

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE IV.

THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF SELF-SACRIFICE.<sup>1</sup>

BY REV. SAMUEL HARRIS, D. D., PROFESSOR IN BANGOR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

It is a German legend, that the emperor Charlemagne comes from his grave, every spring, to bless the land. Up and down the Rhine he walks, flinging his blessing on gardens, vineyards, and fields, to make the seed spring up and to multiply the vintage and the harvest. So the departed good, in the reformations which they effected, in the principles which they taught, in the institutions which they founded, reappear in the scenes of their life-long interest, to quicken every healthful growth, and multiply the ingathering of human joy. And as this Seminary sends out its successive classes, each year scattering its handful of true seed-corn, in the hope that "the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon," it is its venerable fathers who reappear, in their abiding influence, and fling their blessing on the churches that they loved and served.

Meeting you, brethren of the Society of Inquiry, as another class are leaving the investigations of your Association for their life-work, our minds naturally go forward, in sympathy, to the coming toils and trials which, as yet, you inadequately understand. In the divine words are mingled joy and sorrow: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Why, with this promise of sheaves gathered with joy, the vision of tears watering seed sown? Are deeds of beneficence fecundated only when steeped in tears? So, at least, the fact commonly is. Beautiful the vision of a long life in the unruffled enjoyment of

---

<sup>1</sup> This Article is an address delivered July 31, 1860, at the Anniversary of the Society of Inquiry, in Andover Theological Seminary.

wealth, honor, and refined culture, issuing, through a placid old age, serene into eternity. Not usually such the lives of the world's prophets; but oftener lives of conflict, privation, and peril: the ambition for preëminence satisfied only as Paul's was: "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." You turn with your perplexity to the New Testament, and there find the law of sacrifice propounded by the Lord, as the imperative condition of discipleship: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." What then? Is Christianity a system of asceticism? Is humanity only to be denied and crushed by the redemption which promises its perfect development? Does God delight in the sufferings of those who serve him? Is it in indifference to goodness that he leaves the benefactors of men to suffer? These questions touch a topic fundamental in your life-work. Let us pause before you leave these peaceful halls; let us spend this parting hour in considering the Christian law of Self-sacrifice: its ground, its principle, its practical efficacy.

I. The ground of this requirement. Why is it necessary? Not, as is often answered, because the world lies in wickedness, the agencies of benevolence over-tasked, and their resources stunted. These are but the occasions of self-sacrifice, furnished in the economy of God's grace. We must look deeper for the ground of this requirement. And we find that Christianity is essentially a religion of sacrifice. This is sometimes made a reproach. If it is a reproach, it is one which cuts Christianity to the core. But, before considering Christianity as a remedial and redemptive system, it is necessary to consider the supreme moral law of the universe, which Christianity alone has enunciated with completeness and distinctness, and revealed supernaturally as the authoritative will of God; and also to consider the condition of man under this law.

1. The Christian law of self-sacrifice is involved in the supreme and universal moral law. Love is, in its essential

character, sacrificial. The law of self-sacrifice is only the law of love seen on the reverse.

The word *love* is popularly used to denote widely dissimilar mental states : a sensuous appetite, a selfish covetousness, the supreme affection of a holy heart. Thus : " I love an apple," " I love money," " I love God." These all have the common element of desire, and whatever we desire, we are, in popular language, said to love. But love and desire are not synonymous. And, though holy love does not extinguish natural desires, and in one of its phases develops itself in spiritual desires, yet desire is not its distinctive characteristic. Holy love is distinctively characterized by free self-devotement to its object, not by desire for its object. A supreme affection which, when analyzed, is found to be distinctively and essentially desire, must be a supremely selfish affection. Desire seeks possession of the object desired ; love imparts possessions to the object loved. Desire devotes its object to self ; love devotes self to its object. When the supreme affection is essentially desire, the movement of the soul is towards self as a centre, like a whirlpool sucking all things into its own vortex ; when the supreme affection is love, the movement of the soul is from self as a centre, like a fountain pouring itself out in blessing. Love enthrones its object and makes us serve it ; desire seizes its object and makes it serve us. Love adores its object ; desire uses it. Wedded love, devoting to its object the homage of the heart and the service of the hand, is the inspired emblem of holy love ; scortatory affection, injurious to the object which it so hotly seeks, is the inspired emblem of sinful desire. The distinctive object of love is a person, who may be honored and served, but cannot be owned and used ; the distinctive object of desire is a thing, a quality, or a truth, which may be owned and used, but cannot be honored and served. God, in the two great commandments, has set apart persons as the objects of love ; but he has left us qualities, truths, things, as legitimate objects of desire : grace and wisdom with which to glorify our souls, earthly things as tools for our use and materials to combine or consume in accomplishing our higher

ends. Love fixing on a thing, a quality, or a doctrine, in exclusive devotement to it and not to persons, would cease to be love, and degenerate into selfish desire. Such self-devotement to a thing, would make its subject a worldling; to a quality of righteousness or a form of service, would make him a pharisee; to a doctrine, would make him a bigot. It would, in truth, be only selfishness inverted, binding self, by the cords of its own desires, a sacrifice to the object which it selfishly sought as a possession. On the other hand, desire, when, uncontrolled by love, it fixes on a person, would make the person a tool, a slave, or a victim.

But it is not only in popular language that these dissimilar mental states are confounded. An American philosophical writer defines love as identical with desire: "That which we love we desire to have present, to possess and to enjoy it. . . . The loving an object, and the desiring its enjoyment, are identical."<sup>1</sup> What monstrous systems of Christian ethics must result, when the teachers degrade that which is the noblest possibility of humanity, the love which is the godlike in human character, to a feeling, the definition of which is equally the definition of an epicure's appetite or a miser's greed. It is such love as a wolf has for a lamb, the desire "to have it present, to possess and to enjoy it." It is such love as a gambler has for his victim, the desire to have him present, to possess and to enjoy him. It is not love; it is selfishness, limbed with its myriad desires, like a rapacious giant with a hundred ravening arms. And if your love to God is no more than this, it is selfishness, audacious to seize on God himself, and use him as a familiar to fetch and carry the treasures of the infinite in your service, a Demiurge to make and roll the worlds for you.

Self-devotement is an essential characteristic of love in each of its phases.

Love has always two phases: the receptive and the imparting; the ascending and the descending. We seek something from the object of love, as well as impart to it. These

---

<sup>1</sup> H. P. Tappan's Review of Edwards on the Will, p. 18.

two phases are popularly designated as faith and love; but, using the word *love* in the comprehensive sense in which Christ used it, as the general name of all holiness, these must be considered as two phases of love, corresponding to the scriptural distinction of faith and works.

Since the first of these is in its very nature receptive, it may be urged that it cannot be sacrificial. Since it is receptive, it must be accompanied by desires; even holy love must have its holy aspirations; and it may be urged that a love characterized by aspiration and reception cannot be sacrificial. A moment's consideration, however, will show the contrary; the receptive phase of love involves self-devotement; the desires incident to holy love can exist only by self-abnegation.

