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# LIFE AFTER DEATH?

## PALINŌDIA.

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SECOND EDITION.

Στέργοι δε' με Σωφροσύνα,  
δῶρημα κάλλιστον θεῶν!

EURIPIDES.

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TRANSLATION OF MOTTO :

“May Heaven's fairest gift, Sobriety of Heart, cherish me,  
[or, train and nurse me].”

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## PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

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THE small change in the usual spelling is here confined to the omission of *e* final where it is not only superfluous, but misleading. The writer hopes to exhibit and defend hereafter a larger improvement *for the benefit of all learners*; but to the revolutionary Pitman scheme, he is on principle irreconcilable.



# LIFE AFTER DEATH?

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## INTRODUCTION.

MORE than one friend has pressed me to give to the world my maturest thoughts concerning a Future Life. I am not so vain as to imagine that anything that I can write will bring this contested question nearer to a close. The contending schools seem to move on different planes, and never to meet the opposite argument. If from unwillingness to give pain to friends, those who have thought on both sides keep silence, how shall any approach to Truth be made? To state how I now view the controversy, I seem called, because in my book entitled "Theism" I have long seen that I was one-sided. I there wrote, less as an inquirer, than as an advocate. Accounting the physical argument to be quite notorious, I omitted to dwell on its real strength. Various counter-arguments I set forth, as probability higher or lower. I believe I never assumed the dogmatic tone, but I heartily labored to make my case good; not indeed because I felt any spiritual and emotional need of it. Only because logically it seemed an important complement to a Theistic creed, I tried to persuade myself of its truth.

Perhaps it is right to make a further personal statement. In reading Cicero and Plato in early days, I always regarded as trash Plato's arguments for immortality, as, I make no doubt, Cicero himself did. Therefore, as soon as I ceased to trust the scriptures of the New Testament as a divine revelation, my acceptance of a Future Life as a *dogma* at once fell away. But, knowing that so many holy souls had devoutly believed it and that ostensibly it had ennobled their devoted lives, I held

to it with a loose hand, feeling assured that if the Supreme Lord judged it better for them and for me, he would bestow a second life, as freely as he had bestowed a first life, without our asking; but if on the contrary for good reasons of his own he did not grant it, then I was sure that that was best for us. Indeed from distant years I judged, that as in a young child any anxiety as to what its father would provide for it on the morrow would be unamiable and unnatural, so in me to be anxious as to my state after death was wrongful, if I believed myself a child of God. In this spirit I wrote the closing chapter of my book called "The Soul," and on that simple basis I continue to rest. It entirely satisfies me. But I confess, when I gradually discovered my isolation and that those with whom I expected to fraternize more nearly, held as certain the tenet which to me was at most only probable, and in no sense vital, I became very uneasy; at last perhaps morbidly so. I thought I must have been entangled in some materialistic false logic, or from some defect of spirituality failed to discern what some saw as an Axiom. I sought counsel on several sides, and set about diligently to amass and organize all the *moral* arguments for future life which I could approve. They are set forth in my "Theism," in the Sections which I call one-sided. Other experiences have since gradually swung me in the opposite direction.\*

After this Introduction, I pass abruptly to the general discussion, placing first the Physical, next, the Moral side. Observe; that a soul which survives dissolution of the body *must* be either *dis*-embodied or *re*-embodied. There is no third possibility. The two appear alternately in the New Testament, confused with "calling out of the graves," and "resurrection of the body."

\* November, 1885.

## SECTION I.

## ARGUMENT OF PANÆTIUS.

No philosophy is needed, nor any scholastic knowledge, on the side of denial that the soul survives the body. By the word *soul* here is understood  $\Psi\chi\eta$  the Vital Principle, whether of beast or man. Evidently the individual soul *begins to exist* simultaneously with the organization of its body. Not only is the *body* of the offspring derived from the body of the parent, but the characteristic *mental* qualities are transmitted also. We see in each separate animal the peculiar instincts and powers of the breed; whence (in ancient phrase) we say that the soul of the offspring comes from the soul of the parent. Evidently also the soul *grows up* with the body. When the body becomes decrepit, the power of the mind lessens and activity of the soul normally declines; finally, when circulation of the blood ceases, soul and mind entirely disappear.

In the case of the horse, the dog, the elephant (animals displaying much mental activity), mankind in general regard it as *certain* that life perishes with the dissolution, as it began with the organization, of the body. That is accepted as the obvious law of Nature, and no one thinks it strange. *Until some one brings strong, clear argument to the contrary*, we must (provisionally at least) hold that what is true of other animals is true also of man. Man, no doubt, is mentally superior to the dog, as is also the dog to the pig; but in all the cases the soul is cognizable *only* as dependent on and connate with the bodily organization.

Such is the primary physical argument, substantially as given by Panætius, a celebrated Greek philosopher, of whom Cicero may perhaps be called a follower.

Some moderns throw dust into our eyes by intruding the wholly irrelevant question, "Is the soul the *cause*

"of the bodily organization, or, conversely its *effect*?" Of course every Theist holds that a Greater Cause is behind *both*. They are a *simultaneous* Product of Nature and of God. Theists and Atheists are agreed as to simultaneousness, also that, so far as fact is observable, each is a *condition* requisit for the other. Let us not run from light into darkness by allowing the sham argument, "Which is cause and which is effect?" to distract and delude us. This is visibly a sham, if applied to the elephant or the dog: we must not endure its needless obtrusion in the case of man. If the soul be with us the *Cause* of our organization, it is equally the Cause with the elephant and the dog; and if in the latter the topic is irrelevant to the question of survival after death, it is also irrelevant with us.

A friendly critic wonders that I now retract an argument borrowed from my admired friend, Dr. James Martineau, that "Comparison of the lowest does not "reveal the powers of the highest." I did not think that that topic made the physical argument, here adduced, *worthless*; but simply not *so* overwhelming, that no moral argument might outweigh it. I seem to myself to continue on the same basis. But the Moral Argument has now two sides for me, and (as in Section ix. will be said,) the Physical Difficulty greater, the more closely it is considered.

## SECTION II.

### THE GREEK AXIOM.

THE argument of Panætius is given by Cicero (Tusc. Q. I. 32) as follows: "Vult enim (quod nemo negat) "quidquid natum sit, interire: nasci autem animos;

"quod declarat eorum similitudo, qui procreantur, quae  
 "etiam in ingeniis, non solum in corporibus, appareat."  
 Here the words, *quod nemo negat*, are from Cicero,  
 asserting as an Axiom universally accepted, that "What-  
 ever is born perishes," or "Whatever has a beginning  
 has an end." If this is really a just Axiom, there is  
 an end of discussion. What began with the organization  
 of the brain ends with the *disorganization*.

### SECTION III.

#### ST. PAUL'S ARGUMENT.

PAUL himself avows that "God only hath immortality,"  
 (1. Tim. vi. 16,) meaning (no doubt) that in no creature  
 can immortality be *inherent* and *natural*. According to  
 him the resurrection even of Jesus was *not* in conformity  
 to the laws of nature, but in vehement contrast: it was  
 an extraordinary display of God's mighty power (Ephes.  
 i. 20). Christians also are to be "raised from the dead"  
 by a like extraordinary exertion of divine power, because  
 of their *moral* relation to the Christ, the *first-fruits* from  
 the dead. Only by the Author of Nature abandoning the  
 routine of Nature did Paul expect any future life. This  
 position of the argument is then intelligible and clear.  
 There is no pretence of reasoning out immortality from  
 Physics, nor any possible clash with Physical Science. The  
 Creator (according to him) for *Moral* reasons *violates*  
*Physical analogies*, just as in the other Christian and  
 Jewish *miracles*.

All this is to me *reasonable* in one who believes the  
 miraculous theory to have adequate evidence. Against  
 this I am not here arguing.

## SECTION IV.

## PLATO'S ARGUMENT.

PLATO, in the celebrated chapter of his *Phaedrus*, which Cicero has closely translated (*Tusc. Q. I. 23*) evades the Greek Axiom on which Panætius relies, by asserting that every soul is *unoriginated*, or, as he entitles it, *unbegotten*, (ἀγέννητον), because "it moves itself," and "will never be deserted by itself." It is hard to make those Englishmen who are unversed in ancient literature, to believe that one is not misunderstanding and garbling Plato; so incredibly absurd is his reasoning to English common sense. Nor is that all; but on religious grounds it is gravely offensiv. Plato's first words (*Phaed. 51*) are: "Every soul is immortal: for, what is always in "motion is immortal:"—and with him the word *soul* includes all animal life. Whatever moves itself, he maintains to have had no origin in the past, and to be certain to have no end of life in the future. This makes every living thing to be virtually a *little god*, uncreated and eternal. Thus all, whether oyster or man, are cœternal with God; and man is to believe himself to be immortal, by force of the argument which makes shell-fish, worms and butterflies immortal. Whence has Plato deduced this doctrine? From his own assertion that every soul is ever in motion (ἀεικίνητον) and "will "not desert itself"! Can any effort at wisdom be more fatuous?

Elsewhere the *past* existence of every *human* soul is inferred by Plato from the ease with which children learn. Therefore (according to him) learning is simply remembering. The children (forsooth) knew the thing, when their souls were inhabiting other bodies, and because they remember, they seem now to learn easily.

Whatever be the merits of Plato in topics which I do not profess to understand, I cannot repress nor care to conceal my utter contempt for such argument. The very notion that my soul once lived in an earlier body destroys all moral importance in the alledged immortality. For (nearly as Cicero puts it) if my soul animated the body of a hero who fought at the side of king Agamemnon, I yet cannot identify myself with that hero. I hav no intelligible relation to him; I care nothing about him; why the more should I care about my future soul? It will not be myself, any more than was the old soul. Thus Plato's doctrin of immortality is as empty of moral as of logical weight.

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## SECTION V.

