THE SUBJECTIVE DIFFICULTIES IN RELIGION:

DOES UNBELIEF COME FROM SOMETHING IN RELIGION OR IN THE UNBELIEVER?¹

In these later days we hear much about the difficulties connected with Christianity, and even with Theism itself, of which Christianity is daily more and more found to be the sole effectual shield. Those who dwell upon them, whether with a morbid satisfaction or a needless alarm, would do well to reflect on a remark of Cardinal Newman's, to this effect—viz. that a hundred difficulties need not produce a single doubt. Nature is full of difficulties, and most men, except those who would stumble at a straw, know how to pursue their way notwithstanding. We have heard of "an apology for the Bible"; but Nature makes no apology. She says, "Learn of me, and you

¹ The following remarks, as they reply to but popular objections, do not profess scientific exactitude of expression.
shall have bread; ignore me, and you shall starve." There are subjects higher than Nature, the very greatness of which would make a true intelligence anticipate that with them many difficulties must be intertwined; while the thoughtless alone could have expected, or even desired, the absence of such. A superficial age fancies that the wonderful is the incredible, and that the great ideas which for ages have awed or charmed mankind can be pushed aside by "points" cleverly manipulated, or by a "rough and ready" cross-questioning,—one, impertinent if directed against an ancient philosophy, and one which apparently assumes that the religion it interrogates is a "character well known to the police." It is after a different fashion that the difficulties found or fancied in serious matters of belief have to be dealt with. They imply defect, doubtless; but there remains the question whether that defect exists in the creed or in the intelligence challenged by that creed. It is certain that the first teachers of that creed acknowledged the difficulties connected with belief, for they went further, and affirmed that it is impossible for the natural man, without Divine aid, to accept, or, at least, "spiritually to discern," Truths Divine. It is equally certain, on the other hand, that they regarded those difficulties as arising both from the blameless limitations of man's intellect and also, too frequently, from a defective moral condition; for they asserted that there is such a thing as "an evil heart of unbelief"; that it is "with the heart man believes";
and that the believing heart is under the influence of a grace descending from Him who is the Supreme Truth—a grace that belongs especially to the humble and the pure, one that may be intercepted by even a single serious and unrepented sin, and that may, after having been possessed, be forfeited when trifled with or abused.

But this is not all. They affirmed not only that Faith—a faith not superseding reason but strengthening and directing it—was possible to man, and was his deepest necessity, but much more—viz. that it was his great initiatory spiritual gift. On that hypothesis, as the optic nerve expands into the retina, so faith is but the nearer and rudimental part, exercised on earth, of a power destined to be expanded after a glorified fashion in heaven, and there passing into Beistic Vision. Such a power could neither have been regarded as a thing inconsiderable, nor as one but accidentally connected with man’s appreciation of Truth Revealed. It is a thing dishonestly unreasonable, while dealing with Revelation, to ignore the hypothesis on which it rests. On that hypothesis Faith is a transcendent spiritual power crowning our intellectual being, as our intellect crowns our animal being; and where it has its perfect work, religion shows itself so plainly to reason thus enlightened and emancipated that not to believe seems a thing self-willed and unreasonable. Such a claim was a strong one, doubtless; but its "right divine" was attested by its victory. The Faith conquered the world; and the world, thus conquered,
bore the yoke of truth as lightly as a garland. A civilisation such as the old empires, which had degraded the moral more than they exalted the political status of man, never dreamed of, planted pure feet on the earth, and placed it in connection with higher worlds. Divine Truth seemed to have become part of man's natural heritage, and "arts unknown before" passed centuries in singing its praise and picturing its calendars.

For ages, though heresies sprang up, as had been predicted, respecting the definitions of truth, yet doubt as to the Divine claims of religion, natural and revealed, would have been regarded as a pitiable blindness. Men lived in the midst of a great light, its own sufficing evidence; and to turn from it would then have appeared a thing as witless as we should now regard the repudiation of inductive science with all its splendid results. But this could not last forever. It was forbidden by the very greatness of a religion which, while ruling man, had remembered that he who rules should be as he who serves, and which, while directing, had also liberated the human faculties, and thus consciously prepared for Truth a militant condition, and a series of trials different from those of the early persecutions but not less severe. Religion, apart from the special blessings she had conferred, had also, with an ungrudging wisdom, preserved and transmitted gifts which, though 'immeasurably humbler, were yet a part of man's inheritance—viz. the ancient languages, with their noblest
intellectual monuments. The highest inspirations of classic genius were by her exalted to an office of which they had not dreamed. Her schoolmen completed what the Fathers had begun. Aristotle conversed with St. Thomas Aquinas, and Virgil passed the golden branch on to Dante's hand. It was not all gain. Had such bequests never come to be abused, the Christian estimate of fallen human nature would thus have been proved a fallacious one. It was certain from the first that the arts of the "Juventas Mundi," though grafted on the Christian stock, would endeavour once more to "wanton in youthful prime," and on a pagan soil. The same thing was certain as regards the old world's dialectic science. The little bird was sure, when the eagle on whose back it had mounted had reached her utmost elevation, to take its little flight and twitter a span or two higher.

Another nursling of authentic religion was likely to turn against her after a time, though for a time only—that is, material science, or rather the rash award of those who occasionally take her name in vain. The connection between Faith and Science is not the less certain because indirect; truth is akin to truth, though they have their "family quarrels"; and the most spiritual of religions has proved far more auspicious to the knowledge of material things than any of those pagan religions which, while preserving many truths derived from patriarchal times and the primeval revelation, grew corrupted through material instincts. Unlike them, Christianity sustained the sacred and original
doctrine of a Creator. The visible universe was proclaimed not to have existed eternally. It was not an emanation from the Divine, nor the Protean clothing of elemental divinities. It was a creation, and the creation of One Whose action was ever orderly, and Who was known to man as the Supreme Lawgiver. A Christian intelligence could hardly doubt that God's material universe must so far resemble His moral universe as to be grounded upon laws, the general permanence of which was attested, not contested, by the exceptional occurrence of miracles vouchsafed only when required by His Creation's moral ends. The Christian instinct believed also that God, who rewards the strenuous use of His gifts, not the hiding away of them in a napkin, had included in the heritage of man that knowledge of the material creation which, in whatever degree it truly enlarges his intellect, must increase his appreciation of the Creator's greatness, and of the creature's comparative insignificance. But here again, on the Christian hypothesis, the enlargement of man's intellectual sphere might well have been expected to introduce him into enlarged regions of intellectual probation, since physical discoveries, apparently though not really at war with some doctrines of the Faith, could not but present difficulties likely to vanish before physical knowledge more advanced, and theological teaching more defined. In the meantime it is only in a serious and entirely candid spirit that such difficulties can be rightly met. But our theme is a different one; we are concerned with the
subjective difficulties men make for themselves, not the objective difficulties they find.

The former class are numerous and clamorous. To many students, as to many statesmen, religion has changed into the "Religious Difficulty." It has become a controversy. And here it must be remarked that the conditions of controversy, however inevitable, are by necessity less favourable to the elucidation of truth on the subject of religion than on subjects of less moment and less dignity. The objector is free to put forward the whole of what he deems his case; the defender of religion, while replying to objections, has often to leave unnoticed a large part of what he knows to be deepest and highest in the truth he defends, lest he should seem either to preach where he should argue, or, in arguing, to assume what, however certain, his adversary is not yet logically bound to concede. The laws of discussion compel him also to address almost exclusively the logical faculty in his opponent; yet he knows that the office of logic, in such subject-matter of thought, though a high, is a subordinate one—rather that of detecting sophisms and methodising inquiry than that of demonstrating truths—and consequently, that when he has confuted his opponent's errors logically, he has not necessarily a claim on his full assent, though, in proportion as that opponent has a candid temper and a philosophic mind, the "sensation of positiveness," which is sometimes strongest where faith is weakest,
may have diminished, and the sceptic may have learned an excellent lesson—viz. to be sceptical as to scepticism. The logical faculty is but a part of man’s understanding, which is but a part of his intellect, itself a part only of his total being; notwithstanding, it is to this logical faculty that controversy mainly addresses itself; while, on the other hand, it is the total being of man, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, not a fragment of his mind, that receives the sacred challenge of Divine Truth. Intuitive Reason sits in a higher court than the “faculty judging according to sense,” and pronounces with certainty—securus judicat—on matters of which the inferior faculty takes a limited cognisance, dealing, in fact, but with their superficial phenomena. It would be absurd if in studying geometry a student were to demand mathematical demonstration on condition of confining himself to diagram and compass, and of discarding the intuitive part of man’s intellect, acknowledging none of those axioms and postulates which admit of no argument because they underlie all demonstration, and are certain without it. Equally unphilosophical must it be to exclude the intuitive when grappling with the problem of a God. Yet this is, in a great part, required in argumentative discussion by the essential nature of controversy. The highest truth in matters theological belongs to a region above the polemical, as Theology has ever been the first to confess. This may also be said of the highest scientific truth; but in another important respect these two
orders of truth materially differ. If the intuitions of geometry do not admit of argument, neither do they require it, for they address the reason alone. But the intuitive element in religion belongs both to man's reason and also to that moral mind which includes the co-operation of the Will. To demand, therefore, as controversy does, not only such a demonstration of religion as yields certainty to reason at once moral and speculative, and brings peace to "men of good-will," but proof that forcibly excludes all alternative "views" open to man's free-will and insurgent fancy—this is, in a great part, surreptitiously to remove the theme of discussion from its higher grounds of thought and place it on lower grounds. The unbelievers say, sometimes perhaps unconsciously, of the believers, "Their gods are gods of the hill country, but our gods are gods of the plain."—they demand battle on the lower level; and in accepting their challenge the defenders of religion fight at disadvantage. All admit that it would be unfair to demand an exclusively logical demonstration as to the existence of Conscience, i.e. proof forbidding all appeal to interior emotion, since conscience is, ex hypothesi, a moral power, addressing our whole moral nature with all its aspirations and sympathies, its hopes and fears, though it is by no means confined to the region of sentiment, and does not reject the witness derived from experience and expediency. It cannot surely be less unjust to deal after this narrow and arbitrary fashion with religion, which ever proclaims that, although in its relations
with man's reason it is bound to respect the rules of
logic, so far as they admit of a just application, its
empire is coextensive with, and its demonstration
addressed to, the total nature of man.

