

THE KEYS

OF

THE CREEDS

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PREFACE.



THE LETTERS contained in this volume were written between the autumns of 1873 and 1874. The reason for publishing them anonymously will be obvious to all who read them. Happily, religious and historical truth needs not for its confirmation the authority of a name. The Editor has been careful to omit all references of a personal nature, saving only in so far as was necessary to make the position of the writer intelligible. It is considered sufficient to add that the quotations from Scripture have been made, as was natural under the circumstances, from both the Douay and the English versions.

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THE
KEYS OF THE CREEDS.



LETTER I.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

DEAREST AND BEST FRIEND,—Even were my mind disposed otherwise than it is, your touching appeal would deprive me of the power to choose. I cannot, alas! come to you as you kindly suggest; for infirmity, marching far in advance of age, has seized upon me, and with such fell and menacing grasp that my doctors hold out but faint hope of escape by the expatriation to which they doom me.

Do not, however, think that I am excusing myself from complying with your request. On the contrary; next to the delight I should have derived from renewal of the converse which has been the chief solace of my lonely life, will be the pleasure I shall take in seeking to exorcise the demon that

oppresses you, and making you a partaker in the peace I myself have at length found.

I should be disposed to reproach you for deferring your communication until now, and choosing to suffer in silence rather than tell me what you know would distress me, but that I am conscious of having been so much absorbed in things affecting myself as to justify in a measure your suspicion that human intercourse had become indifferent to me. The charge would be true only to a certain extent in respect of things in general, but wholly untrue where you are in question. For, as you must well know, you have ever been a prime element in my life, whether as an object of worship, hope, and longing, when in my young and ardent days I offered you, as my dearest and best, a sacrifice to the inexorable Divinity of Ecclesiasticism, and heedless of your sufferings and my own, took the vows which severed us, and kept them—until too late! Small atonement will it be then if by aught I can say now I succeed in restoring to you some of the peace you so well deserve. And who has the right to command me if you have not?

But there are other reasons in presence of which your hesitation cannot fail to vanish. The development of my mind in regard to the very questions on which you are so sorely exercised, has reached a stage at which utterance of some sort is no longer optional but compulsory. Long ere you broke the too long

silence my resolution was taken; and you have but modified and determined the form of its expression. Ordered as a last chance for health, if not for life, to a Southern clime, I had already selected and partially packed the materials necessary to enable me to compose the book which has been striving to take shape in my mind. Not that I intended to publish it; at least within any time given or contemplated. But I wished to have it in my power to put into the hands of any one sufficiently earnest to care to know, and sufficiently intelligent to be able to comprehend, my view of the real nature of the world-old contest between the Spiritual and the Secular, between the Church and the World, between Religion and Science, between the Soul and the Flesh,—a contest that bids fair soon to surpass all its previous dimensions; and to show also how it is possible, without committing oneself to popular interpretations, not merely to minister faithfully in the Church, but to be a conscientious and even enthusiastic upholder of it.

Well, I propose then to write my book to you in a series of letters from my place of exile. And that you may not be incredulous as to the perfect freedom of my treatment, I will remind you that as a secular priest I have never been subject to the restraint and supervision imposed upon those who are members of any religious Order. Locomotion and converse are thus for me alike untrammelled by superior authority.

And even were they not, I have in me sufficient of the rebel to assert my independence, although no such overwhelming motive existed as that with which you have supplied me.

Your case is in some respects a rare one. In youth it is not unusual for certain temperaments to feel such intense longing to know the secrets of the universe as to be impelled to hasten the termination of life in order to penetrate, unrestrained by the limitations of sense, the world that lies beyond. I well remember having the same feeling myself when, an ardent neophyte, I watched beside the couch of a dead friend who in life had been my fellow-explorer in the realms of mental speculation. Forgetting almost the claims of affection on my grief, and interpreting the deep calm and content written on the still face as a proof that now at length he read the meaning of the problem of God and the Universe, and had satisfaction therein, with envious curiosity I cried, 'Oh, that I knew what thou knowest now! gladly would I take thy place!' But you have passed that period of insubordination, and reached one at which disappointment has generally become a habit, and resignation a virtue not so hard of exercise.

Believe me, then, that in acceding to your most legitimate demand upon my friendship, I experience nothing of the reluctance or wrench you anticipate,

but throw myself wholly and readily into the service, grateful at once for the opportunity so timely accorded me, and for the confidence reposed in me. And that your tender heart may not be apprehensive on the score of having unduly tasked my failing powers, I assure you that the prospect of an occupation so congenial to me, both in its own nature and in its association with you, has already done much to excite the action which my doctors declare to be the main thing necessary for my recovery.

Reserving myself until I shall have reached my destination, I will only say further in this letter, that the manner in which you express your solicitude helps to shape the form of my answer. Is the problem of the world's creeds, you ask, in truth soluble only by death, as the poet implies when he speaks of

The Shadow cloaked from head to foot,
Who keeps the keys of all the Creeds :

and the feeling you describe as so intolerable as to prompt you almost irresistibly to suicide, is that of desire to find those keys.

In the mean time I would conjure you to bear in mind this consideration. Even were it certain that Death is the custodian sole of the mysteries in question, it does not follow that under any circumstances—there, in the world to which Death would introduce you, more than in this one—the secret would be imparted to you. The poet speaks of the ‘Shadow’

only as *keeping* the keys, in no wise of parting with them. Consider, moreover, that in drawing a contrast between the two sides of the grave so immeasurably to the disadvantage of this one, you are following a philosophy more in accordance with the theology you have been accustomed to deprecate, than with the scepticism you are wont to avow. For it is, as you know, the theological usage to exalt the life hereafter as a condition of all perfection in being and knowing, and to repudiate this one as a mistake and a failure. While scepticism, preferring science or knowledge to the faith inculcated by theology, and not ashamed when ignorant to confess ignorance, holds that strong as may be our conviction that we survive and retain our identity after death, we have no certitude of the fact. So that if death be indeed the end of all things for the individual, to court death for the sake of obtaining information on that or any other point, would be to perpetrate a bull of the most ghastly kind.

You will be surprised to find me speaking thus of a tendency which my life has been spent in combating. But the truth is that, though as Anglican parson and Catholic priest it has been my function to advocate the claims of faith, as a man I am not the less alive to those of the intellect; and, indeed, as I go on, you will find that it was on grounds rational rather than religious that I adhered to the practice

and profession of my creed, so long after the dissipation of the early illusions under whose influence that creed received my implicit adherence.

In plain language, I conscientiously remained an officiating priest of the Catholic Church, even while convinced that the authority and doctrines of the Church are founded altogether in what would commonly be regarded as an illusion. And in the letters which will follow this one, I propose to show you the sense in which, and the reasons why, I and every thinker who deserves the name, are compelled so to regard them; to put you in possession, in fact, of *the Keys of the Creeds*, and so enable you to judge for yourself how far you are likely to further your search by taking the poet's hint; and whether, if it were so, the result would be worth the cost.

Tell me in your next if my plan has your approval.

LETTER II.**THE SOUL.**

MY first concern on reaching this sunny shore, dear friend, was for your letter. Having read it, I hardly know in which respect the profuseness of your expressions strikes me as most excessive, whether in that of your gratitude or that of your surprise. As for the former, believe me that I am but too glad to have my long budding resolve forced into flower and fruit, and to find its ripening sun in one whose affection, in spite of the blight and disappointment that fell upon it when I felt compelled to take the step that placed an impassable barrier between us, has been so deep and constant as yours.

As for the latter, surely you were not ignorant that the Church has ever claimed to be the sole depository of the knowledge you seek; and why wonder, then, that I should deem myself competent to impart it to you?

Your surprise, however, has another source. You had no notion that I had ceased to be the true believer you once knew me. Ah, if you only knew

how many fill the priestly office without having even my justification, but simply as a mode of occupation and means of livelihood, your wonder would be that the incredulity of ecclesiastics does not force itself on the notice of the laity to the imminent peril of the Church's existence.

Yet to say that we do not believe, would be to mislead you by saying but half the truth. To all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity specified by you, and the long list of others which grow naturally out of them, I can truly say *I believe*. It is the *sense* in which I believe them that will constitute the essence of my letters to you.

It is true that belief of the kind to which I refer would for the world in general be but another name for unbelief. But the world in general has an exceedingly limited capacity of comprehension. And it is its own misfortune if it places a gross materialising interpretation upon truths which are not amenable to the faculties wherewith it is wont to judge them. Anyhow, let it receive the faith in what sense it may, the world is the better for having it, at least until some substitute be found which has never yet been discovered.

It is because you yourself, while possessing the faculties necessary for a proper appreciation of the meaning of Christian dogma, have never yet found the effective angle at which to bring those faculties

to bear upon it, that you have been reduced to your recent pass. This is due to the fact that you have been reared a Protestant, and have never quitted the Protestant groove. Catholicism prohibits inquiry, but allows full play to the emotions. Protestantism on the other hand, quenches the emotions, but allows inquiry, though only to a very limited extent, inasmuch as it dictates both the method and the conclusions. That is, while Catholicism closes one eye, that of the intellect, and allows full scope to the other, representing the feelings, Protestantism wholly closes the latter, and permits the former to be but half open; and is thus fatal to both the religious and intellectual perceptions of its professors.

To take as an instance the Anglican divine whom you truly rank as surpassing in theological insight all others of his communion in these days, the late Frederick Denison Maurice. Well; pure, intense, spiritual-minded, and laborious as he was, he failed, as you admit, to grasp a single abstruse truth with such distinctness as to enable him to make it clear to you or to anyone. The reason is that, being Protestant, and severed from the Church, he sought in vain for the keys which alone can unlock the mysteries he sought to explore, and which the Church alone possesses. One might as well seek to traverse the ocean in a fog without a compass.

And it is by following the Protestant usage of discarding three-fourths of the mind's faculties, and seeking to judge all things by the remaining fourth, that he and you have been stranded in difficulty and darkness. In religion, as in art, reason plays but a subordinate part compared with that of the imagination. Hence a Protestant *régime*, however favourable to physical analysis or science, is fatal to religion and art, which appertain to the emotional rather than to the intellectual side of our nature.

You must not, however, accept the term *imagination* in its usual restricted sense. Neither must you suppose that because a thing exists only in the imagination it has no actual existence. It is in virtue of our being compounded of two elements, the real and the ideal, that man is an intelligent being. The former includes all that side of him which is cognisable by sense; the latter that which he knows only through the spirit. The real, which is of the earth, earthly, we share with the animals. The ideal, which is of heaven, exalts us out of their sphere into heaven. By the faculties appertaining to the real we may know the organisation of our bodies and the physical world. By those of the ideal we know God, we overcome the world, we attain immortality.

It is humanity only in its limitations, its strivings, its failures, its sufferings, its dying, that we

recognise in the real. In the ideal we see it no longer 'vile' and a 'body of death,' but divested of limitations, translated into the infinite, triumphant over sin, misery, death, risen from the grave, ascended into heaven, seated on the right hand of God.

The process of idealisation consists in imagining an object as transcending its limitations, existing in a perfection not actually attainable by it, and filling infinity with its expanded characteristics. All that is necessary to truthfulness of idealisation is the preservation of character and proportion.

The faculty by which we perform the act of idealisation is known as *the Soul*. Call to mind the colloquial method of describing a person who cares for nothing but what is appreciable by sense: a voluptuary who exists only for fleshly delights, an artist to whom the real suggests nothing beyond the real, a beautiful face expressive of nothing but its own beauty of form and colouring,—we speak of these as being without soul. The higher imagination is wanting, and we despise them accordingly; thus giving proof positive that for us the ideal is more than the real. By the soul we are conscious of our limitations. By it, therefore, we are conscious of the infinite. To possess soul is to have a perception of a greater and better than we are or can be. Without it we should be as the animals who, having

no conception of a better towards which they can strive, remain for ever at the same stage of being, unchanged save by outward accidents of their condition. Man alone is able to look and strive upwards through the power he possesses of looking beyond his real, that is, through the soul.

To speak of man's faculty of idealisation, then, is to speak of his soul. By means of this he transcends the finite and approaches the infinite. Thus it is with the soul that he conceives the personified infinite we call *God*.

This sense of the infinite, or soul, includes the sense of perfection, or conscience. The soul enables us to recognise, the conscience impels us to follow, perfection. It is a mistake to restrict the domain of conscience to religion or morals. There is no direction in which the impulse towards perfection does not find ample room for its exercise. The possession of the power of discerning ideal perfection in one or more directions, and of reproducing it in the real, constitutes genius. The extent to which genius is productive depends mainly upon its combination with energy and faith, or confidence in one's ideal and oneself. 'Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might,' is the application of the rule of conscience to every department of life, industrial, artistic, literary, social, political, religious. For in each there is a standard of perfection capable of

being discerned and approached ; and he alone is a conscientious worker who strives to the utmost to discern and approach it. To renounce the struggle after perfection, and at the bidding of the temporary and expedient to be content with a low and degrading success, is to seek the real at the expense of the ideal, to serve mammon instead of God, to gain the world and lose the soul.

It is with the application of conscience to theology, or the science of God, that our concern in these letters will mainly lie.

LETTER III.

GOD.

THE idea of God has a twofold origin ; the craving of the intellect for a cause, and of the soul for perfection. Confident that nothing he sees is self-existent, man necessarily postulates something that is self-existent, and as necessarily proceeds to invest that something with a nature and attributes. Necessarily conceiving of it as superior to himself and all he sees around him, he finds no point at which to pause in the process of construction short of the infinite. Aware of no faculties but those which he finds himself capable of exercising or appreciating, he takes it for granted that whatever he deems best exists also in his Deity ; only, without limitations. Embarking in metaphysical speculation, he argues that as he himself constitutes the best thing existing in the finite, and God the best in the infinite, he must be the special though finite manifestation of the infinite God. That is, he must be made in God's image, and endowed with the various qualities, physical, mental, and spiritual, of his Maker.

Having come to the conclusion that man, though derived from God and resembling him, is yet not God, but has a separate existence and personality, the earliest metaphysicians did not trouble themselves about the problem which has occupied their successors through all following ages, whether absolute Being, such as a self-existent Creator must be, can be represented in the relative and finite, and become an object of cognition at all, and brought within the grasp of the subject man. Neither did they entertain doubts as to the possibility of reasoning from the relative to the absolute, or from the subject to the object, and identifying that which depends on our consciousness with that on which we depend. Nor did they stumble at the proposition that a conception of an infinite and absolute being by a finite and relative one, involves a contradiction on the ground that such conception must itself be limited and imperfect, and therefore altogether inadequate and fallacious.

No; they set before them one distinct and intelligible idea, and though scattered over all regions and among all races, they never let it go; but however meagre their opportunities and dim their lights, however barbaric their surroundings and evil their times, that idea was ever steadily embodied and reflected in their theology. And however widely they differed in detail, the principle that governed

them was always one and the same, for it was the Catholic principle that God, translating himself into the finite, had made man in his own image; so that man had no option but to make God in his image by retranslating himself into the infinite, and imagining himself as divested of limitations.

All theology, therefore, is based on the assumption that, man being God *in petto*, God is man *in extenso*. But such translation of God into man, you will perceive, constitutes an *incarnation*. And thus, having by the aid of the imagination leaped the chasm in reason left by metaphysics, and as it were taken the kingdom of heaven by violence, theology found itself fairly launched on its momentous career.

You will observe that I refrain from using the term Revelation in regard to any knowledge that man has of God, thus far. And I shall abstain from using it, at least in any sense resembling the popular one. My reason is, that I wish to show you the extent to which the human mind is capable of evolving by itself a theology in accordance with Catholic dogma. I expect to avoid some embarrassment by adopting this course. For if we were to start by regarding the fundamental principle of theology just stated as a 'revealed' one, we should have to allow that every nation, tribe, or sect, which sets up a god made more or less in the likeness of man, whether physically or morally, may, however low its con-

ception and gross its idolatry, claim to be acting under the divine authority of a 'revelation.' That Catholicism should recognise a principle human in origin and universal in application, proves at least that there is thus far no fundamental antagonism between it and the human consciousness.

Well, it is to your portion of that consciousness, and not to revelation as commonly understood, that I shall appeal in elucidation of the mysteries which perplex and distress you. The kingdom of God is within us, and it is within ourselves that the desired keys are to be found. For it is there that the spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit to the eternal facts of which the creeds are the expression. And what is true of the consciousness at one time, is true of it always.

But though we have not to travel beyond ourselves for our proofs and illustrations, the journey we have commenced bids fair to be a somewhat long and intricate one. Our path, however, is too ancient and well beaten to be rugged or obscure. If you observe the direction of the footsteps which have worn it, you will see that they are exactly opposite to ours. For what is requisite in our case is, not that we travel by another path than they who have claimed to be guided by revelation, but that we start from the opposite end of the same path. This in itself will save us much trouble. For the well-

defined track will keep us from wandering into jungles of speculation, from plunging into sloughs of despondency, or fainting on hills of difficulty. While, to make it impossible that we should ever be at a loss for a turn, there is always a signpost at hand, with an inscription easy to read, and not difficult to understand,—an inscription I have already indicated to you, for it is no other than this:—

‘God made man in His own image.’

This, simple as it may appear, was the compass wherewith in those divine old days the wayfarers of humanity sought the goal of their aspirations. Our search, as I have said, lies in precisely the opposite direction. But the needle that indicates the Polestar, points also to the Southern Cross. Lately leaving his Maker’s hands, and coming into an existence where he himself was the least familiar object, man might well think of himself as preserving the recollection of God; so that it only remained for him to learn man. We of these later days, absorbed in the observation of man, have well-nigh forgotten God. You see now why I have brought you into this old pathway, and why we start from this end of it. If man be made in God’s image, by idealising and magnifying man we shall discover what God is. Not to learn man from God, then, as did our forefathers, but to learn God from man, is the task before us.

LETTER IV.

IN HIS OWN IMAGE, MALE AND FEMALE.

WE will take first the most palpable and universal physical facts of humanity, as befits the intelligence in its earliest essays towards the conception of a Supreme Being.

For this, as for all subsequent stages of our progress, it is necessary that we clear our minds from the prepossessions wherewith we are wont to regard the infinite, and suppose space to be absolutely vacant save only of ourselves and the world visible around us. We are here, and yonder is the void. How came we here, and of what nature must that be which produced us?

Such are the questions to which, following the universal course of human thought, we have to provide an answer. Starting, then, from our own consciousness, let us see what answer comes most naturally to us, and what are the lineaments of the image of God.

To man who makes that which he requires, with ingenuity according to forethought and design, his

Maker can only be one who proceeds in the self-same fashion, thinking out the details and fashioning the work with his hands. There must be power, or his Creator could not have made him at all. There must be will, and there must be intelligence. All these are human qualities, inasmuch as man finds them in himself; and qualities which constitute one of man's most essential attributes, personality or individuality.

The Creator, then, appears as a Person possessed of characteristics physical and intellectual. But as man grows and observes he finds that something more than these are necessary to account for the impulse to create. Great as was the advance made when, searching into the marvels of nature, Aristotle found everywhere proofs of the presence of intellect, and ascribed creation to Intelligence rather than to Will or Power, a motive for creation was still wanting.

It is only as we approach adolescence that we learn to ascribe aught resembling emotion to our parents. As children we do not wonder at the fact that the being to whom we belong consists of two persons, a mother as well as a father. Only slowly dawns upon us the mystery of Sex, and its correlative Sentiment. It is long after man has learnt to recognise in his progenitor power and intelligence, that he learns to credit him with emotion or love.

Thus, even while confining himself to the physical side of things, man is led more and more to see in his Maker the original and counterpart of himself; and, recognising one point of family likeness after another, to ascribe to him every organ, faculty, and quality he finds in himself; only, divested of limitations. And the less special and restricted to any particular tribe or race such attributes are, that is, the more they belong universally to all mankind, the more *Catholic* appear the results attained. Sectarianism in its earliest form consisted in depicting the Deity after the likeness of some particular people; making him black and thick-lipped, as did the Ethiops, or white, lithe, and straight-featured, as did the Greeks. Later ones consisted in investing him with local moral characteristics; as did the Jews when they invested their Jehovah with the jealous exclusiveness characteristic of themselves, a quality to which their isolated condition as a people is mainly owing.

A favourite practice in all non-monotheistic religions was to cut up humanity, as it were, and distribute its various qualities, moral and other, among several deities, making one the impersonation of power, another of wisdom, another of love; and in having also separate gods to represent not merely separate nationalities, but separate human pursuits, as war, peace, music, agriculture. All these mytho-

logic systems, pagan though they were, and sectarian in respect of their failing to ascribe perfection in all respects whatsoever to one and the same supreme Being, were yet essentially Catholic in so far as they proceeded on the principle of making God in man's image, the image of man's best, divested of limitations.

For a being to experience the sentiment of love and to be productive, it is evident that the element of duality must not be wanting. For a solitary existence there is neither object of love nor mode of production. Unable to conceive it of himself, man cannot conceive it of his Maker; and whatever man cannot conceive of himself, he cannot, consistently with the rule of nature and Catholicism, conceive of God. Where, moreover, man may well ask, can the universal law of duality, the law in accordance with which nature appears as one vast sexual apparatus, have its origin and seat but in the nature of the Creator himself, the type and model in the infinite of the finite manifestation of himself called the World?

The primitive doctrine that God created man in his own image, male and female, and consequently that the divine nature comprised the two sexes within itself, fulfils all the conditions requisite to constitute a Catholic theological dogma, inasmuch as it may truly be affirmed of it that it has been held *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*, being uni-

versal as the phenomenon to which it owes its existence.

How essential to the consistency of the Catholic system is this doctrine of duality you may judge by the shortcomings of the théologies which reject it. Unitarianism blunders alike in regard to the Trinity and the Duality. Affecting to see in God a Father, it denies him the possibility of having either spouse or offspring. More rational than such a creed as this was the primitive worship of sex as represented by the male and female principles in nature. In no gross sense was the symbolism of such a system conceived, gross as its practice may have become, and as it would appear to the notions of modern conventionalism. For no religion is founded upon intentional depravity. Searching back for the origin of life, men stopped at the earliest point to which they could trace it, and exalted the reproductive organs into symbols of the Creator. The practice was at least calculated to procure respect for a side of nature liable under an exclusively spiritual regime to be relegated to undue contempt.

LETTER V.

IN HIS OWN IMAGE, INTELLECTUAL, MORAL,
EMOTIONAL.

I do not wonder at your surprise. Yet were I to give but a moderately full account of the worship referred to in my last, I should have to write a volume. For us as Christians the universality of the doctrine of the divine Duality derives its main importance from the fact that it indicates the recognition by the human consciousness of the necessity of a multiplicity of persons in the divine essence. In these days, when men accounted of the highest culture are found to ridicule the doctrine of the Trinity as intrinsically absurd, and to regard the Athanasian creed as incoherent and unmeaning, it is well to recollect that the belief finds justification in the very constitution of physical human nature, and as we shall presently see, in the laws of human thought. Just a few instances, then, in illustration of its antiquity and universality.

It appears certain that the names of the Hebrew deity bear the sense I have indicated; *El*, the root

of *Elohim*, the name under which God was known to the Israelites prior to their entry into Canaan, signifying the masculine sex only; while *Jahveh*, or *Jehovah*, denotes both sexes in combination. The religious rites practised by Abraham and Jacob prove incontestably their adherence to this even then ancient mode of symbolising deity; and though after the entry into Canaan the leaders and reformers of the Israelites strove to keep the people from exchanging the worship of their own divinity for that of the exclusively feminine principle worshipped by the Canaanites with unbridled licence under the name of *Ashera*, yet the indigenous religion became closely incorporated with the Jewish; and even Moses himself fell back upon it when, yielding to a pressing emergency, he gave his sanction to the prevailing 'Tree and Serpent' worship by his elevation of a brazen serpent upon a pole or cross. For all portions of this structure constitute the most universally accepted symbols of sex in the world.

