

PREFACE.

IN 1897, I gave two lectures in the Theological Seminary at New Haven on the Recast of Faith. It is with some liberty that the following pages are said to be these lectures. Both the substance and the form have been so far altered in rewriting that those who heard the spoken words may only gain a glimpse of recognition here and there in what is now offered.

I am glad to bid good-bye, in connection with so central and cheerful a theme as that of the goodness of God, to any who, in the years now closing, have taken pleasure in my words.

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Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

Knowledge is Power.

If thou art borrowed by a friend,
Quite welcome shall he be
To read, to study, not to lend,
But to return to me ;

Not that imparted knowledge doth
Diminish learning's store,
But *BOOKS* I find, if often lent,
Return to me no more.

—o Oo—

Read slowly, pause frequently, think seriously, keep cleanly, return duly, with the corners of the leaves not turned down.

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*The Property of*

**Henry B. Lord.**

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# THE GOODNESS OF GOD

BY

JOHN BASCOM

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW THEOLOGY," ETC.

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## PART I.

### INTRODUCTORY TERMS.



## PART I.

### INTRODUCTORY TERMS.

OUR religious beliefs have so lost their traditional basis, and have come to be so shaped by philosophical reasons, as to require, by way of indication of their character, some hint of the intellectual view of the world which underlies them. This is the more necessary when we take up a detached discussion somewhat removed from primary principles. This treatise on the goodness of God rests purely, in whatever strength it may possess, on reason. By reason we mean no single power of the human mind, but the widest exercise of all powers, at any moment possible to us, in the reconciliation of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual world as a coherent structure. Reason means our most comprehensive exposition of the nature of things. It is forever corrected by observation, instructed by experience, and enlarged by intellectual activity.

Reason, as the most vital of vital things, can grow by what it casts aside ; can make each successive stage better than the previous one, and yet derive it from it. Reason, like the strong man in motion, wins the advantage of every position by the energy which first brings him to it and then carries him beyond it. Any uncertainty as to the next step is uncertainty as to the present one. It is to reason that we appeal ; that unconquerable, acquisitive strength of mind by which it makes the world evermore its own. It matters not what aid Revelation may render us in carrying on our work ; our work brings us back to reason, God's revelation in the soul itself.

The philosophy which underlies this discussion is one which equally recognizes observation and insight ; experience and that interpretation of experience that finds the light that is in it. What we first know, in a superficial form, is found in perception ; what we know later, and in a more adequate way, is found in reflection. The book addresses itself to the eye, but the meaning of the book addresses itself to the mind ; and our knowledge is the indivisible product of both. The facts of the world do not beget the apprehend-

## Natural and Supernatural. 5

ing power, any more than the apprehending power begets the facts of the world. The two grow together, complementary parts of each other.

The most familiar example of this interlacing of diverse elements is causation and spontaneity. Causation sustains and extends spontaneity, the germ of thought and rational action ; and spontaneity moulds causation into the matrix of a higher life. Each is barren, both in knowledge and in use, without the other. The presence of both and their interdependence are facts of experience, and are rationally rendered as the two parts, physical and intellectual, of one world. This is the philosophy which tacitly underlies all knowledge, and may well enough, therefore, be the accepted support of faith.

A second, kindred contrast very prominent in the experience we have to interpret is that of the natural and supernatural. Nature stands for a physical world complete within itself, and the supernatural for a spiritual world lying back of the physical world, and pursuing, by the medium of its ministrations, its own higher ends. We reject neither of these two terms. Our philosophy lies in reconciling them. We

find them alike potent in human experience,—the experience we are so anxious to understand. The spiritual universe is not built up of facts and the laws of facts alone, nor yet of the coherent visions of the mind merely ; we despair, therefore, of apprehending it otherwise than in the relation of the two to each other. The physical form and the spiritual substance are, in the universe, inseparable terms.

The philosophy involved in the discussion is nothing more than dualism ; two most distinguishable elements, matter and mind, neither of which is resolvable into the other, and whose infinite subtilty is revealed to us in their extended interplay. The easy, vaulting movements of idealism are more pleasing than the slow, creeping processes of empiricism, yet they leave behind them far fewer traces of knowledge. We are content to study the facts, but content because, like a mirror, they give back a light not altogether their own.

The supernatural element shows itself in everywhere bringing physical facts to the support and furtherance of the expanding life they embrace ; in wrapping them as a swaddling-band about it. The universe is

## Asking and Receiving.

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becoming ever more diverse in life, ever more intellectual in life, and the safety and nutriment of this movement increase apace. The evolution of the world is in no way aimless, but is ever gathering causes together as a nest for a new spiritual fledgling. It is on this ground primarily that the world is spiritual,—it makes for spiritual creations. The flow of its collective physical forces renders it increasingly a pure stream by whose reflection every beautiful thing is given back to itself, and to the spiritual world.

Not only is there this constructive response of the two elements to each other, there is ever a more immediate and vital interplay between them, shown in the manner in which the wants and wishes of men grow daily more potent. “Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,” becomes increasingly the formula of the world. Asking, seeking, and knocking are one, and the world yields to them all, whether they express themselves in following up the clues of knowledge, or in casting the spirit gladly, with poetic insight, on the Spiritual Presence of the world. They are all alike efficacious in winging the mind and in winging the heart for a forward movement.

If we take prayer in its most limited sense, we find that it has played a most productive part in human experience. With the lowly and the lofty it has shaped the purposes of men, and given them firmness in their pursuit. How many, like our Lord, have gone down a steadily declining path of prosperity, and with the words, "Thy will be done," have converted it into a sublime ascent toward righteousness and peace !

There is as the fruit of these two tendencies, the rooting of life in the world and the ministration of the world to life, an increasing sense of a pervasive Spiritual Presence,—inexhaustible strength to the mind, infinite solace to the heart. The soul as certainly finds its nutriment in this conviction as the plant, forcing its fibers into the coarse, dark soil, draws thence food, flower, fragrance. The marvel of the flower and the earth in which it grows is a marvel like that of the pure spirit and the elements which invest it.

We make no mention of miracles. The historic proof does not reach with sufficient firmness to them. We simply feel that there is no rational principle that sets them peremptorily aside. The part they play will be

## Physical and Spiritual.

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plainer as our lives unfold. Like meteors in the solar system, they are mere shreds in the constructive process, not essential portions. No miracle is necessary in the spiritual kingdom. Most miracles are flakes struck off in the welding of men's thoughts into adequate convictions.

The data on which our inquiry proceeds are found in the physical and spiritual facts which enclose our lives. Both classes of phenomena have with us the force of realities. Physical facts are capable of a spiritual rendering, and they, with the spiritual facts that spring up with them, are essential portions of one creation. The two offer themselves collectively for rational apprehension. There is no room for agnosticism, for are we not studying the world, studying it in its profounder renderings? These renderings are the very substance of our phenomenal knowledge. We are not discussing the nature of God in a speculative and uncorrected way. We are simply seeking the open implications of the facts nearest to our own lives.

This implies, of course, that both causes and reasons have free play in the world. We are not assuming a world of causes simply, and

then striving to treat it as if it sprang from Reason and contained reasons. Our reasons are as primitive as our causes. We cannot introduce the question of the goodness of God into a world of causation simply. Goodness implies the knitting of causes together in a beneficent purpose. The tracing of causes alone discloses no love. It is in the interaction of causes and reasons that goodness is revealed. As in the loom, one roller yields the warp and another roller takes up the completed web, the workman accomplishing his purpose in the interval between them, so causes and reasons, the one looking backward and the other forward, are united in the present pattern of the world, a world shaped between the two and judged by the two. We are in search of goodness, and we look for it where alone it can be found, in the framing of events into spiritual products. The discussion becomes wholly illusory without a spiritual philosophy, and this philosophy we assume. We are not enunciating or defending such a philosophy. We are inquiring how, under this philosophy, the question of God's goodness is to be answered.

What is here offered will seem to some to



## Insight.

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lack proof. It does lack proof in the narrow sense. The architect presents his elevations and accompanies them with some exposition. They then lie between him and the critic to be pronounced upon according to the knowledge and insight of the two. This is the very purpose they subserve, that of disclosing the order and harmony present in the innumerable relations they express. It is in vain to ask proof; they sum up too many things, their appeal is too comprehensive. A conviction of adequacy grows by a wide survey of obvious and of obscure relations. The mind takes its final position in the spiritual world, not by succinct steps of proof, but by the more secret processes of growth,—by a continuous revelation and silent appropriation which at the same time determine and disclose the inner and the outer coherence of things.

Our present appeal is to insight, that insight which sums up all the resources of the spirit, intellectual and emotional. Herein lies the true potency of the spirit, the power by which it distills into consciousness through every pore, and secretes in the solid structure of one's being all the nutritive material of a spiritual world. This is life justifying itself

## Introductory Terms.

as life ; not proof, but the approving of the soul to itself, and of the universe to that which it has brought forth.

## PART II.

### THE CONCEPTION OF GOD AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

As Jesus grew older, and learned more of the religious condition of his people, as he saw how small a place the idea of God's fatherhood occupied in contemporary thought, and to what superficiality, selfishness, formality, and hypocrisy the lack of it had led, he must have felt increasingly the importance of it, and his countrymen's supreme need of its uplifting and ennobling power.—  
A. C. MCGIFFERT, *The Apostolic Age*, p. 16.

*Our Father Which Art in Heaven.*

## PART II.

### THE CONCEPTION OF GOD AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

AS our conception of God is introduced as an explanatory idea, it necessarily changes with our conception of the world which is to be explained by it, and with our conception of those spiritual powers revealed to us in ourselves in whose service and under whose analogy we frame the idea. The notion of God must stand on such terms with the world as to make it more comprehensible to us than it otherwise would be ; and on such terms with ourselves as to be intelligible to us, and in harmony with our ideas of perfect spiritual life. The changeable character of our conception of God, the growth necessarily involved in it, render our religious life, like our entire life, one of vital development.

In the beginning, guided by our own relation to the physical world, which offers itself to us in an independent form to be acted on

## 16            The Conception of God.

by us and shaped to our purposes, we conceive of God as an agent external to the material world, bringing it into order. When we come to apprehend matter as holding within itself both the forces and laws of construction, we are led to regard the spiritual life of the world as inherent in its physical structure. God is immanent in His work, as the mind of man is immanent in the body of man.

