

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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I. MATERIALS OF HISTORY.¹

THE materials of history may be classed under four heads; for mnemonic purposes, under four monosyllabic words: who, what, where, and when. Who: the names of the prominent actors in all the scenes of the thrilling drama, as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Pharoah, David and the giant of Gath, Christ and Pilate, the Christian martyrs and the Roman Emperors, Athanasius and Arius, Augustine and Pelagius. What: what has been done; all the covenants, human and divine; all the religious rites and ceremonies; all the events of history. Where: embracing all of ancient and modern geography. When: the entire subject of chronology. But all this is not history, any more than the stones and timbers scattered along the river banks are the bridge; any more than the ten Arabic characters, unarranged, give the distances of the planets and the stars; any more than the twenty-six characters of the English alphabet are "Paradise Lost." What are the colors without the design of the painting? What are the trappings of the stage and the costumes and names of the actors to one who understands not the plot? Even so, the abstract materials of history may be as unmeaning as the scattered leaves of the Sibyl. History, therefore, is something more than names, and facts, and places, and dates.

As introductory, it may be proper to postulate, at the outset, a revelation from God, the exercise of creative power, and the sus-

¹ Inaugural address delivered by the author at his induction as Professor of Church Government and History in the Theological Seminary in Columbia, S. C., May 9, 1888.

II. OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM.

I.

It is characteristic of the eager spirit of philosophy that it must interrogate every new-comer whether, like the ghost in Hamlet, the strange visitant appear "in a questionable shape" or not. It was reserved for the inquisitive skepticism of modern times to interrogate what is at the same time declared to be devoid of hearing or speech, and not only to analyze, but in a measure to define what is admitted and asserted to be absolutely unknowable. It was hardly to be expected, then, that the beating heart of humanity at large could be rocked to sleep, like "an infant crying in the night," without a persistent attempt to satisfy its curiosity and allay its anxiety respecting the great future that lies before each one of us and before the world. Revelation has ever been ready to satisfy these tumultuous interrogations of the human spirit, but her offers to do so have either been unknown or have been generally overlooked or rejected.

There are two questions manifestly involved here. The one has reference to each human being in his own distinctive individual personality, and is the question so ingeniously and eloquently discussed by Mr. Mallock in his brilliant, but disappointing work entitled, "Is Life Worth Living?" The other has reference to man, considered as the *genus homo*, in all his complex relations and surroundings, and in the totality of his generations on the earth. These two questions are intimately connected. If the individuals all fare well, the race as a whole, which is made up of the individuals, must of course have the same good fortune; and *vice versa*. But it is evident that the individuals of any specific contemporary generation, or of a succession of such generations, might fare badly, or fare indifferently, or fare diversely, and yet in a comprehensive view and on a final estimate the race as a whole fare well. In a broad outlook these two questions may often be merged. As a practical inquiry the question about the individual (and the collection of individuals viewed as such) is unspeakably the more in-

teresting and important. It is, on the other hand, the question about the race, considered irrespectively of its individuals and its relation to the earth, that seems to have a more special charm for the philosopher. What is to be the terminus of history? What is going to be the progressive sequence of events, and what the complexion of the final consummation? If we had a glass in which we could scan the remote depths of that abyss of which even the nearest shallows are concealed from us, what, after all had been said and done, would turn out to be the ultimate fate of humanity? What, in short, is to be the outcome of all the warring agencies and influences that are at present shut up within the cauldron of time? Should the dominion be conceded to hope or to despair? Shall happiness or misery assume the throne now contended for by wistful expectation and fond solicitude? To sum up all in a word, are the rosy dreams of the optimist to be indeed crowned with fruition, or rather are the dark forebodings of the now unheeded pessimist, like the vaticinations of Cassandra, after all to be realized in fact?

The answers given to these questions, whether true or false, depend largely on temperament, on diet, on what Mr. Herbert Spencer and the late Charles Darwin, following Comte, call "the environment." They depend most of all, in a multitude of instances, on personal idiosyncrasy. The determining influences are without doubt to a certain extent hereditary. Some men are born to their career; other men conquer it or else fail to achieve it. As a rule a man's character and fortune are strongly affected, if not wholly determined, by those personal forces which begin to operate at birth. Some are by nature practical; others are imaginative, romantic, perhaps visionary. There are born poets and dreamers, and there are also born mathematicians and machinists. Just in the same way some are naturally inclined to ardent philosophic musing, whilst others as readily give themselves up to the colder labors of scientific criticism. The two types for all ages are Plato and Aristotle. The illustrious exponent of Socrates would have been the better (who can doubt it?) for the severe intellectual curb of his own pupil and successor, the equally renowned Stagirite; and the tutor of "Philip's greater son" would in his turn certainly

have been none the worse for more of that suffusion, of which Lord Verulam speaks, which the understanding receives from the will and the affections—and, it may be added, the feelings. The contemplation of the mystical (if dialectic) Platonist is apt to be rainbow-hued. The scrutiny of the rationalistic disciple of Aristotle is at best sombre, and apt to be darkly beclouded. The exaggeration of the first tendency results in the credulity of groundless hope; the exaggeration of the second tendency, in the unwarranted skepticism of fear, or the moral self-abandonment of despair. So that it is evident, that as there are men born with sanguine, and men born with atrabilious and melancholic temperaments; as there are also born mystics and born rationalists; so there are men who are born optimists, and there are men who are born pessimists. It does not by any means follow that both, or that either, of the opponent theories is wholly the creation of subjective prepossession. One weather-prophet, being sanguine, may be counted on, where other things are equal, to predict fair weather; another, having a naughty liver, to predict rain. It does not follow, though in the case supposed it might so fall out, that there are to be neither clouds nor clear skies.

The objective truth is obviously independent of the subjective view-point of the man who should in advance endeavor to put himself in a position to discern it. Because the person who says there will be sunshine has a rich store of red globules coursing in his veins, it is not to be inferred that the weather will be bad. Because the person who says there will be a downpour, or be showers, is afflicted with a dark skin and yellow eyeballs, one should not jump to the conclusion that the weather will be fine. As regards the matter under consideration, there are just these three possibilities: Either the optimist is right, or the pessimist is, or else the truth lies somewhere "betwixt and between" the two extremes. There will be sunshine at last, or the skies will be clouded, or the day will resemble that memorable one described by the Hebrew seer, except that in the evening there shall not be "light," but, as in the greater portion of the symbolical day referred to by the inspired prophet, the day, at its close, shall not be either wholly dark or wholly bright. To all appearance, this

last surmise is an improbable one. It would seem that at some unknown date in the future there must be a termination of the conflict, and that final victory is yet to sit upon the standards either of darkness or of light. This, however, should be made a subject of the most sober and convincing inquiry. If this middle alternative were to be ruled out, it would then be incumbent on the investigator to ascertain, if possible, which programme, that of optimism or that of pessimism, the only remaining alternative, is to be approved and accepted as the true one. At the same time it is proper to take notice that, in the nature of things, it is altogether possible that either one of the two extreme theories may be able to approve and establish itself without any special consideration whatever of the intermediate ground.

