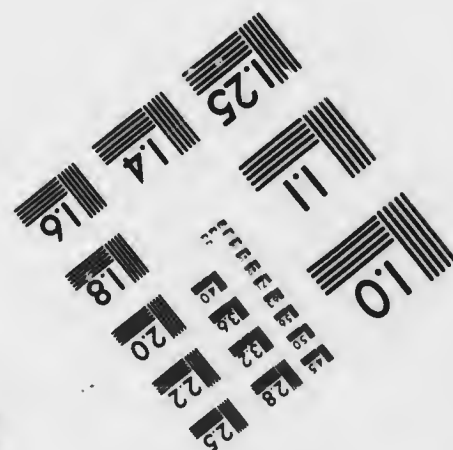
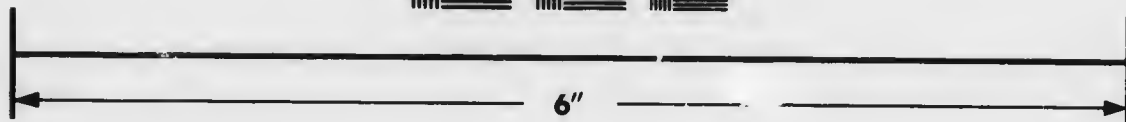
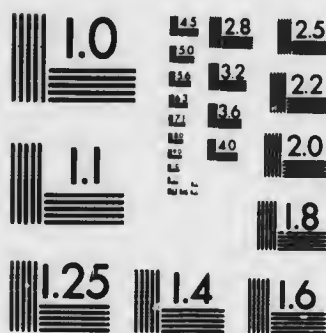


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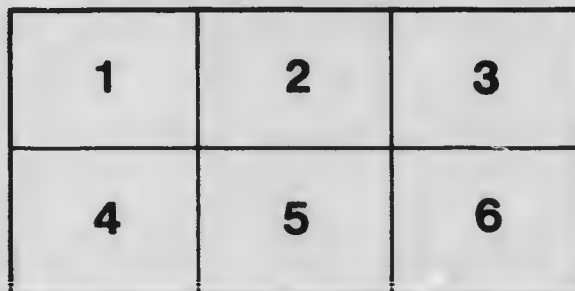
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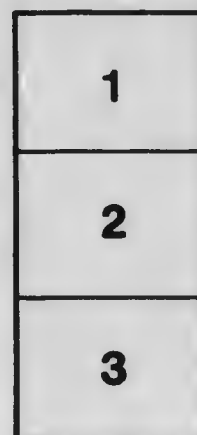
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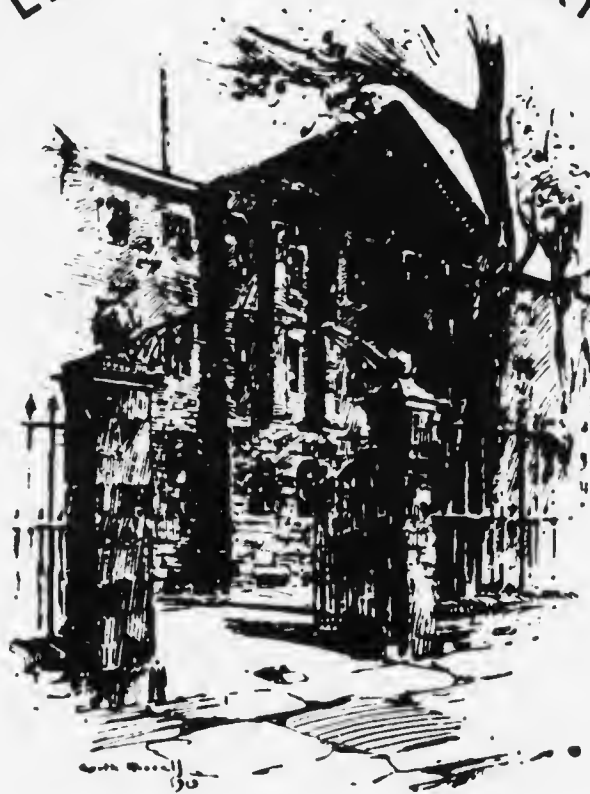
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Henry B. Halliday

THE
DECALOGUE



THE BEST

W. A. Hendry
SYSTEM OF ETHICS. *Halifax*
1844
@ Nash
3

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM T. WISHART,
MINISTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH,
ST. JOHN, N. B.

HALIFAX:

PRINTED BY J. BOWES.

1842.

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TO THE
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY,
In the University of Edinburgh.

REVEREND SIR,

I take the liberty of prefixing your revered name to this Essay on the Decalogue. I have two reasons for doing so,—The one is, that in common with the age, I consider you beyond all comparison the brightest ornament of the Church of Scotland; the other is more pertinent to the theme; it is this—that if this Essay contains any principles likely to be useful, the praise belongs mainly to you, since it was in your Class and from your Lectures that I imbibed the elements of these principles.

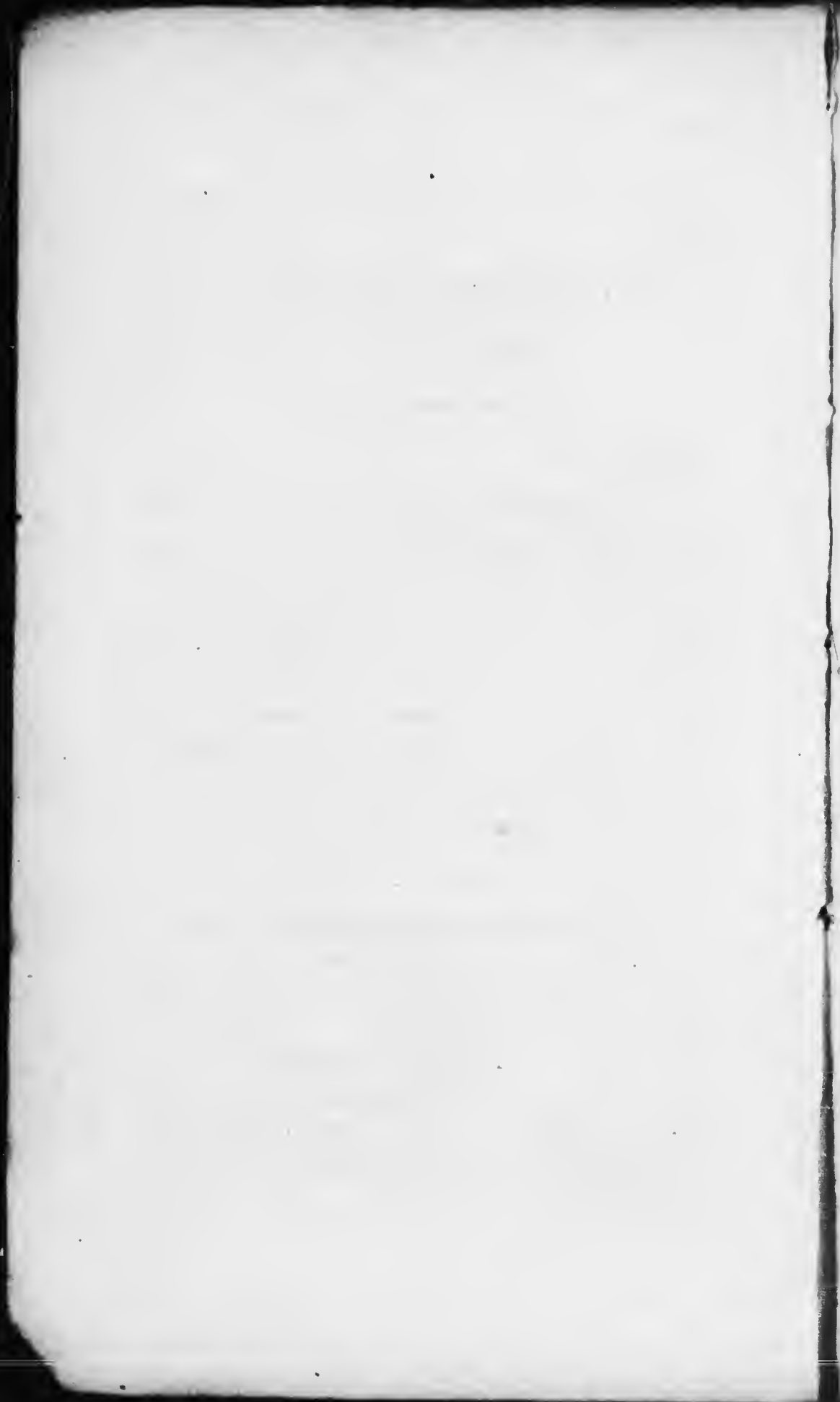
Sincerely hoping that God may long spare you to charm and improve your generation,

I have the honor to be, Reverend Sir,

Your most Obedt. Servt.

And ardent admirer,

W. T. WISHART.



INTRODUCTION.

There was a time when science and religion were so directly opposed, that the followers of science were prone to think, that they could advance no stronger claim to the attention of the reflecting part of mankind, than an avowed and thorough dislike to revelation,—whilst the votaries of religion were disposed to corroborate their pretensions to piety, by asserting in no measured language an unequivocal aversion to the speculations of science. That time is already ebbing fast away. More than one of the sciences, has in these latter days come forward, to offer allegiance to the word of God, and to avail itself of the disclosures of revelation; and several of the master spirits of theology, in our days, have derived a chief share of their strength, their eloquence, their attractiveness, and their celebrity, from this source—that they have discerned the relation which really exists between the *natural* and the *moral* world—that they have contended for an alliance between the two—that they have maintained science to be the best commentator on religion, and religion to be the natural and enlightened patroness of science.

GEOLOGY having at an early period of its career, attacked the method of the creation detailed in the sacred volume, has gradually changed its views in proportion as it has multiplied its phenomena, and enlarged its outline, and now having grown to the height and size of a regular system, has freely confessed that the Mosaic account is that which the best corresponds with all the facts, and that which is liable to the fewest objections. So then the word of God, and that by the admission of those who have no relish for its spiritual disclosures, contains the most luminous view of an intricate science, and unfolds by statements wonderfully few and simple the order in which the materials of the world were put together, the manner of that catastrophe by which the original harmony was disturbed, the nature of those convulsions whereby strata were torn up and piled on one another, and maritime deposits were scattered over the surface of the earth, from its lowest plains up to the pinnacles of its loftiest mountains.

BOTANY having long pursued its researches without any correspondence with holy writ—and indeed, without any suspicion that scripture could throw light on its domain, after having made more than one arrangement and rejected it, as erroneous or incomplete, has, we are informed, discovered that the *three-fold* division under which Moses classifies the vegetable products, is that which the best shuts in the whole phenomena of the science.

POLITICAL ECONOMY beginning its enquiries in a direction as remote as might be from revelation, and continuing these in a spirit which had no sympathy with divine truth, has come at length to see that the scriptures involve within them all that is solid or valuable in the science—has discovered that to carry forth the plain principles of the Gospel into the management of society, is really to put into operation the doctrines of the science, is to ensure the peace and order of communities, is to promote their prosperity and opulence, is to check an excess of population, or to provide a vent for that excess, is to establish the most wholesome rules of commerce, is to plant the most liberal, enlightened and beneficent institutions, is to bring in the most salutary laws for the abolition of intemperance and crime, for the relief of disease and lunacy, of suffering and pauperism.

ASTRONOMY has in many instances raised itself in direct opposition to the word of God, attacking it sometimes in its whole extent, and sometimes in particular portions,—sometimes denouncing the whole plan of the scriptures as at variance with the laws which obtain in the celestial world,—sometimes aiming its assaults at separate portions and specific statements. The breach seems now to be healed. Several eminent men not more conversant with the principles of astronomy than they were with the doctrines of the Gospel, have shewn in treatises admirable alike for learning and eloquence, for acuteness and piety that

there is no real discord between the declarations of scripture and the discoveries of astronomical science,—nay, that there is an intimate harmony between the two—Perhaps ere long the Astronomer may ascertain that divine wisdom coalesces even more exactly with human science than he had supposed—perhaps he may soon find that scripture has anticipated his discoveries, and contains within it the grand arcana of his art.

ANATOMY, as much as any of the branches of knowledge, has manifested an infidel spirit, and has directed many sharp and malicious attacks against the word of God. Since the time that Paley made use of its phenomena to prove and illustrate the wisdom, skill, and benevolence of the Almighty, in the zoological kingdom, it seems to have lost some portion of its irreligious temper,—and there are various symptoms which lead to the opinion that it is on the eve of coming forward as an ally of the truth as it is in Jesus.

CHEMISTRY has in some cases displayed an open enmity to revelation; and in many more has exhibited toward it a cold, jealous, and suspicious spirit. But the change which came over the other sciences has in some degree extended its influence to this one. There are those who think that the Bible, so far from contradicting, corroborates the results of chemical research. There is at least one pointed expression in the scriptures, that would seem to imply an allusion to the

discoveries of this art. When the Apostle Heb. XI. 3. uses the language, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made *of things which do appear*," he may be considered to unfold one of the leading principles of chemical philosophy, and may be understood to allude to those gaseous elements, by which out of two or more imperceptible fluids, things visible are produced. Beginning from this point, it might be that the inquirer may yet find the principles, and axioms of the chemical science mixed and blended with the doctrines of the holy scriptures.

