

VI.

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ETHICS is usually distinguished from the sciences of Nature, by being classed as a normative science. Its main concern is not with the description and explanation of facts as they actually occur in their sequence or co-existence, but with the End or Ideal, with that which *ought* to be. Ethics as a science fulfils its chief object, in defining, so far as possible, the Good, the ultimate end of man's purposes and actions, that which is for him the standard of character and conduct. Thus most writers treat it as a speculative science, that which teaches men to *know* the Good. When the Good is defined by it, it can further proceed to enumerate those qualities of character and types of conduct which are seen to be virtues and duties, as being in harmony with, and aiming at, the Good. The inquiry is conducted in a scientific and speculative spirit, and is treated as a branch of knowledge. It is not the immediate object of scientific ethics, as such, to reform men's characters, but to ascertain what is the Right or the Good. As Professor McKenzie says, "It discusses the ideal of

goodness or rightness, and is not directly concerned with the means by which this ideal may be realised. Ethics, though a normative science is not to be regarded as a practical science.”¹

On the other hand, the essentially religious and practical nature of Christian ethics is shown by the constant insistence in Christianity on the necessity of “the new life.” It not only sets forth the Ideal Good as an object of knowledge, but regards mere knowledge as ineffectual and barren, until man is brought into contact with the source of the moral energy without which its object cannot be attained or even approached. The Christ to whom it points is not a mere memory of departed goodness, but a living Power.

Christianity sets before men, as the personal End and Ideal, the character and life that are realised in Christ. That end is accomplished in any individual in proportion as the moral forces and influences, which are unveiled and invoked by Christianity and mediated through Christ, are efficacious in producing in him that righteousness in which his true “life” consists. The virtues and duties of the Christian life being the special applications of the principle of love to God and man, these virtues and duties are viewed as evidence of that change in the state of the inner life, which establishes the active rule within it of this universal love of which for Christianity

¹ “Manual of Ethics,” p. 10.

Christ is the incarnation and example. Professor Paterson says,¹ "Christianity made itself so entirely responsible for morality, that it has been possible to overlook the fact that it is fundamentally a system of redemption, and to think that its sole purpose is to give good advice in the matter of conduct." Its concern is with the inward renovation of man's life. The purport of the Christian Gospel is the salvation of the soul. The virtues and conduct indissolubly associated with its beliefs are "the things that accompany this salvation," its practical result in the life that is "right with God." The evangelical propagandism which has characterised Christianity as a religion, and has been often prosecuted with heroic effort and self-sacrifice, has not derived its main inspiration from the desire of promoting outward morality in men's relations with each other, salutary and important as such a moral reformation is. It has been sustained in the pursuance of its world-wide enterprise by the belief that through the Christian Faith forces and influences become operative in human nature, which can bring it into inward accord with God and His righteousness, and can thus effect a vital revolution and spiritual renovation in the character of those who accept it and enter upon its Way of Life.

Mill in his well-known Essay on the "Utility of Religion" discusses the adequacy of outward Authority, Education, and the compulsion of public opin-

¹ "Gifford Lectures," p. 413.

ion, apart from Religion, to make men lead moral lives. This is to view the subject from the outside. The question to be asked is whether these influences can of themselves change men's natures at the source and core. Elsewhere,¹ while expressing his dissent from the system of politics and morals in Comte's "Système de Politique Positive," he holds that that treatise has "abundantly shown the possibility of giving to the service of humanity, even without the aid of belief in Providence, both the physical power and social efficacy of a religion; making it take hold of human life, and colour all thought and feeling and action, in a manner of which the greatest ascendancy ever exercised by any religion, may be but a type and foretaste." Mill considers that a love of humanity, apart from the higher aid disclosed by religion, may lead to an abstinence from all that would wrong another, and make men "feel the same absolute obligation towards the universal good" that a fervent patriotism displays in respect to the safety and welfare of one's own country. But such a cosmopolitanism as a substitute for religion and the spiritual forces to which it gives access, has never proved its sufficiency as a guarantee of morality; the love of mankind which has been most practically effective is that which is associated in a religious spirit with the love of God. It is true that right and disinterested lives are lived by many who have discarded or ignored belief in the super-

¹ "Utilitarianism," p. 49.

natural. Such conduct on their part is often inspired by the conviction that moral rectitude and active beneficence are most congruous with man's true nature, and secure for him most real and permanent satisfaction on the whole. They act upon the principle to which F. W. Robertson gave expression—"Whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain; If there be no God and no future state, yet even then it is better to be chaste than licentious, better to be true than to be false, better to be brave than to be a coward." However it may be with individual and exceptional instances, it has never been proved that on such terms an elevated morality, not to speak of the higher Christian virtues, would retain a permanent control over the minds and the practice of men generally. It would seem as if the sense of the presence of a supreme objective Righteousness in the Universe, which is active in human nature and in the world, is necessary to give morality its "magisterial authority" in human life.

