

our own times. Since the last century art and especially literature has severed its connection with revealed doctrine in the works of its foremost representatives. This is especially true with reference to the continental nations. With regard to England this separation has not been so complete, although notable examples are not wanting. What has been the inevitable result of this apostasy? A striking falling-off in the greatness of the works performed as compared with those of former ages. Not that there is a lack of artistic power, although this is sometimes complained of in explanation of this universal dearth of lofty conceptions in the realms of art. Man has dragged down the Muses from their ethereal dwelling-places above the skies, into the stifling atmosphere of earth, which they are unable to breathe. He has thrust the Divinity from his altars and has erected there for his worship the false idol, Nature, and his own perverted image. Hence absence of lofty inspirations on account of the absence of those noble ideals that centre around that source of perfect beauty, the Infinite God.

Thus the history of the past and present amply proves that art can attain its noblest ends only in conjunction with religion. This does not imply however that art is bound exclusively to the service of religion and morality. As has been stated before, art in its ultimate principles, like everything else that relates to human activity is subject to moral law, and can in no circumstances place itself in opposition to that law. Still the spheres of art and morality are not co-extensive, there is much that enters within the scope of art which is indifferent from a religious point of view. Thus the reproduction of inanimate nature either in color or in song has no direct bearing upon morality. It is only when we touch the subject man, the sphere of morality, that art falls under its law. The object of art is the expression of the beautiful. But in the sphere of human action the beautiful is identical with the good and the true, it is their higher union. Therefore the immediate object of art is the beautiful, but its remote end, its guiding star must ever be the true and the good. It is in this sense

that the vaunted principle of "art for art," so loudly proclaimed in our own day, finds its true interpretation. It may be justly claimed that art, within its own sphere, follows its own laws, but it is false to assert that these laws, in their ultimate tendency, are not subordinate to the dictates of reason and morality. With this restriction it may even be admitted that art is not obliged to pursue a moral purpose by direct and immediate intention. The artist and especially the poet who is true to his noble mission, and selects for the object of his muse only that which is truly beautiful, by reason of the identity in the moral sphere of the beautiful and the good, will encompass the moral end by indirect means. The false realism of our times has emphasized too loudly the fact that art, when too didactic in its moral purpose, is apt to become stiff, constrained and wearisome. Whenever this happens, and examples are not wanting, the defect arises not from the too obtrusive moral intention of the author, but rather from his lack of mental breadth and creative power. That a lofty moral aim pervading and supporting the whole structure of a poetical production is not incompatible with the highest excellence in the realm of art, Milton's immortal epic alone would amply prove. It is the element which imparts to his art that startling magnificence and grandeur, which gives it the character of a hymn of divine adoration connecting man's destiny with the throne of the Eternal.

Thus, there are three channels by which man reaches up to heaven. His reason is ever longing after perfect truth, and his moral nature after perfect goodness while his heart is haunted by visions of perfect beauty. In investigating nature and history, and the depths of his own heart in the search after truth he finds everywhere the image of God looming up before his mental vision, and having learned that his own destiny lies within the bosom of the Divinity, his will seeks to reach that lofty goal, while his imagination prompted by his yearning heart must ever strive to express the fleeting images caught from heaven in earthly shapes of his own likeness.