### BISHOP BUTLER'S MODIFICATION OF PLATO'S ARGUMENT.

SIGNALLY unchristian in tone and spirit as was Plato's argument,—wholly destitute of the moral reasons which alone make the Christian doctrin respectable, Bishop Butler did not despair of it, and (some say) has improved upon it. He throws away the absurdity of a past eternity for the soul, and is satisfied with the doctrin that "all living power is indestructible." But this principle is not proved—nor, it seems, is it provable. No Christian can seriously alledge that in creating the souls of men and of butterflies God barred himself from destroying them: how then can they fitly be called "indestructible"? Further, in Butler's day Geology was not yet born. He did not know that rocks of vast extent and depth consist of shells once animated; while according to his theory the souls which formerly dwelt in those *billions* of shells either ar now roving ghosts or animate new bodies.



## SECTION VI.

## TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS.

THE idea of Transmigration seemed natural to an old Egyptian or Indian, or to an Arabian story teller. I scarcely believe Plato, when he represents it as not inadmissible even with Socrates. In the Sanskrit moral poetry, the Centuries of Bhartrihari, which the Rev. B. Hale Wortham has recently translated [Trubner's Oriental Series] take for granted that every human soul has lived in some earlier body. So too in our fourth Gospel, ix. 2. That the doctrine is revived in our "Hermetic Society," I now infer: for, a member writes to me, that Jesus of Nazareth "had attained full regeneration" through the fact, that his "soul was perfected by suffering in his former lives." But for this, I should have dared to assert that no educated European now believes in transmigration. The ancients supposed that if the soul of Phalaris (the Greek type of cruelty) migrated into the body of a panther, that panther would be the identical Phalaris, and that thus the tyrant would be fitly punished. Morally, it is more specious to believe, that if a man cruelly misuses his horse, he will be punished after death by being turned into a horse, because (say we) "it will serve him right." The identity of an animal seems to be lost, if it be deprived of its fundamental instincts. Not only is it impossible to imagine *what is meant* by affirming that the soul of a horse has migrated into the body of a panther; but even into the body of a bull, seems self-confuting. The instincts of the animals are contrasted. The same soul cannot have opposite qualities. Identity perishes in such a transference. If it be said that some instincts are bodily, not mental,—as the proclivity to *eating* grass in the horse and to eating



flesh in the panther,—yet other essential instincts are mental. The dog loves companionship with man; his gratitude for caresses and kind gifts is instinctive, essential and purely mental. To imagine his soul passing into a hyæna and remaining the *same* soul, is to me a contradiction. That the ancients admitted such ideas as steps of religious thought, warns us of their mental unsoundness.

No such collision of primitive instincts is involved in the idea of the re-birth of a deceased man in a human infant, the fundamental nature being in this case preserved. Nevertheless, knowing as we do how the mind and whole character of the child is moulded, built up and trained, and the highly complex variety of character in the human adult, acquired and made habitual in the course of a previous life,—the notion that the old soul can anyhow be identified with the unformed infant soul appears an error as glaring and indefensible, as any metamorphosis of bestial souls. Where religious fear crushes every attempt at criticism as a sin, of course all contradictions can be accepted reverently; but when a mind that has cast off traditional beliefs and aspires to think freely, propounds *as truth* that the same human soul has lived through a series of human bodies,—to me it betokens a state of mind too antiquated or (shall we say?) too Oriental to be argued with.

Naturalists will not even admit that the soul of a modern oyster may be the very same soul as one which animated an Ammonite or a nautilus. Hence in each new series of Geological inhabitants of our Oceans, consisting of new species, no one believes the Creative Power to have economized vital forces by using the old souls again and again in new bodies. Excluding this Transmigration, we have to supplement Bishop Butler's theory by supposing that all the old souls that lived in the vast periods of time which Geology in vain tries to measure,

ar roving, disembodied ghosts, perpetually increasing in number. The whole idea is so grotesque and so gratuitous, that respect for the wise and able Bishop seems to compel a belief, that in the present state of knowledge he never would hav broached such a theory.

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## SECTION VII.

### IS THE GREEK AXIOM QUESTIONABLE?

PLATO wanted a past eternity for souls in order to evade the Axiom, "Whatever has had a beginning, will hav "an end." This, if admitted, refutes Bishop Butler, when he dispenses with past eternity. *Can* we disown the Axiom?

In my "Theism" I hav attempted to deny its *universality*, by an argument from received Astronomy: namely, "The Planetary System had a beginning: It (as "it were) sprang out of nebular chaos, and was at length "consolidated into chronic stability, such as presents no "ground for imagining that it will come to an end from "any *inward* cause." Since I wrote that piece, Sir William Thomson has published his theory that the Sun is always losing heat. If this become an accepted fact, my argument against the Greek Axiom fails. But an eminent Cambridge Professor has propounded to me an opposit belief, that the Sun is perpetually *receiving* heat *back* by innumerable missiles impinging on its surface with velocity unimaginable; so that, for aught we yet know, as much heat is daily received back, as is daily given out.

While I still hesitate to accept the Greek Axiom as universally true, I cannot deny that it has vast weight. What is here further important,—Spiritualists lay immense stress on the *indivisible* nature of each soul. But

this at once bars my astronomical argument. For in it, the chronic stability arises from the balancing of diverse parts by forces variously directed; but if a disembodied soul be argumentatively allowed, and indivisibility be attributed to it, no analogy of such a soul (without body or parts) to our planetary system exists. The Greek Axiom is overwhelmingly powerful against the idea, that any soul can have *natural* and *inherent* immortality, except the great unparalleled Soul of the Universe.

## SECTION VIII.

### CONCLUSION FROM PHYSICS.

I HAVE always taken for granted that the Spiritualist argument does not *contradict* the Physical argument; but only tries to *supplement* it. Physical Science discovers no reason for a breach of continuity between Man and Brute: therefor general ANALOGY suggests that if the soul of the brute perishes in death, so also does the soul of man. Analogy is not demonstration, it is simply suggestiv; yet undeniably in all comparativ physiology, Analogy is very weighty and in many directions is abundantly confirmed. If the Spiritualist adduce *moral* reasons why the soul of man should survive death, though the soul of brutes does not, he is not thereby in collision with one whose Science pretends to *no* cognizance of *moral* reasons at all. Nevertheless the Analogy holds, and must prevail, *until* very solidly disproved. The moral argument which introduces a new element to transmute finite life into infinitude, ought to be intelligible to all moral reasoners,—ought to be popular, not transcendental, nor overlearned, nor fanciful:—ought to be consistent in tending to a single result, clear in

meaning, unambiguous as well as weighty; if it is to inspire confidence and afford a basis for Hope or Fear, Comfort or Warning *to the mass of mankind*, in face of the powerful Analogy on the Physical side. What weight of moral argument will be *adequate*, no words could state intelligibly: indeed different minds are sure to form different estimates. Moreover the physical reasoner insists, that a disembodied soul is a Chimæra, and his argument deserves to be answered, not skipped over, of which I certainly was guilty, though quite unaware.

## SECTION IX.

### IS IT A CHIMÆRA?

IN reply to Moral Reasons for a future life it is objected that a disembodied soul is a form of existence of which we have no specimen and no proof: therefore we cannot with any sound logic introduce it into a hypothesis for the satisfaction of our moral aspirations.

The Divine Spirit cannot be adduced as relieving this objection. He is wholly unique, having *nothing* (as a Latin poet says) *either like or second* to himself.

Cui veget nihil simile aut secundum—

He may not unjustly be entitled “the Soul which “animates all Matter,” but He is no specimen to us of a disembodied soul to which we may expect parallels.

I see not how to reprove one who argues that if the soul of a dead dog has no existence, the fact is a vehement *præjudicium* against human survival. The discriminating love and other strongly marked mental qualities of the dog admit of precisely the same line of argument which the advocates of immortality employ in proof that the human soul is “a spiritual entity, capable

“of existing independently of the material organization in which it began its existence.” That it no longer has active power, is as clear in the man as in the dog: that it is *capable* of separate existence, is no clearer in the case of the man. If the soul were supposed to be *material*, it must go somewhither, when animal life ceases; and Chemistry might try to track it. But precisely because it is *not* material, we are without any reason for supposing it to *exist*, when the organ with which it was cœval is broken up. If we admit that in the case of all other animals, the soul perishes, when the vital fluid ceases to circulate, we seem to attain a *general* law of Nature that the animal soul exists only *in, with, and by* the animal life: then to assume concerning the *human* soul exception co-extensiv with the human race, involves us in a greater difficulty than that of ordinary miracles.

Religious Miracles are in general presented as isolated facts, which can be believed as *exceptional*, without any reconstruction of physical science. But here we seem required to renounce our trust in Comparativ Anatomy, Comparativ Physiology and Psychology as Sciences. In my memory an esteemed clergyman maintained that Fossil Shells and Bones were created as we find them; he did not see that the Creator must then have aimed at deceiving mankind. So here, the wonderful harmonies discerned between the human and the bestial,—whether you study the bones, the vital processes or the mind,—seem to serve no purpose but that of misleading us, if the Analogy is *false* which argues from the Brute to the Man in a matter so cardinal as the cessation of Life when the vital fluid stagnates. We seem to need a Physiology founded on the Axiom that the human soul was from the beginning constituted in essence and quality fundamentally diverse from that of other animals, being physically independent of flesh, blood and gristle. Yet

surely all the facts point the opposit way, and the visible harmony on all sides seems aimed to deceive us, if it ought not to be trusted. If when a horse or dog dies, his soul vanishes, and is *nothing*, is *nowhere* ; but when a man dies, his soul remains *something*, *somewhere* ; the contrast must be strictly original.