On the most superficial view, there is much to recommend the theory of the optimist, not only to the fancy and the mental and moral sensibilities, but also to that somewhat flexible faculty, the judgment. In a more reflective stage of experience the ominous finger points (not unwaveringly, it is true) towards pessimism. The grand discussion may assume a popular or it may assume a scientific form. As it is in religion, so it is in philosophy. A man's real philosophy is not always the philosophy that he preaches; it is the philosophy he *lives*. In this view of it, the question is not a question as to what a man says he thinks, but a question as to what a man *is*. In this sense, every man that is worthy of the name of a man, unless he be a rarely-gifted person, or one of rarely-balanced organs and powers, is an optimist or else a pessimist by nature. There must be few that are wholly and permanently indifferent on this subject. As Josephus went through the entire curriculum of the Jewish sects, so there may be human beings who have gone through all phases of conscious experience, if not of articulate theorizing, in relation to this matter. In the natural order optimism would be the earliest stage in the progression, then would succeed the cooler stage of critical deliberation and comparative neutrality; and, last of all, would come the stage of pessimism. As a general rule, where no counteracting influences are brought to bear, youth, as by the determination of a law of nature, is optimistic. Nearly all children, and a great majority

of young men and maidens, are what might be styled natural optimists. The complete maturity of the physical organs is, generally speaking, coincident with the culmination of the higher powers of thought. This middle period of life is apt to be a period of warfare between the two contending principles or forces, though commonly, whether owing to the survival of the efficacy of the impulse given in youth or not, optimism is still in the ascendant. The decay of the physical powers is often, but not always, synchronous with a decay of lively emotion and even of hope. Sometimes it is otherwise. The body may decay; but the soul appears to "renew its strength like the eagle's," and "joy and sorrow," instead of being revived or recruited, are overcome, and, like a vanquished host upon the field of battle, trail their banners ingloriously and "flee away." On the other hand, the pensive sobriety of world-worn experience may anticipate and precede the decline of nature.

But whilst it is true that one and the same man may, and frequently does, pass through these successive stages, it is usually the case that one man, by constitutional bias or from whatsoever cause, is throughout life characteristically optimist in his leanings, and another characteristically pessimist. History and literature are full of examples. In antiquity they are as abundant as they are striking. Alexander (or Alcibiades) was the type of victorious optimism, Diogenes of defeated pessimism; Cicero and Cæsar were optimists; Tiberius and Cato were pessimists. The Stoics were all essentially pessimistic. There were two schools of Epicureans, one of which was ostensibly pessimistic, the other ostensibly optimistic; yet Epicureanism in its very last quintessence must be identified with pessimism. The motto of Epicureanism in its most refined expression, though disavowing a literal interpretation of the words, might properly be, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Literature, as so largely a picture of life, and so ample an expression of personality, must not be left out of the account. Not only Juvenal and Persius, but pleasure-loving Anacreon himself, and the gay-hearted Horace, and even "the laughing philosopher" Democritus, were strongly tinctured with pessimistic stoicism; and, as has been pointed out before, the apathetic tone of

the Greek censor reappears in the *nil admirari prope res est unica* of the Roman bard. Among the Greek poets it is Pindar, the recording and inspiring genius of the Nemean and Olympic games, who stands as the unique and splendid, almost the ideal, representative of optimism. The Greek tragedies, revolving as the drama always does on fate, are all of them pessimistic; but the "Prometheus Bound" is pessimism itself. Homer, if he ever existed, appears to have hit the *juste milieu*, although it is not to be denied that the story of Hector, of Priam, of Hecuba, of Troy, is one of the most tragic and comfortless stories of all time. In the grand argument of the tale as a whole, Paris and Cassandra amongst the Trojans, and Ulysses and Thersites amongst the Greeks, may be taken as the opponent types. Scripture history abounds in contrasted instances. Moses would appear to have been constitutionally a pessimist, Aaron an optimist; Joshua, David, Solomon were optimists, Absalom and Jonah were pessimists.

In modern annals, Peter the Great and Charles XII. were both optimists; Philip II. and the Duke of Alva were pessimists; Luther and Zwingli were optimists, Calvin and Knox pessimists. Napoleon Bonaparte was at once optimist and pessimist: in some things by turns, in other things always, though in divers degrees according to the particular thing in which the quality or tendency was manifested. Charles V., William of Orange, William of England, and Washington were among the happy few who appear to have touched, or neared, the golden mean. Of the four, the author of Germano-Spanish consolidation (perhaps), and the successful defender of American independence, naturally inclined towards optimism, whereas the saviour of the Netherlands, and the statement might be plausibly made also of the hero of the English Revolution, was a born pessimist.

The late Lord Beaconsfield may be said to have been in his peculiar way a Horatian pessimist—a sort of Anglo-Hebrew Democritus. Mr. Gladstone was of old, and is to-day, an optimist of the first water. Mr. Parnell is probably by nature a pessimist, but by thought and aspiration an optimist. In citing such examples, it is of course not pretended that the classification at all

discloses the opinions of the men as to the future, either of the individual or of the race. It merely marks the trend or tendency in the one general direction or the other.

After much of this essay had been reduced to writing, an interesting critique on the late Matthew Arnold's estimate of Emerson fell under the eye of the writer, and will be found to be in many of its statements in pretty thorough unison with the tone of this paper. The following extract chimes in almost exactly with the general spirit of this discussion :

“Mr. Arnold rules that Emerson's persistent optimism is the root of his greatness and the source of his charm, as Carlyle's pessimism is of his ruin. This ought to be dealt with freely, for it is most important. I cannot see but that a pessimist is every whit as good as an optimist. The man who points out your faults is your best friend. The man who encouragingly tells you you are right will never mend you. There is something bordering on the ridiculous to me when Emerson says: ‘My whole philosophy, which is very real, teaches acquiescence and optimism. Sure I am that the right word will be spoken, though I cut out my tongue.’ If this were literally true there would be no reason for writing at all; and if every one were equally optimistic, the right word never would be spoken, every body would leave it to some one else to say it. It only means, I, Emerson, when I have done my best, am not going to eat my heart out because I get no immediate response from the world. This is a matter of temperament, and there is no special merit either way. It is of a piece with the virtue of Talleyrand, who held that happiness lay in ‘a good digestion and a bad heart.’ . . . But truth is, that the world is neither happy nor well-managed, and to believe against experience, your own and that of history, that the right thing will be done and the right word spoken, is to build castles in Spain and live on the mortgage. If such happiness be wise, Solomon was a fool, who summed up all his experience as vanity. Is not Dante full as he can hold of the wine of grief? Pascal is so skeptical and sad that he has reckoned up man's misery for his glory; Job found that man was ‘born to trouble,’ and there was another in Gethsemane whose woe is annually bewailed through Christendom, an exemplar to the rest, him above all they style *Virum dolorum*. In the face of such facts, what is optimism? The greater souls are tinged with sadness, the lesser sing like Anacreon's grasshopper, happy as kings, but very small. When the autumn is cheerful as the spring, I will vote for optimism, and those who can may pluck ripe fruit in May. When disease and decay and failing strength and the feeble knees are come, the senses droop. . . . Hopes are withered, prospects blighted, means perhaps crippled, smiles once fixed grow frowns; dead friends are lying under the cypress groves, and the raven hair is bleaching to an almond crown; have you so little pity you can flaunt your theory optimistic in the face of souls thus weighed? Were it not better said, dear dying brother, ‘All creation groaneth together until now,’ for this is no abiding place, the solid things visible are unsubstantial, the invisible things it is that are eternal, and this our soul is of them. There may be an optimism there, but to preach it here, to death-fed life, is to mock at man and not to lift him, as Peter the cripple at ‘the beautiful gate.’”

What follows needs of course to be strongly qualified.