It is irrelevant to reply that the ages of faith were not times of unblemished virtue and rectitude. Men's practice has always come short of their beliefs and principles. Even in an age when conviction and enthusiasm were in their pristine vigour, the Christian community was disturbed by grave internal misdemeanours. The exhortations of New Testament writers against such evils as slander, drunkenness, evil communications, showed that these were faults against which it was not superfluous to warn

even those who were "called to be saints." Yet it is certain that where there is the background of a religious faith that is wholly in favour of righteousness, and the conscious presence of a Power which can be experienced by man as making for righteousness, morality has a prestige, and authoritativeness with which no merely prudential or purely rational sanctions invest it. At times and in communities in which materialism has prevailed, there have been a lowering of the moral standard, and an impaired sense of the obligatoriness of such elementary virtues as temperance, chastity, veracity and honesty; and this decline has been reflected in the general practice. The relaxation of moral restraints in the age of the Renaissance, the condition of certain classes of society in England after the Restoration, and in France in the period of the Encyclopædists, and on the other hand the moral effect of Puritanism, when it has been a vital religious force in this country and America, show how close is the connection between faith and practice. As regards the distinctively Christian type of morality, in its purity and elevation, the experience of the past gives no encouragement to expect that it can maintain itself as an active and increasingly influential Ideal without the support of the Religion of which it is the practical issue. When deprived of that support, it does not appear that its exacting ethical standard can prevail against the moral inertia of average human

nature, or that it can continue to provide a moral objective which men would regard as having practical significance for them, as that at which they ought seriously to aim, and for which other things should be sacrificed. The loftiness and purity of the Christian Ethic could not indeed be wholly forgotten, as though the vision and never been seen of the type of character and conduct by which it has been illustrated in those lives which have come nearest to its standard of righteousness, and above all in the life and character of Christ. The danger is that apart from those spiritual influences which are mediated through the Christ of Christian faith, it would be treated merely as an impracticable Ideal, the dream of an unattainable perfection, one of those potent enthusiasms of the past which have blinded men to the actual facts and possibilities of life, and have had their day.

The secular moralists, who have expounded with earnestness and eloquence the content of the Good, the Right, Man's duty, are less successful in showing, even when they have attempted it, how their ideals can be translated into general practice and become efficacious in human life. They have not bridged the chasm between the theory of the ethical life and the moral regeneration of the individual. Their failure to do so is commented on by Bacon. He says,¹ "The writers upon this science appear like writing-masters, who lay before their scholars a

¹ "Advancement of Learning," Bk. 7, Chap. 1.

number of beautiful copies, but give them no directions how to guide their pen or shape their letters; for so the writers upon ethics have given us shining draughts, descriptions and exact images of goodness, virtue, duties, happiness, etc., as the true objects and scope of the human will and desire; but for obtaining these excellent and well-described ends, or *by what means the mind may be broke and fashioned* for obtaining them, they either touch this subject not at all, or slightly." In the same spirit and with equal truth the Author of "Ecce Homo" remarks, "Philosophy undertakes to explain what it is right to do, while Christianity undertakes to make men disposed to do it." Christianity, under no illusion as to the unruly and chaotic condition of the human nature with which it deals, commits itself to effect the readjustment and renovation of man's life in accordance with the mind and life of Christ, in whom it sees the Moral Ideal realised. It claims not only to impart the knowledge of the Good, but also to make known the method and forces by which human nature can be brought to the possession of that true "life," the full and "abundant life," which has been mediated by Christ. It has been truly said that "Christianity raises our moral standards, while it offers to all who accept them the power to attain the splendour of humanity's ideal."¹ It cannot be disputed that Christianity has brought influences to bear

¹ "Life's True Values," p. 54 (Selected Essays from "The Times").

upon men's lives which have proved more widely effective in their ethical results than the most celebrated secular systems of Greece or of modern times. It has had this success, not merely among the élite of the race, where the conditions might appear to be favourable, but among persons of all moral grades and surroundings, even the lowest and least promising. Many other systems have no certain word to say even as to whether the complete moral conversion from a degraded to a virtuous type of character is possible. Some would regard man's moral improvement as strictly limited by his hereditary dispositions and by those elements in his environment over which he has no control. The view of Aristotle was "that the unjust or the profligate was free at the beginning not to acquire this character, and therefore he is voluntarily unjust or profligate; but now that he has acquired it, he is no longer free to put it off."¹ He has forged the fetters which bind him, and for such the Greek Philosopher had no assurance of deliverance. In marked contrast with this is the attitude of Christianity to the morally deranged. The publicans and sinners, and the Magdalene, were the objects of Christ's hopeful solicitude. From among such have come those who have been the most signal instances of a moral transformation. So it has ever been to a greater or less extent, wherever Christianity has had the oppor-

¹ "Nic. Eth.," III., 15, 14.

tunity of revealing the ethical resources which it discloses and makes effectual.

