



TRUTH, HOLINESS,

LIBERTY, LOVE.

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EVIL OF SIN.

If we look within, we find in our very nature a testimony to the doctrine, that sin is the chief of evils, a testimony which, however slighted or smothered, will be recognized, I think, by every one who hears me. To understand this truth better, it may be useful to inquire into and compare the different kinds of evil. Evil has various forms, but these may all be reduced to two great divisions, called by philosophers *natural* and *moral*. By the first, is meant the pain or suffering which springs from outward condition and events, or from causes independent of the will. The latter, that is, moral evil, belongs to character and conduct, and is commonly expressed by the words sin, vice, transgression of the rule of right. Now I say, that there is no man unless he be singularly hardened and an exception to his race, who, if these two classes or divisions of evil should be clearly and fully presented to him in moments of calm and deliberate thinking, would not feel, through the very constitution of his mind, that sin or vice is worse and more to be dreaded than pain. I am willing to take from among you, the individual who has studied least the great questions of morality and religion, whose mind has grown up with least discipline. If I place before such a hearer two examples in strong contrast, one of a man gaining great property by an atrocious crime, and another exposing himself to great suffering through a resolute purpose of duty, will he not tell me at once, from a deep moral sentiment, which leaves not a doubt on his mind, that the last has chosen the better part, that he is more to be envied than the first? On these great questions, What is the chief Good? and What is the chief Evil? we are instructed by our own nature. An inward voice has told men, even in heathen countries, that excellence of character is the supreme good, and that baseness of soul and of action involves something worse than suffering. We have all of us, at some periods of life, had the same conviction; and these have been the periods when the mind has been healthiest, clearest, least perturbed by passion. Is there any one here who does not feel, that what the divine faculty of conscience enjoins as right, has stronger claims upon him than what is recommended as merely agreeable or advantageous; that duty is something more sacred than interest or pleasure; that virtue is a good of a higher order than gratification; that crime is something worse than outward loss? What means the admiration with which we follow the conscientious and disinterested man, and which grows strong in proportion to his sacrifices to duty? Is it not the testimony of our whole souls to the truth and greatness of the good he has chosen? What means the feeling of abhorrence, which we cannot repress if we would, towards him who, by abusing confidence, trampling on weakness, or hardening himself against the appeals of mercy, has grown rich or great. Do we think that such a man has made a good bargain in bartering principle for wealth? Is prosperous fortune a balance for vice? In our deliberate moments, is there not a voice which pronounces his craft folly, and his success misery?

And, to come nearer home, what conviction is it, which springs up most spontaneously in our more reflecting moments, when we look back without passion on our own lives? Can vice stand that calm look? Is there a single wrong act, which we would not than rejoice to expunge from the unalterable records of our deeds? Do we ever congratulate ourselves on having despised the inward monitor, or revolted against God? To what portions of our history do we return most joyfully? Are they those in which we gained the world and lost the soul, in which temptation mastered our principles, which levity and sloth made a blank, or which a selfish and unprincipled activity made worse than a blank, in our existence; or are they those in which we suffered, but were true to conscience, in which we denied ourselves for duty, and sacrificed success through un-

wavering rectitude? In these moments of calm recollection, do not the very transgressions at which perhaps we once mocked, and which promised unmixed joy, recur to awaken shame and remorse. And do not shame and remorse involve a consciousness that we have sunk beneath our proper good? that our highest nature, what constitutes our true self, has been sacrificed to low interests and pursuits? I make these appeals confidently. I think my questions can receive but one answer. Now, these convictions and emotions, with which we witness moral evil in others, or recollect it in ourselves, these feelings towards guilt, which more pain and suffering never excite, and which manifest themselves with more or less distinctness in all nations and all stages of society, these inward attestations that sin, wrong-doing, is a peculiar evil, for which no outward good can give adequate compensation, surely these deserve to be regarded as the voice of nature, the voice of God. They are accompanied with a peculiar consciousness of truth. They are felt to be our ornament and defence. Thus our nature teaches the doctrine of Christianity, that sin, or moral evil, ought of all evils to inspire most abhorrence and fear.—*Channing.*

HUMAN BROTHERHOOD.