"If wise, you will aim at performing well what is to be done, the device of the hour that presseth; discharge it in the best manner that you know how, and whatever little other good chance, favoring you, permits, neglect not. If you do right to that extent, you make for happiness, and you may yourself perhaps attain to a little of it; but it cannot last long in the very nature of things, and with so small a share of it it is absurd to talk of optimism. If, as Mr. Arnold tells us, Epictetus and Augustine both say that the desire of happiness is the root of man's being, but that he must seek it in the right place, then I reply that they have said nothing to the purpose; for the right place is only to be got at by right doing; the path to it is sorrowful; and though it is by far the best thing to be done, it will not bring what the world calls happiness, but a most subdued and very quiet satisfaction only. We are too subject to 'the skyeey influences' to be happy. The vast wretchedness of this world is the actual outcome, it may almost be said, of the foolish endeavors to be happy that most men make. Carlyle perhaps tried to be unhappy, and that is as foolish as any mad endeavor after the pleasant things can be. Do your duty strictly, limit your wants, enjoy or suffer equally what cannot be controlled, banish expectation and harbor no hopes. . . . All this is better than such rubbish as the happiness and eternal hope which Emerson's gospel preaches."¹

Apart from an occasional tendency to that maudlin diction known as "blank verse in prose," there is much in the foregoing extract to command attention and win approbation. The retort upon Matthew Arnold and upon Emerson is capital. The presentation of the case for pessimism is forcible and ingenious, though evidently influenced by the impressive exhibition of the same points by Schopenhauer,² and it may be also by statements of Hartmann. A good deal might, of course, be added, and has, to some extent, been already added in the present article, to what is said in the excerpt respecting the literary examples and kindred matters. Goethe, in "The Sorrows of Werther," and, above all, in "Faust," is one of the most conspicuous instances of literary pessimism in history. It must, notwithstanding, be admitted that Goethe's main drift is obscure and his language susceptible of different interpretations. In his songs, and elsewhere too, Goethe is pre-

¹ Mr. C. A. Ward, in *Temple Bar*, Vol. LXXII.; a fourth of page 246, the whole of page 247, and a third of page 248. London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1884.

² See Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, §§ 67, 59, ii. 46, qu. by Luthardt, *Apolog. Vortr. Vorles*, 2, Notes, and repeated in English by Liddon, *Some Elements of Religion*, Rivington's, London, Oxford and Cambridge, 1873, pp. 132, 133 and 134.

vailingly full as much the laureate of optimism as either Burns or Béranger. On the whole, the great German, like Shakspeare, and probably Homer, at least if the authorship of the Iliad and the Odyssey was the same, appears to have belonged to that noble and select class, "fit though few," who have been too "entirely great" to bend permanently under either one of the extreme influences which have been referred to and subjected to discussion in this paper. But if the Homer of the Iliad may be plausibly set down as a pessimist, it will be remarked that in this as in many similar cases the position can only be maintained in a limited sense. If the Homer of the Iliad is a pessimist, it is in a literary, not a personal sense; and he is a literary pessimist only *quoad hoc*. Virgil, on the other hand (in the *Æneid*), is in the same way a literary optimist. *Per contra* such writers as Rochefoucauld and Heyne were, in a characteristic and all but universal sense, literary pessimists; and Heyne at all events was equally a pessimist in a personal use of the term.

It is often very hard to tell whether an author is sincere in his avowed, or implied, manifestation of himself in his works, or whether he is only "shamming." This remark is preëminently applicable to dramatic writers, but is by no means to be confined to them. The signal instance of all time is of course that of William Shakspeare. In general it may be said that in the tragedies he is apparently pessimistic, in the comedies optimistic, and that in the smaller poems and sonnets he varies. There are two difficulties that beset one in trying to get down to his real, that is, to his deepest meaning. The first of these difficulties, which, however, does not everywhere exist, is to find out how the mighty thinker tricked out in his stage-clothes meant to be taken by his readers, speaking to them as he notoriously does not *in propria personâ*, but through the mask in the tones of his characters. The question here, it will be observed, is not as to what Shakspeare himself thought or felt, but as to what he intended to represent Richard, or Henry, or Bottom, or Iago, as thinking or feeling. In many cases, probably in most cases, this difficulty is either, as has been intimated, purely imaginary, or else is easily removed. In *Macbeth*, *Lear*, and *Othello*, with one possible exception Shakspeare's

noblest productions, the intended pessimism is transparent; albeit there may be no clear evidence that the pessimism is such in any other sense than *quoad hoc*. The case is different with Hamlet; which as an exhibition and discussion of the philosophy of human life is in the judgment of many the author's masterpiece, and at once the loftiest and profoundest reach of man's intelligence and genius in that direction. Here, too, there is a difference of constructions. On one view of the last scene, especially the concluding words, the meaning of which must be decisive as to the grand intent of the tragedy as a whole, Hamlet is to be regarded not only as one of the sublimest, but also as one of the darkest expressions of modern pessimism—of a pessimism as black and cynical as that which pervades the German speeches of Mephistopheles. Fortunately for the optimist, who is also a votary of Shakspeare, this construction of the language is open to debate, and is strongly contested in high quarters. The question as to the true scope and animus of Hamlet is, in point of fact, one of the subtlest problems in the annals of literature.

But when this question has been settled, then emerges the second of the two difficulties mentioned awhile ago. To what extent is Polonius, or Horatio, or Hamlet himself, to be regarded as shadowing forth the veritable sentiments of him who originally penned the words of the drama? In other terms, to what extent is Shakspeare here, or elsewhere, purely histrionic, and to what extent is he to be understood as making a personal revelation of himself? This has been a riddle ever since the Elizabethan era, and is a riddle that will in all likelihood remain unsolved.

Another source of dubiety as respects an author's real meaning, is that he may not only consciously or unconsciously hide, but deliberately dissemble or disguise his true intention or his personal sentiments. It is as much a question now as it was when Macaulay wrote his ingenious essay whether Machiavelli's "Prince" is or is not to be taken *au sérieux*. The question there is simply whether the book is to be accepted in dead earnest, or to be regarded as a piece of cutting irony. There are justly celebrated authors in whose writings the irony is plain enough to those who are not hopelessly color-blind. Much of Swift, much of Addison,

much of Goldsmith, and much of Irving, are of this description. There are other writers who require at times a peculiarly refined and exquisite organ of perception on the part of those who would approve themselves their appreciative readers. Charles Lamb and William Makepeace Thackeray may be cited as examples in point. It is one of the most characteristic traits of Thackeray in his writings, not excluding his letters, that he appears as though continually trying to make himself out to be a sort of Bluebeard, or gruff and devouring ogre, instead of what he is in fact, a great big, grown-up, richly endowed, sharp-sighted, quizzical, hypercritical, "happy-go-lucky," soft-hearted baby. Some one has finely observed that Thackeray is at bottom not a satirist, but a sentimentalist. A French critic has said of him, with unequalled felicity, that the bitterness of his tone is to be attributed to the fact that he had been disappointed at not finding the world better than it was. Thackeray's actual pessimism, like all sweet and noble pessimism, may be ultimately resolved into a species of ideal optimism; that is to say, it is precisely because Thackeray's optimistic ideal is so high that his real pessimism assumes such disheartening proportions.