Butler views man's moral constitution as an ordered polity of impulses, propensities, appetites, and principles of action, some tending to the good of self and some to the good of others. These have not all the same right, in the economy of his nature, to rule in his life. There is a natural order and subordination among them. Over all is the moral faculty, to which belongs the double property of judging acts to be right or wrong, and also of determining itself to be the supreme guide of life, "in contradistinction from all other faculties, or natural principles of action."¹ In this sense it is man's virtue and duty to live and act "according to nature," to his true nature. Regarding this moral faculty or conscience he says that "if it had strength as it has right, if it had power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."² It has always been asserted on behalf of Christianity as an ethical religion that through it a way is opened for the action of forces in man's life, by which "Christ is formed in him" (Gal. iv. 19), which confirm in him the authority and rule of that principle which is the "voice of God" in him, investing it with that power which Butler claims for it. Kant believed in the sufficiency of the Practical Reason,

¹ See Butler, "Dissertation on Virtue," note.

² Butler, Sermon II.

together with reverence for the majesty of the Moral Law, which humbles man's pride,—the only motive of an emotional kind whose moral worth he admitted. In Butler the appeal is to reason, which can convince man that the life lived in obedience to conscience is the only life in accordance with the constitution and facts of man's nature, rightly interpreted, and therefore the life which all reasonable persons should live. The aim of Christianity is to effect a moral change in man's nature by which he is both disposed and enabled to live the life of which Christ is the Exponent and the Ideal.

The Divine Spirit, God in action, is represented (Gen. i.) not merely as creative, but as bringing order into the primeval chaos of physical nature. In Christianity an effect of an analogous kind in the moral nature of man is attributed to the Spirit of grace, which is at once transcendent and immanent.¹ In man the disorderly elements, corresponding to the material chaos, exist as an unregulated aggregate of impulses, propensities, hereditary tendencies, acquired qualities and habits, and constitute his individuality in its disorganised and unformed state. Their anarchic condition is the negation of the true self or "life." It is requisite that he enter into "life," that he be "born from above," if he is to see the Kingdom of God. An inward change, a reorganisation, a new beginning in the self,² is necessary.

¹ See Lecture I, p. 41 (Grace).

² 2 Cor. V, 17; Gal VI, 15.

When this change is effected by the only power which can originate it, the co-operation of the conscience and of the will is enlisted in the moral task. One cannot enter into the condition of true "life" without the action in him of the higher Power, nor can he without it make progress in the way towards the ethical end. All life has its source in God, and the highest 'life' is His noblest work. Christianity finds the vital ethical dynamic, apart from which other influences are ineffectual, in the action of the Divine Spirit in man; while at the same time, it is man's task to co-operate with his will in "working out his own salvation" and in "laying hold on 'eternal life'." The divine action in man is such as to assist and educate the moral personality.¹ Eucken says, "We may call the morality arising thence the ethics of the spiritual life; for the centre of life and its ruling motive lie in man's relation to a superior spiritual life which is at the root of his own being, and yet has to be acquired by his own deeds and efforts"; and again, "All deep thinkers have seen, in the grasp of the essence of life and the development of its possibilities by means of this individual capacity, not an achievement by man alone, but the manifestation of a higher power,—a gift of grace."² Whatever experiences and motives may be associated with the renovation and transformation of the

¹ See above, pp. 39, 40, 41.

² "Present Day Ethics," p. 69.

character, their permanent moral significance depends on their being the means through which the Divine Spirit acts in the life. They are efficacious because they are ways in which human nature is reached and moved by God, "who worketh all things in all" (I Cor. xii. 6). It is man's part to yield himself to such influences, and to allow them to have their due weight with him in the choice of what his End in life shall be.

These co-operative experiences are so various, the nature of their appeal is affected so much by the circumstances of the individual, that no complete enumeration of them is possible. The means by which men are induced to break with what Eucken calls their "aimless past" are multiform. The gates of the City open towards the East and the West and the North and the South, and many paths lead men to it. The inner moral history of no two persons is the same. Yet under the conditions to which all human lives are subject, certain experiences calculated to make a deep moral impression upon men, are of general occurrence. They are means through which Divine grace acts, and tend to predispose men to such an interest in the Christian End or Ideal as may move their wills to make choice of it as their end.