The conception of immanence is introduced as more harmonious with the obvious facts of the world, as a more perfect reconciliation of physical and intellectual phenomena, and as giving us a more intelligible expression of the omnipresence and the omniscience of God. This conception involves a new adjustment of spiritual and physical facts to each other. Physical facts are, in human experience, the inseparable form of spiritual facts, and spiritual facts are the inner significance and force of physical ones. This unity and this contrast of the two, with which we are everywhere so familiar, and on which our intellectual and higher emotional life is constantly turning, are now carried up to the Supreme Spirit and to the world through which He is revealed to us. The two inhere in each other as one

## Change in the Conception 17

comprehensive fact. This doctrine of immanence gives due weight both to physical and to spiritual phenomena, and unites them as parts of one universe. The physical law is held fast, but so also are its constructive relations and spiritual significance. We accept the symbol, but receive with it that which it symbolizes. We translate the physical fact into the spiritual meaning it contains. We deal with words in connection with the ideas they express. The spiritual side of the world becomes as real to us and as intelligible to us as its physical side.

In introducing this explanatory notion of immanence, we have occasion to modify our conception of God and our conception of matter as well. If we can no longer conceive of God as acting arbitrarily on the world under His hand, we can also no longer conceive of physical processes as self-sufficing in themselves, and in their relations to the universe of which they are a part. Such a notion gives no room for God. Our personified expressions, nature, natural selection, genetic force, cosmic process, have taken the place which should fall to Supreme Reason, lying at the heart of things. They are one and all imaginative

creations which find no footing in matter, and which serve simply to displace spiritual powers.

We must brush aside this swarm of personifications, that fill the air with their busy hum, that we may recover the deep quiet voice of reason, which, in the doctrine of God's immanence, we have accepted as the central fact of the world. We are not to repeat in the world at large the error into which the empiricist falls when, amid the functions of the brain, he finds no room for the mind itself. The Divine Thought must lie under and with the wisdom which permeates the world and makes it a spiritual product. The inferences of reason must be open to us in all directions. We are no more to rob the spiritual of its true significance than we are to deny to the physical law its coherent force. Reason, conscious reason, light within itself and bringing light to all that enters its realm, must remain the central fact and force of our entire life. Every other method is irrational, in derogation of reason. Reason alone gives light, and it alone is revelation. So far as we possess it we see, so far as we want it we are in darkness. Reason must forever reconstruct its conceptions, trim its light, but it cannot be allowed to distrust its



own processes. Indeed, scepticism rarely falls backward into this abyss. The only search, and the eternal search, of the world is for reason, and when this disappears, we pass into confusion and chaos. The one eternal, unchangeable principle is fidelity to reason. This it is which leads us to accept the immanence of Reason in the world. Thus and thus only does the world become profoundly rational, and our search into it an unlimited inquiry for truth.

It is a profound piece of irrationalism to think of these magnificent physical things and events which enclose us, ever more subtile in their implications, ever striking deeper into our intellectual life, ever more nutritive of the highest emotions, as not resting back on a corresponding magnitude of spiritual life, as not working their way onward toward a Kingdom of Heaven, as floating meaningless in an empty region of illusions and inanities. This is making a mockery of reason in the very consummation of its processes.

Evolution forces a constant reconstruction of our sense of the destiny of man, and of the means by which that destiny is being fulfilled. Immanence, a new coalescence of physical and

## The Conception of God.

spiritual forces, a fresh denial of the exclusive and conflicting ways in which these two elements have been treated, is one more product of the evolutionary idea. Immanence is a reconciliation of mind and matter with the loss of neither. When we plumb to the bottom of things, we reach impalpable forces, forces forever at work under intellectual relations, something to be understood and to be felt. When we walk through the world, traversing it in a spirit of comprehension, we find ourselves last of all in the presence of God, the living source of truth. When we would give this truth the highest form of reality, we see it turned back before our eyes into that unending procession of events which surrounds us. We make way for God in the world, and the world moves with us as an ever-renewed disclosure of His mind.

As long as men have but a feeble sense of the unity of the world, and an obscure apprehension of its network of causation, the inferences by which they pass over to spiritual beings are fickle and fanciful. These inferences involve evil spirits as readily as good spirits, and finite spirits more readily than an Infinite Spirit. The same confusion necessarily exists

## One Indwelling Life.

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in men's notions of the spiritual world which inheres in their apprehensions of themselves and of the events which surround them. The Christian system has reduced this discord to its lowest expression, and yet retains it in its conception of Satan.

As the creative force of the world and its wholly interior structure are made apparent to man, the conception of God becomes that of an indwelling spiritual life, and there is no room left for exterior forces or conflicting forces. The same tendency of thought that carries with it the immanence of God leads us also to ascribe to Him exclusive power. The construction of the world is complete within itself, and there is no opportunity to withstand His purpose. There is no *pou sto* for an adversary. Even yet this notion of definite resistance is not quite abandoned, as is shown in a recent ingenious work, *Evil and Evolution*.

Our spiritual psychology, our rendering of the elements that enter into righteousness and excellence of character, are equally potent in modifying our conception of God. As long as we put will uppermost, we shall conceive of God as irresistible, personal power. "He is in one mind and who can turn Him? What His

soul desireth even that He doeth.”—Job xxiii., 13. “What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?”—Rom. ix., 22. “Who can stand before His indignation? who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.”—Nah. i., 6. Such men as Calvin and Edwards necessarily shaped their notion of God to the narrow psychology by which they expounded the spiritual world to themselves.

Allied to these notions which enter into our construction of character are those which find expression in government. Civil government, the most obvious type of authority, may be brought forward as explanatory of the divine government. “Doth God pervert judgment, or doth the Almighty pervert justice?”—Job viii., 3. Especially has this notion of justice been misleading. It has been regarded as an absolute quality, a supreme impulse, which demands satisfaction at all hazards. Men have proceeded to construct the government of God in harmony with this notion, and have embarrassed by means of it all the processes of forgiveness and love. (Only the remainder of

## The Goodness of God.

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action, after the impulses of sovereignty and justice have been gratified, have been conceded to love. The exigencies of the divine government — fanciful exigencies because interpreted on a limited human model — must be met, whatever befalls the divine tenderness and redemptive grace.

The confusion of ideas incident to this ill-analyzed moral experience has held men back from completing the notion of divine goodness, which has, none the less, been pushed into the foreground. "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works."—Ps. cxlv., 9. "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O Lord; therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings."—Ps. xxxvi., 7.

Not till the Epistles of John do we find the goodness of God given as an unqualified and ruling principle. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love;

and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."—1 Jno. iv., 7, 8, 16, 18. Here is a conception of God which in its consistency and fulness was new. The words of our Lord, though they are never of the same explicit, dogmatic character, involve a similar idea of God to that contained in the words of the beloved disciple. The introductory words of our Lord's prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven," fling us at once, under the image of goodness most familiar to us, on the goodness of God. Christ teaches us that this watchful goodness extends to all things. The very hairs of our head are all numbered.

The position which Christ gave to the two great commandments contains the same conclusion in a more comprehensive form. We cannot love God with all the heart and soul and mind except as He Himself calls out this love; nor can we love our neighbor as ourselves otherwise than in recognition of the universal law of love. The parable of the prodigal son takes from the conception of God any sense of severity or of retribution, and represents Him

as ever waiting for us with open, parental arms.

These concrete images find abstract expression in the assertion, "God is love"; a conception that was still struggling with conflicting ideas as indicated by the affirmation of the writer of Hebrews: "For our God is a consuming fire."—(Heb. xii., 29); or by the words of St. Paul when he puts down all criticism of God's ways by the inquiry, "Who art thou that answerest against God?"—Rom. ix., 20.

We understand by the assertion that God is love, that love, in the character of God, rules and sets in order all other impulses; that there are no moral impulses which, from the nature of the case or in fact, are in conflict with love. If there is anything in the righteousness of God which is inconsistent with this predominating love, then it could not be said that God is love.

There can be no demand of justice going before and superior to the demand of love. There can be no eternal punishment unless it can be shown that that punishment in some way fulfills itself in love. Righteousness and wisdom may define the methods to be pursued by love, but in so doing they only express

love. They put no limits upon it. This view is consistent with either of the two prevalent ethical theories. We may make happiness the controlling element in the moral law, or we may accept a moral law grounded in reason and ultimately issuing in happiness ; in either case the entire movement of the world is toward the welfare of men. God's love gathers quality, strength, and expression in every fulfillment of ethical law.

Love implies a supreme regard for the well-being of those who are its object. It finds no difficulty in putting this impulse foremost. It accepts love as the primary law of a spiritual universe. If love is possible, then all conflicts can be overcome, and spiritual life everywhere be put in harmony with itself. There is no constitutional discrepancy of interests or of aims between men. The strength of all is found in the welfare of each. If this love is not possible, then there is no possible harmony in the spiritual world, and whatever peace is secured must be reached by crushing inferior claims under superior ones, weaker persons under stronger persons.

The law of love must not only flow out of the rational nature of God, it must find its



## God's Love the Source of Love. \* 27

germinant power in that nature. We shall love Him because He has first loved us ; and love our fellow-men because of the possibility of the extension of love in the world in fulfillment of His purpose. The creative thought will run before and guide our love. If the world, as a spiritual product, gives no color to the law of love ; if the collidings of appetite, passion, and desire are endless ; if they look to no unity and resolve themselves into no light, then we lack the basis of a Kingdom of Heaven, and have no proof of a Heavenly King.

As long as men believed in gods many, merciful or vengeful, the character of any deity had little to do with a sense of reality. Indeed this sense could be enhanced by fear as readily as by love, since it was a question of the emotions. When we come to deal with the spiritual world by a rational rendering of the physical world, by a study of its inner force and drift, any lack of graciousness in purpose or of coherence in plan immediately obscures our sense of a Spiritual Presence. The heavens are covered with clouds, and we see nothing beyond the events, toward and untoward, by which we are enclosed. Any

revelation, therefore, of the love of God is a parting of the mist, an opening up of the deep blue beyond, a disclosure of our true position in the infinitely comprehensive movement of which we are a part. Our sense of the being of God must more and more depend on our sense of His goodness. The interpreting idea of the spiritual universe is this law of love, and in its light the life of God is disclosed and His personality gathered up. Without it, confusion still reigns in what should be the highest realm of order. Very little conviction can gather about the being of a God struck with the worst form of weakness, that of indifference to the general welfare; or with the worst form of incapacity, the incapacity to control evil. The supreme law of the spiritual world is love; one who sees this can give no acceptance to the assertion of a Supreme Reason in whose nature this impulse is not a ruling element. Our best light must be a portion of His light, our clearest vision a reflection of His vision. Those processes of thought which are a disclosure of the ultimate force of the spiritual world must also be a disclosure of the nature of God. We see the one in the other. Any want of parallelism between the two, any

## Love Essential to Belief in God. \* 29

confusion in either, weakens the vision of faith. If the love of God were reduced or lost, it would be impossible to gather up the dissolving attributes of a holy personality in such a way as to make them appeal to reason. The key of the world is its spiritual realm, the key of the spiritual realm is love, and this love must abide in the mind of God. Not otherwise do we reach the harmony of reason. The explanation of the world by the immanence of a pure spirit is rational in the measure in which that spirit is pure; and in the measure in which the world expresses that purity. Any deficiency on either side is confusion and disturbance of thought.