That PHYSICAL science should have kept aloof from revelation, and should have endeavoured to appropriate to itself a separate and independent domain, is, however eccentric it may seem, not so extravagant and absurd, as that ethics should from its rise down to a very recent period, have refused any alliance with revealed religion. That men should fail to perceive the relations that exist between the kingdoms of *nature* and *grace* may appear strange, considering how manifold and how obvious these are, as well as how frequently the two are conjoined in the scriptures. That they should be so dim-sighted as not to discern the family likeness that exists between the worlds of *creation* and *redemption*, more especially when inspiration takes such pains to point them out, may seem an uncommon instance of dulness and unbelief. But how shall we characterise in language sufficiently

energetic, the folly and the wickedness of that view which divorced what God had joined, which made two sciences of religion and morals which looked upon them as so wide apart that it was not possible to consider them together?—and yet such is the system that has prevailed in the christian world for centuries, that has been supported by the acumen, the rhetoric and the wit of many of the leading intellects of each period, that has found vogue and favour in the halls of learning and the schools of science, that has been upheld even by schoolmen and divines. Strange as it seems, when calmly considered, it is nevertheless true that the science of Ethics has generally chosen to take its stand at the antipodes of revealed religion,—that philosophy and scripture have usually been set in the broadest contrast to one another, that in the long catalogue of eminent writers on morals, few have been believers, many have been avowed infidels, and by much the larger number have had the taint of scepticism about them. The ancient philosophy of Greece and Rome, and that also of Babylon and Alexandria professed to be the antagonist of the popular superstition,—and in those times to belong to the schools and academies, almost necessarily involved an opposition to the general vulgar creed of the country. It was not surprising that in these circumstances, science refused an alliance with religion, since science with all its failings sincerely aimed at the improvement of human intelligence; whereas the religion of the times was ingeniously contrived to pollute and to degrade the

minds of men. But it is very singular that since the promulgation of the Gospel,—and since the publication of a scheme divinely adapted to enlighten the mind, and to ameliorate the heart,—pregnant with all the elements of wisdom and goodness, ethical philosophy should evince the like disposition to stand alone, and the same aversion to an alliance with religion. During the early history of the Church of Christ, some symptoms of this spirit discovered themselves,—for even then there were some who laboured to produce a separation between human and divine wisdom, and who regarded philosophy as pure, in direct proportion as it kept aloof from revelation. As the church grew older and as writers increased, this opinion shewed itself with still greater boldness. Throughout the middle ages it is possible to trace out a line of sceptical philosophers, who confounding the Gospel with its perversions, gloried in standing back from the religion, or as they represented it the superstition of their times. But it is *since* the reformation, that this spirit has manifested itself in its fullest vigour, and in its hardest aspect. The independence of thought which that great revolution brought in, has displayed itself not only in that which is good, but in that which is evil likewise; not only in the writings of the advocates of religion, but in those of free-thinkers and infidels.

In FRANCE it may be said with almost sweeping generality that the Ethical philosophy has worn a decidedly irreligious appearance, and that from Montaigne, the earliest of her Metaphysical writers, down

to those of the present day, the authors of that country have drawn a broad line between morals and religion, and even those who have not stood forth the open assailants of revelation, have studiously avoided any alliance or co-operation with the word of God.

IN GERMANY the influence of reformed doctrines has been greater, and hence it is necessary to speak with more reserve in regard to her philosophy; still it may be asserted with every degree of truth that her moralists have not generally been believers, that the tone of their writings has for the most part been irreligious, and that many of the first authors of that country have been the undisguised assailants of revealed religion.

BRITAIN which during the three last centuries has been above all other countries the defender of the faith, the champion of the gospel;—has produced a long catalogue of illustrious writers who have acted upon the principle that there is an essential line of separation between morals and religion, between the philosopher and the christian, between the domain of reason and the domain of faith; Hobbes and Shaftesbury, Mandeville and Tindal, Hume and Smith, Payne and Godwin have handled ethical subjects with an avowed disrelish to the doctrines of revelation; Locke and Berkely, Hutchieson and Reid, Beattie and Stewart, Brown and MacIntosh have treated of morals with such studious silence in regard to our religion as might lead one to suppose that they had never heard of its existence; and even such writers as Sherlock, Butler,

and Paley, altho' they have set themselves forward as defenders of the faith, and have avowedly spoken of ethics in connection with revelation, have yet been remote from perceiving the full compass of the matter, have been contented to consider religion as the help, or the adjunct or the colleague of morals, instead of asserting it to be the foundation, the point of departure, the parent, and the umpire.

The authors who have come nearest to the truth, have lived within this present century; Hannah More and Wardlaw have had some bright views of the true state of the matter. They have not merely like Paley, called in religion to give evidence nor to act as interpreter, when reason was obviously at fault, but they have contended each in a measure that religion should be assumed as the basis of morals. Our wish is to carry the doctrine several degrees further: In the following treatise we shall not be satisfied to regard the Bible as having some bearing upon morals, or yet to consider it as a prop, an ally or an interpreter of ethical science—we shall seek to place it on a much loftier eminence. Our endeavour shall be to prove not merely that it contains the general principles of morals, but that it sets forth a distinct *system* complete in all its parts, wanting in none of its particulars, pure and perfect as its divine artificer, eminently wholesome and beneficial in its practical results, admirably symmetrical, harmonious, orderly, philosophical in its connections and arrangements, and on all these accounts, loudly claiming to be considered the recognised

and infallible code of human duty. In which attempt should our views prove to be sound, we believe that we shall effect something in the way of shewing revelation and true philosophy to be more nearly akin than intellectual men commonly suppose them to be ; and as every advance in theoretical knowledge leads to improvements in practice, our efforts if successful, will conduct to an amelioration in the actual conduct of life. It may be that the subject will not be permitted to rest where we lay it down. Men of large volume of mind, and of acknowledged penetration, set off by commanding eloquence, will perhaps be induced to lend to it the influence of their powers, they will search out its connections, will develope its bearings, will draw out its consequences, until the Bible shall appear even to the dim-sighted a book of morals, until sound sense and science shall be accounted synonymous, until truth shall come to be viewed as the most wholesome metaphysics, and holiness to be considered the most sublime philosophy.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE MORAL FACULTY.

A topic which has caused much discussion among mental philosophers is, the very important question—Are men endued with the power of perceiving moral relations or are they not? Scepticism has found much delight in maintaining the negative position. The great variety of opinion that is to be observed in different countries and periods as to the morality of actions, is the chief ground upon which the advocates of the doctrine attempt to build their argument. That according to the laws of Lycurgus, theft, if undiscovered was held to be no crime, that among the Greeks and Romans the exposing of children was permitted by the state, that there are some countries in which infanticide is allowed and sanctioned; others in which suicide has been held a heroic deed; some in which an indiscriminate intercourse of the sexes has been permitted; others in which polygamy is generally practised, and the female sex degraded to a very low condition; some in which human sacrifices are offered to the deities; others wherein it is held lawful to follow out an injury with the most implacable revenge; some in which single combat is openly countenanced; others where the

nuptial tie has scarcely any force and adultery is commonly perpetrated : because of these and similar anomalies in the opinion and practise of mankind, it has been a favorite notion with several free-thinking philosophers, that there is no sense of moral relations in the structure of the human mind. If the very conception of a moral faculty, necessarily implied a power wholly independent of all circumstances, and unlike the other faculties essentially incapable of variation and change, then would the above argument be quite unanswerable : but if it be reasonable to suppose, that this power like the others is liable to be affected by the accidents of natural temperament, education, position, country and climate then to allege these variations is but to say that it is human, and shows an analogy with the other faculties. To imagine that there should be in the mind one power, which different from the others never vacillates, never varies, but performs its functions, and gives its decisions with the absolute regularity of MECHANICAL ACTION, is to introduce an entire alteration into the arrangements of the moral world, is to annul the possibility of evil, is to deny the fact of original sin, is to transform man from a creature prone to transgression, into one constitutionally incapable of moral wickedness or error. To imagine a moral faculty sternly fixed, while all around it is fluctuating, is to involve all these consequences, is to banish guilt from the earth and to transmute man at once into a perfect being. Such anomalies in opinion and conduct are quite reconcilable with the notion, that we possess a power of

discerning between right and wrong ; they are within certain limits, they never proceed to such an extent as wholly to abrogate all distinction between good and evil, otherwise society could not hold together ; some of them are practised only during peculiar crises of the community, some are permitted rather than sanctioned, many of them are regarded as crimes, and reprobated as such, by the reflecting and decent portion of the very population among which they are practised. The moral sense is neither so variable, nor so dull as sceptics would represent it ; the practices to which they point are more the result of accidental circumstances than the deliberate expression of the moral sentiments of communities. To consider the moral faculty a *plastic* power, which certain influences may hurt while others may benefit it, to hold it to be susceptible of improvements by culture and education, is to suppose harmony and resemblance in the elements of the mind. But there is a plain argument, that should have entirely precluded the fancy of which we have spoken—God has addressed himself to us as moral agents ; he distinctly looks upon us as endowed with the ability to distinguish between evil and good—every word of his scriptures proceeds upon the notion that we possess moral capabilities—every line of the inspired volume is a standing evidence in favour of a moral faculty : to allege the contrary is to declare that the Almighty was guilty of a tissue of extravagant follies in publishing his revelation to men, it is to accuse him of presenting light to those who had no eyes, of uttering

sounds to those who had no ears, of addressing wisdom to those who were by their natural structure incapable of understanding. The existence of the Bible is an argument in proof of a moral faculty, as valid and as intelligible, as the existence of sound is an argument for a hearing faculty,—as the existence of odours is an evidence in favour of a sense of smell.

Another question, but one of a more legitimate nature is this: a moral faculty being granted what is that particular power, which renders us capable of judging of the value of actions?

On this head there has been much ingenious trifling, and some sound discussion among philosophers. One of the most acute thinkers of modern days, has endeavoured to show that the moral power consists in a certain ability to enter by sympathy into the feelings of others,—that when actions are of a virtuous nature, this sympathy is of a pleasurable description,—when they are of a vicious sort, an involuntary feeling of pain is occasioned;—his view is shewn up with eloquence and ingenuity,—but it is a false and an unworthy conception:—it is to make an animal instinct of what surely is the highest property of the mind; it is to render our moral decisions altogether dependant upon the mechanism of the sentient part of our constitution;—it is to make men high or low in the moral scale, not in the ratio in which their moral and intellectual powers are cultivated, but in the proportion that the nervous system is susceptible or dull. Several of the first authorities in ethical science, have been of opinion,

that the safest and most natural method of accounting for the different phenomena is, to consider that there is a distinct faculty set apart for the perception of moral relations. In favour of this view, it may be alleged, that it is analogous to what obtains in the other parts of our fabric. As each of the senses has an organ of its own, so it may be regarded as consonant to this arrangement, that so important a quality as the perception of right and wrong, should not share with some other faculty, but should have an organ peculiar to itself; many of the most accurate thinkers in moral philosophy have adopted this view, and have vindicated it with much force of argument. Another opinion which has enjoyed considerable credit, and which has been illustrated with much ability is, that the reason is the instrument of moral perceptions, and that it is erroneous to suppose the existence of a distinct faculty. In regard to this scheme it may be said to have the appearance of simplicity, which is a high recommendation to an intellectual system. It proceeds upon the principle of refusing to imagine a new cause, if an old one can by any means be made to answer. It may defend itself upon what is seen to happen in the material world, where the mechanism is invariably as simple as can be conceived, and where the Almighty never makes use of a complex structure, where a simple arrangement will as completely effect the end; on the other hand, it may be alleged with an appearance of justice, that to make the reason the moral faculty, is to compel one power to

perform too much labour, is to confound together two departments, which are separated by a well defined line. The verdict of reason, say they who maintain a separate moral faculty, is cold and passionless. It pronounces judgment under circumstances in which there is no room for emotion. It decides in situations, where its assent or dissent is alike calm and abstract. It judges of relations which are not calculated to excite feelings either of approbation or dislike. Whereas say they, when the morality of actions is the matter at issue, it is impossible to sustain the mind in such an attitude of indifference. There is a broad distinction between the states of the mind, when it perceives that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles, and when it entertains the feeling that parricide is a dark and hateful crime. In the latter case it is said, there is something more than reason,—there is an emotion superadded,—and to this complex quality they give the name of the moral faculty. One of the last intellectual systems which has attracted much attention, makes a threefold distribution of the tendencies of our nature, the ANIMAL, the INTELLECTUAL, and the MORAL. This scheme instead of assigning the reason as the instrument of moral perceptions as some have done, or instead of assuming the existence of one peculiar faculty, conceives the moral structure to be composed of a union of three elements,—benevolence, conscientiousness and veneration. Where there is an excess of the first, the character is distinguished by a strong inclination toward acts of sympathy, kindness

and charity, in which there is a want of exact propriety, and a lack of a lofty religious motive. Where the second predominates, the nature is more remarkable for rigid precision and formal decency, than for expansive philanthropy or fervent devotion. Where the third has the ascendancy, the mind is borne away by the reveries of a fanaticism, not sweetened by benevolence, not tempered by propriety. When the three ingredients are well proportioned, there is harmony in the moral fabric, it is humane, consistent and devout. To our mind this scheme which recognises a moral compartment as it were, made up of several properties or emotions, corresponds at the least as well with observation, and coalesces as well with the several phenomena as any of the other systems.

However, this question is one of METAPHYSICS rather than of USE,—a subject of theory more than of practice. When the general principle is admitted, that we are endowed with a power of discerning between right and wrong, it is a matter of philosophical analysis to determine where that power lies, and of what elements it is composed. There is an end to all morality, unless it be distinctly understood that we possess a moral faculty, and in virtue of it are responsible beings. But we may remain ignorant of the composition, structure and mode of operation of that faculty, and yet be fully sensible to the various moral obligations. Every improvement in theory leads eventually to improvements in practice. It would be well for abstract science,—and well for the conduct of human affairs, that men

should arrive at fixed ideas, as to the composition of the moral power; and yet so little indispensable is it that this point should be settled, that we could conceive centuries to roll on, and the world to improve in opulence, civilization, learning and religion, whilst all the while this should remain a matter, which the subtle could not penetrate, and the profound could not fathom.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE MORAL CODE.

The subject which comes next in the order of nature is the moral code, the objects on which the moral faculty acts, the things of which it takes cognizance, the system of rules by which it is guided, the catalogue of duties, the list of matters to be done, or to be avoided.