But if Thackeray in a manner feigns an inhuman savagery that was utterly foreign to his true character, his great coeval Dickens too often simulates the accents of genuine sympathy and pathos. The tears of Dickens when weeping over "little Nell," and still more when weeping over little Paul Dombey, are for the most part very like crocodile's tears. Whole pages of his inimitable writings have a hollow ring about them, like that of counterfeit metal. Lord Byron unquestionably took dark and pessimistic views of human life and human destiny; but in "Childe Harold," in "Cain," in "Manfred," in his poems generally, he ostentatiously poses as the very incarnation of ruined hopes, as the very genius, so to speak, of a gloomy and cynical despair.

It is time now that certain things which have been, to a great extent, conjoined in this essay should, so far as possible, be separated. Literary, and especially what may be denominated dramatic or histrionic, optimism or pessimism, is, as we have seen, a very different thing from that pessimism or optimism that is abiding

and personal. We have had occasion to take notice, too, that the optimism or pessimism, whether merely literary or whether strictly characteristic and personal, may be simply *quoad hoc*, may be relative rather than absolute, may be qualified rather than unconditional.

Another important thing to be borne in mind, is that a native or constitutional bias towards optimism or towards pessimism in some vague and unrestricted sense is not to be confounded with a definite optimistic or pessimistic creed, in the technical and intellectual acceptation of the terms.

Furthermore, the literary expression that has been given to either one of the two diametrically opposing tendencies is only collaterally germane to the present discussion, or if directly germane to it, is only so apart from the intrinsic worth of formal arguments *pro* and *con*, as shedding light on the personal views and leanings of the literary men themselves, who in so many memorable cases have been the intellectual and spiritual luminaries of the race. At the same time it is frankly acknowledged that a complete and an exact exhibit of the opinions and feelings of all the literary men, and of all the human beings, that have ever flourished on the earth, would not suffice to settle this question beyond dispute. Biography and history have their own honored places, but they cannot occupy the province of reason and religion, in such sense as to oust the original and rightful possessors.

H. C. ALEXANDER.

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I. WOMAN IN THE CHURCH.

As straws show the direction of the wind, so recent events in church and state indicate the movement of a popular current, more or less clearly defined, towards the removal of what are called woman's disabilities, and her enfranchisement in what are claimed to be her civil and ecclesiastical rights. There is not room in an article like this for a discussion of the genesis of this movement, or for a review, however cursory, of the debates and deliverances of various public assemblies, social, political and ecclesiastical, in which the strength of the movement has recently made itself felt. There is, we think, no just ground for fear that its current will gain momentum enough to sweep away the conservative barriers within which woman's agency is rightly confined. We have no sympathy with the fears expressed by a distinguished speaker in one of the recent Northfield conferences, when he says, "We behold woman to-day in a condition in which she is absolutely a menace to human society; grown restless and discontented; clamoring for rights when Christianity has brought her all that she has; at times divorced from the church, listening to the siren's song of infidelity, threatening to depart from the church that would withhold from her any privileges or rights she would claim; in the very capital of our nation threatening to join hand with anarchists to secure under another government what she may not secure here." It would be a gross injustice to the noble women of our land to hold them responsible for the incendiary utterances of a few restless spirits amongst them, or to suppose that they endorse the revolutionary sentiments of the speaker to whom Bishop

II. OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM.

II.

It remains to consider with a still closer examination the grand question that was propounded at the very outset, Is the theory of the avowed and outright optimist, or is that of the avowed and outright pessimist, or is either of them, as to the future of society and of the world, the true one?

Since the ancients¹ the most conspicuous advocate of dogmatic optimism was the illustrious and many-sided Leibnitz, who was opposed in his own day by Bayle; and the most redoubtable antagonist of that system, and the great formulator and defender of scientific pessimism, was Schopenhaur.

It is not the purpose of this disquisition to go over the arguments which have been hitherto employed on both sides, or on either side, of this seemingly interminable controversy, but to make use of such considerations as suggest themselves and to arrive at such conclusions as are judged to be alone warranted by the premisses. The contention will be to establish one of the antagonistic theories (qualified or unqualified) as exclusively the true one. This will of itself, and on the obvious principle already referred to, of course dispose at once of the intermediate or compounding view. A most important, a vitally essential factor in the determination of this problem has in the previous discussion been intentionally left almost wholly out of sight. That factor must now be mentioned, and must presently be formally brought in and carefully considered. That factor is religion, and more particularly Christianity, the religion of Jesus Christ.

If there were no such thing as religion, or no such thing as true religion, the quest for the right answer to our inquiry would still be a difficult, perhaps, absolutely regarded, a hopeless one; but the likelihood would undoubtedly incline decisively in one or other direction—in favor of one or the other of the two contradictory schemes. Although there were no such thing as true religion, if

¹ The popular representatives for antiquity of optimism and pessimism respectively are Democritus and Heraclitus (the "weeping philosopher").

we never came to *know* the fact we should remain in puzzled doubt. Even could we be made to know that all religion is a mere figment of the brain, chances would still exist in favor of "a good time coming," of a stable and progressive and culminating prosperity in the approaching *avenir*, though these chances would have to be overwhelmingly discounted under the rigorous operation of the doctrine of probabilities. If natural and supernatural religion were both ascertained to be false, then pessimism would unquestionably commend itself as on the whole the true philosophy. We ought to be assiduous in the endeavor to avoid one-sided and partial views on this subject. The child, and many men and women, as has been pointed out, see everything *couleur de rose*. This may be due not more to original and acquired disposition, than to a special habit of contemplating one class, to the almost total exclusion of the opposite class, of the phenomena. Whoever thinks only of May and June, will of course be oblivious of December; and *vice versa*. The one who lives wholly amongst the soft fair skies and shining streams and umbrageous reflexions and verdant meads, and primroses and daisies and morning-glories and roses, and larks and cuckoos and thrushes and nightingales, of spring and summer, will give himself no concern about the withered leaves and chill winds of autumn, or the snows and frosts of winter. And so, in turn, the man who rivets his mind upon the autumnal or wintry landscape, will have no eye or thought for the revolution inaugurated by the vernal season. Just in the same way, one man may fix his attention upon the benignant aspect of nature and of the cycle of events, and be an optimist; another upon the forbidding aspect of nature and of the cycle of events, and be a pessimist. No theory can be the true one that does not allow and provide for all aspects of the fate or fortune—the weal or the bale—of this ever turning, ever beaming, ever cloud-flecked, surface-chequered, light-sifting, shadow-darkened world in which we all "live and move and have our being."

On the first blush the theories of both the rival schools are alike and equally superficial. Each of them appears to be one-sided, and consequently to be wrong-sided. The optimist dwells too much on the smooth skies and seas, on the years of health and

plenty, on the peaceful incidents and epochs, on the physical, political, and social good there is in the earth; and forgets, or neglects, the earthquake, the cyclones, the avalanches, the volcanic eruptions, the fields of battle, the protracted wars, the congenital taints and malformations, the suffering of infancy and of old age, the carnivals of disease, of accident, of death, the daily multiplication of widows and orphans, the ruthless upheavals of dynasties, the petty crimes, the atrocious invasions of the moral order. The pessimist, on the other hand, reverses all this.

But upon a thoughtful and impartial deliberation on the whole matter, is not the pessimist (apart from the instructions of religion), as contrasted with the optimist, entirely justified in his conclusions, extreme and melancholy as they seem and as they are? If the question related to the present or the past, the scales would be nicely balanced; but as the question relates to the future, and as the outlook of the future, without the magnifying lens afforded by religion, is only "dark, dark, irrecoverably dark, total eclipse," what deduction can be regarded as logical, except that of the sad but stringently consistent pessimist?