Great souls always draw their inferiors to themselves. The founders of schools in philosophy and sects in religion, the authors of reforms and revolutions, the leaders of political parties, the leading minds of a village or a college, draw weaker souls and make them disciples, as certainly as the planets are drawn by the sun, and the moons by their planets. But whenever a man thus becomes a satellite of one greater than himself, there is self-devotement: the man has accepted a master; he has given his soul into the master's hand, to be informed with opinions and guided in action. This hero-worship, though it is what gives power to every gifted anti-Christ, to gather followers and perpetuate his evil influence, is yet originally good: it is a perverted remnant of the soul's primeval tendency to rise to whatever is higher and better than itself; for, like Milton's angels,

"In our proper motion we ascend  
Up to our native seat; descent and fall  
To us is adverse."

So holy love ascends, from sin and weakness, to Christ the deliverer, complete in perfection and mighty to save. Thus manifested, it is faith receiving redeeming grace from his willing hand. But this ascending love is, in its very nature, an act of self-abandonment and self-devotement. In it the

soul accepts its master, yielding its whole being to the plastic hand of the Perfect One, to receive the impress of his thought and will. It is trust in him as Saviour; it is complacency in his character, adoration of his perfections, aspiration to be with him and like him, submission to his authority, loyalty to his person; but, in every manifestation, it is an act of self-surrender to the mighty and gracious one who is drawing the heart to himself.

The same is the characteristic of love descending and imparting—love active in works of beneficence and justice. This needs no argument. As God, when he would save the world, descended to compass himself with humanity, we must go down to the needy and the sinful, to bless them by toiling in their behalf, and giving of what we possess. As Christ died that God might be just, we must endure sacrifices, in allegiance to the right and in vindication of its supremacy.

Love, then, is in its very essence sacrificial, and that in each of its phases. The supreme and universal law of love involves the Christian law of self-sacrifice.

I proceed to consider the condition of man under this law.

2. The second ground of the requirement of self-renunciation is the fact that sin is essentially egoism or self-ism.<sup>1</sup> As love is essentially self-abnegation, sin is essentially self-assertion: a practical affirmation of the absurdity that a created being is sufficient for himself; therefore a repudiation,

---

<sup>1</sup> We have no word in current usage which satisfactorily expresses the idea. *Egoism* is scholastic, *selfism* is unauthorized, and both are open to the objection that the termination *ism* denotes opinion rather than character. The obsolete word *selfness*, could it be revived, would better meet our want. *Selfishness*, in its common usage, has not a broad enough meaning; it does not denote the rational preference of self as the supreme object of trust, of obedience, of service, and of homage. If used theologically as a definition of sin, it should be explained as having this more comprehensive meaning. The term *self-love* is specifically appropriated by the psychologists. And theologically it seems desirable that the word *love* should be limited to the designation of right affections, in order that holiness and sin may not be designated by the same word.

It should also be observed that this egoism, or selfishness in its broadest sense, is not the self-love of philosophy existing in excess. If so, the difference between holiness and sin is a difference of degree only, and many disastrous errors must result.

by the sinner, of his condition as a creature, and an arrogating, to self, of the Creator's place. It has four principal manifestations, in each of which this essential character appears. It is *self-sufficiency*, the opposite of Christian faith; in self resources and energies adequate to realize the highest possibilities of the being. It is *self-will*, the opposite of Christian submission: putting the will of self, instead of the will of God, as the supreme law and the supreme providence of the world; even in philosophy finding no moral law but an autonomy, no moral authority above the sphere of man's own being, no ground of obligation beyond the man's own moral nature. It is *self-seeking*, the opposite of Christian benevolence; putting self in God's place as the end of all endeavor and the recipient of all service. It is *self-righteousness*, the opposite of Christian humility and reverence, the reflex act of sin; putting self in God's place as the object of praise and homage. The Gospel, which is to save man from sin, must break down this spiritual primacy of self. It must require self-renunciation.

I proceed to consider Christianity as a remedial and redemptive work.

3. The third ground of the law of self-sacrifice is the fact that redemption — the divine method of delivering man from sin, and realizing the law of love — is sacrificial.

The substance of Christianity is redemption. Its central fact is the historical sacrifice of the incarnation and the cross. The ground-thought which it expresses, is the eternal and immutable excellence of sacrificial love as the divine character; its eternal and immutable supremacy as the divine law. The ideal which it proposes to realize in the redeemed, is the same sacrificial love. Christianity, therefore, as a fact, as a doctrine, and as a life, is a sacrificial religion. Thus the law of self-renunciation is grounded in the essential character of Christianity.

(1) Christianity *as a fact* is sacrificial. Christianity is not substantially a divine doctrine, but a divine action; it is not a philosophy, but a redemption; not a proclamation of divinely authenticated dogmas, but a divine energy supernatu-

rally flowing into the history of man, to redeem him from sin. Of this redemptive action, the historical sacrifice of the incarnate Word is the central fact. The redemptive energy working in the world all flows, in this sacrifice, from God's riven side.

And here is the point of divergence of the two opposite and irreconcilable conceptions of Christianity: the one, with whatever truths, fundamentally wrong; the other, with whatever errors, fundamentally right. If Christ is a teacher only, as the one system teaches, Christianity is a system of philosophy, distinguished from other philosophies only by greater clearness and comprehensiveness. When the deist insists that Jesus borrowed the two great commandments from Moses, that Plato inculcated forgiveness of enemies, that Isocrates taught the golden rule, that Confucius and Zoroaster enunciated Christian precepts,<sup>1</sup> no defence is left us but to show that Jesus was a greater philosopher than they; we are compelled to acknowledge that Tindal had a right to entitle his infidel book "Christianity as old as the Creation." But if Jesus is the God-man, working redemption by sacrifice, as the other system teaches, then Christianity is not a philosophy, not a system of doctrines or ethical precepts, but a divine action, a redemption by God producing a divine life in men. It is made up, not of dogmas, but of facts. It is worthy of remark, that the principle of the former of these systems, on which Liberal Christianity centres, logically ex-

---

<sup>1</sup> When Christianity is rightly understood, facts like these confirm it. The Bible distinctly asserts that human reason is adequate, without revelation, to discover the moral law, Rom. 1: 20, and 2: 14, 15. When Mr. Buckle affirms "that the system of morals propounded in the New Testament contained no maxim which had not been previously enunciated," he gives his testimony to the truth affirmed by the Metaphysicians and accordant with inspired teaching, that there is a standard of virtue which the human mind, when developed, is sure to discover, and to which, when enunciated and understood, every human being will assent. It must be said, however, that the claims in behalf of heathen philosophy are much too strong. A complete and clear enunciation of the New Testament morality is not to be found in any heathen writer. The moral precepts of those writers are fragmentary; they are mingled with gross errors; and sometimes have a beautiful meaning interpreted into them from Christianity, which the writer never intended and his contemporaries never thought of.

alts doctrines to preëminence, insisting chiefly on "the words of the master;" while the contrasted principle of orthodoxy gives preëminence to the divine action, and the life which it originates.

Christianity, then, being not a philosophy, but a redemption; and consisting, not of dogmas, but of facts; the central fact is a sacrifice: the sacrifice of the Incarnate Son on the cross.

(2) *Christianity as a doctrine*, is sacrificial. The ground-thought, which the historical fact of redemption by sacrifice expresses, is the supreme excellence of sacrificial love as a character, and its supreme authority as a law.

In the first place, it discloses to us that God's character—the supreme moral perfection of the universe—is sacrificial love.