There have been many writers on ethics who have not attempted to pronounce a judgement as to the organization of the moral faculty, but few have handled these subjects without attempting to set forth a system of duties. During twenty-four centuries have such things been going on—along that great period have men been proposing schemes of Ethics, and new systems have continually been rising out of the ruins of the old. A world of discussion has arisen from this source; only theology has produced as much controversy, bitterness and strife. A large share of the intellect of the thinking part of mankind, has been bestowed in this enquiry. Treatises have been written so very numerous, that volumes might be filled with the mere enumeration of their titles. What is the soul,—whence does it come,—whither shall it go,—what is the list of

duties,—in what order should they be placed,—under what categories should they be distributed,—what is the nature of virtue,—has it an inherent goodness in itself,—does it derive its excellence from the will of the Deity, or does it owe it to the effect which it is found to produce in society,—what is the motive to action,—is it a regard to the divine will,—or a desire of approbation, or self-interest,—or sympathy,—or reason,—or a perception of expediency? These and a multitude of similar questions, along with an endless variety of minor topics, that have sprung forth from them, have employed a large share of the human understanding for more than two thousand years,—have absorbed a large proportion of the strongest intelligence which the earth has produced,—have engaged philosophers, scholars, orators, statesmen, generals and kings,—have engendered controversies, factions, revolts and blood-shed. Whilst we admit that this mental effort, continued through centuries, has done much to strengthen, to refine, and to sharpen the intellects of the men of each generation,—and whilst we allow that in this view the exercise has been productive of wholesome results, we consider that it would be very much better, could the science be placed on a foundation that was not liable to shift. We believe that it would be attended with incalculable benefit to mankind, could Ethics be made to proceed out of premises that were established and certain, instead of being erected on grounds that were loose arbitrary and variable,—in which case, instead of fur-

nishing merely a DISCIPLINE for the mind, they would supply it with matter of actual instruction ; instead of being a domain for fancy to expatiate within, they would become a province in which reason also might exercise her highest functions with profit. From the days of Pythagoras, the first philosopher of established reputation down to our own times, twenty-five centuries have run their course. The period is long enough to authorise conclusions in regard to the phenomena of moral science. To say that there has been no improvement in the lapse of so many ages, would be to say too much, for it is quite unnatural to suppose that so many minds could have been directed to one point without effecting some results,—and quite absurd to think that all the other sciences could have gone on improving without casting any of their light upon this. Still when we consider the length of the period,—the number and splendour of the minds that have entered on this department, and the vast advances that other sciences have experienced in the same time, we are forced to the conclusion, that the history of Ethics is anomalous and singular ; and that in its progress it has by no means kept abreast with the other branches of knowledge. It cannot in its career be likened to a building whose foundation has been securely laid, and which has been carried forward with a steady and gradual progress,—receiving additions from time to time, and acquiring breadth, height, and new decorations at the hand of each succeeding architect. It would be more correct to compare it to an edifice of

which the foundation has never been firmly placed, which has not received augmentations as time ran on, but, which each builder has pulled down, that he might rear it again upon a new basis, and construct a fabric in harmony with his own peculiar opinions and tastes.—Whilst MECHANICAL philosophy, proceeding from settled principles, has advanced commonly in a consistent and gradual course, gaining as it went, acquiring fresh facts from the successive minds that applied themselves to its illustration, and imitating the career of a mighty stream which encreases in depth, width, and majesty, as it rolls onward to the ocean—Moral science in its whole course looks like a plant which wants a root, or a fabric which lacks a solid foundation, or a stream which having no tributary rills, is dependent on the casual supplies from the atmosphere, and is constantly liable to be dried up. The oriental philosophy of China, Persia, Chaldea and Egypt manifested a sound and sagacious character, when it employed the domain of material or physical research. At an early period in the history of the world, the philosophers of the East had attained to a knowledge of the leading principles of geometry,—they had made a great variety of observations in regard to the laws of astronomy,—they had investigated the doctrines of arithmetic to a considerable extent,—they had discovered many of the leading phenomena of chemistry, and had applied them to medical science, or to the arts that embellish life,—they had adapted the principles of geometry to various branches of the me-

chanics:—but their speculations in moral science were at the least as visionary and false, as their views in this other department were solid and just. Their opinions in regard to the divine nature,—a future state,—rewards and punishments,—the structure of the soul; were of the wildest and most extravagant sort,—they pushed polytheism to its most licentious excess,—they attributed to the Divinity every foul lust which is regarded as the most degrading to human nature,—their ideas of a future life were vague and incoherent,—the joys of their heaven were composed chiefly of sensual gratifications,—the pains of their hell were made up of corporeal sufferings. It was a favourite doctrine with them to consider the animal creation as forming a graduated scale or chain, and to imagine that the soul beginning its career at the lower extremity, travelled upward inhabiting the bodies of different creatures, until it arrived at man the upper end of the series. It was a general notion in the schools of the East, that the world is governed by two principles, the good and the evil,—that all happy events are owing to the presence of the good, and all adverse circumstances to the rule of the evil principle,—that there is a continual struggle for the mastery between the two, and that the evil influence frequently obtains the victory. As to a regular scheme setting forth the several duties in their order,—insisting on each,—proving its obligation,—analysing the nature of virtue and explaining the mechanism of the moral faculty,—such a work seems far to have exceeded the

wisdom of these times, for we do not find even a happy approach to this in the whole range of the philosophy of the East—their ideas on these points were too meagre to compose a treatise,—too crude to assume the form of a system,—too absurd and incongruous to deserve the name of philosophy. Mixed up with this black mass of fable and superstition, were certain elements of a nature so dissimilar, as to authorise the idea that they proceeded from a different source,—that they were of a divine origin,—and were particles and fragments belonging to the word of God which had been carried into these countries by captive Jews,—or by men of that nation whom commerce had induced to leave their native land. When these portions are abstracted, the philosophy of the East presents a mass without form, without symmetry, devoid of ingenuity and truth. Greece derived its ethical and metaphysical theories from the East. Babylon and Alexandria were the schools in which Pythagoras and Plato imbibed the elements of their systems. Greece improved on the lesson she received. The doctrines of the East when they passed into the hands of her writers, were wrought up into combinations of much elegance, were united with other opinions, and were formed into systems that were frequently harmonious and regular, and that sometimes contained lofty and ingenious views. ZENO reared up a system very marked and characteristic, which pretended to raise the mind above all the events of human life, which put the sceptre of the universe into the hands of the philo-

sopher, and made him sovereign lord over all that could befall him here below. EPICURUS, or his followers, surrounded a scheme of thorough scepticism with the decorations of eloquence and fancy,—taught in alluring language the doctrine that pleasure is the only real good, and endowed with an air of wisdom, (the very prevalent opinion,) “Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.” ARISTOTLE with a mind of wonderful capacity and acumen, ranged over a large part of physical and moral science, collected his researches, distributed them in chapters, analysed each in its turn, and presented the world with a system almost encyclopediac in its dimensions, orderly in its arrangement, acute in its distinctions, profound in its investigations, and frequently just in its conclusions. Yet this remarkable system which continued to be the wonder of the world during at least fifteen centuries, however complete it was in other directions did not attempt to classify into a finished scheme, the objects of ethical science,—what it does contain on this subject is in the form of scattered notices and irregular thoughts. SOCRATES more than any other heathen endeavoured to draw philosophy from idle speculations, and to direct its attention to topics of a useful and practical character which had an immediate bearing upon the conduct of men. There is more sound sentiment contained in the small remains of this philosopher, which are preserved, than in the treatises of all the other writers of his country. But altho’ the separate truths are often valuable, he has

not even essayed to rear a regular structure, and to build up a system complete in all its parts. PLATO endowed with a fancy more lively and an eloquence more fascinating than were possessed by his master, has adorned the doctrines of Socrates with all the graces of rhetoric,—has carried them forth into elegant disquisitions, and has enriched them with new opinions the product of his own mind, or the fruits of his researches into the philosophy of the East. But neither has he sketched out a system of duty with the smallest claims to a solid basis, a complete observation, an orderly arrangement, or a correct analysis. Greece improved on what she received from the East, and reared up a scheme more comprehensive, more correct, and more graceful than what she found; yet when this scheme is subjected to the impartial scrutiny of truth, it must be acknowledged that it is remarkable more for elegance and ingenuity than for soundness—it does not proceed from certain recognised principles; it does not emerge out of axioms and first truths in which all acquiesce—it is not built upon a basis on which all meet on common ground—it does not advance with regular gradation becoming loftier and broader as it presses on—one philosopher does not take up the science where the other lays it down—from foundation to summit it is arbitrary and capricious,—each writer erects his own building, and frequently without reference to what his predecessors have done;—in all its extent there is nothing axiomatic, established, and certain.

Italy imported the philosophy of Greece, just as Greece had originally derived her philosophy from the East. Several minds of the first order, as well for vigour as for acuteness and elegance, applied themselves with enthusiastic ardour to the study of metaphysics and ethics. The Roman mind however, did not seem well adapted to these pursuits. The doctrines of the Greek sages were reviewed, analysed and illustrated. Their systems were exemplified and enlarged,—and yet nothing essentially new was added to their opinions. CICERO expresses himself with greater plainness in regard to the immortality of the soul, and the rewards and punishments of the future state than we find employed by most previous writers, Socrates not excepted; yet neither he nor any of his countrymen can be said to have made any important accessions to the science, or to have given it a new aspect, or to have established it upon firmer principles, or to have found for it a more permanent basis. The Romans paraphrased on the Greek text,—they amended, and they added,—but they did not imprint a new character on the study. During the first centuries of the christian era, philosophy was chiefly engaged in maintaining a controversy with the new religion, she found little leisure for those pursuits which more properly belonged to her, and as happened in France about the period of the revolution, she derived her title to the name of wisdom much more from the tracts which she published in opposition to christianity, than from her researches in the rightful domain of intellectual and

moral science. The philosophers of the first centuries were commonly angry polemics who wrote virulent attacks against the Gospel, or bitter satirists who assailed it with irony and sarcasm, or insidious humourists who endeavoured to undermine it by licentious pleasantry. When the gospel surmounted these attacks, and when the spirit which dictated them began to disappear, philosophy changed its attitude, and applied itself to illustrate, to embellish, or to defend the new doctrine. A large portion of those talents which in former times would have been given to subjects purely metaphysical or moral, were now devoted to subjects that sprung out of that new doctrine which was exerting such an empire over the minds of men. A large amount of ability was absorbed in the controversies of the Nicolaitans and Novatians, of the Essenes and Arians, of the Pelagians and Socinians, which agitated the church for several centuries, afforded an exercise for the controversial talent of the times, gave rise to numberless treatises, and engaged those minds which at an earlier period would have composed systems after the manner of Zeno, Socrates or Plato. Controversial treatises in which the orthodox opinions were attacked and vindicated,—disquisitions on the Trinity,—the person of Christ, original sin, and the method of the atonement,—essays on mysterious doctrines such as the incarnation, and the union of two natures in Christ,—discussions on wild and visionary topics, the nature of angels,—works in which the logic of Aristotle was

applied to the elucidation of the principles of alchymy or astrology,—of rhetoric or geography, or were employed as a method of discovery in regard to the doctrines of revealed religion,—treatises on practical theology, disquisitions on airy and fanciful matters connected with the intellect or its functions,—treatises of casuistry wherein it was attempted to bring together all the possible cases of conscience which could occur, and to set down a rule of conduct for each,—such were the directions in which the mind of the times loved to wander, and such the channels in which the philosophical spirit of the middle ages found its vent. In the course of those various productions every variety of intelligence is exhibited—there is capacity and depth,—there is acuteness and solidity,—there is massiveness and brilliancy; there are works of prodigious erudition, of singular elegance, of uncommon sagacity, of admirable purity and sense. Still throughout the whole series, there is little approximation toward that sound method of handling ethical subjects of which we are in search. The same arbitrary system which we have seen exercised in the schools of Greece and Italy, is to be met with throughout the middle ages. In all this period there are no symptoms to show that moralists had arrived at the discovery that it was possible to found their science upon a basis not liable to be moved, and that they might commence from axioms and first principles that are incapable of being shaken. Nothing of this sort seems to have occurred to the minds of men in these twelve centuries; their

moral philosophy from its foundation upward is variable and arbitrary ; it is without root,—without a first arrangement,—deficient in its induction, incorrect in its analysis.

The revival of knowledge introduced great and admirable changes into the republic of letters:—The means of diffusing information became incalculably multiplied ; the literature and philosophy of Greece and Rome enjoyed a wide circulation ; a much larger number exhibited an interest in the cultivation of learning, and almost every branch of art and science was studied with an ardour that had never before been so generally manifested. What more than any other influence led to the improvement of philosophy, was the appearance of Lord Bacon, who drew out a set of principles whose immediate effect was to produce a vast revolution in the art of thinking. The benefits of this new system have been more sensibly felt in some departments than in others. It has without question imparted a prodigious impulse to MATERIAL philosophy, which may be said without hyperbole to have advanced further during these two last centuries, than in the whole course of the many previous ages. The sciences of geometry and chemistry, with the many branches dependent upon them,—as also astronomy, anatomy, zoology, geology, agriculture, navigation, and many other arts highly ornamental or useful, have sprung into existence, or have received remarkable improvements in consequence of the inductive method introduced by Bacon.

Intellectual philosophy has partaken, altho' in a less degree, in the advantages of the new method. The principle that observation should precede conclusion applied to it, taught Locke and others to banish a mass of jargon which had passed for sense with his predecessors, instructed him to examine and analyse the phenomena of mind, and enabled him to construct a system more capacious and lofty, more accurate and graceful, than the world had seen before. During more than a century the system of Locke continued to be a text-book to philosophers, they commented upon it, they appended their glosses and scholiasts, they modified, retrenched, added and improved. Berkeley and Hume, Hutchieson and Smith, Reid and Beattie. Stewart and Brown, may be termed disciples of the school of Locke:—In their theory and leading principles they adopt his views, and it is chiefly in the accessories and minor details, that they depart from their model and express opinions peculiar to themselves. Much may be said in relation to modern philosophy, that cannot with justice be said in regard to that of classical times, nor yet of that of the middle ages. It recognises the grand doctrine that facts should be observed and classified, before theories should be formed. It is distinguished by a spirit of cautious attention to phenomena, that was rarely exhibited before Bacon introduced the new method of philosophy. It brings a copious induction of facts, in support of its positions. It has advanced a multitude of particulars in regard to

the physiology, structure and functions of the intellect, that were not understood or noticed by the writers of former times: whilst its views are generally plausible and specious, there are many amongst them that may be alleged to be placed beyond dispute. The facts which later writers have brought forward relative to the mechanism of the senses, their simple and their combined action, the association of ideas, the laws by which this principle is regulated, the influence which it exerts upon the memory and other powers, the anatomy of the judgment and imagination, the mode of action of the moral faculty,—on these and a variety of other topics, so sound are their views, that they may be said to present us with certainties rather than theories. Whilst we allow this much to modern philosophy, whilst we admit that it is seldom to be seen squandering its energies in matters entirely visionary and idle, whilst we acknowledge that it has made an extensive and advantageous use of the principle of induction, whilst we confess that it has enlarged the catalogue of interesting phenomena, and distributed its facts in an order more lucid and elegant than formerly obtained, we are far from thinking that in the whole extent it has pursued the right direction. On the contrary we believe that it has endeavoured to rear an edifice without laying a foundation. We consider that it has attempted to measure without employing the right rule, to steer without the right compass, to observe without using the right telescope: and the result of this has been, that the science instead

of moving forward with a steady, and as we might say, innate progression has gone along an eccentric path, and has manifested that arbitrary and capricious tendency, which we have noticed as one of the leading defects in the old philosophy. Mind being a spiritual existence, it seems a conclusion both fair and natural, that the study thereof should be entered into in connection with that book which above all others discourses of things spiritual, and opens up the mechanism of the heart. To carry on an investigation into the structure of the mind, without founding upon this book, without assuming its principles, without profiting by its disclosures, without even employing it in the way of reference or illustration, appears an act of gratuitous folly, which could hardly have been looked for from such a succession of writers. On account of this studied separation between intellectual philosophy and scripture, it has happened as we conceive, that philosophy in spite of the sagacity and ardour which have been brought to its illustration, and notwithstanding the patient attention with which its phenomena have been canvassed, continues thus fluctuating, and refuses to coalesce into a settled form. It has already been proved more than once, that the loftiest powers will miss their aim, if they obstinately attempt to reach it by a wrong direction. If it be correct to allege, that the INTELLECTUAL part of philosophy ought to be studied with a close reference to the word of God, there is plainly a stronger argument why the ETHICAL portion should

be investigated in the same light:—one may imagine a sound treatise on the laws of intelligence to be composed without allusion to the doctrines of revelation,—but it is barely possible to conceive a rational exposition of the moral duties, or a correct analysis of the moral sentiments, written without aid from that inspired work which is the repertory of all right motives, all good principles, and which is the great theatre wherein these views are exemplified, personified, embodied in the conduct of Christ and the most excellent of his saints.

