

morality by religion, meaning by religion the revelation, or, if you choose, the supposed revelation, of God in Christ? It is not difficult to answer. The Gospel supplies three things to morals—a basis, a type, and an impulse.

First, it supplies an unchangeable basis for the sense of obligation. In other words, it gives a meaning to the word 'ought.' It is one of the defects in the utilitarian ethics that it can never do that. It can tell me that some things are useful to me and to others; but it cannot explain the difference between the knowledge of use and the consciousness of duty. I am told that it is base and vile to be false or cruel. Very true; but why is it base? and what do you mean by vile? You surely mean something more than that these things are inconvenient. The attempts of utilitarians to evade this difficulty are amusing. Mr. Bain, for example, says the wrong is identical with the punishable, not seeing, apparently, that it is the very essence of punishment to be deserved suffering, and that the whole difficulty emerges again in the word deserved. The fact is, that a sense of right as right, and of desert or ill desert as springing from it, is intertwined with the very fibres of our nature. None can explain that; none can vindicate the *rationality* of the moral impulses, except those who trace them back to the ultimate structure of the laws of nature; in other words, to the character of the First Cause itself. But this is to make the First Cause not *it*, but *he*, it is to clothe it with consciousness and will. We have done with a vague Unknowable, and find ourselves bowed in the presence of a living God.

The Gospel gives us also a type of character as part of its contribution to practical morals. It is here that there is so wide a difference between the general sentiment of 'religion,' and the special belief in Christ. 'Religion' is, perhaps, little more than a sense of the infinite, and of our enclosure in

and dependence upon it,—a sentiment which may attach itself to anything, from a monkey or a beetle to the ideal of absolute perfection. We shall gain nothing by discussing the moral relations of that. It may very well be true that '*potuit suadere malorum,*' even beyond the eloquent summary of Lucretius. But here and now our faith, if we have any, is in Christ, and it is simply idle to say that Christ does not affect the moral views and character of His followers. He was talking about duty all His life, and He poured out His life at last as a sacred seal upon the supremacy of rectitude. This is not the place to attempt any analysis of the character of Jesus, but I may remind my readers of the admiring words of Goethe, 'to this height men were fated and enabled to attain, and having attained it, they cannot again fall permanently below it.' If it be true that 'Christianity' has been the 'parent of persecution,' it is utterly untrue that the 'ordinary duties and charities of life' have 'owed but little' to it. So far from this, the 'charities' are the outgrowth of the Gospel almost exclusively. And even in the darkest days of persecution, when the scaffold and the stake were in full use, these horrors were so much the exception as opposed to the rule that society could have sustained no greater loss than that of the moral influences derived from the Gospel. Some people seem to think that executions for heresy were the lot of the masses of the people. The idea is preposterous. Mistaken and hateful as they were, for every man executed, thousands had their lives immensely ennobled by the influence of their faith. Mr. Le Sueur is fond of gathering together all sorts of hideous and horrible perversions of the religious sentiment, and quietly slipping in the assumption that they are illustrations of the normal action of the faith of Christians. He might as well charge the horrors of a lunatic's dreams against the faculty of im-