

If we proceed to the second question, the spectacle, as it presents itself to me, is *stranger* still. Although we know that James Mill, arrested by the strong hand of Bishop Butler, halted rather than rested for a while in theism on his progress toward general negation, yet his case does not supply, nor can we draw from other sources, any reason to regard such a position as one which can be largely and permanently held against that relentless force of logic, which is ever silently at work to assert and to avenge itself. The theist is confronted, with no breakwater between, by the awful problem of moral evil, by the mystery of pain, by the apparent anomalies of waste and of caprice on the face of creation; and, not least of all, by the fact that, while the moral government of the world is founded on the free agency of man, there are in multitudes of cases environing circumstances independent of his will which seem to deprive that agency, called free, of any operative power adequate to contend against them. In this bewildering state of things, in this great enigma of the world, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? . . . Wherefore art thou red in thy apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" "There has come upon the scene the figure of a Redeemer, human and Divine. Let us grant that the Incarnation is a marvel wholly beyond our reach, and that the miracle of the Resurrection to-day gives serious trouble to fastidious intellects. But the difficulties of a baffled understanding, lying everywhere around us in daily experience, are to be expected from its limitations; not so the shocks encountered by the moral sense. Even if the Christian scheme slightly lengthened the immeasurable catalogue of the first, this is dust in the balance compared with the relief it furnishes to the second; in supplying the most powerful remedial agency ever known, in teaching how pain may be made a helper, an evil transmuted into good; and in opening clearly the vision of another world, in which we are taught to look for yet larger counsels of the Almighty wisdom. To take away, then, the agency so beneficent, which has so softened and reduced the moral problems that lie thickly spread around us, and to leave us face to face with them in all their original rigour, is to enhance and not to mitigate the difficulties of belief.

Lastly, it is not difficult to understand why those who prefer the Pagan ideal, or who cannot lay hold on the future world, or who labour under still greater disadvantages, should put aside as a whole the Gospel of God manifest in the flesh. But it is far harder to comprehend the mental attitude, or the mental consistency at least, of those who desire to retain what was manifested, but to thrust aside the manifesting Person, and all that His living personality entails. or, if I may borrow an Aristotelian figure, to keep the accidents and discard the substance. I cannot pretend to offer a solution to this hard riddle. But there is one feature which almost uniformly marks writers whose mind is of a religious tone, or who do not absolutely exclude religion, while they reject the Christian dogma and the authority of Scripture. They appear to have a very low estimate both of the quantity and quality of sin; of its amount, spread like a deluge over the world, and of the subtlety, intensity, and virulence of its nature. I mean a low estimate as compared with the mournful denunciations of the sacred writings, or with the language especially of the later Christian Confessions. Now let it be granted that, in interpreting these Christian Con-