What a glorious, what a beneficent doctrine! Had this single truth been all that revelation taught, it would yet have been most worthy of God to bestow, and of man to receive with joy and gratitude. It identifies all nations—it asserts the affinity of all the families of the earth—it proclaims the *brotherhood of humanity*. The Apostle Paul might well bear the scornings of the proud sophists of Athens, strong in the philanthropic consciousness of having such a truth as this to teach them; descendants of demigods as they thought themselves, and masters of slaves as they were. How magnificently does it level distinctions, whether of color, rank, nation, or religion! It rebukes the boastings of pride, the bitterness of hostility, the sternness of bigotry, the coldness of selfishness. It declares to each, the object of disregard, hatred, or contempt, is a man, and man a brother. It knows nothing, it will hear nothing of the thousand pretensions set up for the gratification of vanity, and the indulgence of malignity. What prejudices have been already beaten down by it, and how many prejudices yet exist to which it is opposed, and which it shall yet beat down! That there are in the world different classes of men, heaven-born and earth-born; the blood of some a celestial ichor to which that circulating in the veins of others is but as base puddle; that there are different races, with such disparity that it is for some to be luxurious lords of creation, and others their saleable, fettered, tasked, beaten, and branded beasts of burthen; that a man's clan or country has exclusive title to his affections, exertions, duties, concentrating every thing within that narrow circle except a pitiless hostility to all of humankind beyond its narrow boundary; that there are natural antipathies—hereditary national antipathies, which should make mighty and enlightened countries each other's foes from generation to generation, and from age to age, desolating one another and all the world around them, each dreaming that the evil of its neighbour was its own good; as if the poverty of millions in one country could make a neighbouring country rich; as if the slavery of one country could make another country free; as if the misery of millions in one country could raise another to the summit of felicity; and that there are in the sight of God, man's Maker and Father, eternal differences and distinctions; some walking the earth in the pride and glory of his inalienable blessing, others born, living, dying under the influence of his wrath and curse;—differences sometimes evaporating in spiritual pride or busy zeal; at others shaping themselves into the most noxious forms of alienation, persecution, denial of the courtesies of life, and infliction of the bitterest injuries. These were, and these are, under the various modifications

produced by ancient and present modes of thinking, evils which the Gospel was given to mitigate and to annihilate; with which its spirit maintains everlasting warfare; against which it appeals to our piety, our benevolence, our justice, our consciousness; confronting which, in their strength, it rears its banner with the inscription which, in the day of their destruction, it will place upon their tomb, that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men."—*W. J. Fox.*

SELF-CULTURE.

An important means of self-culture, is to free ourselves from the power of human opinion and example, except as far as this is sanctioned by our own deliberate judgment. We are all prone to keep the level of those we live with, to repeat their words, and dress our minds as well as bodies after their fashion; and hence the spiritless tameness of our characters and lives. Our greatest danger is not from the grossly wicked around us, but from the worldly, unreflecting multitude, who are borne along as a stream by foreign impulse, and bear us along with them. Even the influence of superior minds may harm us, by bowing us to servile acquiescence and damping our spiritual activity. The great use of intercourse with other minds is to stir up our own, to whet our appetite for truth, to carry our thoughts beyond their old tracks. We need connexions with great thinkers to make us thinkers too. One of the chief arts of self-culture is to unite the childlike teachableness, which gratefully welcomes light from every human being who can give it, with manly resistance of opinions however current, of influences however gratefully received, which do not approve themselves to our deliberate judgment. You ought indeed patiently and conscientiously to strengthen your reason by other men's intelligence, but you must not prostrate it before them. Especially if there springs up within you any view of God's word or universe, any sentiment or aspiration which seems to you of a higher order than that you meet abroad, give reverent heed to it; inquire into it earnestly, solemnly. Do not trust it blindly, for it may be an illusion; but it may be the Divinity moving within you, a new revelation, not supernatural, but still most precious, of truth or duty; and if after enquiry it so appear, then let no clamour, or scorn, or desertion, turn you from it. Be true to your own highest convictions. Intimations from our own soul of something more perfect than others teach, if faithfully followed, give us a consciousness of spiritual force and progress, never experienced by the vulgar of high life or low life, who march, as they are drilled, to the step of their times.