Let us take another illustration. The material
beauty of the earth, apart from all her utilitarian helps
and appliances, witnesses to a Creator, because it reveals
that law of loveliness to which He has subjected creation.
But beauty is discerned through the imagination;
and thus a faculty which is deficient in many, and
which, when existing in excess, is often signally op-
posed to Religion, has, notwithstanding, a grave office
in attestation of her claims. Again, unhelped by the
affections, it would be impossible for man to grasp
the ideas of honour or patriotism. How much higher,
then, must not be the place in connection with religion
assigned to the affections of man! Apart from their
sacred insight, even human things cannot be under-
stood. The nobler a character is, the less can it be interpreted by a coldly critical observation—

You must love him ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.¹

A great poet describes a beautiful character as
"one that never can be wholly known," and the
loftiest have often been those most subject to misin-
terpretation. How quickly the eye of love detects
the need that cannot be expressed! How often
sympathy does what genius without it could never

¹ Wordsworth.
do! To apply this remark:—still more powerful than either the imagination or the affections is the moral being of man in sharpening that eye which deals with the super-sensuous. Long before those memorable words had been uttered, "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," the best pagan teachers had proclaimed loudly that it was to the pure heart and the righteous life that the vision of Truth was accorded. It is easy to suggest that such assertions respecting those indirect but vital relations which subsist between man's intellect and his imagination, affections, and moral instincts, are but an attempt on the part of religious apologists to elude the tests of philosophy. The converse is the truth. The assertion is the assertion of philosophy. Nay, and this is remarkable, such a statement may be advanced even respecting man's appreciation of mere material nature, and will then be unchallenged by those who forget how much more eminently it must apply to that which lies beyond nature. Mr. Carlyle maintains, with no less truth than eloquence, that nature has no meaning to the mere physical or even to the mere intellectual observer. He writes thus:—

Without hands a man might have feet, and could still walk: but, consider it—without morality intellect were impossible for him: a thoroughly immoral man could not know anything at all! To know a thing, what we call knowing, a man must first love the thing, sympathise with it: that is, be virtuously related with it. If he have not the justice to put down his own selfishness at every turn, the courage to stand by the dangerous—true at every turn, how shall he know? His virtues,
all of them, lie recorded in his knowledge. Nature, with her truth, remains to the bad, to the selfish, and the pusillanimous, for ever a sealed book: what such can know of Nature is mean, superficial, small; for the uses of the day merely. But does not the very fox know something of Nature? Exactly so: it knows where the geese lodge.  

If Nature requires for her right interpretation "all" a man's virtues, the supernatural may certainly claim, as it has ever done, that of humility. It must require, however, many others also—the "single eye" of the Gospel, since neither moral nor Divine Truth has a meaning for the sophisticated nature; zeal and perseverance, since the search is often arduous; purity, since it is the "clean of heart" that "see God"; reverence, or else the inquirer will overrun and trample down truth in his quest after knowledge. Above all, it requires a devout heart; for as a heart seduced from the right leads the intellect into error, so a heart faithful to the right leads it to truth. Men sometimes imagine that such statements apply only to revealed religion. They are true not less in relation to Theism. To suppose that this principle applies to human knowledge on all moral subjects, and even on the highest and fairest material subjects, and yet that when cited in connection with man's appreciation of religion, whether natural or revealed, it is but a pretence and a pretext, this is to declaim, not to reason;—for there is a mental as well as a verbal form of declamation.

It is the whole vast and manifold being of man—

1 Carlyle's Hero-Worship, p. 99.
his mind and his heart, his conscience and his practical judgment, his soul and his spirit—that Divine Truth challenges. The sceptic, when proud of his scepticism, insists upon the mighty and manifold problem being presented to his logical faculty alone, and wonders why he can make so little of it. In place of dilating his being to embrace the largest of Truths, he contracts it to a lance’s point, and pushes it forth in oppugnancy. He does not perceive that this mental attitude is one that violates not merely the philosophic conditions under which alone the knowledge he seeks could become his, but those under which only it professes to be cognisable. He makes this demand because he insists on gaining his knowledge of things divine in no degree by way of gift, but exclusively as his own discovery: that is, not as religion but as science. He assumes that because religion, like nature, has its science, it therefore is science, and is nothing more. As well might he assume that nature is nothing more than natural philosophy. If he came forth to the threshold of his house, he would be bathed in the sunbeams. He has another way of ascertaining whether a sun exists. He retires to the smallest and darkest chamber in his house, closes the shutter, and peers through a chink.

The indeliberate inquirer too often forgets also that even if it were to a single intellectual faculty that divine truth presents itself, still the aspect which it wears when thus seen would depend largely upon the percipient himself. Without any fault in itself it might to him
appear either repulsive or uninteresting. The anatomical plate from which the ordinary eye turns with dislike is beautiful to the eye of the scientist. This is because his point of view is that of science. Now, a man's point of view, when he contemplates the great religious problem, is predetermined by all the antecedents of his life, by all its accidents, and much more by all its acts, evil or good, remembered or forgotten. To the mind of man in all the best ages religion has been a matter of piercing significance. To that of some particular individual it may present but a blank or a distortion. More strange still, it may have no interest for him. He is therefore bound in reason to inquire where lies the cause of this condition. May it not be connected with something either morally wrong or deeply defective in his will, a part of his being both higher and more responsible than his understanding! A great philosophical writer has borne witness on this subject. Coleridge thus sets forth the results of his long and profound meditations:—

I became convinced that religion, as both the corner-stone and the keystone of morality, must have a moral origin; so far at least that the evidence of its doctrines could not, like the truths of abstract science, be wholly independent of the will. It were therefore to be expected that its fundamental truth (he speaks of Theism) would be such as might be denied, though only by the fool, and even by the fool from the madness of the heart alone! . . . The understanding meantime suggests, the analogy of experience facilitates the belief. Nature excites and recalls it as by a perpetual revelation. Our feelings almost necessitate it; and the law of conscience peremptorily commands it. The arguments that at all apply to it are in its favour; and there is nothing against it but its own sublimity. It could not be intellectually more evident without becoming morally 'less
effective; without counteracting its own end by sacrificing the life of Faith to the cold mechanism of a worthless, because compulsory, assent.¹

If Coleridge believed that Theism did not admit of a strict demonstration through that "sciential reason the objects of which are purely theoretical," apart from the inquirer's "good-will," and in spite of his hostile temper, this was, in his estimate, but because religion stands above such demonstrations. "I believe," he says, that "the notion of God is essential to the human mind; that it is called forth into distinct consciousness principally by the conscience, and auxiliarily by the manifest adaptation of means to ends in the outward creation."²

By some this is now stigmatised as "mysticism." Why should men feel aggrieved by all that constitutes the greatness of humanity? Those who object to mysteries in religion, whether natural or revealed, object to religion's belonging to the infinite, or else to man's being permitted to have any dealings with the infinite. The finite intelligence is of course not able to comprehend in its fulness the infinite. Is it, then, an injury to man that he is raised high enough to apprehend, at least in a fragmentary way, such portions of it as are nearest to him and most needful? If such knowledge sometimes strikes upon difficulties, is that strange? Where the finite and the infinite intersect there must needs be apparent contradictions—that is, there must be truths so large that, as Coleridge remarks,

¹ *Biographia Literaria*, part ii. p. 208.
² *Literary Remains*, vol. i. pp. 390, 391.
to our petty intelligence they can only express themselves approximately and in the form of converse statements mutually supplemental, notwithstanding what at first sight seems mutual opposition. What mysteries prove is that man's mind has, by God's aid, been lifted to its highest, and that God is higher still. The philosopher who thinks that to him there should be no mysteries does not think that there should be none to the peasant. Yet surely the intellectual difference between man and man must be small compared with that between man and God.

Those who demand definitions on all occasions, after that "stand and deliver" fashion more common among peremptory than profound thinkers, forget that it is far more often through careful description than through definition that the most vital, and the most practical, part of our knowledge reaches us. If our knowledge of things divine remained, even when at its highest, restricted within the limit of exact definitions, a new charge would be brought against it, viz. that it was not a divine truth revealed to us, so far as our smallness can receive it, but merely one of the many petty systems shaped by the human understanding—its creation and its plaything. Were it no more than this, it would include of course nothing that defies an exhaustive analysis. It is a special "note" of divine truth, that although, when presented to man, it does not contradict the higher reason, yet it transcends that inferior faculty which exults only in the work of its own hands. Religion is given to us as our help, not
our boast. It can raise us, but we cannot bring it down. It is a Truth immeasurably above us, with which we are allowed to have relations:—we cannot therefore inspect it as if it were a map outspread beneath us. We are surely little tempted to complain merely because we are allowed glimpses of more than we can measure, and yet not permitted to see, as a whole, a truth which professes to show us but its utmost parts—those immediately needful for us. Such complaints do not proceed from reason, which, just because it expects proportion in all things, does not expect authentic religion to be without difficulties to a finite intelligence. They proceed rather from petty conceptions of things the largest man deals with, and an exaggerated estimate of man’s present faculties.

It is the lawless in man, not the soaring, the purblind, not the clear-sighted, which revolts from mystery. Mystery implies obedience in the form of docility. That is just what a true religion might have been expected to demand. It is the claim which Nature makes. So far as our natural life is cast in a divine mould, as distinguished from that portion of it which is artificial and conventional, it makes upon us, in its initiatory stages, the same demand made by religion. It is through a sympathetic and joyous docility that we learn to walk, to speak, to exercise and direct our first affections, to reach out to the rudiments of all wisdom. The process is one from faith to knowledge. It is but mechanical and technical knowledge that is won on other conditions. Sciolists quarrel with religion for
being in analogy with Nature, and for eternalising the youth of our heart. This is a temper the more childish the less it is childlike—one that reaches decrepitude before it reaches intellectual manhood; one that never attains that heroic strength which copes resolutely with the great acts and sufferings of life and death.

Reason knows that man becomes dwarfed the moment he loses hold of God, and that the bond between him and God—religion—ceases to be religion if it discards its sovereign attributes. If it declines from doctrinal Truth and becomes but literature, philosophy, or art, it can do nothing more for man. It can serve him only on condition of ruling him; and it can rule him only through the "obedience of faith," which accepts mysteries because, though it sees, it yet knows that in the present preparatory stage of man's existence, it has to see "as through a glass darkly." Reason perceives that it must be the function of religion to challenge what is deepest in man at once with a potent voice, and a gentle one, thus eliciting a belief which would be barren if it did not work through love. Reason sees that if religion included no mystery it would inspire no reverence; that in the absence of reverence all its truths would for man shrivel up like withered leaves or be sharpened into polemical disputations; that pride would be inflamed, the heart hardened, and a wider gulf than Nature's set between God and man. Reason acknowledges that it is worthy of God that, in His dealings with man, whether through natural religion or revelation, He should both show
Himself and shroud Himself—disclose Himself to men of good-will, who can walk humbly and bravely in His light, and veil Himself from those to whom the revelation abused would prove but a woe. God shows Himself, and He shrouds Himself, alike in His Word and in His Works. “The heavens are His garment;” and it is the office of a garment both to indicate and to conceal what it invests.