We can see and feel the necessity of goodness in the divine character only when we have so far fathomed the ethical laws of the world as thoroughly to understand that the commandments of love are the first and second commandments, and that obedience to them truly inheres in the nature of God and of man. This is a long lesson, and we acquire it very slowly. When we have settled this point, that the drift of the spiritual universe is toward love, we shall allow nothing in our philosophy of life to interfere with it; and we shall

interpret God's nature and purposes by it. In that stage of thought, to deny perfect goodness to God is to deny His moral supremacy, is to deny His being. God must not only be accepted as love, but as pressing into nonentity all that is not love. As reason reveals itself it will always be in this light of love. As, therefore, our knowledge of the nature of love and of its relations to human life expands, our conception of God undergoes change. It thus becomes a supreme question whether the world as a fact justifies this assertion of the divine goodness; whether, unable to affirm any other God, we can affirm this God.

## PART III.

### THE NATURE OF GOD'S GOODNESS.

The safety and sanity of life consist in keeping in mind the higher ends and laws of our existence. For man is not only to know, but to do and to achieve. Strange, is it not, that man should not be content with what he sees ; that he should turn his back on the known and familiar in search of something better ; that he should stake his life sometimes on a hope or dream of his mind ? Yet this, too, belongs to man : it is the ideal ends of human life calling in him for their accomplishment ; and he, simple and loyal, does not fail to hear. —W. M. SALTER, *Ethics and Religion*, p. 75.

## PART III.

### THE NATURE OF GOD'S GOODNESS.

LOVE is an impulse which can complete itself only as it is associated with the most comprehensive wisdom. There must be, in connection with its expression, an adequate choice of ends and a nice adaptation of means to their accomplishment. The conferring of happiness successfully implies a complete knowledge of the being on whom it is bestowed, and of the conditions suitable to his farther development.

There is no sufficient proof that the immediate purpose of the world is to bestow pleasure, to play constantly and agreeably on a sensitive organism. Such a view greatly reduces, if it does not wholly exclude, the spiritual problem. We are to judge the goodness of God in connection with the ultimate aim of His government, and in connection with the means by which it is pursued. If we can form no idea of the end in view in the

## 34 The Nature of God's Goodness.

world, we can pronounce no judgment on the feeling which its events express.

The purpose of the world seems to be a development in man of a spiritual nature,—the perception of spiritual facts and a spontaneous response to them. This means that the possibilities of good-will, the inner law of a Kingdom of Heaven, are being more and more disclosed to him, and are becoming a part of his spiritual consciousness. We gather this purpose from the trend of events; slow, vacillating, and obscure, but on the whole undeniable. The actual evolution of the world has been and is a spiritual one. The law of love is becoming more clearly revealed and more widely accepted. Institutions like the family, the Church, the State, and society are made to rest more distinctly upon it. No other equilibrium in life remains permanent; no other solution of its problems gains acceptance. All construction in society which rests on violence, or on self-interest simply, sooner or later gives way and throws us back on a better, a higher solution of the terms of settlement. The law of the spiritual world, apprehended so long ago, still remains good: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more



until he come whose right it is ; and I will give it him."

This spiritual life is also shown to be the purpose of the world because it is the ideal ever returning in clear light to the minds of men ; that which the wisest and the best promise to themselves and to others. This vision of spiritual fellowship is more than a morning star ; it itself is the light and will grow into the light that shall force back the clouds and fulfill its own promise. If that which is fittest survives in the physical world, still more must that which is best conquer in the spiritual world. It works there with a double force : its mastery over events, and its mastery over the thoughts of men. The highest thing we can conceive lies most directly, as an interpreting idea, between us and God, and is necessarily the centre of spiritual movement. We shall discuss the goodness of God under this supposition, that the creative process now going forward is a process of spiritual life.

The question then becomes whether the discipline of life is well fitted to unfold these higher powers, to beget a clear consciousness of good, to sift the good from the evil, the

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true from the false, and to put the impulses and the gains of life on the side of righteousness. The things we are to secure are apprehension, concurrence, joy, abiding as ever-renewed and growing factors in the soul itself. The excellency of the attainment, if it can be attained, the adequacy of this end, we need not pause to affirm. The only doubt that can linger in our minds pertains to the absolute fitness of the means by which these results are sought. The purpose itself is so comprehensive, adequate, and supreme as to justify any means that are involved in its fulfillment.

It is a slow process by which all the parts of our infinitely complex spiritual life enter, one after another, the region of consciousness, and are there shaped into masterful character. A physical organization that is slowly built into strength and symmetry under the actions and reactions of its environment is a simple product when contrasted with the physical, the intellectual, the social life which attends on human development.

There is, first, a protracted integration of the physical and the spiritual powers by which the body comes to sustain the spirit, and the spirit to gain a visible, suitable presence in the

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body. Not only does the spiritual man, when fittingly endowed with physical life, transcend all other products, he so far transcends them as to be quite of his own order—such a miracle of workmanship as to be the true exponent of the whole world. There is nothing which is associated with him in power save the diversified family into which he is organized and the propagating force of the race of which he is an expression. The slowly accumulated physical and spiritual potentialities which are combined in a proximately perfect man, which have grown up together and completed each other by insensible increments through many generations, whose provoking causes and occasions have been found in the entire physical and spiritual worlds, mark him as the ripening fruit of all evolution. Not only are all phases of physical life completed in him, every step of intellectual development, every spiritual product reached in the painful unfolding of families, communities, and nations, are present in him, held at length as an organic tendency, a communal instinct, and a personal conviction. The double conversion of wants into convictions, and of convictions into spiritual impulses; of necessities into achievements and of

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achievements into inherited powers ; this constant play of the physical life upon the conscious life, and of the conscious life back upon the physical life ; the perpetual transfer of all virtues won by the individual or by the race into the ever-broadening stream of human life, is something which, if at any one moment it remains intangible and invisible, is like the motion of the heavenly bodies, a perennial factor in all creative processes. So to integrate, under an orderly evolution, the physical and the spiritual worlds that they shall become inseparable parts of one thing, and unite in growing ministrations to the conscious and the unconscious elements of life, is to lay the foundations of the Kingdom of Heaven and to build thereon.

One of the most influential developments among men was that of Greece, uniting, under their own inherent tendencies, intellectual activity and physical strength. From that time on the embodiment of these two endowments, mental power and physical beauty, has been an ideal conception among men, and has set in motion many forms of discipline for its realization. This partial achievement of the Greek was one stadium in the march of human

## The Physical and the Spiritual. 39

history. We have so to build the humane purpose on brutal strength, so to ripen the kindly out of the cruel impulse, that our lives shall be as the plant in its victories. For every root it thrusts downward into darkness it sends a branch upward into light ; all that it gathers beneath it expands above as foliage, flower, and fruit.

“ Let us not always say  
‘ Spite of this flesh to-day  
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole ! ’  
As the bird wings and sings,  
Let us cry ‘ All good things  
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps  
soul ! ’ ” \*

This integration of the physical and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly life, proceeds but slowly and with many errors. An early cry of the spirit has been that of St. Paul : “ Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” But a feeling of this kind leads at once to a misapprehension of the problem, and of the method, of redemption. James regarded the friendship of the world as enmity with God.—James iv., 4-11. John says of the world, “ It passeth away with the lust thereof.”—1 John ii.,

\* Robert Browning, *Rabbi ben Ezra*.

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17. Paul exhorts us not to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.—Rom. xiii.,

14. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."—Gal. vi., 14.

The spiritual life received such an impulse forward in the words of Christ, that the voluntary powers were greatly quickened, and his early disciples were ready to carry the Kingdom of Heaven by storm. They had small patience for anything that seemed to stand in the way of it, and were led to regard things as obstacles which were really of the nature, first of difficulties, then of aids. In this spirit they commenced their associate religious life with a partial community of goods, and maintained it till its inherent embarrassments threw them back into the ordinary channels of social development. Paul, when he enforces chastity on the ground that our bodies are the temples of God, involves the true principle of the inseparable interdependence of body and mind.

The Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, shows a sounder apprehension than that which characterized the early Christians of the relation of physical conditions to a healthy spiritual

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life. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."—Ps. xc., 17. "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary."—Ps. xcvi., 6. "That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth ; that our daughters may be as a corner-stone polished after the similitude of a palace ; that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store ; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and tens of thousands in our streets ; that our oxen may be strong to labor ; that there be no breaking in nor going out ; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case ; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Ps. cxliv., 12–15. The rule of righteousness, as imaged by Isaiah, was one of universal peace. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain."—Is. xi., 9. Paul, on the other hand, in the presence of great spiritual issues seems disposed to minimize and push aside earthly relations. "The time is short ; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it, for

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the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Cor. vii., 29-31.

We know how rapidly the separation of the spiritual life from the physical and social life with which it was associated led to mischief, till repulsive squalor and the fanaticism of self-torture brought thorns and thistles in the vineyard of God in place of fruits. Though it is not necessary to suppose that this mistake in method made the redemptive process abortive, it certainly embarrassed and delayed it for centuries. Asceticism became an eddy in the stream, driven indeed by the forward flow, but itself unfruitful of progress.

How very different is the really divine movement by which the physical forces of the world, whether in the body of man, or in interplay with it, unite with its spiritual forces in an increasing expression of the creative purpose! A vital evolution is thus achieved in which the conscious and voluntary powers are ever taking a larger part. The spiritual is constantly laying surer foundations for itself in the sensuous world, and so prepares for itself a more perfect fulfillment of its own purposes.

It is a slow process by which we are first led to conceive of the physical world as our



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medium upward, and later led to that organic growth in it and with it by which it becomes a daily embodiment of our beneficent powers. Nowhere else do we more immediately meet God as working with us, or better understand the practical quality and scope of our labors. We drop out of the heaven of vague desires and enter into the fruition of reasonable hopes. The petition that the will of God may be done in earth as it is in heaven means this bending of all things in lines of obedience to a living, pervasive spiritual impulse, which reaches deep for its sources of strength only that it may spread high and wide in the sunlight of divine favor.

The world is not something to be left behind and forgotten by spirits now happily disembodied, but is the many-wheeled vehicle in which we are taken up in our progress heavenward. Thus to integrate ourselves day by day with God's creative work, to understand and rejoice in that work, to become its most significant and explanatory portion, to make what was simply good without us very good by means of us,—this is to gain our first victory with the first weapon put in our hands, this is to achieve a good at once physical and

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spiritual, this is to have the gift of God in us as well as with us.