Among such experiences may be instanced that sense of *disillusionment and dissatisfaction* with other and inferior ends, which is frequently felt and testified to, and which naturally impels those con-

scious of it to consider what is the true and adequate end of life. The pursuit of the ordinary objects of desire, such as wealth, material comfort, influence, reputation, can so elicit the energies as at times to distract the attention from a regard to what is of ultimate and absolute value in life. Continuous application of the mind to such objects of endeavour becomes through habit a second nature to many ; in the dedication of thought and of time to them, many find a kind of partial self-realisation. For some the amusements and pleasures of society form the main end of existence. The prizes of a political career appeal powerfully to ambition as well as to higher motives. Yet history and biography and the candid confessions of many, afford abundant evidence that such objects as these are incapable of yielding a constant and complete satisfaction, either in the pursuit or in the possession. A man does not realise his 'self' in them, even when they are attained. Goethe's oft-quoted remark to Eckermann is in point, that his prosperous life had been nothing but toil and care, and that he had known very few days of genuine happiness. Others less favourably situated have not claimed the achievement of that which had eluded his grasp. The literature of the inner life and of self-revelation bears ample testimony to the hours of disillusionment which overtake even the apparently successful, when they ask themselves what it is all worth. The question is that with which Ignatius Loyola used to close his discussions with

his friend Xavier on the value of social distinction, influence, fame—"what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" In none of its forms does the cult of the external give scope for the realisation of the self, the "life." And this dissatisfaction, though not always effectual in fixing the choice elsewhere, implies that there are in those affected by it some presentiment, however vague and imperfect, of the moral Ideal, and the capacity, though latent, of experiencing the attractive power inherent in it.

An impression of the vanity of life *in the prospect of its inevitable close* is calculated to turn the thoughts towards an End which imparts a real and permanent value to it. The "Confessions" of Tolstoy disclose the profound despondency which the thought of the certainty of death made upon a man, who, judged by the common standards, possessed all the means of a full life. "Is it not senseless," he asks in "My Religion," "to labour at what, however much you try, can never be finished? Death will always come before the tower of your prosperity can be completed, and will triumph." He expresses his fear of life and dread of death in the tale of the traveller who seeks to escape from danger by descending a pit, but at the bottom sees a dragon waiting to destroy him. To save himself he clings to a twig, "but the white and black mice (day and night) gnawed at the branch by which I hung." Inexorable fate drew hourly nearer. The issue in his case

was an attempted deliverance through escape from the inane, conventional life of his own class into the natural and healthy existence of the laborious and religious peasantry. Many persons of a more normal temperament than that of Tolstoy are constrained by the approach of death to pronounce their life a failure so far as its main purpose is concerned. The question inevitably arises, however it may be answered, whether there is some end in life of a totally different kind from any aim merely temporal and empirical, and of a supremely worthy nature. The problem tends to become more insistent as life advances. The impulse towards a true self-realisation, however vaguely the consciousness of it may be present in many, is often thus stimulated by the manifest brevity and incompleteness of life. If not in things of relative and transient value, then in some other direction, it urges man to seek for satisfaction and fullness of life.

Another pre-disposing occasion of interest in the ethical end is the conviction, often forced upon one in the course of his life, of *the moral derangement of his inner self*, the sense that he is not "right with God." He conceives a dissatisfaction, not merely with the conditions of human life, and with the brevity of its span, but with himself, with what he is. It expresses itself not merely in the acknowledgment that he does wrong actions, but that he *is* wrong inwardly, being conscious of a nature at war within itself, spirit against flesh, sense against mind, pro-

pensity and desire against reason and conscience. As a physical organism experiences pain and disease when its constituent parts function discordantly, so the unity of the self is impaired, and it is conscious of something amiss, by reason of the lack of harmony in the elements which constitute its nature. Its moral health and happiness are destroyed when it is thus the arena of internecine strife. The distress occasioned by this inward distraction may become acute, as it is portrayed in Augustine's "Confessions," or in Bunyan's "Grace Abounding." Yet as in their case, it has frequently proved a state of transition, and the consciousness of this inward disruption has been fraught with important moral issues. The average Greek lived in a "universe"¹ of interests, motives, desires into which such disturbing self-communings seldom intruded. Hence the morality of the Greek never rose to such a height either of moral vision or of attainment as has been reached in Christianity. Christianity introduced a new Ideal and an element of introspection in men's judgments upon themselves which rendered a pagan self-complacency, rarely troubled by serious self-accusation, impossible to those who came under its influence. An intensified sense of this inner discord is a consequence of the fact that in Christianity the ethical aim and ideal so far transcend