Reason knows her own limits. When the subject-matter lies wholly within those limits, as in science, truth is proved by Reason; in matters capable of man’s apprehension in part, and yet partially beyond those limits, it is proved to Reason. In the former case Reason asserts; in the latter she confesses; in the former case she judges alone; in the latter she sits among assessors. When reaching her conclusions on revealed religion, she listens without jealousy to the whisper of Faith, remembering that, of all God’s creatures on earth, one alone is capable of receiving a challenge so high—His reasonable creature, man. When forming her judgment on the great Theistic problem, Reason does not decline as irrelevant the witness of conscience. She knows that while conscience affirms a law, and therefore a lawgiver, it is yet so far from asserting its own divine sufficiency that it acknowledges it cannot give man strength faithfully to obey that law. It calls itself but a voice—a voice “crying in a wilderness”; and its power and its weakness alike point to One greater than itself. Reason knows that it is but declamation to set up morality in place
of religion. Gratitude, loyalty, honour, prudence, benevolence, the sympathies alike and the aspirations of humanity, all these have a place in morality; and, like conscience, they declare that they possess interests in the question whether man has a Creator, a Redeemer, and a Judge. If he has, then man’s moral duties must be all of them duties to Him. It is not Reason that refuses to take counsel with such advisers. While bowing to faith in what is beyond her ken, but yet congruous with all her holiest instincts, Reason offers up her “reasonable sacrifice,” and receives her reward. That reward is that she is herself received as a subject and citizen into the luminous and measureless kingdom of Theism; all the verities of that kingdom, the existence of God, His unity, wisdom, love, justice, His providence, omnipresence, and omnipotence, all His attributes, as numerous as the faculties of all creatures capable of knowing Him, becoming thenceforth a portion of her heritage, and having their place in her teaching. Theism having become practical—i.e. devotional—the true Theist learns that, from the first, Christianity was implied in it; and that the doctrine of a Providence ever prophesied an Incarnation.

Reason detects at once the unreasonableness of the charges most commonly brought against Faith. She sees nothing unreasonable in the belief that an endowment or power should exist, as distinct from the mathematical faculty as the latter is from the experimental, one able, not when obliterating the inferior faculties, but when supplementing and raising
them, to elicit a new and spiritual "discernment," a power august and helpful to man when meditating on supernatural things and eternal interests. Such a gift would seem a most appropriate reward for inferior faculties rightly used and never abused. The denial that this faculty exists, whether on grounds purely à priori, or from prejudice, is among the paradoxical notes of a time when many proclaim, on the flimsiest evidence, the existence of faculties by which we can recognise material objects without aid from the senses, or converse with Souls that revisit earth to play tricks under tables. For some persons the supernatural retains its charm, only provided it can be dissociated from the glory of God and the good of man.

Reason has no sympathy with a common allegation alarming to men at once proud and easily frightened – viz. that Faith means belief on compulsion. A man may profess, but obviously cannot exercise Faith on compulsion; and, if he simulates it, religion inexorably esteems him but as one who adds hypocrisy to unbelief. To exercise Faith is to believe Divine Truth not only with as great a freedom as reason uses in other matters, but with freedom of a more absolute order. When reason believes, on the testimony of sense, in the material objects around us, the mind is chiefly passive, and exercises little more freedom than a mirror that reflects them. When a higher faculty deals with a geometric problem, the intellect is, no doubt, active; but, if it discerns the truth at all, it does so by intuition, and must needs accept it. In neither of
these cases is there either merit or demerit, 'for whether the truth be discerned or remains undiscerned, the confession or denial of it is alike involuntary. But when man believes Divine Truth, on Divine Faith, he believes voluntarily as well as reasonably, and therefore meritoriously. It is the special dignity of God's rational creature that that union with his Creator for which he was made is effected neither passively on his part nor involuntarily, but through a personal co-operation with grace, which, though the humblest, is also the highest exercise of his most Godlike power—free-will. In mere intellect there is often, as in the animal part of our being, something that resembles mechanism—witness our involuntary "association of ideas." In our ordinary and worldly life there is also an element of bondage, for we act, though only within certain limits, under the suasion of downward-tending inclinations, and with a preference determined in part by the balance of earthly interests. But Soul remains free; and the Will, the spiritual within us, when it is a "good-will" becomes the highest expression of our freedom, lifting the reason into its loftiest sphere, and delivering the heart from the thralldom of inferior motives. The obedience of this nobler Will to grace is the "fiat" which unites man with God; and faith, the light of the soul, is the child of that union. The Creator's primal Fiat lux was an act of supreme authority; the Creature's Fiat voluntas tua is an act of humility, and irradiates the world within.
Faith, so far from being belief on compulsion, is, in the highest sense, a spiritual act, and an eminently reasonable act, though also more than reasonable. There is no difficulty in recognising this truth except to those who have been entangled by sophisms, and cannot discern what is divinely simple. The unbeliever unconsciously assumes that the frank acceptance of a creed is much the same sort of thing whether that creed be true or false. He thus implicitly implies that truth does not exist; for if it exists it cannot but wield a discriminating power. Religion affirms the contrary—viz. that objective truth does exist, and that God's reasonable creature was created in a dignity so high, and after his Fall was renewed by a grace so admirable, that his well-being consists in communion with Truth, whose claim he has been made capable of recognising:—"Deus, qui humanæ substantiæ dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti, et mirabilium reformasti." The creature challenged by the Truth is also a creature formed "in the image of God"; and therefore to that challenge he responds, "This is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone." Enough has come to him in the way of evidence, not to make any creed, but to make a true creed, credible:—belief is consequently reasonable; but the mind is not therefore compelled to believe: a moral motive is presented to a man "of good-will," and Faith, which is morally bound to crown Reason, supervenes upon it because the will is in vital sympathy with the true, and is not held back by "invincible" hindrances. It is
 plainly illogical to say that this, religion's statement respecting the nature and genesis of Faith, is unsound, merely because false creeds or creeds that mix error with truth are sometimes accepted. Such creeds are accepted, not by Divine Faith, but, at best, by mere human faith; and creeds wholly corrupt are accepted by that blind and depraved credulity which "believes a lie." True Faith is not the less true because it is imitated by false faith, just as Virtue is not abolished because hypocrisy is common. The perfect freedom of Divine Faith is a fundamental hypothesis of theology; faith would otherwise lose all that nobility which authentic religion has ever claimed for it; while unbelief, nay, Atheism itself, would involve no more responsibility than erroneous judgments on scientific or historical subjects. A man may esteem Cæsar a bad general, and yet be only mistaken; but if he repudiates the laws of Conscience, he obviously stands guilty unless he has the excuse of an ignorance not connected with the will. If moral faith be thus a duty, and yet be free, why should religious faith be branded as compulsory merely because it is a duty? Is this a just judgment or a calumny?

Reason does not sanction another charge brought against religion—viz. that it is a spiritual "bribery and corruption," and that its votaries believe only to gain enjoyment, or shun suffering, in a future life. This is at best a misconception, and sometimes not without a touch of the spiteful. Religion does not reserve her rewards for the next world exclusively;
or, rather, those who dwell in the temporal world dwell also in the eternal, eternity not being a prolongation of time, but a vaster sphere clasping a smaller one, and reaching with its penetrating influences to creatures enclosed at once within both. It is a commonplace of theology that the Christian seeks the Cross, and commonly finds it; while yet the consolations of religion not only exist for those who dwell upon earth, but are granted in their higher degrees to those who have most of earthly suffering. Moreover, the desire of heaven is not a spiritual form of selfishness. On the contrary, it is the only effectual cure for selfishness. The selfish man makes himself the centre of his universe, loving little besides, except so far as the love of others can minister to self-love: but heaven is not an earth improved for the help of specious baselessness; it is the "Beatific Vision" which draws the beholder into Itself, renewing the creature after the Divine Image, while it also makes him realise that merely relative and dependent character which belongs to all merely creaturely existence. In that Vision individual self-love is lost, while true Personality, far from being even merged, is developed to the utmost. The desire of heaven, that is, the love of God and the belief that the highest good must consist in the fruition of the Uncreated Good, is not founded on any calculation of interests, but is a primary spiritual instinct. The converse fear is also a primary instinct of our spiritual being, and one of which the animalised nature seems incapable. It is the fear of an eternal
exile from the supreme Good and the supreme Love—an exile self-inflicted by an eternal hate.

If it be objected that the promised reward of righteousness, in the present or a future life, destroys the disinterestedness of religion, it suffices to reply that the cavil might be raised equally against virtue, since "virtue is its own reward," and against disinterestedness itself, since disinterestedness is man's sole protection from many of his heaviest trials. Who would affirm that filial love means but the child's selfish desire for parental protection, and that parental love is but the parent's intention to enjoy his children's reverence, or their aid in his old age? Fame and power are among the rewards of good actions done for man's behoof; yet it is not true that those actions are done only, or chiefly, or need be done at all, "for pay." Those who look only at the wrong side of the tapestry can see nothing save the stuck-out ends of threads; but they are not philosophers on that account. A world in which there existed no connection between happiness and excellence would be a world in which happiness must chiefly spring from, and gravitate towards, evil—a belief which would implicitly deny the existence of a Creator Himself at once all-blessed and all-good. The aspiration after a love for God wholly disinterested has seldom been expressed with such ardour as in the celebrated Hymn of St. Francis Xavier, who, notwithstanding, believed the Saviour's promise that the humblest good action shall "not lack its reward";
and those who disclaim all religious fear, on the
ground that “perfect love casteth out fear,” are
claiming for themselves perfection—where it is least
likely to exist.

Another popular charge against religion, while one
that reason repudiates as sophist, is one which
vanity and weakness are especially intimidated by—
viz. the charge that Faith is feebleness. Reason
perceives that if Faith exists at all, it must, on the
contrary, be a strenuous energy. To it belongs not
only the gift of spiritual discernment, but that of
daring. It is the great spiritual venture, launching
forth “in search of new worlds beyond the deep.”
Like virtue, it is a virile gift. One of the failings
which chiefly produces lack of Faith is lack of courage.
Faith is a power: and as, in history, it has wrestled
with all the powers of this world, so, in the history of
a soul, it wrestles with Powers unseen. Man, even
subsequent to the Fall, is, except where a second Fall
has drawn him down beneath the level of fallen nature,
a religious being—one who has the strength that
endures long kneeling, as well as the power of sitting
or lying still. He has a soul, as well as a mind and a
body. Religion is a strong soul’s commerce with
God, as scientific thought is the strong mind’s com-
merce with scientific truth, and bodily labour is the
strong hand’s commerce with nature. That sacred
commerce belongs to the soul at once through the
submission and the dauntless energy of Faith. The
entire and final loss of that Faith is to the soul what im-
becility is to our mental, and torpor to our animal being. In its last stage, it is the barrenness of a soul that has not "strength to bring forth" truth. It is no error of strength: it is either the restless feebleness of the world's premature senility, or a malady perhaps but temporary.

