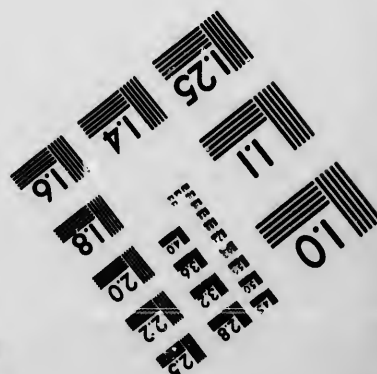
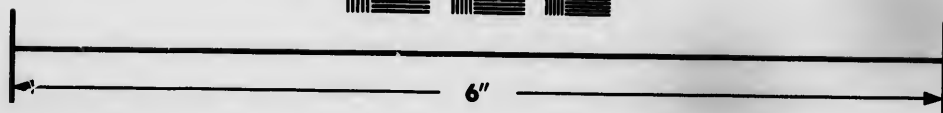
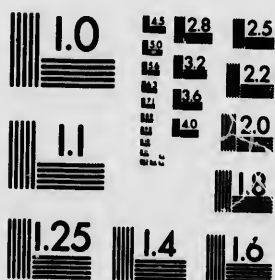


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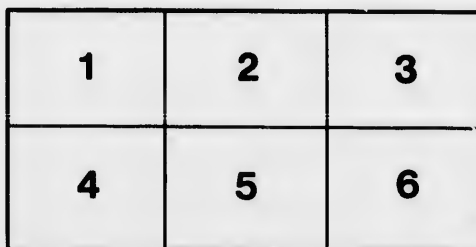
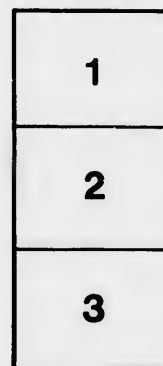
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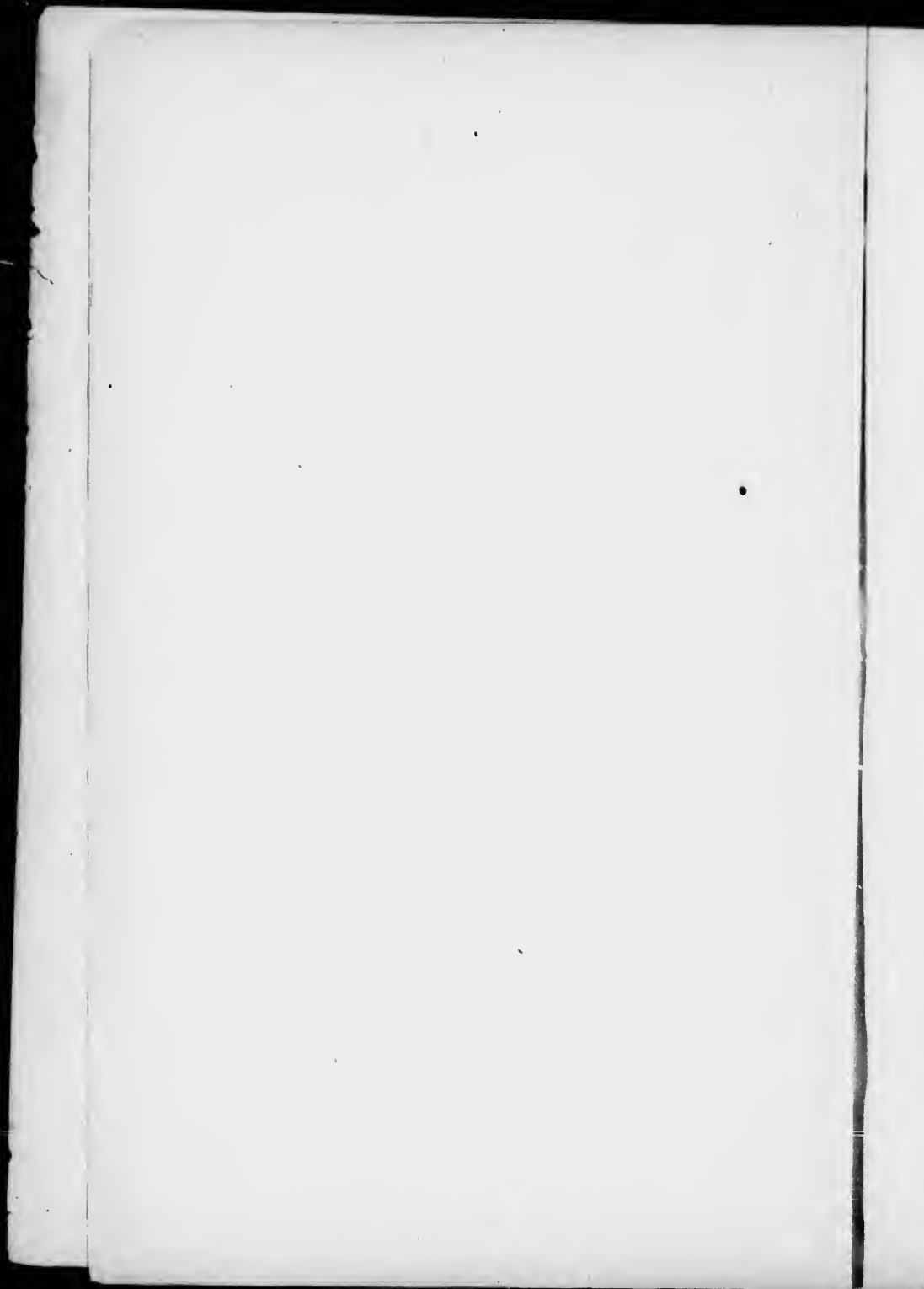
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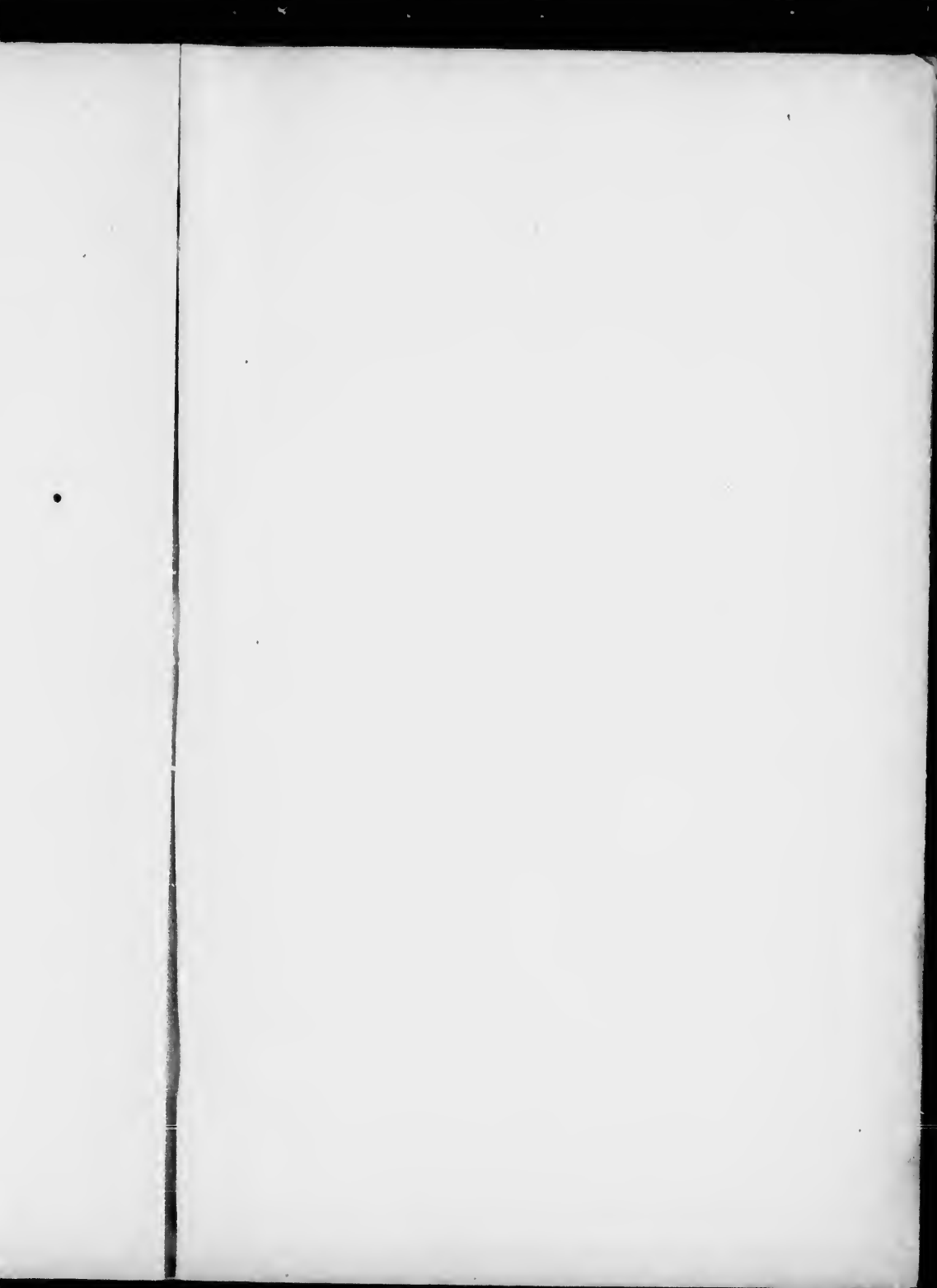
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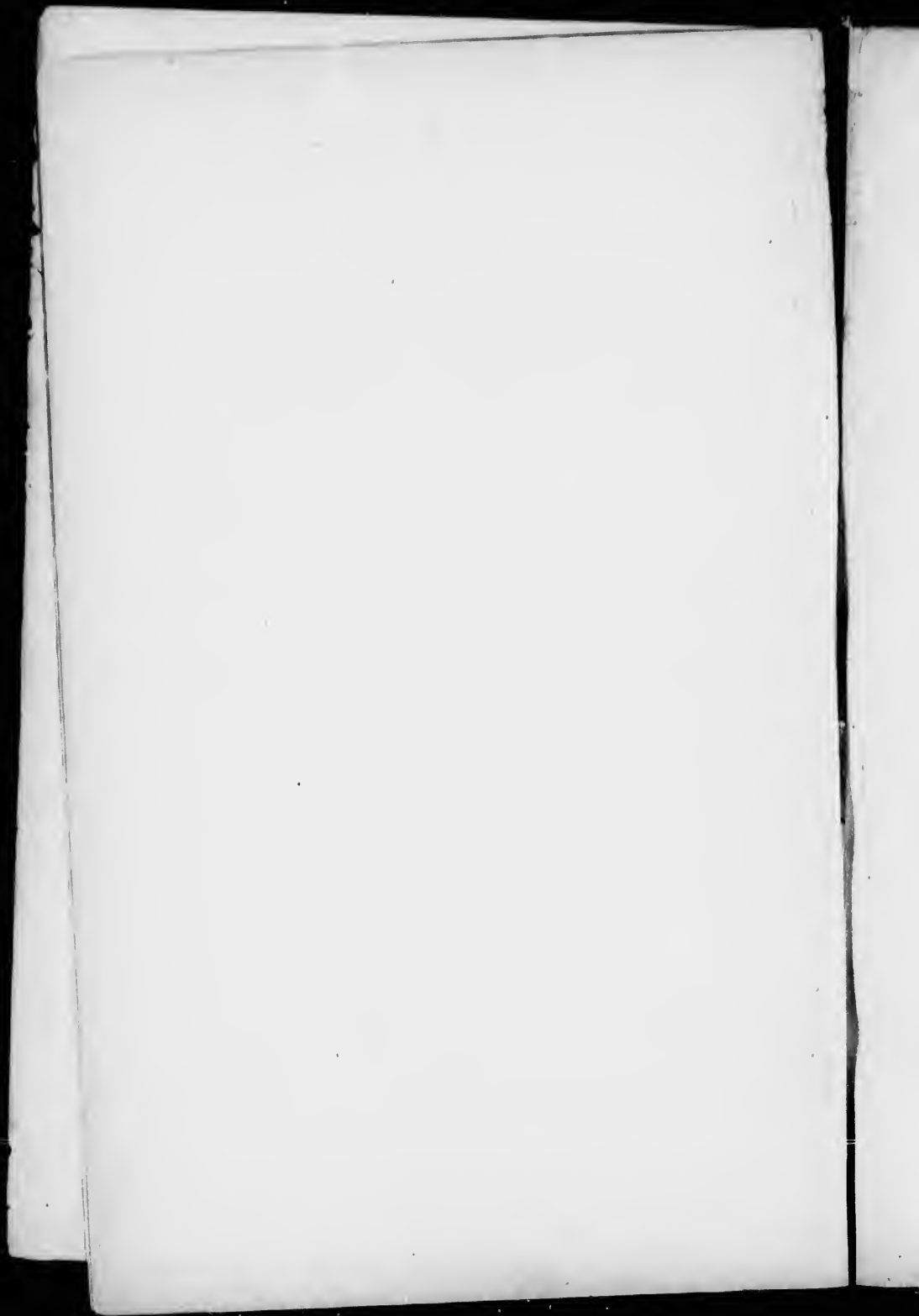
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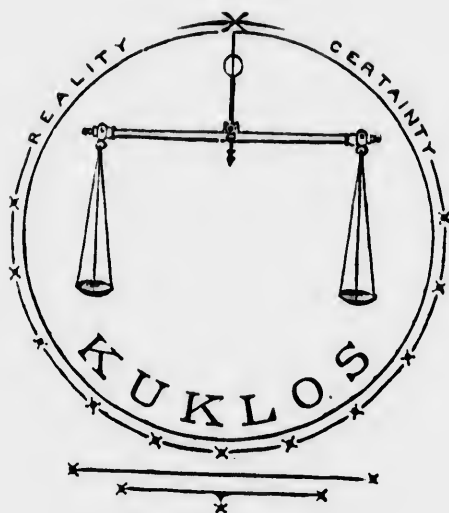






