

years undisturbed by the importunate question — “Why am I here? and what have I to do?” An ideal gradually shapes itself before every reflective mind, of Man’s function and duty, which his actual performances and even his habitual aims fall immeasurably below, and the comparison of which with the reality, fills him with grief and shame. Perhaps some unwonted sin deepens the feeling of disparity between what he is, and what he ought to be — rouses him to a sense of danger — and puts him on efforts that he never made before. Perhaps he is awakened without passing through this ordeal of personal humiliation. He is conscious of powers that have never yet been adequately exerted, or finds himself possessed of opportunities which he has hitherto failed to improve. He looks around on a world languishing in darkness, sin and woe — yet teeming on every hand with seeds of undeveloped good, which only ask for patient and zealous culture, to ripen into widespread blessings for mankind. Can he linger in sloth and apathy, with no earnest aim or chosen work, while such solemn calls are made upon him? His self-reproach may be less for what he has — than for what he has not — done. But in this upbraiding sense of deficiency lies the hidden source of future strength. By whatever consciousness produced, whether of positive wrong or of defective goodness — and however designated in the copious nomenclature of Religion — conversion, seriousness, new birth, conviction of sin, or self-dedication to the truth — in this strong and clear persuasion, of a moral purpose in existence, and in the resolute sacrifice of all worldly, selfish and carnal impulses that are at war with it — the true life of God in the human soul has its origin: and no one probably ever attained to