If love is in its nature essentially sacrificial, then God's love must be sacrificial by virtue of the fact that it is love. How it is so, is a mystery. God's love never ascends; it cannot be a faith; and in descending love, he cannot literally deny himself. But, in God's love, even as it acts serene and blessed amid the grandeurs of eternity and the glories of the Godhead, the element of self-devotement appears in this, that God always gives, he never receives. God is not an infinite sensitivity, seeking gratification; nor a nature unfolding, according to its own necessary law, under a stimulus from without. God is a person, having the moving spring of his action within himself; by the energy of his own will freely expressing the eternal thought of his wisdom in the self-moved action of his love. As, in the mystery of his infinitude, the perfection of moral agency coëxists with the impossibility of sinning, and his absolute freedom is absolute necessity; so, his love is an activity eternally self-moved and eternally blessed, at once absolute self-devotement and absolute self-satisfaction; and the blessedness of the Godhead is not received from without, but, like the brightness of the sun, is the shining of his love, as it pours forth from within. And here, in this infinite of love, self-moved in its eternal efflux, and blessed without receiving, are possibly the essential attribute and the deepest mystery of the personality of the infinite.

But amid the glories of his eternal love, our finite intellects are blinded by excess of light. What his love is, we know from the incarnation: "being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but stripped<sup>1</sup> himself and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This is God's love. It is a mystery indeed; but every revelation of God, like the veil before the mercy-seat, hides while it reveals him. The incarnation, preëminently the revelation of God, is preëminently the mystery which hides him — the mystery of infinite love, which brings him near, the Redeemer setting up his mercy-seat in the midst of men, and yet makes us most awfully aware of the depths of his incomprehensibility and the inscrutable solitude of the infinity and eternity which he inhabits.

In the second place, the sacrifice of redemption, as an expiatory sacrifice, presents to us sacrificial love as the supreme law of the universe, and asserts and vindicates its authority. God, in this sacrifice, expresses the eternal authority, the universal application, and the inexorable demand, of this law, and the impossibility of even offering pardon, except in its full satisfaction.

(3) Christianity *as a life* is sacrificial. The ideal which it proposes to realize, in the character of the redeemed, is sacrificial love.

This is true of both faith and works, the scriptural designation of the two prominent phases of human holiness or love, which every right analysis must recognize.

First, it is true of faith. It has already been shown that faith, in its very nature, implies a surrender of self to another. It is love ascending, to a superior, in trust, in aspiration, in adoration, in loyal allegiance. It is love receptive of help from another. The fact that Christianity is redemption through Christ's sacrifice, necessarily brings faith into the foreground of its ideal of a perfect character. It necessitates the doctrine of salvation by faith, and makes faith the

---

<sup>1</sup> Do Wette.

germinant element of the character which it would realize. Christian love, in its nascent state, must be faith. Self-renunciation, therefore, enters fundamentally into the Christian conception of a good man. He renounces confidence in himself. In the consciousness of weakness and ignorance, as a creature, he looks away from himself to God as a helper; in the consciousness of unworthiness and guilt, as a sinner, he looks from himself to God as the Redeemer. He realizes his normal state only as he is in union with God, in Christ; acting in real freedom and true holiness, only as he is acted upon by the divine Spirit.

At this point the Christian ideal of moral perfection differs, not in degree only, but in kind, from the ethical ideal. Morality is founded in self-sufficiency: it proposes an ideal to be realized in self-assertion. The admired ethical system of the stoics is a conspicuous example. It teaches that man's highest law and highest end are within his own being; within himself, also, strength to obey that law and to realize that end; and strength, in seeking that end, to hold himself unruffled by passion and desire within, or by difficulties and enticements without; serene, in the face of pain, bereavement, death, and every conceivable evil. As Horace expresses it:

" For life and wealth to Jove I'll pray ;  
 These Jove can give or take away ;  
 But for a firm and equal mind,  
 These blessings in myself I'll find." <sup>1</sup>

Says Schwegler, of the stoic's wise man: " he is exalted above all law and every custom. Even that which is most despicable and base — deception, suicide, murder — he may commit at a proper time and in a virtuous character. In a word, the stoics describe their wise man as a god, and yield him the right to be proud and to boast of his life like Zeus."<sup>2</sup>

The same is the essence of all schemes of morality not founded on redemption; schemes which, in different and

---

<sup>1</sup> " Haec satis est orare Jovem, qui donat et aufert ;  
 Det vitam, det opes ; aequum mi animum ipse parabo."

— Ep. 1:18 ; 111, 112.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. of Phil., Seelye's Translation, p. 144.

specious forms have always been current. It is sometimes urged that the popularity of these systems of severe morality disproves the Christian doctrine of human sinfulness. But why should not such a system be popular with sinners? For it is the very gospel of man's sufficiency for himself; it enunciates, as the essential principle of right that which is the essential principle of wrong; it is antagonistic to redemption; and success in realizing its requirements, were it possible, would strengthen the life-principle of sin, and confirm the self-sufficiency which alienates the heart from God. Morality is popular; it is redemption which is scorned. Epictetus is honored; it is Christ who is despised.

Secondly, The same principle of self-abnegation appears in the Christian ideal of the other prominent phase of a holy life, designated in the scriptures as *works*: in love, active in imparting good, discursive to bless mankind, descending to relieve the wretched and to save the sinful. Because Christianity is redemption by Christ's sacrifice, that sacrifice necessarily becomes the type and measure of all Christian love. It is the type: all love is of the same kind, sacrificing self for others — "He laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." It is the measure: as Christ, being divine, stripped himself of the regal splendors of the divine form, and, in the abasement of humanity, humbled himself to death on the cross; so Christians, being human, must devote — little, indeed, compared with his sacrifice — yet all that a human heart and life can give. The cross, central in redemption, exerts a twofold influence, centripetal and centrifugal. It draws the sinner to itself to look on the holy sufferer "made a curse for us." Then it impels him out into the world, quickened by the same spirit of sacrifice, to toil and suffer to save others; never escaping the attraction of the cross, but moving around it, like a planet around the sun, bearing its light and warmth through the outer darkness of sin.

The sacrificial character of Christianity is sometimes urged as a reproach; it is even objected that the doctrine of redemption by Christ's sacrifice encourages sin by leading men

to trust to the righteousness of another. But the term, applied in reproach, we accept as an honor. Instead of encouraging sin, the sacrificial character of Christianity makes the ideal of moral perfection higher, the authority of the law requiring it more sacred, the motive to obedience stronger— I had almost said, infinitely higher, more sacred, and stronger— than is possible when the sacrificial character of Christ's work is denied. They who deny it have no adequate apprehension of the grandeur of moral distinctions; they do not understand the profound significance of holiness transcending virtue, and of sin transcending vice. On their eyes have not yet opened the loftiest possibilities of human goodness, the godlike sublimity of love, to which the Saviour calls. They cannot be aware that, in sneering at evangelical religion as sacrificial, they sneer at God's love in its most wondrous condescension, and at man's love in its most godlike capability.

From what has been said it is evident that this high ideal, this Christian law of sacrificial love, is not superficial or arbitrary; it is ingrained into the very texture of Christianity; it is the ideal necessarily evolved from the essential character of Christianity.

I can only glance at the fulness and earnestness with which it is enjoined. In the Old Testament, while the sacrifices as such prefigured Christ's vicarious death; as offerings (and those required to be costly—the best of the flocks and the herds, the finest of the wheat) they taught that the spirit of sacrifice must animate the worshipper. In the New Testament, the doctrine is omnipresent as the daylight in the air. It is proclaimed as law. It is propounded as the inexorable condition of discipleship. Here it beams in the examples of saints suffering the loss of all things for Christ; there it glares in the terrible rejection of some rich ruler, who loved property more than Jesus, or of some Demas who forsook him for filthy lucre. Here it smiles in promise: "your Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward you openly;" there it frowns in denunciation: "your riches are corrupted, your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall eat your flesh as it were fire." All, in varied

language, proclaim the law of sacrificial love. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," the law which Christ exemplified and vindicated on the cross.