It is to India that we must go for the earliest traces of these things. The Jews originated nothing, though they were skilful appropriators and adapters of other men's effects. Brahma, the first person in the Hindoo Triad, was the original self-existent being, inappreciable by sense, who commenced the work of creation by 'creating the waters with a thought,' as described in the Institutes of Manu. The waters,

regarded as the source of all subsequent life, became identified with the feminine principle in nature—whence the origin of the mystic rite of baptism—and the atmosphere was the divine breath or spirit. The description in Genesis of the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters indicates the influence upon the Jews of the Hindoo theogony, to which they had access through Persia.

The twofold name of Jehovah also finds a correspondence in the *Arddha-Nari*, or incarnation of Brahma, who is represented in sculptures as combining in himself the male and female organisms. And the worship of the implements of fecundity continues popular in India to this day. The same idea underlies much of the worship of the ancient Greeks, finding expression in the symbols devoted to Apollo or the sun, and in their androgynous sculptures. Aryan, Scandinavian, and Semitic religions were alike pervaded by it, the male principle being represented by the sun, and the female by the moon, which was variously personified by the virgins, Ashtoreth or Astarte, Diana, and others, each of whom, except in the Scandinavian mythology, where the sexes are reversed, had the moon for her special symbol. Similarly, the allegory of Eden finds one of its keys in the phenomena of sex, as is demonstrated by the ancient Syrian sculptures of Ashera, or *The Grove*; and ‘the tree of life in the midst of the garden’

forms the point of departure for beliefs which have lasted thousands of years, and which have either spread from one source over, or been independently originated in, every part of the habitable globe.

The point essential for us to observe at present in this system of religious symbolism is the persistency with which the idea of Duality is maintained. The two principles together were regarded as constituting but one complete being.

It was impossible, however, for mankind to remain satisfied with a Duality that did not complete itself naturally, as in man's own case, by the addition of a third element. And so it came that the idea expanded until it appeared in the form of a Triad or Trinity either of principles or of persons, in one essence,—principles for the spiritual and philosophic thinker, and persons for the uninstructed materialising masses.

Proceeding on our way towards the creation of God in the image of man, it becomes necessary, in order to avoid having two or more deities or sets of deities, to combine in one Being the facts and ideas common to man.

Endeavour now to accompany me on a short excursion into a region lying altogether apart from things concrete and appreciable by sense, a region shunned by mankind at large, and rarely entered save by thinkers, for it is called Metaphysics, and it

is occupied by the Abstract. Arrived there we close all the faculties of sense as useless, for there is neither light to impinge on the eye nor sound on the ear, nor aught of any kind to appeal to the touch, but the imagination is all in all, both as regards the things to be dealt with and the instruments wherewith they are to be treated.

Try now to imagine Being, simple and apart from all conditions of being. Try to imagine it as absolute and sole in space. You will not succeed; for the moment we seek to imagine Being existing by itself, there rises before us an idea of something else equally with it demanding recognition. For the idea of Being involves the idea of its opposite, or Not-Being. So that we cannot have in our minds a Positive without at the same time having also a Negative, either actually or potentially.

Apply this fact to the theology we are seeking to construct. We want to imagine deity as absolute and infinite. But no sooner do we attempt to do so than the idea of an absolute negation of deity forces itself upon us. Having one absolute Being, then, we must have two; and so the idea of dualism appears as a necessary idea.

But the laws of thought forbid us to stop there. We cannot imagine two Beings to co-exist without imagining also the effect of their action upon each other. But such effect constitutes a third form of

existence ; so that, given the human consciousness of being at all, we are absolutely unable to exclude from our thought the notion of a trinity of Beings ; a trinity, moreover, in which none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another ; but the whole three are co-eternal together and co-equal, and constitute among them but one being.

If, proceeding a step further, we seek to identify this necessary product of thought with the animating force of the universe, we are equally compelled to regard it as personal, inasmuch as by the very fact of creation it manifests Will, Intelligence, and the creative impulse we call Love.

Thus without aid from aught external to ourselves, without aid even from the visible phenomena of the world, but building solely upon the basis of our own consciousness, we have occupied the throne of space with a Being who is at once personal and infinite, single and threefold, incomprehensible and unimaginable by us, and yet in whom we recognise our own lineaments, the substance of which we are the manifestation. And this, inasmuch as He is Consciousness, while we are conscious. He is Intelligence, while we have understanding. He is Power, while we can do somewhat. He is Energy, while we live and move. He is Love, while we exist.

But no other than such a Being as this is the God men have ever felt bound to adore. The human

consciousness being one, whether as Aryan or Semite, Jew or Christian, the idea of Deity has in all assumed a triune aspect, and men have all adored it on one and the same principle. Whatever faculties for good we find in ourselves, or whatever is productive of that which we deem good, we necessarily offer to him as our reasonable service; and with these, divested of limitations, we build up the fabric of ideal perfection which we call God. To ascribe to him aught that falls short of the best we can imagine would be to stultify ourselves. Even the rudest savage, whose worship appears to us to be rendered to a demon, invariably ascribes to his deity in excess the qualities most prized by himself; never those which he deems evil, be he Cannibal or Calvinist.

Creating God morally as well as physically in our own image, it is inevitable that his growth in our minds should keep pace with our own. Advancing in knowledge of our own character and capacity, we find ourselves compelled to make such modifications in the divine nature as are necessary to preserve its harmony and proportion. Thus, to prevent Will from degenerating into caprice, Power into cruelty, Capacity for enjoyment into sensuality, we add to his attributes others which we find indispensable to our own perfection, as sympathy, patience, purity, justice, and to temper this last, tenderness; first expanding each of them to infinity. Only where we

fail to possess these qualities in ourselves do we fail to ascribe them to our God. To make him defective in respect of any of them, is to make him after the pattern of a pagan or sectarian deity. To attain Catholic results we must regard him as resuming in himself all the good that characterises universal man.

To be able to construct such a God as this, it is necessary to know man in the utmost reaches of our nature. One must have loved and hated, toiled, suffered, and enjoyed, and all with intensity; must have lost and found oneself in all directions, on the side of evil as well as on that of good. To such knowledge the spirit and the flesh must alike bring their contributions. One must have lived the inner life that finds no expression in the prosperous complacency of external worldly success; and in one's own soul have grappled with the problems of sin, condemnation, repentance, atonement, and salvation. In a word, one must have *felt*, inasmuch as God is at once the source, the sum and the product of all feeling.

As metal unrefined and unwrought is valueless, so is there no perfection of character without trial. Any idealisation of humanity in its youth, beauty, and prosperity must be inferior in moral value to one of humanity perfected by suffering. Suffering is the parent of sympathy. A suffering and sympathetic deity is above all those of Greece or Rome. Wherefore, carry our idealisations far as we may, we shall

not transcend the level assigned in the creeds of Catholicism to him who 'suffered for our salvation.'

Thus, if in the construction of our ideal of perfection we attain a height unreached by the 'heathen,' it is because, though on the right track, they failed to carry their analysis of man's capacity to its furthest point. The prominence of selfishness among mankind led them to put self-seeking in the fore-front of the nature of their deities. We, on the other hand, recognising the sympathetic element as at least better, if not wholly dominant in us, lift up as divine the character of one suffering with and for others, rather than of one who by dint of superior force or strategy is triumphant over others. How far the former surpasses the latter in its power to draw men unto it, becomes apparent when, looking from the depths of our own deepest feelings, we contrast the emotions excited respectively by the contemplation of the Belvidere Apollo and the Crucifix. The pagan ideal vanishes, quenched in the higher ideal presented in the creeds. For what are all the miracles worked by force to those of which love is capable?

Thus, not only in his own image, male and female, and all other physical respects, does man create the God to whom he ascribes his own existence, but in his own image, moral, intellectual, and emotional. By and by we shall have to add *spiritual*.

LETTER VI.

THE FALL AND THE INCARNATION.

‘ BUT supposing himself to be made in God’s image, man must have supposed himself to be perfect. He could not have credited a perfect Being with defective work.’

Your remarks are just, up to a certain point. Man had both the convictions you describe. It was on finding himself defective that he came to suppose that, though assuredly made perfect originally, he had fallen from that state. True, the logic that was content with such a solution was itself defective, inasmuch as one of the essential elements of an original perfection must be the ability to remain perfect. According to the popular notion, it was through the abuse of the gift of freedom that man fell. But as a state of perfection must, to be perfection, include such an amount of knowledge and wisdom as will keep from falling, the popular notion is defective in this respect also.

Nevertheless, man knew perfection and fell; and his fall was the most momentous event in his exist-

ence, inasmuch as by means of it he became man. For the fall was the birth of the soul,—the initial stage of the supreme incarnation.

To comprehend the fall, you must first comprehend the incarnation. Here, as elsewhere, we shall be guided solely by the light of human reason, borrowing nothing from ‘revelation.’ Like the idea of a Trinity, the idea of an incarnation belongs to no one religion. Product on one side of abstract reason, and on the other of the phenomena of physical nature, it was postulated by the earliest metaphysicians, ages before either Christianity or Judaism, as the sole possible solution of the problem of creation.

For incarnation is but a term to express the manifestation of the infinite in the finite, of the absolute in the conditioned, of the ideal in the real; that is, of God in nature. Unable to conceive how such a process can take place, yet perceiving that it has taken place if God and the world exist at all, reason is compelled to postulate a miracle.

The incarnation, though a single eternal process, inasmuch as God in his function of creator is always becoming the world, is yet various in kind and degree. The infinite being the source of all things, wherever we find a finite we find an incarnation. Of course the word, as its derivation shows, signifies primarily a manifestation in the form of flesh, but

it may fitly be used to signify manifestation in any form. In this way it becomes applicable to the creation in its earliest stage. Prior to that all was God, in his original condition of pure spirit. In that, God took form in the world. The proof of this is that we cannot think of God as existing prior to creation in any other fashion.

The earliest manifestation of the infinite in the finite comes before us as a world without form and void. Though without life, sensation, consciousness, or even motion, it was not the less divine, inasmuch as it was the divine handiwork, formed of the divine substance— for there was nought else of which it could be formed—a part of God himself, made in the image of God thus far, though to us, viewing it from the advanced standpoint of our own after-growth, it may appear but a poor and meagre embodiment of the divine nature, or illustration of the divine perfections.

Product, however, of the omnipotent intelligence, will, and energy, this dark and shapeless mass is instinct with the possibilities of our universe. Every particle of it, minute beyond conception, contains in itself the two poles, positive and negative, which constitute the first elements of life. Restless, and moving among themselves, they develop in a continually ascending series life chemical, as in the process of crystallisation, life vegetable, life animal.

But this, vast as is the advance on previous existence, does not satisfy us as presenting a fair portrait of the characteristics of the Creator. We find in it the commencement of our own lower nature, but not that on which we pride ourselves, the higher characteristics of humanity. Made thus far in the image of God, creation as yet affords no image of him who transcends our best actual, possible, or imaginable. A higher stage of the incarnation is yet to come.

At length a being in our own form appears upon the scene. Surpassing all his predecessors in capacity* mental and physical, and finding all things subject to him, he knows not his own nature or the limits of his powers. Everything is so fitted to his wants, existence is so delicious, it does not occur to him that aught can be better. Without experience of contrasts it does not occur to him even that aught is good; nor, therefore, that aught is evil. Having no standard or criterion whereby to form a judgment, if questioned on the subject he could not do otherwise than assume that he is perfect.

Still does the capacity resident in the original atoms develop itself. With all his might, beauty, intelligence, man is still but an animal, for he lives in sense, and has no notion of a right and wrong, of a good and evil. Unable to imagine anything better than he has or is, he has no ideal wherewith to sur-

pass his real. And having no ideal, he is unconscious both of himself and of God. Bounded by sense, he is still in the real, and with no side of him open to the ideal and absolute. Knowing nothing of conditions or limitations, he cannot conceive the unconditioned or unlimited. Knowing nothing of perfection, he has no sense of imperfection. Knowing nothing of law, he has no consciousness of transgression. And having no law whereby to judge himself, no moral nature to render him amenable to a moral law, no conscience—or sense of perfection—to condemn him, he is ‘sinless,’ ‘innocent,’ ‘perfect.’

But this is precisely the sense in which my horse and your dog are morally perfect. The recognition of a law by you and me does not justify us in condemning them as ‘sinners,’ for they are without that law. But though not sinners, are they, then, our superiors, and would it be a fall or a rise for them, were they to become partakers of our ‘sinful nature?’ Surely a rise, inasmuch as it would be an advance from the unconsciousness of the animal to the consciousness of the human.

It was the fact of man’s attaining the consciousness of an ideal, or perfection unattainable by the finite in respect of things moral, that constituted the introduction of ‘the law.’ By the ‘giving of the law,’ that is, by our becoming conscious of a better than we could do, ‘sin came to life and we (vir-

tually), died.' That is, we recognised ourselves as falling short of a perfection we were able to imagine, and therefore as incapable of living under the *régime* of the ideal or perfect law which has its existence in the conscience.

Thus all have sinned, and come short of the ideal perfection personified in God.

The fall, then, consists in man's becoming aware that his real does not equal the ideal he is able to imagine; or, conversely, in his attaining a sense of perfection beyond that which he is able to realise. It is thus the birth of the soul, or faculty whereby we are enabled to rise from the finite to the infinite, from the real to the ideal, from the earth to God, and to know that from which we have sprung, and to which it is our highest function to aspire. No mere external fact in history, then, is the fall, but an experience true of every individual of our race who is gifted with a 'soul.' For us all alike, the first perception of a standard of excellence transcending our actual, is the moment of the giving of the law, even that law by which is the knowledge of sin.

Let us return to the incarnation. Unconscious of any defect in his real, prior to his discovery of the distance between it and his ideal, man supposed himself to have been made in the image of God, an exact counterpart and resemblance of his Maker. The discovery of his shortcoming was accounted by

him a fall. Having quitted his original state of unconsciousness of imperfection, he could no longer regard himself as worthy to be considered a divine incarnation. Before humanity can claim to be made in the divine image and to be a true incarnation of God, it must produce a new Adam, whose real shall coincide with the ideal.

LETTER VII.

THE ATONEMENT.

‘WHOSE real should coincide with the ideal.’ That, say you in your charming and appreciative letter, would be an union of the finite and the infinite, of man and God. And you go on to suggest that surely humanity cannot have fallen far if it is able to rise to such contact.

Every word you write to this effect is good and true, but you have not allowed your perceptions to attain their furthest reach. Had you done so, you would not have stopped short until you had arrived at the doctrine of the Atonement, developing it out of your own intuitions, and without any revelation save that of reason applied to your own faculty of idealisation.

And not without revelation only, but without aught historical or concrete; but, given solely your own consciousness of the abstract, and supposing only the existence of the two elements—the real and the ideal—you will find your thought, when allowed to go forward, reaching successively the stages of

original incarnation (or creation), fall, new incarnation (or second creation), and atonement.

It is not, however, in the meaning popularly ascribed to it, and for which you express such strong aversion, that this doctrine is true.

For, in the first place, no doctrine respecting the Divine Nature that is repulsive to the human intuitions, or sense of perfection, can be true. Startling as this may appear, it is a simple truism. By the divine we mean only the ideal perfection of which the soul alone is cognisant. That perfection personified is God. If repulsive to our sense of perfection, it is not God.

In the second place it is not logical, and therefore cannot conduct us to that higher esoteric doctrine which the Church reserves for a chosen few.

The atonement signifies simply the mutual reconciliation between the Maker and his work, first through that work proving equal to its Maker's intention, and so winning his approbation; and, secondly, through the work, no longer conscious of failure, and of cause for alienation, becoming reconciled to its Maker.

This last may be otherwise elucidated. Taking God for the ideal, and nature or humanity for the real, the union of the two in one person constitutes in itself a reconciliation or at-one-ment. It is the longing of humanity thus to find itself in harmony with the object of its highest conceptions, that has ever

and again prompted it to select from the race some individual pre-eminent for his goodness, and to ascribe to him a divine origin and character. Thus it has come that wherever a man has appeared whom his fellows deemed so far above themselves in any direction as to indicate the possession of an element of infinity, they have straightway held him as inspired by the divine spirit, and as being, in a greater or less degree, God as well as man.

That the last member of the race thus deified by any considerable section of mankind, should have been the Jesus of the New Testament, is not surprising when we take into account the character and history of him which have been presented to us. We may seek in vain among other deified men for so many and so lofty elements of infinity. In him the religious genius seems to have culminated to such an extent as in a great measure to obliterate his local and national characteristics. His sense of ideal perfection raised him above the limitations of his deified predecessors. Especially as drawn by John and Paul, was there in him an universality that entitled him to the appellation of Son, not of Israel, nor of any limited denomination, but Son of Man; for nought human was excluded from his sympathies or the benefits of his moral teaching. To all whose hearts were accessible to any sense of perfection in things spiritual, were the gates of his kingdom opened.

And this brings me to a point of vast importance in determining how it came that such a character should have emanated from a race so intensely bigoted and exclusive as the Jews.

The quality which made them emphatically a peculiar people was that of spirituality, or appreciation of the personal and divine in Deity. In them God was above all things the Moral Governor of the universe, so far as they comprehended morality, and it was through men's hearts and minds that he made his presence specially felt. Of course there is much in their earlier history and literature that conflicts with this high conception of Deity. Many and many a time is the portraiture coarse and revolting, and such as only a people whose ideal scarcely transcended their own lowest real, could have devised. In fact, so various are their delineations of him, that it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that they worshipped two distinct divinities under the same name. I will in my next dwell a little on this, as it will explain much that perplexes honest enquirers, and account for many a theological contradiction.

In the present I will content myself with remarking that even in their earliest compositions there are gleams of a pure and lofty ideal, gleams which grow and brighten as misfortunes thicken on their race, showing them to be no exception to the rule that all products of nature, whether human or material, re-

quire to be wrought with toil and trial in order to attain their highest value. And so, when place and power were lost, and servitude had become their inheritance, Israel, made perfect through suffering—his real quenched in sorrow—attained in Jesus to the conception of an ideal of character which the world has since accepted as the highest humanity can produce, and styled at once Son of Man and Son of God.

LETTER VIII.

THE TWO JEHOVAHS.

THE two Gods of the Bible, of whom I promised to give you some account, must be referred to the antagonistic influences of the real and the ideal in man's nature. Though existing side by side throughout the whole of the sacred literature, and passing under the same name, there is no difficulty in discerning between them. In one we have a Being of amazing selfishness and ferocity, owning responsibility to no moral law, and absolutely revelling in blood.

The other is a just judge and ruler over all, yet pitiful and of tender mercy, a hearer of prayer, and one that doth not willingly afflict the children of men. It is to the co-existence in the Bible of these two presentments of Deity, and the failure of the worshippers of the letter to distinguish between them, that the theological troubles of Christendom and the comparative failure of Christianity are in great measure due. For, so far from referring the existence of the inferior Jehovah to the propensity of unde-

veloped man to make his God after the image of his own lower nature, the Church, rather than weaken the authority of the letter of Scripture, has sought to sanctify even the most revolting doctrines by ascribing to them a spiritual signification.

The truth is that so long as the gross and brutal predominate in the character of man, they will predominate in that of the God recognised by man. Only as the things of sense give place to the things of the spirit, and the ideal assumes its proper supremacy over the real, does the Deity emerge from his low estate, and shedding the grosser nature with which he has hitherto been invested, shine forth as the sun in his glory, the absolute realisation of man's developed moral conceptions.

How low and rudimentary humanity still is, even among peoples we regard as highly civilised, is demonstrated by the reception still widely accorded to the grosser interpretations of the doctrine of atonement by blood. The term *carnivorous* is in no way too strong to express the character thus ascribed to the Deity himself. As if expressly to illustrate the inveterate co-ordination subsisting between man and his gods, the Bible exhibits in strong relief the continuity of both natures. The carnal God of the Old Testament survives in the carnal God of the New; and the spiritual God of the Old Testament survives in the spiritual God of the New.

Let us glance shortly at their respective careers. Throughout the Old Testament we find the lower Jehovah depicted as abandoned to falsehood and cruelty, and ever ready for a bribe of blood to aid the foulest cause. For his consent to offer up his only son as a burnt-offering, Abraham is repeatedly lauded as the father of the faithful and friend of God. For a promise which involves a like fate to his daughter, Jephthah obtains the desired victory. And even the Moabite King Mesha gains a victory over the Jews in virtue of his offering up his son as a sacrifice. David, on a mere surmise, hanged the seven sons and grandsons of Saul 'in the hill before the Lord,' 'and after that God was entreated for the land.' He puts a lying spirit into the mouth of his prophets, and threatens to destroy those who are deceived by them. He denounces the most tremendous penalties for the lightest offences. Nothing can satiate his propensity for blood, and the idea of the sanctity of life is utterly scouted. Blood of animals innumerable; blood of peoples hostile to his own people; blood of offenders among his own people; blood of unoffending men, women, and children even, also among his own chosen people. Because some of them look into the ark, he smites fifty thousand three score and ten men. By the mouth of one of his prophets he declares, 'I also will deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity. And though they

ery in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.' To another he says, 'Go through the city and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children and women, and begin at my sanctuary.'

Passing to the New Testament; its continuity with the Old in respect of this deity is indisputable, and the propensity is carried to a height previously unimaginable. No Jew in Old Testament times thought of God as a possible parent, except in a general way of the human race. But the Dualism veiled under the name that was too sacred to be uttered, had in the interval borne its fruit; and after glutting himself with the blood of the first-born sons of mere men, this deity found himself at length in a position to require the blood of his own 'only-begotten beloved Son.' The plea on which this stupendous sacrifice was demanded was the pardon of mankind. But so far from their condition being ameliorated, no sooner was it consummated than the bulk of the human race found themselves in a worse plight than before. The Old Testament consigns no one to eternal punishment, nor does it make penal the honest conclusions of the understanding. The New Testament, on the contrary, abounds in dire menaces not only against evil-doers but against independent thinkers. Here the deity appears as

inflicting torture for torture's sake, without any pretence of reforming the offender or promoting the security of society. 'The unbelieving and the abominable' are placed in the same category, and both 'have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone,' 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,' and where there is 'weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

It is the love of blood evinced by this the lower deity of the Jews that Christians recognise and sanction when they receive in the gross material sense the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

Far different is the character of the Jehovah who has won for the Jews the credit of being endowed with a transcendent genius for religion. In him all the noblest attributes of humanity reach their highest expression. For he is 'a God of truth, and without iniquity,' whose 'ways are equal,' and who is 'no respecter of persons:' a 'God of peace' and hater of violence, who takes no delight in the blood of animals, but 'whose name is holy,' who 'dwells in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the contrite, and to revive the heart of the humble.' A God, moreover, who so loved the world that he sent his Son to save it; a God whom that Son called Love, and of whom he declared, 'If a man love me and keep my words, my Father will love him, and

we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.'

There is a sense, however, in which the shedding of blood is necessary to procure a full reconciliation between the soul and its absolute ideal. For how can humanity justify itself to the Supreme Perfection; save by showing itself capable of attaining the loftiest reaches of moral heroism? And how can such heroism be shown but by being 'faithful unto death?'

LETTER IX.

GOD-MAN AND MAN-GOD.

THERE was a manifest consistency in the destiny that assigned to the Jewish race the honour of producing him who has filled for mankind the part of ideal man. Its character, its history, its literature, all combined to make it fitting that, as the Hebrew mind had attained a conception of spirituality and righteousness far beyond that of any other people, so the Hebrew race should produce the individual in whom spirituality and righteousness culminated to such a degree as to make mankind see in him the realisation of its highest ideal.

Let us proceed to trace the lineaments of the ideal man, not according to any supposed historic outline, but as evolved necessarily from our consciousness when once the notion of such a being has occurred to us.