It may be amusing enough to listen to word play, to observe skirmishes of wit, to notice men beating the air, to see them laboriously attempting to build without a foundation, and to perceive them studiously endeavouring to see distant objects without a telescope. It may be further admitted that such essays are calculated to sharpen and strengthen the minds of those who practise them, and of those who carefully observe their movements. But it would be much more interesting to the sincere friend of truth to see philosophers building on a sure foundation, and availing themselves of the powers of that telescope which is already provided for their use,—There would then be no waste of energy, no loss of time,—the mental discipline would be quite as complete, all the while that the search would be sure to conduct to solid results; moral science would move along a straight and well defined path, in place of threading its devious way through labyrinths and mazes. The world is old enough to be wise,—

and sound has already been too often mistaken for sense, words for things, and shadows for realities. In the whole catalogue of the writers on ethics, there is absolutely not one who has attempted to base the science in all its breadth on the word of God. The most have laboured to erect an edifice composed of their own wood, hay, and stubble. A few have been so discreet as to affect a decent regard for the scriptures. And even the one or two moralists who have been known to cherish a love for divine things, have been too timid or short-sighted boldly to assert the full claims of the Bible ; they have considered that it would evince a want of philosophy should they at the outset assume revelation,—and argue from its principles. They have cautiously ventured to employ it as a candle, but not until their own light failed,—to use it as a glossary, but not until they were brought to perplexity,—to make of it a telescope, but not until they were positively assured that they had passed the range of the natural eye. We accuse such writers of the very fault which it was their intention to avoid. They exhibited a want of philosophy when they shewed themselves afraid to assume the scriptures as themselves philosophy. They did injustice to the high claims of revelation, from a notion that by stating its pretensions low, they might propitiate the good will of philosophy falsely “so called.” In our opinion, intellectual and moral science will never cease to fluctuate,—will never fall into a method of progressive movement,—will never exercise a com-

manding influence on human society, until the doctrine be recognised and followed out, that the book which gives a delineation of the whole nature of man with unerring correctness, must needs be the highest authority on moral topics; until philosophers shall be persuaded that their surest method to collect principles and facts, is to search the scriptures, until it shall become the current opinion of thinking men, that the best philosophy is that whose premises and whose conclusions are alike drawn from the word of him who cannot lie.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE MOTIVE PREFIXED TO THE DECALOGUE.

The philosophy of mind has followed a wavering course, not so much for any want of induction, as because that induction has not been directed toward the right objects. During the two last centuries, that same method of observation which has been applied to natural science, and which has pressed it onward with wonderful speed, has been directed also to moral science, and in this case has been attended with comparatively trivial results. The difference is owing to this; that in natural science induction has taken cognizance of right objects, whilst in moral science it has attempted to act, without employing the right calculus—the word of God; and has endeavoured to excogitate the laws of the spiritual world, without calling in the aid of that inspiration, which alone can open up the mysteries of the spiritual kingdom. It is owing to an accidental circumstance, that moral science contains even the little truth that is to be found within its compass:—Philosophers altho' they studiously disowned any sympathy or alliance with the Gospel, could not so thoroughly discard its principles from their theories as they affected or

D2

endeavoured to do. Dwelling in christian lands, the doctrines of revelation insinuated themselves into their treatises, in spite of all their attempts to preserve them free from such elements;—owing to which circumstance the science has contained some particles of truth, and its positions and conclusions have not been infected with all pervading fallacy. We consider the unassisted mind as unable to arrive at the first principles of Ethics, or as incapable without help, to trace these principles when found to their rightful consequences, as we regard the unassisted eye to be unable to survey the appearances of the most remote of the planetary bodies:—and we deem that moral science is in want of a radical reformation,—we believe that it requires as much to be instructed as to the functions of the Bible, as astronomy stood in need of the help of the telescope, and navigation of the assistance of the compass;—and we imagine that from the instant that this change takes place,—from the moment that Ethics clearly perceive the properties of scripture, and assume it as the foundation, the guide, the interpreter and the umpire,—from that hour a new aspect will come over the science,—it will dart forward with unexampled rapidity,—it will pass from the closet and the coterie to the thoroughfare and the market-place,—it will become the study not only of the few, but of the many,—it will exert a commanding and a benignant influence on the laws, institutions, and political welfare of mankind.

The first article in any system of morals, is the **MOTIVE** proposed to enforce the observance of its precepts; without this, a system even if in other respects it be faultless, wants that which is requisite to press it on the attention of men. In regard to this particular there has been as much discussion and as great variety of sentiment, as we have noticed to prevail in other questions of Ethics. Some have proposed a regard to **TRUTH**, as that which should dictate an observance of the rules of morality. To make the practice of principles which are quite at variance with the natural bias of mankind, to depend upon another principle that is just as opposed to their inclination, argues a degree of ignorance that is startling enough. To imagine that the corrupt tendencies of men are to be held in awe by a name, that principles most unpalatable to them are to acquire a relish from a word, is to set up a doctrine to which every page in the history of the world loudly gives the lie. Some again have maintained that the **FITNESS OF THINGS** is the basis on which morality should be built, and the motive that should prompt to its duties:—That these duties exert a wholesome influence on the order of things here below,—that they are calculated to produce harmony in the affairs of rational beings, that they are suited to the true interests of men, are points that cannot be contested:—But it demands a considerable reach of intelligence to understand such views,—and when they are understood they are not of such a sort as to

exercise a strong influence over the many violent passions of our nature,—to propose as a motive to the mass of mankind what is quite above their capacity,—and to think of governing the most stormy tendencies by a cold doctrine of philosophy, is to exhibit a view so wide from the truth, that the sober observer of human nature cannot well believe, that rational men could have ventured to propound the doctrine. Others have chosen to say that morality should stand on this foundation, that its principles are **EXPEDIENT** and **USEFUL**. Some writers of eminent talent have advocated this opinion,—we coincide with them in all that they allege as to the usefulness of virtue; but we dissent completely when they seek to make this the groundwork and motive of moral performance; if the vulgar are to be brought within the pale, they must be addressed by a motive more palpable; if the devilish propensities of human nature are to be controlled and put down, it must be by an influence greatly more energetic; if morality is to stand so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, it must be reared on a rock, and not on a basis that is liable to fluctuate. To propose expediency as the groundwork of Ethics, is to seek and to tarnish the lustre of the Godhead, is to defame the character of virtue, is to advance a motive which the ignorant cannot appreciate, and which the wicked will not regard. Some again have spoken of **THE INNATE GOODNESS OF VIRTUE**; as the principle which urges

moral duties on the notice of men. If men were perfectly virtuous this motive would suffice to recommend morality to their regards; but in their actual condition, and with hearts thoroughly indisposed to that which is good, this principle can be termed only a mockery,—or a piece of refined sarcasm, which laughs at men as they are, by representing them as they ought to be. None of these motives answer the purpose: they are too abstract, or too weak,—too low, or too subtle; but where was the use that men should thus set themselves to devise a false basis for their moral systems, when God himself had provided a sure foundation? Prefixed to that code of divine morality which we are now analysing, is the motive that is designed to enforce its claims to our obedience. “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” These few words shut in a great amount of meaning—They involve all the attributes that centre in the nature of Jehovah, they include what may be predicated of him as he is in himself, and as he stands related to his rational creatures. He is “WITHOUT VARIABleness OR SHADOW OF TURNING,” which quality in him enables us to understand that his moral law, which is the express transcript of his nature, should be immutable in its obligations, and disposes us to listen to the Redeemer when he says, “verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till

all be fulfilled." He is infinite in his WISDOM,—and connecting himself in this open manner with his law, this ought to be an assurance to men that it reflects this attribute, that it is worthy of its divine author, and that all its provisions may be implicitly received as the exact expression of perfect wisdom. He is absolute in POWER,—by the word of his mouth the heavens and the earth were created;—which attribute of the Almighty serves as an assurance to mankind, that he has the ability to carry into effect the provisions of his code, encourages them in righteousness from the consideration that he is able to confer the rewards which he has promised, deters them from evil, from the conviction that he has the might to execute the punishments which he has threatened. He is perfect in HOLINESS. This quality which forms an essential part of the divine intelligence, must enter into that system of duties of which he acknowledges himself the author, and so entering in should give it a high value in the estimation of men, should fill them with a devout eagerness to observe a law which is thus precious, should move them with godly sorrow when they are tempted to transgress its enactments. He is "A JEALOUS GOD,"—which peculiarity of his character, is calculated to warn men not only that they should observe his law in its larger requirements, but that they should labour to fulfil it with scrupulous attention even in its smaller stipulations. He "HATES SIN WITH A PERFECT HATRED,"—which feature of the

divine nature is well suited to inspire holy reverence and vigilant practice into the minds of those who are anxious to obtain the favour of God. He is "THE SEARCHER OF HEARTS,"—which attribute, taken in connection with the moral law, is well adapted to teach men to examine themselves, is well suited to urge them to observe its injunctions with religious attention.—He has at his disposal REWARDS of so exalted a kind, that the mind cannot form even a distant conception of their value ;—and PUNISHMENTS of so awful a nature as quite to surpass the strongest idea which men can have of the terrible ;—which circumstances, powerfully appealing as they do to the principles of hope and fear, must exert a mighty influence in promoting amongst men an observance of this law. He is EVERYWHERE, PRESENT,—so that we cannot if we would, escape from the sphere of his authority ;—which fact viewed in reference to this code, secures for it not a local, but a universal acceptance, and serves as a warrant that it shall be the rule of men not only in the church and the market place, but in the secrecy of the closet and the darkness of the night, in the remote wilderness, and on the waste of waters. Moreover, Jehovah is connected with men by many intimate bonds :—He is the "KING IMMORTAL AND INVISIBLE,"—and as such claims from them the allegiance of subjects ;—He is the supreme lord and master over all things ;—as such he is entitled to the deferential obedience of men, his servants :—He is the maker of our bodies ;—in this capacity he deserves

every mark of external regard which we can offer, the service of the eyes and the lips, of the knees and the hands:—He is “the father of our spirits,”—by which title he merits all that inward regard, reverence and love, which we are capable of bestowing:—He is our preserver,—the bounties of his providence are new every day,—He feeds and clothes, he shelters and defends us, he heals our diseases, protects us by day and night by land and sea, he confers upon us numberless comforts of body, and countless pleasures of mind, we are living miracles of his power, patience and unwearying goodness;—In this relation there is a cogent obligation imposed on us to return him gratitude for all his benefits, and as the best proof that we are grateful, to revere the ordinances of that precious law which he has given as a rule to his creatures: Finally he is our Redeemer; Here is the strongest bond of union between God and men,—and here is a very lively inducement to them to keep this law, that “God so loved the world that he spared not his well beloved Son, but gave him up unto the death for us all;—In this view many weighty influences combine to press the moral law on the attention of the true believer: It is that code of precepts that is so momentous in the sight of the most High, that to heal the breach therein it behooved the second person in the Godhead should shed his blood:—It is that system of duties which “God manifest in the flesh,” fulfilled whilst he sojourned amongst men:—to observe this law is to set the feet

in the prints which Jesus left ;—to practise these rules is to walk on the very path which Jesus trod, is to “put on Christ,” is to make him the example, is to have fellowship with him and with his saints, is to adorn his gospel, is to cherish his spirit, and to set forth its fruits evidently before the eyes of men.

To make this the basis of the decalogue, is to build it on a very broad foundation, and to fortify it by a motive of surpassing strength ;—in this focus all the attributes of the Almighty converge,—his wisdom and power, his purity and holiness, his jealousy of his honour and his hatred of sin, his ability to discern the heart, and his omnipresence, his power to bestow infinite rewards, or to inflict infinite punishments, his benefits as the maker of body and mind, the preserver of life, the Redeemer of the soul. This many-voiced motive addresses itself to every particular principle in our complex nature ; It speaks to the lower and also to the higher feelings of mankind ; It discourses to reason as well as to the passions ; It makes an alarming appeal to the principle of fear ; It speaks eloquently to the emotions of gratitude and love. With A MOTIVE thus broad and plain, thus cogent and salutary, placed at the outset of the decalogue, it might have been expected that whatever difficulties men might feel as to ulterior matters, they would experience none as to the point of departure. When God with his own hand has placed his own divine character at the commencement of his system of morals, as the influence which is to dispel doubt,

overcome unwillingness, subdue frowardness ;—a the menstruum which is to reconcile men to holiness, and to render godliness palatable,—surely it must be regarded as a singular instance of foolish perversity that they should exhaust their minds in fruitless attempts to invent that which is already discovered, to find that which is already found:—surely their time would have been better employed, and their efforts better directed had they at once closed with the principle which God has unfolded to their view, and had they instead of impiously seeking to devise a better, occupied themselves in shewing how good is this one, how well suited to its purpose, how worthy it is of its divine author.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMPLETENESS OF THE DECALOGUE.