NATURAL PHILOSOPHY
AND
DIVINE REVELATION.

BY
JOHN HARRIS.



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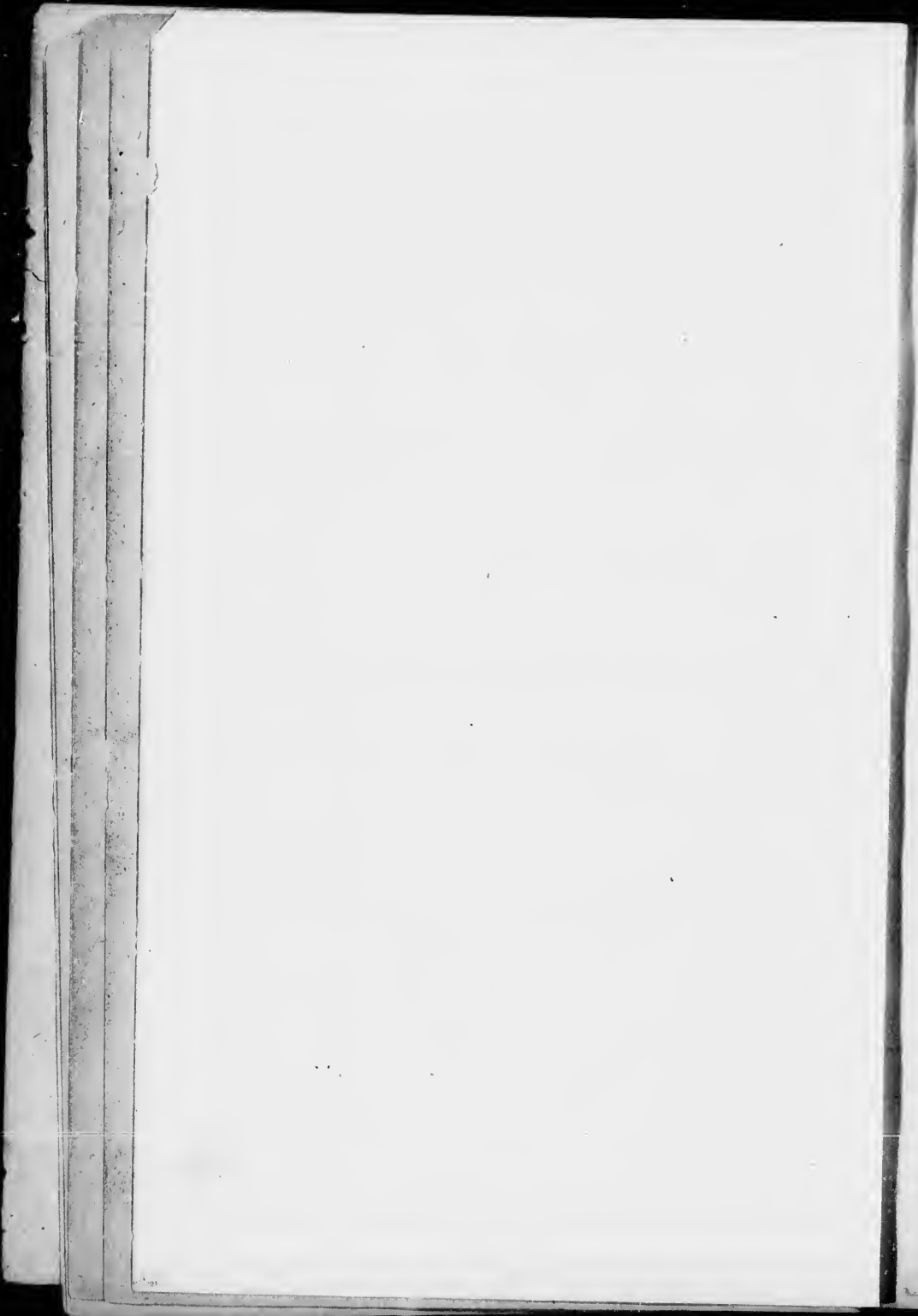
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TO THE
Author of the Bible.
THE KING OF SCIENCE,
AND THE SUPREME HEAD OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THIS BOOK
IS HUMBLY AND REVERENTLY
Dedicated.



NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND DIVINE REVELATION.