We thus win what are sometimes contemptuously called natural virtues—virtues which, in their deepest signification, mean pure affections incorporated in a structure suitable to them. The natural virtue is virtue freed of its heat and passion, and made the peaceful movement of the mind in its daily ongoing. This concurrence of temperament, physical tone, and spiritual temper in one rational life, this strict subservience of appetites and passions to the organic structure of which they form a part, is the highest harmony known to men, and one toward which all events are pushing. The difference between the most perfect specimen of the most perfect race and the least perfect example of the least perfect race lays down for us a measuring unit in this growth of men heavenward.

It is quite possible that in our earlier apprehension and pursuit of this complex spiritual well-being, our Christianity may gain in muscle faster than in the mind of the Master. This is only another example of a universal experience. Great truths are pursued and attained in a rhythmic way, with an ebb and flow of

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effort. We may be pouring more air into the glowing furnaces of a gunboat, when we should be trimming the sails of a merchantman to the steady trade-winds that bear her gaily forward on her beneficent errands.

The two elements, physical and spiritual, must necessarily grow together and interlace along the lines of their common expansion. A certain concurrence of the two is inevitable, and their complete harmony in the highest life is the ultimate issue of all evolution, physical and spiritual. This is the true deliverance from the body of this death, which our physical structure seems to be to the impatient spirit which has suddenly projected itself forward in the line of growth. Such a soul, far on in the enemy's territory, needs to pause and to fortify the position it has won. The Kingdom of Heaven is the product of many generations of purified life. A life that thus develops itself within itself, that compacts itself by itself, gains, at the same time, a growing mastery of the physical forces that enclose it. To grow in grace thus means to grow in all the conditions of a wholesome experience, means a complete revelation of the divine mind in broad daylight, means a leisurely

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walk with God in the garden of God for the ends of its cultivation.

A second integration, which accompanies and follows this integration of mind and body, is that which takes place between our intellectual and our ethical or spiritual impulses. The term which lies midway between intellectual activity, as a simple adaptation of means to ends, and spiritual life, nourishing itself by a wide and penetrative rendering of the world in its ultimate address to the affections, is the ethical law. This law is accepted and established within the mind itself for its own highest unfolding.

Men have great trouble in uniting sensuous and spiritual welfare with each other, and laying down harmonious boundaries between them. It cannot be done otherwise than through ethical law, that inner law of action by which we grow up into all the higher conceptions of the spiritual life and call out its self-rewardful impulses.

Few discussions in practical life or in philosophy have been more pertinaciously pursued than that involved in the determination of the nature of ethical law, and in the crystallization of our activities about it. The ground so

## The Intellectual and the Ethical. 47

often fought over, of necessity and of liberty, the alleged victories of determinism at once made nugatory by the ever-returning tide of human activity,—the chiselled rock beginning at once to show lichen and moss,—involves, as the gist of the contention, the existence of an ethical law. The presence of such a law implies and carries with it the power of obedience. Philosophy is compelled, however often it may stumble and fall, to bring forward anew this notion of liberty, building up the structure of reason on the ethical framework of reason. Spiritual life will accept no other solution.

In the practical development of life, men are constantly thrusting back, in fierce aversion, this and that phase of ethical law as it appears above the intellectual horizon, and passing over those who urge it to the category of meddlers and imbeciles.

“Not that there is to-day any lack of theologians and philanthropists to protest against it (the right of the strongest). To them we owe the numberless volumes in which they appeal, in eloquent phrases, to right and to justice, a kind of sovereign divinities who direct the world from the depth of the skies. But the facts have always given the lie to their vain phraseology. These facts tell us that right exists only where it possesses the necessary strength

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to make itself respected. We cannot say that might is greater than right, for might and right are identical." \*

This sentiment is not often blurted out in this crude and offensive form, but it is present in every social struggle, and lies as a shadow of darkness on the skirts of every historic landscape. Few as yet accept the supreme force of ethical law, a law that renews itself after every defeat in its entire claims. Men grant, in moments of insight, the inextinguishable nature of truth, but they do not see that this assertion means no more than the truism, "What is is," except as truth discloses lines of action and so resolves itself into the eternal laws of conduct. This endless conflict does not matter; it drives back no moral impulse; it simply prepares the way of victory. Men may have declared for a century that there is no moral element involved in slavery which must be reckoned with; yet at the end of the century peals out the assertion of an irrepressible conflict, and the whole fabric of force crumbles in the dust.

All the developments of society are simply an integration of ethical law, normal to man's higher constitution, with the physical

\* Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of Socialism*, p. 327.

## Religious Feeling and Ethical Law. 49

laws which inhere in him as an appetitive, refined, sagacious brute.

One might suppose that men would find little difficulty in reconciling ethical law and religious feeling, being, as they are, the intellectual and emotional sides of our spiritual life ; yet this has not been the case. Christian faith, as voiced in its expositors, has often instituted a kind of antagonism between morality and religion, and has spoken lightly of what has been termed mere morality. If we are at liberty to speak of mere morality, we are at liberty to speak of mere religion ; of mere body and mere mind ; till our disjected members all perish together. Ethics as much demands keen spiritual insight, and the sentiments incident to it, as does any distinctively religious doctrine. There is no revelation of God more spiritual, more commanding, more comforting, than that of ethical law. It is the most direct, pervasive, and conspicuous expression of the Divine Reason. Religious feeling that is not nourished by ethical law lacks wisdom and strength. Ethical law that does not call forth profound personal sympathies is robbed of its own proper fruit. Morality cannot be assigned a position subordinate

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to faith, for it is of its very substance, its most rational and substantial element.

A still greater failure to unite the two as parts of one system has been seen in the ease with which the government of God has been made to accept principles which rest on no ethical basis. Even the very notion of ethical law has been planted, not in eternal reason but in infinite power. Here we have Le Bon and Paul catching at the same idea. Paul puts down his adversary with the sharp inquiry, "Who art thou that answerest against God?" Yet Reason is infinitely open to all inquiry and placable to all insight. The severe punishments referred to God have been justified as expressions of His will, or defended on grounds quite aside from the ethical training involved in them. The penitence and the forgiveness which so constantly assuage transgression among men have been conceded only a limited use between men and God. The government of God has not been allowed to stand on terms of perfect sympathy with the ethical construction of the world.

Because of this reduction of the part played by the moral element in human discipline, men were less able to unite natural law and spiritual



## Natural Law and Ethical Law. 51

law in one harmonious whole. Natural law and ethical law offered little restraint or guidance to the divine method. Says Cowper, whose mind was saturated with current theology : "I know that God is not governed by secondary causes in any of His operations, and that, on the contrary, they are all so many agents in His hand, which strike only where He bids them." \* He was ready, therefore, to charge himself with some imbecility of faith, because he was disposed to trace a periodical return in the malady under which he suffered.

At the present time we are at the opposite extreme of the arc of vibration, and find great difficulty in admitting any direct spiritual force in the government of God. That government is identified with natural law, and is allowed in no way to transcend it. The spirit struggles in vain not to be stripped of every inner garment of faith, and not to be left naked, subject to all the cruel pelting of the physical world. Can any adjustment be less spiritually fitting than this : man alone with things, with no spiritual resource or spiritual response, and that in a world in which every unfledged bird is born in a nest !

\* Cowper's *Letters*, p. 258.

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When we come to the ultimate problem of the relation of the physical and the spiritual to each other in the government of God, we seem to forget at once the clue by which we should approach it. If we can hold fast to the integrity of the mind, the validity of its powers, girt about as it is with physical causes, we should be able to hold fast to the spiritual integrity of God, even though a world of natural forces is His constant medium of revelation—the atmosphere through which the light plays. If the human mind can melt into its physical agents,—like the flake of snow in the water—and yet not become one with them, certainly God may preserve His personal spiritual presence in a world of His own creation. It is time that we ceased to relieve our weariness by standing, first on one foot and then on the other, and moved forward with that marvelous concurrence of things both physical and spiritual which makes us to be rational creatures.

The ethical law may be said to be that additional element which enables us to unite matter and mind with each other, and to organize our sensuous and spiritual activities under the discipline of that commanding idea of duty by means of which both are defined and fulfilled.

Thus the beating of the spiritual pulse is ever determining the rhythm of forces with which the entire life goes forward. No union can possibly transcend in creative power, in beauty, in joy, this union, under ethical law, of our sensuous experiences and spiritual affiliations. It is an integration, which, like that of clouds in rapid atmospheric changes, constantly takes on fresh disclosures of the marvelously facile elements with which we have to do. The ethical and spiritual man needs to be taught, like the unethical and unspiritual man, that his conceptions are by no means ultimate ; that he claims for them in their inadequate and transitional forms an authority which does not belong to them, and that these intangible terms of conduct must declare and establish themselves in the growth of tangible things. The spiritual world is a creation, and in each of its stages we must be able to pronounce it good ; and in its completion, very good.

In this ethical integration lies a chief discipline of the world. We evolve the ethical law from accumulated experience, individual and collective ; we then bring it back to that experience for reciprocal correction. Thus Ethics passes into civil law, and civil law

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sobers and widens men's thoughts, till duty becomes the substance of social life. Papinian was a great civicist because of marvelous ethical insight. Our religious faith gains wisdom and practical guidance by virtue of ethical disclosures ; and what we first conceive as religious obligation, in more or less perverted and painful forms, by virtue of the ethical insights and spiritual affections called out in connection with it, becomes, at length, the substance of spiritual strength. Life is made reasonable, self-contained, harmonious, and free by the growing revelations of our moral nature.

What a masterful position falls to us ! On the physical side, notwithstanding our physical weakness, we are neither overborne nor cast aside by the tremendous powers which enclose us. If we abide in ethical strength among ourselves, we can put upon them widely our purposes. On the spiritual side, we are in the focus of light. All revelations gather in us, all lines of creative power, building up the Kingdom of Heaven, go forth from us, buoy up our activities and bear forward our hopes.

The doctrine of immortality rests wholly on the force of the ethical law. Not only is there no sufficient argument to be derived from the

physical world for immortality, its implications lie all in the opposite direction. It is the unfulfilled moral law, the germinant powers of our ethical being, that push into the future with a hope and with a claim that we can lay at the foot of the throne of God—One who loves righteousness and nourishes it in the world. Faith pre-eminently lays hold of the inherent vigor of ethical law, and stands by it in noble fidelity to its own highest nature. As the mathematician casts his formulæ into limitless space, and predicts this and that in the movement of heavenly bodies, so does the spirit, strong in the coherence of its conceptions, thrust them forward as the adequate basis of the divine plan—of everlasting life.