Whenever, yielding thus to spiritual weakness, man has relaxed his grasp upon Truth once his, he has commonly been soon after found running upon the downward trails of the old pagan philosophies—a circumstance full of significance. The most irrational of these was the theory which accounted for the universe in its present form by a "fortuitous concurrence of atoms." It would be absurd to impute such a theory to all those who believe in Evolution, for that theory fully admits that, outside what it accounts for, there remain three problems wholly unsolved—viz. the origin of the first matter, of life, and of law including the laws connected with Evolution. To the theistic evolutionist these three problems are solved by that which "Evolution," if it does not teach, yet does not deny—viz. the existence of a Divine Creator. Matter cannot be eternal; but God, if a man takes in the idea at all, cannot be thought of as other than eternal. He who is the Eternal Existence has created the first matter; He who has life in Himself has created life; and He who is the Supreme Lawgiver has subjected matter and life to the laws they obey. But all evolutionists are not theists; and the atheistic form of Evolution, abjuring the support which a philosophic evolution derives, as some maintain, from
Theism, involves in a more pretentious form an absurdity quite as great as a fortuitous concurrence of atoms—viz. the dogma that a Matter self-subsisting, and quickened by a Life never imparted, obeys a Law never imposed upon it. Again, the most abject of the ancient philosophies was the cynical, which selected the tub for its temple. But not less cynical is that modern materialism (Carlyle would have called it "hog-wash") which, disbelieving in the existence of soul, makes man a mere animal, and educes whatever he thinks or feels out of a perishable material organisation. If man were indeed but the most intellectual of animals, he would be the worst, since he would be the only animal that sins. Among the forms of modern cynicism the chief is that of "Agnosticism," which does not deny that a God may exist, but affirms that, even on that supposition, man must remain ignorant of His existence, adding that knowledge on that subject, or the kindred subject of man's immortality, is needless, such themes being amongst those respecting which a healthy mind will feel little curiosity and no distress. The diseased limb feels no distress when the period of mortification has set in, and that of dissolution is imminent; and yet mortification is not thought a healthy condition. The paganism of old times, till its season of mortification had arrived, would have despised a contented Agnosticism; for with the hopes and the yearnings derived from a belief in immortality was interwoven whatever was great in the arts or acts of antiquity. The child is no
Agnostic; like the peasant, he is ignorant of many things irrelevant; but he "delightedly believes" in things divine. "Agnostic" is a Greek word, signifying much the same as a time-honoured one derived from the Latin—viz. "Ignoramus"; and one hardly sees why the invention of this new term should be considered as so great a flight of modern philosophy. Contemporaneously with these metaphysical systems there have too often been put forward ethical theories which it would be unjust to charge upon any large school of thought, but which notwithstanding carry with them unequivocal warnings to several schools. They have vindicated suicide, infanticide, the putting to death of persons in hopeless disease, and much besides of a character worse still, which painfully recalls the lowest ages of paganism. The books propounding them have been publicly sold in the streets, and defended in the courts of justice. A boastful age is not without cause for misgivings, and may one day find cause to be grateful for humiliations!

One would have thought that the primary mathematical truths at least must ever occupy an unassailable place; but those who are old-fashioned enough still to believe in the universal and absolute character of geometry are now named as the followers of a special "intuitional school" by persons who ascribe, astonishing as this may seem, our knowledge of abstract, not less than of physical science, to experience, not to reason, and who affirm that in other planets a larger experience may contradict the assertions which it
makes in ours, such as that two and two must invariably amount to the same as three and one, and that the angles of a triangle must in every case be equal to two right angles! Once more, personal identity might be supposed proof against cavil; but passages\textsuperscript{1} may be found in recent books, which mean—if they possess a meaning—that man's moral existence is but an on-flowing stream of sensations, thoughts, and purposes, not ruled by any independent and personal will, but necessarily winding in the channel moulded for them by irresistible motive and external circumstance.

Scarcely less strange are the conclusions of a certain new philosophy, "Positivism," which regards itself as the high-water mark of all systems. It informs us that it was but an extravaganza of the human race, in its childhood, which made man turn his attention to things above us; that the same race, only a little wiser in its youth, had then indulged in the study of things within us, ethics and metaphysics; but that, mature at last, it has now discovered that the one proper object of investigation lies around us, viz. material nature. This materialism it calls "Good Sense." Fraudulent nomenclature is one of those fine arts in which false science is an adept. It deserves a sterner censure than most errors, though one confined to those who invented it, and not extended to those who, themselves ensnared, use it unwittingly. It has its alluring side. It praises

\textsuperscript{1} Several such passages are quoted in Mr. Kirkman's \textit{Philosophy without Assumptions}. 
"truth," but truth in its tongue means but truth scientifically discovered—a small portion of what it means elsewhere. It praises the love of truth; but it loves truth so little that it prefers the search after truth to the possession and use of truth, alleging often that the very claim to Revealed Truth is an unworthy one, because it implies a restriction on inquiry. It praises "culture"; but the term, in its cant sense, excludes most thinkers of our time, though highest in art, science, and letters, who have remained believers in the Bible, and includes in its brevet promotion all who believe in the latest theory of Biblical criticism. It boasts its "free-thought"; but the "thought" thus lauded is not deep; and the "freedom" does not include a freedom from that presumption which most impedes sound thought, or even from that cowardice which trembles at the charge of "obscurantism." Fraudulent nomenclature has also its cautious side. Working its way through books and journals read by believers as well as by unbelievers, it is skilful not to shock: besides its strong meat for men, it has milk for those who are still but babes in unbelief, draws distinctions between atheism and "dogmatic atheism," and asserts that to admit a God is not to admit a personal God, but only a Force that may exist impersonally, like the law of gravitation. Theists, of course, ascribe to God, but in a transcendent sense as well as degree, attributes such as love, wisdom, justice, holiness, power, which, in a sense and degree immeasurably lower, exist in man also simply because man was made in God's
image:—the new nomenclature, inverting the truth, has the assurance to stigmatise such an ascription, in the absence of which the term God could represent no idea and make no appeal either to the moral reason or the human heart, as man’s creation of a God after his own image, and nicknames it “anthropomorphism.” “Positism” has carried this new nomenclature to its utmost extreme. It does not deny a “Grand Etre”; it only denies that he is God. The “Grand Etre” is Humanity: the individuals of the human race perish and vanish, but Humanity remains: it is to be worshipped; and an elaborate system of rites and festivals has been instituted for that worship! This system is certainly original, for it combines atheism with idolatry—viz. worship, the highest it has to give, of that which is not God; and it unites both with a practice as anomalous in the eye of reason as of faith—viz. the adoration of that which has no actual existence: since, apart from the individuals it supposes to pass into nothingness, Humanity is but a collective name.

A word on the ideal end of this philosophy. Assuming its eventual prevalence and the success of its aims, man would have finally put aside all hope of attaining knowledge respecting things divine, and also all belief in the soul’s immortality. On the other hand, he would have perfected his knowledge of nature, and his mastery over the material universe. Let us assume also that he had banished diseases, greatly improved civil government, and lengthened
human life. What does the triumph amount to? The narrowing of man's being by the extinction of its spiritual part and the enlarged possession of all those things which, apart from things spiritual, are nothings! The human affections, as distinguished from animal instincts, if we believed that the objects of them must moulder for ever in the dust, would eventually, and after a piteous struggle, either shrivel up and wither away, or survive but to mock us; and we should envy the animal races among which affections are, as for such they should be, evanescent. Unfountained from above, the higher moral virtues would clothe themselves with decay for lack of a meaning; and the imaginative arts would dwindle in sympathy with that decline. Our perfected knowledge of physical science, when nothing connected with it remained to be known, would waken neither our energies nor our admiration; nay, possibly, when we had learned how to "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," our last discovery might be that we had changed our planet to an asteroid and our palace to a prison. If a human aspiration remained, the victories of material knowledge would but intensify our grief at the invincible barrier placed by Fate between us and all spiritual knowledge. Barbaric races live in a twilight region of intellect, clasped by a boundless horizon of twilight hope:—the "perfected" conditions of the false philosophy and the foolish, philanthropy would abide in a blinding glare of knowledge respecting matters barren to the soul and to the heart, encompassed by the very
blackness of darkness respecting all those which are precious whether to the human and moral affections or to the spirit. The contrast would make the loss intolerable. Man would walk upon an earth all ashes, and under a heaven all iron. The ideal of the Positivist philosophy would be the nearest definition of that hell which Christian philosophy, by no means bound to interpret literally Scriptural expressions one of which is obviously metaphorical, has found it difficult hitherto to define. And yet this immeasurable despair would be but a misplaced, stunted, and vitiated fragment of that boundless Christian Hope, which includes in its heaven, not lost in a Divine Fruition mightier yet, the perfection of every knowledge separated from the error mixed with earthly knowledge, and graduated aright amid the hierarchy of the knowledges; and which includes not less the perfection of every high and pure affection, cleansed from mortal dross, separated from what was temporary in its purpose, and exalted, not lowered by just subordination in the hierarchy of love.

At a time when "Progress" is the cry, and "We will charge you with reaction" is the threat, it may be well to remark that there is such a thing as progress neither upward nor onward, but downward, and such a thing as reaction in favour practically of ages both remoter and blinder than those traduced by the aspersions that they were "dark ages." In defence of such progress is raised another popular cry, "Beware of tradition," "Beware of prepossessions." This is also a cry to
which reason can give but a limited consent. Whatever knowledge has been attained, or will ever be attained, must needs be transmitted by parents to their children, and therefore must reach remote generations largely as a tradition, without on that account forfeiting the benefit of that evidence, whether external or internal, by which it is authenticated. Humanity itself is a tradition, and cannot separate itself from the conditions of an historical existence; and though philosophy, no less than religion, protests against "traditions of men," it condemns by that term only those local and partial traditions of the clique, the school, or the nation, which make void a larger truth at once attested by reason, and brought home, by the universal consent of men, as part of the human heritage to individual man at a period when he is as yet too young adequately to test, though yet he feels, its reasonableness. Moral prepossessions we must have, because the best thoughts of the best ages, when sifted by time, mould our beings from the first, and because, if we had not moral prepossessions, we should have immoral. Should "Agnosticism" last long enough to become a tradition, the child born in that sect will start with prepossessions, such as that "truth" is "what each of us troutheth," and that "liberty" consists in our having always an equal and undisputed choice between alternatives, not in our willingly and gladly, and by no means on compulsion, believing the true and doing the right. If we discarded "prepossessions," we should enter on the study of morals without the admission of any responsibility
on our part, and to that of history without any preference for the just ruler above the tyrant. Man could never have made a beginning of natural philosophy if he had not come to it with that high prepossession, the idea of Law; and, as Bacon reminds us, the prudens interrogatio is necessary if we would elicit from Nature more than the fool's answer. If prepossessions are thus preconditions for natural and for moral philosophy, are they intrusive in a religion which has lasted for centuries, and moulded a world?

As superficial is another allegation often made—viz. "Religion but solves the riddles of existence by resolving them into another riddle as inexplicable." Were it true that it only resolved the many into one, it would so far have followed the aspiration of philosophy, which is to resolve phenomena into laws, and laws into a single law, and which knows that the ultimate ground of all must remain inexplicable to science,—the craving of which is limitless, and to which an "ultimate" would be defeat, not triumph. But this is the least part of the sophism. Religion does not substitute riddles for riddles. She answers a thousand painful riddles, each of them a sphinx ready to devour us, by lifting them into a higher region; and she resolves them, as has been well said by Auguste Nicolas,¹ into one sunlike Mystery, which, if itself too bright to be scanned with undazzled eyes, yet irradiates the whole world besides. The ages and nations bear witness to that mystery; it is the mystery of power and of healing.