'And the Serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall not surely die.'

PREFACE.

WE purpose in the following pages to consider briefly, but carefully, the arguments and conclusions put before the public on the subject of Divine Revelation by certain recent writers on speculative theology.

To pass in review and examine critically the writings of a number of individual authors who have published their thoughts and opinions on physical death, on an after state of existence, and on the nature of the future life (assuming such future life to be a reasonable probability), would not have, we think, any practical utility, even supposing it were to be very well done. At best it could but add a few drops to the ocean of literature on the subject before the public. Merely to heap up more arguments where the persevering and determined reader, if he proceed far enough, is already fated to be overwhelmed and suffocated, would be, indeed, to perform the reverse of a beneficial and useful work.

What we think is much needed, and by which a very useful purpose may be accomplished, is to separate into classes and to discriminate characteristically between the works of the various authors, and then to examine them fundamentally, not as to the plausibility of the arguments, not as to the learning and ability of the respective authors, nor as to the eloquence and refinement with which the arguments may be expressed, or the beauty and sublimity of the language in which the conclusions may be clothed, but, as to whether the arguments and conclusions be or be not legitimate and reasonable.

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CHAPTER I.

RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY.

Classification.—As a primary and general classification we propose to separate the writers on this subject into three groups :

1st. Those who have written in support of the exclusive dogmatic tenets of some one religious sect.

2nd. Those who have written with an avowed or inherent disbelief in the existence of a personal God who has revealed Himself in any intelligible and distinct sense to man.

3rd. Those who, avowing a decided belief in the existence and attributes of a revealed God, have written in more or less doubt as to the precise nature and extent of the presumed revelation.

It is the works of the last class of writers that we purpose to consider here more particularly. Since the objections we wish to state in regard to the conclusions arrived at, are as to their non-scientific and unsafe character *because improperly arrived at*, it will be most convenient and practically useful to take the works of some one author of great ability and repute for the purpose of defining, illustrating and making manifest the fallacy in the method of investigation which in our opinion vitiates and renders unsafe, in a greater or lesser degree, the conclusions arrived at thereby, not only in the writings of the

‘NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND DIVINE REVELATION.’

Correction of Typographical Error.

Page 36...The bottom line; and	}	For... ‘truthfulness’ read... trustfulness.
Page 34...The second line from bottom.		

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We will take therefore as the illustration and immediate subject of our examination the works of the eminent American theologian, Theodore Parker.

The Doctrines of Theodore Parker :

In selecting for consideration the doctrines of this writer as the outcome and intellectual result of an earnest but mistaken and illegitimate endeavour to solve by means of natural philosophy, problems of great difficulty belonging to ideal science, we have been mindful of the educational advantages possessed by him, as well as of the natural ability displayed in the use of those advantages, to justify us in treating him as the intellectual representative of many other writers on speculative theology.

We wish it to be understood that in critically examining these writings we are not intending to praise, blame or pass judgment in any degree upon the author as an individual man, but upon his doctrines as a teacher and as the intellectual representative of a class. What were his qualifications ?

He was a very learned man, possessed of much knowledge of various kinds, a man of great industry, of perseverance, of superior natural ability, eloquent, excelling in literary skill, experienced as a natural philosopher in the application of reasoning to the affairs of the natural life. The record of his out-ward life exhibits him as a man of moral rectitude of conduct, of earnest religious feeling, and of devotion to the ministrations belonging to his office as a teacher and witness of God to the people under his charge.

Let us first define the correct significance and value of certain of those expressions (verbal compounds) which have a necessary and important relation to the subject, and then proceed to examine with particularity the fallacy in the method of Mr. Parker's investigation.

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knowledge which is in a strict sense reasonable, *i.e.*, which is true, certain and real. The difficulty is in certain cases for the individual man to discriminate, and to determine whether that which presents itself to him as scientific knowledge, actually possesses these characteristics or not. Now, if each man was obliged to investigate every item of knowledge for himself, and was to refuse to believe anything to be true which he could not himself demonstrate mathematically to be so, his progress in the acquisition of knowledge would be but very slow, even supposing the difficulty of his thus making a commencement could be surmounted. And then, again, unless we suppose his mathematical ability perfect in an absolute sense, he would after all run the risk of fallacies in the demonstrations which seemed to him quite sound. But a man can in very many cases acquire compounded knowledge with reasonable certainty as to its truthfulness and reality, although he may be himself quite unable to *directly* verify it or to analyze it mathematically. Whenever the subject be of such kind that knowledge thereof can be acquired by human observation, and a number of able and truthful men, having investigated and acquired knowledge of the subject, concur in stating a certain result or conclusion as demonstrated and certain, the individual man may accept such compounded knowledge with certainty through his knowledge of the truthfulness and reliability, or the wisdom and faithfulness, of those who communicate it to him. The question which he, as an intelligent being, has in such a case to decide for himself, is : What are the grounds of my confidence in the persons who inform me that this statement is true : do they suffice to justify my acceptance of their instruction ?

I am unable to investigate the matter for myself. I cannot doubt the sincerity and truthfulness of these persons individually. I feel sure that they have, each one of them, used the proper means to acquire knowledge of the subject, and they all agree as to the fact. Therefore I believe their statement, and accept it as certainly true. A man thus acting acts reasonably, for what would be the consequence if he pursued the opposite course, and persisted in accepting as true only his own personal judgments and conclusions. It is evident that his mind would be filled with prejudices and fallacies; he would be either considered wrong-headed and insane by his neighbours, or, if any were foolish enough to accept his conclusions as right and true, their minds would be also contaminated and their intellectual health impaired by unsound judgments and false theories.

Moreover, in thus accepting knowledge through reasonable trust and confidence in the teacher, the responsibility is mainly with the teacher and only in a minor degree with the recipient. He who thus accepts knowledge which is actually unsound must suffer in some degree for the teacher's fault; nevertheless if his trustfulness were in itself reasonable, he will, even in such case, have gained by his acceptance.

Natural philosophy is systemized reasoning correctly applicable only to the Natural or Material world... reasoning based on the natural human senses. If correctly systemized and applied only to the subjects of natural science in their relations only to the natural world, *natural philosophy* is a perfectly safe and reliable guide; but if it be applied to the spiritual subjects of ideal science without a knowledge of, or with a neglect of,

the strict rules by which alone reasoning on such subjects is authorized, it may then be considered synonymous with *unsound spiritual philosophy*, and becomes fallacious and deceptive.

The term *true* or *sound knowledge* as applied to the major part of human knowledge, necessarily means knowledge which, being imperfect or imperfectly apprehended, is essentially and characteristically true so far as apprehended, and which guides the mind accepting it truthfully in the right direction. It may be that the light furnished by it in a particular instance is not much, and even that little may not be light *directly* derived from the great central source of light; but if it be true knowledge it must be *derived* from that source, and however dim and small in quantity may be the light furnished by it, it will illumine and make manifest some portion of the path which leads towards the full clear light of the day.

Thus the degree of perfection of sound knowledge is in a measure dependent upon the intellectual apprehension and educated capacity of the recipient. All teachers know that to communicate simply and directly the full truth on subjects belonging to the ideal world would be in some cases to state what could not be intelligible, and in other cases to astound and perplex the person they were desirous to instruct. Hence the advantageous and oftentimes necessary use of symbolic and figurative language, of fable, parable, and allegory, as vehicle of sound and true instruction on subjects belonging to ideal science.

The primary characteristic of Parker's doctrines, whether considering him as an individual teacher or as

the exponent and representative of a class of teachers, is that he rejects the Bible as the word of God, or, to speak more definitely, as the intellectual revelation of God the Creator to His human creatures, and that he bases his doctrine, as a (Christian) theologian upon another foundation. The question that immediately suggests itself is: what is that other basis which he prefers to the Bible—and why does he prefer it?

Putting aside for the moment the question, let us consider some of the consequences of this rejection of the Bible.

The Bible is too great a fact to be disregarded. That it has an important historical and educational connection with the subject is too patent to be overlooked, and that it is to some extent at least inseparable from any system of Christian theology is quite evident: hence the Bible is described, in Parker's system of theology, as the narrative of the actions and lives of men who were devoted to the service of God: who in some cases were great and good men, the educators and benefactors of the human race, but who were nevertheless either wilful impostors or else the dupes of their own imaginations. The ultimate corollary which this rejection necessitates is that the absolute God of truth has at least recognized as true, and approved as an educational means, a book which is not only essentially untrue but which grossly misrepresents His character and relationship to mankind.

The basis which Parker chooses as the foundation of his doctrine is the idea of God evolved from the inner consciousness. The precise meaning which he attaches to this expression is not defined. It does not clearly appear that he is aware that his system is left without

any other support: for he does not take any care to explain or show how this idea has of itself, without aid or support from the Bible, or those teachers whose lives belong essentially to the Bible, become developed into the theism or system of theology which he teaches.

The positive portion of Mr. Parker's system is philosophically as inconsequential and incoherent as the negative. It appears to consist of three distinct theories irreconcilable with each other and incapable of combining, and which are brought out sometimes singly and separately, and sometimes in a more or less mingled condition, as the exigencies of the argument or difficulties requiring explanation may call for.