The same ideal is presented in the actual administration of Christ's kingdom. He does not establish it by his visible coming, supernaturally destroying his enemies, and giving his church a toilless victory and an easy reign. That dream is contrary to the fundamental idea of Christianity and to the entire method of its administration. He commits his kingdom to the fidelity of a toiling and suffering church, under the guidance of the Spirit, and permits it slowly to evolve through conflict and self-denial, through alternations of defeat and triumph.

Says Isaac Taylor: "To touch the substantial miseries of degenerate man, is to come within the infection of an infinite sorrow." Jesus was subject to that infection; so are all who labor with him. As he was met by devils crowding the field of action, in numbers and power at no other time paralleled; so always, the more energetic the action of Christ's church, the more terrific the mustering, against her, of the hosts of darkness. The epochs of her triumphs are epochs of Satanic endeavor. As our Saviour, in the very hour of redemption, cried: "this is your hour, and the power of darkness," always the hour of redemption is the hour of the power of darkness. Even the miracle-workers had no permission to work miracles to save themselves from suffering. Able to raise the dead and to control demons, in the advancement of Christ's kingdom, their very handkerchiefs conveying healing virtue to others, they themselves were left under the law of doing good by sacrifice; and, as if no miracle-working power slept within them, were obliged to say: "even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place."

Thus Christianity as a fact, as a doctrine, and as a life, is sacrificial; and the law of self-renunciation, so fully declared in the Bible, and recognized in the administration of Christ's kingdom, is the ideal of the Christian life, which

necessarily arises from the essential character of Christianity.

4. We may find a fourth ground of the law of self-renunciation, in the constitution of the created universe ; for this is an expression of the same eternal love, which manifests its sacrificial character in Christ.

Here our ignorance does not permit us to construct a complete argument ; but glimpses of the law we can trace. It appears in the natural laws of society : a child is brought into the world by its mother's anguish, and nurtured by parents' toil and suffering. In turn the child grown up, wears out life, perhaps, in nursing a parent through a long sickness, or in the infirmities of age. It is shadowed even in physical arrangements : the dew-drop, which sparkles on a summer's morning, exhales its whole being while refreshing the leaf on which it hangs. When, in the early spring, the crocus lifts its pure whiteness from beneath the reeking mould, when the iris puts on its sapphire crown, when the rose unfolds its queenly splendor, it is as if each graceful form said : " this is all I have, and all I am ; this fragile grace and sweetness — I unfold it all for you." The wild berries nestle in the grass, or droop, inviting, from the vine, as if saying : " this lusciousness is all my wealth ; it is for you." The apples, golden and red, glowing amid the green leaves, seem to be thoughtfully whispering God's own words : " a good tree bringeth forth good fruit." The field submits, without complaint, to be sheared of its yearly harvest mutely waiting the return of blessing at the good pleasure of him that dresseth it ; symbolizing the patient faith of him who does good, hoping for nothing again, except from the good pleasure of God, who is not forgetful to reward the patience of faith and the labor of love ; on the contrary, the land which bears thorns and thistles, though it is allowed to keep its own harvest to enrich itself, yet (emblem of all covetousness) is rejected and nigh unto cursing. The sun walks regally through the heavens, pouring abroad day ; and the stars shining all night, seemingly say : " we are suns ; yet even our opulence of glory we give to others ; our very nature is to shine."

Do not say that this is all fanciful. The creation was cast in the mould of God's love; and each thing bears some impress of the same. Before the solid earth and the ocean were made, before sun or star shone, before chaos, formless and waste, God's eternal wisdom and love filled the void. And when "He spake and it was done," the creative fiat only spoke into finite form some eternal thought of his wisdom, only crystallized into finite realization some definite purpose of his love. Hence everywhere, on land and sea, on the earth and in the star-thrugged skies, are traces of that law of sacrifice which expresses the essential character of love. All things that seem otherwise are expressions of love in as yet undeciphered hieroglyphics, the tones of the Father's voice speaking the words of an unknown tongue.

II. The principle or spring of self-sacrifice in the Christian life. This is love itself; a new affection, controlling the life and making the acts of self-denial easy.

Happiness is not bottled up in outward objects—the same definite quantity to be secured by every man who obtains the object. A man's affections determine the sources of his happiness: he finds his joy in what he loves; and is incapable of enjoying its opposite. The scope of a brute's enjoyment is determined for it in its nature; the scope of a man's enjoyment is determined by him in his own free choice. His joys may be angelic; or they may be earthly, sensual, devilish. But when once his heart has fixed on its object, the range of his enjoyment is as effectually limited by his supreme affection as a lamb is, by its nature, shut up to crop the grass, or a hog to wallow in the mire. If he loves God, he is capable of enjoying God; his affection lifts and binds him to God, and enables him to expatiate in the grandeur and blessedness of God's service; like a planet bound, by its own attraction, to the sun, and revolving in a vast orbit in its light. If his heart is on the world, all his desires go out and bind him to the world, like a caterpillar by the viscid threads issuing from its own body, bound, in a filthy web, to the perishing leaf on which it feeds. Nothing, in the half of the kingdom,

could give to Herodias so much happiness as the bloody head of the faithful prophet, who had dared to rebuke her licentiousness. By her revenge, she was shut up to that grim enjoyment as effectually as a tiger, by its nature, to ravening in blood. Nero had the whole known world in his hand, to squeeze it like an orange; and all the sweetness which he could make it yield, was the horrid joy of sensuality and cruelty. If he had had the universe in his hand, as completely as the Roman empire, his character remaining the same, it could have given him no higher joy. The old Friesland chief could see nothing attractive in heaven itself; but when its spiritual character was explained to him, he turned with disgust from the baptismal font, and said: "I would rather feast, with my forefathers, in the halls of Woden, than spend eternity in your starveling Christian heaven." When the heart is fixed on money, or office, or any worldly object, all the desires fasten the soul to that object, as a shell-fish is bound by the wiry fibres of its own being to a rock under the sea; and there, immovably fixed, is capable of no other action than to stretch its slimy feelers, and bring in what it can within its own shell, and digest it into its own cold and sluggish life.

Whether, then, any course of action is to be a source of happiness or the contrary, depends on what the man loves. The upspringing of a new affection, as the love of a first-born child, opens on the soul a new world of joy.

But religion is an affection. It is not a sense of duty, under whose lash the soul creeps through its daily stint of service. It is not prudence, shrewdly sacrificing present joy for future gains, toiling through the gymnastics of Bible-reading and prayer, and getting down nauseous doses of religion, to avert impending death. It is love.

While sinful affection rules the heart, religion comes to the sinner an outward law, bristling all over with prohibitions, and every touch draws blood; it goes against the grain of every desire and purpose; every object which it presents, and every duty which it requires, is repulsive; it is self-denial from beginning to end. Then the sinner is incapable of finding enjoyment in religion; and to bid him enjoy it, is, to use

an illustration from South, as if Moses had bidden the Israelites to quench their thirst at the dry rock, before he had brought any water out of it.