¹ *Etudes Philosophiques.*
of life and of love. The knowledge that God exists ratifies conscience and enlightens it; consecrates reason yet humbles it; sets the will free by teaching it to substitute for the thraldom of petty motives a glad submission to a sacred law. It is the mother of progressive wisdom and of spiritual civilisation; it gives man the power to act righteously and to bear patiently; it changes an anarchy of warring passions into a royal commonwealth of graduated powers. For ages it has dried the eyes of the widow and guided the orphan's feet. Yet these are but its lesser gifts, for its higher boast is that it creates an inner world of sanctity and peace, a 'hidden life' of the creature with the Creator, the pledge of a glorified life with Him. The spleen of an ungrateful and hasty time may fancy that it can sweep such gifts away; but a true philosophy will rebuke a revolt so self-destructive and so dishonourable. Whatever the theorist may affirm or deny, Christianity professes to be essentially a life, the life of individual man, and of social man; and, despite the scandals bequeathed by those who have but taken religion's name in vain, experience has attested her claim. We live in an experimental age: a contented sceptic would do well to become an experimentalist, and test religion by living it. Amid his inquiries he should include a careful one as to whether he has been a sincere and a reverent inquirer. We have been told, and not untruly, that "honest doubt" has in it much of faith. But doubt is not honest when it is proud, when it is reckless, when it is as confidant
as if resolved negation were solid conviction, or as apathetic as if Divine Truth would be less of a gain than the "struggles that elicit strength." We have been told, in disparagement of creeds, that Life is Action; but it is in the light, not the darkness, that brave and sane men act and struggle. It is the Christian Faith that brings that light; and it was the Christian Life that first claimed to be a noble warfare. The warrior must have solid ground beneath his feet.

And yet the defender of religion must ever end with a confession. If all who believe had but been true to their trust, religion must in every age have shone abroad with a light that would long since and finally have conquered the world to itself. It is an eye keener than ours that sees how far each man has used his wealth of faith rightly, or come by his poverty honestly. If in many a case unbelief means a defective, perhaps an evil will, in how many is it not the malady of a bewildered time? How many a one who is tossed from doubt to doubt may yet, in the depths of his being, resemble St. Augustine when he was drawing nigh to the truth, and knew it not! God alone knew that in him the love of the good and of the true had never ceased, and that, however dry and barren might be the surface of his soul, there still remained, far down, the dews of past grace—and the tears of Monica. Almost to the last in what strange confusions did not that great soul remain, reserved as it was for a career so arduous and an expiation so noble from the moment that peace of heart had fitted him for the
militant life of the Christian, that the darkness which paralyses strength had been chased, and that a divine light had "given the battle to his hands." His conversion came quickly at last. Yet the process had been slow. He had learned that the enemies of religion disputed chiefly with the creations of their own fancy; that their difficulties were but those found no less abundantly throughout the course of nature than in the lore supernatural; that their warfare was one against the heart of man, with all its hopes and its aspirations—all that can give security to joy and a meaning to pain. Yet still he wavered. Few things earthly helped more to his conversion than the philosophy of Plato; yet just before that conversion he seemed on the point of committing his life in despair to that of Epicurus. So strongly does man's pride contend against man's greatness; so perseveringly does his ingenuity evade his good! But the happy hour came, and the ages have found cause to rejoice. In becoming a Christian, St. Augustine became also a true Theist—that is, one who not only believes in God, but loves Him and adores; for love, like humility and faith, is learned at the foot of the Cross.
XIII

A SAINT

This work, the first in a new series of Lives of the Saints, is as delightful as it is unpretending. Its great charm is that which it derives from the character of the Saint it records—a character which it illustrates with a skill shown frequently in wise and deep reflections, and everywhere in the felicity with which the most characteristic incidents of a career as beautiful as it was brief are selected and commemorated. That character suggests a few remarks, all of them connected with a single line of thought, and therefore by no means exhausting the subject, which tend to illustrate at least the Veneration of the Saints,—to illustrate only, as more is impossible without entering the thorny and commonly barren region of polemical controversy.

Sanctity is at once the simplest and the most "many-sided" of all things. The characters of the Apostles, even after Pentecost, remained distinct one

from another—a proof in itself, as has been remarked, of the truthfulness which belongs to the chief source whence we derive our knowledge of them. From the corresponding distinctness in the character of different Saints, a similar inference may be drawn as to the authenticity of their "Lives." The gifts of grace are diverse, and in the supernatural order as in the natural we find the most distinctive types of characteristic excellence. Saint is, so to speak, supplemental to Saint; and from the harmonised dissimilitude of its several members, Religion becomes thoroughly equipped with all which it needs for ministration or example. It is true no less that among all Saints are to be found those great generic features which belong to the Household of Sanctity; and that from any one of them the main characteristics of holiness may be illustrated. But where resemblance exists, diversity sometimes teaches us to appreciate it the more; and from a life like that of St. Aloysius we learn many lessons that relate to both.

The author of this biography well remarks: "Perfection is set before all as the object of their aim, but not the same perfection;"¹ and an analogous statement is made in the preface: "Every man has his especial call; and the grace that accompanies it corresponds to the idea of him in the Divine Mind, as elected from all eternity to a certain conformity to the image of His Son—a purpose which the awful privilege of freewill enables the soul to ratify or

¹ P. 371.
to defeat." The Saints are those who completely ratify that purpose: the consequence is that those elements of character which, in the case of ordinary Christians remain a confused mass, in their case clear both into distinctness and brightness. They have the diamond's sharpness and definiteness of outline, as well as its splendour. If the uninitiated does not see that distinctness, it is in part because his dazzled eye does not note the lineaments for the radiance which invests them, and partly because he does not take that interest in the subject which alone appreciates individuality. A man without an interest in nature hardly discriminates between tree and tree, while the shepherd's dog knows every sheep in the flock by face. To the man of the world, the lives of the Saints are all alike. For the man "whose eyes are open" they include an infinite variety. In variety, the marvels of natural history are probably small compared with those which belong to the supernatural.

The careless observer often sees distinctness in characters marked by some malformation which he identifies with individuality. Yet even he must see that to an eye which passes his own in discernment, individuality may be marked in a different way. It may be evidenced not through the ruling passion, but through the predominant virtue; not by some picturesque moral disproportion, but by some variety among types, all of which alike have perfection of proportion. The diversity among material forms, all of them

1 P. viii.
imperfectly proportioned, is not greater than that which, in the vast range of ideal art, is reconciled with perfect proportion. The Saints of God are divine works of art: they are the living monuments of supernatural grace, wrought out, touch by touch and line by line, by that Sanctifying Spirit who is *Digitus Paternae Dexteræ.* Thrice "Lives" of the Saints constitute the gallery in which those monuments are stored.

Indifference to these triumphs of grace, a deadness which too often proceeds from an exaggerated interest in things devoid of all moral significance, entails even a greater loss than might have been expected. It is not only of their examples that we are deprived; but the Supreme Exemplar of perfection is thus also to a large degree hidden from us. The Saints of Christ are mirrors of Christ. In their manifold and, derivative perfections, that perfection, one and infinite, which belongs but to the King of Saints is brought down to our poor intelligence, and revealed to us in parts. In the character of Christ all perfections are blended in that ineffable Sanctity which exists but in a human nature assumed by a Divine Person; in the Saints those perfections remain the attributes of beings exclusively human, though their human nature has been grafted into the Divine Humanity of Christ. In Christ we have the white light of Sanctity; in the Saints the coloured beam of this or that virtue, especially imparted to one in particular. In one it is charity, in another humility; in one it is devotion to
the Will of God, in another the contemplation of His Being. In all it is Christ; and in proportion as the eye becomes purified by resting upon those manifold but inferior semblances of Christ, the knowledge of Him who unites all perfections becomes more defined, and sinks with a more vital beam into the devout soul. To imagine that the spiritual eye requires little training, or that the Spirit Who alone gives it "discernment," employs no subordinate instrumentalities for that end, would be a grave error. The mere human eye is trained by degrees; and the scientific eye is assisted by numberless instrumentalities which no serious student would discard. The Saints are lenses that accommodate to dim eyes the vision of a virtue higher than such can see. What we know of the Saints we know through a familiarity with the details of their lives. Each is a being in himself; and to make each what he is has required the whole world of God's Providence, and the whole world of His Grace. In no two of them do the virtues that bear the same names in mortal tongue imply altogether the same thing. In one, faith specially implies courage; in another insight; in one love specially implies zeal, in another patience. The relations of these virtues one to another, their progression, their combinations, their modes of joint or separate working — in all these things there is at once an infinite variety and an absolute order. Amid the manifold and the inexplicable there are traces of a mystic unity: and again and again throughout that spiritual universe
which they constitute we come upon the same footprints of the one Creator. It is as among the Alps, where the Infinite seems to look forth from the finite with aspect at once elevating and overawing,—where the mountain lines—diverging or converging—now shooting past each other, now bearing far away in long oblique angle, and pointing toward measureless distance—seem to reveal, or at least to announce, some dread mathesis that belongs to a vaster world than ours—a world which to our narrow intelligence appears less a world than a chaos, yet where, amid the labyrinth of marble ravine and glacier-river, Nature indicates a method which she will not wholly disclose. Without an initiatory knowledge of Christ we have no key to the character of His Saints; but on the other hand, without a detailed knowledge of them and their ways, our knowledge of their Lord is but stunted.

In this last particular Christian philosophy might have anticipated the lesson which Christian history records. If the Saints are fragmentary images of that illimitable perfection expressed in the Divine Humanity, so “the Word made Flesh” is Himself to us a picture of Him whom no eye can see. We know Him dimly in Attributes which amid their vastness seem to us opposed to each other, and which to our littleness present no definite image. The lines of that incommunicable Countenance change before us like lightning; and voices which mortal ear may not harmonise—the inorganic sound of some infinite universe, infinitely remote—seem to lie beyond all
such music as we can grasp and mete. In the Creator become a Creature the formless submits to form. Man had always felt that justice was a divine attribute, and that love was a divine attribute; but how to envisage the two in union he knew not. Their union is to our finite apprphension shadowed forth in Him who denounced eternal woe against impenitent sin, and yet wept over one whom He was about to raise from the dead. In God there is an Infinite Wisdom and an Infinite Power, both of which might seem to suffer contradiction while sin and sorrow riot amid the world He has made. In the Saviour who “opened not his mouth,” and suffered because He willed to suffer, we have an image of this dread long-suffering of God. In Christ, who knew all things, and yet, “grew in wisdom and in stature,” we have an image of the Unbeholden One, who abides in endless rest, and yet is an Energy and an Act perpetually creating the universe. Between the mode in which Christ images the Father to us and that in which His Saints image Christ, there are analogies. In Christ are made visible not only those attributes which belong to His Father, but others also which could not belong to Divinity except in hypostatic union with humanity; so in the Saints who share, and as it were dilate, their Lord’s glorified humanity, we find not only the traits of that humanity, but others beside which He could not possess Who did not share man’s fall—penitence, for instance. Again, as without a belief in God it would be impossible for us to
recognise His image in "God made man," so without a knowledge of Christ, our great example, it would be impossible to profit by the examples He gives us, in His images, the Saints. Once more, as they who from pride and hardness of heart renounce Christ, thereby cut themselves off from the Father, to whom He is the appointed "Way," and thus lose hold at once of a living Theism, and of that Christianity which for us is the only authentic and practical Theism, so those who willingly reject all serious thought of His Saints to a calamitous degree make dim the mirrors in which they ought to see that Incarnate God, in part distorting the idea of His character, in part divesting it of reality.

