

matter; can mould metals into implements, and turn the wood into furniture, but cannot *make* the metals nor the wood; so they considered that Deity also had only a great *plastic power*. By this power he could hew out from Chaos a world, and fill it with forms of beauty: in virtue of the same power, *i. e.*, a mere act of will, he could ordain the unvarying courses of the stars. And though such an over-ruling power is really as inexplicable as the power which creates, yet they could never rise to the grand idea of "all things being made by Him" the alone uncreated existence. And now, however, that revelation has made known the fact unto us, the highest reason of man admits that it is a deep truth, and springing from the worthiest conceptions of what spirit is. Matter is dead: force belongs to spirit alone. But the material world is needed as the servant of mind, to interpret its ideas to other minds, to be the medium of communication. It is the shadow of the spiritual: but unless there were the better things of reality to make the shadow, how could we have a shadow at all? It is the living garment of God, by which we see Him; but the garment is continually wearing out and being renewed, while God remains the same. It is the rainbow of love, touching the earth and the heaven, and being a bridge between; for we can gaze upon and delight in the beauties of the rainbow, though we could not look into the deep splendors of the sun which creates it. God required not anything material for Himself. He is all-sufficient in Himself. But for those living beings whom He made, He created the clay, for only through the medium of it could creatures such as they be educated; and "one thing is double against another, and God hath made nothing imperfect." Yea, rather, "behold how everything He has made is very good." And hence, on the other hand, we would expect that matter, independent of mind, is utterly useless. And so it is. What is the need for beautiful scenes and exquisite expressions in matter, if there be no mental eye to rejoice in the beauty, the higher ideal of which is at the same time suggested to the soul by the material adumbration? What is the use of arrangements of matter in obedience to laws, if there be no intelligence to understand the law, no God-derived soul to rise from the law up to the law-giver, of whose attributes all laws are weak types or patterns?

"The earth is the Lord's," not the devil's. The old Platonic doctrine that matter belonged to the evil principle is false. The doctrine of many narrow-minded Christians that we can learn about God only in the Bible, and that only the godless study the volume of Nature, is false. God has given over no part of his empire, neither matter nor mind, to the devil. Everything is His. The earth is the Lord's, "and the fullness thereof;" and He has given dominion over

all to man, to use all for their good, and in knowing all to know Him. We are ungrateful, then, if we look with suspicious eyes upon the world and earthly blessings. Our part is to accept them gratefully as gifts from God, who giveth to all his creatures liberally and upbraideth not. He does not command us to shut ourselves up as "eremites in cell," and attempt to purify our souls by afflicting our bodies. No: we are to mix with the world, and hold communion with nature; enjoy the bounties provided by our Father; see everything, every change, every provision, every blessing of common life, in the light of God, so that everything may be sanctified thereby. "The earth is full of thy riches: so is the great and wide sea." Truly it appears that David was a wiser and broader man than many of those who boast that they have the full light of evangelical truth.

Again, if all things are the Lord's, they cannot be ours; and we must seek for the ultimate right of property elsewhere than in man. I do not here enter upon this truth; but two lessons certainly we should learn from it: (1) To be content with whatever amount of worldly goods God has blessed us. We brought nothing into the world with us, and it is certain that we can carry nothing away. Whatever we have we owe; and therefore it becomes us cheerfully to yield up all or part whenever the wise Giver so wills it. Do you murmur and consider yourselves unfairly dealt with because another has received a larger share of the coarsest bounties of God's treasure-house? Ask yourselves the question—"What claim have I to any share at all?" and perhaps it may be revealed to you that it is something very different from grumbling that is incumbent upon you. (2) To be liberal with the riches we have. Dare we shut up our bowels of compassion towards the poor, or those whom God hath otherwise afflicted, when He has given us *all* that we have, and yet hath declared that He will consider giving to the poor as lending to Him? And shall we contribute niggardly or not at all, to advance his cause on earth, when with perfect right He could strip us of all and give it to those who would be more honest stewards. For what saith the Lord? "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine." He needs not our aid, He asks not our pitiful mite as a favor. But in His love He desires us to be co-workers with Him.

"The world and they that dwell therein." Not even *we* are our own: by right of creation we belong to Him. God formed us and breathed into us the breath of life. And we are his, for He continually preserves us, and binds us to Himself by the cords of love, many and strong. He has been very good unto us; he has put all things under our feet, crowning us as kings. We are not our