

outrage the intelligence by its unreason, or shock the moral sense by its injustice. We may treat with all tenderness the uncritical devotion which thought to honour the Deity by a lavish ascription of attributes, some of which were meaningless as applied to the absolute, and others were impossible as applied to any personal manifestation of it. But we have swept out of the shadow of this past into a newer day, which brings with it fuller knowledge and clearer thought; and we cannot with reason assent any longer to misconceptions which are possible only to a cruder faith. There is mystery enough in the world around us from which we cannot escape, and before which we can only bow in silence, but we need not add to this a mystery which lies, not so much in the truth of things, as in the vagaries of human thought. The mystery of evil owes its mysteriousness chiefly to the incongruous attributes with which earlier thought invested its author. Clear away these disfigurements, and the moral reproach of the mystery will disappear with them, and evil, freed from all that is malignant, may then find place in the Divine scheme, as a stern but faithful minister of its benign purpose.

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