The first quality which ought to be considered in any system is, how far it may be said to include all the facts which it pretends to set forth, and to answer all the purposes which it professes to serve. When God's moral law is considered from this side, its divine origin is very distinctly seen. Whilst every other system has carried within itself the principles of short life and dissolution, this bears the mould of immortality plainly stamped upon it; whilst all other plans have lasted for thirty, sixty or an hundred years, and then have been pronounced defective or redundant, and have needed to be recast, or have been entirely superseded by a new scheme, this has already endured three thousand years, it has been tested in all the circumstances of the thirty centuries that have passed over it, it has been found to contain neither too much nor too little, and without one symptom of age or decrepitude upon it, it looks just as regardless of the lapse of time, as is the being of that God who gave it forth;—every other system which has been promulgated however solid it was, seemed to men to need to be modified within a generation, seemed to require to be entirely recast within a centu-

ry :—this one although many centuries have gone over its head has not begun to betray the minutest symptoms of age, or the smallest signs as if it needed revision. In all other cases even the admirers of a system were forced to confess, that the object of their admiration had its defects,—as that it made too much of some favourite notion, that it over-charged some points and under-rated others, that it erred by excess in some instances and by defect in others. In regard to the decalogue, though jealous eyes have been directed at it during so many ages, and although all the malice and subtlety of Satan and his adherents have been employed in attempting to find or to forge some sufficient charge against it, it comes forth more than a conqueror from every conflict; the scrutiny does it honour, the ordeal shews its materials to be eternal, the combat proves it to be clad in impenetrable armour. There is not on record one authentic case, it which it has been shewn to be faulty as to its motive or its arrangement, as to its quantity or its quality, as to its shape or its contents; altho' by very much the BRIEFEST system that ever was propounded, it is beyond all comparison the most complete; altho' its divisions are few, it includes far more than those systems whose departments were many:—TEN short principles,—so short that they may be all written on the memory of a child, include the whole of this law—lest even this should be too cumbrous for the mind to bear, the same God who sets forth the whole system under ten heads, con-

descends to give us an epitome, and reduces it to two chapters. This code then in ten articles and two sections, has stood the test of thirty centuries, has resisted the combined attacks of desperate, malicious and subtle antagonists, has endured the scrutiny of countless critics whose acumen was sharpened by abhorrence, has received no injury, has caught no taint, and has repelled all the darts of its enemies as with a shield of adamant.

Of the two divisions the first in four articles exhibits our duty to God; the second in six instances propounds our duty to men:—Four points shut in the range of duties which we owe to heaven,—six points include the duties which belong to earth.

The FIRST article propounds a doctrine, which, simple and natural as we call it, now that it is revealed, really lies so far beyond the unaided powers of men, that it could not have been known to them but by an express message from heaven. The UNITY of God, altho' evidently the simplest notion that can be formed as to his nature, is from this very simplicity placed quite beyond the reach of unenlightened reason; There is something too prodigious in the idea that one being should be able to regulate all the processes of this great and complicated world for any understanding without help to be able to come at it. Those of the philosophers who bring forward this notion or who approach toward it, in all probability learned the doctrine from the Hebrew Scriptures, which in one shape or other were more generally

known in the old world than we are disposed to think:—the view is notoriously too large for the grasp of the natural mind. The reason and the fancy cannot without express assistance body forth an idea so stupendous as that the whole frame of nature is under the government of one king. All that the unaided mind can do is to conceive a multitude of Gods, each of whom is somewhat larger in person and mightier in power than common men. The interval between the heroes and the gods of the heathen is something, but it is FINITE. The natural reason has no conception of the infinite. In order to govern the world the heathen are reduced to conjure up a multitude of petty gods, each of whom is entrusted with a separate kingdom of nature. God alone can understand his own character; he only was able to comprehend his own unity, and men of themselves were just as adequate to create the heavens or the earth as they were to arrive at the notion that there is but one Creator and Ruler. There is something unspeakably wholesome in this first article of the moral law:—the belief of it is calculated to explode a world of foolish, wild and impure opinions:—at one sweep it overturns a multitude of thrones on the earth and in the heavens, and places the sceptre of dominion in the hands of one great king. It dislodges the gods of the sea and the rivers, of the hills and the vallies, of the forests and the plains, of the sun and the moon, of the lower and the upper worlds;—and having deposed these petty princes it

casts all their provinces into the dominions of one monarch. Perhaps it is not possible to imagine the influence which the knowledge of this one article is fitted to produce upon men. Let two nations differ from one another only in this single point of faith, and whilst one of them holds the doctrine that there are many gods, let the other be informed that there is but one ;—this single difference will produce a most perceptible diversity in all the opinions and practices of the two nations. The belief that there is but one God is a bright sunbeam darted into a country of thick darkness;—it is a portion of infinite wisdom conveyed to the intelligence of finite creatures ;—it is one wise and powerful ruler substituted in the room of a variable number of bad, weak, and yet despotic Lords ;---we cannot estimate the amount of knowledge which this one doctrine imparts to men.

The SECOND commandment provides more fully for the fulfilment of the first, by stipulating that God will not suffer that men should think the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and mens device.—It provides that men should revere as it were the PERSON of the almighty, that they should abstain from reducing it to any of those forms which they are accustomed to see around them, and that the homage which they bestow upon him should be truly of a spiritual sort. The wisdom of this institution is best seen in those instances wherein the law is broken. Whether we turn our attention to the heathen or to the Jews, or to those who mix up idolatrous practices with

christian doctrines, we are presented with many and shocking proofs, how degrading both to head and heart is the worship of idols. Let any nation or portion of a nation holding the truth in other respects, allow this one ungodly practice to taint its worship, in the course of a single generation the intelligence and morality of that people will be terribly impaired;—and if the practice should continue during several generations without any check, few traces will remain of the science or the moral purity which it may once have possessed. This enactment is eminently qualified to render the worship of God an exercise of the higher faculties of the mind, and not a service performed by the merely animal powers. It is not practicable to make a calculation how much this one enactment has done to raise and refine the intellect. The most distinct ideas of its benefits are to be learned by contrast, and we can best calculate what this commandment does for the faculties of men by comparing the moral aspect of a nation of idolators, with that of other nations who worship God in spirit and in truth.

The THIRD commandment provides, that our reverence for the most high should be so thorough as to extend even to his NAME. It accordingly issues a decree against every kind and manner of the sins, which consist in speaking lightly or contemptuously of the name and attributes of Jehovah.

It makes provision that his holy name shall never be mentioned, save in those appointed seasons and

prescribed exercises, when we are engaged expressly in his worship, or in those other instances in which it is employed to give force and obligation to the solemn contracts between man and man. This enactment then, utters a prohibition against all those sins wherein the mouth is employed in speaking blasphemy, impurity and maledictions, it confines the office of the lips to uttering those words that are to the praise of God and the welfare of man.

The FOURTH commandment erects a religious institution, ordaining that one day in seven should be set apart for rest and the worship of God. Whilst it enjoins that the seventh day should be thus employed, it makes distinct provision that the other six days should be religiously consecrated to labour. The injunction that the sabbath should be a day for repose and public worship is not more peremptory, than is the enactment that the other six days should be employed in terrestrial toils; both stand on the footing of positive institutions.

The decree to labour during six days, and to worship on the seventh, is fortified and illustrated by the argument with which it is associated, that in "six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." The spiritual and temporal benefits that spring out of this single enactment are so various and great, that it would need volumes to set them forth. The vast and striking differences between the aspect

and condition of christian and heathen nations arises more than any thing else from the circumstance that the seventh day is hallowed by the former, and that no such institution exists among the others.

The FIFTH commandment expounds the first of that class of duties which relate more especially to mankind. It makes provision for the right observance of the relation subsisting between parents and children, and by so doing it lays the foundation of terrestrial morality broad and strong. By laying an emphasis upon this duty and attaching a high reward to it, the divine lawgiver commences a system of discipline at a time when his creatures are most susceptible of impressions and provides for the fulfilment of a relation, which when well observed, gives a form to the character that no future influence can alter, and prepares men to understand and to practise the duties that flow out of all the other relations.

It is not too much to say that wherever this injunction is begun early and in the right spirit, and wherever it is followed out consistently through a course of years, impressions are made which are never afterwards effaced, and a temper is formed which qualifies the man to adorn every situation in which he may be placed, and fulfil every duty which he can be summoned to perform.

The SIXTH commandment by its injunction "thou shalt not kill," requires us to respect our own person, and that of our neighbour. It does not merely repro-

bate outward demonstrations of violence, it does not merely condemn bloodshed, suicide and murder, but it denounces the feelings which instigate to such deeds—it stigmatises envy, wrath, hatred, revenge, and rapacity, which are the sources from which they flow. The right observance of this command directly promotes feelings of love, peace, forbearance, charity and kindness, and goes to eradicate every passion which under any circumstances would lead men to put forth the hand upon their own bodies or those of their brethren. Directing its censure against all those passions which give rise to deeds of violence, it provides for this; that all the intercourse between man and man should proceed in a spirit of love, gentleness and forbearance.

The SEVENTH commandment, “thou shalt not commit adultery,”—like the former reprobates, not merely the actual transgression of its mandate, but every thought or word which implies the existence of illicit desires. Carried forth in all its extent this enactment provides for thorough purity in the intercourse between the sexes, whether in the single or connubial estate. Were this admirable appointment fully observed in any section of society, the results which would proceed from it would loudly proclaim how good and useful it is—a great addition would be made to the amount of happiness, much peace and joy would accrue to the community, a valuable accession would be made to its health, opulence and longevity, some of the cruellest diseases which sin

engenders would be banished, and much of the most poignant suffering of parents, husbands and wives would disappear.

The EIGHTH commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," ordains a respect for the property of our neighbour;—It therefore denounces all that order of feelings and actions which are of a dishonest nature. Were this appointment carried out in its full extent, a measure of comfort and confidence would be introduced into the transactions between man and man that would render society something very different from what it is. It is owing to the circumstance that this institution is already partially observed, that society holds together:—It is because of the circumstance that religion, law and other motives have infused some degree of integrity into the practices of communities, that they are enabled to subsist in their social form:—If the degree of this quality was much smaller than it is, society would lose its adhesive properties, all its coherency would be abstracted, and it would be reduced into a number of wretched isolated creatures, forced by their own depravity to dwell at a distance from each other:—It is greatly owing to the fact that the commandment is carried forth in so imperfect a manner that social intercourse is tainted with so much evil; that such large armies are maintained by nations, that such great fleets are kept up, that such onerous taxes are laid upon countries, that such numerous and expensive police regulations are found requisite, that so many deeds of violence and murder

are perpetrated, that prisons are so numerous and tenanted by so many wretched inmates, and that there are so many laws and institutions which cramp the energies of men, and indicate the great lack of confidence that prevails in society. To make this enactment universal or even general, would abolish all this :—multitudes of strong arms and useful minds that are now engaged in repressing the dishonest tendencies of men—as soldiers and sailors, as police and constables, as magistrates, lawyers and gaolers would be left free to other and more useful employments ; one fraction of mankind would not be occupied in watching over the others,—the energies of men would much more than now be dedicated to really profitable avocations,—public burdens would be indefinitely diminished,—crime and suffering would prodigiously decrease,—wealth would flow into the community in large streams,—commerce would advance almost without impediment,—the causes which at present hinder peace and harmony, would be in a great measure removed, and the whole usages of society would speedily become more easy, pleasant and kindly.

The NINTH commandment, “thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,” ordains a regard to the law of love as it respects the reputation of our neighbour. As the preceding inculcates an observance of truth and integrity in our conduct, so this enjoins a regard to the same quality in our words :—as the foregoing commands us to keep a watch over

our actions, so this one inculcates a like vigilance over our tongues:—as the former demands of us that we respect the property, so this one requires that we respect the character of our neighbour:—it denounces all sins of the tongue, such as severe censures, bitter sarcasms, ridicule, harsh judgments, innuendos, slander and detraction; and above all the crime of giving false testimony against our neighbour when on oath before a court. In so very succinct a code of laws it was necessary to observe the utmost brevity of expression, that was consistent with an explicit statement. We are not from this commandment to imagine that only the most flagrant examples of sins of the tongue are forbidden;—a striking instance is selected in this and others of the commandments, with the evident intention that there might be no doubt as to the class designed;—we are not therefore to confine our attention to the maximum of the action or feeling, but taking it as standing for the class, we are to reason down from it, and to conclude that the minimum or smallest instance of the crime is as positively forbidden:—inasmuch as offences of the tongue are the most frequent of all sins, and are the most common source out of which spring almost all of the disorders of human society, to cut them off is to do much to introduce harmony into the affairs of men, by excluding the many evil passions which derive their aliment from this cause.

The Tenth commandment is as much a summary of the preceding five as it is an express additional institution;—it is placed as the fence of all the rest:—“The Apostle’s reference to it Rom. vii. 7 & 8 shews that it comprises the utmost spirituality of the law; and it is a perpetual confutation of all those systems by which the outward gross crime is considered as the only violation of the command; we must not so much as desire any thing whatsoever, which God forbids, or which his providence withholds; and so far from seizing violently on our neighbour’s possessions, we may not so much as hanker after them. We may desire that part of a man’s property which he is inclined to dispose of, if we only mean to obtain it on equitable terms; but what he chooses to keep we may not covet. The poor man may desire moderate relief from the rich, but he must not hanker after his affluence, or repine even if he does not relieve him. Men exposed to equal hazards, may agree to a proportionable contribution to him who suffers loss, for it accords with the law of love to help the distressed:—this exculpates insurance when fairly conducted;—but every kind of gaming originates from an undue desire and hope of increasing wealth, by proportionably impoverishing other men, and is therefore a direct violation of this law. In fine, discontent, distrust, love of wealth, pleasure and grandeur, desire of change, the habit of wishing, and every inordinate affection, are the evils here prohibited, and we know them to be the sources of all other crimes, and of man’s misery.