Some, I know, will wonder, that I should think the mass of the people capable of such intimations and glimpses of truth, as I have just supposed. These are commonly thought to be the prerogative of men of genius, who seem to be born to give law to the minds of the multitude. Undoubtedly nature has her nobility, and sends forth a few to be eminently "lights of the world." But it is also true that a portion of the same divine fire is given to all; for the many could not receive with a loving reverence the quickening influences of the few, were there not essentially the same spiritual life in both. The minds of the multitude are not masses of passive matter, created to receive impressions unresistingly from abroad. They are not wholly shaped by foreign instruction; but have a native force; a spring of thought in themselves. Even the child's mind outruns its lessons, and overflows in questionings which bring the wisest to a stand. Even the child starts the great problems, which philosophy has laboured to solve for ages. But on this subject I cannot now enlarge. Let me only say, that the power of original thought is particularly manifested in those who thirst for progress, who are bent on unfolding their own nature. A man who wakes up to the consciousness of having been created for progress and perfection, looks with new eyes on himself, and on the world in which he lives. This great truth stirs the soul from its depths, breaks up old associations of ideas, and establishes new ones, just as a mighty agent of chemistry, brought into contact with natural substances, dissolves the

old affinities which had bound their particles together, and arranges them anew. This truth particularly aids to penetrate the mysteries of human life. By revealing to us the end of our being, it helps us to comprehend more and more, the wonderful, the infinite system to which we belong. A man in the common walks of life, who has faith in perfection, in the unfolding of the human spirit, as the great purpose of God, possesses more the secret of the universe, perceives more the harmonies or mutual adaptations of the world without and the world within him, is a wiser interpreter of Providence, and reads nobler lessons of duty in the events which pass before him, than the profoundest philosopher who wants this grand central truth. Thus illuminations, inward suggestions, are not confined to a favoured few, but visit all who devote themselves to a generous self-culture.

PARABLE AGAINST PERSECUTION.

BY DR. FRANKLIN.

1. And it came to pass, after these things, that Abraham sat in the door of his tent, about the going down of the sun.
2. And behold, a man bent with age, coming from the way of the wilderness, leaning on a staff.
3. And Abraham rose and met him, and said unto him, Turn in, I pray thee, and wash thy feet, and tarry all night; and thou shalt rise early in the morning, and go on thy way.
4. And the man said, Nay, for I will abide under this tree.
5. But Abraham pressed him greatly; so he turned, and they went into the tent; and Abraham baked unleavened bread, and they did eat.
6. And when Abraham saw, that the man blessed not God, he said unto him, Wherefore dost thou not worship the most high God, Creator of heaven and earth?
7. And the man answered and said, I do not worship thy God, neither do I call upon his name; for I have made to myself a god, which abideth always in my house, and provideth me with all things.
8. And Abraham's zeal was kindled against the man, and he rose, and fell upon him, and drove him forth with blows into the wilderness.
9. And God called unto Abraham, saying, Abraham, where is the stranger?
10. And Abraham answered and said, Lord, he would not worship thee, neither would he call upon thy name, therefore have I driven him out from before my face into the wilderness.
11. And God said have I borne with him these hundred and ninety and eight years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding his rebellion against me, and couldst not thou, who art thyself a sinner, bear with him one night?
12. And Abraham said, Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot against his servant; lo, I have sinned, forgive me, I pray thee.
13. And Abraham arose, and went forth into the wilderness, and diligently sought for the man, and found him, and returned with him to the tent; and when he had entreated him kindly, he sent him away on the morrow with gifts.
14. And God spake again unto Abraham, saying, For this thy sin thy seed shall be afflicted four hundred years in a strange land.
15. But for thy repentance, will I deliver them, and they shall come forth with power, and with gladness of heart, and with much substance.

"THE PURE IN HEART."

Christianity is admired, when rightly understood, for its simplicity. And its precepts will be obeyed, on the account of their reasonableness. The simple and consistent expression, "Blessed are the pure in heart," is fraught with consolation and comfort. When we learn that our heavenly Father requires us to make no burning sacrifice;—no smoke to rise from an altar; and no incense to stream from the "golden censor;" no weary and exhausted pilgrims are called upon to pay at stated intervals, to the shrine of a prophet;