¹ See McKenzie's "Manual," p. 47, for the meaning of the term "universe" so used.

the mundane virtue of Aristotle or even the Idealism of Plato. It has been alleged in favour of the moralities of Confucianism and Mohammedanism that their demands are such as to allow for human imperfections, and can be fulfilled with comparative facility by the average man. But in proportion as an ideal is easily attained, it has less moral elevation. The righteousness of the Kingdom, rising to "perfection's sacred height," surpasses man's actual achievement. By revealing man to himself in the light of what he ought to be, it destroys his self-satisfaction. By at once rebuking and attracting him, it tends to become an uplifting and regenerating power in his life.

The false unity of the lower life, and the emergence of that sense of discord which may prove the beginning of a vital ethical change, are described by St. Paul.¹ He refers to a stage antecedent to the recognition of the law of righteousness, which is the condition of those in whom a sense of sin does not interfere with the inner self-content of the nature which is morally unawakened. It is the state of a false inner harmony and unconsciousness of evil in one whose existence is wholly on the natural level. He is, as St. Paul says, "alive apart from the law." He is unaware of any discord and lack of conformity in himself, because he has as yet no vision of moral reality and of a true order with which he is at variance, and therefore no conscious need of

¹ Romans vii.

being inwardly in unison with it. But when he sees that vision, when he recognises that to which he has been blind, "when the commandment comes," then he can no longer remain ignorant of the falseness and abnormality of the life whose maxims he had taken for granted and whose nonconformity with the right had not previously troubled him. He "dies," realising that he has not the rightly ordered "life." He discovers that his inner life is not adjusted to the moral environment of which he has now become aware. The moral reality which is disclosed to him "through the commandment" occasions in him a paralysis and despair, and thus "the commandment which was unto life," he finds in that crisis of his ethical experience to be "unto death." The unity of his nature becomes consciously disrupted into diverse selves. Hence many of his actions "executed blindly with no proper concurrence of the will,"¹ but at the impulse of tendencies which his higher self repudiates, are not acknowledged as truly his by that higher self. "That which I do I know not; for not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate that I do" (Rom. vii. 15). The better self delights in the ideal of righteousness which it acknowledges as rightfully imposing its claim to obedience; but through the strength of the lower self dominated by its rebellious elements, sin asserts its constraint upon

¹ Sanday and Headlam, "Romans," p. 177.

the actions. Owing to the ready access of sin into his life through his physical organism and fleshy nature, he seems doomed to continue a captive in this condition of moral servitude. This experience of inward strife and derangement leads to the question who shall deliver him from *the body of this death*? Thus Paul tells how it was the occasion of his coming under the redeeming power of Christ, through whom and in whom the true unity of man's nature is restored.

The ethical significance of the experiences we have referred to is due to the fact of their conducing to Repentance, which Christ Himself proclaimed as the essential condition of entering into the "life," and the citizenship of the Kingdom of God. His call was (Matt. iv. 17) to repentance, "for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." His commission to the Twelve was to preach repentance. This repentance did not consist in a merely emotional regret and feeling of shame for the unworthy past. Nor was it to end in outward acts of self-inflicted penalty, as might be suggested by the Vulgate rendering of His summons ("Do penance," *poenitentiam agite*). The Repentance (*metanoia*, change of mind) required, implies a transition into another "universe" of thought and desire and will, a change in the inner life of thought and feeling and purpose, which marks the beginning of the process whose end is the realisation of the true life or self. Whether the transition is associated with a prolonged period of storm and

stress, as with Augustine and Bunyan, or is less emotional and laboured in its accompaniments, it is a crisis in which the old yields place to the new life. Repentance is the repudiation of the former self. If it is sincere, an inner change is already in process. It means that a man comes to have new views regarding life and its values, and at least an incipient recognition and appreciation of the type of person he ought to be. When it is permanent and effectual, it issues in a reformation of character, a new orientation of the life, and moral progress in the direction of the Ethical End.