Apparently to attain standing ground in this argument, a belief in Ghosts has been clung to, by certain eminent persons, of whom John Wesley may be named as a type. For a like reason, many who hav lost confidence in the Christian Scriptures eagerly embrace a revived NECROMANCY, which professes material and scientific proof that Disembodied Souls not only exist, possessing memory of human events, but ar able to impart thoughts and knowledge to us, and to act upon material objects, as in rapping, table-turning, marking a photograph, guiding the hand of a writer. Nay, I heard with my own ears a lady preach powerfully in a deep masculine voice, which those present explained as *the utterances of the deceased George Dawson's soul*, speaking by her organs. (Her *doctrin* differed notably from George Dawson's.) The belief in Ghosts, universal with the ancients, relieved them from some embarrassments which Science has brought on us.

To criticize the arguments of modern Necromancers would be quite out of place here ; yet it seems right to state two *counter*-arguments which wholly forbid me to take refuge under their sheltering roof from the missiles of objectors.

First, the power over Matter ascribed by them to secret roving spirits would vitiate our material Sciences fundamentally. Every Experiment which is made, as in Mechanics, Chemistry, &c., assumes as a *Postulate* that Matter is not tampered with by secret and arbitrary Will. If in weighing gold against lead, (to mention a very

simple case) a spirit could be believed to pull down one of the scales, the Experiment would be worthless. To sustain the credit of our fundamental experiments, we need to suppose these Spirits to be so conscientious *towards men of Science* as never to interfere or mar an observation or an experiment, however wild their pranks at other times.

Next, to believe that God would allow unseen Spirits to play tricks with us, would so alter my conception of Divine Rule, that I cannot tell how much of practical religion I should be able to retain.

If we could prove the existence of even one dis-embodied soul; or else one transmigration of a human soul into a "new house" at the moment of losing its old house (so as never to be *dis-embodied*), this would be a step forward. Our inability to prove either, involves our moral argument for "life after death" in serious tangle. For, unless we are first *nearly sure* that an arrangement which we desire on moral grounds is within the sphere of Power, it is vain to pile reason upon reason why it *ought* to exist. To reconcile human ideas when intrinsically incongruous, (like "undoing the past") is no problem for Deity.

## SECTION X.

### CONSENT OF MANKIND.

A CURRENT argument from Cicero down to Theodore Parker claims in favor of human immortality the fact that all nations believe it. The reasoner in Cicero adds, that as the concurrent testimony of mankind to the existence of Divine Power is a just ground of belief, so is it for a belief in future life for individual man.

Hesiod and Aristotle rightly lay stress on "the voice



"of many nations" (*not vox populi, but vox multorum populorum*) as "a sort of divine voice." As a ground of Human Ethics and of belief in Divine Power, I accept it as very substantial, very important: moreover in both Ethics and Theology increased knowledge and culture justify the sentiment of barbarian mankind. Ever since Newton unveiled the law of Gravitation connecting distant worlds, a man who accepts the law as a fact writes himself down as on the mental level of a Fetish-worshipper, if he deny that a Universal *Mind* is active and prepotent in Nature; which Mind or Spirit we entitle God. In these two branches of thought cultured intellect adopts and re-inforces the earlier belief. But as to human immortality the argument is sophistical. First, there is no real Consent of Mankind. Next, what consent there is, we may trace to weakness of understanding. Thirdly, advance in culture does *not* corroborate herein the thought of ruder men; on the contrary, seems rather to undermine it.

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## SECTION XI.

### NATIONS NOT UNANIMOUS.

IN Cicero's day the beliefs of foreign nations were far less known than now. Of China and Africa scarcely more was known than of the undiscovered America: even as to the Hebrew religion the grossest error was current. We cannot censure Roman ignorance. But in English authors of this century to whom the Hebrew Scriptures are familiar, the assertion that all mankind unite in believing human immortality damages their case; for it suggests that through lack of valid argument they rashly make false assertions. Nothing is clearer in



the Hebrew prophets, in most of the Hebrew Psalms and in the whole law called Mosaic, than that in the national creed (until changed by Captivity and Dispersion) no future life for individuals was taught. Next, in Roman and Greek literature and in all their Epitaphs, it is clear that life after death was not a practical belief, but only an occasional poetical fancy or flattering compliment.

Concerning Ancient Egypt we know now that three notions contended for mastery: *first*, resurrection of the flesh,—which was the apparent stimulus to embalming; *next*, the doctrine of Transmigration of human souls into other perhaps bestial forms; *thirdly*, in the Ritual of the Dead, (as early as king Mycerinus,\* earlier, I believe, than the patriarch Abraham, and thenceforward) the sacred and perhaps secret doctrine was, the absorption of the soul into the divinity by death. This, it seems, was a privilege; a higher and better lot than to reanimate a human or bestial form; the latter being a punishment. This “absorption,” which Sophocles expresses by “going back thither, whence we came,” is a delicate phrase, which prosaic Englishmen interpret by annihilation, and insult it as “dying like a dog.” We know now that also in the Buddhist creed this reabsorption into the Divine Spirit is the normal lot of the eminently blessed. And what number of the human race hold the Buddhist creed? The best accredited authority on this question is Dr. W. Hunter’s Dictionary, which assigns to them five hundred millions at present. Those who set the number lower, have to allow that in India both Islam and Brahminism have largely won upon Buddhism. Thus from the “consent of the human race” we have to except the Hebrews, whence we derive our highest and purest inward religion; the Greeks and Romans, our intellectual

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\* Rawlinson’s *Egypt*, vol. ii. p. 64.

and political teachers; and the very numerous votaries of Buddhism. When a religious minister to whom we cannot impute ignorance or fraud rests human immortality on this "consent," it seems as though his mind were drugged unawares by a traditional creed. The formula uttered by religious Moslems in dying: "From thee we came, to thee we return," has a smack of the old Buddhism, and I hav my private reasons for thinking that dying Christians ar often in reality closer to that creed than is generally suspected or than they ar themselves aware. The Christian Heaven is to us at most an *intellectual* belief, but it can hav no color or form to the *imagination*.

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## SECTION XII.

### "CONSENT" EASILY EXPLICABLE.

HOMER's poetry exhibits plainly how futile ar barbarian notions on this matter. Achilles sees in a dream his slain friend Patroclus, and tries to embrace him; in vain. Then he raves against the stupidity of ghosts, who do not know their friends. The dream givs a vivid notion of a ghost. In Cicero's dialogs we see that spectres in dreams ar adduced in proof of fact, and even the Epicureans supposed such spectres to hav a material existence, of which they must giv some explanation. To savages whose life has had its main excitement from war and hunting, nothing is more natural than to fancy and desire like employment after death: hence their effort to furnish a deceased chief with the means of continuing his old gratification. No just weight could be given to such notions, were they even universal. As well might

we argue from universal consent, that the Earth is still, and the Sun moves round it. Discerning the cause of the vulgar error, we smile at the ignorance which would give it importance. Time (says Cicero sagaciously) pulls down Error, but establishes Truth.

### SECTION XIII.

#### A COUNTER PHENOMENON.

CICERO and Lucretius (iii. 911) allude to the ejaculation over one deceased: "Ah, poor fellow" (*miser ah miser!*) The same thing continues among Christians, even when the deceased is revered as a pious relative (as, "My poor father"), however firmly they think they believe that he is "gone to a better world." I have heard this in quarters very various, and when I least expected it. The fact suggests that the heart contradicts the head. The head is possessed with a creed that the next world is a better world, but instinct forbids the reception of the idea into the heart, and suggests (as I have heard) that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." In all such cases there is no consent of the *whole man* to the idea that untimely death of one, however saintly, is a benefit and promotion to him.

An amiable preacher lately pronounced over the grave of an honored gentleman, that Death was *either* a highly melancholy event *or* matter of joyful felicitation. (I have not the actual words before me.) The inference implied was, that, unless we were willing to accept it in this case as deplorable, we must glorify the departure. But to me every *untimely* death seems mournful, even of a criminal who is too dangerous for human society. But

if death comes as the close of a complete life, after vital force is spent, it is natural and not to be regretted, though parting with one beloved is painful. A "Dilemma" cannot here yield any positiv truth.

## SECTION XIV.

### MORAL TENDENCY OF THE RECEIVED BELIEF.

AMONG average Englishmen the idea prevails, that unless a man believes "After Death is the Judgment" his oath is worthless. It is assumed that Fear of Punishment alone deters from Wrong, and Hope of Reward alone prompts to Right. This stupid error, this degrading view of man, is heard from the same persons who talk high of human nature as ennobled by an immortal soul. Many a magistrate or judge has scolded out of court with rude insult a witness whose evidence would have damaged a hostile party, when this party has cunningly objected that the witness had no belief in Judgment to come. Such wise-acre judges would have ruled that the solemn word of Joel, Isaiah or Jeremiah was not worth a straw. I try to formulate their doctrine *as accrediting* the tenet of future life; thus: "Belief in a Future Judgment is essential to make men truthful: therefore the belief is true."

But it is not true that truth is spoken so much through fear of Future Punishment, as through hatred of Falsehood and love of Justice; nor in general have the worst criminals rejected their national creed, whether it threaten them with persecution by Furies in old Greece, or by Devils in Christendom. I myself essayed an argument: "The more spiritual Religion becomes, the more does belief in a Future Life gain assent." But I am less

able than I was to assert this to be certain truth; moreover, unwelcome facts of opposit tendency hav to be considered. To this side of the question I pass.

Timidly I mention first a weakness widely prevalent, as must be judged by popular phrases. In the "next world" God is supposed to be *nearer* to us than in the present. To die, is called, "going *into the immediate presence* of God." This very prevalent idea tends to bedim or obliterate the true Hebrew realizing of the Divine Presence at every moment, and by simple faith "seeing Him who is invisible." I am quite aware that this is by no means a necessary result of believing in a Future World. Yet it seems to be a very common tendency, and in so far, adverse to spiritual life. "Enoch *walked with God*" is surely now accepted as alone describing worthy religion.