This concurrent training of the intellectual perceptions and of the ethical sensibilities is constant and comprehensive. The world is hardly more of a school for our thoughts than for the feelings which unite us to each other. Every man's experience offers him his own problems, and these problems run at once into those of his neighbor and those of the collective social life. They are also problems that are held fast and forced to a solution by the

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lines of action embraced in them. They are like the fibrous, interlaced roots of a plant, spreading over the whole ground subject to it, and maintained in constant activity by its entire life.

The inquiry into ethical phenomena is equally empirical and intuitive. While each man holds a torch in his hand, he explores by means of it the spiritually obscure events of his own life. If he sees to any purpose, these are the things which he sees. If the power to apprehend lies at the bottom of all investigation, the investigation itself is directed to the nature and fruits of action as presented in human society. A full, vigorous mastery of the events of the spiritual world is the wisdom that issues in conduct and character.

Nor is it possible to deny that such a concurrent evolution of our intellectual and ethical thinking is in progress. It is not a question of theory so much as of observation. Moral convictions, propounded, improved, readapted in many ways to the wants of men, as for the moment apprehended, constitute the substance of customs, of social disputations and of judicial decisions. Take such a growth as that of common law, or such a budding up within it as

that of equity, to give it more perfect adaptation ; or such a development as that of international law, a tardy application of primary principles of Ethics to the relation of States to each other ; or the ways in which a Constitution like our own, fitted in the beginning by those who framed it, as they were best able, to the wants of men, is constantly rediscussed and readjusted, that it may better meet the changeable tone of events ; and we see at once that the ethical integration of men's thoughts has already gone far and is to go much farther. It is an evolution as positive and plain as any that has taken place in the world's history. The blindness of those who fail to see it, or the perversity of those who deny its significance, are only a part of the rubbish to be cleared away.

The only possibility of social equilibrium lies in this ethical integration. Every point made is one of equilibrium. The opening of every new question arises from the lack of equilibrium. The ethical verdict is the verdict of reconciliation. With the same certainty with which physical forces adjust themselves to each other along the lines of least resistance do intellectual forces unite along the lines of

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ethical law. Indeed, this is the entire significance of ethical discussion, the union of all interests in personal and in general welfare. To deny the integrity of ethical evolution is to affirm the eternity of strife and confusion in the higher spiritual realm; is to resolve rational events into chaos. The entire reign of law so far in the physical world pleads for this harmonized movement of social events, this coming of a spiritual kingdom, the counterpart of the kingdoms beneath it. The whole accumulated momentum of the ever-growing idea of evolution is passing into this last, highest stage of activity. The integration of the diverse terms of our intellectual life under their own law of freedom is sure to proceed, under that one compelling certainty which has ruled from the beginning, no matter how many ages it may embrace. Nothing stands in its way but the confusion it is destined to overcome; nothing delays it but the magnitude of its own work; nothing hides it but the opaqueness which its own crystallizing forces are to cancel. This intellectual transparency must precede, and be the basis of, social construction.

A third integration, proceeding with the two already given, is that of the individual



with the community, of communities with each other, of all classes and conditions of men in the one spiritual world which they make up,—fulfilling the most explicit and perfect image of St. Paul, “We are all members one with another in the same body.” The law of this integration is contained in the two commandments of love. That these should so long have been present in the minds of men, evermore gaining clearness and comprehension, is a disclosure of the true goal of progress; that they should have been conceived so inadequately, and obeyed so slightly, shows how far off is that goal and how painful the road to it. The law of love has been like the sun seen through a thick mist; its position has been indicated, but its disk has been undefined and its heat cut off. Men say to themselves they see it, and yet in no way apprehend its glory.

These two commandments indicate the road to be travelled; but immediate and adequate obedience is impossible. Men can neither fully see the requirements, nor feel their sanctions. Love lies between higher, purer, more peaceful spirits, and can only declare itself in its perfection as a spiritual law, when the spirit itself finds it a spontaneous expression of its own impulses.

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The intellectual enlargements, the emotional corrections, the softened experiences, which attend on the development of the spirit are slow and painful, and leave it for long groping in a light insufficient for the ends of life. The day clears, but it clears lingeringly, for the mist is heavy.

This integration of man with man is one which rules the civil, the commercial, and the social worlds. In the political world, it involves the reconciliation of individualism and collectivism; it looks to that construction of the State which shall make it at once the best medium of personal life and united life. It struggles to escape the barren, unstimulative method of socialism, in which the special powers of special members are largely superseded and lost,—and equally to escape that eagerness of private ambition which is as willing to sacrifice as to build up the common welfare. We are now suffering the disappointment of democratic institutions, and are disturbed by the disclosure of the new evils which come with them. It is because our integration of classes has been a formal, rather than a vital, one. Our civic relations must sink deeper into the minds and hearts of men, or, in the heat of human passion

## Prosperity and Love.

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fanned by prosperity, they become fibres of flax in the flame. We readily turn the gains of free government into losses, and have occasion to travel again and again, backward and forward, over the same road, till we have adapted our lives to it, and made it a highway of suitable and familiar thoughts. This need of a deeper integration of the State is ever with us, and we are finding our way slowly into those truly vital experiences which suffice to expound its constitution to us, and to sustain us in carrying it out. Again and again communities have reached prosperity, and been weakened and destroyed by its new conditions. They have come to the birth, and have not had power to bring forth. Not because prosperity is not prosperity, but because it calls for the support of correspondingly wide spiritual sentiments.

In company with this political integration, and closely allied to it, must proceed our union in economic effort. So central in the development of society is the acquisition of wealth, that we shall not prosper civilly nor socially till we have learned to harmonize our productive activities. Economics have been very perplexing, because, with a plain indication of certain

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fundamental laws, we have, in their fulfillment, suffered all the flaws of passion. No matter what profound and peaceful depths there may be in the ocean, its surface is constantly swept by storms. Our economic theories and our economic practice under them, have not been in harmony. Our expositions in action of principles has not expressed the true principle. Competition in Political Economy means a full and fair presentation of each man's productive power as compared with that of his neighbor. It demands that there shall be no advantage conceded to any one to which he is not entitled from his relation simply to production. In practice we have made it mean a rough-and-tumble conflict in which we do our adversary what harm we can by any means at our disposal. There is little or no resemblance between what we often call competition and the competition of Economics. Under the competition of Economics the common welfare has sway, and if we drive a competitor from the field, we do it by a more efficient pursuit of this welfare.

Political Economy treats of the laws which underlie the production of the general wealth, not of the processes by which one man may advance his own wealth at the expense of other men.

While the laws of Economics are not those of benevolence, they are not inconsistent with them. Both have reference to the general welfare in different phases of it. We have also to remember that these laws are operative, not in a vacuum, but in the one field of human action, side by side with all the complex laws of our social and spiritual life; and that they must suffer modification from them as well as bring modification to them. The supreme law is not the largest returns with the least labor, but Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. These two laws do not stand in arbitrary suspension of each other, but are capable of integration in one felicitous social product. This can be accomplished only by a perpetual and kindly interplay of the two principles under an experience in which both are fully and wisely expounded. The law of love, well applied, will give the best conditions to production; and production, at its maximum power, will soften asperities, and give love its most facile and pleasurable flow. Self-interest, pushed forward into selfishness, begins at once to baffle itself and call out conditions which make wide and permanent and general prosperity impossible. The way is filled with pitfalls, and the victims

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become more and more numerous. On the other hand, the temper of good-will is stimulating, organizing, harmonizing, and, when the wisdom which guides it is adequate to the task, it not only becomes a great creator of wealth, it makes safe and sure the connection between wealth and the pleasures it is intended to secure. We do not strike a concealed rock just as we enter harbor. This grand result can only be arrived at by a revelation which spreads slowly through all minds, and an integration which knits the whole together, part with part, in patient and well-ordered production.

Social integration is at once cause and effect in connection with civic and economic construction. The three expound each other and thrive together, and all three depend for their strength on that spiritual fellowship in life which is nourished by a controlling sense of the wisdom and love of God as expressed in the world which encloses us. It is on this wide ocean that our several yachts speed hither and thither, go and return on all their errands of business and pleasure.

There can be no magnitude given to our spiritual life, till by this integration of the many and the few, this spreading of life to its own proper

bounds, we are made heirs with all and through all of the largeness of the wisdom and the love which sustain us all. The atmosphere of the mountains is always stimulating because it comes from far and goes afar. It is spiritually high places that enable us to abide in restful strength in the wide currents of our spiritual being. In the many are hidden the prodigality, universality and exhaustless quality of God's love. The spiritual world is none too large for the life of any man in it. What limitations of thought and cramping throes of self-interest begin to take possession of a man when he falls off from our common humanity !

Many are ready to say that human nature is unchangeable ; that the integrations of which we speak are fanciful ; that all things continue as they were. This assertion flatly contradicts not only faith, but that great plan of the world which we have come to call evolution. Our own historic period, brief as it is, is quite wide enough to bring us to another conclusion. Take the single fact that Roman civilization could subject to its luxurious indulgences, under the rigor of a pitiless servitude, Greek beauty, art, and ingenuity, while with us so alien a race as that of the negro, though

## 66 The Nature of God's Goodness.

hated and despised, affronts our moral sense in the condition of slavery.

What discipline could be more spiritual, could bring with it a deeper, more varied, more enlarged experience of the inner and the outer forces of the world than these accumulative integrations, first of our lives with physical conditions, then of our ruder powers and our finer perceptions with each other, and still farther of our individual and our collective wants, the strength of each achieved in the strength of all! If we look at the results of our training in the world, results in knowledge, in action, and in character, they seem plainly to indicate that we are embraced in a scheme of spiritual development, most comprehensively fitted to its purpose. Knowledge breaks all limits; errors expose and correct themselves; progress brings to us conditions of farther progress; the movement accelerates itself; corrections, qualifications, and expansions appear at every step. The goal seems remote and unattainable simply because it is so comprehensive and complete. That which remains to be known, done, or endured holds in it the seeds of farther life. The great achievements which mark the path of the race are so



## Persistency of Discipline. \* 67

many guide-boards to still more comprehensive ones. While the movement is largely one of knowledge and the mastery of physical resources, that which gives it smoothness and steadiness is moral quality — men coalescing in their efforts under one law. This is the deepest lesson of all; one to which, if we choose to neglect it, history brings us back again and again. It is vain that we balk at the leap; we are compelled to return to it. If men cannot learn, and learn to practise these lessons of spiritual life in this world, they can learn them nowhere. They are present on the positive and on the negative side. The light and the darkness are alike terms of revelation. Our development is one of insight, faith, obedience, and we cannot regret the doubts, delays, and dangers that are its essential conditions. He who is to subdue the world under the law of reason, fructify it under the law of love, must make light of the labors and sacrifices by which this is done. To endure hardship is of the substance of good soldiership. To master knowledge is of the nature of knowledge.