But when the new affection wells up in the heart, all this is changed. A new world of action and joy opens to the man. Religion is no longer an outward law, commanding him against his will ; but an inward affection, drawing him in the way of his own inclination. His hold on o'd sinful objects loosens ; they drop and lie scattered about him, no longer prized ; he easily leaves them for new and purer objects. His gain has become loss ; and his loss, gain. The energies of his being, no longer cramped and crooked in impotence to good, now, in new liberty, walking, and leaping, and praising God, he presses on, exulting in his Maker's service.

This new affection, which is the principle of Christian self-renunciation, is specifically love to Christ, whether existing as faith in him or devotedness to him. We are saved by Christ, not by Christianity. Christianity as a fact, a doctrine, and a life, is all in him. Therefore love to him must be the principle of action distinctive of Christianity, the spring of Christian excellence in every aspect. If religion is submission to authority, or inflexible adherence to the right, or complacency in a holy character, or enthusiasm for an ideal, or benevolence to the needy, it all is involved in love to him, the Supreme Lawgiver, the Just One who died that God might be just, the beauty of the divine perfection, the partaker of humanity who receives service to his redeemed as service to himself.

It is evident, therefore, that Christian self-denial is primarily that first great act of renouncing self in self-devoting love to Christ. It is the surrender of self to Christ in the act of faith. Accordingly, on this the scriptural requirements chiefly concentrate : " Put off the old man, put on the new." You are liable to think Christian self-denial more than it is ; for you think it a death-shade glooming over the whole Christian life ; a persistent crushing of all life's joys ; whereas, it is simply renouncing self in the surrender of yourself to Christ, which fills life with purer joys and nobler

interests. You are liable to think Christian self-denial less than it is: for you think it is giving some of your property, relinquishing some pleasures, drudging through some duties; whereas, it is immeasurably more than this; it is giving your heart; it is giving yourself. Did Simeon Stylites practise Christian self-denial? No. He renounced earthly goods, but he did not renounce Simeon Stylites. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."<sup>1</sup>

It also appears, as to the method of self-denial, that sin is not torn off by force, but drops off through the growth of the new affection; as a man drops his childish plays, not by a self-denying struggle, but because he has outgrown his interest in them. So always self-denial is accomplished, not by a dead lift, but by the spontaneous energy of love.

Hence the preaching of the gospel is not primarily "Renounce self" — as if a man with no new love might by a naked resolution put off his own character, or, to borrow the biblical illustration, as if the Ethiopian might by one desperate leap clear himself from his own skin — but its preaching is, "Look to Jesus," and by faith in him sin will fall away. Thus the Ethiopian does change his skin and the leopard his spots. Thus love always begins in faith, and faith always works by love. And this accords with the scriptural teaching of the impotence of the law and the efficacy of the gospel.

It further appears that self-denial, in the very act of exercising it, is strangely transfigured into self-indulgence; the cross, in the very act of taking it up, is transfigured into a

---

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps a distinction ought to be made between self-denial and self-renunciation or self-sacrifice. Whenever, for the accomplishment of an object, we forego the gratification of a desire, we may be said to exercise self-denial; but self-renunciation is the renunciation of self as the supreme object of trust, obedience, service, and honor. If this distinction is observed, there may be acts in the spirit of self-renunciation, which have ceased to be self-denial, — like Paul's missionary labors in which he rejoiced. And there may be acts of self-denial when there is no self-renunciation, — like a miser's self-denial in order to hoard. I have not attempted to observe this distinction.

crowns. It is a false charge that Christianity, by the severity of its self-denial, crushes human joy. Had you emancipated a slave, who had touched the deepest abasement incident to that system of iniquity, and had become contented with his slavery; had you educated him and opened to him opportunity of remunerative industry, so that he is now incapable of being happy in slavery, and shudders at his former contentment, would you feel guilty of crushing his happiness, or pity him for the sacrifice which he has made? But he did sacrifice the joys of slavery; yes, and gained the joys of freedom. An emblem this of the sacrifice which Christianity requires. The joys of sin are sacrificed, the joys of holiness are gained; the snow-birds are gone, but the summer songsters are tuneful on every spray within the soul as it bursts into leaf and blossom beneath the returning sun. All religious services once repulsive, prayer and praise formerly frozen words rattling like hail around the wintry heart, all works of beneficence once chafing to the selfish soul, all are now transfigured into joy. Under the power of the new affection, what was once self-denial accords with the inclination; the soul has become incapable of enjoying its former sins, and regards it as self-denial to return to them, shuddering at them as an emancipated slave at his contentment in slavery, as a reformed drunkard, in the enjoyment of virtue, of home, and plenty, at his former hilarious carousals. Only so far as sin yet "dwelleth in us" is the service of Christ felt to be a self-denial or recognized as a conflict.

But it will be objected that the innocent, natural desires, must be denied in Christ's service. After love has made religious duties pleasant, we are obliged, in Christ's service, to forego the gratification of natural desires, and to give up comforts, property, and sometimes life. Are these sacrifices also transfigured into joy? So the fact seems to be. Missionaries apparently get more enjoyment out of life than any other class of men. Paul gloried in tribulation. His contemporaries took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. No books were ever written under trials more appalling than

those which attended the writings of the apostles; yet no books breathe a more joyful spirit than these. Even martyrs have been joyful at the stake. This arises from love to Christ. Love to a person makes it easy to toil for him. Enthusiasm for a cause makes it easy to endure privation and to face danger for that cause. So love to Christ, and enthusiasm in his cause, makes toil easy and burdens light.

Here, in justice, it should be said, that self-denial of this kind is incidental to all worldly business, not less than to the service of Christ. Can you attain any great object without sacrifices? Is the enterprising merchant, the successful lawyer, or physician, a man of luxurious ease? Merchants, in foreign commerce, sacrifice home and the blessings of civilized society, as really as do missionaries. Merchants and scholars often sacrifice life in the energy of their action. Nay, Sin itself requires this sort of self-denial. Drunkards eagerly and knowingly sacrifice property and health to their cups. A sailor, who had been flogged, when released grasped the mate in his arms and sprang overboard with him, sacrificing his own life to his revenge.

It follows, from the foregoing views, that they who enter deepest into the spirit of Christian self-renunciation, are least aware of sacrificing anything for Christ. The more intense the love, the less account of service rendered to the beloved; as Jacob heeded not the years of toil for Rachel through his love for her. This is illustrated in worldly passions. The reason why men of business are scarcely aware that they deny themselves, is, that they are so intent on their objects; therefore they make no account of toil and privation to attain it. The raging of appetite makes easy the sacrifice of property and health in drinking; the fierceness of revenge makes it sweet to offer life in its gratification; the greed of avarice makes the miser glory in his rags, as Paul gloried in his tribulation. Love to Christ, and enthusiasm in his cause, produce the same oblivion of sacrifices made for him. They who deny themselves most are least aware of it. Great deeds of Christian love are done

in unconsciousness. And this is precisely what Christ requires in the command: "Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth." It does not require you to keep your good deeds secret from others; it is of no consequence whether others know them or not. It requires you to keep them secret from yourselves. Be so full of love that you will take no note of the sacrifices to which love inspires you.