The diversity of character observable in the Saints results, not merely from the diversity of supernatural gifts, but also from those differences in natural constitution which grace always respects while it directs and harmonises them. That region of human life which perhaps most attracts the thoughtful eye is the horizon line where the natural and the supernatural meet, and where the colouring from above allows itself to be modified by the configuration of its earthly support. In biographies taken, like the one before us, from authentic records, we ever see the man in the Saint, and learn in part how the time, place, and circumstances of his outward life co-operated with that interior grace which shaped him to a definite type of perfection. Some of the traits special to St. Aloysius
result from his having belonged to the still surviving feudalism of North Italy at the close of the sixteenth century. We must bear in mind that though he died young, he did not die immaturely. He was a Saint; and therefore all the processes which form character had in him been perfected, though with an extraordinary rapidity.

The foundations of his character seem to have been laid in the intensity which belonged to his realisation of divine things, a gift conspicuous in him when he was yet but a child. "His head lady-nurse, Camilla Maynardi, often told her mistress that when she took the little Prince Aluigi in her arms, she experienced a thrill of devotion."1 Much must also be attributed to the natural influence on a being of lofty and delicate dispositions of a mother whose earliest desire for him was that he should be a Saint, and who had taught him to lipsthe names of Jesus and Mary before those of Father and Mother. Other children learn of heavenly things from earthly. The children of saintly parents begin with the higher, and interpret the lower by them. That lofty, a priori estimate of things which is sometimes learned as a branch of the Platonic philosophy by one whose moral habits have already grown hard, and whose lower instincts have perhaps developed themselves according to the maxims of Epicurus, becomes under happier circumstances the living law of a being still plastic and fresh—of one in whom the passions have not yet been awakened,

1 P. ii.
and in whom experience, far from checking the spiritual aspirations, is contented to walk humbly in their footsteps up the hills of truth. We marvel that some few Christian children should thus start clear, and hold their own. Had we lived when the Gospel first brought to men the tidings of a regenerate humanity, should we not rather have expected that such would have been the usual franchise of the Christian child? There are consequences of grace which may be called natural in the supernatural order. Ordinary persons realise earthly things intensely; while, as a consequence, spiritual things remain unrealised by them, and, though acknowledged as truths, hang in visionary distance like a far cloud on the horizon of their thought. In both respects the converse held good with St. Aloysius. In his daily walks he observed hardly any of the objects which he passed. He took no hold of worldly things, nor they of him; and even when the love of them seemed to have been sown in his youthful heart, it turned out that the seed had fallen "on stony places," and the springing plant withered of itself. A few years after the Turkish naval power had been broken at the great battle of Lepanto, the father of the Saint went in command of 3000 Milanese to defend Tunis, which then belonged to Spain, against the Sultan Selim II. He took his little son with him; and the child was delighted with the military movements, and of course became the delight of the rough soldiers. But strong as was the aptitude he showed for all manly exercises,
their attraction faded away, just as the religious impressions of early childhood so often fade away. In all things a law of compensation prevails. Had the future Saint been alike devoted to earthly glory and to the praise of God, it would have been much more wonderful than that he should have valued the latter exclusively.\(^1\)

It is the more remarkable that many should find it difficult to believe in the spiritual gifts which have belonged to Saints, even in childhood, considering the animation with which they record the gifts of another sort often found in the world’s favourites. Mozart had so fine an ear that when a child he could detect in every chance sound some latent musical note, and wept if his ear was hurt by the slightest discord. Is not this as wonderful as the spiritual sensibility of St. Aloysius of whom we read,\(^2\) "The first time he presented himself at the tribunal of penance, he was so overcome with reverence, shame, and confusion, that he fainted at the good father's feet.” Before Pascal had heard of Euclid he had proposed to himself multitudes of mathematical problems, drawing diagrams on the wall and inventing names of his own for angles and curves. Why should one who believes in some child who can multiply nine figures by nine in his head, or play a game of chess without seeing the board, be staggered when told of a corresponding power

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\(^1\) A most amusing account of the child-warrior’s exploits in his brief campaign, one of which nearly cost him his life, is given in p. 15.

\(^2\) P. 25.
of abstractedness in a youthful Aloysius who prayed for half a day without wanderings of thought? The Saints are in religion what men of extraordinary genius or energy are in the world. At seven years old St. Aloysius refused to use a cushion when kneeling. Some of his austerities were such as to a child must have been needless as a protection against temptation. The smile with which a wise man reads of such fancied dangers has nothing in it either of the sceptical or the scornful.

What we call "genius" has its extravagances and its eccentricities, and is far from running at a regular pace in the harness of conventionalities. It too has much that is worthy rather of admiration than imitation, and much "that without demanding either, is the natural result of extraordinary aspirations under peculiar conditions. Perfect regularity and proportion should be looked for only in a Saint perfected—that is a Saint in heaven. It is incompatible with our militant condition. Bacon remarks that when the child's limbs knit quickly, and include no disproportion, it is a sign that he will reach no considerable growth. The Saints are those who have had large spiritual growth in them. We should remember, too, that there is a lower, as well as a higher proportionateness, and that some persons attain it, not by making their nature wholly spiritual, but by eliminating all but what is animal in it. To unite Body and Soul—a regenerate with an earthly life—a mortal lot with an immortal destiny—this is man's condition, and it is certainly to
blend very antagonistic forces. Taking all things into account, merely to be born is, it must be owned, to "get into a great scrape," and by no means leads to an easy peace. Much more difficult must it be, then, to make a good thing of our contradictory life, and avoid worse charges than that of eccentricity. The "strangeness" the world complains of in the Saints is but what might have been complained of in ordinary human beings by the merry Wood-Gods and Satyrs that glanced at them from the forest nooks, and rejoiced that they had not themselves to sustain the burden of a responsible being!

We should bear in mind also that much which to us seems unreasonable in a Saint was probably to him a special inspiration guarding him against some special danger. He who makes His ministers "flames of fire" commonly gives to His Saints a peculiar ardour of nature—an ardour which might have worked itself out either in the sphere of their intellectual or their material being, and which makes them Saints only on condition of its being limited, directed, and forced to develop itself chiefly in the spiritual being. Such are the gifts of Him who gave to men the true Celestial Fire—

And He tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man.

Respectable people sometimes descant on the temptations of the Saints, and affirm that no such trials

1 *Prometheus Unbound* (Shelley).
assail them. Perhaps the reason is that they are respectable people but not Saints, and that they are spared what they could not resist. Perhaps it is that the Tempter deems pettier temptations more suited to their mediocrity—is contented with their self-content—and does not wish to wake them out of their dream of security. Sometimes they fancy that they meet no temptations because they never resist those temptations,—as the flying leaf does not feel the gale that splinters the tree. It is certain that the Saints have been marked by a timidity, as the world would call it, as wonderful as their courage, and have guarded the outward senses far more than those who have, compared with them, no inward power of resistance. Theirs is the timidity that springs from that humility on which alone can be built the virtue which attains a great elevation. The Saint has no belief whatever in his own strength; and that Divine Strength which lives within him is a gift which, as he knows, may easily be subverted through a single movement of pride.

Excess in things lawful is to ordinary men often a greater temptation than they are exposed to from things unlawful; by parity of reasoning we see how slight participation in things lawful, but yet incongruous with a higher vocation, may be a snare to the future Saint. Aloysius was constantly renouncing even what was innocent in human ties: such renunciation might have been dangerous to others, but it gave to him that perfect detachment without which he could never have reached his marvellous gift of prayer. This is well
illustrated in some of the many thoughtful passages with which the Saint’s life is here recorded. “Solicitude and desire—these are the great foes of all prayer; but much more of contemplation. It may be possible to repeat vocal prayers with a certain degree of attention where they are not entirely banished; but with prayer of a higher order they are simply incompatible.”¹...

“Here was the secret of all. His lifelong study had been to pray much, to pray well, to pray always; and so convinced was he that prayer is the great lever in spiritual things, that he used to say that it, was wellnigh impossible for any but a man of prayer and recollection to acquire full dominion over himself.”

This wonderful confidence in prayer, so invariable an attribute of the Saints, is the natural consequence of their realising the supernatural world. Prayer is that which, moving Him Who is omnipotent, has a derived omnipotence of its own; while it is also the only earthly power that is not in part illusory. If, then, those who realise the supernatural world give themselves for half their time to prayer, like the members of Contemplative Orders, they are but doing, mutatis mutandis, what the wise worldling does in his way. He too shuns much that, measured by a purely worldly and materialistic standard, might fairly claim to be innocent though not laudable. He passes, perhaps, not half his time, but the greater part of it, *in applying means to ends*, that is, in using those instru-

¹ P. 175.
mentalties which are to the natural world what prayer is to the supernatural. The social and the material worlds have, he knows, their laws; to move them he must put those laws in motion; and to do this he must conform himself to those laws. He subjects himself therefore loyally to Nature; and his reward is this, that he gains from Nature a genuine insight into her ways, and such control over them as she gladly bestows on her ascetics. This is what is done by the Saint in the supernatural sphere. Prayers, and all those ministrations, in heaven and on earth, which are connected with prayer—these constitute the Living Laws by which the spiritual world is swayed; and to these he trusts as the engineer trusts to those laws which, at his bidding, call the sea-mole from the mountain quarry, or fling the bridge across the strait. The distance to which the modern intelligence is falling from faith is by nothing more marked than by the narrower limits within which its appreciation of prayer daily shrinks. It began by inveighing against those who prayed constantly, stigmatising the highest spiritual Action as idleness. It now attaches hardly any other efficacy to prayer than that which results from a reaction of the mind on itself. A man who prays can, it admits, warm himself by that exercise; but he had better not include outward things in his prayer. A prayer really answered it does not believe in. It can excuse much that it cannot accept, and can play with the graceful shadows of devotion when it would be offended by the repulsive hardness of the substance. It revolts from
St. Aloysius's belief in prayer, while it thinks it is only scandalised by his miracles. It says that prayer should be not so much a special act as a general habit of mind; one of those plausible statements which are true at their affirmative side, but untrue at the negative. From the lives of the Saints we learn that the habit is most constant where the act is most intense. We read of St. Aloysius, "During the ordinary occupations of the day his soul was visited by God with marvellous consolations, and these not passing touches or short elevations of spirit, but overflowing torrents of joy."¹ His humblest duties were consecrated by being discharged in the spirit of prayer, a grace which was rendered easier to him by the habit of seeing in everything a symbol of higher things than itself. "When engaged in preparing for the repast he would say, 'Let us go and lay the cloth for our Lord, or for the Madonna.'"²

The root of St. Aloysius's sanctity is to be found in his humility. "I am a crooked piece of iron, and am come into religion to be made straight by the hammer of mortification and penance"—such was his estimate of himself. While studying at the Roman College, he hardly ventured to lift his eyes when conversing even with the lay-brothers and seculars in authority. A more beautiful picture of youthful modesty can hardly be imagined than that which we owe to the graphic touch of his latest biographer. The youthful Prince "Would wander into the country through the

¹ P. 178. ² P. 246.
Porta Comasina, always selecting Thursday for this stroll; and, after bidding his attendants remain behind, he might have been seen loitering on the way, now reading, now picking violets, as though to while away the time, like one who is watching and waiting for some expected meeting. By and by in the distance might be descried the black figures of the Fathers approaching. They were returning from Chisolfa, a villa which they possessed about a mile and a half from the town, and where every week they spent some hours of recreation on that day. Lewis would now stand close to their path: he had watched for the joy of that moment to salute them courteously and reverentially as they passed: he would then follow softly on their steps, leaving such discreet interval as should remove him from their company, but keeping his eyes intently fixed on their retreating forms, as if he beheld so many blessed angels defiling from the gates of Paradise.”