Theory 1. is *materialistic*. That the material world is the universe which has been made over as a possession to mankind, and that mankind has been continually improving and progressing from the earliest ages to the present. Their religious opinions and beliefs at each stage of this advancing civilization having been merely the intellectual product or result of their mental condition.

Theory 2, teaches a *divinity of human nature*. Each and every man is divinely inspired. Each and every man is continually progressing towards the divine perfection. A man's faults and sins improve and elevate him and assist his progress upwards although not so rapidly as if his actions were regulated by a more enlightened understanding. The present life is only the first stage, and a man having become disburthened of his bodily incumbrance springs suddenly upwards or advances much more rapidly towards divine perfection.

Theory 3. *The Non-existence of intellectual individuality apart from God*.—God having pre-ordained and pre-

arranged every event which has happened or can happen to each and every man, in the natural and intellectual world, is the cause of and responsible for the actions of each and every man; for his sins and crimes, and also for the sufferings and privations he may undergo in this life. It follows, or is held to follow, as a consequence, that the perfect justice of God must have provided an after existence in which each individual man who has not obtained a share of happiness equal to that of his most favoured or most fortunate brother will receive that difference, to which he has a natural and rightful claim.

Independently of these theories, with either of which, indeed it is evidently inconsistent, is Mr. Parker's conception or apprehension, of the nature of God and His relationship to men as His intellectual creatures. The universality or immanence of God's presence and energy, His providence and love, the constant guidance and instruction of man by the Divine Spirit, are distinctly recognized and inculcated in very beautiful and refined language. But this apprehension of the Divine Nature, tested by the revelation of Himself in God's word is very incomplete, one-sided and imperfect. It does not recognize the primary relation of God to men as Judge of all the earth, King and Supreme Ruler over the inhabitants of the Earth, and Arbiter of their terrestrial affairs; and it does not apparently recognize any power in God to forgive sins. To do so indeed would at once upset Mr. Parker's theory of punishment and divine justice; for punishment is according to his doctrine the expiation of sin by suffering. The suffering is in all cases necessitated by the sin and of itself suffices to rectify the consequences and absolve the sinner. In

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this connection human justice is described as distinct and different in kind from divine justice, the punishment inflicted by human justice having the character of vengeance. That this item of doctrine is, whether considered as a theoretical assumption or as a conclusion, certainly false and of a very dangerous tendency we have no hesitation in affirming. By human justice is to be understood perfect, or perfected, human justice, and between such human justice and divine justice there can be no difference in kind or distinction; human justice is divine justice applied by or through men to the terrestrial circumstances and affairs of men. To doubt this, or to suppose otherwise, is to suppose that the mind of God is different in kind from the mind of man, to deny or refuse to believe that man has been created in the image of God, and, consequently, to throw overboard at once all reasonable or intelligible reliance on the truthfulness, faithfulness, love and justice, of God.

In connection with the imperfect recognition of God's relationship to man, as set forth in the Bible, is the non-recognition of obedience and submission to the will of God, on the one hand, of wilful disregard of God's commandments and rebellion against His authority and government, on the other. In this human scheme of man's existence and relation to his Maker; put forth by Mr. Parker, the rights and claims appear to be all on the one side. Man as the *created* becomes entitled, in addition to the perpetuation of his existence, to assured happiness, to a progressive development, and to a number of specific blessings, but it does not clearly appear that the *Creator* has acquired any rights in relation to man or is entitled to claim recognition, reverence and

obedience from the intellectual being he has called into existence, and whom he has left, so far as his own welfare and the security of the commonwealth permit, to the control of his own free will.

The injustices, sufferings, privations, inequalities, and miseries of human life are a source of great trouble and constitute apparently an inexplicable mystery to Mr. Parker. Were it not for his strong outside conviction that the infinite love, wisdom and justice of the Creator must have provided some means to set matters right in another world, he would conclude that the plan of human existence has failed, and that the arrangements connected with it have been from the first very imperfect, not to say very bad. But we cannot find that he has anywhere taken the primary conditions of human existence as experienced by us in this terrestrial life, and considered what the consequences thereof must necessarily be.

What are those conditions? A number of intellectual beings, some of them almost, and some entirely, ignorant, differing in their inclinations and passions, in the activity of their intellectual desires and in their capacities to acquire knowledge, are put to live together on the earth, each one under the control, within certain limits, of his own will, having to learn for himself, by his own experience and the guidance of his own reason, the difference between right and wrong, and the consequences of acting rightly or wrongly. It is at once evident that the conduct of each one individual must affect others; his experience must be gained at his own expense and at the expense of others. If he be ever so well disposed and desirous to do right, he has to learn to discriminate and

choose the right from the wrong. But he has animal passions and inclinations, and intellectual passions and inclinations. What if he be wilful and selfish; and, knowing what right is, does not choose the right but deliberately does that which is evil? Must not some other individual or individuals suffer the consequences, whether he himself eventually gains or loses thereby? Very much of the inequality, injustice, pain, and miseries in the world are thus readily accounted for. Very much of the difficulty and mystery attaching to an indiscriminate disorderly consideration of a number of heterogeneous phenomena is at once eliminated. To men thus circumstanced, so soon as some knowledge had been acquired, the definite question would suggest itself: Is this life which we enjoy here, or which we spend in labour and trouble here, the end and sole object of our existence? We feel that we are, as intellectual beings, in some degree distinct from and superior to our bodies. After a time the body dies and the human being disappears from the apprehension of his fellows, but does he necessarily cease to exist as an intellectual being? Can we reasonably expect to live after this bodily terrestrial life is ended? Putting aside the immediate reply to this question, we know that many who have written on this subject have expressed the opinion that the terrestrial human life is not in itself a state of existence to be thankful for; that, were it not for the hope of something much better to follow, it would be scarcely endurable, or even quite unendurable. We believe such to be the deliberate opinion of, comparatively speaking, but very few individuals. If the whole human race could be canvassed at the present time, or, if at any former period of the world's

history such a complete collection of the opinions of all could have been made, we feel sure the result would have shown the agreement by a vast majority, that this our present existence is a pleasure to us; a boon for which we are grateful and which we do not wish to forego until our allotted time has expired.

A little reflection will suggest some considerations in this connection which may not be immediately apparent: for example; people are not usually altogether selfish, even those less considerate of the welfare and happiness of others are generally able to find some satisfaction in feeling that they are benefiting or have benefited other people. Now a condition of barbarism is fraught with hardships, privations, and miseries which in a condition of civilization are ameliorated and in a great measure avoided, their place being supplied by pleasures and enjoyments; but the condition of a more perfect civilization must be preceded by a partial or less perfect; and that, again, by a condition of barbarism. Those, therefore, who live in a time when the less perfect civilization prevails have the satisfaction of knowing, if their lives are spent reasonably and usefully, that, in addition to whatever pleasure and enjoyment their lives afford themselves, they are also benefiting and adding to the happiness of their successors.

Let us now proceed to the question: Have we, or can we, obtain any evidence or reliable information as to a continuation of our existence in a life after the death of the human body. The primary question upon which this is dependent is: do we possess demonstration of the existence of God the Creator? With exception of a

few individuals all educated men are agreed that the world is full of evidences that God exists.

Then, if there be an after existence for men, God must know it, and must certainly be able to communicate the knowledge to men, if he please. Now if there be an after-life, it at once follows as extremely probable, nay almost certain, that the present life with its conditions has relation, as introductory or preparatory, to the after-life. Again, if this life be related to an after existence as a place of preparation, or training school, it is evidently important that men should have reliable information of such a fact, and an inference of the very strongest description is forced upon the mind, that God having the knowledge and wishing, as by the supposition he must do, that man should understand the condition of his existence, so far as it could be made intelligible to him in his ignorant or semi-educated state, must have taken some means to communicate the requisite information to him.

Assuming reliable information to have been obtained as to an after life, and that the main purpose of the present human life is educational: namely, a preparation for those higher conditions of existence belonging to the future..the further question presents itself: Is the after life inherited and obtained by all men alike whatever use they make of the present? If, knowing of this after existence..having been informed by God that preparation for it is necessary and that their lives here on earth are expressly intended for that purpose, they disregard the information and refuse or neglect to make the requisite preparation..What then?

Theodore Parker gives three definitions of the word

Miracle ; two of which are, we opine, quite inadmissible. There are words undoubtedly of which a full and complete definition presents considerable difficulty, and requires the possession of much and varied learning. We do not think, however, that *miracle* is one of those words. On the contrary, its meaning is easily understood and readily admits of definition.

A miracle or miraculous result is that which is produced by a supernatural cause. This definition supposes the case to which the expression is applied to be one of such a character and of which the conditions are so well understood that it is either manifestly evident or satisfactorily certain that the result cannot have been produced by a natural cause... *i. e.* by a cause belonging to the material world.

Taking this definition . . it immediately follows that those who do not believe in the possibility of a miracle, do not believe in the existence of any power outside the material world. Or, if they believe in God as existing independently, they do not admit the possibility of His acting in the material world except by and through the ordinary laws of nature. Those who, on the contrary, feel no difficulty in believing the possibility of a miracle, may, of course, be dissatisfied in any particular case as to the credibility of the testimony or the sufficiency of the historical evidence.