## SECTION XV.

### PRIDE ENGENDERS CRUELTY.

WHEN among reasons which weigh on the Christian (as opposed to the old Hebrew) side, I said that the belief in human immortality ENNOBLES MAN, a Reviewer seized eagerly on this avowal as sufficient in itself to decide him in favor of the belief. He had me on his side! I am since taken aback as to this "ennoblement." An eminent priest in Rome has preached with contempt of those who object to the torture of brute animals. Men (says he) must not be tortured; *for*, they hav immortal souls. Other animals ar not immortal; *therefor*, they hav no rights that man needs to respect. They may be tortured at his pleasure.—Now if this were the doctrin of one man, it might be passed by as an eccentric insanity.

But I learn that it is really CATHOLIC doctrin,\* and that historically it has leavened the vulgar Italians with dire callousness to the sufferings of the lower races. Thus, as, in common belief, princes "born in the purple" are prone to be, through royal pride, selfish and apathetic to human suffering, so the vulgar masses of mankind are, not "ennobled" by a belief that their souls are immortal, but simply made disdainful to the docile creatures on whom they look down. Disdainful? nay, but heartless; though these inferior races *hav nerves as sensitiv as the human*, and share the labors of life with their unfeeling tyrants.

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## SECTION XVI.

### CRUELITIES FROM WILD FANCY.

SOME press me with the great enlargement of the mind rising out of a belief in human immortality. Doubtless all dwelling on infinity gives width to thought, whether in Time or Space, whether in the starry heaven, the boundless ocean, the black depths of an unfathomable crevasse, or in strata which suggest Geological measures of time. The nobler and more cultured minds rise higher by such contemplations. With them a severe logic checks *the riot of Fancy, and of Poetry which apes Philosophy*. But the case is widely different with the uninstructed, to whom the indulgence of Fancy becomes a Frenzy.

I must not shrink from pressing historical facts, which attest (however disagreeable to me and to my readers)

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I since very gladly learn, how Cardinal Manning puts it. Animals (he admits) have no rights; but to torture them is wrong, because it demoralizes man.

that to barbarous man a belief in human immortality is on a large scale a *depraving influence*, propagating cruelty by a contempt of human life. This takes two courses,—contempt of one's own life, which tends to reckless bravery in war,—and contempt of the lives of other men, which leads to a sanctification of murders. Perhaps the noblest tribes of barbarians are the very men who have been possessed with sanguinary delusions; rather, their contempt of life has made them to be at once bravest and reputed noblest.

Herodotus tells us of a tribe of Getans (that is, Goths, according to Grimm) on the Danube, who believed themselves immortal. He calls them signally noble and just. Every five years they sent a messenger to heaven, to acquaint their God of their special needs. The process was as follows. They used to fling a man aloft, and catch him on three spear-points. If he died quickly, it was a good omen; but if he happened to survive, they reviled him as wicked, and had to kill a second victim as his substitute. No doubt these Getans were brave, and with barbarians bravery is a chief virtue; but when thus excited, it diffuses cruel superstition more widely. We may make sure that the victims who perished were accounted meritorious,—perhaps as Quirinus or Hercules, drinkers of nectar at the heavenly banquet.

But this Getan superstition is dwarfed by the Funeral for every chief of the Imperial Scythians. Could he who had held so lofty a station here be less than a king in the Spirit-World? Every priest or magician, every poet, was sure to say, no!—Well; as a king, he must have a body-guard and a royal household. Herodotus gives us grotesque and ghastly details, more than we need here to quote. Fifty young men and fifty horses of finest breed are killed for his military escort. Besides, he needs a wife, a cook, a cupbearer, a page, an adjutant;



—and other horses, apparently for his personal riding. All these ar killed to accompany him. Such atrocities might be disbelieved, had we not confirmations from similar facts elsewhere.

In 1661, the Jesuit Fathers Grueber and Dorville undertook to travel by land from China to India, and passed in Thibet through a desolate region called Tangut, where they found a religious practice prevalent. A sacred boy called Buth, equipped with sword, quiver and arrows, and with numerous standards stuck about him, sallied forth [on certain holy days only, we presume] to kill at pleasure whomever he met. No one resisted him; *for to be thus slain was believed to be a signal blessing to them in a better world.*—[Hugh Murray, *Travels in Asia*, 1820.]

Most persons hav heard of the Customs of Dahomey, which perhaps ar declining under European influence. The Dahomeyans ar described as tall, graceful, brave and devotedly obedient to their king. At his death, as used to be narrated, the guards issued from the palace and killed whomever they met. This was a First-fruits. Afterwards, as a Wesleyan missionary tells, deliberate “sacrifices” of numerous men, women, beasts and fowls were made for the fancy of sending *spirit messages* to the soul of the deceased monarch, and (if the missionary be correct) to the spirits of the beasts and fowls. If this interpretation be uncertain, it is yet clear that as soon as the idea of the “Spirit-World” is accepted, concerning which absolutely nothing is known or knowable, wild Fancy has deadly power to override Justice and Humanity. Dahomey is not a singular case in the modern world. Similar atrocities of superstition ar reported from other parts of Africa; and in America the killing of a chief’s war-horse to secure a mount for him in the World of Spirits hints to us how easy the step is



into slaughter of his retinue. Indeed East Indian SUTTEE, in which a widow was burnt on the funeral pile of her husband, belongs to the same ghastly family of religious fancies.

## SECTION XVII.

### FURTHER TENDENCY.

IN considering the moral tendency of a doctrine *on Human Nature*, it is vain and illogical to exclude barbarians, who have formed so large a mass: but also in civilized races and modern time we meet grave mischiefs from the "Spirit-World," where Fancy claims to wanton. From it has sprung Invocation of the Dead, prime germ of Polytheism ever reblossoming. Notoriously in ancient India, Greece and Rome, the invocation of deceased Parents and Heroes, as of Saints in Christendom, culminated into worship and deification. Even in modern India among the Theistic Brahmos a vehement proclivity to invoke in prayer the Spirits of ancestors has appeared. Nay, in philosophic Germany a like warning comes to us from the case of the accomplished historian Berthold Niebuhr, who in one of his published letters informs a friend (with apparent complacency) that he prayed to the Spirit of his first wife to aid his second wife in her birth-travail. So easily does baneful superstition glide in, since to the disembodied spirits whom we glorify no limits of Space or Power are assignable. Fancy is at the bottom of the idea which she moulds at pleasure; Fancy therefore naturally rides supreme to the end. Out of the same vagueness of the "Spirit-World" which Fancy paints in her own hues, come the vulgar beliefs in Ghosts, Magic and Necromancy, all generally debasing to the intellect

and enervating to bravery. When moral advantages are claimed for the belief that the soul survives the body, we ought not to forget the counterpoise from its fostering of superstition and *undermining of Monotheistic Worship*. Hence the severity of Mosaism against wizards and witches.

## SECTION XVIII.

### HELL AND PURGATORY.

OUR sage Judges and Magistrates claimed a belief in Hell to guarantee the validity of oaths. Little they knew of the horrors entailed by this belief, in many directions. It is not here pretended that a belief in life after death necessarily or logically requires belief in Hell Fire, much less a belief that the non-acceptance of a creed is an offence unpardonable with God. But hitherto nations have found it much easier to imagine an awful Hell than a desirable Heaven. The old Greeks readily understood Furies and maddening torment; but as to the Elysian fields, the poet of the Odyssey makes the great Achilles say, that the life of a slave on earth is far better. Until the forces of life are spent, or disease is agonizing, to desire Heaven would be morbid and unnatural. Necessarily, where future *Retribution* is received in theory, the only effective practical belief is in Hell,—a Hell not for oneself (for no vile sinner believes that his vileness deserves it), but for one's opponents, political perhaps or religious. Thus the poet Dante paints his political foes in Hell: Christians in the middle age put Moslems there, Moslems consign Christians to it. [“Come away from him!” screamed an African woman to a girl, to whom Captain Clapperton put a question. “He is a Christian, who

"eats pork and will go to Hell."] This deadly doctrine has exasperated contempt and hatred between Christians and Moslems, has hardened Christians into cruelties against Jews, into worse still against Heretics; cruelties, which without a belief in Hell could have had no lodgment in religious theories. Bigotry and Cruelty, it has been said, nowhere vanish from the multitude, until crushed out by disbelief in this authoritative creed.

It is not easy to exhaust the tale of mischief which the tenets of Hell and Purgatory are still working; but from one side only does the topic concern my present argument; viz., the question raised in Section xiv., *What is the Moral Tendency* (on\* a broad national scale) of believing in a Future Life of Retribution for Saints and Sinners? The practical result is very weak from the tenet of Heaven;—except that under religious persecution it may animate martyrs and keep them faithful to their convictions. But from the tenet of Hell, *which always tends to be the more powerful influence*, while religious credulity is unimpaired, great exasperation of malignant sentiment arises; nay, it gravely darkens the believer's view of the Divine character. A clear proof is found in a very popular argument against capital punishment; viz., that "it hurries a sinner away to the "dread Tribunal, giving him no time to repent." The multitude pity the sinner in spite of his sin and crime, but count that God will be *less* merciful and considerate than they are! When the Hell is believed to be actually Eternal, the case is worse and worse; but no "Purgatory" is ever thought to be *less* than a day's roasting alive.

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\* My Unitarian critics cannot justly forbid the inquiry *on a broad scale*. Of course my argument is addressed, not to them, but to the "Judges and Magistrates," &c.

## SECTION XIX.

## IMPROVED MODERN CREED.

AMIABLE modern Christians more and more refuse to retain with Spurgeon and the Salvationists the doctrine of Hell. Paul never teaches it, and seems in Romans xi. and 1 Cor. xv. to propound Final Universal Salvation. So in 1 Timothy iv. 10, "God is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe." But when these amiable reasoners glorify their private creed, *which the General Church has never accepted*, the thought presses, that we have no experience how it will work if generally adopted. Hitherto among Protestants, eminently in Wesleyans and Salvationists, zeal for "conversion," has chiefly turned on *saving souls from Hell*; to which the word Salvation is banefully confined.