If St. Gertrude conversed with our Lord habitually in the elevations of vision and rapture, so to St. Aloysius the closest union with Him would seem to have been accorded in the lowliest acts of obedience. In this supernatural grace we may trace, perhaps, the workings of a natural law also. Those who know best how to rule, know best also how to obey: and Aloysius, to whom princely sway was a birthright, seems, when he had renounced it, to have been drawn by a special instinct to the converse yet analogous duties which belong to obedience. “He would often beg permission

1 P. 107.
to go about Rome in a tattered habit, with a bag on his shoulder, to solicit alms." ¹

... To the same class of virtues we should, doubtless, refer the Saint's unappeasable love of mortifications, whether physical or mental. The sensitiveness of his nature made him shrink when publicly reproved; and therefore "He earnestly and frequently begged to be reprehended before all. This pain, moreover, was entirely voluntary on his part;—owing to the complete mastery which he possessed over his imagination, he might with the utmost facility have distracted his mind from what was going on, so that, hearing, he would have been as one that did not hear; but this he would have considered as defrauding holy obedience of its claims, and himself of its merits; he compelled himself, therefore, to taste as well as drink the cup presented to him." ²

The tenderness and refinement which belonged to St. Aloysius, whether they resulted from an organisation of unusually delicate fibre, or from the habits of a palace, assumed, like all his qualities, a spiritual character. The pain he felt at any allusion to the worldly greatness he had relinquished showed itself in the blush which displaced the habitual pallor of his face. If any one spoke with feeling of divine mysteries, his colour went and came, his breath became short, and his slight frame was shaken so vehemently by the palpitation of his heart that his superiors sometimes interdicted or limited his devotions. The boy was shy and shrinking

¹ P. 163. ² P. 166.
as a girl; yet he selected the most afflicted in the hospital as the special objects of his care. He shrank back in humiliation when an aged ecclesiastic demanded his blessing; yet his lowliness never degenerated into weakness. The instrument was more perfect because the wood of which it was made had a delicate grain; but it yielded martial as well as solemn harmonies—although its "songs of war" were those that "sound like songs of love." He had the profoundest sense of filial duty; yet year after year he bore up with humble heroism against his father's opposition to his vocation. He saved at a crisis of danger the brother who had owed him a throne; yet on entering his novitiate, he left "The home and the friends of his youth without shedding a tear, and scarcely addressed three words to that brother during the last brief hours which possibly they were ever to spend together." Most men are so drawn to self that, if a few are but moderately true to the natural objects of human affections, the world counts such fidelity to them as a religious merit. To him the natural ties were so "full of light" that they became transparent, and revealed those heavenly relations of which earthly ties are the types. The aspirations of others had become his sympathies. His gravitation was upward; and, as the author of this biography forcibly expresses it, his soul tended to God "as the falling stone seeks the earth."  

The most sensitive natures are sometimes driven

1 P. 179.
by a noble necessity upon the most absolute self-mastery, and therefore on the most intense repose. It was so with St. Aloysius. When asked whether he did not pine for those he had left, he answered that “He never recollected them save when he recommended them to God,” adding that “By God’s grace he was so entirely master over his thoughts that he never reflected upon anything but what he desired.”¹ For him, though not for others, it was needful to reach this state or to abandon contemplation. The author well remarks, “Just as an image is broken into fragments when the breeze passes over the surface of the stream, so it is with the soul when any earthly solicitude or desire sweeps over it while it is striving to receive the image of God into its placid depths.”² It is true no less that, as water which a breath can ruffle yields us, in its stillness, a more vivid image of tranquillity than the solid earth beside it, so the serenity reached by a nature as sensitive as that of St. Aloysius affords to us the most perfect image of peace. To this interior stillness was doubtless owing, not only the Saint’s power of contemplating God, but another gift—viz. the power of looking through his own being as if it were that of another. “When by a close scrutiny he had satisfied his mind, so as to enable him to make a true confession, he gave himself no further anxiety;” for, like St. Teresa, he confessed that his garden naturally produced only briars and thorns. ‘Forgive me, Lord,’ he would say, ‘and

¹ P. 155. ² P. 176
grant me grace not to do so again:' after which he was perfectly tranquil, and made his confession briefly, clearly, unembarrassed by a shade of scrupulosity.”¹

The absence of agitation and scrupulosity is not wonderful, where it results from the absence of self-knowledge, and from a forgetfulness of the Divine Justice. It is where the spiritual being has reached a lofty stature that this serenity is as wonderful as if the tall tree stood unshaken in the storm. Such a condition would be impossible, doubtless, but for the special aids afforded by Confession, which alone render habitual self-knowledge compatible with the absence of morbidness. Where self-knowledge rejects in pride the aids which Religion has thus provided for it, unhealthy feelings attach themselves to it so closely that modern philosophy, advancing a step farther on the downward way, recommends as a remedy what it calls self-forgetfulness, meaning thereby self-ignorance and indifference to the soul’s health. But neither this life nor the next accepts the burning of the bill as the payment of the debt.

Among the characteristics of the Saints is that mysterious influence which they diffuse around them unconsciously, like a spiritual magnetism. As soon as St. Aloysius had entered on his novitiate at Rome all around him began to be the better for it.

Few weeks had passed before a palpable change came over the Roman College. The flame of divine love seemed to dart

¹ P. 163.
from one bosom to another, and even the coldest felt its warmth, and began to kindle like the rest; so that Cepari himself, the witness of what he describes, when in summer time he contemplated 200 students scattered through the garden in parties of three and four at the recreation hour, could feel well assured, from his knowledge of all, that there was but one subject of discourse among them, as they sat or wandered at will, like so many angels communing together amongst the trees of Paradise.¹

Nor was his influence confined to his equals; it was felt no less by his superiors. In a discourse, delivered in 1608, Bellarmine spoke thus—

When I gave the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius to Aluigi, I discovered in him such abundance of divine light, that I must confess that, at my advanced age, I learned from this youth how to meditate.²

It is not strange that, as his biographer relates—

When raised to the Cardinalate, the venerable prelate not only continued his yearly practice of repairing to the College Church of the Company to venerate the tomb of Aloysius on his anniversary, but used to make a devout visit to the room whence he had taken his flight to Heaven, and there would shed tears of tenderness in memory of their last parting.

A polemical age loses, in dealing with this question, many advantages which an age truly philosophical would possess. Catholic controversialists have by necessity been thrown so much upon answers to negations relative to the veneration of the Saints that they have not always been able to insist as strongly as they might otherwise have done on the great philosophical principles and moral ideas involved in such veneration, and the practical loss incurred by communities deprived of it. What the Catholic believes is, of course,

¹ P. 208. ² P. 305.
not merely that the practice is no remnant of Pagan idolatry, but that it is the Christian’s especial preservation against the unconscious revival of that idolatry either in the form of nature-worship, of hero-worship, or of self-worship. He believes also that not to venerate the Saints is to cut off many channels of communication between the humbler part of Christ’s kingdom and its nobler part. It is to forsake our spiritual Highlands, as men decried the English mountains during the last century.

It is when we study the lives of the Saints that we regard this vast subject, as it were from within, and see how closely it bears on our Sanctification. Children learn to speak mainly through sympathy and imitation, and they exercise those instincts because they associate frankly with those who know how to speak. The earlier instincts both of honour and of conscience are developed under similar conditions, and are often therefore not formed, or most imperfectly formed, in the hearts of castaways brought up among the courts and alleys of great cities. Among these last, even when removed at a later time to healthier spots, the higher instincts sometimes will not grow, because, again and again, some rude shock used to break the finer tendrils of their roots just when they were beginning to knit themselves in the soil. Habitudes are not to be formed out of maxims; and long before the passions of the child have begun to prove a temptation to him his moral sense may have become irrevocably stultified because he has lived among those
who regard right and wrong indifferently. At a later period he may receive moral, as he receives intellectual instruction; but it is communicated to him after a barren fashion, as when we teach mathematics to a child in whom the scientific faculty is not yet developed, and who has to measure the diagram with a pair of compasses before he perceives whether the sides and angles are equal. Now the same danger which all recognise as regards our moral training, assails also our spiritual being; and our protection against it is of a corresponding sort. In spiritual matters those who belong to the Church Militant are but children; and like other children they are intended to learn from their elders and betters—that is to say, from the citizens of the Church Triumphant. The two portions of the one great city are not separated, save by the "barricades" of an "emecute." A portion of it sits on the hills amid the purer airs and the brighter lights; and another portion of it—the dark and narrow Ghetto within which we live while on earth—occupies the lower region; but there exists a divinely-appointed order of ministrations between the two. The inhabitants of the lower region communicate with those in the higher, and the children borrow insensibly from the elders. It is through the habits developed in that heavenly yet familiar intercourse that they learn to lisp the living language of Sanctity which those amerced of such aids learn as a dead tongue. The supernatural standard of Christian perfection is sustained before their eyes in steadfast elevation; and
they believe in it, both as a thing divine and as a thing practicable. Others often have standards though imposing yet far below the Christian ideal; but for them that supernatural ideal is ever the chief of Realities, and lives on both in their heart and their hope. They approach it, though on earth they may not reach it; and their shortcomings deepen their humility.

