

that Browning has achieved his best works. He deals with the "corrupt semblances, the hypocrisies, formalisms and fanaticisms of man's religious life." He accepts as primary facts the existence of God and the soul: the meaning of the latter and its relations to the former are the object of his research. By investigating human thoughts, ideas and passions, he tries to discover a connection between the visible events of the world and the unseen universe beyond. "The doctrine of individuality is the basis of his art, the core of his philosophy, the key to his religion."

Life is a school of probation, of moral discipline, in which man fits himself for a higher sphere, an education in love of truth and detestation of falsehood. Its end is spiritual progress. Perfect knowledge cannot be attained, but it is the attempt to make the best of ourselves as we really are, that constitutes real life. Every man falls short of his ideal; in this life we are blessed by our unsatisfied longings for impossible ideals, rather than by the realization of limited desires. The servant of God each day finds how hard it is to be a Christian. These very failures, the imperfection of man, are the secret of his greatness, the pledge of his future triumph. An acknowledged failure is a promise of future attainment. The faulty art of the old Florentines was a far higher

thing than the most perfect art of Greece, because it strove after a divine ideal.

Life is not the creature of circumstance. Its value and meaning is measured, not by success or achievement, but by the passion and sincerity with which it is lived. The conditions of this life must be accepted with all its limitations if we are to make full use of our opportunities here. If we attempt in this world to do the work of eternity, to gain infinite consciousness from finite powers, we fail. Life's purpose is the education of the soul; every stage of life has its fitting lessons. Pain is hard to bear, but it is the fount of gain. Obstacles are tests, whether we shall creep or climb; temptations are the tests whether we shall achieve the mastery. Trials come that they may be met and trampled under foot. Wherever there is love, Browning sees the figure of Christ in the midst. None of all our poets has had greater influence on the current contemporary thought. He has told us how we are to think of him now he is gone:

"Of one who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