Religion, as has been stated, introduces a new and vitally essential element into the discussion; for religion professes at least to be able in its grand outlines to foresee and portray that future which is otherwise hidden from mortal scrutiny.

But the religions of the earth may be classified as either true or false; and the trouble with false religions is precisely this, that they have no foundation in fact on which the optimist might rear the solid palace of his hopes. All false religions may thus be immediately and summarily ruled out of the account in this debate; and the same may be declared of the untrue or groundless portions of all composite or borrowed religions—religions which are made up of elements that are partly true and partly false.

Again: all true religion must be considered under the two-fold distribution and description of natural and revealed. As the grand flaw in the averments of false religions is that they are, where differing from the true, without basis in fact, so the vice in the intimations of natural religion is that they are intimations only, not averments; or if averments, that they are too often averments

without adequate, because without satisfying, evidence, and thus "leave the mind bewildered in a dubious road."

The pessimist, then, may well maintain that in the *cause célèbre* in which the optimist stands as plaintiff in the action, the only righteous verdict, in a case where only false or dubious witnesses have been cited against the defendant at bar, should be that one so familiar to the jurists and courts of Scotland, the verdict of "NOT PROVEN."

The indifferentism of the ordinary worldling, refusing, as it does, to avail itself of the aids of religion, or even to take into consideration the question of the truth or falsity of religion, or so much as recognize the momentous nature of its protestations, is in a predicament that does not differ substantially from that of the agnostic or of the atheist.

Now, we do not hesitate to affirm, in the light of the exhibition that has just been made of the true state of the case, that apart from the clear and solid teachings of revealed religion the pessimist is right and the optimist is wrong. The acceptance of natural religion would preclude the adoption of dogmatic pessimism in its complete, which is its extremest form; for natural religion sheds a ray or two of hazy light upon what would otherwise be the profound abyss of darkness. The assertion of the pessimist might and should still be made, but not made without the qualification due to the known possibility of error. Pessimism would still be the only tenable theory in the absence of all real proofs of optimism. For your irreligious or non-religious worldling, however, no less than for your outright atheist or remorseless naturalist, there is no logical alternative to a pessimism at once dogmatic, unlimited, unqualified, and final.

Agnosticism urges in its own behalf that, by its own humble pretensions, it cannot consistently adopt the scheme either of the optimist or of the pessimist. It is but fair to acknowledge that this is strictly true, so far as a positive and unqualified affirmation of either one of the opposing alternatives, in its extremest form, is concerned. Yet where the scales are so evenly balanced, the absolute uncertainty as to the future which is thus implied must of itself cause the weights to preponderate in favor of a pessimism

which, if not strictly unrelieved and unconditional, is practically as dark as Erebus, and as devoid of hope as the deepest circles of Dante's Inferno. For, according to agnosticism in its purest expression, we do not, and, what is more, we cannot, know whether there is a hereafter, whether there is a resurrection from the dead, whether there is an immortal soul, whether there is a continuously distinct personality, whether there is a future recompense, whether there is an eternal God, or even so much as a compensatory principle—like the Karma of the Buddhist—that in the long run “makes for righteousness” and the reward of virtue. But it must be borne in mind that the actual agnosticism of our day is utterly untrue to its own definition. Agreeably to the definition, agnosticism ought to be impartial and indifferent in its attitude towards any and all religions, not excepting Christianity itself. This was in fact the avowed attitude towards Christianity of that modified Comteist, that materialistic idealist, that most acute of contemporary skeptics, John Stuart Mill. *Per contra*, the *soi disant* agnosticism of the day assails, denies, denounces, and sometimes reviles, the religion of the Christ and the claims of supernatural revelation in any of its forms. The *soi disant* agnosticism of the day, therefore, in its relation to the vexed question of optimism or pessimism, differs little from atheism, and not at all from the other forms of ancient and modern unbelief. All the several streams of skeptical infidelity find their point of confluence and their logical outlet in the chimerical and monstrous absurdity of thoroughgoing Pyrrhonism. Pyrrhonism has a coward dread of committing itself to any assertion, but with ghastly face and trembling hand it points, with no easily mistaken insinuation, towards the universal contradiction of the nihilist. Atheism and agnosticism have united with Pyrrhonism in spreading the bier of religious peace and comfort, in preparing the funeral of religious aspiration, and in creating the apotheosis of mundane wretchedness and despair. Of either one of them it might be said that, like the uplifted arm of the human figure in the cave in the well-known allegory in the “Spectator” (or the “Tatler”), it forever dashes down the lamp, and dashes out the light, of the only knowledge and hope that were before accessible to mortals.

Looking at the matter then from the *a priori* point of view, and apart from the suggestions of revealed religion, "in the stern conflict of reason with reason," of which the English critic speaks,¹ it is evident that the pessimist has much the best of the argument. This is, as we understand him, the main drift of Mr. Mallock's fascinating volume. If modern skepticism be well-grounded in its positions, then surely life is *not* worth living. In this his central contention Mr. Mallock is unassailable. In the negative, which is the principal part of the argument, the author himself could hardly improve upon either the substance or the form of what he has himself written. It is only in the latest pages of the book, where, instead of grounding himself immovably on the bed-rock of our common Christianity, he goes out of his way to find a treacherous foundation for his positive structure in a sublimated and mystical yet superstitious and at the same time rationalistic Romanism, that he fails.

The pessimism which underlies so much of the worldliness and permeates so much of the speculation and literature of our time is, to a commanding extent, to be regarded as due to an acceptance both of the premisses and of the final and unavoidable conclusion of the atheism, the agnosticism, and the Pyrrhonism of the age in which we live, and live—so, at least, the skeptical logic runs—only to doubt, to pine, to lament, and to despair. Pessimism is thus seen to be, in large measure, the honest and inevitable revolt of human reason, in the lack of a better and a higher faith, against the deceitful promises of false religion and no religion.

True, the *a posteriori* view of the matter presents the cause of the optimist in a somewhat more favorable aspect. It is very difficult to determine, but on calm review and inspection it certainly appears as if things were on the whole growing better, instead of on the whole growing worse. When the tide is going out individual waves now and then outstrip their gradually receding fellows. So, when the tide is coming in, individual waves now and then fall behind their gradually advancing fellows. Those who are with a child day by day hardly notice the evidences of its growth. Indeed, there may be intervals during which nutrition

¹ Macaulay, in one of his most splendid paragraphs.

is impeded and growth retarded or set back ; and yet, in a comprehensive sense, it may be affirmed that all the time that was a growing child. The proper course is not to consider a few insulated facts here and there, but to consider the sum total of the facts. The way to assure one's self as regards the child is not to contemplate it when it is in specially blooming health, nor when it is the victim of some acute or chronic malady, but to observe it after a lapse of months, or, better still, of years. To vary the supposition slightly, the man in his coffin had evidently grown since he was the infant in his cradle. If we judge the world in the same manner, the result, so far as it goes, is encouraging rather than depressing. For one thing, the area of civilization has greatly increased, and is daily increasing. For another thing, the humanity and altruistic feeling of the world have been greatly augmented.