Love to Christ, then, is the spring of all acts of self-denial. Love much, serve much. When the tide is out, no human power can lift the great ships that lie bedded in the mud. But when you see the leathery bladders of the sea-weed swinging round, and bubbles and chips float past you upwards, then you know that the tide is turned, and the great ocean is coming to pour its floods into the harbor, to make the ships rise "like a thing of life," to fill every bay and creek and rocky fissure with its inexhaustible fulness. So you may see toils and sacrifices of Christian service seeming too great for your strength; yet if your affections are beginning to flow to Christ, and your thoughts and aspirations are turning to him, these are indications that love is rising in your hearts, with the fulness of God's grace behind it, to fill every susceptibility of your being with its divine fulness, and lift every burden buoyant on its breast.

Here we see the fundamental difference between asceticism and Christian self-renunciation. Asceticism is a suppression and denial of the soul's affections; Christian self-renunciation is the introduction of a new affection displacing the old. The former is a negation of the soul's life; the latter a development of a new and higher life. The former produces a constrained performance of duty, a restraint of desires which do not cease to burn, a sad resignation to necessary evils; the latter produces a new affection which makes duty coincide with inclination, quenches contrary desires, and quickens to positive joy in the accomplishment of God's will. The former, by perpetual constraint, makes a *free* life impossible; the latter brings the will into

coincidence with reason, and ultimates in real freedom, in which obedience to God is unhindered by any opposition from within the soul; the man spontaneously following all his impulses is equally following the requirements of reason, and law disappears and conscience ceases to command amid the quicker and coincident impulses of love. The former, by its self-mortification, makes a *full* life impossible, and goodness becomes a mere negation of sin; the latter, opening a new love, develops life in its utmost fulness, gushing in inexhaustible springs of thought, energy, and joy. The former is founded on the error that the suffering and self-mortification of his creatures are in themselves acceptable to God; the latter on the truth that God delights in the full development of his creatures in life, energy, and joy. The former, therefore, heaping suffering on self to gain the favor of God, is in reality, not Christian self-renunciation, but only a self-righteousness; a form of the self-sufficiency which is the essence of all sin.

Hence, what is needed to unfold the spiritual life, is not necessarily affliction and sorrow, which of themselves are equally fitted to sour the soul or to crush it in despondency; but the discipline, whether of adversity or prosperity, which develops love as a living principle of energy and joy.

III. The practical importance of the Christian law of self-renunciation in individual development and social progress.

When Christ said: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant," he simply announced a fundamental principle of the Christian scheme, that greatness can be realized only by service; that man's highest development is attained only by self-abnegation. What he meant by being a minister and a servant he intimated in those most touching words which he immediately added: "Even as the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."

The contrary method is popular at the present day, in the

current philosophy which, with various names and forms, proposes to man his own worthiness as his highest end, and promises to realize it by self-assertion. It is this which has drawn the crowds to the Music Hall in Boston. Says Theodore Parker: "If I wished to teach the nobleness of man, the Old Testament and the New were there with dreadful condemnations of human nature. \* \* \* There was no virtue but the scriptures could furnish an argument against it."<sup>1</sup> Proposing to insure human progress by a philosophy of self-sufficiency and self-assertion irreconcilably antagonistic to the Christian system of sacrificial redemption and self-abnegation, it is not surprising that he found the Bible opposing at every point his methods of inculcating human virtue. The same is the vital principle in the philosophy of Carlisle—a self-asserting stoicism declaring, "If Hell must be dared, it must;" and defiantly challenging for self the power to meet in serenity and triumph all the evils which may assail it from earth or hell, in time or through eternity. It is the essential principle of the infidel political philosophy which underlies the Red Republicanism of Europe, and is penetrating American politics, and displacing the political philosophy of the Puritans. It is proclaimed by Spiritism in the alleged revelation that self-love is the essence of all virtue. It is boldly carried to its legitimate consequences in Secularism—the Working-men's atheism of England; for the fundamental principle of Mr Holyoake and Mr. Holdreth is, that the purest morality can be realized without the idea of God; and there being no need of the idea, either to interpret our moral convictions, or to realize our moral perfection, it should be quietly dismissed from the mind; so that it is hardly extravagant to say that the spirit of the nineteenth century finds its truest utterance in the mad words of Heinrich Heine: "I am no child; I do not want a heavenly father any more."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Experience as a Minister, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> So Satan speaks:

"For who can yet believe, though after loss,  
That all these puissant legions, whose exile  
Hath emptied heaven, shall fail to reëscend  
*Self-raised* and repossess their native seat."—*Paradise Lost*, B. 2.

In opposition to this, I affirm that individual development and social progress depend on the Christian law of self-renunciation. The primal promise of the Arch-Deceiver was in accordance with the infidel philosophy: "Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." It promises participation in the divine, but the ideal of divinity is intellectual power, and the means of realizing it is self-indulgence; it promises realization to the deepest desire of human selfishness, the aggrandizement of self by the acquisition of whatever it covets. The gospel also promises participation in the divine: "Ye may be partakers of the divine nature;" but the ideal of the divine is the sacrificial love of Christ; and self-renunciation, not acquisition and self-indulgence, the method of realizing it.

Recurring again to the two phases of a right character, the receptive and the imparting, or faith and works, compare, as to their practical efficacy in developing each of these, the Christian scheme of self-abnegation and redemption, and the infidel scheme of self-assertion and self-sufficiency.

1. As to the receptive phase of character, or Faith.

Here the aim must be to realize a character marked by reverence for superior power, wisdom, and goodness, and trust in the same; humility, in the consciousness of sin and need; aspirations for the true, the beautiful, and the good; loyalty to superior authority; and that peculiar courage in the vindication of truth and right which springs from loyal confidence in a leader powerful in their defence.

This side of a holy character necessarily receives immediate and large development in the Christian scheme of redemption by Christ's sacrifice and salvation by faith in him. It presents the objects of trust, reverence, aspiration, and loyalty, not as abstractions, but concrete in the personal Christ; and thus introduces the peculiar and overpowering motive of Christianity, affectionate trust in Christ as a personal Saviour. It is objected to evangelical doctrine that, in its zeal to exalt God, it abases and extinguishes the man. But it is the method of man's exaltation. It discloses God

coming near to us in the suffering and sympathizing Redeemer; it draws the soul to God with invitation and promise, to be quickened, purified, and beatified by his transforming grace; it teaches man to trust his Maker as a friend; it teaches man that his normal state is a state of union with him—acting with the highest freedom and power only when acted on by him, and finding bondage and weakness, as well as sin, in alienation from him; it awakens reverence for the divine power, wisdom, and goodness in Christ, and aspirations to be like him; it produces obedience to the law, not as a submission to an abstract proposition, but as a trustful loyalty to the personal Saviour; and in the recognition of God's electing love, individualizing and eternal, makes every one who trusts him fearless to stand up for truth and right, one with God against the world. Thus is developed a character beautiful with reverence, with lofty aspiration, with loyalty, with courage to maintain the right, springing from confidence in "the Captain of our salvation." This phase of Christian character finds its expression in worship.

The philosophy of self-assertion has no legitimate place for this class of virtues. Consequently, carried out it cannot recognize them as virtues, but must leave them to be despised as weaknesses or defects; like those ancient languages which give no name to humility and its family of virtues, and name virtue itself not godliness but manliness. It has given us the pregnant maxim that work is worship, in which it expresses its inherent destitution of the element of faith, and declares that the only availing prayer is our own endeavor.