The ideal, as you already understand, being in the imagination the equivalent of the infinite, the ideal man must have his origin and habitat in that region; and on all sides of his nature he must appear

divested of the limitations of the real, and endowed with the element of infinity. In every particular of his history he must show himself superior to the race of ordinary men. His very coming into existence must be by no vulgar method ; for of him the supernatural alone is worthy. Yet, proceeding immediately from the supreme personified ideal whom we call God, and therefore himself God, he must, to be man also, derive one half of his being from a human source. So palpable is the necessity for this, that the legends of all religions recognise it, and many of them agree in representing their divine men as born of virgin mothers. For the ideal man postulates the ideal woman ; the woman who, like her ideal spouse the Holy Spirit, and ideal son, surpasses the limitations of the real, and without human assistance produces her ideal babe.

Son at once of humanity and deity, he must possess in perfection the characteristics of both natures, and these so balanced that none can say which predominates in him. Animated with the divine enthusiasm of the perfection from which he is sprung, he will go forth to do battle against all the powers of evil, or man's lower nature, by stimulating the growth of the ideal, and so reducing the real to its proper level. Not, however, by dint of physical force ; that in itself would constitute an appeal to and alliance with the very power he desires to subdue ;

but by setting forth the rule of perfection, and exhibiting it in himself in so winning a guise as to draw perforce unto himself all who are amenable to such sweet and spiritual influences.

As his mission must be the highest imaginable by man, he must for its accomplishment be invested with powers transcending those attainable by man. At his command must be all the elements of physical nature. Earth, sea, air, and fire, heaven and hell, must obey him. The very dēmons must acknowledge his supremacy; disease and death must flee his approach.

God though he be, he is still man, and as man he must suffer and die. But it is by his death that his divinity is most triumphantly demonstrated. For it is by his death that he crowns his life, and exhibits in supreme degree the love of perfection as his ruling passion. Mighty as has been his enthusiasm of humanity in the real, his enthusiasm of ideal perfection far exceeds it. For the ideal perfection, caught up and resumed in an infinite personality, is no other than his Father, God.

Yes, it is for love of God even more than for love of man, that the Man-God suffers and dies. So vivid is his sense of the personality and presence of the Divine Perfection, and of his own intimate relationship thereto, that he speaks ever of him in the most endearing terms, aspiring ever to his presence,

and so shapes his speech as to imply identity of being with him—‘My Father and I are one;’ ‘No man cometh to the Father but by me;’ ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life;’ ‘He that has seen me hath seen the Father also.’

As the ideal Son must have existed, either actually or potentially, in the bosom of the ideal Father, he must be co-eternal with him and co-equal, and the same divine disposition or spirit that animates them must proceed alike from both.

But while eternal in his ideal nature, he must be subject to death in his real. And inasmuch as by his death he reconciles the real to its Creator, his blood is for the healing of the nations, his suffering for their salvation.

For his death is the crowning proof of his thoroughness. Infinite would be the loss to mankind were he to shrink from such consummation. For then would humanity exhibit itself as incapable of attaining perfection even in its ideal. Unable to imagine such unselfish devotion as possible, it would have shown itself to belong to but a low degree in the scale of moral existence. The capacity to imagine and appreciate self-sacrifice involves the capacity for self-sacrifice. Our whole real is elevated by the exaltation of our ideal; and the supreme ideal is reconciled and propitiated thereby. Humanity, in virtue of the perfect ideal it has produced, takes its

seat at the right hand of the Absolute Perfection, and claims the enthusiastic greeting, 'My beloved Son! in whom I am well pleased!' For it has attained perfection, and the divine work of creation is 'finished.'

God though we may be disposed to deem him, it is as man and man alone, though man perfect, that the ideal Son achieves for us his victory. His triumph is the triumph of humanity. For he represents man's ideal side rising superior to his real, inasmuch as he accomplishes the sacrifice of sense to spirit, of body to soul, the lower to the higher, the phenomenal to the eternal, the limited to the infinite.

To comprehend the nature of the Son of Man, you must comprehend the nature of man. Two elements go to the making up of this, the real and the ideal. Discard the notion that either of them is in the popular sense supernatural. This done, the divine man readily appears as he in whom both these sides of humanity are perfect; but in whom also the real occupies its proper place of subordination to the ideal, or sense to spirit.

It is only in respect of its transcending sense, or the 'natural,' that the ideal can be regarded as supernatural. We have no warrant for regarding any part of existence, real or ideal, as lying outside of nature. No possible redeemer can the ideal man be for us unless he be identical with that which he comes to redeem, one of ourselves,—save without de-

fect. For, otherwise, his very perfection would but enhance the disfavour with which the Creator regarded his work. The demonstration that other elements than those contained in humanity are necessary to produce a perfect man, would involve a confession of impotence in the original creation. And so far from the divine work being finished in him, and he being greeted as the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased, and suffered to ascend on high, and, crowned with honour and glory, to take his place at the right hand of God, he would be to the Father a constant source of mortification, as a reminder of his failure in the first creation.

No Saviour or Redeemer in such case would he be for us; no maker of peace by his blood; no reconciler with God.

It is, then, not at the incarnation as an isolated or historical event, or as restricted to any one period of time, that we arrive in our process of constructing God in our own image, and in following the theology that naturally evolves itself therefrom. But we arrive at the incarnation as a perpetual demonstration of the capacity of nature for attaining perfection on its ideal side. The existence of perfection anywhere in nature, whether in you or in me, demonstrates the divinity of creation, and so 'saves' the world. And he who is most perfect does this in the greatest degree.

THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY

LETTER X.

THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY AND THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON.

HAVING got, either in idea or in reality, subjectively in our consciousness or objectively in history, a man whose character and career suggest to us the element of infinity in power and goodness; and having by him discovered the capacity of our race for attaining perfection, real or imagined, and having thereby won exemption from eternal condemnation, how shall we give vent to our heart's promptings to adore him as a God, how institute divine worship in his honour? Having a theology and a religion, worship inevitably follows.

Not enough that we make him in the image of our own little best. As Son at once of God and man, the universe contains no element too noble to be pressed into his service, no symbol too exalted to be converted to his worship.

Here, dull and unimaginative that we are, we should, if left to our own resources, find ourselves at once brought to a standstill through lack of a rule by which to fashion the expression of our adoration.

It was not so in the days of old when, not yet civilised and artificial, men lived in immediate dependence upon the physical order of the universe. Buried in the streets of towns, unconscious of the operations of nature on which our very existence depends, and heeding the changes of the seasons chiefly for their effects on our social life, we can little realise the vivid interest taken by primitive peoples in the march of the sun, and in his varied yet regular operations throughout the year. Not for us in these days is his rising the daily advent, or the winter solstice the yearly birth, of a god. Inhabiting a temperate climate, and sheltered in substantial dwellings, we dread not his noonday rays as the darts of irresistible power; warmed by clothing and fire, and cheered by artificial light, we hail not his victory over the cold and darkness of winter as a rescue and redemption for ourselves; nor, nourished by the commerce that flows from afar through a thousand artificial channels, do we watch eagerly for the alternate beams and showers which alike proceed from him, in fear or hope of starvation or plenty.

Surely, if there be anywhere a visible manifestation of God which can be accepted as 'the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person,' it is in the kingly orb on which we depend utterly for light and life, and all things needful to existence. What then but the sun can represent for us and

suggest all that we require in the way of symbolism and worship, when we would fulfil the impulses which bid us adore the Perfection whereby we ourselves are made perfect?

It is the sun, then, that we must press into our service, and not ours only, but his whom we delight to honour, if his worship is to reach the supremest heights accessible to humanity.

You have demanded of me the Keys of the Creeds. I gave you before the key to their moral side, in the worship of perfection. I give you now the key to their physical side. It is the worship of the sun. The sun and, as I have already indicated, the organs of sex, are the fundamental symbols of every religious worship known to us, each alike catholic in their acceptance, their necessity, and their functions. It was impossible for me to enter fully into detail respecting the second. Neither is it essential to my purpose to do so, seeing that, although incorporated with the basis of ecclesiastical Christianity, and discoverable by those who choose to search for it, it does not practically affect either its doctrine or its ritual; its function being purely antiquarian and æsthetic.

Far otherwise is it with the sun, whose course to this day not only controls both our secular and ecclesiastical calendars, and the character and times of the festivals held in honour of Christ, but coincides

with the main circumstances narrated of his life, from his conception and birth to his ascension and reception into heaven.

So little is there strange and recondite in these facts, that it is a perpetual marvel among the initiated how even the least incredulous of the laity contrive to ignore them,—a marvel not unmixed with apprehension as to the result that would follow from their becoming enlightened. The blind impetuosity, on the other hand, with which Protestant sects indignantly denounce ‘idolatry,’ pagan or catholic, while themselves offering palpable homage to the sun under the name of Christ, is to us a never-failing source of amusement.

LETTER XI.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

INDIA, Persia, Egypt, Syria, Greece, and many more countries of the ancient world, place themselves at our disposal the moment we seek to explore the mysteries of the solar *culte*. I will commence with Persia, under the influences of whose philosophy the Jews, in their captivity, finally abandoned their passion for the grosser idolatries of Syria; and after their release collated their legends, and re-wrote what they are pleased to call their history.

The rule was to personify the sun under the form of a benefactor to mankind, and to narrate his annual career as a moral and philosophic tale. The Persian magians accounted to the populace for the introduction of evil into the world by a fable of a serpent tempting the first woman to pluck a forbidden apple. This act, as the apple ripens late in autumn, was of course followed by the prevalence of winter, with darkness and cold—the kingdom of the evil principle—and necessitated the adoption of clothing. The mischief thus brought about could only be remedied by

the agency of the sun, whom they identified with the principle of good. Hence they supposed the incarnation of the sun in the person of Mithra. This Mithra was set forth as born of a virgin in a cave at the winter solstice, and as accompanied by a retinue of twelve persons, who represented the months. Having vanquished the prince of darkness, who under guise of a serpent had seduced the woman, and having lost his life in the contest, Mithra descended into hell—or under side of the earth—and at the spring equinox rose again and ascended into heaven, opening to man the gates of light and redeeming him from the oppression of the evil one.

Mithra was represented as born of a virgin because the constellation Virgo was on the horizon at the time of the sun's birth. And because the sun was then in the sign of Aries—then known as the Lamb—at the vernal equinox, which governs the year, Mithra was called the Lamb of God, and the Lamb that takes away the evils of the world. The serpent that causes all the mischief by bringing in the winter is Scorpio, the constellation of the later autumn.

Zoroaster, the reputed author of the sacred books called the Zend-Avesta, where this system of theogony is found, is variously reckoned to have lived from one to six thousand years before the Christian era. He was a pure and ardent monotheist, but compelled by way of solving the problem of evil

to ascribe a dual nature to deity. Like all the great men of antiquity, from being an historical he grew into a dogmatical personage,—an immediate emanation from the supreme Being. Such was Alexander; such Plato, who was said to be the child of Apollo, and born of a virgin named Perictione. Ariston, who was betrothed to her, postponed his marriage because Apollo appeared to him in a dream and told him that she was with child. Genius was for the ancients ever associated with a divine origin.

The religion founded in honour of Mithra was provided with the sacraments of baptism, penance, the eucharist, consecration, and others. Its novices were subjected to a severely ascetic regime. Chastity and virginity were accounted sacred; and it contained the doctrines of the Fall, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection.

Passing to Egypt, we find the sun-god Osiris, a member of a triune godhead—product of Egyptian metaphysics—coming upon earth for the benefit of mankind, and gifted with the titles Manifestor of God and Revealer of Truth. Born of a divine virgin, he was persecuted and put to death through the malevolence of the Evil one, namely winter or darkness. He was buried and rose again, and returning to heaven became the judge of all men. Such was the Man-god of the Egyptians, whose worship pervaded the country that gave tone and colour, if not

actual birth to the Gospels, and which gradually paled and died out before the ascendancy of Christianity.

Already will you have perceived in the coincidences between the histories of these Sun-gods and that of the Christ of the calendar and creeds, evidences that the same compulsion which dominated the expression of the pagan faiths controlled also the Christian. The surprise you confess at the notion of there being any coincidence between the festivals of the Church and the solar phenomena would have been astounding to me, but that a long experience of the determined blindness of ordinary Christian folk, where an account of their faith is concerned, and of their utter indifference to its truth, has taught me to be surprised at nothing in that relation.

To no less a person than Sir Isaac Newton the world owes both the first suggestion that the Christian festivals were determined upon an astronomical basis, and a detailed list of instances of correspondence. Even he, however, resolutely closed his eyes to the inevitable inference; and like his great brother in science, Faraday, declined to submit the basis of his faith to the test of his understanding.

The day assigned to the birth of the Sun-god of all the other religions was the same as that assigned, without a particle of historical evidence, by the Church to Christ. The shortest day being December 21, his birthday is put on the twenty-fifth, the

first day that shows any elongation, and which is therefore the actual commencement of the year; while the twenty-first, on which the sun reaches its lowest point, when his worshippers are supposed to be filled with alarm lest their lord and master fail to rise again, is assigned to the doubting apostle Thomas. In the corresponding worship in Syria, it was the custom to lament the Sun-god Adonis as actually dead at this time, and needing to be re-born into life.

Well, Christmas has come, and the sun is born; but winter has still a long career to run, and consequently, the sun, as yet a feeble infant, has to undergo a series of struggles with the powers of darkness. And so, just as we find the infant Christ exposed to the perils celebrated on Innocents' Day, we find the various representatives of the sun with difficulty and danger emerging into childhood. In the case of the Hindoo deity, Crishna, who was cradled among shepherds, and greeted at his birth by an angelic chorus, a massacre of children was ordered by a jealous king, in exact correspondence with the slaughter afterwards ascribed to Herod. In every case, however, the Sun-god escapes all dangers, and grows in stature and in favour with God and man, the days gradually gaining on the nights as he rises higher above the horizon, until the spring equinox, when they are equal.

This period of equality constitutes in all the solar religions a serious crisis in the god's history, and it

becomes an anxious question for his adorers whether he on whom their very existence depends will still be able to make good his way against the powers of darkness; or whether the world will be thrust back into the region of winter, and never more see sweet summer skies.

For a time things seem to go against him, and mankind are in despair. The change to the southwest rainy monsoon brings equinoctial storms which hide the sun from their sight. He has succumbed to his foe. They fast long and mourn him dead. But being a god he cannot be holden of death. Nay, by his dying he shall prove himself to be conqueror over death, and his very death shall be a blessing and redemption for the nations; for the rains by which the sun has been obscured are essential to the life of the eastern world.

Thus hope returns, and despair is changed to joy, as from a point still higher in the heavens than that at which he had disappeared, he shines out with new and greater effulgence. His rising is followed by his final triumph and continued ascent towards the zenith, his kingdom of heaven, whence, in the heat and fruitfulness of summer, he sends down sustenance and comfort for men.

But during the equinoctial period of the sun's rising and ascension he is in the constellation of the *Lamb*, as *Aries* used to be called. This also is his

time to *pass over* the equinoctial line from the tropical zone to ours. Now does the orb of day begin to attain his full powers. Thus, in the Apocalypse we find the Lamb adored in the presence of the throne by four living creatures, the cardinal constellations of the heavens, and twenty-four elders or hours, who fall down before him, crying, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' For the symbolism of the Apocalypse, that sublime hymn of invective against Rome and idealisation of the future glories of Israel, shows itself to be mainly derived from the solar phenomena, especially as exhibited in the worships of Mithra and Osiris. What but the constellation that ushers in the winter is the Serpent or Scorpion which afflicts the earth five months, and whose tail draws a third part of the stars of heaven?

Not less susceptible of a solar interpretation are the miracles ascribed to Christ. Thus the conversion of water into wine represents the formation of the juice of the grape out of the rains by the sun's action. The production of food, as in the extraordinary draught of fishes and the feeding of the five thousand, illustrates the sun's fertilising influence on land and water. In the stilling of the tempest we have an example of the dependence of the weather on the sun. It is the sun that, by affording light, gives sight to the eye. He is the

universal healer of disease, able by darting his rays afar to impart renewed vitality at a distance, as in the cases of the nobleman's son and centurion's servant. He it is that raises from the dead to new life the body buried in the ground. While in the blasting of the barren fig-tree we see the blighting effect of the sun's heat on a feeble and rootless vegetation.

The rule in the calendar is to dedicate to some apostle the day of the sun's entry into a new sign. And—as pointed out by St. Augustine in his sermon on the nativity of St. John—the saying of the Baptist, herald of the sun that is to be, 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' procured for him his place in the calendar as lord of the waning year. For his festival is held on June 24, the last day of the summer solstice, and that from which the days begin to decrease; while from that of Christ, at the opposite pole of the year, the days grow in length. Peter and Paul, the most zealous of the apostles, are placed together on the 29th of the same month, when the sun enters the station of greatest heat; while the phrase, 'who by transgression fell and so went to his proper place,' applied to Judas, is exactly descriptive of the month of February—dedicated to the successor of Judas—which by transgressing or passing over a day, falls into its proper place in the year.

The notable part played by the constellation Virgo in the celestial scheme could not fail to procure its

identification with the ideal woman of the new dispensation. Osiris, Mithra, Bacchus, Christ, are all represented as having been born at the moment of midnight, between Christmas eve and Christmas day, in a cave or stable. At this moment the constellation Virgo is cut exactly in half by the eastern horizon, the sun itself being beneath the earth in the sign of Capricorn, or Stable of Augeas, the cleansing of which constituted one of the labours of Hercules—who also represented the sun. Justin Martyr boasts that Christ was born when the sun takes its birth in the Stable of Augeas, coming as a second Hercules to cleanse a foul world. The appearance of the celestial Virgin above the horizon at this time is thus indicated in the third Rosary: ‘Let us contemplate how the B. V. M., when the time of her delivery was come, brought forth our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, at *midnight*, and laid him in a *manger*.’ And Eusebius says he was born *underground*.

• Even the names assigned by gospel or legend to the grandparents of Christ, on the mother’s side, seem to bear a solar signification; *Heli* being a contraction of the Greek *Helios*, the sun; and *Anna* the feminine of *Annus*, the year. And it so happens that July 26, the day devoted to the latter in the calendar, was the new year’s day of ancient Egypt.

Returning to the Virgin herself, we find that the Church celebrates her Assumption ‘into the heavenly

chamber in which the King of kings sits on his starry seat,' on August 15. This is exactly the time of the disappearance of the zodiacal constellation *Virgo*, called by the Greeks *Astræa*. And the period during which the constellation is so wholly absorbed in the brightness of the sun's rays as to be invisible in the heavenly field, is seven days,—or the period during which Miriam (or Mary), the virgin of the Old Testament, was compelled to hide her leprous face in the camp of Israel. Three weeks pass ere the sun has moved sufficiently to allow the entire constellation to be seen. The day on which *Virgo's* head emerges from his rays—September 8—is the day appointed for the nativity of the B. V. M.

The sun's place at the vernal equinox is not now in *Aries*, as it was at the beginning of our era, but has moved on to *Pisces*. It was previously in *Taurus*. The shifting of the zodiac by a sign occupies 2151 years. It is thus that while Mithraism, Osirisism, and, following them, Judaism, had the bull and the lamb, the 'golden calf' and 'paschal lamb,' for their symbols, Christianity adopted the lamb and the fish.

The division of the sun's path among the stars, into the constellations which form the Zodiac, was made and known throughout the East, and dominated its religious myths, at a period so remote that Ptolemy declared it hopeless even in his time to seek for its origin.

LETTER XII.

THE APOSTASY.

THUS, for both the worshippers of the solar deity and for those of Christ the same 'cardinal doctrines' of the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, held equally good. And the fact is indisputable that neither the claim raised for Jesus as being the Messiah of the Jews, nor that of being the incarnate Logos, the Word made flesh, of the Alexandrian Neoplatonists, of whom I will tell you by and by, nor even the fierce denunciations of eternal tortures against all who did not believe in him, and the assurance of salvation for all who did, would have secured for him popular recognition and acceptance in the absence of his identification with the sun, and therefore as the legitimate successor of Mithra, Osiris, Adonis, and all the numerous other human forms under which the sun was worshipped.

Not among the populace only did the principle of the old religion thus retain its vitality, but many strenuous attempts were made by influential persons to restore it to supremacy. Among these was a

notable attempt made by the imperial family of Severus, especially by the female members of it, instigated no doubt by the priesthood of the decaying faith. Jealous of the Jewish Christ, and perceiving the necessity of a new incarnation to restore the prestige of their religion, these princesses sought to elevate Apollonius of Tyana, a remarkable character, said to have lived during the whole of the first century, to the desired place, and to that end claimed for him the distinction of being the latest incarnation of the solar deity.

The worship of Christ as a god, continued, however, to gain ground against all competitors; until at length the power, moral, political, and ecclesiastical of the system as a religion, made it expedient for the State to recognise it and incorporate it with itself. And thus it came that under Constantine Christianity was erected into a complete system combining all that was essential and vital in the systems it was called on to supplant.

I have shown you the correspondences between the course of the sun and the histories ascribed to the various personages in whom he was held to have been incarnate, and those of Christ. The authoritative promulgation of the Nicene Creed by the Council presided over by the politic Constantine, cannot but have confirmed the world in its ancient beliefs. Light and life, the objects of worship from the beginning,

are set forth in this document as of the essence of God, 'maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible,' through the agency of his 'only begotten Son,'—the grand orb in which for us all light and life-giving warmth are centred and expressed, which may further be said to be begotten of the supreme source of things,—'the Father, before all worlds, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father: by whom all things were made' as agent for the Father, even all terrestrial life, by the action of the solar rays on the earth's crust. Then we have the sun's annual history. 'Who for us men and for our salvation' from death by the cold and darkness of winter, 'came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost,' the wind, or atmosphere. For to the ancients the course of the sun lay, not above and beyond, but through the atmosphere, the breathing of which is essential to life, while its movement, or wind, is directly due to the influence of the sun's heat.

But the Holy Ghost must have a spouse, by whom to produce the human expression of the Only-begotten. To the warm winds of spring breathing on the surface of earth, 'the frolic wind that breathes the spring,' is due all life, vegetable and animal; and from them the earth, ever virgin, receives her impregnation, at the season accorded by the Church to the annunciation of the Virgin Mary—the spring

equinox—precisely nine months before Christmas day.

So the sun is made man, and in man's form undergoes on earth the vicissitudes to which he is subject in the heavens. He 'suffers death' on a machine whose shape is the most ancient and universal symbol of the sexual order of nature. 'He is buried' out of sight, as is his prototype during the spring storms and rains. But not for long. For presently 'he rises again, and ascends into heaven,' mounting higher and higher as midsummer approaches, and takes the post of honour 'on the right hand of the Father' of Light, as supreme arbiter of life and death, or 'judge of quick and dead;'—for the sun has but to withdraw his rays and the world is wrapped in death; to restore them and it blossoms into life:—'whose kingdom shall have no end.'

The Nicene creed was composed at two different times, for two special objects. The first part belongs to the Council of Nice, and was written to condemn the doctrine of Arius, who affirmed Christ to be a mere creature, though the first of creatures, and not of the substance of the Father. The second portion, with the exception of the phrase 'and the Son,' was written half a century afterwards, to define the nature and functions of the Holy Ghost in opposition to the teaching of Macedonius. The attempt to define these things at all, and still more the im-

position of them by authority, have been fraught with mischief incalculable to mankind, and will never cease to be so until mankind is brought to see the real nature of the contention, and the unpractical character of the subject. Even now eastern and western Christendom are hopelessly divided on the question of the procession of the Holy Ghost. The Nicene creed, in virtue of a later addition, takes the western side, and affirms his double procession from the Father and the Son, a development in which the eastern Church declines to follow it. Seeing that the wind, personified by the third person of the Trinity, is due alike to the universal principle of light and life, that is, to the Father; and to the sun, in whom he takes visible form, the Nicene creed as we have it, is manifestly in the right. So that by the solar analogy as well as by that of sex, the doctrine of the single procession of the Holy Ghost shows itself to be untenable.