An English journal recently—and with the very purpose of making this point—contrasted the gladiatorial shows at Rome, under Caligula or Nero, with their bloodless but otherwise close imitations in the Italian Exhibition at Olympia near London under Victoria during the present summer. There are many who are sanguine enough to look forward to the cessation of wars as a state of things that is sure to be realized in the future. We do not speak of those, and their name has long been legion, who base their expectations on the dictates of holy oracles or on the forecasts of inspired prophecy. We refer to those who, proceeding exclusively on natural principles, argue that as the world, under the operation of its own internal forces, and by some inscrutable process of evolution and natural selection, grows wiser, more economical in the expenditure of its resources, more fertile in the suggestion of happy expedients, and in the discovery of milder and consequently of more rational means and measures, more tolerant and more altruistically sympathetic, there will be a gradual disruption of the armaments of nations, and a gradual abolition of the arsenals and ultimately of the schools of war. It has notwithstanding always been, as it is to-day, the firm conviction of the Christian theist, that so long as the constitution of human nature remains essentially the same that it has continued to be

during all the centuries of recorded history, human nature unaided by divine grace will never be able to reclaim itself, the kings and potentates of the earth will go on shedding the blood of innocence on the field of arms, and the tears of unfortunate affection will not cease to bedew the monuments of honored but hapless valor. In the past history of mankind wisdom has never within the same bosom, whether of an individual or nation, proved itself a constant match for wrath; and why should it prove itself such in the future? The passions of anger, revenge and pride, and the lust of ambition, must often, on the ordinary principles of human nature, obtain the ascendant over sound judgment and a mere calculating self-interest. It is nevertheless a rather curious fact, that after all the *a priori* speculation on the subject, there is an observable tendency to precisely the condition of things in relation to the world's attitude towards peace and war that the optimist predicts will one day be fully realized. The terror of the new death-dealing weapons, the study of political economy, the balancing of national armaments and equipments in self-defence, and the growth of a more rational and humane spirit, have given arbitration a place of commanding superiority. It must, however, not be left unnoticed that this result, even if admitted, could not fairly be attributable solely to natural causes, without taking into view the all-important factor of religion, especially the Christian religion, to which as one potent, if not—as is the opinion of a countless multitude—the main, or even the exclusive cause to which the production of the effects in question should be ascribed. But take the extreme case. Let the supernatural be allowed no hearing, and let nature and the world itself have all credit for their own partial regeneration. Furthermore, let it be conceded that the dream of Virgil in his famous eclogue, and that of Juvenal in his noble satire, are to be fulfilled as though they had been veritable prophecy; and that the vague impression referred to by Tacitus in his "History" as prevailing extensively in the times of Vespasian, of something like a return of the golden Saturnian age that had originally blessed the earth, is to be one day justified by the facts. Let all this concession be made, and what does it all amount to upon a critical, a dispassionate, a profound and far-reaching ex-

amination? Even though the cycles of the future were to be uniformly cycles of light and not of darkness for each succeeding generation on the earth, *cui bono?* might well be the desponding exclamation of the pessimist, since we are all none the less creatures of the dust, a procession of transitory notes in the sunbeam; since there is no hereafter for the sensitive and conscious person beyond the grave, no glorious climax after death in the form of a completing and compensatory paradise for the suffering body and the immortal soul, for the individual subject, of whatever is possible in the experience of pleasure or pain, of happiness or misery, in the unknown allotments of the future.

This is the true explanation of the melancholy, the sadness, the cynicism, the heartlessness—even at times the brutality, which to so remarkable an extent hangs like a pall over the boasted light and culture of the nineteenth century. If there is no deeper and more reviving draught than is to be found in the chalice commended to us by the atheist and the agnostic, then all the sources of earthly wellbeing must be broken cisterns. If the withered branch proffered us by the materialist be all that is left of a once burgeoning world, then all the blue has gone out of the sky, all the green from off the globe, and all the bloom and all the perfume have been taken from existence. The current materialism has not only snapped—it has crushed the “fading flower” of life; its loveliness is departed and its precious odor is exhaled. With nothing to guide them but the malicious fox-fire of modern speculative science and the few dim rays afforded by natural religion struggling obscurely through the heavy atmosphere that conceals the firmament and involves in miasmatic gloom the inhabitants of the earth, surely it is little wonder that the finer spirits should bewail the everlasting orphanage of the creation and the unspeakable vanity of human wishes. It is this which imparts to almost every line of the Chopin-like poetry of Clough the pensive tone, as of a landscape in India-ink, of a softly-shaded *nocturne*, of a threnody on the fate of human happiness, or the solemn tread of a *marcho funèbre*. It is this which induced another of the most brilliant and candid minds of our time, who died in the morning of his precocious fame, the mathematician, philosophic critic, and literary

artist, the late Professor Clifford, to grieve inconsolably over the loss of him whom he strikingly styles, "The Great Companion," and to yearn with inexpressible but hopeless tenderness and sympathy after one of the unhistorical and impossible "days of the Son of man."¹ It cannot be denied that this is an exceedingly unusual and peculiar, as well as cultivated and refined, utterance that has been given to one of the characteristic and dominant—nay, leaving Christianity out of the question, to the most characteristic and most dominant spirit, in relation to the highest questions, of our time. The praises of the century that is now rapidly nearing its termination have undoubtedly been widely and greatly exaggerated. It does not admit of debate, however, that it has been preëminent among all the centuries for two things; for its objective and practical tendency and achievements, and for its reflective, introspective, and subjective way of dealing with mental and moral as well as even with physical laws and phenomena. That such a century—where not too strongly influenced by the Christian religion—the last century, so far as our knowledge yet extends in "the tide of time,"—in spite of a powerful bias towards objective optimism, should have yielded, and in circumstances surprisingly favorable to a right decision, to an opposite bias towards subjective pessimism, seems to us a fact of the utmost significance. It looks very much like the decision of human reason at its highest point of development in its relation to such matters, acting independently and (as by a sort of power of contrary choice; that is, more accurately, without compulsion or partiality,) almost as *in equilibrio*. Whether it be the best judgment of the unenlightened, or imperfectly enlightened, human reason, it is a judgment which under the same conditions is amply and emphatically affirmed by the declarations of Holy Writ.

Apart from the special teachings of Christianity regarding the future, optimism finds, as we have had occasion to see, little countenance from natural religion, and no countenance whatever from the Word of God. Several of the Psalms, in part, at least, much of the book of Job, and the whole of the Ecclesiastes, are intensely pessimistic. There have been two orthodox theories of

¹ This last statement is an extension beyond what Clifford says.

the difficult book of Ecclesiastes. One of them is that the book is a psychological autobiography, and that the author, with wonderful dramatic power, reproduces for the benefit of his readers the musings and conclusions of his past life, and of his days of sin and folly. The other theory of the book is, that it is *ex professo* an argument, and that much which upon the first theory must be regarded as bitter irony is really to be taken in solemn earnest. Upon either of these theories the scope of the book is to teach the awful lesson that there is no alternative to the happy optimism of the sincere believer but the unalleviated pessimism of him who has abandoned all thoughts of happiness, and accepted the creed and submitted to the direction of despair. On the one hand, "the conclusion of the whole matter," which should be heard and heeded by all, is, that the fear of Jahveh is the secret not only of duty, but also of wisdom and abiding welfare. On the other hand, the fatal dictum is established, that any different course will be found to issue only in ruin and eternal misery. *Vanitas vanitatum*—"all is vanity and vexation of spirit," is the legend that is written in advance above the approaches of every avenue that can be traversed by the foot of any child of Adam—a legend as mournful and horrifying as that which was pointed out by his ethereal guide to the dreaming poet of Firenze, as the inscription over the door of hell—"He who enters here leaves hope behind." What place is there in such a tragic scheme as this for the delusive enticements of fancy, for the frivolities of a doomed society, for the baits of honor and ambition; in brief, for "the sunny optimism," as it is denominated by Canon Liddon, "of Leibnitz?" Well might the dejected psalmist, overwhelmed with this view of the subject, exclaim in bitterness of spirit, "O God, why hast thou made all men in vain!" This melancholy outcry has been made the text of two remarkable sermons, one by John Howe, and the other by Robert Hall. Howe's discourse had the priority in time, gave Hall his model, and therefore possesses the higher claim to originality. It should also have the praise of superior massiveness and grandeur, but Hall's should probably be preferred for compactness, elegance, and instantaneous impression. Both bring out the psalmist's meaning with a lucidity and cogency that cannot be gainsaid, and

a fulness of illustration that leaves no room for additional comment.