Spiritual growth involves both insight and activity under it. The two are inseparable.

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Knowledge enlarges the field of choice, and choice widens in turn the opportunities and the occasions of knowledge. A scheme of things, therefore, which looks to spiritual power must furnish an unending discipline of thought, and of the constructive, social powers which work under it. Perplexities are a part of success so long as a way can be forced through them. There must be a constant widening out and clearing up of the common consciousness, like the dawn of day, till all the fields and boundaries of spiritual activity lie before us. We cannot, as mere children, be put in possession of large things; we must grow into them, make them our own. How could there be a world which apportioned out to all sorts and conditions of men singly and in reference to each other, with more variety, urgency, and fitness of claims, things each day to be known and to be done, the knowing and the doing passing into higher forms of being! How could harvests return more steadily into seed or seed into harvests! The cogency of the present system impresses us less favorably because we weary of it, because it seems involved in the teasing nature of things, and not in the heart of God. It is involved in the

## Our Discipline Spiritual. 69

constitution of things, and what we need to understand is that this untiring pressure of the world, by which we are pushed forward in the ways of life, is the love of God. What every child needs is to translate the requisition of the father into his affection. The inevitableness, the rationality, and the goodness of things are one and the same.

All our struggles, by virtue of our fellowship with each other in them, are made spiritual. Our profound choices and deep experiences lie between men. There is no astronomy without stars; no discipline of the spirit except in this common medium of spirits. The world is pre-eminently one of men, with whom we stand on slight and cogent, near and remote, superficial and profound, terms; men with whom we are making peace or war all the days of our lives. When we have learned to build together, we shall begin at once to build the Kingdom of Heaven. Our ever returning labor, as well as our ever returning prayer, is, Thy Kingdom come.

How each least, vexatious quarrel perplexes the spirit, forcing upon it new questions of right and wrong! How often we rehearse to ourselves the annoyance with its failures in

## 70 The Nature of God's Goodness.

perception, in expression, or in feeling ! Over against this little and light discipline, how does society in its unfolding raise new and difficult questions, whose answers turn on profounder principles ! How are the minor and the major terms in enterprise and labor to be united with each other as they enter together on some wider field in social activity ? How are the intangible terms in which wealth is now gaining such extended expression, its subtle and diversified credits and claims, to be made to bear their share of the common burdens, and to be harnessed, with their workaday fellows, into the common service ?

It is this view of the world, as one which looks forward to spiritual construction, as one in the thick of the creative process, that discloses to us the counsels and the love of God. If we are to understand the goodness of God, we must understand it in connection with those comprehensive measures by which the growth and the unity of our spiritual life are being secured, and we are made the sons of God.

We are also to bear in mind that these integrations must proceed in the individual, and in the common, consciousness. Otherwise they are not spiritual transformations. The physical

## Delay.

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terms involved in them cannot be hastened much beyond the concurrent spiritual ones. The question is one of what men think, feel, do, are. Time must be given in which all this inner life can be wrought out according to its own law. If there is great delay, it is delay incident to the dulness and perversity of men, and to the multitude who take part in this creation. To the truly enlightened mind, this seething mass of life, issuing ever and anon in some higher spiritual product, is as sure in its methods and as full of hope as is to the smelter the union of the ingredients which he is melting together to form the lenses of a telescope. The failures, the arduous and delicate work of shaping the final product, are only difficulties which enhance the value of the accomplishment and show how much skill and thought enter into it.

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## PART IV.

### OBJECTIONS TO GOD'S GOODNESS.

In common language we speak of a generation as something possessed of a kind of exact unity, with all its parts and members homogeneous. Yet very plainly it is not this. It is a whole, but a whole in a state of constant flux. Its factors and elements are eternally shifting. It is not one but many generations. Each of the seven ages is neighbor to all the rest. The column of the veterans is already staggering over into the last abyss, while the column of the newest recruits is forming with its nameless and uncounted hopes. To each its traditions, its tendency, its possibilities. Only a proportion of each in one society can have nerve enough to grasp the banner of a new truth, and endurance enough to bear it along rugged and untried ways.—John Morley, *On Compromise*, p. 208.



## PART IV.

### OBJECTIONS TO GOD'S GOODNESS.

WHILE most will assent to the force of the considerations now urged, not a few are embarrassed by conflicting impressions. Grant that the world is a nursery of spiritual life, is it not vexed by a climate unduly severe? Are there not many mishaps, if not misarrangements, which delay and baffle the end in view? Is not the system slow, unyielding, exacting? Some of these complaints are peevish and pitiful; some arise from narrowness of intellectual view; some from a reluctance to encounter great risks and endure heavy labors, even in behalf of adequate ends; and some from a lack of forecast of the divine plan and faith in it.

The sensuous and unspiritual are willing to remain so. They would more quickly be left to inferior pleasures than be charged with the task of winning superior ones,—superior ones whose superiority they but dimly perceive. A process in which a thousand years are as one

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day is distasteful to man. He has been haunted by a millennium not far ahead, and which should come with sudden upheavals and signal aid. He has had no sufficient sense of the impossibility of such things in the vital world, still less of their impossibility in the spiritual world. This at least is to most men a world which can be changed offhand—a thing of volition.

The imagination is especially impressed with the long, barren periods during which men have inhabited the earth—men shrivelled by polar cold, sodden by tropical heat, and everywhere grovelling. Though the fact may be in keeping with the magnitude of things, it and this immensity are alike trying to our perplexed thoughts, to our indolent and ignorant aspirations. What are such remote things, even if they be true, worth, bringing to us endless suffering in their unfolding? The world does not receive the callow human young into a snug, warm nest, but into rigorous and unpromising nurture. One, straining his vision backward over the weary journeyings of the race, feels as when he gazes at midnight into the cold depths of the sky: the sense of greatness and remoteness oppresses him. He searches no longer for the Infinite, but the finite. He would fain

draw near to the things about him, and feel them drawing near to him. Man, with his rational powers just opening to their proper uses, is always trembling between feelings and events too large or too little for him.

It is not possible to satisfy this desire for change in the spiritual world in connection with the underlying nature of the changes sought for. The methods by which the intellectual powers are wrought into physical processes and physical processes are made to sustain intellectual powers; by which ethical convictions gain expression in social organism and social organism nourishes ethical convictions; by which human consciousness becomes clear, extended, and self-sustaining, cannot be pushed hastily to a completion. Haste means at once darkness and confusion. Nor has the movement ever been so slow as to rob any of us, the brightest of us, of something to do and to win; so slow as to fatigue our powers by inactivity. We are not, as those who wait on the endless delays of a great procession, worn out by standing; we are rather as the overtaxed marshal, who finds the time only too short for what is to be done in it. If we were hurried, there would be a want of depth in our knowledge and of

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strength in our action.     Great blanks would show themselves in our experience.

When events have seemed to hasten forward, as in the French Revolution, or as in the physical progress of the last half-century, or as in the temperance reform, they have been followed by a flurry of thought and much failure in action.     We have now thrown upon us many new and urgent social problems as the result of increased productive powers, and if we fail to give them sober and sufficient answers, that failure will soon arrest our physical progress.     We may well doubt whether the world, as one whole, does not move forward with a pace as rapid as we can sustain, our physical, our intellectual, and our spiritual powers keeping step.

We, as a people, are threatened with the bewilderment and intoxication of too many things.     Our young men grow callous under them, and urgent social and political questions plead in vain for attention.     Like children, we have laid hold of more balls than our small hands can handle.     May it not be asserted that our spiritual growth is so a part of the system of things in which we are enclosed, that it approaches irrationality to ask for a de-

velopment materially different from that which occupies us, spreads out our tasks and brings our rewards? Is it not true that every spiritual impulse which arises in man and in society has an immediate field for expenditure? Is it not true that when straitened, we are straitened in ourselves rather than in our circumstances? If this is not strictly and always true of the individual, is it not because, in the integration of society, the individual necessarily bears its burden?

“If we take any two periods of society, the present, for example, and that of a thousand or five thousand years ago, we shall find enormous or incalculably great differences in social structure, in the amount of knowledge, in the character of the ethical, religious, and philosophical beliefs, and in the relations of the individuals of which society is constructed; but between the individuals of the two periods we may find hardly any definable difference whatever.” \*

The test of spiritual growth is not light here or light there, on this topic or that topic, but the spread of the spiritual kingdom to its proper bounds, its structure within itself as a kingdom. Nor does the advanced individual win his own otherwise than in his relations to the whole. As long as the masses remain an

\* Leslie Stephen, *Social Rights and Duties*, vol. ii., p. 29.

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opaque lump, translucent to no truth, they will throw back on the brightest minds heavy shadows. We shall find a Plato accepting slavery, and breaking up the household. If it is a sound assertion, that "the degree in which any ethical theory recognizes and reveals the essential importance of the family relation is the best test of its approximation to the truth," \* then this spiritual integration of which we are in search must spread through the whole human household, whose members are everywhere busy in framing the family, casting safety about it, and kindling light within it. All later organic units must depend on this primitive unit which enters into them all.

The march of the race is like the march of an army. It can lose no division and sacrifice no supplies. Its safety is composite. The flow of human life is like that of a great river. Its eddies, its bendings, its level stretches through which it creeps onward, are incidents of the system of which it is a part, but do not alter its purpose and destination.

The feeling which leads us to regard progress as too slow is allied to that which leads us to think of it as too exacting. The mind plays

\* Leslie Stephen, *Social Rights and Duties*, vol. ii., p. 244.

## Discipline and Natural Law. 81

indolently with difficulties and with possibilities, and makes no sober, adequate adjustment of them to each other. Its connections are those of a series of images, not of a series of causes. The same persons who reject miracles as inconsistent with universal law, will sometimes object to natural law as too severe and pitiless. Natural law falls very heavily, at times, on individuals, and communities, and nations. Is this fact in evidence against the goodness of God? We shall answer this question according to our sense of the disciplinary value of natural law in the world; our sense of the evils which must accompany any uncertainty in that law, any playing fast and loose with it. The government of the world is to be interpreted as a system of law, natural and ethical. Is it thereby a better government than it would otherwise be? Have we occasion to rejoice in it by virtue of this its rational character? When we remember how men love to evade their own responsibilities; how glad they are to rely on some good fortune or divine intervention; the many ways in which they soften or escape the claims of reason, we are compelled to look upon this firmness and uniformity of the

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divine law as a cardinal feature in the discipline of the world.