The arguments and opinions put forth by Mr. Parker on the subject of the miracles recorded and circumstantially narrated in the Bible, constitute an instance of perverse and inconsequential reasoning, to which, considering the serious and important nature of the subject, and the advantages of acquired know-

ledge possessed by the teacher, we can apply no expression so suitable as the word 'frightful.' Starting off with a professed and doubtless sincere belief in God as the living Supreme Intelligence actively concerned in the affairs of men ; acknowledging His omnipotent power over the creatures and laws of the material world ; well informed as to the claims of the Bible to be considered the revelation by God of His relationship to man and of the condition of man's spiritual existence ; quite aware of the reasonable probability that special witnesses to God's name would be supported, and the authenticity of their appointment as divine messengers be attested, by just such manifestations of supernatural power,.. he expresses his decided disbelief in the miracles, and does so in strong and even contemptuous language.. Whether, indeed, this most inconsequential judgment is based on his disinclination to believe the possibility of a miracle, or on his dislike to admitting that certain men have been at various times appointed by God as His specially authorized agents, is not clear. In order to support and justify his disbelief, men whom he extols as amongst the wisest, the most unselfish and the best that have ever lived, are supposed, some of them, to have practised an organized and most wicked system of deception in the name of God, whilst others under the inspiration and guidance of the Divine Spirit were grossly deceived by the impostures and deceptions of the first. After all, there remain particular cases, which even the wildest and most extravagant of these suppositions does not suffice to give any intelligible explanation of: for example, the alleged miracle attending the conversion of St. Paul. No doubt is expressed that

St. Paul is himself a real historical personage, who wrote the writings ascribed to him and acted as narrated in the New Testament; he is moreover extolled as an especially manly and upright character, a man of superior ability and intellectual power, whose life was devoted to what he believed to be the service of the God of truth, the omnipresent and all-wise God, who could not be deceived and to whom a lie was utterly hateful. Now as to the circumstances alleged to have attended St. Paul's conversion, we have not only the orderly narrative relating the circumstances as in the case of the other miracles, but, also, we have St. Paul's own circumstantial and minute relation of the particulars, not alone of his being struck blind and hearing the voice, but also of his being directed to go to Ananias, of his going as directed, and of the miraculous restoration of his sight. Admitting the historical reality of St. Paul himself and the general truth of his biography, is there any reasonable choice whatever other than to believe and accept his relation of the circumstances as strictly true, or else to condemn him as having concocted and palmed off upon the credulity of mankind a false statement...an invented story...of which the wickedness would be only equalled by its improbability?...But this alternative is not reasonably admissible even as an assumption or supposition, because the man demonstrated beyond all question by his subsequent conduct throughout the remainder of his life, his own sincere and thorough belief in the truth of his own statement.

A man who fails to understand that, if Christianity has been expressly authorized, acknowledged and supported by the Divine Spirit, the miracles by which it

was inaugurated, and upon which it is in part based, must necessarily be true, and who, therefore, disbelieves those miracles, is only consistent in disbelieving the similar miracles belonging to the much earlier time of Moses and the other prophets whose acts and lives are recorded in the Old Testament. There are, however, miracles of a different character, which, belonging more strictly to the realm of ideal science, tender their testimony especially to the intellectual and educated man. Thus we have the continuous miracle, extending over a long period of time, during which many successive generations of men lived and passed away, of the production and preservation of the record called the Old Testament. We shall hereafter take occasion to show that these writings contain demonstration, in the strictest mathematical sense, of the Divine Authorship; that is, of their having been written, compiled and preserved under and with the inspiration, sanction, and supervision of the All-Wise Divine Spirit. For the present, let us take the case of the Decalogue. Now Theodore Parker comes forward as a learned teacher having a highly cultivated mind—does the Decalogue manifest itself to him as a miracle? No. He observes:

"Of the law.—This comprises the first five books of the Bible. They are commonly ascribed to Moses; but there is no proof that he wrote a word of them. Only the Decalogue, in a compendious form, and perhaps a few fragments, can be referred to him with much probability. * * * * * "Besides, the character of the books is such that a very high place is not to be assigned them among human compositions, measured by the standard of the present day."

But educated men have to ask themselves the ques-

tion—is this a reasonable conclusion? Let us consider the document itself. Is it conceivable that any amount of human wisdom, legal knowledge and literary ability, combined in one individual, could alone have enabled any man at any age of the world to compile such a document? This question is asked, taking the Commandments in their literal usual sense, that is, in their application to the terrestrial affairs of men, and as the fundamental bases of the laws of the civilized world for all time; but a comparatively few men, possessing a knowledge of ideal science, are aware that each commandment contains also a spiritual signification deeper, broader, and more comprehensive than that which applies to the temporal government of men as inhabitants of the Earth only. Let us observe, moreover, that if Moses be accepted as a historical reality and the events of his life recorded in the old Testament be accepted as substantially true, then, if the strictly Divine Authorship of the Decalogue be disbelieved, we have a case presenting a similar character to that of Saint Paul relating the circumstances of his conversion. For the document purports to be a personal declaration by the Creator, and was published by Moses with the express statement that he had received it directly from God. There is no reasonable alternative if we do not accept his statement as strictly true, other than to condemn him as having deliberately fabricated the document and represented it falsely as coming from God, because he must have known whether he received it from God or not. But neither is the alternative reasonably admissible, for it involves the assumption that Moses was an irreligious man and an atheist, otherwise he could not have ventured to put himself in the place of God in the manner supposed.

Now such assumption is directly controverted by the admitted facts, namely, that Moses was a religious man; who proved himself by his acts and conduct to be a sincere believer in the existence and power of God, to whose service he devoted his life in an especial manner.

CHAPTER II.

SUPERSTITION.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, In this dark world and wide,
And that one talent, which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide ;
"Doth God exact day labour, light denied ?"
I fondly ask; But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best: His state
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest ;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Milton.

The word Superstition, although there may be, as in fact there are, great and multifarious differences of opinion as to its correct application in particular cases, is not one of those words of which the correct definition presents any difficulty. Superstition means . . . unreasonable belief, and unreasonable disbelief; and it may be accordingly divided into positive superstition and negative superstition.

Of that application of the word which he considers correct, and the illustration of the word afforded, as he thinks, by certain forms of Christian belief, Theodore Parker writes thus:—(VOL. I. Page 85.)

"Of *Superstition*—Combining with Ignorance and Fear, the Religious Element leads to Superstition. This is the vilification and debasement of men. It may be defined as **FEAR BEFORE GOD**. Plutarch, though himself religious,

"pronounced it worse than Atheism. But the latter cannot exist to the same extent; is never an active principle. Superstition is a morbid state of human nature, where the conditions of religious development are not fulfilled; where the functions of the religious faculty are impeded and counteracted. But it must act, as the heart beats, in the frenzy of a fever. It has been said with truth, "Perfect love casts out fear." The converse is quite as true. Perfect fear casts out love. The superstitious man begins by fearing God, not loving him. He goes on, like a timid boy in the darkness, by projecting his own conceptions out of himself: conjuring up a phantom he calls his God; a Deity capricious, cruel, revengeful, lying in wait for the unwary; a God ugly, morose, and only to be feared. He ends by paying a service meet for such a God, the service of Horror and Fear. Each man's conception of God is his conception of a man carried out to infinity; the pure idea is eclipsed by a human personality. This conception therefore varies as the men who form it vary. It is the index of their soul. The superstitious man projects out of himself a creation begotten of his Folly and his Fear; calls the furious phantom God, Moloch, Jehovah; then attempts to please the capricious Being he has conjured up. To do this, he demands his Superstition makes are not to keep the laws which the one God wrote on the walls of Man's being; but to do arbitrary acts which this fancied God demands. He must give up to the deity what is dearest to himself. Hence the savage offers a sacrifice of favourite articles of food, the first fruits of the chase, or agriculture; weapons of war which have done signal service; the nobler animals; the skins of rare beasts. He conceives the anger of his God may be soothed like a man's excited passion by libations, incense, the smoke of plants, the steam of a sacrifice.

Again, the superstitious man would appease his God by unnatural personal service. He undertakes an enterprise,"

"almost impossible, and succeeds, for the fire of his purpose subdues and softens the rock that opposes him. He submits to painful privation of food, rest, clothing; leads a life of solitude; wears a comfortless dress, that girds and frets the very flesh; stands in a painful position; shuts himself up in a dungeon; lives in a cave; stands on a pillar's top; goes unshorn and filthy. He exposes himself to be scorched by the sun and frozen by the frost. He lacerates his flesh; punctures his skin to receive sacred figures of the Gods. He mutilates his body, cutting off the most useful members. He sacrifices his cattle, his enemies, his children; defiles the sacred temple of his body: destroys his mortal life to serve his G d. In a state more refined, superstition demands abstinence from all the sensual goods of life. Its present pleasures are a godless thing. The flesh is damned. To serve God is to mortify the appetites God gave. Then the superstitious man abstains from comfortable food, clothing, and shelter; comes neither eating nor drinking; watches all night absorbed in holy vigils. The man of God must be thin and spare. Bernard has but to show his neck, fleshless and scraggy, to be confessed a mighty saint. Above all, he must abstain from marriage. The Devil lurks under the bridal rose. The vow of the celibate can send him howling back to hell. The smothered volcano is grateful to God. Then comes the assumption of arbitrary vows; the performance of pilgrimages to distant places, thinly clad and barefoot; the repetition of prayers, not as a delight, spontaneously poured out, but as a penance, or work of supererogation. In this state, superstition builds convents, monasteries, sends Anthony to his dwelling in the desert: it founds orders of Mendicants, Rechabites, Nazarites, Encratites, Pilgrims, Flagellants; and similar Moss-troopers of Religion, whom Heaven yet turns to good account. This is the Superstition of the Flesh. It promises the favour of"

"its God on condition of these most useless and arbitrary acts. It dwells on the absurdest of externals.