The most frightful picture that has perhaps ever been drawn of the present condition and future prospect of the world on the modern agnostic and atheistic hypotheses is in the latest and most objectionable work of Strauss, "*Der alte und der neue Glaube: ein Bekenntnis*,"—"The Old and the New Faith: A Confession (or Creed)." According to this powerful writer, the world is a sort of fiery Moloch between whose all-embracing arms the children of the human race are thrown to be destroyed. He also compares the world we live in to an enormous mass of machinery, with bands and axles and horizontal and perpendicular rods, and colossal wheels, and remorseless, jagged teeth, grinding and tearing and smashing everything to pieces that has life and yearnings and aspirations and that is beautified and warmed with hope. Strauss, who began his career as a pantheistic *pseudo*-optimist, wound it up as an avowed materialistic and atheistic pessimist.

A wholly different but harmonious expression had many years before been given to the same idea by the well-nigh prescient genius of Edgar Allan Poe. It is in one of his strangest, his most thrilling poems that, like Shakspeare, he conceives of life on the earth as a tragedy on the boards, "a play of hopes and fears." The theme of the drama is the inevitable triumph of death. Agreeably to Poe's fine thought, this tragedy is acted in the presence of a body of angelic spectators covered with veils and "drowned in tears," by "mimes in the form of God on high," who "mutter and mumble low" and shift the scenes "at bidding of vast formless things," and whose own life's blood slakes the thirst of a hideous but victorious creeping thing. The music that is silently going on all the time is "the music of the spheres." The last stanza is terrific, where the lights are said to be "out—out all," and "the curtain, a funeral pall," is described as coming down "with the shock of a storm." The *finale* is in full keeping with what had preceded it—

"And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising—unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, Man,
And the hero THE CONQUEROR WORM."

And now the argument must be summed up and the verdict rendered. Attention has been directed to what was at first sight a seeming contradiction between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* considerations, the first, when wholly severed from inspired teachings, clearly favoring pessimism, while the second apparently leaned towards optimism. It was seen that this appearance of conflict between the two classes of evidence is removed on a deeper investigation; for the *a posteriori* proof does not assure the stability of the progress, and the *a posteriori* argument does not point to uninterrupted progress in the case of the individual. All that remains of what was supposed to be the antagonism between the two classes of evidence is the undoubted fact, that in so far as the complexion of the future can be guessed from the complexion of the past and the present, and in so far as the *a posteriori* considerations can be relied upon at all, the improvement of the race as a whole, and of its environment in the world, is pointed to with some steadiness as the most likely of two opposite events. So far as this particular argument goes the fate of individual mortals is still as bad as ever. Now it certainly must be admitted to be somewhat of an anomaly that the race should advance, and the individuals composing that race should retrograde.

This brings us to the last and most important stage in the discussion. An announcement is presently to be made which, if it can be substantiated, removes this anomaly, as well as any suspicion of conflict between the different sorts of evidence, and at the same time solves the main problem under review. Before we take up this new position, in order to have the whole case before us, it is desirable to notice in a passing way the only remaining ground that is imaginable on which optimism, apart from Christian theism, might be justified. It is a view of the matter which underlies all the exhibitions of ancient or modern pantheism, is articulately formulated by the higher philosophic Buddhism, and has been revived by Comte and certain of the positivists and agnostics. The notion at the bottom of this view is that altruism, itself the growth of the ages, at the ideal point of its nobility and elevation is absolutely disinterested. An altruism like this alone knows how to be virtuous in the highest sense; *i. e.*, with no re-

ference to a God, whose nature, whose very being it may be is unknown, and with no prospect of future recompense.

Several things might be said in rejoinder. The exalted benevolence that shines so resplendent in this, the subtlest of all the forms of refined and thoughtful optimism, is itself but a reflex of biblical theism, and never was completely evolved and stated before the general promulgation of the Christian religion. Another thing, and one that must strike the common sense of mankind, is that it is perfectly chimerical, being wholly unsuited to the condition of fallen beings. Whether it is adapted to a state of un-fallen excellence we do not care to discuss. Whether even the holy angels are in any degree actuated by a principle of legitimate self-love we shall not argue. Certainly, as man is at present constituted, he can only be restrained from crime, if restrained then, by the sense of divine obligation, by the apprehension of future punishment, or by the expectation of future reward. The old Tractarian pretension, "No church without a bishop, no state without a king," has been in certain quarters opposed and ridiculed. A far wider homage has been done to the truth, that there may be the parody of religion, as in the case of the theophilanthropists of the French Revolution, and of the humanity-worship of Auguste Comte and his most faithful disciples, but no religion in the proper sense without a God. Yet the theophilanthropists worshipped a woman as the goddess of reason, and Hegel and Comte, like Herod and Pilate, join hands in the deification of man.

The sincerity of excessive protestations of devotion and loyalty has always been looked upon with distrust. Who of them all so obsequious to Othello as Iago? It was once said by an eminent personage of a contemporary who was an over-zealous monarchist, that he was *plus royaliste que le roi*. We believe that it was General Benjamin Butler who voted fifty (or was it a hundred?) times in the Democratic convention for Mr. Jefferson Davis. Herod may be out-Heroded. We have, we confess, no patience whatever with a theory of liberty, or a theory of temperance, or a theory of altruism, that goes beyond the mark so carefully and so plainly drawn in the Word of God.

But, as the discerning reader has already anticipated, the altruistic optimist relies upon the *a posteriori* argument for his prediction of ever-brightening cycles of prosperity in the coming generations of the human family ; and this has been shown to be an utter perversion of the tenor and force of that argument.

We are now, it is to be presumed, in a situation where it is no longer advisable to prolong the main contention or to defer the final enunciation to which reference has been already made, which is to decide the grand issue. A surprising anomaly was signalized in the circumstance that, as the facts appear to stand, the race is making regular progress, whilst the individuals are in the present, just as in the past, uniformly perishing. This anomaly disappears on the assumption, which is an undoubted certainty, that the bettered condition of the world is due to Christianity, which equally and notoriously undertakes to provide a lasting remedy in the case of individuals for the ravages of death and a panacea for every other evil. The consideration of the influence of the Christian religion upon human society has so far not been allowed to have a place in this debate ; and yet the fact that that influence has been felt and been extraordinary is conspicuous and admitted.