Let me again remind you that these two provinces of nature have suggested the matter or controlled the expression of every system of theology the world has seen. So that the Nicene creed will hold good of all incarnations whatever until the world gives practical recognition to the facts long since proclaimed to it by astronomical science. For, so far from descending and dying and rising again, and undergoing the other changes on which the theologies are built,

the sun remains fixed in the centre of the solar system, and the whole of the phenomena of the seasons are due to a change of position in the axis of the earth itself. To this you must add the consideration that, as ours is but one of an innumerable host of suns and systems, whatever theological system we assign to one, we must assign to all, allowing only for local peculiarities.

Of the peculiar value attached to the atmosphere by the Orientals, and therefore of the importance of the personification of that element in their theological systems, we can judge from the fact that the Sanscrit root of the word for God in the Latin, Greek, and other derived tongues, signifies equally *breath*. The Greek *Pneuma*, and the Sanscrit *Div*, the root of deity and divine, have an identical meaning in the *air*. The world was supposed to live by a process of breathing, and the thoughts of men's minds were regarded as *inspired* together with their breath.

But on whatever ground Christianity obtained acceptance as the new rule of faith, whether from pagans as constituting a new form of sun-and-sex worship; from Jews as the fulfilment of the Law and Prophets, and the reign of the Messiah; or from philosophers as a complement to metaphysics, in that it seemed to demonstrate what metaphysics had only postulated, and by a practical instance to bridge the gulf between the finite and the infinite; whether,

again, it obtained acceptance from the masses in virtue of the supernatural physical powers with which Christ, in common with all the other Sun-gods, was credited; from moralists, through their recognising in the teaching ascribed to Christ a standard of conduct of absolute perfection; or from theologians, on the ground of his proclaiming the spiritual nature of God and his own identity therewith, and living consistently with such claim;—in no case does the rule fail to hold good, that in exalting him into a god, all these classes but exalted that which they deemed best in humanity, and so made God in their own image, only divested of limitations.

If proof were wanted of the affection still entertained in the fourth century for the old religion, and of the moral advance made by men through the contemplation of a life of earnestness, purity, and unselfishness, such as was presented to them of Christ, we have it in the attempt of Julian to undo the work of Constantine and reinstate paganism. Constantine, an ardent worshipper of the sun, whom he chose to be his tutelary deity, adopted on the grandest scale the principle of 'concurrent endowment,' and established Christianity in connection with sun-worship. Julian, similarly devoted, sought to re-establish sun-worship in connection with Christianity. That is, he wished to retain the old creed and ritual under their true and original forms, but with

the additional spirituality, morality, simplicity, and purity acquired by the recent generations from the contemplation of a life that was beautiful all round ; a life which the Jewish Christians had learnt, under Neoplatonic influences, to regard as that of the incarnate Logos, or the Word made flesh, of their Jehovah ; but which the rest of the world insisted on regarding as a new and more noble incarnation of the sun.

Both sides could adduce what must have seemed to them irresistible reasons for their views. The Pagan could point triumphantly to the heavens for the visible origin and sustainer of life, who already in the persons of Crishna, Mithra, Osiris, Hercules, Bacchus, Apollo, Adonis, and many others, had condescended to man's estate to redeem mankind from evil.

And the Jew, whose temperament and history disposed him to lay the principal stress on the moral side of things, could point to his Law, with its strenuous insistence on perfect physical purity : to his prophets, with their ardent inculcation of spiritual perfection : and now to his Christ, with his fulfilment of the requirements of both as the translator of all perfection from the abstract into the concrete, from the infinite into the finite, the ideal into the real, God into Man.

Viewed in this relation the story of the Trans-

figuration possesses a profound significance. In it we have Christ, taking Peter, John, and James, representing respectively zeal, love, and works; for his witnesses, and meeting Moses and Elias, the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, 'in glory.' In the company of these two he is recognised by a divine voice as the 'beloved Son of God,' the fulfilment and completion of the dispensations represented by Moses and Elias, resuming in himself all the perfections contemplated by them, and constituting therefore a satisfactory solution of the problem their supersession had been to the Jewish mind.

It is true that the occurrence is alluded to only in the three Gospels which are of exclusively Jewish origin, and is not mentioned in the Epistle ascribed to James, nor in the fourth Gospel, which bears the name of John, nor in his Epistles. The omission as regards John is important as an indication that the fourth Gospel was the work not of any dweller in Palestine, but of some foreign Neoplatonist, who was more concerned to identify Christ with the Logos of the Alexandrian school, than to save the credit of the Law and Prophets of the Jews.

LETTER XIII.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

I WILL now tell you of the *Logos*, or Word that was made flesh.

As not from without but from within the human consciousness, came the necessity for a Being who should constitute the solution of the problem of existence, that is, for God; so, not from without but from within the human consciousness, only further developed, came the necessity for a solution of the problem how God could produce the world; the problem, that is, how the infinite could become transmuted into the finite, the ideal into the real, perfection into imperfection.

For ages had metaphysicians pondered it. The doctrine of the eternity of matter affording no basis for a religion, Brahminism resolved absolute being—*Brahm*—into a trinity of persons, representing respectively Creation, Preservation, and Decomposition. About B.C. 1000 to 600, came Buddhism, a system derived from Sakya Muni, a sage and philanthropist, who sought to spiritualise Brahminism in much the same

way that Jesus sought to spiritualise Judaism. Under the name of Buddha this reformer was widely worshipped as the Word of Divine Wisdom made flesh.

Simplifying the teaching of the Indian theologians, and breaking down the partition wall of Caste between the priests and people, Buddha called on all alike to receive the Word and its spiritual benefits.

Passing from India to Persia, and thence to Greece, where in the hands of Plato it was made much of, the doctrine of the Logos became the prominent feature of the famous Neoplatonic school of Alexandria. For some time the doctrine was here restricted to the region of philosophy, and was devoid of any personal element. But to mere intellect the chasm between the finite and the infinite was impassable; it was for religion to accomplish what philosophy had only attempted.

Where intellect sees an idea, an abstraction, religion sees a person. This involves a superior development of the consciousness; inasmuch as, while intellect of itself, having neither motive nor force, could not have created, personality includes intellect and all else that is indispensable to action, namely feeling and energy. Aristotle, as I have already mentioned, was here surpassed by Plato, who spoke of emotion and intellect as the two wings on which we rise towards God. It was by their aid

that man discovered that God is Love,—Love and therefore Creator ; Love and therefore Redeemer.

Yes, Redeemer. For the growth of consciousness had brought with it yet another problem, and one whose solution was as necessary to the repose of the human soul as that of the others had been for the satisfaction of the human mind. The infinite had become transmuted into the finite, the ideal into the real, and thus had brought about the world. But with the growth of consciousness came the growth of conscience ; and under its influence man perceived that the real fell so far short of the ideal as necessarily to be displeasing to its Creator, the absolute ideal. How was a reconciliation to be effected, and the real be re-united to the ideal, the world to God? Surely, only by the same method as was employed in the original creation ; even by an incarnation of the Divine Wisdom or ‘ Word ’ in the nature of those who were to be redeemed, even God manifest in the flesh. Only by a new birth or creation through the Divine Word, the High Priest, the Anointed, the Christ incapable of sin, first begotten of God, born of a wholly pure mother ; the Word who was before all things and by whom all things were made, who stands between the living and the dead, and by whom God will raise up man perfect and place him near himself.

Be not dismayed. I am not quoting Scripture

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

to prove itself. The keys wherewith we are to open the Creeds are not taken thence. These phrases are all borrowed from a writer who lived and wrote not only long before the time of the New Testament, but before the commencement of the ministry of Jesus. And he did not use them as if he had originated them, and was eager to propagate his own fame by their means. He used them as being already in vogue; for they were already in the air, soon to be precipitated in a concrete form to the earth. The sense in which he used them, however, was less spiritual than philosophical. They constituted for him the solution of a mental problem.

Once more, then, I say, *Redeemer*; for the love that creates must also save. But love is of the feelings, not of the intellect. Wherefore a religion that appeals to the intellect only, fails in the essential element of religion. The founders of religions have not been intellectual men; at least it was in virtue of their spiritual and emotional characteristics, rather than of their intellectual ones, that they have been qualified for their mission. Pure intellect would be content with an impersonal unconditioned Unity, occupying space in such a way as to admit of nought beside itself. And neither intellect nor feeling can conceive of Unity as productive.

All this was obvious to thinkers thousands of years ago. Hence the Trinities of the Vedas and

the later Hindoos; of the Scandinavians and Egyptians; of Zoroaster, of Plato, and many others, all of which had their basis in a philosophy that was purely human. Hence also the various incarnations springing from those Trinities. For, thousands of years ago it was obvious to all, except the Jews, that the fact of the divine personality involved the necessity of a Trinity, and that the doctrine of incarnation alone solved the problems of creation and redemption. The Jews, to some extent, learnt it at last; but it took a long course of study in the philosophy of Persia, Greece, and Egypt, to bring them up to the level of this catholic doctrine. A long course of study, and of suffering also; for only by suffering was Israel at length to be made perfect. This should not tell against them. It was only through the extraordinary fibre of the race that it required so much working up, and that it was capable of being worked up to so high a pitch. True, Israel's cross-grainedness often brought its own troubles upon it; but a less hardy stock would long since have perished utterly.

So far, then, from ministering to the moral degradation of the Jews, their hopelessness of a physical deliverance bore fruit in the production of the idea of a spiritual deliverer, through whom their race should achieve a triumph surpassing any imaginable by their enemies.

LETTER XIV.

‘OUT OF EGYPT HAVE I CALLED MY SON.’

WHILE Israel was thus developing its faith in the advent of a Messiah who should redeem him from all his sins, instead of one who should rescue him from his political woes, there arose in Alexandria a school of philosophy that seemed to be a revival of the departed glories of Greece. The language of this School was Greek, and its philosophy that of Plato, only Plato still further spiritualised and speaking of one God as creator and ruler of the world, without deference to the popular predilection for a multiplicity of deities.

The School of Alexandria added a new Trinity to those already received in Egypt, which were derived, as I have shown you, from the phenomena of the solar system and of sex. This new Trinity was based on an analysis of the functions of the individual man. Every living being consists of a trinity; the individual self; the mind; and the life.

Well, following our rule, and projecting the individual man into the ideal, and divesting him of limita-

tions, the Neoplatonists presented their Trinity as consisting of three Persons, of whom the first was Unity, infinite and perfect, but capable of generating existence. How it could do so, this philosophy could not say, because as yet it was only a philosophy, and not a religion. The second person was subordinate to the first, but was the most perfect of all generated beings. It was called the Intelligence, Wisdom, or Word,—*Logos*, a Greek term, by a happy coincidence signifying both *reason* and *speech*. The third person was the universal Spirit, Soul, or Life. It was only through the Word that God the Father could be known, as a man’s mind can only be known through his speech. The Word was thus the interpreter or mediator between God and man.

The leading apostle of this philosophy was a Jew, named Philo, who was born about B.C. 30. From his writings were quoted the passages that sounded so much like Scripture. He was at once an enthusiastic disciple of Plato, and an ardent Jew after the pattern of the later and more spiritual type. His countrymen, growing in spiritual graces since the captivity, had long been familiar with the idea of the *Logos*, whom they personified under the name of Wisdom. The Apocrypha, a collection of writings retained in the Catholic Canon of Scripture, but excluded from the Protestant, affords us a clear insight into the progress of Jewish thought between the

times of the Old and New Testaments. Constantly in the book of *Wisdom*, is Wisdom spoken of as a personified emanation of Deity, in every function identical with the Logos of Philo.

In Jerusalem itself thought approximated more or less to that in Alexandria. The early advent of a deliverer was the object of belief and prayer with all earnest Jews. Their differences were mainly respecting his nature. Should the expected Messiah appear as a great Jewish warrior to redeem their country from the Roman yoke, and lead them to the enjoyment of all the glories and delights of the world of sense; or should he be a teacher of righteousness to lead them to God and to the worship of an ideal of spiritual perfection?

These aspirations found an echo in the mind of Philo. But living in a philosophical atmosphere and being of a religious temperament, and withal a liberal in politics, his aim was to win Jew and Gentile alike to a religion derived equally from Moses and Plato, and one which he believed himself able to construct on a sufficiently catholic, or as he called it encyclic, basis; a religion at once so rational and so spiritual as to be able to win acceptance from the human heart and human mind without divine interference. Besides, for him the Logos was already an actual person; existing, not indeed in a gross material form, but as the *idea* subsisting in the mind of

the Creator, and taking form in speech, even the Word whereby all things were created, yet at the same time a distinct personality.

We have, thus, at this time in the most influential centre of thought, and closely connected with Palestine, geographically, commercially, and intellectually, a religion which consisted in the worship of a divine being, incarnated in human form in order to redeem fallen man, born of a virgin, teaching immortality, working wonders of benevolence, dying through the hostile machinations of the Spirit of Evil, rising from death, reascending into heaven, and becoming judge of the dead. As representative of the sun, the festivals appointed in his honour were fixed in accordance with the seasons; his birth being at the end of the winter solstice; his death at the spring equinox; his rising soon afterwards, and then his ascension into heaven, whence he showers down benefits on men. And, mingled with the worship of this being, we have moral and theological teaching of the utmost purity and nobility.

We have, also, at the same time and in the same country a philosophy counting many adherents among the learned and pious, and seeking to become general, of which the main doctrines were a Trinity of spiritual beings, consisting of Father, Son, and Soul or Life, the second person being distinguished as the Logos or divine Word, by whom all things were made,

and without whom nothing was or could be made ; and who was also man's redeemer and mediator with God.

And, shifting the scene but a short distance to a country adjoining and in intimate intercourse with Egypt, we have a people of the intensest religious temperament, all of them ardently longing for deliverance from the yoke of a conqueror, and many of them regarding the deliverance from spiritual and ceremonial bondage as of still greater importance ; familiar, too, with the preaching of a new era which should constitute the kingdom of God on earth, when under the chieftainship of a heaven-descended Messiah, Israel should become the head of the nations in moral if not in political power.

Still possessed as were the Jews by the tendency to personify principles and ideas which had made them so liable to idolatry, it was inevitable that the desires which had accumulated until too oppressive to be borne, should take visible form, and the massive cloud of the general hopes and feelings burst and discharge its pent up contents in solid form on the earth. The passionateness of their character finds ample demonstration in the history of the sect of the Essenes. These were a people who first appeared in the country of the Dead Sea about 200 B.C. Deriving their tenets from the East, they believed in the Persian dualism, regarded the sun

as the impersonation of the Supreme Light, and worshipped it in a modified way. Forsaking civilisation for the wilderness, they renounced all the pleasures of sense, and devoted themselves to the culture of repentance and pious mysticism, in furtherance of the ‘kingdom of God’ on a broader basis than that contemplated by the Law. They had all property in common, and refused the ordinary sacrifices, deeming themselves the only acceptable sacrifice they could offer to God.

The Essenes also took vows of poverty and chastity, attached vast importance to baptism, and, in virtue of the solar basis of their faith, practised the Mithraic rite of the Eucharist. Perhaps it has not occurred to you that the sacrament of bread and wine is traceable to such a source? Yet how naturally does the eternal work of the sun, daily renewed, express itself in such lines as,—

Into bread his heat is turned,
Into generous wine his light.

And imagining the sun as a person, the change to ‘flesh’ and ‘blood’ becomes inevitable; while the fact that the solar forces are actually changed into food without forfeiting their solar character, finds expression in the doctrines of transubstantiation and the real presence. To the sect of the Essenes the originals of John the Baptist and Jesus himself must have belonged; and it is not difficult to imagine an

extraordinary development of the religious genius in the youthful Jesus as calling forth the prophetic utterances of John.

The passionateness of the Jewish character finds illustration also in another and more influential party, whereof the writer of the Pauline epistles was an enthusiastic member. These could not conceive of a law so holy, just and good, and inculcating a standard of perfection so transcendent as that of Moses, or of the sacrifices enjoined by it, as coming to an end except by being so absolutely fulfilled as to be no longer necessary: or of the high and sanguine anticipations of their prophets passing fruitless away.

The absolute hopelessness of restoring the old *régime* would prompt this class of thinkers to accept any solution that promised to save the credit of their cherished system. It was true the prophets had not held the Law in such high estimation as to consider its perpetuity desirable. Nay, one of the most highly inspired of them had drawn a touching picture of Israel personified as a man of sorrows, and blameless life, and so far from requiring sacrifice for himself, dying for the sins of others. What if the obscure itinerant enthusiast, whose violent death and the outcries of whose followers, had brought into notice his simple life of benevolence and his moral, though withal revolutionary teaching,—could be

taken as foreshadowed in such a prophecy, and exalted as the redeemer and moral Messiah of Israel?

The Law, the decay of whose authority they were lamenting, had failed, it is true, to exalt Israel to the first place among mankind. But that was through no fault of the law. It postulated an ideal perfection, now proved by experience to be unattainable in the real, so far as men, and even Israelites, in general were concerned.

. But what if it could be shown that a single individual of their race had attained the perfection prescribed by the Law, and in pursuit of that perfection had come to a violent death? Why, in that case the Law could be superseded as fulfilled in every respect, and could without dishonour give place to a new dispensation.

But who could thus accomplish all the divine commands and supersede a law given by God? None, surely, save God himself. Perfection such as this appertained not to the finite. The new moral Messiah must therefore be God himself, incarnate in the seed of Abraham and David, even the familiar Logos by whom all things were created and redeemed. But if God, there must be discernible in him elements of infinity, moral spiritual and physical, altogether incompatible with the limitations of humanity.

In accordance with this train of Jewish thought, we are now brought to enquire what was the life and rule, what the secret and method, whereby he on whom the choice fell to fill this high office, demonstrated his superiority to ordinary flesh and blood, and reconciled a doctrine essentially Catholic with one exclusively Jewish.

LETTER XV.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

To be accounted divine by his fellows, a man must exhibit the element of infinity in one or more directions.

The special distinguishing characteristic of the Jesus presented to us by the gospels, consisted in his dealing with all moral and spiritual questions from the standpoint of the ideal. His rules were rules of absolute perfection, to be followed implicitly without reference to consequences or to the possibility of carrying them out in their entirety. Thus far they were identical in spirit with the law of Moses. But there was an essential difference between them and that law. The law did not concern itself with the attitude of men's minds, or set forth the Deity as an object of affection. It was essentially outward and ceremonial, regulating conduct and appearances, and its ruling motive was fear.

Jesus, on the contrary, cared nought for externals, but made the spirit all in all, and love for God the sole motive. For him the essential element of

the perfect life was the cultivation of the soul; the means employed being the contemplation and practice of absolute perfection. This alone being of consequence, he accounted nothing that befalls the individual thus occupied as worthy of consideration. The end and aim of his followers must not be the happiness either of themselves or of others, but such perfection of spirit as will of itself produce the most perfect behaviour under all circumstances. To those who seek first the ideal perfection in their minds and hearts—‘the kingdom of God’ as he called it—whatever else is desirable will be added spontaneously. Being good will produce doing good. And a life in the ideal will, by being indifferent to the life of sense, seem to have all good things. .

It was not the rich only whom he admonished to hold their real as of no account, if they would cultivate their ideal, and to whom he promised ‘treasure in heaven’ on condition of their following him the perfect ideal. The poor also would be gainers, in that their poverty in respect of the things of sense would be less felt by them when absorbed in the pursuit of the things of the spirit. In declaring it to be hard for the rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven, he signified that wealth provides so many delights for the senses, that those who possess it are apt to neglect the culture and fruits of the spirit, and to cherish the real rather than the ideal.

Similarly must we interpret the saying that who soever is born of God overcometh the world. Products of the ideal, the things of sense have no power to affect them. And so absolute was his requirement in respect of spiritual perfection, that he denounced even the possession of the natural appetites necessary for the continuance of the race as incompatible with perfect purity of soul.

To be able to devote oneself wholly to the ideal, there must be complete trust and confidence in it. The name given by Jesus to this sentiment is *faith*. The ideal itself he personifies under the name of God, and the state of ideal perfection he makes concrete under the term kingdom of God or of heaven. Thus, to have entered into the kingdom of heaven, or to 'be one with God,' means to be so penetrated and suffused by a sense of ideal perfection, as to be altogether lost to things of sense, and alive in the spirit alone. Being thus, we have the faith that moves mountains, for to such enthusiastic love of the ideal, material obstacles count for nothing, or operate but as means of attaining further grace.

In virtue of his supreme genius for religion the soul of Jesus readily and spontaneously ascended into these sublime regions of feeling. The 'inspired' everywhere are those whom the possession of the instinct of perfection provides with the wings necessary for such flight into the ideal. As ideal and

representative man, it was fitting that Jesus should have this sense of perfection in the highest degree, especially in respect of things appertaining to religion, things affecting the welfare of the soul. Absolute perfection as imagined by religious genius necessarily becomes personified. That is, the soul creates God, in man's image, but the image of man spiritualised, purified, sanctified, and glorified.

Making allowances for the imperfection of the reports of his teaching and conduct which have come down to us, it would seem that Jesus was himself so utterly penetrated by the enthusiasm—not of humanity, that was but secondary—but of spiritual perfection, as to identify himself personally with the supreme ideal of perfection or God. Only thus, supposing the fourth Gospel to represent him accurately in this respect, can we account for his frequent declarations that no man cometh to the Father but by him, and that whoso hath seen him hath seen the Father also. No other teacher has thus exalted himself. So that either he regarded the spirit which animated him as identical with the supreme spirit of the moral universe; (and who can say it is not so with all pure human spirits?) or the sentiment was afterwards ascribed to him to give colour and support to the doctrine which identified him with the Logos or Divine Word made flesh, and therefore with God the Father himself. For both the fourth

Gospel and the Epistle to the Hebrews show unmistakably a Neoplatonic inspiration.

The ascription to him of physical infinity followed of necessity that of moral infinity. And when subsequent ages had removed him altogether from the category of the real into that of the ideal, and he was regarded no longer as 'the man Christ Jesus,' but as a being wholly devoid of limitations, his disciples, following the universal custom in such cases, eagerly vied with each other in ascribing to him every attribute which struck them as befitting a deity. We have in this a further illustration of our doctrine that it is by regarding humanity, on its best side, as divested of limitations, that men ever seek to make God. Thus the life as well as the teaching of Christ assumed in the eyes of his followers the element of infinity, and appeared as free from the limitations which restrain the action of other men. Seen through such glasses his acts of sympathy became miracles of healing, and he was made lord over disease and the elements, and even over death itself, and this in the persons of others as well as in his own.

This universal tendency of religionists to represent the objects of their veneration as superior to the limitations of humanity, makes it necessary to distrust all accounts professing to give details of their lives and conversation. Their dispositions and characteristics,

though not incapable of distortion, can hardly be so completely misrepresented as to seriously mislead. So that we may possess a trustworthy account of the spirit that was in Jesus, and yet be altogether in the dark respecting his precise sayings and doings.

The condition of the world at this period being such as I have described, it was inevitable that any impressive personality, whose career enabled such things, with however small a modicum of truth, to be predicated of it as were predicated of Jesus, should be seized upon and appropriated to the purposes of a new religion. Religion and philosophy alike were at a standstill for a solution of the new feelings and ideas which had long been growing up. A fallow time as to outward and visible products though the ages immediately preceding Christ may have been, they were not inactive. The soil of humanity, whether pagan or Jewish, had undergone decomposition, and in the process had set free the element of spirituality in quantity and quality hitherto unequalled.