The blindness of a presumptuous mind on such subjects is “night immersed in night”—the darkness of the natural man, wrapped around by a second cloud of inherited prejudice. A traveller drives into an Italian or Spanish village, bright with flowers, and banners, and lights, and resounding with music. The processions wind along the heights—the fireworks blaze in the market-place, and round the cathedral the crowds swell and surge. In the scene there is much that is ennobling, and something that is quaint. The enlightened “man of culture” can see but the latter when he learns that all this popular enthusiasm is the celebration of the Patron Saint’s Festa. He can appreciate the greatness of some statesman whose speech he has lately heard, or some warrior whose anniversary feast he has attended. But the villagers whom he despises have retained a knowledge worth more than all that he knows. Their minds too are haunted by the idea of greatness; but they have never forgotten that primary truth without which the imagination can but pour forth for us the Vinum Demonum—the lesson that the truest Greatness is Goodness. Their Saint is their hero, because he was pre-eminently good; and
he was pre-eminently good, not because he fought hard for the world's esteem, but because he sought the lowest place. They are proud of their Saint; and in praising him they praise God, whose praise alone he desired to set forth. He brought them the Faith, perhaps 1500 years ago, and they still rejoice as if a siege had been raised, and their city delivered from destruction, an hour before! Time and its centuries have not made them forget their benefactor; the world with its illusions has not taught them to prefer false glory to true. What discernment, what fidelity, what generosity, what an exalted and authentic standard of all that man should venerate and imitate! To what do the peasants owe these gifts? To the circumstance that they have remained "on speaking terms" with God's Saints! The world, in ceasing to have a loving zeal for these, falls to a distance from them,—a distance that tends ever to increase. First, men cease to aspire after heroic sanctity; next they cease to believe in it; at last the very idea of it departs from their mind, as some ideal of poetry or architecture gradually vanishes from the world. The imagination of society renounces its baptism, and becomes "reconverted to the world."

There can here be no neutral position. The saintly ideal was that which expelled the Pagan ideal native to man's heart—that ideal in which sense and pride combined to dress out the beautiful. Nothing could have effected this miracle but a frank and fearless Christianity—a Christianity which conquers an animalised
by a spiritualised humanity. Pentecost was a beam from that celestial light which ever lives beyond the *flamman
tid menia* of mortal life; and as the sunshine puts out the fire, so this beam from afar extinguished the flame that played on the Pagan hearth. Among the sects, and in the world, the Pagan imagination repossesses itself of its abandoned seat. This is proved by the fact that to the diseased modern intelligence the Saints wear the aspect of demi-gods, and the veneration of them seems a new mythology, though one to them unwelcome. It is strange! A Newton can see the analogy between diamond and a bit of black charcoal; but prejudice is unable to see a difference between gold and any worthless bauble that glitters. Equally incompetent seems a paganised intelligence to discriminate between Christian Saints and Pagan Gods. No wonder that others should advance a step farther, and reject Christ, on account of some fancied resemblance to Budha. And yet the Christian and the Pagan ideals are not only unlike, but are opposites, and that whether we regard Christ or His Saints. History bears witness to this truth. It was not till the latest remembrances and desires of Paganism had been "with sighing sent" from their old homes, that their abandoned shrines in the human heart had been once more lustrated and made pure, and that, by the reiterated definitions of councils, the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation had ascended to unquestioned thrones in the zenith of theological science,—it was not till then that the vener-
ation of Christ's Saints became fully developed. At an earlier period it might have been dangerous, or at least misunderstood. Had the Saints but embodied a new sort of mystified mythology, then, as the reverence for these false Gods advanced, that paid to Christ, as God, must have receded. Christ would Himself have been regarded only as one of the Saints,—nay, in time all prayers to Him might have been condemned as idolatrous, or condoned as but pious ejaculations.

All who claim the name of Christians would feel insulted by a laboured argument to show that the Character revealed to us in our Divine Lord, if the term may be used, so far from resembling the Pagan ideal of a divinity, is the opposite of it, whether we regard its measureless height of sanctity, or that abysmal humility and love of suffering which marked its condescension. How come they not to see that the character expressed in His Saints is no less the opposite of the Pagan ideal? To be godly, and to affect the Godlike—these are plainly opposite things. The former is to kneel always; the latter is a perpetual strut. To assert inherent might in every movement—

Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent,¹

was the differentia of an ideal cast in the imagination of pride. To have undergone the greatest of all changes, putting off the old man in regeneration; to live a life that had renounced Self, the false centre, and

¹ Shelley.
which was an eternal adoration of Him Who is the true centre; to repent of every act, or thought, or idle moment, which wilfully warred against, or suspended, that perpetual adoration for which the created spirit was formed—this was to be the Saint. Rhetoric, always dangerous, is fatal in theology.

Let us look farther into this. It was Christianity, we must remember, which not only brought to man the doctrine of the Incarnation, but brought back to him with it that of a Creation. These are the truths that slay idolatry. Lost in its pantheistic dream, Paganism did not know that the world was created; and for this reason every instinct of adoration or of wonder pushed it upon a sensuous idolatry. Nature had indeed lost its true elevation, which belongs to it only as the work and the expression of the one all-holy and infinite God; but even this very loss imparted to it a counter wonderfulness of its own, and taught it to wear the mask of a something divine in which holiness claimed no place. The next stage was that in which pantheism became mythology. The mere material image of the Infinite fatigues and overpowers—this image soon broke itself up into fragments, which assumed a separate vitality; and from clear wave and shadowy bough, divinities—at heart but nature still—looked forth in the form of Nereid or Dryad. It was a worship without awe; a poetry that had substituted itself for religion, and taken its name; one that gave a luminous projection to man’s thoughts, and preserved the relics of precious truths lost; but one that glorified
no'less low passions and base appetites. It was a poetry which ever "gilt that whereon it gazed," but which, whilst it exulted in admiration for all things, could never rise even to the idea of a true adoration, because the supernatural, which is the object of adoration, cannot exist where the thought of a Personal God abides no mor'e. But man, though deluded by a false religion, was not satisfied by it. The God whom conscience demanded was something more than the easy divinities whom Fancy had decorated with her wreaths; and a Parnassus, the radiant beauty of which was but the mellowed and painless reflex of man, and man's life, left man—the self-worshipper—to pine away with the fate of Narcissus. Nature herself made confession that she was both more and less than her worshippers had supposed, and hinted that the gulf between the sphere of finite things and an infinite Creator could not always remain impassable. Man cherished a "fearful hope" that behind the veil of the sense there remained divine realities. These realities at last came to him through a religion that addresses the spirit of man, not the sense, and which addresses it, not through the pride of the imagination, but through Faith. Christ was "the Desire of the Nations"—not the least significant of His titles. In all those legends which typified an Incarnation, and pre-eminently in the Rite of Sacrifice, even the Pagan religions had preserved a memory of the primal prophecy. It had beheld the "Woman" and the "Seed" who was to bruise the head of the serpent.
After the "Desire of the Nations" had come,—when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,"—that thirst which had created idolatry, tormented the human race no more. The World, not the sensualised imagination, became then the chief snare. It was then announced to us that "covetousness is idolatry,"—nay, that those who prefer human to heavenly ties are idolators; and warning was given of an age in which human ties, thus illicitly exalted, should be as ungratefully dishonoured,—one in which each man should worship his own self, installing that idol above both natural and supernatural objects of love. It is the "arch-mock" of the old Spirit of Delusion, when he persuades a world which for eighteen centuries has been lifted up to a plane of higher lights and of darker shades,—of richer graces and of more insidious temptations,—to arm its vigilance against those snares which beset its infancy, and to ignore those which ensnare its maturity and corrupt its decline.

For man's Heart as well as man's Imagination the coming of Him, the "Desire of the Nations" appeased that craving which had led to idolatry, because it awakened that Heart's deepest sympathies. The God-Man had died for man; and the Crucifix was incomparably more often looked upon than the fairest picture of the Babe on His mother's knee. The infinite had entered within bounds; but at the moment of the Annunciation, He who is life itself had subjected Himself to death. All that followed, from the crib to the Cross, and from Calvary to the
Ascension, was included as in a germ in this divine act of obedience to the Father's Will. In the character of Christ is pictured forth the unseen Father; and that character means the infinitude of elevation in the infinitude of condescension. If in the Saints we see the image of Christ, the likeness consists mainly in a measureless humility tending to a measureless elevation. If the obedience of Christ cannot become the object of our thought except when we grasp also the thought of that Father to Whom He was obedient; so the humility of the Saints can find no access to our mind without the correlative thought of Him in Whom alone His members have their being, Whose merits alone give them merit, and in Whose grace alone they are strong. Saints are, of all men, those who have least of the demi-god about them. We may forget the dependence of an ordinary man; but that of a Saint is the essence of his character. In other words, the Saint, in place of resembling the Pagan conception of a God, is a living protest against it.

Let us look at this more nearly. In proportion as the idea of God, the "Creator of heaven and earth," stands distinctly before us, we must needs see with a growing clearness that all creaturely perfection consists in dependence, not in a Godlike and self-asserting might. In recent times, wherever Pantheism has been superseding a belief in a creative God, the Pagan ideal of human character has been reasserting itself; and what has the consequence been?—an
avowed and boastful Hero-worship! Men who refused to yield "honour where honour is due," and to reverence God's Saints, have expiated their irreverence by becoming "a servant of servants"—by rendering a servile adulation to those false Gods of this world who perhaps in their day had themselves been the most servile to human opinion. The doctrine of a Creation is included in Theism, and as such it was revealed to the Patriarchal Church, though for us it hardly exists except in connection with Christianity, in which it is re-revealed. To a true Theist, God is the Living One, the Personal, the All-Holy: to believe in Him means to worship Him; and the only relation which even the imagination can attribute to the creature in connection with his Creator is that of a kneeling adoration. Suns and systems are but as transient motes that sparkle in his beam. The creature lives but in proportion as he is united with that Creator; that union can only exist as the union of dependence; and the closer it is, the less can the creature claim anything of a separate light. As the rainbow hangs suspended on the luminous mist, so that glory of His Saints which evermore surrounds the King of Saints rests evermore upon the bosom and breath of His glory. Not only it cannot exist, but it cannot be conceived of, except as the reflection of that glory inherent, after His resurrection, in the triumphant Humanity of Him who has given to those who serve Him that they should sit with Him "in His throne judging the
twelve tribes of Israel.” How can the nature of such a greatness be misapprehended? Is there a peasant who does not know that what the Saints are, they are through their extraordinary gifts of grace, and through their submission to grace? Now grace obviously means dependence; he who possesses it most is but the most conspicuous sign that points to Him from whom it comes.

The humility of the Saint is not merely, like that of the ordinary Christian—a deep sense of his own sins or shortcomings,—it is the intense appreciation of the essential nothingness which belongs to the creature, as such. For this reason it increases as sinfulness diminishes and sanctity advances. “I am that which is,” our Lord said to a Saint in vision, “and thou art that which seemeth to be.” If this, the highest form of Humility, were not their protection, the most advanced Saints might at once be subverted by that pride which smites most, like lightning, the loftiest summits; and their fall would be, like that of the Apostate angels, the sin of a moment and a sin of thought. Their sense of nothingness comes from that piercing insight with which they contemplate God’s greatness, in comparison with which all created things are infinitesimal—His Absolute Being, in comparison with which all finite things are but relative—and His everlasting might, in comparison with which the forces of creation are but things seeming, except so far as they are instrumentalities put into motion by His Divine
Energy. But as God's Providence always co-operates with His Grace, that sense of their own nothingness is for the most part externally guarded by the humiliations, afflictions, or temptations which are sent or permitted to the Saints that their purification may be the more rapid, and no less by the obscurity which commonly enshrouds them while on earth.