However, in a later day it goes to still more subtle refinements. The man does not mutilate his body, nor give up the most sacred of his material possessions. This was the superstition of savage life. But he mutilates his soul: gives up the most sacred of his spiritual treasures. This is the superstition of refined life. Here the man is ready to forego Reason, Conscience, and Love, God's most precious gifts; the noblest attributes of Man: the tie that softly joins him to the eternal world. He will think against Reason; decide against Conscience: act against Love; because he dreams the God of Reason, Conscience, and Love demands it. It is a slight thing to hack and mutilate the body, though it be the fairest temple God ever made, and to mar its completeness a sin. But to dismember the soul, the very image of God; to lop off most sacred affections; to call Reason a liar, Conscience a devil's-oracle, and cast Love clean out from the heart, this is the last triumph of Superstition; but one often witnessed in all these forms of Religion—Fetichism, Polytheism, Monotheism; in all ages before Christ and all ages after Christ. This is the Superstition of the Soul. The one might be the Superstition of the Hero; this is the Superstition of the Pharisee

A man rude in spirit must have a rude conception of God. He thinks the Deity like himself. If a buffalo had a religion, his conception of Deity would probably be a buffalo, fairer limbed, stronger and swifter than himself, grazing in the fairest meadows of Heaven. If he were superstitious, his service would consist in offerings of grass, of water, of salt; perhaps in abstinence from the pleasures, comforts, necessities of a bison's life. His devil would also be a buffalo, but of another colour, lean, vicious, and ugly. Now when a man has these rude conceptions, inseparable from a rude state, offerings and sacrifice are natural. When they come spontan-

"eous, as the expression of a grateful or penitent heart; the seal of a resolution; the sign of Faith, Hope and Love, as an outward symbol which strengthens the in-dwelling sentiment—the sacrifice is pleasant and may be beautiful. The child who saw God in the swelling and rounded clouds of a June day, and left on a rock the ribbon-grass and garden roses as mute symbols of gratitude to the Great Spirit who poured out the voluptuous weather; the ancient pagan who bowed prone to the dust, in homage, as the sun looked out from the windows of morning, or offered the smoke of incense at night-fall in gratitude for the day, or kissed his hand to the Moon, thankful for that spectacle of loveliness passing above him; the man who, with reverent thankfulness or penitence, offers a sacrifice of joy or grief, to express what words too poorly tell;—he is no idolater, but Nature's simple child. We rejoice in self-denial for a father, a son, a friend. Love and every strong emotion has its sacrifice. It is rooted deep in the heart of men. God needs nothing. He cannot receive; yet Man needs to give. But if these things are done as substitutes for holiness, as causes and not mere signs of reconciliation with God, as means to coax and wheedle the Deity and bribe the All-Powerful, it is Superstition, rank and odious. Examples enough of this are found in all ages. To take two of the most celebrated cases, one from the Hebrews, the other from a Heathen people: Abraham would sacrifice his son to Jehovah, who demanded that offering;* Agamemnon his daughter to angry Diana. But a Deity kindly interferes in both cases. The Angel of Jehovah rescues Isaac from the remorseless knife; a ram is found for a "

* A footnote in Mr. Parker's book commences thus:—"Gen. xxii. 1-14. The conjectures of the learned about this mystical legend, which may have some fact at its foundation, are numerous, and some of them remarkable for their ingenuity. Some one supposes that Abraham was tempted by the *Elohim*, but *Jehovah* prevented the sacrifice. It is easy to find Heathen parallels, &c., &c."

"sacrifice. Diana delivers the daughter of Agamemnon and leaves a hind in her place. No one doubts the latter is a case of superstition most ghastly and terrible. A father murder his own child—a human sacrifice to the Lord of Life! It is rebellion against Conscience, Reason, Affection; treason against God. Though Calchas, the anointed Minister, declared it the will of Heaven—there is an older than Calchas who says, It is a Lie. He that defends the former patriarch, counting it a blameless and beautiful act of piety and faith performed at the command of God—what shall be said of him? He proves the worm of superstition is not yet dead, nor its fire quenched, and leads weak men to ask, which then has most of religion, the Christian, who justifies Abraham, or the Pagan Greeks, who condemned Agamemnon? He leads weak men to ask; the strong make no question of so plain a matter.

But why go back to Patriarchs at Aulis or Moriah; do we not live in New England and in the nineteenth century? Have the footsteps of Superstition been effaced from our land? Our books of theology are full thereof; our churches and homes, not empty of it. When a man fears God more than he loves him; when he will forsake Reason, Conscience, Love—the still small voice of God in the heart—for any of the legion voices of Authority, Tradition, Expedience, which came of Ignorance, Selfishness, and Sin; whenever he hopes by a poor prayer, or a listless attendance at church, or an austere observance of Sabbaths and Fast-days, a compliance with forms; when he hopes by professing with his tongue the doctrine he cannot believe in his heart, to atone for wicked actions, wrong thoughts, unholy feelings, a six-days life of meanness, deception, rottenness, and sin,—then is he superstitious. Are there no fires but those of Moloch; no idols of printed paper, and spoken wind? No false worship but bowing the knee to Baul, Adonis, Priapus, Cybele? Superstition changes its forms, not its substance. If he "

"were superstitious who in days of ignorance but made his son's body pass through the fire to his God, what shall be said of them in an age of light, who systematically degrade the fairest gifts of men, God's dearest benefaction; who make life darkness, death despair, the world a desert, Man a worm, nothing but a worm, and God an ugly fiend, that made the most of men for utter wretchedness, death, and eternal hell? Alas for them. They are blind and see not. They lie down in their folly. Let Charity cover them up."

Let us first consider the two cases here connected and presented together, of Agamemnon and his daughter, and of Abraham and his son. The first, that of Agamemnon, is brought forward admittedly for the purpose of weakening and discrediting the second. Mr. Parker in effect argues thus:—"The two cases are quite similar. If what the man was called upon to do in the first case was unnatural and horrible, and therefore wrong and unreasonable, so must the similar act which the man was commanded to perform in the second case, be equally condemned as horrible and unnatural. But there is no doubt that the first was a case of superstition ghastly and terrible, therefore there can be no doubt that the second was likewise a case of superstition ghastly and terrible.* Herein we find a very flagrant instance of that kind of false demonstration commonly known by the term begging the question, *i. e.*, prejudging the subject of the argument. The assertion that... 'no one doubts' that

* In fact, the act was not actually performed or committed in either case, but Mr. Parker would probably have argued that so far as each of the men was concerned this made no difference. In resolving or consenting to act, the act was morally committed, and if criminal or wrong, the guilt was incurred. In thus arguing on this point, we consider that Mr. Parker would have been quite in the right.

which he has taken upon himself to demonstrate, argues Mr. Parker's unmindfulness of the most necessary and fundamental law of argument.

Agamemnon is described by Homer as a man of more than ordinary intelligence, a great man, and a king, who in addition to his sovereignty over his own subjects had been elected, on account of his political sagacity and intellectual superiority to the leadership of a confederated expedition. Just observing that the express purpose Homer's great Epic appears to have, is to teach by illustration the necessity, in order that any great purpose may be accomplished, of disciplining and training the natural will, and of bringing the sensual passions and desires under the control of the intellectual spirit guided by reason... We will suppose that Agamemnon, being the man he is described to have been, and having been informed by Calchas that God commands him to kill his daughter, commences the series of passionate ejaculations which Mr. Parker puts into his mouth. We opine that at the third word 'murder' he would have checked himself, paused, and begun to consider; he might then have proceeded in his reflections after this manner :*—

* It may be well to note that Mr. Parker might, in strictness, be called upon to justify the ground he occupies in thus emphatically describing the case as that of a father murdering his own child. He appears to forget that his basis is that of the inner consciousness of the natural man only; for he declines to accept the divine authority of the Bible, and esteems the Decalogue as the work of Moses or the invention of some other man. The primary question, therefore, arises, does the natural consciousness of man necessarily evolve a conviction that the slaying of a child by its parent, or of one man by another, is unnatural and horrible. To test the case by fact, the actual behaviour of man in an intellectually primitive and barbarous condition would have to be investigated. Even at the present time, acts which, to a highly civilized and educated European or American,

'Stay...Is it murder? What is murder? If I were to kill my child from want of affection, from a desire to get her out of the way, from avarice, to please myself or to please any other man, that would be murder...But there is something in this case essentially different. What is the precise case? Calchas informs me in the most solemn manner that God commands me to kill my daughter: Calchas is mad; he is not authorized to make such an unnatural demand: this is an invention of his own. No—it is mere folly to try to deceive myself, I know that Calchas is not mad: I have had many proofs which I cannot disbelieve or doubt that he is the authorized and appointed minister of God: I am perfectly sure he would not venture to deceive me. But it is unnatural, and must be wicked, to kill my own child that I love so much...Stay: It is the command of God...I know that my life as well as the life of my child is the gift of God...I know that God can if he please, at any time take away my life or her's...I know that I am continually in the hands of God; that He has been benefiting me all my life...I am sure that he is my friend and does not certainly wish to harm me purposelessly. Yet I cannot understand what good or useful purpose can be served by such an act. No; but then, what if I can't understand...who is the wisest, God or I? Other men are not called upon to make such a fearful sacrifice...why should I in particular have this thing to do. To destroy my child! No...To kill the body is not necessarily to kill the spirit...If I really believe, as I have been professing all my life to do, in the omnipotent power and love of God, it is after all, to put the spirit of my daughter, separated from the body by His command, into His hands. It is a question of truthfulness and obedience; perhaps a trial to myself and a necessary example to others. Let us

would be looked upon as unnatural and of revolting cruelty, might be, in some parts of Africa or other countries, considered not unnatural but quite in order and correct under the circumstances.