But though the soil had been thus preparing for centuries, generations had yet to pass before the acceptance of the Jewish teacher as an adequate basis for a new religion, became in any great degree general. In the meanwhile, such acceptance as was accorded was due in great measure to the mental exigencies of the times, and to the desire of the popular

imagination to fill up the vacuum caused by the failing prestige of the old religious systems. For the masses, too, the spectacle of an heroic crusade against the authority, respectability, and pharisaism of an established ecclesiasticism, combined with complete self-devotion, with teaching of the most absolute perfection in morals—a perfection readily recognisable by the intuitive perceptions of all—and with a confident mysticism that seemed to imply unbounded supernatural knowledge—all characteristics of the sect of Éssenes to which he and the Baptist manifestly belonged—these were amply sufficient to win belief in Jesus as a divine personage. And especially so when they found him persistently reported, not only as having performed miracles in his life, but as having shown that traditional superiority to all the limitations of humanity which was ascribed to their previous divinities, by rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. Familiar as they were with the notion of incarnations in which the sun played the principal part, and accustomed to associate such events with virgin mothers impregnated by deities, births in stables or caves, hazardous careers in the exercise of benevolence, violent deaths, and descents into the kingdom of darkness, resurrections and ascensions into heaven to be followed by the descent of blessings upon mankind,—it required but the suggestion that Jesus of Nazareth was a new and nobler incarnation of the

deity who had so often before been incarnate and put to death for man's salvation, to transfer to him the whole paraphernalia of doctrine and rite deemed appropriate to the office.

Add to these deeply-rooted beliefs the fact that Christianity as then preached contained characteristics universal to man, blended with the element of infinity as to God, and it becomes impossible that the Christian system could have been rejected from any religion claiming to be catholic in character, or seeking to become catholic in extent. Calculated, moreover, as such a system was to satisfy the longing of mankind for some palpable horizon to limit the excursions of barren speculation; and at the same time to formulate their desire for perfection in things moral and spiritual—a desire fostered by their natural recoil from the fast accumulating abominations of the imperial *régime* of Rome—it constituted the sole scheme available whereon to construct a catholic Church,—a Church that should at once resume and succeed to all that was of value in the systems which were ceasing to be.

LETTER XVI.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

THE function of the Church is the culture of the ideal.

You ask why there should be a Church, and why its headquarters should be Rome.

Consisting, as does the Catholic Church, of all persons who recognise the ideal as the supreme object of human aspiration, especially in things spiritual, it is inevitable that there should be an intimate bond of union and fellowship between those who make such culture the main end of existence. Inevitable also, that, prevented as most are by the exigencies of the struggle for physical existence from devoting themselves to such culture with the assiduity and intelligence necessary to secure the highest results, a class should be formed and set apart for this express purpose. It is thus that we have the division of the Church into clergy and laity.

Catholic or universal as is the Church in respect of its principles both doctrinal and practical, it follows that all who refuse to acknowledge its jurisdic-

tion condemn themselves to an abrogation of that which is general in favour of that which is particular. Thus the essence of sectarianism consists in its preference of a part to the whole. The part may indeed be good and true so far as it goes; but by being severed from the whole and accepted as a whole in itself, it becomes distorted from its true relations and proportions, and converted into monstrosity and falsehood. As well take a fraction of a ladder and expect to mount as high as with the whole ladder, as hope to obtain in a sect the same perfection of culture for the soul as in the Church.

It is especially in virtue of its universality that the Church is infallible. Derived from no isolated place or period, its doctrines represent the collective intuitions of the human consciousness and the collective facts of human life in their highest development. It is only because the Christian aspect of these is the highest that the Church styles itself Christian. The Church's infallibility thus resides, not in any specific corporation or individual, but in the universal human soul. For every man, as has been said, carries within him, consciously or unconsciously, the whole paraphernalia of dogmatic theology. And of that infallibility the chief officer of the Church for the time being is the final depositary and expression. It culminates in him. If, thus invested with the expression of the soul's ultimate conclusions, he be

fallible and erring, it is then farewell to the intuitions of humanity as a criterion of truth in matters of faith in religion and of practice in morals; for then man is himself a failure, not in respect of his real merely, but of his highest ideas and aspirations.

But, being man, and endowed with a soul, or capacity for idealisation, he must have somewhere a guide and exponent for his aspirations towards the spiritual world; and if such exponent cannot be found in the head of the Catholic Church, who and where is he? Pontifex Maximus; Bridge-Maker between the real and the ideal; Vicar of Christ—the ideal realised and vanished into the skies—and main channel through which that ideal exercises its reflex influence on man's real;—such are the titles and such the functions of him who occupies the position of spiritual father of the whole human race. For there is on earth no other claimant; and without such an one to hold in the flesh the place assigned to Christ in the spirit, the scheme of humanity would be incomplete, the divinest part of the divine work a failure.

‘But why Rome?’ Why not? True, there is no inherent necessity for any one locality above another; but a locality there must be for things appertaining to the real, and what place can show a prescriptive right to be accepted as such compared with that of Rome? The point was settled by Provi-

dence and history long anterior to Christianity. Precisely as Christ, the ideal man, was, as we have seen, the natural sequence and outcome of the character and history of the Jewish race, so was Catholic Rome the natural sequence and outcome of pagan Rome. For ages had Rome, dominating the world's nationalities, given man law. Who, then, more fitted, under the new dispensation, to give it gospel; and abolishing nationality and its severing influences, to unite all men under one head in the bond of an identical spiritual sentiment? And here is another analogy between Roman and Jewish history. The law imposed by Rome pagan, like that of Moses, had referred solely to man's real. The law imposed by Rome catholic, like the gospel of Christ, had for its subject man's ideal. And if, in its unapproachable universality and loftiness of function, Christian Rome surpasses pagan Rome, as the Gospel does the Law, and attains a height and perfection unknown and unreached elsewhere, what better title can it have to the supremacy it claims?

Moreover, of all bodies claiming to be Churches, the Roman alone has exhibited the spiritual knowledge and vitality which mark the true Church. She alone is orthodox and catholic. She alone possesses the Keys which enable her to unlock successively in their due course of development the divine mysteries of religion. There is no other system that does not

fail in these essential respects. Protestantism, whose theology is but an arbitrary selection from the body of Catholic doctrine, represents a retrograde step in that it is an appeal from the spirit to the letter, from the ideal to the material. Putting the imperfect records of a single period in the soul's history, above the universal consciousness of the soul in all places and ages, it seeks to interpret Scripture by itself and apart from its context in humanity, and thus makes catholic doctrine the result of Christ, instead of making Christ the result of catholic doctrine !

Such narrowness and exclusiveness constitute the defect of all sectarianism whatever. Through the omission from man of some essential element, is produced a representation of Deity scarcely less partial and distorted than those of the rudest paganism. Thus, the God of the Calvinists, the greatest of the rivals of the God of Catholicism, so far from representing in unlimited degree all the characteristics of man, according to the acknowledged principle of making God in man's image, is restricted to an absolute Will, ruling on rigid mechanical principles, devoid of any emotion save that of anger; and though accepting, in its grossest and most repulsive sense the atonement made by Christ, as an expedient, reduces it to a mere mechanical adjustment. Catholicism, it is true, includes the same system;

but by completing the human element, and idealising it as a whole, exalts it to the divine. And this it does with every element of universality which it finds in any religious or philosophical system whatever. So that while every other system represents some special aspect of humanity, Catholicism alone, at once universal and eclectic, takes humanity in its totality, and by projecting it into the infinite, sets forth a God in whom every man can find the sympathetic counterpart of himself.

Not that even within the Church all who are Catholics in name are catholic in spirit. Just as their mental or bodily development must be meagre and unsatisfactory who cultivate but one portion of their faculties, so is the spiritual condition of those who, renouncing the manysidedness necessary to build up the perfect man, confine themselves to some one doctrine, worship the embodiment of some one ideal, or attach supreme importance to some one phase of life or faith, some solitary characteristic, and ignore the whole remaining portion of the vast body of divine truth.

But if this can occur within the Catholic Church, how inexpressibly petty and poverty-stricken must appear to a catholic mind the various sects into which Christendom has divided itself; each taking for its basis some point in theology, some practice in ecclesiasticism, and rearing thereon a structure

scarce recognisable as an attempt to build up a body for Christ. The sole redeeming consideration, when one beholds the crowds of worshippers flocking to their temples, is, that these people, narrow and stunted as are their spiritual perceptions, and grossly inadequate to the comprehension of the divine significance that may be in the phrases in which their parrot-like utterances are couched,—are still, yes, whether Jew, pagan, or Christian, in so far as in them lies, or rather in so far as their spiritual guides, blind and leading the blind, have shown them the way, cultivating the ideal side of their nature, still worshipping God, though God dwarfed and starved to dimensions in accordance with their own puny imaginations.

Worship, whether it take form in prayer or in praise, means nothing unless it consists in communion with the ideal. However low that ideal may be for any man, still, being his ideal, it is his best. Wherefore the poet's injunction,—

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,

should ever be sacredly observed, no matter how mean the would-be intruder may deem the object of the suppliant's faith. Even the possession of infallibility confers no right to enforce any other ideal.

LETTER XVII.

THE CHURCH ; ITS SECRET AND METHOD, IN
THEOLOGY.

So I seem to you to show that no religion is true except the Catholic, and that even that is false; and you marvel that I can thus exalt a system which I admit to be mainly founded on and occupied with illusions.

Remember that I qualified the term, and said 'what would ordinarily be regarded as illusions.' But it was not to deal with the ordinary that the Church came into existence. It is 'ordinary' to take for granted that things which are real are alone of consequence. Yet every one's experience contradicts the assumption, inasmuch as the beliefs, feelings, or sentiments excited in us by things, affect us infinitely more than the things themselves, so that even according to common experience the imaginary is more important to us than the actual—in fact, is the more *real* of the two.

I ought not, probably, to wonder at some of your observations in this connection. But, habituated as

I am to see in the ideal, at once the cause and result of the real, the Alpha and Omega of all existence, the Absolute Perfection, or *Nirvana* as the Buddhists term it (*pace* your friends the professional Orientalists,) whence all things proceed and to which they finally return, and therefore as the sole Eternal in the universe,—I am liable to overlook the very different view which the world takes of it. It is, therefore, just possible that the information I have to give you on this head, will surprise you more than aught that I have yet said. Yet so indispensable to a true comprehension of our subject, is a distinct understanding of the respective functions of the real and ideal in the Catholic, or as you naturally prefer to call it, Christian scheme, that I am disposed to think I should have done well had I gone fully into the subject at an earlier period in our correspondence.

It is necessary to premise that the Church takes little notice of God as Creator of the world, beyond formally ascribing creation to him; but concerns itself with him as the ideal of humanity—‘God in Christ’—an ideal in which it is impossible to recognise aught in common with the principles on which animated nature has for the most part been constructed.

In other words, the Church is what the world would, if it were given to thinking, call *atheistic*. But atheism is necessarily the secret of every anthropomorphic religion. For it is through failing to find

in the world external to man aught that it can recognise as God, that the Church has sought to meet man's want of such a Being by constructing a substitute or equivalent out of the inherent characteristics of the race.

To make such a process possible it was necessary to call into existence not only the Being himself, but a region in which he should have his abode, and that both should transcend all limitations as to space, time, and conditions. The faculty whereby alone this could be done is the soul, which I have already defined as the faculty of idealisation. Through the soul and its handmaid the conscience, we attain the infinite and behold perfection. And these constitute what is called the supernatural.

Now, here is the point specially to be noted. The *supernatural* of the theologian is no other than the product of man's faculty of idealisation. In exercising this faculty we transcend the limits of the real, or that which is appreciable by sense.

But this faculty, and of course also its product, are properties of the human mind. So that what theology has done is to divide human nature into two portions, and call that which appertains to and is cognisable by sense, the *natural*: and that which appertains to and is cognisable by spirit, the *supernatural*. It is to these two departments that I have so often referred as the *real* and the *ideal*.

The division of consciousness into God and self is a wrong division. Consciousness is self, and self is consciousness. For God and self, read, the ideal and the real, both of which exist in, or rather constitute, the same consciousness.

The supernatural, spiritual, or ideal, and the natural, material or real, are thus equally parts of nature. But the former, being so far as man is concerned dependent on the latter, is only reached by a process of translation, or transferring the real into the ideal, through the imagination, and regarding it as divested of limitations.

Not a single result has been attained by theology beyond those attainable on this principle. By following it we arrive in turn at every tenet and dogma of which the Church proclaims itself the recipient, originator, expositor, or guardian. In it we have, therefore, the master-key to the Creeds. Projecting man and the system of which he is a part, into the infinite existing in the imagination, we arrive successively at the ideas of God and the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Immortality, Satan, Heaven, and Hell: a theology supernatural inasmuch as it has its source and habitat in a region transcending the physical or real; yet natural in that the ideal is as much a part or function of man as the real.

The divine for us is ever the highest and best

imaginable by us. How divine that highest and best may be, depends on our own rank in the scale of spiritual being,—depends therefore on the development and culture of our souls.

LETTER XVIII.

THE CHURCH ; ITS SECRET AND METHOD, IN
MORALS.

ALTHOUGH there is no apparent connection between the Creeds and Morals, there is a real and essential one which in this 'utilitarian' age is rarely considered. It is, moreover, impossible to treat fully of religion without referring to the influences of the religious principle in conduct.

As by religion we signify the sense of our relation to the whole, by morals we mean the sense of our relation to the parts. The former involves our relation to God: the latter to each other. Catholicism, carrying into the real the same conscience, or sense of perfection which actuates it in regard to the ideal, necessarily refers morals and religion to an identical basis, inasmuch as there can be but one perfection in the universe, and that being God, the recognition and pursuit of it in whatever direction constitute a religious act.

The Utilitarian affects to ignore all reference to religion, or any transcendental standard in constructing his system of morals; but in so far as he

aims at what he deems a perfect system, and deems, therefore, perfection, of some sort or in some degree, attainable, he is essentially religious. For him as well as for the religionist perfection has its home in the ideal: and the endeavour to translate the ideal into the real is, however unconsciously, a homage paid both to God absolute and to God made flesh. Thus saint and iconoclast alike acknowledge and reverence the Incarnation.

Where the Utilitarian, however, falls short of the highest, is in his accepting a lower standard than is consistent with the recognition of the most perfect ideal. He limits his aspirations by actual Humanity, instead of raising them to Humanity idealised, that is, God. Restricting his enthusiasm to the practical, material, or human, instead of exalting it to the divine; and placing the individual before the general, sense before spirit, he falls short of the Catholic standard. Utilitarianism, as I showed you in Letter XV., was no part of the secret and method of Jesus. Had it been so, he would have shown himself to be lacking in that element of infinity his possession of which makes him the fitting corner-stone of the Catholic Church.

Do not, however, suppose that the doctrine of perfection is not an utilitarian doctrine, even where Humanity is concerned. But its utilitarianism consists, not in limiting its aim to human conve-

nience, but in uniting man to the perfection which is God. Catholicism puts God first, but does not stop with that. It includes man also. Utilitarianism puts man first, or rather the convenience of individual men, and does not take God, or perfection, into the account.

At least, not consciously. The uncompromising opponent of compromise, no matter how utilitarian he may deem himself, does but tread in the steps of Christ when he exhorts to leave all and follow him,—the ideal perfection. The most pronounced infidel and radical, when seeking to overthrow altar and throne, and to bury the time-honoured institutions of his country in ruins, is acting out the principle of religion if his object be, not self-advancement, but the realisation of an ideal of human life that seems to him nobler and better.

Admitting that the Church's method in dividing the real from the ideal in human nature, and in relegating the latter to the region of the divine or supernatural, does afford apparent ground for the reproach that it treats all that appertains to the senses as fallen and base, and as requiring an exorcism at consecrated hands to redeem and sanctify it,—we must remember how potent is Sense, how unceasing its endeavours to make itself all in all, and to extinguish the divine spark of the ideal within us, and that unless dealt with as a foe whom there is no trusting,

and with whom therefore any peace must be hollow, it will ever be rising in arms against the soul.

Rightly considered, however, so far from being liable to reproach on the score I have indicated, the Church does but take advantage of a fact actually existing. It is an universal truth that for all mankind the real is below the ideal, or in other words, that we all are able to imagine something better than we can be or do; and this in every department of life, be it art, morals, or theology. In art, for instance, no subject is too mean to be treated idealistically, and thus to be sublimated into a thing of beauty. And this is what the Church seeks to do with human life. As in the meanest flower that blows may, for the sentimentalist, lie thoughts too deep for tears, so for the truly Catholic the grossest parts of our nature, even those we share in common with the brute creation, are capable of being idealised and exalted into the pure and holy. The mistake and evil consist in denying that the latter are as much parts of nature as the former, and in requiring for their purification and sanctification a grace of which the source is external to nature.

Let us apply the Church's method to a specific example,—the relations between the sexes. If any human sentiment be sufficiently important to be deemed divine, it is surely that of love. The impulse to yield oneself to its indulgence constitutes

the chief crisis of man's existence. To love amiss is to hazard all, to love aright to gain all, that life offers worth having. At least, to me as a celibate, and especially one who has dared to indulge dreams which once seemed not incapable of realisation, such is the light in which love appears. Dear friend, I have much for which to ask your forgiveness. Is it any atonement that the bitter reflection has oftentimes thrust itself upon me to the destruction of my soul's repose, that in obeying the call to leave all and follow what I deemed the highest ideal, I was not only yielding to an impulse wholly selfish, and sacrificing one whom I would gladly have died to save, but actually mistaking the lower for the higher? Confident, however, am I of one thing. No man ever abandoned a sweeter real to become a soldier of the ideal. Yet not upon the Church must the blame be cast; but upon my own failure to perceive that the kingdom of the ideal is to be realised on earth, and that if we fail to take it by force here, we fail to deserve it anywhere.

Sanctified by elevation to the ideal, nothing is common or unclean. By insisting that the vow once taken shall be irrefragable, the Church ordains that none but the one supreme love possible to man or woman, shall aspire to its recognition and sanction. Knowing no repentance, such love admits no wavering in fidelity. It thus constitutes a religion in

itself, inasmuch as, being conscious of no limitations, it belongs to the category of the ideal. With no love short of this, no bond that is soluble, can the Church, the guardian and exponent of the ideal, for a moment concern itself. If any choose to invoke the sanction and rite of the Church for an union impelled by any impulse short of the supreme one I have described, and to degrade the sacrament by using it to procure the gratification of a sentiment that is merely animal and transient, they do so to their own cost. They have chosen to fasten in a sacred and lasting bond, hearts which are incapable of a sacred and lasting love. The Church cannot sink its ideal to the level of such as these. Ordinary and commonplace, let them be content with such ties as they may frame for themselves, or as the civil power, whose function is restricted to the real, can make and unmake at will. But the true marriage is made in that ideal world, where flowers never fade or fall, and souls are pure and unchanging as eternity itself. Wherefore the Church in its dealing with the relations of the sexes, remains true to its mission, and transmutes that which, if left to sense would be carnal and gross, into pure spirit worthy to partake of the lot of the saints in light.

Such use of marriage, however, is regarded by the Church as possible only, not as easy or probable; and it holds as more likely to attain the king-

dom of the ideal, those who renounce wholly all delights into which sense enters. And not from the pleasures only, but from the cares and anxieties of the married state, are they free who, devoting themselves wholly to a religious life, reserve for the service of God—or culture of the ideal side of their nature—all the faculties and energies wherewith they are endowed.

Zeal is the especial characteristic of the celibate. Into the subject of his devotion he throws all the force which has been detained from love; and this in imagination as well as in act. Arrested in the direction of the sexual feelings, the idealisations of the virgin far transcend in intensity those of the wedded. Nought human approaches to their ideal. They must have something to love and to worship, or they will become mad.

There is, too, another, and a far larger class for which the Church provides a refuge. Those whose vocation is neither celibacy nor any form of the ideal, but who through defect of circumstance fail to find legitimate satisfaction for their natural affections, and are liable to brood morbidly over their disappointment. For both of these classes the Church supplies a fitting object of regard in One whose perfections can never be exaggerated, never pall by familiarity. The persons and characters of its idealised man and woman, in the imagination of

the devotee and blighted take the place that would naturally have been occupied by a real object. On the Saviour and the Virgin respectively are lavished all their capacity of loving. They too were virgin, and the mystery of sex, that supreme mystery which for Object and Subject alike is veiled, constitutes a bridge of sympathy across the gulf that divides them.

Rising by means of such culture of the ideal humanity far beyond any heights attainable by the culture of the real, and unable to fall away from grace inasmuch as the ideal suffers no reaction or relapse, but ever retains its supremacy in the empyrean of the imagination,—they come at last to regard that side of nature which they have trodden under foot as but a poor sacrifice in comparison with the joys of the heaven they have won, or hope to win.

LETTER XIX.

THE SUPERNATURAL.

IN things religious mystery has ever been deemed essential to authority. For its own sake therefore, as well as for that of the world at large, authority has always fostered what it considered a wholesome degree of ignorance respecting sacred things. No doubt such reserve has its disadvantages, especially in respect of the controversies and schisms to which partial knowledge gives rise. But even an infallible Church can only choose between evils, and in its view the advantages of a firm belief far outweigh the evils arising from obscurity.

There have been few more fertile causes of scepticism than the logical difficulty attaching to miracles, and the moral difficulty of everlasting punishment. True, I am about to remove both difficulties for you; but I leave you to judge of the effect of similarly removing them for the world.

And first, as to Miracles. We have already treated of the perpetual miracle of the Incarnation. This being no other than that of Creation, or the

process ever going on of transmuting the eternal ideal into the phenomenal real, and constituting a problem insoluble by finite minds, we can but bow and pass on. The world exists, and we cannot think of it as making itself. That is all we know, or can know, on this head. The God of the naturalist has nothing in common with the God of the theologian.

Very different is it with the miracles which constitute your difficulty and that of inquirers in general. I say inquirers, because believers have no difficulty whatever. The very impossibility of a thing is to them but further proof of the existence and agency of God. The sense in which they receive them, however, will not satisfy you. Nor will it satisfy anyone who subordinates belief to knowledge. Nevertheless, notwithstanding your present aversion to miracles, I promise you that if you keep your foot beside mine on the track we are following, you will instead of regarding them as thorns and briars, soon be plucking them in delight by the handful.

Only let me remark first that the very terms in which you express your objection to miracles, involve the idea of their possibility. By 'the laws of nature' you imply limits to nature. By what right do you assign such limits, or determine their place? I should not, however, raise an objection on this point, but for your use in the same connection of the term omnipotence, by way of contrast to nature's limita-

tions. For you thus expressly imply your conviction of the existence of a power external to and surpassing that of nature, and so yourself make way for the very interference you deprecate.

Endeavour now to dismiss from your mind the notion of an inside and an outside to nature. Trample down the limits you have been wont to assign to it, and bring into it the whole region hitherto allotted to the supernatural or divine. Doing this, you will be able to dismiss altogether from your vocabulary the term supernatural, and to regard nature as including all that is; only, compounded of two elements, commonly called the natural and the supernatural, but properly the real and the ideal. Doing this, you will find yourself ranging under the name of the ideal all that portion of existence which does not come within the range of the senses, and of which we are cognisant in idea only: and under the name of the real all that is appreciable by the senses, and commonly called *nature*. This done, God becomes for us the supreme personal element in nature; but existing only in the ideal, inasmuch as it is only in idea, and not in the senses, that we are cognisant of him.

We now find ourselves in harmony with those who, like the Greeks and other Pantheists, regard Deity as immanent in and inseparable from nature. With those also who, like the Jews and Christians,

regard him as existing apart from and above nature. And with those who have earned for themselves the name of Atheist by regarding the real (under the name of nature) as existing independently of any ideal (or God) at all.

Under the influence of your inherited notions, you have been wont to regard all that, being in nature yet transcends nature, as miraculous and therefore impossible. Taking now the ideal into nature, do you find any difficulty in making the real your basis, and constructing your ideal upon it? If you do not, you admit that something which is natural can transcend the real, and so be 'miraculous' without being contrary to nature.

LETTER XX.

MIRACLE.

It is as I expected. You regard the real and the ideal as so intimately allied as to be inseparable for us; and you make this union the essential condition of conscious intelligence: That is, you find it impossible to be cognisant of any external object in fact, without being at the same time cognisant of it in idea; without, therefore, being able to imagine it as divested of the limitations which it has for your senses. You own that, being natural, it transcends nature: and you fail to see what this has to do with miracles?

