

was still the object which a man was bound to labour after. Though giving no claim to pardon, still less for reward, it was the necessary fruit of a sense of what Christ had done, and of love and gratitude towards him. Good works were the test of saving faith; and if there were no signs of them, the faith was barren: it was not real faith at all.

This was the Puritan belief in England in the seventeenth century. The reason starts at it, but all religion is paradoxical to reason. God hates sin, yet sin exists. He is omnipotent, yet evil is not overcome. The will of man is free, or there can be no guilt; yet the action of the will, so far as experience can throw light on its operation, is as much determined by antecedent causes as every other natural force. Prayer is addressed to a Being assumed to be omniscient; who knows better what is good for us than we can know; who sees our thoughts without requiring to hear them in words; whose will is fixed and cannot be changed. Prayer, therefore, in the eye of reason, is an impertinence. The Puritan theology is not more open to objection on the ground of unreasonableness than the Catholic theology, or any other which regards man as answerable to God for his conduct. We must judge of a creed by its effects on character, as we judge of the wholesomeness of food as it conduces to bodily health. And the creed which swept like a wave through England at that time, and recommended itself to the noblest and most powerful intellects, produced also in those who accepted it a horror of sin, an enthusiasm for justice, purity, and manliness, which can be paralleled only in the first age of Christianity. Certainly there never was such a theory to take man's conceit out of him. He was a miserable wretch, so worthless at his best as to deserve everlasting perdition. If he was to be saved at all, he could be saved only by the unmerited