Faith, hope and love were by the old Theologians called the Theological Virtues, as being divinely "instilled" into men, and as resting in God as their object. The Good is of the very nature and being of God. The right made known through conscience is the voice of God. The morality having this religious sanction is not only rationally obligatory upon men, but has all the authority which a divine command possesses. Its observance is obedience and service rendered to God. Without faith, God cannot be known; He cannot be apprehended as One who is always and absolutely good, and on the side of the good. Such a religious faith, in proportion to its sincerity, cannot fail to create moral earnestness and purpose. The obedience is not that given to an arbitrary command, but to the prerogative recognised as belonging to the absolutely Good. In Faith there is the element of venture in which

man commits himself to an Object beyond him and unseen. Christian Faith is the trustful self-surrender to God as to Him who is perfectly righteous and always wills what is perfectly Good. The immoral and the wrong are seen to be in opposition to the rectitude of the Universe, and to the very nature of things, being contrary to God's will. Christian Faith transforms every breach of morality into a crime against God's righteousness. In its view wrongs done to others are offences committed against Him; they are deliberate perversions of His will. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned," (Ps. li. 4). It is obvious that morality when supported by such a sanction must possess a practical force, must exercise a constraint, which no prudential Hedonism or purely rational Idealism could exert. Especially would its superior power appear at times when men are subject to sudden and great temptation. In the case of one so tempted it need not be asked which motive would be most efficacious in enabling him to resist,—that to which he appeals when he says to himself, "If I do this, I am contravening the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and my own true interest on the whole"; or that which he experiences when he says, "If I do this, I am violating the impersonal reason that regulates all nature"; or that which he feels to be final, when he says, "How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). The

morality based on the Christian faith which centres in a God of infinite power and goodness brings a Power making for righteousness to bear upon men's lives. Alike the Christian type of goodness and the sense of the obligatoriness of that goodness, are the consequences of the Christian belief and experience of the Divine, which underlie the Christian ethic. The apprehension of God is an act of faith, and it opens an access into human nature for the influx of a moral energy which has not its source in man.

The *personal loyalty and devotion* which Christ has inspired have wielded an influence of supreme power in the moral life of men. It has been said that the most original element in Christian morality is the person of its Founder, and that His greatest contribution to ethics was His life. He did not merely speak of the Good, He lived it, and proved its reality by realising it in Himself. He is in Christian Ethics the concrete expression of the Moral Ideal. The Good as defined in many systems of secular ethics is an abstraction. The conception of it is framed by combining the virtues and excellences which in actual life are found apart, and raising them to their highest indices. Seneca indeed seeks in history for some actual person who could be revered as embodying them all. Quoting Epicurus, he gives it as his counsel that "we should make choice of some good man, and should always keep him before

our eyes, that so we may live as if under his observation, and do all things as if he saw us." ¹ The models he suggests are Cato or Laelius, the former of whom ended his life by his own hand because Cæsar was victorious, while the amiable character of the latter is known to us mainly through the writings of Cicero. Seneca failed to find what he sought. It would be impossible for any secular theory to indicate even among its most revered exponents one who could be said to have "fulfilled all righteousness," and to whose moral control and example persons of every age and condition could subject themselves with entire loyalty and confidence.

Christianity points to Christ as One in whom its adherents recognise a perfect character, and in whom its opponents have been unable to prove moral default. It claims that its great Example appeals to all in human nature that can constrain man to yield an unqualified submission, both of mind and of heart, to what he sees and knows to be highest. The True, the

¹ Seneca, "Ep. XI." "Aliquis vir bonus nobis diligendus est ac semper ante oculos habendus, ut sic tanquam illo spectante vivamus, et omnia tanquam illo vidente faciamus. . . . Aliquem habeat animus quem vereatur, cuius auctoritate etiam secretum suum sanctius faciat. O felicem qui sic aliquem vereri potest, ut ad memoriam quoque eius se componat atque ordinet! . . . Elige itaque Catonem. Si hic tibi videtur nimis rigidus, elige remissioris animi virum Laelium. . . . Opus est, inquam, aliquo ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigant; nisi ad regulam prava non corriges.

Beautiful and the Good have an inherent sovereignty, requiring no extrinsic support to make valid their title to the homage of those to whom it is given to appreciate them. When they become incarnate in an actual Person, reflected in His words and acts, revealing themselves in all that He was in Himself, and in His relations with others, their power over those who can discern them and are in sympathy with them, may well prove irresistible. He "has called us by His own glory and virtue" (2 Pet. i. 3). Coleridge says,¹ that "the true life of Christians is to eye Christ in every step of His life, not only as their rule, but as their strength." The influence of a life is immeasurably greater than that of a system. Precepts derive much of their weight from the character of him who utters them. Christ draws to Himself man's highest admiration and devotion; and with this love to the Good as manifest in Him, there mingles the sense of personal indebtedness to Him. Those in whose lives He has been the dominant power have invariably testified to the sense of what they personally owe to Him. His sufferings and the sacrifice of Himself were for them. The sense of their individual obligation to Him is not lost in the magnitude of His work for mankind. This combination of love and gratitude forms the strongest incentive, of which human nature is capable, to the imitation of Him in whom they centre,

¹ "Aph. on Spiritual Religion," No. XVI.

and to casting in one's lot with Him in purpose and action.