We must hope that when no longer stimulated to practical zeal by the frightful theory that impenitent Vice damns people to Eternal Hell, they will not undervalue the noble result of converting sinners for the sake of *this* world, even though they believe the sinful "doomed to be saved" in the next world.

But when preachers do *not* rest the belief of a blessed future for us all on a miraculous revelation, yet (very often indeed) the tenet is quietly assumed by them as scarcely needing proof and encumbered by no difficulties. In Indian Brahmos this perhaps may be ascribed to Eastern heredity, which naturally imbibes ancient metaphysics and psychology. But in our "Free Christian" Churches, which disclaim authority as any basis of belief, whose laity also are well aware that miracles tampering with physical law for moral objects justly call for intense jealousy and suspicion, it is to me wonderful

that the preachers account elaborate\* argument for Life after Death superfluous.—I write under correction, if I am wrong as to fact. That the belief makes one comfortable and “ennobles mankind,” seems (as far as I can learn) to most of them a sufficient proof.

## SECTION XX.

### FUTURE OF THE WICKED.

IN the heart of every savage is engraven the motto, that “the Violent must expect like Violence;” and as Prometheus in Æschylus expresses it, “That foe should suffer from foe, is no-wise unseemly.” Incipient philosophy then sets up an Axiom, “The evil-doer *deserves* to suffer evil,” and the doctrine of “Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,” easily gains currency. If the kinsfolk of a murdered man, alledging special extenuation, accept pecuniary compensation and condone the murder, ere long the public and the law-giver take fright, lest mild treatment encourage crime: the Judge is forbidden to pity an offender, and “*Retribution without Mercy*” is enacted.

Religious thought next transfers the law of the Human to an imagined Divine Tribunal. Retribution for crime, if it be not inflicted in the present world, is thought nevertheless inevitable. When public curse follows into

\* I accept from a Unitarian minister the explanation, that I do not know of such sermons because they are not always *printed*. He adds the information that the Rev. George Dawson avowed his belief in Immortality to vary with his mood. The Rev. Charles Voysey writes to me that our belief largely depends on our power of vehement love to an individual.

the grave an unpunished criminal, surely (is the popular inference) if there be any God who abhors crime, he will punish it in a future world.—This logic widely approves itself concerning *signally cruel* tyrants, even among nations which have no serious belief of *general* human immortality. Once uttered by Prophet, Priest or Poet, the idea sticks fast. Extreme cruelty of a man, whose power forbids any human tribunal to arraign him, *must* be punished after death, *somehow, somewhere, by some* unseen deity.

So felt and so judged Pagan Antiquity. Even after the special mythologies were exploded by philosophic thought, it was hard for philosophers themselves to disown the claim of "late-avenging Retribution." They discerned that punishment, if delayed and put out of sight, very ill deters a hardened conscience from crime; moreover, that to punish a criminal after death brings no solace to his victim; therefore such punishment is mere futile Vengeance, in fact, is *useless Cruelty disguised as Justice*. Though they were unable to believe it, yet in argument the popular instinct was distressingly against them and difficult to parry. MERCY was in a human judge an unpermitted weakness: could a Divine judge be so *weak* as to let off a high criminal with impunity?

Greek and Roman philosophers, unable to accept as Justice punishment that comes too late, adopted as moral the maxim of assassinating a tyrant who dominates and crushes the human tribunal before which he ought to be arraigned. Thus Timoleon for assassination of his brother was honored by all Greece, and to his last day was held to be a model of virtue; thus the assassins of Caius Julius were panegyricized and envied by Cicero. But in the latter case events painfully showed that to slay the tyrant did not slay the tyranny.

With the old PAGANS Nature and God were not

identified. Their chief God was a sublime Potentate, sitting external to Nature. Nature or Fate had allotted to every God his special task. The tyrant Phalaris, if brought up before the tribunal of Pluto or Rhadamanthys by the Furies, and permitted to defend himself, had no case for turning on his judge and asking: "Why did not you arrest my career earlier and rescue the innocent from my cruelty?" For the judge would reply: "Fate gave me no jurisdiction on upper Earth; my sole function is to punish *here* those who were guilty *there*. With CHRISTIANS and JEWS this after-death tribunal is only an anachronistic survival of a Pagan theory which with us is illogical and worse than absurd.

For, God is with us the animating power of Nature, the force by which we breathe and live, a Mind cognizant of our purposed wickedness. A magistrate who knows that crime is being planned, yet remains inactive and allows it to work cruel wrong on the innocent, though he has police force abundantly at hand, is condemned as AN ACCOMPLICE in the crime. We cannot attribute to the Supreme Ruler *inability* to cut short the career of the criminal, yet (for his own excellent reasons) he deliberately refuses to put forth his resistless power. This undeniable and glaring fact utterly overthrows all analogy to a human tribunal and human *processes* of Justice. The Power which calmly allows the perpetration of cruel guilt, *cannot* rationally be supposed to promote justice *on the same lines* as a human magistrate. Therefore all argument of a future tribunal based on such analogy is utterly futile. Delay of action until action is too late to save the innocent, foils all our reasonings from the imagined analogy.

"As the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways higher than your ways," saith the Lord.—*Later Isaiah.*



ἰθεὶα Διὸς ἐν παναληθῶι  
 Διὸς ἡμερος οὐκ εὐθὴ' ρατος ἐτύχθη.  
 δουλοὶ γὰρ πραπίδων  
 δάσκειοι' τε τείνουσιν  
 πόροι κατιδέων ἄφραστοι.\*—Æsch. *Suppl.*

No plea for a future life is weaker, than that without it many wicked will escape punishment. But do they escape it, in this world? Very often, *perhaps*. I do not hold, with Socrates in Plato, even that the worst and most cruel tyrant is sensibly miserable: deadness of conscience encrusts sensibility. The bloodiest of the Huns or Moguls had no more consciousness of cruelty than English sportsmen in a battue: nor possibly had Nero or Torquemada. But however prosperous a selfish or malignant man may be, he forfeits all the highest joys; for these spring out of unselfishness and active love. *How much* bad men punish themselves, only the All-seeing Eye can know. I do not pretend to clear this great argument and "vindicate the Most High." Faith is severely strained by the awful results of stupidity and dull selfishness,—say nothing of wanton cruelty; but whatever the strain on Faith, no relief is brought by the theory of Punishment in the Future; for, it comes too late to rescue sufferers; *which is the vital point*.

No Tartar, no Roman, no Russian tyrant could act with extreme inhumanity, were not his tools callous-hearted. In our days, after War has been softened in many respects, Gibbon avows that even now (ch. xxvi., first paragraph) War is "*out of all proportion* more calamitous than earthquakes, deluges, hurricanes and "volcanoes." War from a Maria Teresa or a Victoria may cause miseries *worse* than those of a Nero. War-

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\* "In the straight line of Jove, though truthfully drawn,

"The heart's desire of Jove is not easy to track.

"For the paths of his heart stretch winding and overshadowed,

"Uncalculable in the survey."



loving princes and statesmen could not now inflict on the world this awful pest, had they not standing armies under hirelings ever eager for "glory;" *that is*, eager for the job of wholesale murder, with promotion to follow: perhaps elevation to the Peerage.

Before the age of Constantine the military profession was not accounted consistent with Christian *duty*. "Be not partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure;" said good St. Paul. But now—the Churches make no protest against hiring oneself to be a *blind* tool of slaughter; our Anglican Church seems to glorify the profession. What is this, but to take part in a system of crime, and then claim that *God* will revenge it in a future life? *Does not He claim of us to do our best to hinder and prevent it in this life?* Who can imagin how different the world might now be, if in the last 1550 years the Catholic Church had continued to brand the *trade* of the hired soldier, ready for any or every war?

## SECTION XXI.

### COMPENSATION TO THE WRONGED.

Two typical men, Leibnitz and Baxter, thought an Eternal Hell necessary to God's justice, and deserving of applause from all saints. But now from a far more compassionate heart with a mind untrammelled by traditional creeds rises a fervid claim of Redress in a future world to the innocent men or brutes who have been wronged in this life. In bolder, harsher tone it is asserted,—"*If there be no future life, God is UNJUST to wronged innocents.*"

Such utterance from one in present agony, would elicit only pity and respect. Yet nearly every martyr

expecting cruelty, if asked beforehand whether he would count it a mercy never to have been born, would emphatically disown the thought as false and impious. No one can measure the *quantum* of another's pains; but it is to me credible that the pangs of some diseases and of some accidents (as from fire or fracture) equal the worst misery which artificial cruelty can inflict. But what patient, in his severest pang ever called out: "God owes me a *compensation* of bliss in a future world for these torments." If no sufferer, except in madness, ever put in such a claim, *who* and *where* is the plaintiff who thus arrains the Author of his life, saying "God has been *unjust* to me in this world, and thereby is in an arrear of *debt*, which he is bound to repay to me, his creature, in some future life?" If any one seriously presses the argument, that God's world, as we know it, is so bad, as to make the Author liable to a claim of compensation for negligence and delay of justice; the reasoner seems bound to answer the question: "How otherwise would you have the world fashioned?" John Stuart Mill drew an awful picture of elemental ravages in this world, as displaying the utter heartlessness of its Maker [if there were a Maker]; but he did not venture to tell us under what physical laws this world *ought* to exist, *if* its Author were benevolent. Philosophy becomes as childish as Epicurus, if it undertake such problems. If painful necessity forced on me the conclusion that this world is an "utter failure," and that in it God deals "unjustly" with his own creatures, I should lose all confidence that he will be any the more just (as I measure Justice) in a future world. To avow that "Compensation for Wrong" is required from him, appears to me a fatal concession from a pious Theist.—But I am asked, "What comfort will you be able to give to wretches,—diseased and dying, guilty perhaps, yet foully wronged,—if you cannot

“promise them redress and happiness in a future blessed existence?” One question may be answered by another: “What comfort hav the believers in Eternal Hell and Heaven for 1700 years past been able to giv effectually “to nineteen out of twenty of the cruelly wronged and “miserable?” and “what to the pious who ar aware that “many of their dearest hav died impenitent?” It is no new fact, however painful, that it is hard for the outsider to bring comfort to the miserable by *any abstract doctrin*. A kind heart, prompting kind deeds and kind words never fails to bring *some* relief. To cultivate such a heart, is excellent: but not, to make the pleasantness of a doctrin any more than of a reported fact, a measure of its truth.