But the impossibility of realizing a perfect character, without this class of virtues, is too apparent to admit of their total exclusion. Says Arnold: "It is necessary to the highest development of the soul that it should have somewhere an object of reverence enthroned above all doubt or criticism." This even the philosophy of self-assertion has been obliged to acknowledge, and to offer what substitute it can for the Christian's God. It offers humanity-worship—

hero-worship. It bids us honor the worthies of the past. It bids us combine in an ideal the excellencies which have been exhibited in history. It bids us create divinities of shadows — idols compacted of the vanished virtues and fading memory of the dead — divinities without being or life, without authority to command, or mind to know, or mercy to help. These be thy gods; before these learn thy own imperfections; let these kindle thy aspirations for good; let these animate and strengthen thee in thy conflict with evil. Oh, folly profound! oh, madness of unsanctified thought! — to send men, with the Chinese, to worship their own grandfathers; to kindle at these shrines aspirations for truth, beauty, and goodness, which go out like the gilt paper burned without heat at those heathen graves; to launch under these auspices philanthropic enterprises, pretentious in promise and impotent in performance as the miniature boats annually launched by the Japanese on a voyage to the spirits of their ancestors, the wrecks of which strew all the coast before the sun goes down; — to attempt to save men by these pale meditations, and not by faith in Christ; not by the sacrificial love of God in him; nor by the warmth of his compassion on the cross, and the glow of his eternal justice, manifesting the beauty of love and upholding its authority as law; nor by the pulsations of his grace beating in divine influences on the hearts of men.

2. I proceed to consider the practical efficacy of these contrasted schemes in the sphere of *works*; in the development of active and imparting love, of the energies of a wise philanthropy.

Here it is unnecessary to add to what has already been adduced to show that Christianity is effective in this direction. Accordingly the history of the church is crowded, like the evening sky with stars, with missionaries, confessors, reformers, martyrs — self-devoted workers for the welfare of men — heroes of sacrificial love; and the progress of Christianity has been followed by the amelioration of the condition of society, and the introduction of the benign institutions and customs peculiar to Christian civilization.

The legitimate result of the contrary scheme would be the development of a common-place selfishness, or at best of a heroism of self-aggrandizement, the frequency of which in history makes it also common-place. In the current theories of human progress, however, this principle with its legitimate consequences is not presented naked, but under the disguise of philanthropy. Humanity or society is the object of human service; and we are challenged to show wherein this philanthropy differs from self-devoting Christian love. Time forbids a full examination of this peculiar birth of modern civilization, this strange hybrid, gotten from the ethics of Christianity by the philosophy of infidelity.

It would be easy to show that by denying redemption it obliterates the grandest motives to self-sacrificing love and overlooks the divine grace which alone quickens the human heart to its exercise.

It would be easy to show that it belittles our conception of humanity: for to make humanity the end of service is a conception immeasurably inferior to that which recognizes humanity itself as existing for God's glory, its whole history taken up into redemption, exalted to divine relations, and invested with divine grandeur. When redemption disappears, the dimensions of the moral universe shrink, as at the disappearance of the modern astronomy the starry heavens would dwindle into a crystal dome spangled with brilliants. In the same proportion would all human rights and obligations dwindle, and the criminality of violating them would be lessened.

It would be easy to appeal to the history of such philanthropy from the first French revolution until now, and show the advocacy of human rights issuing in the Reign of Terror; in successive and fruitless convulsions of society; in agrarianism; in the demand that government provide bread for the people; in schemes of socialism that lose the individual in the organization; in reforms that degenerate into agitation, as Walton says: "Whetting the knife till there is no steel left to make it useful;" in philanthropy avowing hostility to the churches and the Bible; in benevolent movements

in which the rust of denunciation and hate has eaten out all the benevolence, and love to all mankind is preached by Ishmaelites whose hands are against every man's hand.

But leaving these considerations I confine myself to this single suggestion: the self-abnegation involved in the sacrificial character of Christianity is the only effectual preservative of the personal rights of the individual in his devotement to the service of the race. An ungodly philanthropy has two distinct and seemingly incompatible developments, each of which is continually appearing in its history. If the self-sufficiency which is at the bottom comes practically into prominence, we have an exaggeration of the individual; theories of human rights levelling all organizations and legitimatizing anarchy; reformers whose type is that ancient righter of wrongs who said: "though I fear not God neither regard man, yet because *this widow troubleth me*, 'I will avenge her;" reformers who, acknowledging no need of being redeemed, unconsciously offer themselves as redeemers of man. On the other hand, if the idea of service to humanity becomes practically prominent, the inevitable peril is of overlooking the individual's personal and inalienable individuality, and of recognizing him, not as a free and Christ-like benefactor, but only as a slave or tool of society. For the Christian doctrine being set aside, the only philosophy which gives a basis for this law of service is either Pantheism, which recognizes conscious deity only in humanity, and the individual only as an atom in the mass, a specific and transitory development of the genus; or the Positive Philosophy, not rising even to the dignity of Pantheism, which engraves at its entrance that man must cease to claim to be the lowest of the angels, and be content with being the highest of the beasts — an inscription over the portal of this dreary philosophy parallel in significance, if thoughtfully read, to that which Dante read over the gate of Hell:

"All hope abandon ye who enter here."<sup>1</sup>

Both of these philosophies destroy the significance of the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate.*

personality of the individual; the individual exists in and for the race; he is developed out of the race and exists, like the individual brute or vegetable, merely as the vehicle of perpetuating the race. The individual, therefore, can have no personal and inalienable rights, but is to be used or even sacrificed for the service of the race. Accordingly in Comte's scheme for the reorganization of society this principle is relentlessly carried out. The individual has no rights; all rights belong to society. The individual is the creature and tool of society. Society determines for him in childhood to what uses he is adapted; society educates him, not into a man, but into an artisan, not with reference to his individual development, but for his social uses; and society relentlessly uses him as a tool. Thus this philanthropy, which begins in great sounding words, exalting humanity as the object of worship and service, in its essential principle belittles the race, and in its practical application extinguishes the individual.

How grandly, in contrast, Christianity develops universal love, in its divine activity, and yet upholds the individual in his divine dignity. The Christian surrenders himself, without reserve, to God his Creator and Redeemer; and, in love to him, freely devotes himself to the service of his fellow men, a worker, together with God, in the sublime work of renovating the world; a worker, with God, in designs so vast, that the very conception of them ennobles; in enterprises so godlike that laboring in them lifts to a participation in the divine. He is no longer the tool of society, but its Christ-like benefactor. The very fact that he kneels in entire self-surrender to God, forbids abjectness to man. He will not kneel to man, but he will die for him.

3. Besides the efficiency of these schemes in developing the different phases of character, I must consider their efficacy in developing the natural powers of thought, action, and enjoyment.

Here we meet the objection that man cannot be developed by negation and suppression; and that self-denial, being a suppression of the soul's life, cannot develop it. But this

objection is already sufficiently answered ; for it has been shown that self-denial is not a negation, but the reverse side of a positive affection. Its power to develop is continually exemplified. It is commonly remarked, for instance, that an unusual proportion of missionaries, of both sexes, exhibit eminent powers. The reason is found in the efficacy of the discipline of Christian self-denial to invigorate and develop the soul.