It is a principle in ethics that the end desired and aimed at constitutes the motive.¹ The End or Ideal, apprehended as the Supreme Good, the ultimate interest, is itself the motive to its realisation, that which moves the will to identify itself with it. In Christian Ethics the Ideal is held to be realised in the character and life of Christ, and the acceptance of Him as such has operated through the ages in effecting a moral regeneration in men's souls. We quote the well-known words of the historian of Rationalism, as those of one not likely to be guilty of emotional exaggeration :² " It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love ; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions ; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice ; and has exercised so deep an influence, that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years has done more to regenerate and soften mankind, than all the disquisitions of the philosophers and all the exhortations of the moralists. This indeed has been

¹ Seth's " Principles of Ethics," p. 72 *seq.* Mackenzie, " Handbook," p. 64 *seq.* Muirhead, " Elements of Ethics," p. 60 *seq.*

² Lecky, " History of European Morals," Vol. II., p. 8.

the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life." "The Platonist exhorted men to imitate God; the Stoic, to follow reason; the Christian, to the love of Christ."

The Christian hope which anticipates the progress and final advent of the Kingdom as the *Social End*, has acted at all times as a powerful stimulus to Christian practice. The expectation in the early church of a speedy consummation of the age gave place to a sober sense of moral responsibility on the part of those who realised themselves to be "labourers together with God" (1 Cor. iii. 9), and "fellow-workers with the truth" (3 John viii) in this world. The enthusiasm of the earliest period settled down into the steadfast assurance that the moral task will not be in vain, whatever difficulties it may have to encounter. *Hope* accompanies the conviction of Faith in the supreme worth of the end, and anticipates its realisation. It is sustained by belief in the power of the Good to overcome what is contrary to it in the individual life and in the world,—by the Christian certainty that the forces making for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness are greater than all that are against them. It is the inspiration of the patience that can endure. "We are saved by hope," and "if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. viii. 24, 25). Christian Faith and Hope unite in giving vigour to the moral endeavour which consists in "forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forward to the things

which are before." The social End of the Kingdom, even though it be conceived in a vague and partial manner, acts as a morally constraining summons to those in sympathy with it to be in themselves worthy of its citizenship, and in their outward life and work to hasten its coming (2 Pet. iii. 12, R V. marg.). It proves its moral power as an incentive to love and good works, when men and women are ready to endure hardship and sacrifice "for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake." The coming of the Kingdom is marked, not only by its outward extension, but also by the increase in its members of that love to Christ which is creative in them of the type of character and life He has originated. The Christian Church by its witness to Christ fulfils its mission in the measure in which it sets Him forth as supremely worthy of that devotion and loyalty.

If such is the nature of the attractive power inherent in the Christian End and of the motive constituted by it, there is no truth in the criticism that denies the Idealism of Christian morality, by representing it as calculating or prudential in its appeal. The hope of the reward for those who endure enters into the prospect. But to represent the promised recompense as of a hedonistic or even mercenary kind, proceeds from a misapprehension of what it imports, and of the nature of the expectations which it encourages. The terrors of future penalty and the crude anticipation of celestial felicities have had a place in Christian preaching

and literature. It may be admitted that they have had a salutary effect upon the lives of those who in their ignorance were scarcely capable of experiencing the force of the genuinely Christian motive and sanctions. If those who have been influenced by such impressions reached a truly Christian level of thought and life, they have outgrown the need of such incentives. No school of ethical thought would accept Paley's definition of virtue as "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness."¹ It may be quite true that "The meek shall inherit the earth," that the Christian type of righteousness succeeds best in the long run, and that those who practise it in their lives lay for themselves a good foundation for the future; but the Kingdom and its righteousness are sought for themselves, first and as the Supreme End. They are not sought with the object of gaining by means of them a recompense other than themselves. To do so would be to subordinate what Christianity proposes as the Highest Good to an ulterior regard for a personal happiness and gain, thus making it not the end but the means. While Christ speaks of a great reward to those who persevere in this righteousness, the tenor of His utterances is to spiritualise the thought of the reward so that it can have value only for those who are already in sympathy with the End. The reward promised to those who hunger

¹ "Mor. and Pol. Phil." Chap. VII.