SUPERSTITION.

see: what is the position I occupy? I have been placed at the head of this great expedition. I can understand that politically and socially it is of the greatest importance to the State that the expedition should succeed, and its purpose be accomplished; but there are numbers of my subjects and others here with me who are too ignorant to understand the matter the same as I do, who have left their homes and property and know that they may very likely lose their lives, for what? In obedience to my commands and because they have confidence in my knowledge and that of the other leaders as to what their duty to the State requires them to do. Then am I to refuse to obey the direct commandment of God because it entails a grievous sacrifice on my part personally; shall I not rather trust the wisdom and providence of God and be content to do as he commands me? Yes, I am no longer in doubt. It is very grievous to part with my child and in such a manner: but Thou, O God knowest what is for the best. Thy will be done.*

Supposing this to have been substantially the reasoning of Agamemnon we think the decision he came to was

*Mr. Parker's assumption of the strict similarity of the two cases obliges us to suppose Agamemnon to have possessed a direct realization of God's Personality, and an individual confidence in His Providence, similar to that of Abraham. If there be not such strict similarity, Mr. Parker's argument in this respect evidently fails. Nevertheless, on a more general knowledge only, Agamemnon's consent to obey the commandment commends itself as reasonable; but the immediate grounds of his decision would probably have been recognition of the duty of an individual to give up his private interest or affections for the good of the State, this recognition being, however, based on belief in the power, providence, and supervision of God. His reflections might have been (in brief) as follows: 'God has commanded me by Calchas to do this thing; Can the expedition succeed without the blessing of God, or contrary to His will? No. Is it reasonable to expect His blessing on the expedition, if I, as the leader of the expedition refuse to obey? Certainly not. I love my child very much, and it will make me very unhappy; but that is my private affair and no justification for my refusing to do my duty.'

enlightened, wise, and the reverse of superstitious. Whereas, if he had come to the opposite conclusion, on the grounds specified by Mr. Parker, and persisted in refusing to obey, he would have been guilty of wilful superstition.* In the second case, that of Abraham and his son, we know, on evidence, that there was a distinct recognition of God's right to make such a demand, and an assured reliance upon His Wisdom and Power. The purpose of the required act has been also in this case indirectly made known to us, namely, that the spiritual sons of Abraham, *i. e.*, his sons by spiritual filiation, were to become the spiritual subjects and sons of God, and, in order that this purpose should be carried out, it was requisite that the *father* or founder of the *nation* should prove his perfect truthfulness and obedience by the willing (*i. e.*,

* Definition of the word *superstition*. If the avoidance of superstition is absolutely dependent upon knowledge, or upon an enlightened understanding, it is evident that, since perfect freedom from superstition would require perfect knowledge, the most enlightened of the human race must be very far from having attained such a condition. But our definition of the word assumes that a man who applies whatever knowledge he possesses reasonably (whether that knowledge be greater or less), is not superstitious; and if he act reasonably, making the right use of such light as his knowledge and understanding afford him, he does not act superstitiously. The expression, therefore, is relative and not absolute.

We would discriminate between wilful and ignorant superstition. Wilful superstition comprises those cases where, the reasonable conclusion being actually recognized by the mind, the disobedience to God, or disregard of the dictates of duty, as declared by the voice of reason, is disguised and masked under the pretense of regard for natural affection, of obedience to traditional or conventional authority, of the claims and rights of some deity other than the God of reason, of obedience to reason itself; in these or any cases belonging to the same class, although a man may easily succeed in *very nearly* deceiving himself, and although it may be almost impossible for the most enlightened human being, of himself, to altogether avoid going wrong, it is not, strictly speaking, superstition, but wilful disobedience.

readily consenting) resignation into the hands of God, of that which was most precious and dear to him. The reality and sincerity of such trustfulness and submission to the Will of God would be most thoroughly tested by the commandment to sacrifice his son, and was demonstrated by Abraham's ready obedience without expostulation or hesitation.

Of the other examples and supposed instances of superstition brought together by Mr. Parker, some of them, unquestionably, are correctly denoted by that expression, whilst others of them, on the contrary, are acts showing a wise recognition, on the part of the individuals performing them, of the higher spiritual relationship secured by the promise and covenant of God to that part of mankind which chooses to avail itself of the privileges belonging to that relationship, by acceptance and compliance with the conditions attached to the covenant, namely, a willing submission to the systematic spiritual discipline and training requisite to prepare and educate the mind of a human being for the duties essentially pertaining to the higher spiritual existence.

An unreasoning and unreasonable fear of God as a wrathful, malevolent, and cruel Being, requiring to be constantly appeased and propitiated, very difficult to please, easily provoked, unforgiving and intolerant, is certainly superstition. It is no doubt a degraded form of religious feeling, very unworthy and discreditable to the intelligence of any educated man. To worship God with such feeling is undoubtedly a form of idolatry, which, although not perhaps of the worst type, must be extremely offensive to Him who has revealed Himself, alike in the natural and the intellectual world, as the Giver

of all good gifts, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great goodness, the guardian and protector of the weak and helpless, the God of Love.

Mr. Parker is fond of quoting the text which states that, "perfect love casteth out fear." "There is, however, another text which states that, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." It is not easy, indeed, to conceive how there can be a distinct and direct recognition of God. . that is, of the Personality, Power, and Omniscience of God without fear. And, although it is not difficult to believe that perfect love casts out fear, it is evident the bestdisposed human mind in its natural condition, *i. e.*, uneducated, undisciplined and inexperienced, must have much to go through before perfect love becomes possible. And then perfect love of God must be a perfectly reverential love, based on the intelligent realization of the Wisdom and Power as well as on the Benevolence, Sympathy, and Goodness of God toward the human being. But "if ye love not man whom ye have seen, how then shall ye love God whom ye have not seen." The love of God in the human mind must necessarily include, and be preceded by, the love of the fellow-human being. In other words a metaphysical and indefinite love of God as a Supreme Intelligence is likely to be, at least in great measure, unreal and merely nominal; whereas a direct recognition of God as a Being loveable and to be loved, is preceded by some degree of spiritual discernment, and recognition of those qualities in the human image of God which are reflections of His Attributes and Properties.

Had Mr. Parker commenced by considering the very strong probability, looking to the circumstances and con-

ditions of human life, that some revelation would be made by God to man of knowledge not otherwise attainable, and had he then reflected that if any such revelation had been addressed to human beings in all stages of educational progress and intellectual development, much of it would be necessarily unintelligible to the less educated, the claims of the Bible to reverential consideration might have commended themselves to him as requiring at least a very careful and particular investigation. But he might have considered, moreover, that such a revelation would, not improbably, be itself likewise progressive: each successive portion being as much as possible adapted to the intellectual development of the human race at the time of its being made known to them. Now in such a compound revelation communicated in several successive divisions, the earlier portion would necessarily have relation and reference to that which was to succeed it, and as the educational condition of those who had received that earlier part advanced, an apprehension that what they possessed was only a part, and in itself incomplete, would naturally arise, and, hence, an increasing desire to obtain the further revelation referred to and foreshadowed in that which they already possessed.

But if the object of the revelation, besides making known the relationship of God to man in his present life, and the laws and conditions of men's existence as the terrestrial subjects of the Creator, was also to communicate knowledge of a future state of existence, and of the relationship of God to the intellectual being, belonging to that future state, it is evident that a great difficulty would be experienced even by educated men in receiving the knowledge and correctly appreciating the revelation, be-

cause, the knowledge being of a different character, and differing in kind, from that belonging to the merely terrestrial conditions of existence, could not be directly tested and verified by or through the senses belonging to their natural bodies. Herein we have for consideration a progressively developed intellectual existence in which those appointed to teach, or who employed themselves in teaching other men the knowledge communicated in and by the revelation of God, would find themselves called upon to exercise a discretionary and discriminating power of a very responsible and serious character. They would find that, having communicated what they distinctly understood and felt quite certain about, the instruction of the learners was far from complete and the information in their possession not nearly exhausted, but that as to the remainder they were themselves in more or less uncertainty and doubt.