Dear friend, what then is a miracle but the transmutation of a 'natural' or objective fact, that is a reality, into an imaginary or subjective one, and its enlargement to ideal or 'supernatural' dimensions?

For me 'supernaturalism,' in the popular sense, has as little meaning as for you; though the grounds of our objections are different. As I have tried to make clear to you, the ideal is as much a part of nature, or the universal order, as the real. So that

we have not to transcend nature to find an explanation of 'miracles.' What we have to transcend is the limitation of the fact in its reality. The moment it is removed from the category of the real into that of the ideal, and divested of limitations, it becomes what it is the custom to call supernatural or miraculous.

Thus you see the significance of your admission that so far from the miraculous, thus understood, being contrary to nature, it constitutes a necessary element of thought, inasmuch as the union of the real and the ideal is an essential condition of conscious intelligence.

Writing of the soul I said, the process of idealisation consists in imagining an object as transcending its limitations, existing in a perfection not actually attainable by it, and even filling infinity with its expanded characteristics. And the faculty whereby we perform this act is the soul.

The soul, therefore, is the true miracle-worker. Taking, necessarily, the real for its basis, it constructs thereon the ideal with all the wonders of religion. In admitting the union of the real and ideal in man, you are opening the door to every doctrine of Catholicism. To fail to see this is to be a sectarian, a Protestant; that is, one who, able to see but a short way along a road, denies the road's continuance beyond the reach of his own vision.

You now understand how that all the wonders which make up the life of the God-man and Man-god, are equally with himself the product and necessary product of the soul's longing for a realised perfection, or God made flesh. The translation of the person of Jesus of Nazareth, from being at most an apostle of the sect of the Essenes, though remarkably endowed with spiritual graces, into the ideal, would have been but a meagre and inadequate process unless combined with the like translation of his actions. It was through an extraordinary conjunction of circumstances that upon him, and not upon any other individual of admirable and exquisite character, fell the supreme destiny of being accepted as the representative man of the race, latest and most perfect realisation of the divine idea of humanity. But as such destiny was bound to alight upon some one, in accordance with the traditions and wont of mankind when previous incarnations had lost their prestige; and as the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish race were most fitted to produce the character best adapted for the part,—there is no reason why it should not have been filled by him as well as by another.

So common has it been for mankind to credit the objects of their veneration with miraculous powers, that the improbability that Christ should be so invested hardly becomes greater on the hypothesis

that he was no real person at all, but wholly a creation of the imagination. To judge from what we know of previous incarnations, it does not appear to be absolutely necessary that the character selected as their subject should have an actual existence in the flesh. Indeed some early Christian sects denied such existence to Christ. Even the Pauline epistles often leave us in doubt whether the writer regarded Christ as a real person, so strong is his tendency to treat him as but an idea. The declaration, 'Last of all he was seen also by me, as by one born out of due time,' bears out this conjecture, inasmuch as it was not in the flesh, but only in the spirit, that Paul owns to having beheld him; while the refusal to know him after the flesh, indicates his strong preference for Christ as an idea and system of thought rather than as an individual.

Idealist as Paul was, it was assuredly not Christ as a person, but Christ as representing the ideal perfection contemplated in the law of Moses, and the triumph of that perfection over sin, death, and all the limitations of sense, that roused the apostle's enthusiasm to its highest pitch. His principal solicitude was that the *character* represented by the name of Christ should proceed from the Jews. For in such a product he beheld a power capable of subjugating the world, and demonstrating their superiority over the Gentiles.

For, had it not subjugated himself? So long as he had deemed of Christ as a man, he had applied the whole force of his enthusiasm to the persecution of his followers. It was when the true *idea* of Christ flashed suddenly upon him in all its possible significance, that he fell stunned as it were to the ground, at the revelation of the grandeur and beauty of that which he had hitherto reprobated. Thenceforth his enthusiasm, turned into the opposite direction, led him into being himself accepted as the second founder of Christianity.

Brought up in a school whose leading characteristic was its intense appreciation of the spiritual significance of the Law, Paul was carried by his ardent spirit beyond all his compeers. For him 'Sin' consisted in the falling short of the perfection of the infinite by the finite. Everything appertaining to the real was a 'body of death,' utterly vile and contemptible in comparison with the ideal recognised by him. Yet lofty as was his doctrine, his omission to take account of the truth that the constitution of nature makes it utterly impossible that the finite should emulate the infinite, the real the ideal, and therefore that the individual is not responsible for the interval between them, has greatly contributed to the widespread belief that the whole domain of the real, or 'nature,' is essentially and thoroughly

bad, and worthy only of reprobation and perdition. And the belief has caused anguish unspeakable to millions of tender souls, and has inflicted on the world that kind of detriment which comes to everything that, being desirous of perfection, finds itself pronounced incapable of amendment. The law of perfection is holy, just, and good, and indispensable as a standard by which to regulate our lives. It is necessary, also, for our moral progress that we should recognise the interval between it and our performances. But when we assume that we are ourselves responsible for the existence of the interval, and abandon the hope of doing aught to diminish it, through our consciousness of the impossibility of wholly abolishing it, then the commandment which was ordained to life is found to be death to us. Raise our real as we may, we cannot with it attain to the full height of our ideal. Compared with that our best actions must always be defective.

It was necessary that one who surpassed the limits of the finite in things moral and spiritual, in such degree as to be accounted God manifest in the flesh, should surpass them also in respect of things physical. As all his teaching must be the teaching of perfection, so all his doing must surpass the possible. Should you, in your reading of the Gospels, be disposed to ascribe error or imperfection to the divine Master; should he appear to you cold

and unfilial to his blessed Mother, or harsh to the stranger seeking relief; should you be led to the opinion that the miracle of Cana, or the raising of Lazarus, was effected by chicanery and collusion, and his conduct in regard to the fig-tree, the result of an ebullition of bad temper; should some of his parables, such as that of the unjust steward, or the importunate widow, strike you as defective in their morality or theology,—set it down to the dulness of his reporters. If they did not represent him as perfect, they ought to have done so; for no one less than perfect could occupy the position assigned him by the Church. Whether as Son at once of God and man, the Divine Word made flesh, or as the heaven-sent Messiah, nothing short of perfection was suited to the part. There is for the Catholic no sound canon of criticism except this.

This canon however, so far from ruling miracles out of the record, makes them indispensable. True, Paul makes mention of no miracle but that of the resurrection, and that was for him a spiritual rather than a physical fact. The apostle's contempt for things of the 'flesh' accounts for his indifference on this head. But for us to whom the Jewish law and its spiritualisation are considerations subordinate to Humanity and its consciousness, the perfection of Christ in all things is essential to our accepting him as God incarnate; and the soul of the believer is

wanting in the fervour of true faith if it fails to translate all his acts from the region of sense and limitation into that of spirit and perfection. The soul as I have said is the only miracle-worker; and where there is unbelief even the Son of Man himself—the soul's personified perfection—can do there no mighty works.

But where faith is strong no miracle will be beyond his power. Divested of limitations in virtue of his ideality, he will be conqueror over all the ills of human existence. Did he not herein transcend the real, were he not all-powerful over the elements of the world, over disease, sorrow, sin, and death, he would be but common-place humanity, merely real, and no true ideal rising sublime above all limitations.

What we already as mere men have from the beginning been striving to accomplish in reality, he accomplishes for us in idea and hope. We have always been struggling to improve our real by banishing as far as may be the ills which afflict it. The fact of our continued efforts is a virtual confession of our faith in the possibility of a greater or less success. For, what becomes of those who make no such efforts? They remain what they were myriads of ages ago—the lower races of men and animals—creatures, however human in form, devoid of soul inasmuch as they lack the faculty necessary

to improvement, the faculty of transcending their real in the ideal.

It is thus, through his possession of an ideal, in which he sees himself ultimately victorious over all that he now counts as hindrances, that man is induced to struggle at all. The divine discontent which inspires him, the travailing and groaning in pain, are themselves agents in his redemption and adoption into the perfection of the ideal realised. Faith in God, that is faith in his ideal, is no other than faith in Humanity,—in himself.

To render unnecessary further reference to Paul, whose life and writings are accounted the strongest portion of the evidence for the historical existence of Jesus Christ, I will add here three remarks.

First, that as a Pharisee and one of the sect most instrumental in bringing about the death of Christ, the true Paul could not have 'gloried in the cross' of Christ, and in being a Pharisee also. Nor could he have referred, as the Pauline epistles continually do, to his sufferings without a word of compassion for him, or reproach for the sect that caused them. Nor, again, could he have known aught of Christ's denunciations of the Pharisees, and still continued to exalt both Christ and Pharisaism.

Secondly, that the 'secret and method' (I employ the phrase of the author you so much affect) of Jesus and the Paulist writer are identical. They both aim

at a rule of absolute perfection, a rule transcending the limits of the 'flesh,' and attainable only in the 'spirit.'

Thirdly, that as the Pauline epistles implicitly if not explicitly set aside Jesus as a person for Jesus as an idea, it is far from improbable that the apostle himself may, under the sublimating process of historical criticism, be removed from the category of the real, and transferred to that of the ideal. Certainly is this true so far as concerns the identification of their writer with the Paul of the Acts. Every such exaltation, however, of the ideal in place of the individual, of the spirit in place of the letter, is a gain to religion. For we thereby escape more and more from the region of persons, fact, and controversy, into that of doctrine, faith, and unity; and become more and more one with God and with each other in the spirit of holiness. That is, more Catholic and less Protestant as we cease to worship the letter.

The mythical character of Paul's history finds exemplification in the narrative of his conversion, an event readily explicable on the solar hypothesis. As secondary founder of Christianity it was fitting that he should be represented as impelled to his mission by the direct action of the solar divinity with whom Christ had become identified.

LETTER XXI.

THE CHRISTIAN OLYMPUS.

LET us follow the new creation which owns the soul of man for its maker. Given the soul and space, all that is in man the real becomes necessarily transferred to the ideal, and there exists divested of limitations, comprising all desirable or imaginable objects of aspiration and worship. Already do we behold, seated upon the throne of infinity, the Absolute Supreme, ideal Father of our spirits, associated in bonds of eternal amity with the ideal Mother and ideal Son, and animated by the same ideal disposition or Spirit, the Spirit of ideal perfection. Nought is there in their nature or conditions to disturb the everlasting equilibrium of their satisfaction, could they only be content to pass eternity in the contemplation of their own perfections.

But the ideal must have a reflex influence on its real. Wherefore they are not like the classic gods of old, so finely described by England's truly Catholic poet:—

The Gods who haunt
 The lucid interspace of world and world,
 Where never creeps a cloud or moves a wind,
 Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
 Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
 Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
 Their sacred everlasting calm.

For, as mankind has mounted in the scale of moral being, so have the gods, or, to adhere to our own nomenclature, the ideals of mankind. And hence it comes that, no longer selfishly absorbed in themselves, no sound of human joy or sorrow here is so faint but that it mounts to their sacred abode, not to mar their repose, but to win a sympathetic response. More 'perfect' these, as we understand perfection, than their impassible predecessors. No sooner, then, does man, finding it vain to attempt to redeem himself by his own limited efforts from the evils inherent in all conditions involving limitation, glance upward in appeal for aid, than the ideal Son, obeying the impulses which are at once human and divine,

Down from his glorious throne descends
 With joyful haste to save ;
 Dies for our sins in mortal flesh,
 Then leaves the vanquished grave.

For even death has no power over the children of the ideal. Rather do they, when freed from the limitations of mortality, rise and ascend into the brightest heaven the imagination can depict, there

for evermore to bask amid the full glories of the throne.

Thus is it with the company of the glorified dead, who all are children of the ideal, even those whom we style Saints inasmuch as they have lived on earth the life of ideal excellence, the life in which the realities of sense have had little part, or power to withdraw them from their devotion to ideal perfection.

But for him, their elder brother and lord, Son at once of Humanity and of the supreme personified Ideal,—not for evermore does he abide in repose to enjoy his well-earned laurels. The sovereignty he has acquired is not that of lotos-eaters,

Resting their weary limbs on beds of asphodel ;

and lying—

Reclined

On the hills together, careless of mankind.

It imposes a responsibility. It constitutes him judge of all men, who at the crisis of every soul is to descend, and determine the fate due for its conduct on earth.

Different indeed to his former coming is this one.

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory,

does he now come 'to judge the quick and dead.'

No rare or isolated experience is this ; but a fact in the soul's history of all men possessing a faculty of idealisation, that is of all who have a soul, and this again is all who possess a moral consciousness.

Recall, if you can, your earliest conception of perfection in life and conduct. Was it not meagre and unstable ; too weak to raise and guide you ; strongest ofttimes when you felt most humble, and weakest when you were best satisfied with yourself ?

So is it with the ideal of every man. At first, 'coming in humility.' But, carefully cherished, it grows 'in stature and in favour with God and man,' ever lifting up our real towards itself ; and when our decaying powers warn us that the end is near, and we make a final estimate of ourselves and our work, and see how often and how far we have failed to cherish our ideal, and to strive to act up to it, it stands over us an unerring criterion of our deserts, from whose judgment there is no appeal. 'And so he cometh to judge the world.'

LETTER XXII.

THE TWO TRINITIES.

THE same Protestant training that enables you to go with me thus far, hinders you from joining me in offering the recognition due to the divine Mother who represents the feminine element in deity. Accompanying us in constructing their God in the image of man, so far as the masculine element is concerned, by their omission in this respect the sectarians have produced a deity of a hard cold passionless nature, possessing indeed intellect, will, and power, but non-productive and incapable of creation in that they have denied him the impulse that alone prompts to creation. Their unintelligent worship of the record, which comes down to a certain period only, has kept them from appreciating the spirit of that record, and its equally necessary revelation subsequently developed. Even while holding that man is made in the image of God, and consequently that God must be the idealised counterpart of man, and that the Son of God is no other than the ideal man himself,—as the ultra-evangelical professor of Moral Philosophy in the ultra-protestant

University of Cambridge recently declared,—Protestantism refuses to allow woman her place in the divine essence, and so mulcts the Godhead of one-half of its fair proportions. Shrinking thus from the journey's end, it ought not to have entered on the journey at all. Accepting the principle, it has no right to recoil from the full application of the principle. To such timid and halting exploration of the many mansions of the Father's house, the keys which unlock the inmost and most sacred chambers are rightly denied. The defect has been fatal to the system. Lacking the vital elements of tenderness, fervour and love, which woman alone can evoke, Protestantism as a religion is torpid and dead. The sole resource left to it is science, the domain of the real and limited, the wilderness of mere fact. While Catholicism cares not to enter there, it suffers no intrusion upon its own empire, the ideal and infinite. There it is infallible; and in nothing does it more effectually demonstrate its divinity than by its completion of what may be called the domestic economy of heaven.

I have placed before you the two Jehovahs of the Bible. Behold now the two Trinities of the Church. As in man the same individual comprises three entire personalities, each absolutely separate and distinct, yet inseparably combined in one, Father, Husband, and Son; so in woman we have Mother, Wife, and

Daughter, three distinct persons in one, each complete and perfect in itself, and yet inseparably combined to form one whole.

Well, as in man, so in deity made after man, the masculine trinity postulates the feminine trinity. Wherefore we find the Blessed Virgin comprising in herself the functions and titles of Mother, Spouse, and Daughter of God. For the divine sonship of the ideal man has its complement and counterpart in the divine daughterhood of the ideal woman; an impersonation which bids fair in a future development of Catholic dogma, when, by the acquirement of the 'rights' she is already demanding, woman shall have demonstrated her superiority over man, to invert the positions hitherto assigned to these two constituents of the Godhead.

To comprehend fully the thoroughness with which the Church projects the human into the divine in this relation, you should be familiar with the modes of address to the Virgin which have been formulated through the profound insight of the Catholic fathers. Fathoming the deepest recesses of humanity, they have ascertained that the closer the relationship in blood between two persons, the more intense their love and complete their union where they love. Projected into the infinite and ideal, such union is untrammelled by the exigencies of family life in the limited and real. And hence we are without reproach en-

abled to address the Holy Virgin in the words of the Litany of the Immaculate Conception as ‘ Daughter of the Father Immaculate. Mother of the Son Immaculate. Spouse of the Holy Ghost Immaculate;’ and yet to regard these three as one, and the act of one as the act of all, and Mary as the ‘ handmaid of the Divine Trinity,’ and this though elsewhere she is addressed as ‘ Spouse of the Eternal Father.’

Not unmindful of the evils to which such ‘ confounding of the persons ’ is liable, the Church is careful to present such admonitions as the following :—

‘ Consider with what privileges and honours the Blessed Trinity glorifies her. The Father loves her as his daughter ; the Son honours her as his mother ; the Holy Ghost embraces her as his bride,’ and his ‘ loving spouse who was taken up to the heavenly chamber (thalamum) where the King of kings sitteth on his starry throne.’ ‘ Admirabile Commercium ! O marvellous intercourse !’ exclaims with exquisite fervour one of the *Primes* in the Golden Manual, ‘ the Creator of Mankind, taking a body with a living soul, vouchsafed to be born of a Virgin, and becoming man without man’s concurrence, bestowed upon us his Deity !’ ‘ O God,’ exclaims another, ‘ who didst vouchsafe to choose the chaste chamber (virginalem aulam) of the Blessed Virgin Mary to dwell therein ;’ and again, ‘ Thou art be-

come beautiful and sweet in thy delights, O holy Mother of God.'

No prudish shrinking here from the deification of the prime facts of love and loving intercourse, so dear to humanity. Small thanks would God owe to man if denied that which man prizes most for himself. But with such sacrifice offered him in the ideal, he in turn sanctifies love in the real, and constitutes it a legitimate indulgence for man possessed of a soul as for animals devoid of it. No particle of right or title to reject such doctrine can Protestantism exhibit. It is the logical and necessary outcome of the doctrines already accepted by Protestants, and is essential to the principle on which equally with Catholicism their religion is based;—the principle that, God having made man in his own image, it is by reversing the process and projecting himself into the ideal that man in his turn arrives at his conception of God.

Not without reason are Catholics sanguine over the spiritual condition of England, when they see both logic and sentiment operating to bring it back to the true fold. For, ministering in the Anglican communion are to be found men who, recognising the vital inseparability of the feminine from the masculine element in Catholicism, have accordingly restored to their parishioners the privilege of paying to it the homage due. And this in no secret under-

hand way, but with the full knowledge and consent of their bishops who, lamenting the mutilation of the faith and estrangement from the Catholic Church involved in Protestantism, are, under a higher law of morality—higher in that morality itself is subordinate to theology—doing all that is possible, consistently with prudence, to annihilate the schism. There are country parishes in which, as bright oases of faith in a desert of unbelief, the parish church witnesses not only the invocation of the saints, and prayers for the dead, but the recognition of the Blessed Virgin as the effectual mediator with the Father and Son, and even as herself a hearer and answerer of prayer; and the peasant, the stolid unimaginative English peasant, reverts with delight to the worship of ideal womanhood!

And yet further, smitten by the beauty of the idea of Mary, as was Paul by that of the idea of Christ, there are Anglican clergy who in receiving the Holy Eucharist, that perpetual symbol of the Incarnation and Atonement ever in process of renewal, mentally add the Virgin's name to that of her Son, and by faith eat her flesh and drink her blood with his.

For one placed thus high no honours can be excessive. Heaven as well as earth must contribute of its best. We have seen how Catholicism has invested the ideal man with all the glories of the

solar orb. Equally must the skies be ransacked on behalf of the ideal woman. Not enough is it to invoke her as 'Star of Heaven,' 'Star of the Sea,' 'Gate of Light,' the Christian Daphne and Aurora—the dawn of whom is born the light of the world. She is also 'Queen of heaven,' 'glorious Queen of all the heavenly host,' 'gentle, chaste and spotless Maid,' 'Queen with the stars as a diadem crowned,' who, 'wrapt in the blaze of her Son's divine light, doth shine as the dawn on the confines of night; As the Moon on the lost through obscurity dawns, the Dragon's destroyer, the rose amid thorns.'

Here then is the process completed. Christ, the incarnation of the sun, enacts on earth a part in all its details corresponding to the course of the sun in the heavens. The Holy Spirit as Atmosphere, is variously saluted as the Searcher, the Refresher, the Invisible, the Winged, the bringer of showers, the melter of frost, the harbinger of spring, the herald of the advent of the sun. He broods over the earth. He moves on the face of the waters. He shakes the house with a mighty rushing noise. He breathes into man the breath of life. Resigning this, the dying gives up the 'ghost.'

The Virgin is the moon, Mother of the sun and Queen of heaven. When, entering on his nadir, the sun falls into darkness, undergoes a bloody passion, and dies on the reddened bier of his setting, he turns

to the representative of his Beloved, and exhibiting to him the moon, exclaims, 'Behold thy mother! I go hence and am no more seen; but now she takes my place. Henceforth she is thy mother.' Thus the Church, celebrating in August the festival of the harvest moon, celebrates at the same time the feast of the Assumption and of the Sacred Heart of the Virgin. And Catholic painters, following the description in the Apocalypse, fondly depict her as 'clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet,' and both as overriding the dragon. Even the triumph of Easter is not celebrated until, by attaining its full, the moon accords its aid and sanction.

Is it not interesting thus to discover the true note of Catholicism in the most ancient paganisms, and to find that the moon, which for us is incarnate in the Blessed Virgin Mary, was for the Syrians and Greeks respectively personified in the virgin Ash-toreth, the queen of heaven, and Diana, or Phœbe, the feminine of Phœbus?

It was in furtherance of that ideal perfection which ever strives to renounce the real and its pleasures, that the Church, following some of the elder paganisms, enforced the principle of asceticism which finds its extreme outcome in the adoration of virginity and practice of celibacy. For in its view sense is the chief antagonist of soul, and sex is the chief agent of sense.

LETTER XXIII.

THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS.

WE have now peopled one portion of our imaginary space with a Holy Trinity, nay two, of Absolute Excellencies, made in our image, and so far identical with, though surpassing, the best and greatest possible to ourselves. And we have followed man, redeemed by his faith in his ideal, on his passage from life through death to life again, where he re-assembles as a Communion of Saints, never again to fall away, but henceforth to repose in bliss. He has shed the limitations of the real, the corruptible has put on incorruption, the mortal has put on immortality. Death is swallowed up in victory, and the victory has been given by the supreme personified Ideal through the final embodiment of his perfection in the ideal Søn of God and Man. Henceforth man, redeemed, is beyond the reach of trial and temptation, beyond the necessity or possibility of being called on to make efforts that may fail or cause him to fall. His lot is fixed in that new abode, at once

heaven and earth, where all tears are wiped away, and there is no more death nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain. For the real has passed away with all its limitations and antagonisms. Inheriting the kingdom of the ideal, the individual is merged in the universal Perfection and Unity from which all have proceeded, and to which those return who through tribulation and poverty and persecution have kept fast their souls, and retaining their love for the ideal, have proved faithful to it unto death, and shall now obtain a crown of life 'with God and the Lamb.'

We have thus far, however, peopled but one portion of space, and that with idealisations derived from one side of our nature. There remains, alas, another and contrasting side, equally capable of being idealised, and not less imperious in its demand to be submitted to such a process. Opposites and contrasts are essential to consciousness. The light from the throne itself must cast a shadow somewhere. It is in the gloom thereof that we have now to seek. Seeking there, we shall find the dark side of ourselves.

Yes, as on the one hand we project our best into the regions of the infinite, and make a Being wholly and surpassingly good; so on the other hand we project our worst, and the result is the impersonated Evil, Ruler of the world of sense, Prince of dark-

ness. Thus, as in man's image the Church makes God, the Lord of the ideal, so equally in man's image it makes the Devil, the Lord of the real, and divides between them the empire of conscious existence, in co-equal co-ordinate sovereignties, inherently and eternally antagonistic, and yet essential to each other's existence as the idea of darkness is to that of light, of evil to that of good.