This command also requires moderation in respect of all worldly things, submission to God, acquiescence in his will, love to his commands, and a reliance on him for the daily supply of all our wants as he sees good.*

The system declares its divine origin, by this among other things, that although by very much the shortest scheme of morals that ever was proposed, it is beyond all comparison the most comprehensive and full:—it contains but ten propositions, which are divisible into two chapters or tables, and yet there is positively no one article of our duty either to God or man, but has a place allotted to it within its compass:—every other system of ethics, even those which have been the last advanced, which have been written in christian countries, and with the decalogue as a guide, had the authors so willed it, have erred by excess and by defect:—however ample their dimensions they have undeniably omitted some articles for which they should have reserved a place;—however distinct their analysis they have confounded what should have been kept separate, and have distinguished where there was no real difference:—however exact their arrangement they have in many instances reversed the true order of things. One error common to most of these systems is the THREEFOLD division which they make of the duties;—to God,—to our neighbour,—and to ourselves. Specious as the arrangement looks, the decalogue disallows it, and settles an order more

* Thomas Scott.

succinct, more philosophical, more lovely and holy. It considers that duty to God and man, shuts in the whole circumference:—it thinks that one rule is sufficient for a man and his neighbour:—it has contrived a piece of mechanism with a self-adjusting power, when it has ordained that the measure which we deal to our neighbour should be just that measure which we deal to ourselves:—it has enjoined a singularly intimate union between man and man by its very silence; by making absolutely no distinction between man and his brother, by placing the two by implication in one category, it has declared more loudly than express statements could have uttered it, that God considers his creatures as forming but one family,—that he desires their intercourse to be regulated by the very highest principles of mercy and love, that he will sanction no rule inferior to his own royal law—that a man should love his neighbour as himself.

The decalogue has stood the test of thirty-four centuries, and the result has been a notable confirmation of the scripture, that “the law of the Lord is perfect.” Charges have been brought against it from age to age, but the ordeal has only gone to prove its materials to be of eternal fabric. Its armour of proof has received no dint,—its wall of adamant, has experienced no damage.—The most expert, daring, and resolute of the sons of men have been among the assailants, but the law like its author has held them in derision. There is not at this moment one of these charges on record, or

if there are any the world has ceased to regard them. The tide of public feeling is rapidly running in an opposite direction,—laws and institutions are every day approximating more nearly to this divine model:—The usages of society are fast feeling the influence of its leaven;—and mankind seem to be on the eve of a period when this code shall be considered as—as much the work of God as is the sun or moon, and when all nations shall look to it for light, instruction and happiness.

CHAPTER V.

THE SYSTEMATIC CHARACTER OF THE DECALOGUE.

There is a strong disposition amongst many, who are not so decided in their views as to avow a disbelief of the inspiration of scripture, to treat the Bible as a work,—which, whatever may be its pretensions to holiness, has no claim to taste, elegance, symmetry, philosophy and method. Independent of all observation, it would seem an unlikely matter that the most high God, the source of all wisdom, would deliver a message to men which should be devoid of those very qualities of form and style, which he has taught his creatures to use and to appreciate, and which according to the constitution which he himself has imparted to the human mind, are requisite to render composition pleasing, impressive, or intelligible ; actual observation corroborates this supposition; the Bible is not that crude, formless, tasteless production, which free-thinkers and worldlings, would represent it ; every part of it is disposed with a method so exquisite, as to become more apparent the more fully it is analysed. There are admirable examples of every style that could be conceived fit for such a work. The historical narratives are remarkable for clearness, precision, and frankness. The portraits and biographies are bold, striking, picturesque,

and touching. The didactic and axiomatic portions are singularly terse, pithy, sententious and distinct; the odes and prophecies are in the very highest style of poetry; their diction is noble, their sentiments are sublime, the figures which they employ are, by the confession of unbelievers, grander, more various, and more appropriate than anything that is to be found in the whole range of uninspired composition; the epistolary portions are admirable for ease, simplicity and plainness; the orations which are interspersed through the sacred volume exhibit all the features of the most genuine eloquence. The Rhetorician might confine himself to the Bible, might make it his text book, and would find in it not only good, but the very best illustrations of his art in the whole range of its rules and forms. This has not always been the current opinion; even believers have been disposed to allow what literary men have been accustomed to allege against the external qualities of the Bible, but different opinions are rapidly diffusing themselves, and before long it will not be accounted extravagant for a man to say, that the Scriptures are as worthy of their author as regards their order, manner and style, as they are worthy of him in their other qualities.

What has been asserted of the Scriptures in general, has been frequently said of the decalogue. It has been allowed to be a good scheme of morals in the main, but having no claim to a regular plan, or a lucid disposition of parts; the accusation is quite as groundless in the one instance as in the other.

The decalogue possesses all the qualities which shallow thinkers deny it ; the induction is complete, for no one article has been omitted which deserves a place in such a system ; the analysis is correct, for no opponent has been able to prove any confounding of things identical, or blending of things dissimilar ; marvellously compact as to its bulk, like every piece of divine mechanism, it includes much more than human fabrics of much vaster dimensions. Complete in its synthesis, beautifully correct in its analysis, the materials are disposed in an order so lucid and natural that the fancy positively cannot conceive any form of greater symmetry. There is a general division of the subject into two parts ; this at least is consonant with the strictest rules of logic. Not only do these two parts stand in their proper relation to each other, the law of God holding the first place, the law of our neighbour the second : but the sections which each of these chapters comprises, are in the like thorough subordination to each other. The first commandment is a general proposition, and the three which follow may be considered to illustrate the meaning, and to unfold the contents of the first. What can be conceived more agreeable to the philosophy of thought and the laws of logic ? The four articles, three of them negative and one positive, so thoroughly shut in the conduct which the Almighty requires that men should pursue toward him, that we cannot imagine any particular which is omitted ! Is it not a feat of high philosophy to pack into so

small a bulk such an amazing amount of materials? There is the same order, precision and compactness about the second table. It sets out with an injunction which, if acted upon in its proper extent would plant morality in childhood, would nip vice in the bud, would make the paternal dwelling the nursery of all the graces, and would effectually hinder the perpetration of any of the crimes mentioned in the following five commandments. It was agreeable to the SOCIAL order to give this rule the first place,—it is consistent with the PHILOSOPHICAL order to set that first, which if complied with would prevent the necessity of the injunctions which follow. In this sense the fifth commandment may also be regarded as a general position, which comprehends what the five succeeding specify and draw forth. The minor propositions, as we may term them, stand in that very order in which their relative importance to the well-being of Society would lead us to expect that they should be placed. The sixth commandment is an admirable specimen of that ingenious brevity which distinguishes this law. Four short words plainly denounce all that multifarious class of feelings and actions, which lead us either to think or to perpetrate any evil against our own bodies and lives, or those of our brethren.—There is a check at the outset of the second table, there is another at its close. The fulfilment of the fifth article precludes the commission of the sins afterwards mentioned,—the fulfilment of the tenth has the effect not merely to

prevent the actual perpetration of the crimes, but the very conception of the feelings out of which they arise.—If ample induction and exact analysis,—if perspicuous method and singular compactness,—if perspicuity of expression and symmetry of form,—if depth of thought and intimate knowledge of men be any recommendation to a scheme of ethics, then is the decalogue not only, not inferior to any other,—but very obviously the most scientific plan that ever was devised.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MORAL PURITY OF THE DECALOGUE.

The purity of this system is remarkably brought out by placing it in comparison with any other scheme of ethics. Some of these have proceeded on the notion, that we have no certainty as to the existence of a God, —this one starts from the position, that this doctrine is as well ascertained as any fact in the whole range of things. Some have gone on the opinion that if there were a God, it mattered not to us, for that he takes no share in the management of the world;—this scheme is founded on the notion that God is the active ruler of all nature. Many systems were written under the impression that the government of the world is portioned out amongst many deities; this one is based on the dogma that there is but one God, and that it is extreme disloyalty to his name to suppose that there are more. The greater number of systems have been put together on the idea that there is an absolute barrier between theology and ethics, between duty to God and to men; that it argues a confusion of ideas and a want of philosophy to place them together, and that ethics cannot stand on a solid foundation unless they be kept in all their extent quite aloof from theology. This scheme is framed upon

the opposite view ; that they are branches of one stem, that they are twin brothers, that they are two chapters of one subject, that they must stand or fall together, that it is UNPHILOSOPHICAL to separate them.

Several systems have devoted much space to the enquiry whether men are endowed with a power of moral discrimination,—of what that power is composed, and how it acts, this one proceeds directly to practical objects, avoids such serious trifling, and shews that men HAVE such a faculty by addressing it with inducements and motives. Most systems have expended much of their strength in discussing the question, what is the proper foundation of morals, is it benevolence or sympathy, or the will of God, or the good of men, is it utility or the fitness of things, or expediency or truth ? After much disquisition they have frequently proceeded on in their career without positively fixing on a motive, or when they have made a selection, it has been one that wanted breadth or solidity, or strength or practical influence, that was but a name or a sound. Like the Brahminical cosmogony which rests upon an elephant, which stands upon a tortoise, these schemes were reared upon a basis which had nothing to support it. Whereas the divine law is built upon a foundation broad, sure, and that cannot be moved ;—the nature of God ;—the whole character of the most high with all its attributes, and all its bearings upon men, is affixed as a motive to the decalogue. Then what a wholesome and purifying influence

is there in the disclosure contained in the first article, that there is a God, and that he is *one*.—How salubrious compared with the dreary opinion of the sceptic, that chance or fate regulate the mechanism of the world.—How good and reasonable, compared with the doctrine of the polytheist, that the government of the universe is committed to the charge of many deities.—Without touching upon the religious aspects of this matter and its connection with the happiness of a future life, it is not easy to estimate the advantages which it confers upon the present life. It is by no means easy to bring together the benefits which it confers upon man, merely in an intellectual and moral capacity. When the circumstances of heathen lands are considered, two opinions are commonly found to obtain in their compass,—the notion of the multitude that there is a number of gods and goddesses,—and the notion of the few, who offended by the gross views and degrading practices of the multitude go to the opposite extreme, and maintain the blank, cold doctrine, that there is no God. From either opinion springs a numerous family of the worst vices.—The multitude indulging in hatred, dissension, violence, murder, and war,—giving free course to gluttony, intemperance, concupiscence, in all its forms, mixing up their most hateful sins with the very rites of their idolatry, justifying them by the example of their very duties, and placing the whole of their religion in outward forms, in sacrifices offered upon altars, in pilgrimages made to shrines, in unmeaning prayers uttered before senseless idols. The

philosophers exhibiting a little more refinement in their vices, yet indulging to a man in some of the blackest sins ; coldly sneering at the superstition of the people, wrapping themselves in the delusion that their own views were enlightened, and their practices comely, and standing in the midst of all the beauty, order and symmetry of creation, declaring that there was no king to this empire, or that he heeded not the concerns of his creatures. This single revelation must be considered as fraught with a peculiarly powerful influence on the moral purity of men. Then how admirably calculated is the next precept to carry out the spirit of the former. Omitting from the view that the worship of idols is incompatible in a spiritual sense with all true religion, leaving out of sight that the worship even of the true God under any definite form, is forbidden in a religious point of view, how well fitted is it to refine and to sublime the mind, that men are commanded to maintain all their intercourse with Jehovah through the agency of pure intelligence, and are commanded not to resort to sensible objects as if to help their minds. How much moral doctrine is contained in this enactment. Again how well suited is the commandment, not to take the name of the Lord in vain, to inspire in the minds of men those feelings of reverence and awe for the loftiest of beings. How much do such sentiments elevate and adorn the moral character, how low and tame and cold is the nature that has never been subjected to the influence of such a menstruum. Too much can hardly be said as to the

effect which a faithful observance of the fourth commandment is directly fitted to produce on the moral practices of men:—where it is obeyed through lively faith it must of necessity produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness,—and impart a high and wholesome tone to the sentiments and conduct of a people. Even where religious principle is absent, society receives many temporal benefits from this institution, in the propriety, decency and order which it communicates to those lying round the circumference of the circle, and who do not participate in the religious feeling that prevails about the centre. One day in seven dedicated faithfully to the Lord by a portion of the community, by the general moral influence which it diffuses, entitles us to believe that the effect of the ordinance would be prodigious were it observed by all;—if every one who complied with it externally did it from the heart,—if all who honoured it sincerely did it with all their mind and might. Even in the very imperfect manner in which it is observed in the countries the most leavened by the gospel, we can collect sufficient data to make up a landscape which shews a very marked contrast to the aspects of the lands of scepticism or heathen superstition. The different usages and customs that are to be found in the two examples tell amongst other things, how strong and influential is the keeping of the sabbath on the moral sentiments of nations.

The FIFTH commandment quite as much as any of the others, bespeaks the purity of this law, and

stands out in as high relief to the practices of the unbelieving part of mankind. The place assigned to it, no less than the sentiment contained in it, betokens the wisdom and holiness of the author of this code. It comes next after divine duties,—it stands in direct contact with heavenly things,—it is set in the fore-front of our terrestrial obligations. Sagacity and holiness meet together in this enactment. It is impossible to conceive a view better calculated to impress upon parents a strong sense of the importance of their functions, than thus to locate the duty immediately after things heavenly, and at the very summit of things earthly. The same consideration is fitted to act with great power upon the feelings of children, since it tells them by implication that it is the divine order that they should honour their parents next after their God. The purity of the precept is shewn up, when it is compared with the actual practices of men. There is more than one country where down to this day, this institution is so little understood or acted upon, that children regard it a part of their duty to slay the authors of their being when age has unfitted them for earning a livelihood. In several parts of the world where heathenism assumes a mild aspect,—where the people are by comparison humane, gentle, and moderately well instructed, it is a frequent usage for the children to cast their aged and decrepit parents into a running stream, or to leave them exposed in some place where wild beasts are wont to repair. Even in

those heathen lands where the religion of Mahomet, (borrowed in a large measure from the Scriptures,) does not sanction such barbarous and abominable crimes, the conduct of men is flagrantly at variance with this pure and amiable decree:—In these improved instances parents are far from claiming that reverence to which this law entitles them,—far from commanding it by their precepts, far from deserving it by their example, and children even where they acknowledge some respect for this duty, are never seen to fulfil it in any degree proportioned to its high and holy stipulations. Even in the regions in which the Scriptures are received, the sabbath observed and the gospel preached,—even in those districts and among those denominations in which the largest measure of the spirit of Christ appears to reside,—even in those favoured spots where the true leaven is purest and strongest,—where knowledge and piety are the most highly concentrated, the practice of men is removed at an amazing distance from what may be fairly taken to be required by this wise and wholesome institution. Whilst it may be alleged of the greater number of the nations which inhabit this earth, that they terribly sin against the duty contained in this enactment, it may likewise be affirmed of the few remaining nations which allow the obligation and affect to obey it, that they are so far from complying with its demands, that the amount of their defalcation forms the strongest argument which we can adduce for the spirituality of the

commandment. So important is it to the temporal and eternal welfare of men, that were we required to single out one reason which more than any other explains the slow progress of the gospel, we should be tempted to mention the very imperfect manner in which the Fifth commandment is carried forth, in the deportment either of parents or children; and this charge affecting not only shallow professors, but true believers. That institution must needs be eminently lofty and marvellously pure which thus broadly censures the behaviour not only of the idolater or the Mahometan,—not only of the Jew or the Papist,—not only of the rationalist and of the tame professor of the gospel, but even of that peculiar people, which small in number are the salt of the earth,—the leaven hid in the dough,—and the lights that shed the only benignant lustre that shines upon this dark world.