The shock of an earthquake falls on a city, an entail of evil passes from parent to child ; it is left to us to say that this hardship of method should in some way be softened. Yet a scheme of things is to be judged as one whole. If accepted in its primary purpose, it must be conceded in its necessary parts. Not all things, but only coherent things, belong to a rational system. Continuity of causes and soundness of reasons constitute one self-sustaining method. An escape from the captious, inconsequential, and fanciful ; the enforcement of the genetic, real, and eternal, are fundamental parts of our experience. We must find God, working by a method of great scope. The creative character of the work, the magnitude and universality of its conditions, the impression that these elements make upon our thoughts and feelings, the training to which they subject us, the trifling importance which attaches to what may seem to us serious disaster, the many ways in which the physical is redeemed by concurrent spiritual events, in which spiritual forces react upon and correct physical facts, are all to be borne in mind in



judging the grandeur and creative power of the present system. This meeting God in the world, as a stubborn and monotonous fact, may not be walking with Him in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening, but it is none the less a cogent spiritual experience. That we are dealing with realities of great import, for good or for evil, is a first principle in our discipline; and a farther implication of this principle is, that this discipline must have way, though it be severe, when it is involved in universal and beneficent law. Is it not a reasonable claim that we should leave these interactions of law and limits of law with Him who alone has the wisdom to frame them? It is not the claim of reason that every single action of God should at once seem rational to us; but that the immeasurable overbalance of wisdom and goodness should be open to us.

A third objection to the goodness of God, one which gathers up all other objections, is the immense amount of suffering incident to His government,—a government which, in pursuing its ends, conceding them to be creative, scatters failure, overthrow, and death on every side. Only an alert and elect few seem to be saved.

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The method of the world is not to be judged by the immediate happiness conferred, nor by some possible increase of that happiness. It is spiritual life which is offered as the ultimate purpose of discipline, and the happiness which is to accrue is to follow after it, and be incident to this high attainment. The lowest terms in pleasure—sensuous enjoyment, gratified passions—are not to rule the higher terms,—spiritual affections,—but are to be ruled by them. The ethical activities, pursuing their own functions, are to bring with them blessings of their own high quality. We are to judge the tree, not by the crude fruit which may first be ripened upon it, but by its mature product. The question is, therefore, not whether there is suffering in the discipline of life, but whether it is gratuitous suffering, suffering not involved in the end proposed. Heroism equally with goodness implies suffering, and he alone is heroic who despises the difficulties and dangers that lie in his path.

There has been a strong tendency in connection with empirical philosophy, to magnify the suffering of the world. It arises from an unduly liberal estimate of the powers of animals ; from a reduction of the moral element in man ;

## Suffering of Animals.

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and from the heavy service laid upon suffering as a working force in evolution. The suffering which seems most to militate against the goodness of God is that of animals. It is disassociated with moral discipline, and has in itself no higher justification to plead than that of sensuous welfare. The animal, it is true, as an inferior member in a great system, may be left to share the fortunes of that system. The defeated army or the victorious army suffers alike, man and beast. Yet we would wish that, on its own narrow basis of pleasure, the good, in the case of the animal, should greatly overbalance the evil. Life in the animal, as in man, is a very distinct good, and one little harassed by disease, hunger, cold and fear. There can be no pain without consciousness. Pain must be proportioned to the extent and delicacy of consciousness. Our intellectual, our conscious, life is built on organic, instinctive life ; supplements it and, in a measure, displaces it. As the conscious life of man is his distinctive characteristic, and has received much extension by evolution, we are not at liberty to reason, without much reservation, from man to the brute in estimating pains and pleasures. So reasoning, we attribute far more

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to the conscious life and far less to the instinctive life in the animal, than we ought. In spite of the great extension and assiduous exercise of our conscious activities, much goes on for good or for evil in our own bodies of which we are not aware. Not a little muscular action and even emotional expression take place in us with no accompaniment of pains or pleasures.

Our voluntary and reflective powers are coordinated by sensibilities. Our sensibilities are correspondingly increased. Consciousness pushes from above downward, not from beneath upward. As we descend, the darkness rapidly increases. The range of consciousness may not only be less, it is sure to be very much less, in the animal than in the man ; in the brutal man than in the refined man. Much that puts on the appearance of suffering, as the wriggling of the earthworm divided by the spade, may not be accompanied by the least suffering. Indeed, any suffering that does not serve a protective purpose is not to be presumed. It would be eliminated, not less by God's goodness than by natural selection. Pain that does not protect the vital powers wastes them, and burdens the animal in the race of life.

We are certainly at liberty to believe that in the economy of sensitive, organic beings pain is limited to protection, while pleasure is held fast as a full realization of power — a self-sustaining term. The immense increase of suffering, as the field of consciousness is widened and the voluntary powers take the lead, is incident to a higher discipline of which the animal knows very little.

The eagerness with which the empiricist, at times, insists on the suffering of animals has in it something of the perversity of a theory. He casts downward the lights and shadows of human life on to animal life. We are to presume neither fear nor suffering which is not an immediate term of safety. Observation confirms this view. Timid animals do not show themselves harassed by remote dangers.

A similar principle is applicable to our estimate of the sufferings of men. The lower the intellectual life the ruder is the nervous organism, the less its sensibility to pain. We fall into constant error in judging the experiences of inferior persons and races. We unite in them incongruous elements — our sensibilities and their circumstances. The two are never joined and never can be. Sensibilities

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and circumstances are in constant action and reaction, and so establish, if not a perfect, a bearable harmony. We shall judge human experiences best by clinging somewhat closely to our own experience, in its general characteristics. Every experience is a unity within itself. If that unity, offered in our own lives, brings with it a proximately comfortable life,—oftentimes too comfortable, one of varied possibilities and promises,—we may believe that other lives, in spite of their apparent diversities, are doing much the same thing. The inevitable processes of adaptation and growth are operative in them as in us. Our own moral problem is apprehensible by us. It yields light and gives discipline. So is it with each one. By no other terms does life become moral than by these distinct shades of conduct near at hand, and by choice between them. We have no occasion to fear that in the moral world heavy responsibilities will rest on weak shoulders. Weakness, ignorance, misapprehension, are their own protection.

Take the African in his welter of tropical vices, his witchcrafts, his credulities, his cruelties. This blind struggle with a fanciful world of malignant spirits—reflections of those

## A Moral Struggle Everywhere. 89

who gaze into the stream of events — is most repulsive to us, and may at times seem diabolical. Yet how long is it since we escaped from witchcraft! What superstitious notions, the trailing shreds of dissolving clouds, still infest us! We are still struggling with the waste, passion, and suffering of war, and have no final and rational reason to offer in its defence, save that of our common stupidity and blunted sensibilities.

It is not of so much moment where, and about what centres, the moral struggle is taking place, as it is that there is such a struggle forever going forward. Two savages, in an unbroken forest, may find a training in the craft of war not altogether unlike that of a Napoleon at the head of European armies; and with a loss but an infinitesimal part of that which accompanied the more conspicuous conflict. Spiritual growth will answer all questions, shake off all embarrassments, push back all darkness and declare itself by its own life—like the seed that has pierced the soil and now deals with sunlight. It is the very function of spiritual life, in its final unfoldings, to correct the ups and downs of sensuous good, to make trifling what seemed hopeless delay, and to disclose the true wealth

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of our resources. It is the vegetation under it that tests the actual capacity of a climate.

Accepting freely, after all abatements, a large remainder of suffering, we cannot feel that it occasions any impenetrable darkness in the world. In our physical mechanism, it is corrective and instructive. It is one of the terms in which all economic and social problems gain expression. It constitutes the shadows, the varying intensity of the light; and these are the conditions of all spiritual revelation. The stimuli of action, its cautions and its encouragements, are all present in this interplay of pain and pleasure. So true is this that the elimination of pain from a world like our own leaves it inconceivable as a field of rational activity. It is drawing the threads of a rich fabric, and still hoping to retain its strength.

The one idea which chiefly sums up the service of suffering, so far as man is concerned, is that of discipline, spiritual evolution. To bear suffering, to relieve suffering, to despise suffering, to rise above suffering by means of it, to correct, in its presence, all our devices for doing good, to make our action as intelligent as it is sympathetic, to establish a parallelism between our resources and our wishes, this is a training



## Suffering and Spiritual Evolution. 91

which is of the very substance of human strength. Ignorance, stubbornness, shilly-shally, perish in its presence. Patience, insight, skill, good-will, thrive upon it. To stand between pain and pleasure, disturbed by neither, a master of both, is like planting one's feet on a mountain pinnacle, the chasms on either hand imparting only a more sublime sense of safety and elevation.

This is the enthusiasm, but it is also the sober experience, of the world. The purified ones are those who have walked through fire ; and the fire has not hurt them. The best men, those most aware of the suffering of the world and most anxious to relieve it, have usually been those least disposed to shirk it, or to censure it. The heat and the heavy blows by which men's thoughts and actions are welded together, link by link, into that chain which binds the soul to righteousness, are encountered in connection with suffering.

“A solemn, a terrible, but a very joyous and noble universe ; whose suffering is not at least wantonly inflicted, though it falls with dispassionate partiality, but where it may be and generally is nobly borne ; where above all any brave man may make out a life which shall be happy for himself, and by so being, beneficent

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to those about him.”\* “The lofty and simple nature knows instinctively that grief, terrible as it is, is yet, in another sense, an invaluable possession. The sufferer who has eaten his bread with herbs learns, as the poet puts it, to know the heavenly powers.” †

“Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !  
Be our joys three-parts pain !  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;  
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the  
throe !” ‡

“After a course of bitter mental discipline and long bodily seclusion, I came out with two learned lessons, the wisdom of cheerfulness and the duty of social intercourse. Anguish had instructed me in joy, and solitude in society.” ||

The spirit that shrinks from pain, that is exacting of pleasure, and querulous in the world's contact, so far lacks the germs of nobility as to make its redemption most difficult. Many a plain man, simply by the patience with which he has endured exposure and pain, has forced the spiritual gates. There is no exhortation which returns more uniformly to all men than

\* Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Robert Browning.

|| Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett*, vol. i., p. 36.

this: Endure hardship, as good soldiers of the cross. So universal has been this association of strength with suffering, that many, in all races and religions, have fallen into the error of accepting self-inflicted pain as a part of a purifying process.

If it can be stated as a general truth, that those who have endured suffering in an heroic temper, who have cheerfully accepted it as an essential term in life, have so far been helped by it as to make it a leading feature in the formation of character, then we can hardly do otherwise than concede its necessity in a great system of things which puts spiritual strength foremost.