## SECTION XXII.

### MY OWN IDEAL OF HEAVEN.

ALL my life I hav never particularly wished to go to [the Christian] Heaven. It is certainly too monotonous for an Eternity. The *negativ* side of it sounds all right. Absence of pain, of mental disquiet, of cold and heat, of hunger and thirst, of turmoil and contention, of toil and weariness, of sin and death,—thus much I understand, and for a moment approve; but all this is completely provided in the old Hebrew grave, without any after-life. To make a new life desirable, it must giv us something to do, something worth striving for, and *a career by which we may improve in Virtue*. Some modern speculators hav suggested that in Heaven we shall all learn the mysteries of Science and more beside. Just so, Cicero’s talker imagins that his soul, escaping from the body, will mount aloft in the atmosphere until it floats steadily

in a stratum of its own density, and then will delight itself in the magnificent spectacle of this Earth in all its parts, its geography and its landscapes. Moving about with inconceivable velocity (for what is so swift as Mind?), without toil it will enjoy endless scenes of beauty. (Tusc. Q. i. 18, 20.) But Beauty and Science in entire isolation cannot satisfy a human soul or mind long. We emphatically need moral relations, old or new. If we ar to retain activ powers, we need some objects that worthily call out those powers. If we ar to increase in Virtue, we need occasions for *self-denial*, *self-controul*, and *self-sacrifice*. But these cannot exist, where there is no want, no offence, no pain. Want and pain, toil and trial, cannot be wholly banished out of *my* Heaven. Pursuing the thought, I find (like the simple savage) that no world is to me desirable, which has not *the elementary principles* dominant with us: only let not their sterner forms be in such excess as to crush immature virtue. Out of this I infer, that, but for man's misconduct, this world is in the main as good a world as we can wisely desire. If only,—if only!—the better men could rule over the worse, would not that make upon this Earth as good a Heaven as we ar capable of receiving?

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## SECTION XXIII.

### A HEAVEN ON EARTH.

Is it Quixotic to imagin the better men ruling over the worse? Which class is the more numerous? The answer partly varies with time and place, partly depends on the meaning of the epithets. Nowhere can the Many stand criticism by saint or sage; yet the Many every-

where hav a deep interest in Justice, and those who profit by Injustice ar the Few; while from Injustice spring the great miseries of this world, entailing Enmity, Crime and Vice. Were not a vast numerical majority on the side of Law (which is supposed to be Just) crime could not be punished. In every industrious, law-abiding community the popular sentiment for Justice vastly preponderates, and is amenable to wise exhortation. To be practical, let our argument be confined to England. Those who claim to be "the Salt of the Earth" hav, as their proper function, to rally the force of Opinion and direct it to the aim of making the national *institutions* and the national *policy* just. Old institutions, founded on conquest, ar seldom likely to be just. A true Church must be open-eyed on this point. It would hav been Quixotic at the birth of Christianity to deal with national affairs. Apostles necessarily limited their task to saving *out* of the world "an Elect Remnant." The time of "leavening the whole mass" was not yet ripe. But three centuries later, the Bishops of the Church woke up to a new ambition of claiming the whole world as "the kingdom of God and his Christ." How and why they failed, this is no place to tell: but that the failure was complete and disastrous is manifest in the horrible fact, that after fifteen centuries more, to this very day, without public rebuke, Statesmen who prate of Christianity act as though *Might made Right*.

There always hav been individuals (and there ar plenty among us now) so unselfish, so sympathizing, so loving, so just, so thoughtful and discreet, so activ in lessening temptation to immature virtue, that they make a *little Heaven all round them*; but they ar seldom aggressiv against public evil. Individuals ar not strong enough. Societies ar formed to contend against *special* evils; but however useful this may often be, they constantly thwart

one another, each claiming precedence. Only Christian Churches, or other Churches united on our common Morality, comprizing a massiv force of men and women *pledged to ALL VIRTUE*, ar equal to the battle against Ambition and Avarice. Ambition in a Court turns on royal or national pride. Ambition in military, naval, or civil servants and aspiring merchants turns almost wholly on AVARICE, which crushes and corrupts weaker nations, demoralizing us at home. Let us hope that the Churches, learning their strength, will learn their duty better than hitherto, and abandoning partial interests, will struggle for universal Justice, alike in legislation and in Foreign policy. If England led the way, many other nations would follow, and the effort which Little Faith calls Quixotic would redound to world-wide blessing.

Hitherto, alas! the Churches seem to hav interpreted the sacred prophecy that "nation shall not make war "against nation," in the curious sense that there is to be no war *in Heaven*. Else,—did it never occur to a single Bishop, that to bring about fulfilment of the prophecy is the Church's sublime task? Must we wait for Disestablishment to moralize the Clergy?

## SECTION XXIV.

### WILL THE FITTEST SURVIVE?

ACCORDING to the New Gospel all ar "to go to Heaven." All human souls ar traditionally accepted as immortal; souls of babes, souls of barbarians which rejoice in bloodshed, and hav little more moral development than apes and lionesses, which love their young. From a Catholic priest I learned that, under certain circum-

stances, to baptize an *unborn* child is approved by the Church. Ar we thus to extend the idea of inevitable immortality?

Yet if that *exceptional boon* is to be granted for *moral* reasons, the grant (methinks) would discriminate morally. The theory suggests as program,—(1) annihilation to all to whom immortality would be as encumbering as to dead wolves; (2) continued life to all who hav passed well enough through God's primary school to be fitted for an upper form. Under this regimen, Darwinianism would triumph; for the Fittest would survive.

## SECTION XXV.

### MY OVERSTRAINED ARGUMENT.

I HAV never been able to giv up the belief which pervades both Hebrew and Christian thought, that God verily has a "peculiar people,"—his "fellow-workers." Proceeding from this basis, I hav overstrained an argument in my "Theism," and am bound to retract it. This world (I argued) was designed by its Author to be a School of Virtue to man, his highest creature in it. But if Virtue, by Divine decree, perish with each virtuous man, then the Divine aim is thwarted by its own enactment, and a normal blight seems even to impair the Divine Counsels and the Divine Bliss.

I now argue against myself as follows. If the Divine aim be the moral advance of *the race collectively*, it is not necessarily made void when good souls cease to liv: *for*, their Virtue may hav helped forward the Virtue of survivors, as in Science the "Lamp" is passed on. The nobler souls do not liv in vain, if *their work* survive;



and each will say gratefully: "Lord! now lettest thou "thy servant depart in peace," when his handiwork has been prospered.

Another side of the topic has since pressed vehemently on me. Though Virtue is our most sacred possession, without which Life is not to be coveted, and therefor is that which, as we hold, God most approves in Man, (*θεοφιλέστατον*, to use the phrase of Aristotle,) yet Human Virtue is in its essence largely relativ to Human circumstances and almost requires such circumstances for its exercise and maintenance. In the Christian Heaven neither Chastity nor Bravery nor Compassion nor Prudence nor Generosity nor Justice nor Longsuffering can hav any exercise. This single fact weighs heavily against the idea, that, when torn up from its own soil, any human virtue can hav absolute value great enough to be preserved (as it were) *in vacuo* by exceptional physical law, or sacredly in-urned as a memento, after its occasion is past. Everything distinctiv of the individual seems to vanish when all the dearly-earned peculiarities ar stripped off or locked up, which, admirable in this world, ar superfluous in the *quasi-angelic* state.

## SECTION XXVI.

### CAN VIRTUE PERISH?

FROM the treatise of the celebrated Malthus, I think, I learnt the formula, that God ordained this world as *a manufactory of Virtue*; a doctrin which seemed to point further to a belief, that he would not permit the loss by death of a product elaborately earned or bought at vast price. But now I am pulled back by perceiving that nearly all our separate Virtues, especially those that ar



gained or sustained by earnest effort and grave sacrifice, are virtually lost in the *Christian* Heaven; while it is hard to imagine *any* Heaven in which they will grow and thrive, unless its climate approximate to that in which they were nativ. A further inquiry arises, whether pious Christians would think it a boon from God to live a second life in a world *sufficiently like* to ours to need and maintain our Virtues. I half remember from old days a hymn on the dying Christian, in which, after a whisper from him that "Worlds should not tempt him" to accept a second "dreary life" such as the present, the hymn-writer closes with the verse :

Thus spake the Christian, firm possess  
Of Faith's supporting rod :  
Then breathed his soul into his Rest,  
The bosom of his God.

This verse suggests (and to me other facts support the belief) that the "Rest in God's bosom" for which many a Christian longs, is not perceptibly different from that "Absorption into the Divinity," which, in the Egyptian Ritual of the Dead and in the modern Buddhist Creed; is greeted by English scorn and gibes. Virgil well understood that painful effort was wisely planned for man by the Supreme power. He tells us :

Pater ipse, colendi  
Haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem  
Movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda,  
Nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno.