The Sixth commandment, brief as it is, contains within its compass more than was known to the heathen,—and far more than they practised. In theory they considered it right to carry out the law of retaliation, against the persons and lives of those who had injured them,—they regarded any measure of cruelty lawful when perpetrated on captives or slaves,—they believed it to be a justifiable method of averting a war or a pestilence to immolate perhaps hundreds of human victims on the altars of their idols,—they exposed or slew their children with the sanction of the law whenever the burden seemed

to them heavier than they cared to endure,—they maimed their bodies in the groves and temples of their deities, and so far from regarding the practice to be unlawful, they looked upon it as one of the rites of religion, one of the constituents of holiness,—they were commonly guilty of the sins of violence and assassination,—the punishment of the law often fell lightly on such offences,—the stigma of society upon them often was not deep. Suicide so far from being viewed as one of the very foulest of crimes, was positively exalted by philosophy to the rank of a lofty virtue. The sage was considered to shew his wisdom, and the hero his courage, by cutting the silver cord and shuffling off this mortal coil. The plain and peremptory language of this commandment denounced all such things;—it set forth a purer morality;—it made murder in every one of its aspects a dark transgression;—it issued a prohibition against every feeling and principle that was calculated in the remotest degree to conduct to this result. It promulgates a decree against the sins of anger and revenge, envy and jealousy, pride and avarice. So far from not containing the whole of human duty within its compass, each article of this wonderful code may be said more or less directly to denounce all the vices. And how can we estimate too highly an enactment which is intended to put down such a variety of the worst crimes? How can we speak too strongly as to the salubrious influence of a code, one regulation of which is designed to

thrust forth so much evil, and by consequence to bring in so much good? What an important place do these vices perform in every community of human beings,—how terribly do they invade the tranquillity of society, and what a moral revolution is it to introduce in their place, love, gentleness, charity and kindness?

As the next offence after murder, fornication or adultery is stated. The decalogue by the rank which it assigns to this sin, as well as by the absolute manner in which it denounces it, shews itself eminently wiser and purer than the views and institutions of men, even in the countries in which the Bible is openly admitted to be the word of God.—All through the world opinion in regard to this class of crimes, has been, and is, very wide from the truth.—In pagan lands there are few symptoms to shew that they are looked upon with much aversion. In some instances, the evil runs to such an extent that the intercourse between the sexes is almost indiscriminate and without check. Throughout many countries the crime interwove itself to such a degree with the very rites of their idolatry, that it was practised to the most frightful extent in the mysteries of their religion, during their solemn festivals and within the precincts of their temples. In many cases the priestesses, who administered the ceremonies of worship were prostitutes.—The law-givers and philosophers often regarded the crime with great indifference; were themselves confessedly polluted by it, and considered that restraint was more

a matter of expediency than a moral duty. In many heathen countries polygamy which can be regarded only as a mitigated form of the crime, was, and still is expressly sanctioned and generally committed. When the lands which call themselves by the name of Christ are surveyed, the report is not much more satisfactory. In many of the most civilized, the marriage vow is so little respected, that fidelity to its stipulations must be set down as the exception rather than the rule.—Even more common is it to see the covenant regarded as of so little force, that the most trifling difference is considered an adequate reason for annulling it. Throughout the whole extent, and in each particular country, illicit intercourse is so prevalent that a very considerable proportion of the population are not born in wedlock. In one large country it was recently estimated that one fourth of the whole population consists of bastards. To review the ideas and practices whether of pagan or christian nations in this particular, is to bestow a high eulogium on the purity of the decalogue,—is to cause its comeliness to stand forth in strong contrast. It does not tamper with the sin ; it denounces it with a loud and clear voice. By placing it next after the crime of murder, it assigns it a prominent but a right position among the vices. By giving it the name of adultery in all its forms and in all its degrees, it stigmatizes it in every aspect in which it appears as one of the most hateful of crimes. Does not an enactment deserve to be named pure which so strongly and

generally condemns the conduct of men? Does not this code deal more frankly and impartially with crime, than any system of man's invention?

Each of these commandments implies much more than it directly enounces.—The maximum of the sin is stated and reprobated,—not that we should infer that this is the whole stretch of the enactment, but that we should reason downwards and account every thing to be forbidden, which in any degree is calculated to engender the sin.—The injunction, “thou shalt not steal,” prohibits along with acts of gross theft, those feelings of avarice and rapacity which prompt to the crime, and those acts of duplicity and cunning which are employed to disguise and shelter the crime. As a proof that even this principle self-evident as it appears, is more holy than anything that was practised or believed by men in their natural state, we find the wise and severe law-giver of Sparta, permitting a departure from the rule of honesty, and fixing it as a principle of his commonwealth, that theft should be regarded as blame-worthy, only where it could be proved against the offender. If one of the most austere virtuous among the heathen, held and expressed such loose ideas in so important a matter, we may conclude very reasonably, that the views and practices of the multitude would fall lamentably short of this divine rule. When the eye is passed over pagan countries the report which it brings back is, that the law of integrity is violated in a general and flagrant

manner. Where the people is very barbarous the whole community stands forward possessed by the predatory spirit, and one tribe pursues such a ceaseless course of rapine upon another, as to give considerable plausibility to the theory of an ingenious writer, that the natural state of mankind is a state of war. Even where the nation is in a higher condition of political progress, it is strange to observe how many of its practices are either altogether or in a considerable degree at variance with the law of thorough honesty, how much fraud is perpetrated by the state in its dealings with other powers, or with its own subjects,—what a prevalent disposition exists among the strong to despoil the weak,—and what a woeful absence of integrity is to be seen in the general transactions between man and man. As a still louder testimony to the purity of this law, when those countries wherein the Gospel is recognized are surveyed, along their whole length and breadth, and amongst most of the classes which compose them it will be found that there is a strong tendency to measure by a rule which is not so long or so accurate as that of this commandment.—There is a prevalent opinion that it is no heinous sin to defraud the revenue; many of the taxes and imposts are very commonly evaded;—in most of the professions and trades various artifices are currently practised which do not tally with the rule of complete honesty;—and in every direction there is an inclination to pilfer, or swindle, or defraud, or to exact more than is strictly fair; and all this

is proved by the laws and penalties, and restrictions, and forms intended to check these propensities, and to introduce ostensible integrity into the transactions of men.—How pure must be that law which stands out in such glaring contrast to the practice of mankind, even in the circumstances wherein they profess to know and to act upon the truth of God.

As the eighth commandment forbids false CONDUCT in all its degrees, so the ninth prohibits false SPEECH in every conceivable situation. With a happy attention to philosophical gradation, sins of the hand are placed before sins of the lips because they indicate a higher degree of guilt, and are attended generally by more pernicious results. The loose morality current amongst men prompts them to deal with great leniency toward sins of this kind. Human moralists are disposed to think that crime is not crime until it has reached its last stages,—and sins of the mouth are passed by with a slight censure, because they are not so deep or so baneful as some other crimes. The practice of the world corresponds with this lax theory. In whatever direction the eye looks, into times ancient or modern, into lands heathen or christian, men will be seen to live in manifest and general disregard of this article of the law. The sin in all its various shades and degrees, as detraction, back-biting, slander, calumny, scandal, perjury will be noticed to prevail wherever the human family is found. Again the impartial observer must be compelled to own, that the decalogue is

higher by many degrees than the practice, and even than the speculations of men.

The TENTH commandment more than any of the others has respect to SENTIMENTS. The others point their censures in some degree at least against the outward act,—this passes behind the veil, walks into the shrine of the heart, and demands that the interior also be in harmony with the enactments of this law. The best devised systems of legislation, even those of them which were framed within view of the decalogue, have been satisfied to prohibit external transgression, and have not pretended to control the mechanism of the inner world. This scheme with an unfeigned desire that holiness should be seen not only in the conduct, but in the feelings, exhibits a watchful jealousy over things visible and things not seen. Thus from whatever side, and at whatever point this system be considered, its moral purity shews manifest and striking. In its relation to God, it lays down regulations eminently sagacious, wholesome and philanthropic, admirably fitted to produce a worship of a pure, intellectual and holy character. In its relations to men it disposes the sins in the order of true philosophy, in accordance with their real enormity and their social results. It exhibits its purity by making no separation between man and his neighbour, by confirming the parental authority,—by denouncing vice not only in its extreme, but in all its shades and degrees, and above all by attacking sin at its source and by demanding not only outward obedience but also the service of the heart.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UTILITARIAN CHARACTER OF THE DECALOGUE.

There are minds of a peculiar cast, which quite unable and quite unwilling to look at a subject in a religious bearing, shew an exclusive inclination to try it by the test of expediency, and a disposition to value it only, inasmuch as it appears to them of immediate benefit to the present condition of men. Minds thus unsanctified, thus gross and mundane, are in no degree moved by anything which can be alleged as to the moral purity and spirituality of the scriptures and the decalogue ;—the sole argument that will take their attention, would be one which should inform them that these things have a tendency to benefit mankind in their SOCIAL and POLITICAL aspect. With men of this sort it has been a common objection to revelation, that it is opposed to human improvement, that it is anti-social, being calculated to cherish superstition and bigotry. The most eloquent of this infidel class, has gone so far as to affirm that it is opposed to reason to believe, that any community of men could hold together, wherein the moral code of the Gospel was obeyed in all its extent. The objection, were there any truth in it, would go far to disprove the claims of the decalogue to be considered a code of divine origin, as it

would involve the absurdity, that God has promulgated a law to men, which yet is essentially opposed to the improvement of the very faculties and feelings, which he has implanted in their nature. But the objection is utterly false, and in its whole extent.

It may be alleged of the decalogue that it is benevolent and useful in its tendency,—with just as much reason as it may be predicated of it, that it is complete as to its materials, that it is pure in its motive, or systematic and philosophical in regard to its form. Nineteen centuries have elapsed since the moral code of the gospel has been displayed to the general view and scrutiny of mankind, and observation collects enough of proof along that period to be able to affirm with a loud voice, that the practical operation of the system has been signally conducive to the temporal welfare and the social progress of men. It had not been long promulgated before its influence in this direction became manifest to the eye:—the overgrown edifice of a false and sanguinary mythology throughout many countries tottered and fell:—the vast temples which sheltered the vices and errors of whole kingdoms were desecrated and torn down. The cunning and sensual priests and priestesses who in myriads devoured the substance of countries, and ministered under the guise of religion to the most devilish propensities of men, were driven forth to share in the useful toils of their fellow-beings:—the idols were melted down or broken in pieces,—the shrines were emptied of the precious metals that were heaped up within them,—the altars

were pulled down, and by their overthrow thousands were spared to benefit the community, who, had paganism subsisted would have been offered up as victims to propitiate the deities and avert a pestilence or a war. The mere subversion of idolatry did much to better the social condition of men:—It exploded a system filled with the most wild, fantastic, shocking and abominable ideas and practices. It removed an iron yoke which heavily pressed and cruelly galled the neck of mankind: it dispelled insane and prejudicial opinions on a subject of the loftiest importance, and one which is closely connected with all the feelings and conduct of men. It dispersed multitudes of designing men educated on system to do the work of the devil most effectually. It expelled rites, ceremonies, and festivals, that were not merely absurd and savage but that interfered very materially with the comforts and the duties of life.

Wherever this divine code was published the opinion gradually sprang up that slavery was opposed at once to the welfare of men and to the will of God. Even where it did not immediately introduce the liberation of slaves, it rendered their condition more tolerable, by laying masters under a moral obligation to treat them with greater kindness. As its influence increased in any country it brought complete freedom along with it. It abolished a large number of those shocking punishments which masters were wont to inflict upon their slaves, or which the laws of states permitted to be imposed on captives and male factors. It introduced



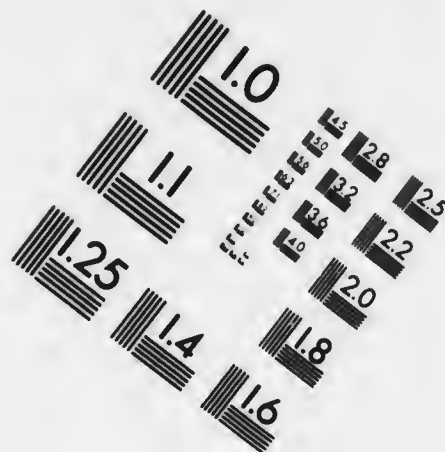
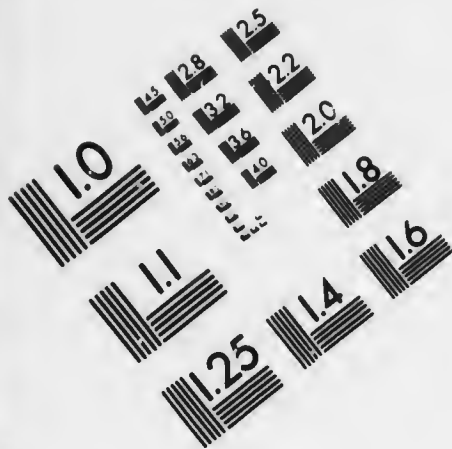
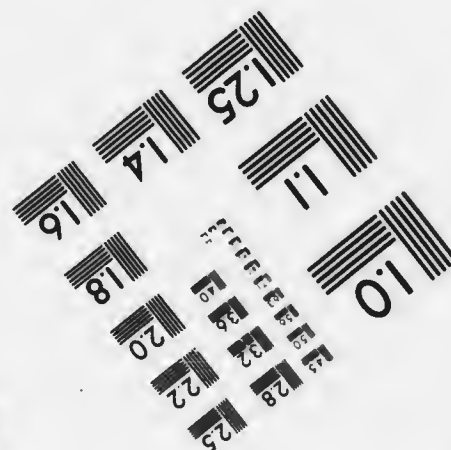
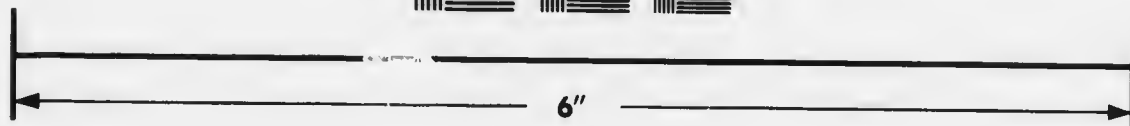
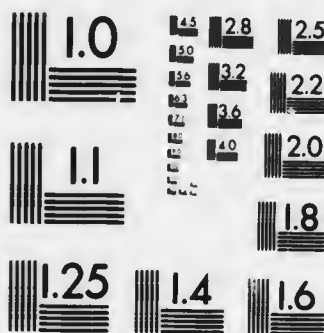