In a just estimate of the discipline of adversity, we need to contrast it, under present conditions, with that of prosperity. Few individuals and no nations have thriven long on prosperity. Prosperity has been a stormy spiritual headland which no fleet has doubled and ridden quietly in the peaceful waters beyond. Take a moment when the inflowing tide of business is in full sweep. How eager, hard, unscrupulous and unsympathetic the business man becomes! A group, in unrestrained conversation, might easily be taken for partisan

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leaders, contemplating a marauding expedition. The public welfare sinks out of sight, and every one claims a free hand. Pride and a sense of power take possession of the successful few, and a feeling of unfairness and injury settles down, like a chilling mist, on the many. Society begins at once, under these repellent feelings, to disintegrate, and when some severe pressure arises it goes to pieces. Men are thrown once more back into the school of adversity, until they are again ready for union and a fresh struggle with prosperity. Adversity sharpens and burnishes the spiritual weapons with which we drive back the appetites, passions, and desires so hastily spawned by prosperity.

We should also bear in mind that we enter into the joys of others very largely by entering into their sufferings. If we care nothing for their pains, we shall care very little for their pleasures. A large share of human life will be shut off from us as ministering to our enjoyment. The sympathy extended to suffering opens the hearts of men to each other, and makes them thenceforward partakers in each other's blessings. If the pungent experiences of pain do nothing to unlock the heart, the less

pungent ones of pleasure will pass it by untouched.

If the framework of events is beneficent, we are not to bring a petty and vexatious criticism to every detail. We are to be modest and wise in our thoughts, as well as earnest and assiduous. We are to have confidence in the good, to believe in its purging and purifying power. We are not to abide in the presence of a system so infinitely comprehensive and trust nothing to it. While we measure freely with our own thoughts the world about us, and stand firmly upon it, we must, none the less, gain the momentum of those large and lively inferences which belong to the immense things that envelop us.

Certainly the suffering of the world offers a case in which faith wins a rational victory in seeing and accepting the trend of events, before the proof forces its way into the sensuous world—a mere impingement of light and sound. All life is good. If we raise the question, Is life worth living? we do it in the presence of some failure or miscarriage of life. The hilarity of physical powers, the exhilaration of intellectual activity, the repose of spiritual affections, are so supreme as to admit of

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no disparagement ; so supreme, as to cast the light of joy on every path by which we mount up to them. The clearing up of human consciousness, confused and obscured by conflict and suffering, is as the return of blue sky after the storms and darkness of the night. The change, once accomplished, puts beyond regret the events that have led up to it.

There is no method by which a fellowship with the redemptive Spirit of Truth is more assured unto us than this of sharing the labor and the suffering of the world.

“ For pleasant is this flesh ;  
Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
Pull'd ever to the earth, still yearns for rest ;  
Would we some prize might hold  
To match those manifold  
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best ! ”\*

If we have some just sense of the breadth and openness of the spiritual life, the evils incident to the journey thither will certainly weigh light with us ; if we have not as yet caught this vision, then every step which leads to it is our only hope. Light retains its true character even if for the moment it seems quite shut out.

\* Robert Browning.

## Redemption from Suffering. 97

Not only are the problems of the world given to us in terms of pleasure and pain ; not only is the inner spiritual significance of events constantly coming to the surface in crimson colors, glad or portentous according to the light that plays upon them ; it becomes a permanent duty of man, concurrent with divine labor, to eliminate pain and promote pleasure, to make the whole spiritual landscape respond with contentment to the sunshine which falls upon it. What method could be more significant than that pain should have found its way into the world as a constructive physical term, should have been to man expository of the problem of life, and should then give way before a growing spiritual development ! Thus man redeems his inheritance from thorns. Whether we shall do our own redemptive work or have it done for us is very much like asking whether the sunlight shall play among the clouds as they clear away, or whether this significant work shall take place in midnight darkness and the results be flung at once upon us as bald midday.

The possibility of an almost complete expulsion of pain by the hand of man and the providence of God is indubitable. Let a

## 98    Objections to God's Goodness.

thoroughly intelligent and loving purpose find expression in the actions of men for a hundred years only, and with the passing away of negligence, ill-will, and cruelty nearly the whole troop of pain would have disappeared. The providence of God, voicing itself in human sympathy, would gather close about us, and the laws of inheritance would be freighted with ever-increasing blessings.

The domestic animals, which now suffer so much at the hand of man, would have entered into an elysium of good things. In place of the repression of violence, which has characterized the animal kingdom, we should have a prevenient grace, eliminating a strife and rapine no longer the primary term in the equilibrium of life. Pain would sink into a wholly secondary element in evolution, an idle index travelling almost without observation along its graduated circle. Pain would be hardly more than the decimal point from which the great aggregates of pleasure would take their rise.

In this question of the goodness of God, we are to remember that suffering is not a dead weight which must be carried any way, but a changeable, disciplinary burden which skill and good-will can make almost inappreciable.

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## Suffering Part of a System. 99

Neither is there in the world any spasmodic outbreak of cruelty, which is wont to characterize a nature tainted with ill-will. Pain is ever held under rigid law, close to its constructive purpose.

If, then, God proposes spiritual life, spiritual power, pain is an essential of a scheme in itself so gracious. By it we are enclosed with Him in His own work of love. Our surface of contact is first pain, then pleasure, the one the prelude and energy of the other. As severe suffering is followed by the ecstasy of relief, so our experience of evil measures our capacity for good and our sense of its grand, comprehensive nature.

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## PART V.

### CONCLUSIONS.

The living Heaven thy prayers respect,  
House at once and architect,  
Quarrying man's rejected hours,  
Builds therewith eternal towers ;  
Sole and self-commanded works,  
Fears not undermining days,  
Grows by decays,  
And, by the famous might that lurks  
In reaction and recoil,  
Makes flame to freeze and ice to boil,  
Forging, through swart arms of Offence,  
The silver seat of Innocence.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Spiritual Laws*.

## PART V.

### CONCLUSIONS.

**I**T remains to gather together, somewhat more compactly, the points we have made and the conclusions we have reached. The entire discussion is based upon the belief that the spiritual world is the fulfillment of the physical world, that it is a construction of its own supreme order, proximately apprehensible by us in its nature and purposes. The reason which is in the world is referred to the Supreme Reason, which encloses it, and is one with it. All reason is personal from its very nature,—is the substance of personality. The Supreme Reason cannot exist outside the world, because the world is ordered from within and is the chief expression of wisdom. This Reason which rules the world is immanent in the world. Yet it transcends the world, it carries with it a conscious life of its own, or it ceases to be reason. Thus the mind of man works as a living principle in the body, and at the same time transcends the body.

The ethical law is the supreme law of the spiritual world, the law put by reason upon itself; and hence the absolute ethical excellence of God is as essential to the conception of God as are infinite wisdom and power. Without these attributes he loses his comprehending force. The spiritual world becomes under the ethical law a perfect creation. As the source and fullness of this righteousness, God gathers all things into Himself. If this relation fails us, our thoughts drop back at once into confusion. God, that He may be God, must be the seat of the harmonizing power of the spiritual world. Any uncertainty as to God's love is uncertainty as to His supreme rationality, is uncertainty as to the origin and end of spiritual life, is uncertainty as to His own being.

The goodness of God companions with the wisdom of God, and the two find expression in the unfolding of a spiritual kingdom. The goodness of God is to be apprehended, therefore, in connection with this kingdom, and with the movement of events toward it. The things manifestly being accomplished, slowly, it is true, but with undeniable certainty, in this human, spiritual world of ours, hold in themselves the solution of that world.

## Three Integrations.

105

We found three distinct but closely united processes, widely embracing human life and all looking to a spiritual kingdom. The first of these was a more complete integration of the physical and the spiritual terms of life, as that life is developed into a richer, wider, more spiritual consciousness. The body of man and with it the physical world at large are thereby brought into more immediate and perfect response to spiritual wants and spiritual powers. The apparent conflict between these two terms disappears. The two are interlaced in the closest dependence, as the development of the spirit of man proceeds within itself. The complete integrity of the world declares itself.

A second integration consists in an equally slow interfusion of the intellectual and the ethical life in man. The two unfold side by side in constant interaction. The intellectual nature propounds the evermore complex problems of conduct while the moral nature solves them. The two sustain and correct each other through the entire field of human activity. The light of life emerges at this centre of ethical discussion and spreads thence in all directions.

The third integration is that of man with man in society—the integration by which human companionship passes into the Kingdom of Heaven. These three integrations are mutually dependent. The ethical movement by which we reach the spiritual law of love is central, working downward that it may subordinate to itself the physical terms of its activity and bow the world in submission to its supreme form of life, spreading outward that it may bring all parts of the one kingdom into the general interplay of power and love. Without this physical transformation the ground once won to spiritual insight could not be quietly held. Without this social transformation individual life could not secure the volume, permanence, variety, and quality which yield a spiritual construction truly cosmic. All these integrations must proceed together in one common consciousness, aiding and retarding each other, otherwise the product is not truly spiritual.

This sense of the scope and overruling force of the divine plan so establishes the goodness of God that we attach no very great weight to the many objections to that goodness—as negligence and delay—of which the world at first



## Happiness Rightly Conceived. 107

sight seems so full. We feel disposed to sweep them aside somewhat summarily, as inevitably incident to our narrow vision — as clouds that linger after the sunlight has struck through.

In the physical world suffering is constructive ; in the spiritual world it opens up the problems of life and is a leading incentive in their solution. It gives its essential flavor to noble conduct. Life is revalescent, and enters into itself by virtue of suffering. The man who confronts the world cheerfully in its sorrow and pain, who bears patiently his portion of them, and beats it back perseveringly at every point, is hourly made greater, better, happier, thereby.

The world, so far, has not been able to put intelligently to itself the problem of life. It has not known what to pray for. The happiness which it has coveted it has not been able to reconcile with itself. Neither the receiver nor the participator nor the bystander has been blessed by it. Granted in its crude terms it has quickly miscarried in some new form of suffering. The world has been thought of by good men as a "vale of tears," and goodness as the means of escape from it. No revelation of God's purposes is possible to this frame of

mind. A continuous and tormenting entail of suffering can alone suffice to reveal the problem and bring it to a better solution.

The good, in the measure of their goodness, have thought lightly of suffering as it has touched themselves, and have sought most assiduously and sympathetically for those high paths in which men walk together in aidfulness and love. They have found their goodness in a sense of the goodness of God, and have given it expression in an effort to carry forward His redemptive and constructive purposes. The one attitude of mind which is divine in its incipency, vigorous in its growth, and glad in its fulfillment, is that by which we find and follow the lead of God from darkness into light, from pain into pleasure, from death into life. If we have a supreme sense of the worth of spiritual life, and of its comprehensiveness; if we judge the world as a means of perfecting and spreading abroad that life; if we walk with God in the fulfillment of this purpose, the difficulties and darkness which remain become simply a rugged, but a suitable, discipline of our powers. The joy of the movement conceals its hardship and nullifies its fatigue.