and thirst after "the righteousness" is that they will reach further attainments in it, that they shall be filled with it (Matt. v. 6). He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive *a prophet's reward* (Matt. x. 41). The servants who traded with the talents entrusted to them were recompensed in accordance with the results of their diligence and fidelity; but the award consisted in their promotion to positions of higher responsibility, calling for effort of a more arduous kind: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things." The reward is not a payment or a prize, with which the winner might retire, to enjoy it with a selfish satisfaction. It rather consists in continuing in the service, and in increased opportunity in it. The Christian motive and incentive are the hope of "more life and higher," of the enlarging capacities and possibilities of "the life" which is on the way towards the attainment of the Supreme End and Ideal as realised in Christ. He rebuked self-interested inquiries as to who should be greatest, as to who should obtain such a recompense as would satisfy mundane desires and ambitions. Those who asked this question revealed their misunderstanding of the task before them, and of the true meaning of "the life" on which they had entered. So far from seeking to attract by prospects alluring to the natural man, He emphasised the dangers and difficulties besetting the path of the true life. Mohammed promised a Paradise replete

with pleasures to those who signalised their fidelity to the cause of Islam. Christ was reticent regarding the conditions of the life to come. But while the ideal Good, the End, is to be sought for itself, He represents it as a blessed End,—such that each individual, seeking and finding it, shall recognise in his experience that to him personally it is an absolute Good, including all that can be desired as good. God Himself is perfectly blessed, because He is perfectly good. In the Christian conception of God, the divine blessedness is an essential element in the divine perfection. The Supreme Good could not be man's Absolute End if he did not seek it as supremely good for him. He could not desire it above all else unless he could represent it to himself as in itself supremely to be desired. No aim could be proposed by man to himself as his absolute End, which he could think of as possibly involving any element of injury and imperfection. The chief end must be that in which he finds the complete satisfaction of his being. It must include the fullness of life and joy. It is not a question of "making the best of both worlds," but of having now the life which consists in a continuous approximation to the End and Ideal in Christ. Viewed from the Christian standpoint, the reward is given to each in the measure in which the Kingdom, with all that it implies, is realised in his inner life and progresses in the world. The final reward is "life" in its fullness in that Kingdom of perfect righteousness,

in which man attains his true destiny, and which is the fulfilment of the divine purpose with humanity and with the world.

It is the task of the historian to estimate the results of the Christian Ethical Ideal in the world, and the extent to which it has leavened human life and institutions. It is indisputable that its influence has been great and fruitful in the lives of individuals and in Society. It has exerted a powerful moral uplift towards higher conditions of thought and life in those peoples to whom it has been made known, supported as it is by the sanctions of a pure and Spiritual Religion. It has fostered the social and humane virtues and those qualities that make for peace and brotherhood. Many would claim that to its presence is due all that is best and highest in our modern civilization. The abolition of slavery may be cited as a triumph of the Christian spirit over material obstacles that once seemed insurmountable. Credit is due to it for much of the increasing sense of man's duty to his fellow-men, especially to the poor, the suffering and the oppressed. It has done much to exorcise the spirit of Cain. The desire of peace among the Nations, the disrepute into which the appeal to mere force has fallen, the sense of man's responsibilities to others as distinguished from his claims upon others, are manifestations of its influence; and it is perhaps

in these directions that its effects are most visible in our times.

There is no means of judging what the Ethical condition of the peoples of Christendom would have been, if the leaven of Christianity had not been operative among them. Yet it is evident that the Christian Ideal, when all is said, has made but partial progress in transforming into its own image either the character of individuals or the life of society. Far from implying its failure, however, this tardy advance is what might have been anticipated in view of those restrictions and hindrances to it, arising from human nature as it is, and from the present world order. Finality, perfect realisation belongs to the future. There can be no "rest and be thankful" in the moral quest. Its aim is a divine Righteousness which cannot be fully realised until "the former things have passed away," and "that which is perfect has come," and therefore not in this present world as it is and seems likely long to continue to be. We may believe that the nineteen centuries that are past are but a brief period compared with the time that is still before the race; but God has eternity in which to accomplish His whole moral purpose. At the stage to which that "increasing purpose" has been as yet brought, it is because of the Idealism of Christian Ethics that it can claim to prescribe the lines on which man's moral advance must continue to proceed towards the divine End. As in the past so in the future,

the wealth of moral truth implicit in the Christian Ideal will wait to be unfolded and appropriated, that under its guidance man may go onwards along the path towards the goal that is ever before him. That End and Highest Good is in the realm of the eternal, immortal and invisible, and it cannot be fully attained in human experience until the Kingdom of the world shall have become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.¹

¹Rev. xi. 15.