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the notion that laws might be just and rigid, without sanctioning cruelty and tortures. It found wars general and constant, and waged with such implacable ferocity that frequently neither age nor sex were spared, whole countries had their population swept away, whilst those who had the mischance to escape the sword, were exposed to the worst torments which the most ingenious barbarity could devise. It has made a great alteration here. Wherever it has appeared, wars have become much less frequent, and much less bloody, and even in their heat and fury, every act of needless cruelty is discountenanced, as opposed to true courage and unworthy of manly combatants.—The decalogue found one sex taking advantage of superior strength to exercise an arbitrary and often harsh dominion over the other. It produced a great and glorious reformation here also. In whatever country it was acknowledged, the idea rapidly sprung up that woman was destined to be the companion of man, to share in his pleasures, to participate in his sorrows, and to constitute one half of his existence. Thus wherever it made its appearance, it elevated the condition of one complete half of humanity, by many degrees, and by so doing improved the situation of the other half, almost in a like proportion.—This topic richly deserves that the mind should linger over it.—The benefits which this scheme of morality has conferred upon women, and through them upon men, cannot be enumerated in short space.—It raised women to the attitude of thinking beings, it liberated them from

the degradation of a merely animal existence, it secured to them a participation in all the avocations and enjoyments, that are compatible with their physical and mental structure; it rendered them objects of respect and true admiration to the stronger sex, it brought in a state of companionship wherein the one sex communicated a portion of its peculiar qualities to the other; it imparted to women some degree of the dignity and firmness more natural to men, it imparted to men an infusion of the gentleness and pliability more natural to the female; it introduced a class of sentiments which were almost unknown before, and which do more to render existence enviable, than all the other merely earthly emotions put together, it gave birth to that mixture of courtesy tenderness and respect, wherewith in christian countries man commonly regards the woman, to that union of reverence, admiration and affection, wherewith the woman looks upon the man.—Among other feats which this morality achieved, wherever it was heartily received was this, that it abolished the hateful institution of polygamy, a practice which in its general influence, prevents all real affection between the sexes, renders the household a scene of jealousy, disunion and violence, embroils the dwelling with the conflicting passions and interests of several families, renders the union between the parent and his offspring very weak and uncertain, hinders the exercise of wholesome discipline over the young, effectually prevents the child from regarding the parent with the respect and love which under other

circumstances he may be taught to feel, brings in a strong infusion of sensuality, mars the courage, energy and activity of the man, destroys the delicacy of the female nature, greatly hinders the increase of population, giving rise to a weak and decrepit race, diffuses a very lax system of morals, and introduces practices too hateful even to be named.—This code has introduced a great variety of signal improvements into the institutions, laws, and general usages of society, in every country wherein it is received, and even partially followed out, its influence may be perceived in the laws, which are in a degree just, merciful, well proportioned and fairly administered; in the customs which are marked by a measure of humanity, politeness and honesty that is in very striking contrast with the usages of heathen nations. Where this law is recognised, there is an ease in the intercourse of society, a facility in the commerce between the different classes, a tone of independence and self-respect among the poor, a spirit of courtesy and kindness among the great, that are truly singular when compared with what obtains in regions that have not heard the joyful sound of this amiable system.—Its influence may also be seen very distinctly in another direction.—It has carried with it a spirit of mercy into all the lands into which it has entered, in all such countries there are numerous institutions which drain off the surplus affluence of the upper and middle classes, and transport it by numerous rills and conduits among the poor of the land.—The number of associations, that in

christian countries aim at affording spiritual and intellectual benefits to the indigent, that seek to infuse among them economy, industry and temperance, that make it their business to supply them with books, apparel, food, fuel and medicine—is great; and the sums contributed to them are immense.—Then there are institutions of many other descriptions, for receiving the aged, the infirm and the maimed, the widow and the fatherless, for housing and curing the lunatic, the deaf and dumb, and the sick, for affording shelter and instruction to women who have erred from the paths of virtue. Establishments of these sorts exist in great number, consume a very considerable proportion of the wealth of a country, employ the time and talents of many of the best and wisest of the community. Without estimating what is done by christian nations to propagate religion and knowledge among the heathen, it is truly astonishing to reflect how much is done within their own compass, to benefit men in mind, body or estate.—It is perhaps not extravagant to say that one half of the community is to be seen expending a large share of its time, talents and substance for the assistance of the other half.—Little or nothing of this is to be witnessed within the compass of pagan countries.—There a spirit of gross selfishness pervades all classes.—The indigent, the infirm, and the aged are often liable to perish for hunger, the ignorant are left without instruction, the diseased in mind are left to wander about, the blind the deaf and the dumb have none to help them, the widow has no husband,

and the orphan no father in these regions.—The contrast is palpable, and in the precise degree that it is so, is the practical excellence of the decalogue asserted ; for it is specifically owing to the morality of this code that the contrast exists.

But in recounting the political advantages that flow out of the Decalogue, it would be a flagrant omission were we to keep out of view, the influence which it has exerted on the mind, and on the various sciences.—Men are wiser than they were, before this law was promulgated to the world by Christ.—The arts are greatly more advanced in christian countries, than they are in the heathen regions in the same periods of time.—This moral system in the hand of the Almighty is the great agent that has wrought the difference.—There is the closest sympathy between the moral and the intellectual parts of our nature, so that whatever has the effect of improving the former has an almost equal tendency to ameliorate the latter.—The difference between the two has been exaggerated by the prejudices of sceptical intellectualists and bigoted theologians ; in the beginning it was not so.—Men show themselves wiser under the jurisdiction of this code, because it strikes off a multitude of follies from the catalogue of truths, because it explodes a host of unworthy, pernicious and superstitious fancies ; because it abrogates a great variety of usages, which consumed much time and squandered much energy ; because it has freed many of the most important of all questions, from the doubts wherewith they were be-

fore inextricably entangled, because it has brought in freedom of thought ; because it has taken the prohibition off a variety of topics, which false priests and false prophets considered their own property ; because it has introduced much greater security by diminishing the frequency of war ; because it has brought a number of male and female intellects into the sphere of thought, that would otherwise have been crushed beneath the thralldom of an animal existence ; because it has produced more leisure and more comfort in the various relations of life ; because by banishing fallacies, it has much more than formerly confined the faculties to things useful, profitable and substantial.—The social benefits which observation shows to have flowed out of this scheme of morals, may be seen to be contained in it when it is analytically considered. A scheme which professes to impart to men correct notions as to the loftiest of all subjects, the character nature and worship of the supreme God ought to have the effect of making them wiser and better in their social aspect.—A system so notably calculated to introduce peace and discipline into each dwelling apart, should be directly beneficial to the order of society which is only a confederation of families.—A scheme which with divine authority commands men to respect the persons and lives of their brethren, should by all the rules of reason, be well fitted to confer benefits upon societies, filled with guilty human beings, prone to act in a contrary manner, and to break forth into violence, bloodshed, murder and wars,—crimes which strike at the very existence of communities.—

A code of laws which enjoins thorough propriety, and purity of conduct between the two sexes, contains at least one provision that is signally calculated to promote the welfare of creatures, that are strongly disposed to indulge those criminal passions, which destroy both soul and body, and act with the influence of a plague among the associations of men.—A plan of morals which distinctly stigmatizes dishonesty, in all its degrees, is very obviously adapted for the welfare of men, who by nature are disposed to this crime,—a crime which is fraught with the very worst results wherever it is practised. A moral system which takes so minute a cognizance of conduct, as to reprobate even the sins of the tongue, must be acknowledged to produce a salubrious influence in associations of human beings, who are naturally much disposed to transgressions of this class, who suffer severely in consequence, and who account themselves able to frame laws, or having framed to execute them, which are sufficiently accurate and authoritative, to repress this very dangerous and very common propensity. And finally, a scheme of morals, which not content with forbidding the actual and overt violation of its enactments, appends an extra regulation at the end, which ordains that men must not even THINK of these crimes, and looks upon the very intent to sin, as a real violation of the law—such a plan must be allowed to be not merely spiritual but singularly salubrious in the confederacies of men, who have neither the wisdom to devise, nor the skill to man age, nor the authority to execute laws—thus pure, hearty, accurate and thorough-going.

CONCLUSION.

If it be true that during the long period of twenty-five centuries, men have been engaged in rearing moral systems with so little concurrence, that the business of each successive philosopher has commonly been to tear down the edifices reared by his predecessors:—if it be correct to say that the history of the science is not a scene of steady progress, but of vicissitude, of contention, of unceasing mutation:—if it be a just representation to allege, that one system has differed from the others not merely in the minor details, but in essential and fundamental particulars.—If these statements be correct then we have the strongest reason for coming to one of two conclusions; either that the science is absolutely inscrutable by the human faculties, or that men have been attempting to investigate it by a false calculus.—The former alternative cannot be entertained for a moment. Reason scouts the idea that a science so necessary to the present and future happiness of men, should be essentially removed above the reach of their powers. The second alternative then is that, with which we must close.—If men had been pursuing the right method through so many ages, the result would have been widely different from what it is.—Had they at the outset found the true point of departure, and laid the solid foundation, a goodly edifice would have been raised ere this, a noble science would have been reared, vast results would have been attained to, and both ethics and religion would have been much better understood by this time.—The chief object of this little treatise is to propose to the thinking part of mankind, that a method which has been proved to be so barren of fruits, should be laid aside, and that a new method should at once be adopted.—Is a motive or foundation desired for a system of ethics, what better one can be conceived than the one which Jehovah has set as the

preface to the decalogue? Is a system valuable in proportion as it is comprehensive and correct, erring neither by excess or defect, then what scheme can be supposed to possess these qualities in so high a degree, as that divine plan which has lasted so long, has undergone so severe and jealous a scrutiny, and has stood firm both against secret and open assaults? Is a system excellent in proportion as it is symmetrical in its form, accurate in the disposition of its parts, philosophical in its arrangement, then do we without hesitation assert the decalogue to be, by much the most perfect that has ever been proposed!—Does a system deserve attention in the degree that it is pure as to its motive and as to the principles which it seeks to establish; then is there a new and mighty argument for maintaining this plan to be—by much the best yet devised!—Is it a strong reason for the excellence of a plan, that its results are necessarily wholesome and beneficial to men, both in an individual and a collective aspect; then is there yet another reason to pronounce this system the best, which during so long a period and under such dissimilar circumstances, has invariably produced such salubrious effects!

In proposing the decalogue as the scheme of ethics which in all time coming should govern the enquiries of philosophers, we propose a system which stands on a broad and solid basis, which is eminently compact and plain, which contains the whole articles of duty to God and Man, which is exquisitely simple and elegant in its structure, which is infinitely pure in all its enactments, which in its results is thoroughly beneficial to man in this life, and in that which is to come.—We are not satisfied that men should henceforward call this code religion, we maintain it to be right that they should name it philosophy likewise; we shall not be contented that they allow it to be good upon the whole, we demand that they acknowledge it to be perfect in all its details; we do not merely re-

quire that their writings should run parallel with it, we contend that there can be no sound ethics until it shall be the recognised point of departure, and the acknowledged norma in all its extent.—If this principle be allowed, moral science will at once become stable, progressive, salubrious and practical.—It will no longer be the endeavour of enquirers to invent a shape for their speculations, and then to discover materials to pour into the mould which they have formed. They will consider that this is already done to their hand.—In place of inventing an original scheme of duties, the efforts of moralists will on this notion be directed to shewing what are the demands of the plan already constructed.—They will consider themselves usefully employed in analysing the principles, in exhibiting the mechanism, in urging the practical bearings of the system which God has given them for their instruction.—If in this manner ethics shall contain less of metaphysics, they will include much more of usefulness, and truth.—It will no longer, on this view, be matter of speculation what is the right motive and what the specific duties that are required of men; the object of enquiry will simply be what is the extent and what the exact application of the principles already laid down.—The ingenious moralist will mean the man who evolves some new excellence of the divine code, and proves it to be broader, longer, purer, and more accurate than it was seen to be.—A system of ethics will no longer mean, a work in which the author having reviewed the various fantastic theories by which men have been led astray in past ages, proceeds to draw forth his own view—which perhaps is quite as extravagant as any that went before.—If our opinion be correct, future moralists will adduce the old doctrines of human ethics, not to enlarge on their ingenuity, acuteness and beauty, but to place them in broad contrast with the principles of the decalogue, and to show how inferior they are in simplicity,

purity, elegance, utility and truth.—The systems that may be put together, will think it enough to give a rapid outline of the idle fancies of heathen, infidel, or semi-christian authors, and having advanced these in the way of preface, will reserve all their strength for the expansion, illustration, and improvement of the doctrines of the decalogue.—Youth will not be compelled before they can arrive at what is true and wholesome, to travel through the insane and abominable errors of twenty or thirty centuries; nor will it be thought requisite that in training men to be christians, they should be taught to linger over and to admire the bold or specious blasphemies, of all who have laboured most strenuously to divorce morality from religion. Ethics will then avowedly form a branch of religion, and the two sciences being studied in common will throw light upon one another. The moralist will impart to the practical christian some portion of his accurate analysis, his orderly method, and his precision of thought, the plain believer will communicate to the moralist, his warm sentiment and lively emotions.—The hateful notions engendered by the unnatural separation between the two departments will rapidly disappear.—The moralist will cease to regard the believer as a man fooled by his feelings, and essentially incapable of calm and accurate thought.—The Christian will cease to look upon the moralist as a rash and impious innovator, who brings doubt and scepticism wherever he comes.—It will become a natural mode of thinking to consider it essential to salutary ethics, that they should be suffused by the spirit of genuine piety; and to believe that practical godliness shews immeasurably more attractive, when set off with the lucid order, the accurate method, and the distinct expressions, that hitherto have been thought to belong rather to the philosophy of men, than to the wisdom that cometh from above.