In the Zoroastrian system, the most spiritual and catholic of all pagan religions, the necessary existence of the Devil as a complement and corollary to that of the Deity was first discerned and acknowledged. Then was the Deity first rehabilitated; for in the absence of a special representative for the evil side of their nature, men were compelled to ascribe good and evil alike to God.

As other systems failed to gather up, idealise, and personify, all the best characteristics of humanity in a single deity, so had they failed to gather up, idealise, and personify the worst.

That is, they had no Devil. The credit of the revelation of this great personage was reserved for Persia; and it was thence that, after the captivity, he was adopted into the system of the Hebrews, to assume such stupendous proportions in that of the Christians. The Devil, as we have him, is the crowning proof of the divinity of the genius of Christianity, the final demonstration of the human

soul. Had there been no Devil, there would have been no God. And without God, no soul.

As by idealising and personifying his best, man creates God, in the image of his own best; so by idealising and personifying his worst, man creates the Devil, also in his own image, but the image of his worst. The incapacity to idealise the one would involve the incapacity to idealise the other; would involve therefore the incapacity to idealise at all. Thus the sense of moral perfection, or conscience, is wanting to those who exclude the Devil from their theology. But this sense is of the very essence of the soul. So that the abolition of the Devil would involve the negation of conscience and the destruction of the soul of man.

So long, then, as man retains any portion of his faculty of idealisation in respect to things moral, he must be able to exert it in one direction as well as in the other, and to personify the perfection of his bad as well as of his good. Thus, projecting his worst side into space, as we have already described him as doing with his best, and contemplating it also as divested of limitations, he is compelled to regard it as contending on equal terms with the Deity for the sovereignty of the universe, each vanquishing and vanquished at the same moment and in turn, commingled, inseparable, burning with deadly hate towards each other, and still unable to exist apart.

LETTER XXIV.

HELL.

OF course the Devil must have his special place of abode. Such a personage cannot be expected to subsist without dominion and regal state corresponding to those of him who occupies the bright half of infinity. He must have his hell and his throne, even as God must have his heaven and his throne.

But these two, though they fill space, do not monopolise it. Each is a lord of hosts. The angels of the one are matched by the demons of the other; and the lines of their hostile array are everywhere.

For, as we personify in two chief idealisations respectively the entire good and entire bad sides of our nature, under the name of God and the Devil, so do we further divide and subdivide our various qualities, and personifying each portion, project them, divested of limitations, into the spiritual world. Thus, as the supreme ideal of Good is surrounded by angels of whom each one reflects in transcendent measure some one quality found excellent in man; so the supreme ideal of Evil is backed by a host of

lesser demons, each of whom represents in a degree transcending the limits of the actual, some defect or failing in ourselves.

And as their supreme leaders, so are the two armies, to their most insignificant member, locked for ever with deadly grip in each other's arms, instinct with unceasing vitality; inasmuch as every quality contains the idea of its opposite, and we cannot imagine its positive without necessarily imagining its negative.

It is a false theology, then, that would postulate the existence of God and exclude that of the Devil; just as it is a false theology that makes of God a unit, and denies his dual and treble nature. False, because incapable of being unlocked by the key, which, as we have seen, alone opens the gate of all theological mysteries. It is a false theology also that holds the Devil as capable of repentance and salvation, until, at least, man shall have lost the faculty of idealising and personifying evil, while retaining it in respect of good. To lose the Devil would be to lose our souls.

And inasmuch as both beings are compounded of the same essence, even the ideal, divine and indivisible, we have in good and evil, or the ideal and the real, the true duality which are, and ever have been and will be, the parents of all conscious existence, divine co-progenitors of the sentient

universe, the eternal interaction between whom is the condition of all life and thought.

If it seem to you that the hypothesis must be defective which represents the principles of good and evil as co-equal and co-eternal, and neither proceeding from the other; and nevertheless makes the latter to some extent inferior and subordinate to the former,—remember that, although in one sense they must be on an equality, inasmuch as both have an identical source in the human faculty of idealisation, yet that it lies with man to determine to which side the balance of power shall incline, and that it pleases him, theoretically at least, to give the preference to his ideal of good, and making that the Supreme, to commit all creative power into his hands, even the power that produces the Devil;—a fact recognised in the Hebrew saying, ‘I the Lord create evil.’

But though we thus attain our conception of the existence of the personified Evil by a process identical with that which brings us to God, namely, by imagining one side of our nature as divested of limitations, it does not follow that the natures of these two beings correspond in detail. In the Devil is no distinction of persons or distribution of functions; no trinity of Father, Son and Spirit, of God, Woman and offspring. These are the essential attributes of creative intelligence only, and of loving

impulse. Hate creates nought, save a hell for itself and its victims. The function of the 'sole Being sole'—the personified selfishness—is destruction.

'But the Devil may improve, or at least be utterly vanquished?'

Only in one way can the former happen, namely as we ourselves improve. And by this I mean, not the getting so far away from evil as to lose all conception of it. But rising in the scale of moral being so that our good may be a higher good, our evil a less low evil; our love for the real decreasing as our love for the ideal increases; but still with the same impassable barrier between them as before. To become so utterly unconscious of evil, so incapable of appreciating it as to be entirely lost in good; that is, to be absorbed in the ideal, or God, is attainable only in the soul's final rest. This is *Nirvana*, the ideal perfection, or Absolute of Buddhism, from which all things spring, and to which they return. But so long as we remain in the real, the perception of contrasts, and therefore of good and evil, is essential to consciousness.

What, then, is the meaning of vanquishing the Devil? Simply resisting the impulses of the real, or sense, when they interfere with the call of the ideal, or spirit; and striving towards the perfection which our souls enable us to discern and our consciences prompt us to pursue.

There is a further reason against a multiplicity of persons in the diabolic nature, and this completes the astronomic parallel. As God represents light, Christ the sun, the Spirit the atmosphere, and the Virgin Mother the moon, so the Devil represents darkness. Now darkness is not gathered up and condensed into any specific orb or body. It is a mysterious intangible existence, universal and all-pervading, save only where light penetrates. It is enough therefore to sum it up in a single being, without ascribing to it any distinction of persons. To do with it as the Church has done with light, would be to violate the solar analogy. There are no orbs of darkness. The very name of God in the countries whence our religion is derived signifies *the shining one*. What, but the prince of darkness, then, can be his opposite?

LETTER XXV.

* FOR EVER.

DEATH being the end of all things for the real, that which survives can exist only in the ideal. The two elements being severed which constituted the individual, neither can undergo further change, save in respect of the limitations of the ideal. Whatever the real was in character and proportions, that it must for ever remain. Whatever, then, we are in life, that in death we continue to be, only carried forward into the realms of infinity and eternity. Should we, therefore, have grieved and quenched the ideal within us, and ensured that the judgment of which I spoke be against us, we must reconcile ourselves to a sentence of eternal condemnation.

The revolt against the doctrine of eternal condemnation is a consequence of that same neglect of the ideal which characterises this materialistic age. Let us test its significance and reasonableness by analogy.

You love flowers. Your rose-bushes are the marvel and envy of the neighbourhood. Do you

remember once pointing out to me a cluster of withered buds on a tree, all whose other buds had blossomed into fullest perfection of beauty and fragrance, while these, through some defect in themselves or in their conditions of atmosphere or nourishment, or through attack of hostile insect, failed to reach their due development, and had to be plucked from their stem, partly because their appearance was a blemish, and partly lest they should be injurious to the tree?

Well, all your love and tenderness cannot make you think of those withered buds other than as failures. Carry their memory forward in your mind as far as you will, and still it surpasses all the miracle-working power of your imagination to change the failure they were in their real, into success in your idea of them. In spite of yourself—their creator as it were—their condemnation is eternal. As they fell, so they lie, and in their grave is no repentance.

Similarly with the flowers which attained perfection. Your sense of that perfection remains with you after they have quitted the regions of the real, and through that sense they continue to flourish for evermore in the heaven of your ideal.

Thus, not for themselves do they, not for ourselves do we, continue to exist, in any sense that can be called real. But self is swallowed up in the universal ideal, absorbed in God, who alone abides

the all and in all. Such is the doctrine of all spiritual catholics whether Christian or Buddhist.

But some come to an end while on the road toward perfection, losing their chance of attaining it only through some untimely accident. Are these, you will ask, liable to like condemnation? If they are, you rebel against the sentence.

In thus stating the case you would answer your own question. You think of these not as failures and fitted for destruction, but as containing elements which, under more favourable circumstances, would have enabled them sooner or later to attain perfection; and so in idealising them you continue the process and suppose them ultimately to attain that perfection. No hopeless reprobates these, as shown by the idea they leave with you. You do not, however, place them on the same level with the actual successes. Your feeling respecting them is one of hope and expectation. They escape condemnation, truly; but they fail to attain the highest places. Promises rather than performances, you do not reject them, but the place you assign them is below the highest. In the house of your ideal are many mansions.

But they may yet fail to prove themselves worthy your regard, and ultimately fall away from the grace you have shown them, and have to be cast out?

Nay ; such relapse is impossible. Their place in the ideal world is fixed by their place in the real. Promises they were, and as promises they must ever continue to be regarded.

True, a larger charity, founded on the discovery that evil, like darkness, has no absolute existence, leads us to be less ready to regard any as hopelessly reprobate, than was the custom in the days when the Creeds were composed. But for the severity of those times we must not hold the Creeds responsible. They represented humanity, and humanity had not got beyond the point of so thinking.

But let humanity advance as it will, it will never reverse the sentence pronounced against the wholly reprobate, and in favour of the good. He that is unjust, will be unjust still ; he that is filthy and lives in sense only, will be filthy still ; he that is righteous will be righteous still ; and he that is holy and lives in the spirit, will be holy still, when he has passed from the real into the ideal state.

I see in a paper just come the deaths of two persons of whom we both had some knowledge. One, a man of singular piety and benevolence, with a clear abounding intelligence, but so humble that in all his intercourse with others, he seemed ever to be the learner rather than the teacher. The other was a cynic of the first water, hard, selfish, and tyrannical.

Shall we ever think of these men as being other than we knew them? That would be to destroy their personal identity. It would be annihilation. No, he who for us was selfish in the real, will be selfish still, when translated to the regions of the ideal. And he that was benevolent, will be benevolent still. Remember them long as we may, we cannot think of them otherwise. Nay more, we even exaggerate their dominant characteristics, and think of them as possessing them without the limitations of time and space, and so as being wholly given up to the exercise of the qualities which in life determined their place in our regards.

LETTER XXVI.

NIRVANA.

AH, my friend, so sense and the things of sense dominate you after all, and you insist on regarding as worthless the perfection which is of the spirit, unless it contain the element of material perpetuity. Taken each by itself, you find the ideal inferior to the real in its power to confer happiness, and you require the addition of immortality to strike the balance in its favour.

The confidence with which you appeal to the Paul of the Epistles would be amusing were it not a yet further proof of the extent to which a Protestant *ré-gime* is able to paralyse the spiritual life. Paul preach the worthlessness of the 'hope in Christ' as a source of delight in the present! Paul rank duration above perfection! You have indeed misread him, and fallen short of comprehending the enthusiasm that filled him for his beloved ideal. No, we may be very sure that it was to no sentiment such as you imagine that he was giving utterance when he said, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all

men most miserable.' Rather was he with the eagerness usual to him, overstraining the argument for the resurrection; or his appeal was addressed to those who, like yourself, were more amenable to the things of sense than to those of the spirit; or the life of which he spoke as miserable was the outward material existence, and the life of hope in Christ was life in the perfected ideal.

Your letter illustrates that habit of living and judging to which the prevalent outcry against God's justice in the world is due. 'There must be another world,' meaning a future physical existence, 'to redress the inequalities of this life, if we are to believe that God is just.' As if in the ideal world of our own now-living spirits we had not that other world we need. As if, too, another physical and therefore finite existence could fail to repeat the limitations of this one.

No, it is not true that if in this life only we have no joy beyond that of communion with our ideal, we are to be accounted miserable. Only they whose life lies wholly in sense, and who are therefore incompetent to judge between body and soul, would impugn the divine justice on this score. Their very inability to comprehend the feeling of those 'whose life,' to use Paul's phrase, 'is hid with Christ in God,' and, to imitate the language of the fourth Gospel, are one in spirit with the ideal Son and the

Absolute Perfection his Father, even as they are one,—disables them from forming a sound judgment in the matter.

As to the perpetuity of the joy and peace which come from 'believing,' is it not manifest that whatever lasts as long as we last, is perpetual for us? What more can we require in the way of continuance?

As a Protestant and one therefore familiar with the text of the Bible, you readily recognise the stress continually laid in the Bible on the inward and spiritual nature of that only true religion which consists in the cultivation of the ideal. Whether it be the sense of abstract perfection called in the Old Testament 'the law of God in the heart,' by Socrates his 'dæmon,' by Paul the 'inward man,' and by us the conscience; or the perfect condition called in the New Testament 'the kingdom of heaven,' and described as being *within* us; or whether it be the appreciation of the incarnate personified perfection set forth as 'Christ,' whose function it was to hold up as a standard towards which we should perpetually strive, rules of perfection so absolute that nought finite can attain to them; and who is described as being *in* us, our life and our hope, by whom we are made perfect, and in whom, when we have 'crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts'—sacrificed the real to the ideal—and become 'dead to the rudi-

ments' of the world of sense, we 'rise towards the things which are above;'—no suggestion is made that all these things are of such small account in themselves that they depend for their value on their power to procure for us some other state of physical existence. Those who think otherwise have never known with Paul, or appreciated as he did, the 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' or comprehended the meaning of spiritual religion; have never known the intensity and abidingness of the satisfaction that comes from living up to one's higher nature,—a satisfaction so complete and enduring in itself as to need no stimulus from the future; the sole satisfaction that knows no ebb or satiety.

Such incapacity, however, is but the natural outcome of that same materialising tendency which leads all Protestants, and not a few Catholics, to require an actual historical representation at some specified place and time, and by some specified individual, of the immutable doctrines of the Church, and to lay all the stress, not on the indwelling consciousness of humanity, but on the letter of the record which claims to give some special instance of its manifestation.

Repress, then, for the future this longing for assurance of immortality, and rather say to yourself, 'If I am not perfect, I am not worthy to endure. If I am perfect, let me be content: I have fulfilled my

nature, and God has fulfilled himself in me.' For this at least I hold to be self-evident:—Should immortality be a fact, the least likely way to attain the perfection which alone can fit us for it, is to convert the expectation of it into a motive either of conduct, feeling, or belief.

Such, again, is pure catholic doctrine, whether Christian or Buddhist. For, as the Buddha-Word says,—

‘To Buddhas Nirvana is the name of that which alone is good.

‘He who flees to Buddha, who clings to his doctrine and Church,

‘He will understand aright the fourfold lofty truth.

‘He who, loose from all ties of sense, has risen to the divine communion:

‘He who has thus laid aside every weight,—him alone do I call a Brahmana’ (or one who only requires death to attain Nirvana, where self is lost, or rather found, in God, the absolute ideal.)

LETTER XXVII.

OUR COUNTRY.

THE questions which throng to your mind, and which I will do my best to answer so far as my still-failing health will permit, involve more than you are aware of. For they not only range over the whole subject which has occupied us for the last ten months; but they involve a declaration of my own individual sentiments apart from Catholicism and the Church.

Well, the conclusion to which a life of close and reverential inquiry, mingled with intervals of rapt adoration, has brought me, is that nought supernatural, as the word is ordinarily used, ever has occurred or can occur. Not even 'the original act of creation' constitutes for me any exception to this rule. Nature, which includes all that is, consists of an element which assumes in the mind two different aspects, namely those which I have called respectively the real and the ideal. When we have conceived of nature as *alive*, and in the course of its eternal growth producing the whole infinite variety of forms which constitute the physical universe, we

have conceived all that the most advanced science can ascertain concerning the world of the real. When we have conceived of nature as *alive*, and in the course of its eternal growth producing the whole infinite variety of moral phenomena which constitute the spiritual universe, we have conceived all that religion can ascertain concerning the ideal, or God. For the rest, we must abandon the universal and absolute as insoluble by us, and restrict ourselves to the standpoint of ourselves. It is from this standpoint that every religion the world has seen or can see, has its rise. Man can recognise as good that only which he finds to be good in himself. Wherefore, as he cannot worship aught that does not appear to him to be good, he must worship his own best. Catholicism, or Christianity, differs from other religious systems in that it carries out this principle more fully than they do, and includes elements which they omit.

Thus, though wholly human in origin and character, Catholicism represents the best human,—the side of humanity so high and exquisite as to merit the epithet *divine*, inasmuch as it is the divinest thing humanity can know or imagine; and it is by cultivating this that Catholicism seeks to draw us up from the lower to the higher regions of our nature.

While there is thus room within the many mansions of Catholicism for all mankind, it fails to gather all in, through the operation mainly of two causes.

The first of these is the ignorance and narrowness of individuals;—ignorance of the meaning of Catholicism, and narrowness that is incapable of appreciating its breadth.

Do not suppose that I refuse the character of Catholic to all who do not adopt the name. All followers of a high and generous ideal, all seekers after perfection, in whatever department of life, are so far catholic. The narrowest sectary does but follow catholic doctrine. The tenet he selects for his special patronage is orthodox in itself; though through imperfection of his mental vision he distorts it from its true proportions in relation to the whole body of doctrine. The controversy about the respective value of Faith and Works, for instance, as agents in human redemption, is as absurd as would be a controversy about the respective values of colouring and drawing. To perfect art form and colour are alike essential; and in religion it is as impossible to show one's faith without works, as it is necessary to prove one's faith by works.

The essential characteristic of idolatry as distinguished from true religion, is the selection of some one quality or faculty for exclusive adoration. Seeking the realisation of his ideal in one 'Son of man' after another, man has had gods many and lords many, each representing for him, indeed, some quality of excellence, but none in whom he could see

of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Each, however, betokened an advance on its predecessors, until at length, in the fulness of the time, from the bosom of the infinite ideal of humanity there came forth the 'Son,' born like ourselves of a woman, made under the law of perfection, and fulfilling it in all imaginable high respects. and resuming in himself the totality at once of human nature and of the cosmical system from which human nature is derived. This is the Catholic ideal, which the sectary is unable to grasp. Remaining still pagan and idolater in heart, he prefers to pay his homage to some limited and exclusive tenet, rather than to the whole and indivisible body of divine truth. And this with the Catholic Church matured and organised, in his view! What is this but to ignore the sun, and worship some petty star as the source of light and life?

A purely human product, Catholicism represents the divinest aspects of humanity. And to accept a part of it, as does the Protestant world, and vehemently reject the rest, is to rend in pieces the seamless garment of the ideal.

If such must be the verdict of the Catholic respecting the great seceded divisions, such as the Anglican Church, think how infinitely small in his eyes must be the bodies which have seceded from them. Parts of a part, sections of a section, the religious sects of Anglo-Saxondom are impersonations of indi-

vidual idiosyncracies rather than of universal truth. Products indeed of burning zeal, though oftentimes of zeal inflamed by anything but love, they are products also of intense ignorance of the source and significance of that which they accept and of that which they reject. O missionary-loving England! Sending your apostles to convert the heathen from their idolatries, while yourself worshipping the sun under the name of Christ, and making a fetish of a book of palpably human origin. O Protestant England! hating and reviling the whole body of doctrine and worship from which your own is but a selection. O practical commonsense-loving England! resting all your hopes of perfection upon a particular record and taking no account of that side of humanity which alone makes such record intelligible. How gladly would Catholicism once more gather you under her wings, and make you partaker in her divine secret and method! As it is, for lack of that sense of perfection whose culture is the Church's special function, you are year by year sinking to a lower level both of aims and of execution. Your guides—— heavens! to think of the destinies of England being entrusted to the purblind sectaries who profane the sacred name of Liberal by arrogating it to themselves. Incapable of comprehending and appreciating the ideal, how shall you shape the real? Well, well, nature works in a mysterious

way ; and man can little forecast the issue from the character of the means. But for the labour of the scavenger the streets of London would be impassable, the metropolis of the world a desert. Ply then your ruthless besoms, ' Liberals ' of Britain. If need be, use the torch. What if the Communist of Paris on being charged with setting fire to a library, justified the act by saying that *he* could not read !

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The road to God is paved with idols.

LETTER XXVIII.

THE CHURCH ACTUAL.

I FEAR that in my last letter I allowed myself to become over-excited. The fact is, I lose all patience when I reflect on the fate with which the Anglican Establishment is threatened by people who affect to be a branch of the Catholic Church, and on the capacity for usefulness of the highest kind which, properly administered, the Establishment possesses.

It is not necessary to be superstitious to revolt from the idea of withdrawing that which has been dedicated to our highest uses, and applying it to lower ones. No one can deny that the material dedications of religion have been at least intended as an offering to what men deemed the highest in their nature ; so that the application of the revenues, organisation and fabrics of the National Church to inferior purposes, that is, purposes which are felt to be not the highest, would constitute a sacrilege. And this, precisely as even the man least susceptible of refined sentiment would feel it to be a sacrilege to transfer to a wanton, gifts which have once been tokens of

a pure and ennobling love. Fancy one's wife's jewels decorating the person of a scullion! To give to purposes of sense that which has served the soul, and so to rob the ideal for the real,—this it is that constitutes the sin of sacrilege. For what is given to the ideal, is given to God, the soul's perfection personified.

I spoke of a second cause for the failure of Catholicism to gather the world into its fold. This is not the narrowness of the human mind, nor the wickedness of the human heart,—that favourite theme of preachers who, knowing not that heart, find their ill-contrived appeals to it vain. The cause is twofold, and to the charge of the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church must each count of it be laid. These are the affectation of universal infallibility, and the assumption of temporal power.

Through its affectation of infallibility has come the substitution of the principle of authority for the voice of the individual conscience. The highest reach attainable by sentient existence is, so far as we can imagine, the production in finite beings of that sense of and impulse towards perfection which constitute the soul and the conscience. For, as I have insisted throughout, man's sense of perfection is his recognition of God, and involves that union of the infinite with the finite which constitutes the supreme Incarnation. The Holy Eucharist, whereby the Church

seeks to symbolise this incarnation, has under the operation of authority become degraded, as I have already said, from a simple and exquisitely touching allegory, of purely spiritual significance, into the grossest of fetiches, and a banquet for carnivora. Thus converting faith into credulity, and exalting itself at the expense of the understanding, authority has itself to thank for the meagreness of its reception by mankind. The intellectual or analytic faculties—equally with the emotional or synthetic demanding exercise and recognition—recoil from the suicide imposed by the principle of authority. Had the Church appealed to both sets of faculties, and by avoiding concealment and mystery set forth the whole truth, it would have enlisted the support of reason on behalf of faith, and have become as universal in fact as it is in essence.

The Church therefore erred, not in regarding itself as infallible in matters pertaining to the ideal; but in asserting its infallibility and resting thereon its claim to supremacy. It is no impeachment of its infallibility in the ideal, that it should be liable to errors of judgment, and even of spirit, in the real.

It is in this latter respect also that the second count lies, namely the assumption of temporal power, of all its errors the most fatal to the growth and stability of true religion.

It is probably true that in the first instance the

Church gained by its investment with power. But the gain was outward, superficial, and temporary, and at the expense of its best interests; like the apparent gain of a trade or a plant through unnatural forcing. Its fibre was enfeebled, and its quality deteriorated. The proper function of the Church lying solely in the ideal, its kingdom being not of this material world, it cannot be invested with physical powers without belying the essential object of its existence. Only when crucified as to the arm of flesh, and ignoring all weapons save those of the spirit, can it hope to succeed in lifting up the ideal with whose culture it is charged, in such aspect of loveliness that it shall draw all men unto it.