An Eden, a Paradise, such as under ancient *Saturn*, would, according to Virgil, have been the torpor of mankind. True and sound philosophy. Effort is essential to progress. In the finite Being, Rest, unless as preparativ for new Effort, is Stagnation. Indeed, if a *superlative* Virtue can only be attained and "perfected by "suffering" (Heb. ii. 10), then no future Heaven can be characterized as a Rest, but rather will be a wrestling

ground, where higher and ever higher Virtue is to be laboriously earned. If such lofty Virtue is destined to become a reality, beyond a doubt it will hav an inward well of joy unimaginable. Possibly some ambitious souls may aspire to be "baptized with this baptism;" but the many seem to pine for a royal and easier road to the celestial plateau. These thoughts somewhat hint that a single life may be quite enough for average saints, who hav "served their generation by the will of God, and "then fallen asleep." It is not for us to deny, that Eye hath not seen nor Ear heard what the Secret Counsels may reserve for some. My sole question now is, whether it is wise and legitimate for the preachers of *unauthoritativ* religion to announce future life as an ascertainable fact, that ought to influence Theory, Sentiment or Conduct. To pretend that it is essential to having any worthy religion at all, is not only a wonderful historical error, but a very pernicious one in the face of modern material Science.

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## SECTION XXVII.

### THE RELATION OF MAN TO GOD.

FOR more reasons than one the relation of the Dog to Man seems instructively to represent in some respects that of Man to God. Man's normal life being five times as long as the dog's, no man thinks of a dog as his life partner. For his death the master has a short grief, but to *cherish* grief would be a weakness. In the unequal friendship the inferior givs far more love, yet is not wronged; for he gains the full satisfaction of his nature. The man is to the dog vastly more than the dog can be to the man; yet the two hav moral affection in common.

They hav in common love and hatred, and other emotions. The dog *apprehends* the man, understanding his commands and believing in his love, yet certainly does not *comprehend* him.

Between God and Man the gap is prodigiously greater than between Man and the Dog. Our failure to comprehend the mighty Superior, whom yet we apprehend, is out of all proportion vaster. If there be in the man something divine, much more is in the dog something human; much ampler also is God to us, than anything that all men can be to him. Human love to God can only be, or mean, with an intellectual belief in his Supreme Goodness, a love of *all* goodness in the abstract; *therefor* supremely to him. Such love and reverence ar due to him, just as obedience to us from the dog: but love *on the same basis* men cannot hav from God. A man is not heartless to his loving dog in calmly accepting his timely death: must God be accounted reckless of his grateful devotees if he does not make them sharers of his own Eternity?

## SECTION XXVIII.

### IS ETERNITY COMMUNICABLE?

THE question further presses, May not Eternity like Omniscience and Omnipresence be a special peculiarity of the Most High? I marvel at the levity with which many Christians scoff at any who doubts of human immortality. In reply to insult sometimes unsparing, it is vain to ask, "Would you fling such words at Isaiah "and Jeremiah?" for an average Christian is too deeply drugged with dogma. But to one who can listen, I reply:

Do you really think a saint's life of seventy years to be a mere dog's life? Surely the question is, *How* a man lives, not *how long*.

Antiquity believed that man could be deified: we regard this as the babbling of childhood. The Infinite One is in permanent and necessary contrast to all his finite creatures. It is not piety, but folly, to suppose his illimitable power, his illimitable knowledge, his illimitable reach in *space*, imparted to one of us. Who can wisely reverse the presumption in the case of illimitable *time*? To propose as a dogma, an Axiom, that man is to be co-eternal with God, is to me like an infatuation. If any one believe it on the ground that it is *miraculously revealed*, that is quite another matter. But to present it as a first principle, is simply inadmissible: and if it be argued out morally, it must be held modestly,—as an opinion, or a personal conviction,—not as a dogma. Certainly *a priori* all analogy concerning the Infinite and the Finite is strongly adverse to the notion.

But I here add a protest not superfluous. It is indiscreet to use the grand phrases, *Eternity, Immortality*, and exposes us to attack by the Greek Axiom.\* The Power which gives to Man eighty or one hundred years of life, does not communicate any Divine peculiarity in granting a second or a third limited term of life; and so on, however often repeated. *If* there be no intrinsic contradiction, or other absurdity, in the idea of a human Life *renewed* after Death, argument for it is admissible without invading the characteristics of Deity.

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\* Section ii., above.

## SECTION XXIX.

## THE JOY OF RE-UNION.

UNDOUBTEDLY the present contemplation of joy in the future meeting of the tenderly beloved is very fascinating. I find it hard to read without unmanly tears Southey's lines on Ladurlad and his daughter meeting the deceased mother in Paradise (*Kehama*, canto x., Mount Meru.) But how is this topic (which kind friends press on me) connected with the present argument? Can it be implied that *whatever is pleasant to believe is true*? Truth is often bitter to digest; but Falsehood,—indeed *all Delusion*, draws endless mischief after it, if not to the individual, yet in its further growth: therefor Truth, even if it be bitter, ought to be welcomed. But temperaments and circumstances vary. Years ago, in converse with an amiable and very thoughtful widow, I asked whether in the loss of dear ones she had found the hope of meeting them in a future world a sustaining power. To my surprize she answered: "Oh! the idea of meeting "would be quite painful, utterly embarrassing." For a test case I take what I hav just now read in a newspaper. A young couple ar married in the morning: in the same afternoon the bridegroom ventures on the ice, and is drowned. Will it console the bride to say to her: "Weep not! for in due time you will rejoin your lost "lover in heaven?" Alas! she expected to hav him in this world as her life-partner, perhaps as her bread-provider, certainly as her protector and friend, to soothe her in grief and sympathize in joy. How cold the comfort, to assure her that after she has fought perhaps a hard battle of life, bereft of her dear one while she wants him, she will regain him where she will *not* want him, after she is mentally so changed, as perhaps not to be recognizable. Deviation from the Physical Analogies

for a moral purpose, requires weighty reasons and a complete result. Jesus is said to raise from the dead a youth who was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: there the consolation is complete. But to re-unite the widowed mother and her son in a distant and unknown future, is certainly a lame result from the moral correction of physical law. Is it not possible, that when consolation from this topic is administered conventionally, with intention however kind, reticence is imposed by good taste on one who gains no real assuagement. *In precisely the cases which most need it, this ground of consolation signally fails.*

Elsewhere I have adduced the case of a good mother made wretched by a graceless undutiful son who has died impenitent. The logic of the Christian Church for 1700 years bids this mother to believe that her son is gone to an eternal hell, and comfort herself by the assurance that *she* is herself going to a happy heaven. The new school which rebukes me as *flippant* for the argument, has to *put its own new wine into old skins*; and, while glorifying in theory the doctrine of Jesus, marvellously transforms his "worm that dieth not and his fire unquenchable" into something of totally opposit spirit.

Whatever the first joy of Ladurlad, however delightful the remembrance of his earthly affection and its object, Southey's heaven provides for his hero no material to elicit or sustain his love for Yedillian, such as on Earth daily wants, mutual service, mutual thoughtfulness, common joy, common sorrow afford.

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## SECTION XXX.

### YEARNING FOR GOD'S KINGDOM.

NOR does this yet touch the bottom of the matter. A right-hearted man has no desire for anything in his

own future *at all to compare* with his longing that Truth, Righteousness and Universal Mercy may triumph; especially on that area on which his knowledge is most complete and his interest keenest. Next after praying that we may ourselves hallow the thought of God, zeal that God may be everywhere obeyed ought to possess us, according to the received "Lord's Prayer." He who rejoices in God's coming kingdom, better fulfils the ideal of God's servant and fellow-worker, than he who rejoices in his own personal prospects and future ecstasies of spiritual joy. A rude ancient Roman, a not very virtuous French soldier, accepts the pang of his death-wound with joy, if he believes it has contributed to the victory of his country. In this idol of his fancy, however ill-deserving it may be, he entirely forgets and sacrifices himself. Hav we not something to learn from his wild virtue? If we choose our paramount object of desire wisely and rightly, the less we think of our own future the better. When the progress of *the kingdom of heaven* chiefly kindles our enthusiasm, we easily forget self, longing only that Sin may vanish and God may reign *actually*, wherever ar creatures capable of Sin and Holiness. Only on this Earth do we *know* of such creatures. Concerning planetary inhabitants and angelic beings we only guess. Therefor precisely concerning the future of *this Earth* does it seem most reasonable for a *heavenly-minded* man to be specially concerned. To *liv* and *see* the kingdom of heaven triumphant is naturally his dearest wish. Nearly such was the Hebrew aspiration: "Oh visit me with thy "salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen and "glory with thy inheritance."

We regard Wilberforce as eminently favored,—so too Charles Sumner, Garrison and Wendell Phillips, because they lived to *see* the triumph of Negro Freedom, to which they had devoted their lives. What we cannot hope to



see or hear, we anticipate by Faith, which, buoyed up by undemonstrable Hope, becomes to the heart a substantial evidence; the Faith that the kingdom of Charity will triumph there, *where the heart has most ached for it.*

This in fact was the true primitiv Christian faith; that God would establish his kingdom here over men in flesh and blood. The saints were to share Messiah's triumph, to sit beside him on his throne, as in some sense superintendents and agents under him. The joy was not selfish, for it turned on the prevalence of Righteousness to supersede the reign of Satan. Contrariwise, in the modern Christian notion of Heaven, *the broad, unselfish desire is evanescent, and the purely personal desires ar made prominent and paramount.* For a moment it seemed to me, that to look serenely from above and see the advances of God's kingdom on this Earth would be an intense joy; but I quickly had to check myself. Only He to whom a thousand years ar as one day, could look on without agonizing impatience, if in the future the advances of his kingdom ar to be slow as in the past. *If so, then:*

"Quid æternis minorem  
Consiliis animum fatigas?"\*

It is better to believe, than to watch inactively.—But Hope, Faith and Charity all suggest, that the future advances will be more rapid, though Little Faith call the idea Quixotic.