And here is a mistake of the scholarly divine who has followed Unitarianism till he has found no more road ; and, recoiling from the inane of rationalism, has announced to the world his discovery. It is not true that the developing power is the centrifugal, which in self-assertion drives the man away from God, while the centripetal, which draws him to God, is antagonistic to development.<sup>1</sup> It is not true, that man, even in savage or infantile lack of development, is "scorched and shrivelled in the glory of God's presence." It is not true, that the church and the world are coördinate factors in salvation, "the one making the man, the other saving him ; one giving him a being to be saved, and the other putting salvation into his being." The church and the world are, as the scriptures represent, antagonistic, not coördinate. Each develops the natural powers ; but the development which Christianity effects in self-abnegation, is the normal, harmonious, and complete development of man.

Here, then, I must contrast the two types, of progress and of civilization, which the two are fitted, respectively, to produce.

(1) In the sphere of intellect, the one gives us rationalism and scepticism ; the other, faith and stability. The one begins with affirming that human reason is adequate to attain the knowledge of God, without revelation, and ends by declaring that it is inadequate to know anything, and that all religion must be, like that of Rabelais, "a great perhaps ;" the other begins with acknowledging the inadequacy of reason without revelation, and abides in the stability of true knowledge or unwavering faith, awed before the great mys-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bellows's *Suspense of Faith*, p. 21.

teries of existence; yet believing, and enriched, and ennobled, by the faith. The one asserts the right of private judgment, to the extent of rejecting all creeds and contemning institutions and ordinances, thus repudiating the wisdom of the past and stripping the novice to begin the elements of religious knowledge in the *puris naturalibus* of barbarism; the other receives the wisdom of the past, and thankfully accepts the helps of its creeds, its systems, and its institutions. The one claims a mental independence which fructifies in a perennial crop of crudity and self-conceit; and, in questioning old truths, mistakes vanity for originality, bravado for courage, and haste for progress; the other, looking to God's Word and Spirit for light, is content with fewer discoveries but more truth, with less novelty but more wisdom.

(2) In the sphere of social life, the one develops the outward activity, the other the inward resources. The one stimulates grasping and self-aggrandizement; the other, the spiritual life. The one is concerned with what a man gets; the other, with what he is. The one is adequate to make man develop a continent; the other, to develop himself and the continent. Hence the spirit of self-assertion, while it stimulates to indomitable activity, quickens inventions, and multiplies the instruments of action and the means of enjoyment, leaves the man restless and unsatisfied: it builds the house, but cannot create a home; it fills the house with "all the modern improvements," but not with domestic bliss; it multiplies facilities for business, and makes the man a Sisyphus in conducting it. Let me present Paul and Napoleon as examples of these two types of development. Look at them in their years of imprisonment; when, thrown wholly on themselves, they disclosed what they really were. Napoleon was querulous and morose, unhappy and weak. Deprived of the objects of his ambition, his soul could not stand alone, but sunk like a rank weed, which, when its support is removed, falls and trails in the dirt. Paul's imprisonment interrupted plans of action as vast as Napoleon's and as earnestly prosecuted; it was longer than the emperor's, and incomparably more severe. Immured within a prison, en-

during the discomforts of a sea-voyage, in a crowded ship; or, in Rome, with one hand chained, day and night, to a soldier; how self-poised and firm, how full of grandeur and dignity, how serene, and often triumphant! who can read his letters and not see the grandeur of his soul?

(3) In the sphere of political life, the one insists on freedom, the other on justice, mercy, and reverence for God.

The love of personal freedom is a natural feeling, consistent with selfishness. It is stronger in the savage than in the civilized man. A political system built on this is a system of pure self-assertion. It is consistent with it that those who boast their own love of liberty should hold slaves, or that the government should be an oligarchy of the few tyrannizing over the many. But Christianity lays at the foundation of the political system the sentiment of justice. The former, in the spirit of self-assertion, teaches me to insist on my personal freedom; the latter, in the spirit of self-renunciation, on duty and right. The former gives us the shallow and dangerous watchword of the French Revolution, "liberty, equality, fraternity;" the latter gives us the maxim of inspiration, "justice, mercy, and humility, or reverence before God." The former understands "the rights of man" to mean *my* rights and *your* duties; the latter recognizes the doctrine as equally including *your* rights and *my* duties.

Hence two opposite theories of human rights, both equally opposed to the divine right of kings,—a theory which, though it may, as in the British Constitution, secure the liberty of the subject, yet recognizes every right as a privilege granted by the sovereign, and thus asserts his absolute supremacy,—yet both as much opposed to each other. The Christian doctrine of human rights agrees with the British Constitution in recognizing the rights of the citizen as privileges, but privileges not granted to a few or to a class by the sovereign, but granted and guaranteed to all men by God, to be exercised in reverent allegiance to him, and in submission to the government which he has ordained. This foundation of human rights is explicitly stated in the Amer-

ican Declaration of Independence. The theory of the French Revolution, on the contrary, does not recognize human rights as grants from any superior, but as inherent in the individual in his natural liberty or wildness, and having neither authority nor guaranty above the man himself. Some of these rights are surrendered to the government in the fiction of the social contract, and this is the sole foundation of governmental authority. Thus absolutely the highest source of law and authority is the will of the people. Liberty thus founded is necessarily atheistic in principle and ungodly in practice. It engenders fever rather than growth, revolutions and convulsions, rather than the steady uplifting of the people by their actual improvement in intelligence, character and capacity. It produces convulsive alternations between despotism and anarchy, instead of real progress. By teaching that the supreme authority of government is the consent of the governed, and that the will of the people is the highest law, it first engenders a defiant recklessness of God, and then undermines the authority of government itself; beginning with making human law higher than God's, and ending in making it subject to the caprice of the mob, and suspending its enforcement on the varying breath of public sentiment. It extinguishes reverence, and causes the very idea of loyalty to disappear from the mind. It begets disobedience to parents, insubordination to law, and contempt towards superiors in age, wisdom, or goodness. It begets a hard, defiant, swaggering character, and makes the very boys exhibit the irreverence of a Mephistopheles, though without his culture and refinement, the recklessness of a Hotspur, though without his chivalrousness.

Thus contrasting the results, we see that only the Christian doctrine of self-renunciation is efficient to secure the healthy development either of the individual or the race.

Brethren of the Society of Inquiry, I have shown you the grounds, the principle, and the practical efficacy of the Christian law of self-renunciation. Have your souls faltered before the mysterious fact that under the government

of God it costs sorrow and sacrifice to do good? To explain it we now feel no need of resorting to the hypothesis that no God governs the world; or if any, the God of the iron foot, who crushes living souls beneath his bloody tread as recklessly as he splits the oaks with his thunderbolts, or scatters the rose leaves with his winds. No. Our doctrine discloses a more profound philosophy. God exercises his children in self-denial, that they may become strong in Christ-like love; he is educating them by sacrificial toil to possess a Christ-like character and glory, to be capable of Christ-like achievements of mercy.

The law which calls you to self-sacrifice is severe, not exempting life, if its sacrifice is needed; it is inexorable, but it is not arbitrary. Only in it can the essential character of Christianity find expression; only by it can you realize the highest possibilities of your being. Do you complain of the hard requirement? But were it abated, it would only be so much abated from the divine excellence of Christianity, so much abated from the God-like character to which you are called, so much detracted from the divine beauty and power of love. It would unsettle the two great commandments, stain the great words of revelation, "God is Love," eviscerate redemption of its significance, change the character of Christ's kingdom, dim the glory of heaven, and let in night on the eternal day.

Go forth, then, serene but earnest, to your Master's work, rejoicing that he has counted you faithful, putting you into the ministry, thankful if you are counted worthy to suffer for his name.