The essence of love is spontaneousness; and to be won to the love of perfection, whether in things moral or things spiritual, the soul must be free. As perfect love casts out fear, so is fear in its turn an inevitable counteractive to love. Setting forth the ideal—the true eternal and substantial—the Church in seeking temporal power with the hope of obtaining all power, grasped at the shadow and, as the event proves, lost both substance and shadow together. It still remains to be proved whether when wholly dissevered, in wish as well as in fact, from that which hindered, the Church will ever recover even its legitimate sway. So long as it hankers after the flesh-pots of worldly power, such an event is hopeless.

Had it renounced the 'unclean thing' voluntarily, the error might have been forgiven it. But mankind has a good memory, and what it has suffered under the material lash wielded by spiritual hands, can never be forgotten. Never to trust ecclesiastics with power has rightly become the maxim most deeply graven in the human mind. Their very habit of judging things from the standpoint of the ideal, unfits them for the control of the real. Small mercy has finite man to expect at the hands of the unconditioned and absolute, as witness the horrors of the creed of Calvin.

Doubtless the dream was a grand one, and the temptation to realise it overpowering. And even from the Church's point of view it was not destitute of a certain, though illusive, logical propriety. For, had not Catholicism held forth to mankind the spectacle of two perfect yet incompatible natures—the real and the ideal—combined in one person? Why, then, should not the fleshly and the spiritual departments of humanity be equally blended?

The consciousness of its infallibility, however, in things spiritual proved too much for ecclesiastical equilibrium. There was no State but would gladly accept the Church as a friend and ally. But the Church would only tolerate the State as a slave. Importing the same pretensions into things secular, it lost its head altogether; and by arrogating supremacy in an element foreign to its nature, drove nation after

nation into lawful rebellion;—a rebellion, alas, which so far from stopping at the assertion of its proper rights for the real, has gone on to make war upon the ideal itself.

And so the true moral of the story of Peter's sword has been lost upon the very Church that claims Peter as its founder and patron. Nay, and even the moral of the temptation of Christ himself, who when offered by 'Satan' the sovereignty of the real, refused it on the ground that the ideal only was worthy his aspirations.

LETTER XXIX.

MAN'S GOD AND NATURE'S GOD.

YOUR *resumé* of my argument is perfectly correct. I deny neither God, nor revelation, nor immortality. But I assert that every doctrine of the system called Christianity can be arrived at by the natural mind and faculties of man. And I have to the best of my ability shown you the process by which the human mind has arrived at them.

I grant you that even if Christianity is demonstrably a product of the human mind, it does not follow that it is the less a revelation from some source more divine than that mind. The animating spirit of the universe may work through man from within, as well as on man from without. But it is impossible for man to prove that results thus attained are not the natural thoughts of his own mind. And when the suggesting causes of his thoughts are plainly ascertainable, as we have seen them to be, all pretext for ascribing them to aught supernatural vanishes; and we are compelled to acknowledge that

the theology set before us by the Church is but a sublimation of our own nature.

I will now reply to your question as to what I meant by saying that the God of the naturalist has nothing in common with the God of the theologian; and I shall thereby strengthen the proof that the latter is merely the reflection of ourselves, by showing how very much the former is the reverse of ourselves. Of course by ourselves I mean the best side of our nature. The worst side we have bestowed upon the Devil.

I must observe here, however, that the recognition of the principle I have stated is never suffered to be more than a tacit one. Ecclesiastical Councils, Synods, Congresses, and Convocations are far too wary to proclaim to the outside world the nature of the criterion or Canon whereby they determine the truth or falsehood of any doctrine. If any of their members show themselves so unsophisticated as to appeal to the Bible, they are covertly laughed at as simpletons, and overruled by the others who are in the secret, and who proceed to their decision on principles unsuspected by the worshippers of a text, sometimes, perhaps, unsuspected by themselves! Whenever you wish to check one of these decisions, all you have to do is to take the broadest possible view of human nature, project it in your imagination into the infinite, and regard it as divested of limita-

tions. If the doctrine in question prove proportionate and harmonious with the whole of human nature—on its good side—thus treated, it is an orthodox dogma, and predicable of the God of the Church.

But how little a deity thus constructed in the image of man's best has in common with the actual creator of the world, becomes startlingly apparent when we think of Christ, the divine son of divine love, the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the Passion at Gethsemane, whose ardent love of perfection and sympathy with humanity led him to devote himself to the death in relieving suffering, denouncing cruelty and injustice, and preaching the *régime* of ideal perfection : and then think of him as creating a world in which the struggle for existence and its indispensable selfishness are the conditions of continuance, and the vast majority of living creatures are formed expressly to prey upon each other. Christ impose their habits on the Carnivora ! Little attention could the learned and pious Alexandrian, or the spiritual enthusiast his disciple who composed the fourth Gospel—the profoundest and most exquisite piece of anthropotheistic idealism ever penned—have bestowed on the facts of animated nature, when they contemplated as the Divine Word him by whom all things were made and without whom was made nothing that was made.

Assuredly whatever the God of theology may be,

the author of nature finds no counterpart in man's best, and is no product of his idealisations. For, lovely and delicious as nature is on one side, it has a side that is exquisitely horrible and revolting. Scanning nature's universal untiring eagerness to appear in one form of life or another, the profoundest scrutiny of science is compelled to regard it as a vast mechanical apparatus working on principles utterly exclusive of moral considerations. Doubtless the sum total of pleasure is greater than that of pain. Hardly otherwise could the world go on. It would become a scene of universal suicide. But the struggle to become alive and to continue alive is carried on irrespective of justice, benevolence, or any kind of morality whatever ; and beings innumerable are endowed with an irresistible instinct to perpetuate their kind, whose express function seems to be the infliction of misery upon others.

Such is especially the case with the enormous class of parasitical animals, which in the shape of insects, worms, and various other creatures, prey upon the outside or inside of the larger organisms, themselves wholly guiltless of having done aught to merit the torments thus inflicted on them. Naturalists assure us that there is scarce an individual creature, even among the animals used for food by man, but its system is riddled by myriads of loathsome intestinal worms whose function it is to inflict suffering ; while

man himself is the victim of diseases innumerable of which living organisms are the agents,—each separate part of his body, to the very eyeball, having a species peculiar to itself to prey upon it.

This, however, for man is the consequence of his voluntary act in ranging himself in the ranks of the Carnivora. But let us take such a case as that of the horse and his tormentor, the *æstrus equi*, where no responsibility can be attached to the noble sufferer. This insect deposits its eggs on the skin of the horse. The irritation thereby set up causes the animal to lick the part. By means of the tongue the larvæ are introduced into the interior, where, attaching themselves to the membrane of the stomach at the cost of vast distress to the horse, they attain a development above that reached under any other conditions, and finally are ejected fully matured to perpetuate their race and their depredations. The very name of *gadflies*, to which the *æstrus* belongs, has become proverbial for the miseries they inflict on the Mammalia.

One member of the dreadful class of *Entozoa* is the *Tænia Serrata*. This animal makes its first appearance in the interior of dogs, where it lays its eggs. These, when dropped about on grass where sheep are pastured, are swallowed by the sheep, in whose body they change into a worm that has a special affinity for the brain. Tormented in this

region by these worms, the sheep vainly seeks relief by butting its head against trees. The *Tænia* is capable of a yet further development, but to attain that it must have a nobler abode and richer diet. When sheep thus infested are eaten by human beings, it enters the third and last stage in its metamorphosis. Boarded and lodged in the brain of man, it operates in like manner as in the sheep, inducing cerebral disease and madness.

For no breach, conscious or other, of the laws of their being, are such tortures inflicted on the lower animals, but in the legitimate use of their natural and necessary diet. And, what must strike us as an anomaly even more remarkable is the fact that, whereas the higher the development attained by ourselves, not only the less noxious but the more beneficial to others do we become,—many of these creatures actually improve, so far as they themselves are concerned, in proportion to the excellence of that which they destroy. As I before said, there is reason to believe that the general balance is in favour of happiness, and even largely so. But inasmuch as, on the hypothesis of an omnipotent, intelligent, and benevolent Creator, we can conceive of living beings as provided with instincts which would preserve them from liability to suffer or inflict misery, as easily as we can conceive of them as having instincts at all,—we are unable to recog-

nise in the author of nature the perfection which we are able to formulate in our own souls, and which religion exhibits as the God and Creator of all things.

I do not dwell on the evils incidental to man as an argument against the benevolence of the Creator; because the sufferings inflicted on us by nature are small compared with those we inflict on ourselves through our neglect of the laws of our being. It is impossible to conceive of our gaining any moral or intellectual education save by the effort to work ourselves up, through, and out of difficulties. So that although in man's case there appear to be needless evils, from which he can obtain neither immunity nor advantage, it is impossible to assert positively that there are any which may not be turned to some high spiritual end. Were man alone upon earth, he might ascribe nature's indifference to his sufferings to its supreme regard for the moral over the physical.

Here, however, we are met by the condition of animals. We cannot regard them as gainers morally or otherwise by the evils which afflict them. And their sufferings, being neither penal nor educational, are a puzzle as insoluble to us as to themselves. It is true that, on the whole, pleasure for them predominates over pain. Nature, as I have said, is one vast apparatus for the production of life. Wherever there is life, there is love in some sort, and the joys of love

are a compensation for many woes. But if pleasure be the end, why should it be qualified by so many drawbacks? And if there be—as it is scarcely possible for a whole-hearted man to avoid thinking and hoping—some universal conscious Being to feel through all his creatures, would not he, as well as they, be the happier in their completer happiness?

But our inability to perceive the moral and physical perfection we would fain ascribe to every part and detail of the universe, does not justify us in taking the pessimist view of its author's character or intentions. Our own ideal, with all its sublimity, is as much a product of nature as the real that so much revolts us. And if in human creations, when we find among the works of an artist who has reached the highest excellence, some things which we fail to appreciate, we reserve our judgment in deference to his proved genius;—still more so, when perplexed by some of the works of nature, ought the consideration of the absolute perfection we are compelled by our very definitions to ascribe to deity, as well as of the perfection attained in the idealisations of the human soul,—to make us pause in reverential humility, and trust with what confidence we can the nobler hope. It may be that a certain physical education of matter is necessary for its development into higher forms, as in mind.

But love and worship are impossible while the

mind is clouded by distrust. Nature veils its origin from us. So that if man must have a supreme object of worship, there is none to whom we can better render the unreserved homage of our hearts than the God set before us by the Church,—a being good as we imagine goodness, in every respect in which we can conceive it, even the personification of our own best. The supreme ideal of all human aspiration, it is he with whom our spirits must seek communion in prayer and in deeds; he whom, with the ideal man of our race, we must call Father; he whom we can see and approach only through the ideal; and who, thus approached and sought, will manifest himself to us, each in our own souls, though not to the world that lieth in sense: and who, if we love him with all our heart and with all our mind and with all our strength, and keep his commandments, will come to us and love us and make his abode with us, and teach us to be perfect even as he our heavenly Father is perfect.

Lofty as such an ideal of deity must appear to us, we have no right to assume that it represents the ultimate reach of creation. Man is but a single one of the multitudinous products of nature. Some of these are lower; some certainly in the future, possibly in the present, though unseen and unrecognised, higher. If one kind of creature may credit its best thought with being a representation of deity, others may do the same, down to the very lowest.

Man, moreover, has existed but for a comparatively brief space, and has seen of the universe but a comparatively limited portion. Whereas, in order to judge of the Creator fairly, we must take the whole of his work as it exists throughout infinity and eternity. To attempt to do otherwise is to judge the whole surface of the earth from, it may be, an acre of garden plot, a league of ocean, or a patch of the Sabara. But until we obtain a view that completely satisfies the requirements of our highest ideal, we have no choice but to withhold our adoration.

At present the utmost that can be predicated of the Creator in reference to ourselves is, that the highest perfection we can imagine does but represent the ideal standard towards which we and our particular kind are intended to aspire, and in no way the character of the Creator himself.

Every different species of beings, and nearly every different member of each species, has, if we may judge from the analogy of man, a different ideal of perfection towards which to aspire; each such ideal being founded on its own real.

Yet one more reflection. If we cannot credit the author of nature with being the God of our ideal, let us at least respect nature for being the producer of that God. It must have in it an element of divinity to be that.

LETTER XXX.

THE CHURCH POSSIBLE.

So you have been studying Comte, and have come to the conclusion that, like him, I find nothing left to worship save Humanity. I thank you for having frankly stated your impression, as it involves a mistake on a point of much importance.

Although Catholicism sets before us a God made after the image of man, save in respect of his personality, it is a religion of humanity in quite another sense than that of Positivism. The latter indeed affects to preserve the best elements of Catholicism, and to reinforce it by adding the element of science. But inasmuch as it takes little account of individuals and individual amendment, and aims at regenerating the world by a mechanical adjustment of the relations between man and man, it falls infinitely short of the system it seeks to supplant.

Positivism claims to be the religion of humanity in that it posits the sum of human possibilities as the sole legitimate object of adoration. It thus sets before us an object at once finite and indefinite.

Catholicism, on the contrary, though constructing its God after a human pattern, does so on a scale infinitely transcending all human possibilities, and thus exalts a rule of absolute perfection, not a rule of something merely better than we now have. And this rule of perfection is imposed, not on man in the mass only, but on every individual man, requiring of him the awakening of the conscience, the purifying of the heart, an entire re-birth in short from the fleshly and real to the spiritual and ideal. However much the Church may seem to have erred by its depreciation of one side of man's nature, namely the finite and real, Comtism commits a far greater error in ignoring the other side, namely the infinite and ideal. All the social and other science in the world can do little for us in the absence of that perfect ideal in the heart whereby alone we ourselves can be made perfect.

But Catholicism does more than supply us with a perfect rule of life and feeling. It sets before us a Person as the embodiment of its rule of perfection. This ideal incarnate becomes for the true Catholic who worships in spirit and in truth, God himself, present at once in heaven and on earth, in the heart and in the hands. The Human Possibilities of the Comtist must ever fluctuate with the conditions of humanity. Not so the infinite and eternal Ideal, the God-Man of Catholicism, who is ever present to

the soul of the worshipper who receives the Holy Eucharist in faith. Where there is no Person there is no worship, and where there is no worship there is no religion. And inasmuch as Positivism dispenses with a Person, it is a mockery to call it a religion either of humanity or of anything else. Religion is emphatically a function of sympathy, and sympathy can subsist only between individualities. If we are to have religion at all, it must be an affair between persons, even though on one side at least they exist only in the imagination.

The vast bulk of mankind recoils from abstractions. Why has Protestantism failed to obtain a hold on the masses to elevate and refine them, but that it offers them a symbol only instead of a Person? Men and women, especially those in whom the emotions are unmodified by education, cannot in their devotional moods be content with aught less than One in whom faith enables them to behold sacred feet at which they can kneel, knees which they can embrace, hands which they can kiss, eyes which can melt in tenderness and pity, lips which can speak pardon and encouragement. Take from the sacrament this divine Presence: tell them it is but a symbol; and their feeling will no more be evoked towards it than would the feeling of loyalty by a wax effigy of the Sovereign. And as Positivism is far more abstract than Protestantism, it possesses even fewer attractions for the world.

Positivism, however, has done the world admirable service in assigning a foremost place to science. And it is for the Church of the future to repair the error of the past by recognising the claim of science to share the throne of its highest regards. In this matter the theory of the Church condemns its practice. Recognising the union of two elements, the real and the ideal, in its god-man, it has virtually sacrificed one to the other by its exclusive exaltation of the ideal. The Church has now to learn that it must extend its recognition of this duality to man himself; and applying itself alike to the culture of the ideal and the improvement of the real, make religion and science the two wings whereon in the future man may mount upwards. After what I have said of the nature of the ideal, you can perceive how vain is the notion that there is any inherent antagonism between them,—at least, any greater than that which the Church teaches was overcome once and for all in the Incarnation. Man consists of soul and body; and joined together as these have been by Nature, the Church has no right to put them asunder. Hitherto it has sought to raise the ideal by depressing the real. The effect was, not to raise the ideal, but merely, at best, to extend the interval between them. Let it only recognise the truth that man's ideal is but the projection of his real into the infinite, and then, no longer fearful of entrusting men with the

knowledge, it will proclaim as a new gospel the truth that the higher we raise our real, the higher the ideal which may be reared upon it. It is with the spirit in which this should be done that the future concern of the Church will lie.

For the present, in its attempt to obtain rule by dividing these two elements, the Roman Church has sunk into imbecility. The recent enunciation of the Pope—that Christians owe no duty to the lower animals—exhibited gross ignorance even of the special function of the Church. For, setting aside the question as regards the animals themselves, it is manifest that if the culture of ideal perfection in man is compatible with the practice of cruelty to an humble and helpless servant, there is no vice whatever with which it is incompatible. The representative of the Gospel herein showed himself far behind the giver of the Law, who prohibited the muzzling of oxen while treading out the corn, the taking of the parent bird with the nest and eggs, and—by way of fostering kindly sentiments in man, even where no cruelty would be inflicted on the animal—the seething of a kid in its mother's milk.

While the Papacy, under the cover of transcendental metaphysics, is aiming at universal dominion, the world at large is manifesting indications of an approach to a new era. The modern extension of the sympathetic sentiment beyond self, beyond family,

beyond caste, beyond party, beyond country, beyond race, beyond humanity itself, even to everything that has life, demonstrates perhaps more than any other phenomenon of modern society, the continued development of the soul in man. Is it not evident that when, under the substitution of the reign of sympathy for that of the selfishness which has hitherto prevailed, there shall be no more war of peoples, no more antagonism of classes or parties, no more indifference to suffering whether of man or beast, we shall in some measure realise the promise of those new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth justice?

But, to qualify itself to foster this new regeneration and lead the world on to so desirable a consummation, the Church must be true to its own principles, must return to its first love, and renounce as an unclean thing the worldly elements to which it is in bondage. Minister of the ideal, but one thing is needful to it. And when on part of the Roman branch of the Church, the Pope announces himself content with his spiritual functions and abdicates all worldly dominion, rank, and distinction; and on part of the Anglican branch, the bishops voluntarily and with a single eye to the spiritual, vacate their temporal privileges, then perchance may we say, 'lo! here, and lo! there,' and begin to hope that the grain of mustard seed is at length beginning to shoot

among whose branches, when grown into a tree, all may find a home and a rest for their souls.

It is through misconception on both sides that we see conflicts, such as that now raging in Germany and which may yet reach England, between the State and the Church, between the departments of the real and of the ideal. Though distinct in their functions, both rest on the same basis,—the collective conscience of the citizens. The State and Church of every country represent, though under different aspects, the aggregate of citizens, but the duty of each citizen to his own conscience is superior to the obligations imposed on him by his fellows under the name of either. His own ideal of perfection is to him the God whom, rather than man, he ought to obey. In all issues whatever his conscience must be supreme ; and it is not as controller but as developer of that conscience that the Church should ever regard itself. The proper meaning of Papal supremacy in this relation is that, regarding the Roman pontiff as president of the council of conscience, the catholic citizen is bound to accept the coincidence between the dictates of his conscience and the decrees of the Pope as indicating his duty with a certainty otherwise unattainable, and to act accordingly. No man will be a worse citizen for thus regulating his conduct.

But, except through the free conscience of the citi-

zen, the Church should exert no influence whatever. Gathering up in itself all the threads of the threefold cord of human culture, Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, the Church should no more seek to be entrusted with executive or legislative functions than should a guild of literature, art, or industry. Its business is to teach, and to illustrate by example, not to rule or to take possession. And the State when encouraging art and education, and whatever tends to the higher development of its members, must logically extend its control to the Church. And this, if for no other reason than to secure to it the largest freedom and possibilities of usefulness by bringing the practical secular mind to temper and correct the extravagancies to which a body under exclusively professional influence is liable. The ministers of the Church, charged with the cure of souls, or culture of the ideal, enter a province for which their special office unfits them, when they attempt to exercise power, even though it be only over their own material fabrics and organisation.

The notion that the Church has outlived its time, and that the world, having got science, can now dispense with religion, is wholly vain. All the science in the world is of small account in the absence of that perfect ideal in the heart through which alone we can ourselves be made perfect. Science may make our outward conditions perfect. But we are more

than our conditions; and who or what is to make us perfect?

The Church, it is true, may exchange its means for others. It may discard much that in the shape of doctrine or rite it has been accustomed to use; and especially should it discard and eradicate the notion that in dealing with the supernatural it deals with aught external to humanity. It must thus suffer truth to spring out of the earth, before it can hope to prove itself an efficient minister of the righteousness that looketh down from heaven.

So long as children are born ignorant, and men continue to be imperfect, will the necessity for a Church exist. As the world changes, the means employed by the Church must change. It will not in the developed future as in the rude past, require the aid of anthropomorphic theologies, or solar myths, symbolic ritual, or mysticism in any form whatever, to keep alive the light of the ideal. But, inasmuch as that light must be maintained so long as man is possessed of a soul and sense of perfection, the institution charged with the function of maintaining it will always possess the essential element of a Church, under whatever name it may be known, or by whatever means it may work, and its culture will constitute 'religion.'

If, indeed, the existing Church ultimately fails and falls away into dissolution, it will be because

it has suffered the mystical and mythological elements in it to stifle and supplant the moral and spiritual. It is for want of the proper exaltation of the standard of personal perfection among us, that the idea of Duty is so feeble and dim, while that of 'Rights' is rampant. Family tyranny, social ill-nature, and cruelty to the human and the animal, are still rife, while the mass of workers of every degree think more of the amount of their wages than of the quality of their work,—as if conscience and perfection were vain things. The individualism of the Protestant spirit is accountable for much of this. And even if the Church is slow to abandon the old nomenclature, and insists on regarding the revelation of which it is the medium and guardian as 'supernatural' and 'divine,' let us strive to look tenderly on it, considering that whatever proceeds from that part of man's nature which is above the ordinary and secular—namely, from the ideal and spiritual—to the real and sensible, must ever be for us the divinest, and possess the highest sanction attainable. This and science constitute the only true 'revelations.'

As with individuals, so with peoples. If nations are to flourish and endure, they must keep ever before them, burning clear on the altar of the national heart, that ideal from whose bosom springs the righteousness that alone exalteth a nation. Seeking power, honour, wealth, luxury, kingdoms innu-

merable have risen up, endured for a space, and then passed away, because they followed the real and the transient—ends merely utilitarian and temporary—instead of that ideal which constitutes the Everlasting Perfection, even the God whose kingdom ruleth over all and abideth for ever.

.

And now, sweet friend of my life, adieu. The time appointed for my departure for the warmer seas and gentler airs of the southern hemisphere has come, and in a day or two I embark in further search of the San Graal most prized by mortals—physical health. I will not attempt to deceive you by feigning hopes which I do not entertain. Whatever amendment I am capable of has, I suspect, already been effected by this intercourse with you. For, all through our correspondence you have been a ‘real presence’ to me, and one fraught with tenderest blessings. What I have written, I leave wholly with you. The writing of it has been of infinite service to my own mind; and I prize beyond measure your assurance that it has brought peace and comfort to yours, that the stone has been rolled away for you from the door of the sepulchre, and that, secure of possessing within yourself a standard of perfection towards which to aspire, you can henceforth contemplate undismayed all chances of finite and infinite. Thus provided, you have indeed found a God who

will be to you a refuge and strength and very present help in trouble.

About your suggestion that others might derive benefit from my confessions, and your request for leave to publish my letters, I have hesitated greatly, though I can scarcely formulate the grounds of my hesitation. I now hesitate no longer. Not for worlds would I expose you to the woe pronounced against those who take away the key of knowledge; who enter not in themselves; and who hinder those who would enter in. I do not, however, ask you to publish them, but leave it to your discretion, suggesting only that you allow yourself to be guided by the wants of the times, so that, if spoken at all, they may be spoken in season. All that reaches me respecting the condition of thought and progress of events at home, makes it seem probable that such a time is near at hand. Thus do I make you a sharer in my responsibility! For myself I can now with all thankfulness say,

Liberavi animam meam.

FAREWELL.

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