## SECTION XXXI.

### WHAT IS IDENTITY?

No one can care for his own future life, unless he is convinced that his identity is preserved, when his soul is dis-embodied or re-embodied. To me no question is

\* "Why out-wear thy soul, unequal to Eternal Counsels?"—*Horace.*



darker than "What is the test of Identity?" Practically it is by memory that each makes sure that he is the same person. This suffices, while the brain is in a normal state: but in a morbid state, as in an ugly dream, a man may have false memories, so as to fancy he has committed crimes. Other anomalies of the insane are attested: yet no one supposes that Identity is lost in such disease. Indeed if it were, much more would it be lost by death which dissolves the brain.

Moreover, memory of eighty or one hundred years on Earth is a very poor *capital* (so to speak) for a million years to come; not to embarrass ourselves with Eternity. To each adult his infancy is of no importance: scarcely any one identifies himself with what he was in his first three years. If the soul is to live through vast ages, the events of human life ever dwindle in importance and the consciousness of Identity seems to evaporate. There is a terrible disproportion between the narrow limits of human life and the endless years that are to follow. The more the mind dwells on this contrast, the more does the sober truth of the Greek Axiom impress me: *Whoever has a beginning of life has also an end.* He alone who, like his own Universe, is unlimited in Space and Time, can inherit a future Eternity. For us it remains to be *grateful* that he has given us that very noble gift,\* Human Life, and absolutely to *trust* him with child-like confidence, when he recalls it.

## SECTION XXXII.

WHEN IS MORAL ARGUMENT ADEQUATE?

IN the close of Section viii. it was remarked, that what force of moral argument will here be *adequate*, will be estimated differently by different minds. It seems, in

\* "Glorious manhood," according to simple, genial Homer.

this stage of our discussion, not amiss to observe, that the same difficulty is encountered, whenever *Miracle* is propounded. Inexperienced man lightly believes in miraculous tales. To give to Joshua longer daylight for slaughtering a beaten enemy, seemed an adequate moral reason for arresting the Sun's movement in heaven. To manifest his controul of the elements, Jesus walked on the water of the Lake of Galilee. To deliver the host of Israel from Pharaoh, the waves of the Red Sea stood up like a wall to the right and to the left, and opened a passage through the depths. To minds which have insufficient acquaintance with human inaccuracy and our vehement love of the marvellous, *Miracle* passes without severe scrutiny: yet experience teaches even the multitude how very ill we (*homunculi*) judge in what crisis a moral reason will be *adequate* with the Most High for breaking the continuity of his physical laws. Our wishes would multiply miracles a thousand-fold. This phenomenon might warn us, how wrong we all are likely to go, if we imagine that we can *by our moral insight* survey physical law *from above*, and suggest corrections or exceptions which the Divine Author will find reasonable in the interest of morality.

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## SECTION XXXIII.

### CONCLUSION.

IN Section viii. above, I propounded that only if the moral argument for human immortality were unambiguous as well as weighty could it bring supplement and correction to the Physical Analogy which leans so strongly to the opposite side. My reasonings thirty years ago (quite sincere, though prompted by an eager desire to establish

my case) differ so vastly from my present reasonings (equally sincere) that I find the moral argument to be undeniably *double-voiced*, and therefor to me inefficacious. In confessing this, I feel pain, especially through fear lest I seem to scorn a tenet very sacred to the piety of the moderns. Yet after all, I do but vindicate the old Hebrew doctrine against that "Oriental philosophy" which the Pharisees borrowed and Christianity *has passed on* to us by mere routine, in a miscellany of notions which we have discarded as silly and noxious error. The creed of Isaiah and Jeremiah sets Religion on a simpler, surer basis, at once more popular and less offensive to Scientists; on which also it is less liable to degenerate into sentimental unreality, selfishness, subtleties of theory, and contempt of this world as transient; while Events and our wisest Knowledge proclaim that it is, not indeed Eternal, but an eminent type of Permanence. Such too was the sentiment of the Hebrew sages. But I still maintain, that Knowledge being inevitably limited, a margin beyond always exists for Opinion and Conjecture; an area which I call a Penumbra between Light and Darkness. In this Penumbra for many long years I have quite happily left this question. It will be at once understood, that I am not anxious to press anyone to quick decision on a topic with which I myself have dealt so leisurely.

But here it occurs to me to digress. When I first heard that an esteemed American philosopher had pronounced it hard to decide whether Christianity had been to the world more beneficial or more pernicious, I thought the doubt betokened a jaundiced mind. On further thought I concluded that under Christianity he comprized all the mischiefs and horrors of the Papacy, and, if so interpreted, he might not be wrong. But *now* in a new aspect the same doubt confronts me.

For, the Christianity of Luther, Zuingle and John Wesley, equally with Romanism, has taught that all mankind are born under the wrath of God, that this globe is early destined to fiery destruction, that no good is to be expected from it, (for neither sages nor saints can mend it,) and that future good will come only in a heavenly home, which Christ has gone to prepare. Necessarily, whoever *heartily* accepts this creed, thinks labor for the improvement of this world all but useless. Its evil state being inevitable, he not only will not himself struggle for any fundamental change, but will use all his moral and religious influence to induce oppressed classes and nations to submit quietly to outrageous injustice from pretentious authority, under the belief that "in another world" all will be set right. How very unimportant is "the world which passes away"!—Has not such a creed played a fatal part to paralyse those efforts for a *better Present* which history recognizes as essential for improving this world?

Thus on one point I am willing to utter a confident judgment. Belief in a Future Life becomes pernicious, *first*, if the argument require us to disparage the present life, which is certainly God's work, and his only work directly known to us. To speak with contempt and despair of this world cannot glorify its Author. How much better judged the old Hebrew: "God saw that it was good." "All thy works praise thee, O God." *Again*, the belief is mischievous, if, as always hitherto, it divert good people from striving to tear up the *roots* of Evil. From the true Church are due to the World, not a mere salving of wounds, as "mercy" to the wretched, but sounder bases of Society, to *prevent* Injustice, Impurity, Cruelty and Misery, hitherto dominant in spite of Christianity.

I have heard of a good Scottish minister, who defined as the right object of life for each of us:—"To leave this

"World *better and bonnier* by reason of our having been "born into it." Clearly this is our divinely allotted task:—and he who is faithful in little, may be trusted with much. Our best preparation for another world, if we expect another world, is, by working for Justice and Mercy in this.

I thought I had here written my last line; but I see now that it remains to sum up, for simple truthfulness and for the convenience of anyone who may assail these pages. They assert that the doctrine of Heaven and Hell has its source, not in Christianity, much less in Judaism, but in a shallow and monstrous Oriental Theosophy. They plead that this doctrine is not only unproved, but unprovable; that the idea of Hell or fiery Purgatory is wholly pernicious, and that of Heaven (variously and on the whole) far from harmless.

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#### POSTSCRIPT TO SECOND EDITION.

WHETHER it is worth while to notice a critic's question, when he misunderstands the posture of an argument, is very doubtful: yet, when he seems friendly, it is more respectful to answer it. I am asked, Why I am not shaken in my Theistic belief on the ground that many heathen believers pervert religion; if I argue against Human Immortality by the topic that it is believed perversely? I marvel that one who is certainly far from ignorant of my writings, is unaware that *in my mind* the cases are not at all parallel. My belief in God is founded on the present world of which we have immense and certain knowledge. No stupidity of men or nations can annihilate or impair that knowledge. The logic which infers

*intelligence* acting in the heavens is the same as *infer's intelligence* in other beings besides myself. In the opening of my "Theism" I have avowed that a Divine "Mind is visible as directly as each man's Mind to his fellow." The doctrine which Atheistic scribblers sometimes address to me, about "a Self-Acting Universe," I despise as *fetish* superstition, disgraceful to a modern scientist. Contrariwise the belief in a future world does not rest on knowledge, but on moral aspiration. A hypothesis is advanced (*not* an assertion supposed to be provable), that the human spirit is a part of an unseen infinit world of spirits (whether in Space or out of Space, attached to matter or unattached), and must live eternally. Of this vast Conception no direct evidence is propounded:—only in its favor was pleaded that the belief ennobles mankind, makes future retribution possible and *conduces to human virtue*. Obviously in such a posture of the argument, any facts which attest that the belief in many cases conduces to cruelty or to religious folly and damaging, and must proportionably cut away the only ground of belief. The theory has no basis of known and acknowledged science to maintain it, unless we can accept Ghosts and Necromancy as such.—Turn from this to Theism; and I say: no cruelties or baneful superstitions of erring religion tend to invalidate the clear, positive certainty, that this Universe which we see and know,—about which we have not to guess and fancy,—was built up and is at every moment sustained by INTELLIGENT POWER acting on every clod of matter with accurate *knowledge* of distance, and in every living bosom: nor can any folly of a barbarous creed weaken my conviction as to the moral qualities which my Reason attributes to our glorious Superior and Overseer.

I think my critic must know that I never touched the topic without protesting (whether against Lord Brougham,

Mazzini or Theodore Parker) that the doctrine of Theism must not be treated as *co-ordinate with* that of Human Immortality. The two doctrines with me lie on quite different planes. I have always held with Paley and with Archbishop Whately,—(perhaps with nineteen clergymen out of twenty)—that on the existence of an Overruling God all mankind are right in dogmatizing; but that no one can fitly dogmatize concerning “human life after death,” who does not trace the doctrine through some transcendental channel to some source of knowledge *not* human.

From another quarter I am asked, whether I really disbelieve in a Spirit World. I might have replied simply,—“Until I have evidence to the contrary, I believe that only the Divine Spirit is without local attachment to Matter, being hereby unlimited in Space; and the whole Spirit World known to me consists of embodied Spirits and that unique Spirit.” But my interrogator turns sharp aside by explaining that he means “a World full of Spiritual Substance,” giving me as illustration, that “Love is a Spiritual substance.” I have now only to reply, that I fear all discussion between him and me must be futile. “Love” in my judgment is an emotion *of* or *in* a spirit. To suppose it diffused outside (if that is meant) I regard as rank absurdity: to call it a Substance is to me a gross and delusive abuse of language.



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