But the primary teaching of the materialistic and skeptical philosophy itself is that the existing state of any organism, or collection of organisms, is the joint product of its own internal forces and of the whole environment to which it has been subjected. Now that for nearly nineteen centuries the world has been subjected to the mysterious influence of Christianity, and that that influence has been no less mighty than extensive, is questioned by no one. But it cannot be controverted that, *a priori*, that influence was entirely favorable to a progressive and ultimately a complete improvement of society ; whereas, upon purely naturalistic principles, the result, on the *a priori* view, confessedly pointed the other way. The law of nature, according to our adversary, is unambiguously pessimistic. The law of grace, it must be owned by all who are fair-minded, is unambiguously optimistic. The *fact* is, so far as the *a posteriori* argument can carry us, that the state of the world to-day, as compared with the state of the world in former times, is one that is immediately and perfectly accounted for by referring

it to the Christian law of amelioration, but is utterly anomalous and perplexing, if we refer it to the natural law of deterioration. This is a convincing proof that the diminution of evils and the augmentation of good within the record of human history is due more to supernatural than to natural causes, and, in its most important features, is to be attributed wholly to the powerful, direct and indirect, influence upon mankind of the blessed religion of Jesus Christ. Agreeably to the theory advocated in the present essay, all difficulties are thus satisfactorily explained. Under the scheme of Christianity alone every semblance even of contradiction at any point between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* arguments is obliterated, and all discordant appearances are brought into a state of harmonious reconciliation. The Christian programme comprehends not only the rectification of social wrongs and the elevation of the human species, but also the eternal well-being of the individual.

The upshot of it all is, that a purely naturalistic theory as to the destiny of the world and of mankind, logically regarded, should be the lowest form of pessimism; whereas a theory taking note of all the facts in the case, and consequently including a reference to the data and forces of supernatural Christianity, logically regarded, should be the highest form of optimism. It has been justly remarked by a sagacious thinker, that of a plurality (or duality) of proposed solutions of a given problem, that is the true one which vindicates itself by actually solving the problem. This unrivalled achievement in the present instance philosophic Christian theism has manifestly accomplished.

It will be readily perceived that this, which is the true scheme of Christian optimism, is radically antagonistic to the scheme of the Manichean and the Pelagian errorists, on the one hand, and the universalist and restorationist errorists, on the other. The theory of the "impreventability of sin," as it has been styled, and of its fatal consequences, has been held in common alike by dualists and unitarians, by acknowledged advocates of the trinity (as Bushnell and Young), as well as by Socinians. Pantheism virtually denies sin altogether, by regarding it as a necessary incident of growth. Bushnell adopts the same view, and compares sin to a

“suspension” in music. The old gnostic and Manichean view (which seems to have been anticipated by Aristotle) was that the Almighty was absolutely barred from interference by a remorseless and eternal necessity. The Pelagian view was that he was relatively barred from interference, because interference would be inconsistent with the conditions of a moral system. All these views are optimistic in the sense that everything has been, and is now, going on as well as it could do.

Universalism passes to the opposite extreme. Instead of denying the possibility, universalism and the kindred heresies affirm the certainty of such a condition of ultimate perfection that sin and evil will be utterly banished from the universe. The Scriptures teach the contrary; and, furthermore, that such a sentimental *dénouement*, in the face of impenitent rebellion on the part of angels and men, could not take place except at the sacrifice of the divine honor, and upon the overthrow of the system of righteousness and moral order. Christianity notwithstanding has provided for the salvation of all men who will accept its simple and reasonable terms.

We sum up, then, that if we leave Revelation and the Christian religion out of the reckoning, the only tenable theory is that of the pessimist; but that if—as we must—we take them into the account, then the only tenable theory is that of the optimist. It thus turns out that, in the ultimate determination, if we apply the principles of the skeptical speculative science itself, optimism takes the palm. It has, however, just been shown that this is not the counterfeit and deceitful optimism of a spurious religion or a bastard philosophy, but that securely guarded system which looks for its sanctions alike to the events of human history and to the oracles of God.

Natural, as assisted by revealed, religion, or, to speak more accurately, the revelation of nature as assisted by the revelation that is supernatural, now assumes an importance which natural religion, or the revelation of nature, pure and simple, did not possess. The volume of natural religion was a faint palimpsest, and much of the original writing could not be deciphered without the glass of a superior revelation, or as characters in sympathetic ink require the

heat of the fire to bring them out. The testimony of the two witnesses, the revelation that is natural and the revelation that is supernatural, is, when combined, discovered to be consentaneous. Bishop Butler, for instance, in his "Analogy," has made it clear that the course of virtue on the earth, after ample allowance has been made for the many exceptions, is in general also the course of individual as well as of public well-being and happiness.

If it should be demanded why it is that the almighty and omniscient Creator, in the exercise of his omnipotence and unfathomable wisdom, did not forestall the necessity of an atonement for sin, and ensure the realization of an absolutely ideal optimism, by preventing the introduction of sin itself into the world, we have little to reply. This is the problem that is at the foundation of all theological problems, and is still the opprobrium of all attempted theodicies. Bishop Butler has, however, triumphantly evinced that it is a problem that is not peculiar to natural as contradistinguished from supernatural religion, but is common to the two. In considering the question of optimism or pessimism, we are surely called upon to deal with facts as they are, and not with an imaginary state of things without even the shadow of basis in reality. But the two unimpeachable witnesses, natural and revealed religion, unite in attesting the facts of sin and of obdurate impenitency, and in pointing towards a future and eternal retribution. That the Divine Being acted rationally and wisely in allowing the entrance of sin into the universe, we infer from the fact that he is God. What his reasons were it is vain for man to conjecture.

It may be contended that the *a posteriori* argument as employed in this essay is made to prove too much. If Christianity had been the great operative factor in human improvement, it may be urged that the improvement must have been greater, must indeed have been complete. Professor Drummond has lately taken up this point in a brilliant address, of which we have only seen a brief notice. The title-theme of this address is "The Programme of Christianity;" and the eloquent apologist accounts for the admitted shortcomings of the church on the ground that Christians have not lived up to their own ideal. But does not the Christian

theory stand pledged to the assurance that Christian men and women shall live up to their ideal? Yes, in the heavenly condition of the church. All that is certainly promised as to take place before the day of judgment is the overthrow of the preponderance of ungodliness and evil in the world, and the general conversion of the world, and a wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church. The signs of such a consummation—so amply predicted and so “devoutly to be wished”—are already appearing in the most unlikely quarters of the globe, and beginning to flame upon the clouded heavens like the victorious *labarum* of Constantine. The event is becoming more and more correspondent with the inspired anticipation. By far the grandest triumphs of the cross are yet future. Glorious things are spoken of Zion. “All the promises do travail with a glorious day of grace.” The “awful rose of dawn,” the poet speaks of, already begins to dapple the forefront of the coming era. The phenomenal success of modern missions within the last hundred years, which has just been celebrated at the great International Centenary in London, is but the first dropping of the mighty showers that are one day to descend upon the earth. Seers and apostles agree in looking forward to the euthanasia of the present state of the globe itself, and a renovated earth and sky.

The benefits of this optimistic jubilee will not accrue to all. Pessimism at its worst will still be realized in the doom of the unpardoned enemies of Jesus. But there will be a mighty difference. Optimism, with its centre in heaven, will radiate its unspeakable blessings throughout the universe; whereas pessimism, with all its dark and discomfited legions, will be confined to a hopeless, because an inflexible and an eternal Gehenna. Leibnitz—with whom we have always sympathized—is at last sustained in his principal contention, though not by his own argument or in his own sense. The watchman of the celestial guard shall one day be able to cry, “The followers of Immanuel have been redeemed, the opposition to Jehovah has been subdued, and all is well!”

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