After each one endeavouring to make out for himself the full meaning of certain statements and communications, they would find on comparing notes that others, apparently quite as well qualified to investigate the matter, had arrived at conclusions altogether different. To successfully carry on such a work, men must act together, the teachers would say; let us see how far we can agree. If we can agree as to the actual meaning of what is most important and essential, let us combine to teach that. And if we can agree that certain opinions and conclusions which some persons have put forth, are certainly wrong, let us unite in rejecting them. For the rest, since there are some statements and communications which in the present state of our knowledge do not appear to admit of definite determination, let us agree to consider them in-

definite, and, as we have no right to withhold them altogether, let each of us be considered at liberty to exercise his individual judgment within temperate limits, in his interpretation of them. On such a basis a great number of individual teachers can combine, appoint their officers, arrange their rules of discipline, and act together in orderly and harmonious concert with all the advantages of mutual support and assistance; thus constituting an intellectual organization termed in the ideal language of the Bible . . . *a nation*.

It is evident that teachers who, belonging to such an organization, thereby debarred themselves from the liberty of teaching their individual opinions and judgments, and who faithfully observed the rules of the organization to which they had agreed, would be placed in a position of considerable disadvantage if intellectually attacked in argument, by an adversary, outside such organization, who considered himself perfectly at liberty to adopt and use whatever arguments and opinions might most effectually serve his purpose at the moment. More particularly would this be the case, however, in reference to those items of the general doctrine which, not being able to distinctly apprehend, they had agreed to communicate in the sense which appeared to them most nearly that of the revelation. For as the educational process proceeded and knowledge became more generally diffused, and the human mind by culture acquired greater capacity to receive and assimilate ideal knowledge of a highly intellectual description, it would appear that some things which seemed at first mysterious and unintelligible had become susceptible of satisfactory and intelligible explanation. The teacher who had agreed to observe the rules of the

organization would for a time feel himself debarred from teaching or accepting the new and more enlightened explanation. After a time perhaps the Council of the organization would agree to forego or to modify certain of the restrictions, and the teachers would be set at liberty to adopt the new explanation; but, as this would not happen until some time after those outside had shown that the new explanation was more satisfactory than the old, their adversaries might claim to have forced the acceptance of it upon them.

Such an organization to teach religious truth derived wholly or in part from a progressive revelation, must be, from its nature, conservative. Whenever a case for considerable alteration or modification were brought under consideration the council would say: "Take care, we must not be hasty in altering doctrines committed to us by our predecessors and derived perhaps from divine inspiration. Is it quite certain that the nature of this case is such and our knowledge sufficiently advanced, to justify us in giving up the old form and adopting the new?"

Certain strong charges of intellectual backwardness, superstition, and bigotry, are brought by Mr. Parker against ministers of the gospel. More particularly against those belonging to that intellectual organization (nation), known as the Episcopal Church. We will put before the reader an instance quoted apparently with approbation by the author of a work, recently published, entitled: 'The Hopes of the Human Race.' The author of that treatise precedes the quotation by the following observations:—"The Life after Death. (Page 107.) Div. IV.. "The moral condition of the dead is (as I have remarked) the one point concerning them on which the

thought of Christendom has been persistently fastened. Yet it has fixed on a view of that moral state which originated in a comparatively dark and rude age of ethical feeling, and must necessarily have given place long ago to higher conceptions, were it not for the stereotyping process by which the Cyclopedia of Religious Knowledge supposed to be contained in the two Testaments has been closed against either correction or amendment for eighteen centuries. While our clergy say as little as they can help about the eternity of torment, we are all aware that any serious attempt to remove the doctrine from the Church formularies, or even to place the dogmas of the Resurrection of the Body, and the physical penalties with which it is threatened, in the category of open questions, would be met by invincible opposition. We have conquered from the adherents of the Book of Genesis the million ages of past geologic time; but the million millions of ages of future torment in the Lake of Fire, we have by no means won from the disciples of the Book of the Apocalypse. They will give up almost any doctrine sooner than this. As Theodore Parker said, they cry out in dismay when such a thing is named—"What! give up Hell? our own eternal Hell? Never, Never, Never!"

The general answer on the part of the Episcopal Church to this and similar attacks, is to be found in the Psalms of David, especially in that part of the cxviii psalm, commencing with the words: "O think upon thy servant as concerning thy word; wherein Thou hast caused me to put my trust."

The particular answer to the particular charge here brought by Mr. Parker is stated, if we understand aright, and the charge itself unwittingly refuted, by the author

who quotes the passage, in the words: "Our clergy say as little as they can." Now Theodore Parker's charge, if we appreciate it correctly, amounts to an assertion that the clergy of the Episcopal Church retain the doctrine of everlasting torment because they wish it to be true. Whereas the statement that "our clergy say as little as they can," is equivalent to stating that they do not like the doctrine, or do not wish it to be true. If we may venture to state their case in this particular, on the part of at least very many clergy of the Episcopal Church, it will be in this wise:—The doctrine of everlasting punishment seems in itself to human reason extremely improbable. It is scarcely consistent with the Attributes of God, in which we believe. What we know of the Love, Mercy and Power of God, would not, certainly lead us to conjecture such a doom for any men or other beings, however great their sins may have been. This is not a question, however, of conjecturing or arguing, but of delivering a message. The doctrine *seems* to us to be contained in the divine message, and we do not feel justified in withholding it. It is a question of fact which we cannot determine by argument. We should be rejoiced to learn, on such sufficient authority as to justify our acknowledgment, that no such doctrine is actually set forth in the Bible, but until this can be satisfactorily shown we will deliver the message as we understand it to be given to us.

There is a favorite hymn (of modern date) in use in the Episcopal Church, the careful perusal of which might assist to rectify the judgment of those teachers of Religious Philosophy who, like Mr. Parker, suppose that ministers of the Gospel are at the present day principally

concerned for the preservation and propagation of certain antiquated dogmas in the which they themselves no longer find any reasonable ground for belief. Not only to the generality of clergymen belonging to the Episcopal Church of England and America, but also in regard to the ministers of the gospel belonging to other sections of the Christian Church; in regard to the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian and the Wesleyan minister, we feel sure that such a supposition is a mistake and a misapprehension of the fact. If we are right, the belief of the minister of the gospel is, primarily, in and upon the God of the gospel. Secondly, in the Gospel because it has been made clear to them that it is the gospel of God. Assuming this to be the relationship which the Christian minister recognizes as existing between the gospel and himself, it is at once evident that he cannot feel himself at liberty to treat the collective writings, which constitute the Gospel, or any part of them, as he would do a collection of merely human opinions and conclusions. No doubt, very many Christian teachers, since his time, have shared the feeling which St. Paul almost passionately expresses, of a great preference to teach that only of which they themselves possess a perfectly distinct and definite knowledge and apprehension; but they feel sure that the actual arrangements are the wisest and best, are content to teach to the best of their ability that which is appointed them to teach, and to wait until what is now discerned but darkly becomes clear and distinct under the strong light which maketh all things manifest.

The well-known hymn to which we allude is remarkable as not only expressing, in very beautiful language,

the feeling of the earnest individual Christian, but at the same time expressing, with equal truth and felicity, the feeling of the Christian Church itself, in its present more spiritually enlightened condition, towards the ever-present Great Teacher, Helper and Guide.

"Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on:

The night is dark, and I am far from home,

Lead Thou me on.

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou

Shouldst lead me on.

I loved to choose and see my path; but now

Lead Thou me on.

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,

Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it will

Still lead me on

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone;

And with the morn those angel faces smile

Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

CONCLUSION.

As a philosophical writer Mr. Parker must be held blameworthy in having omitted to bring under consideration a very important part of that compound subject which he undertook to investigate. The necessary dependence of happiness, freedom, and intellectual progress, upon willing submission to lawful authority, and, hence, the necessity of intellectual discipline and education is not anywhere dwelt upon or shown in his published works.

A just law is public property, it belongs in part to each member of the community, each one is individually, as all are collectively, interested in the law being upheld and obedience to it enforced. Evidently every command of the supreme Ruler of the State is a law, and if the Ruler be perfectly wise and beneficent it is necessarily a just law; disobedience, therefore, to the command of the lawful Ruler is an injury done to each and every member of the community. A ready and willing obedience to law requires recognition of the necessity of such obedience, and which recognition, again, requires education.

The proposition 'that freedom is dependent upon willing submission to lawful authority' would be accepted by educated men, at the present day, as a truism or self-evident proposition, but, not very long since, it would have been met, even amongst educated men, by objection and denial. Even now, we opine, the want of knowledge

and appreciation of this fact by the masses of the less educated, is a source of danger to civilization.

But men, sufficiently educated to readily receive and appreciate as true the above proposition, should be able to understand and accept the same proposition in its more extended and complete form. . that perfect freedom is dependent upon a perfectly willing submission to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. . in other words, to the Will of God.

The importance of obedience, and the necessity that obedience should be enforced and secured, becomes therefore manifest. The supposition that the forgiveness of sins—of all or any sins—is simply a question of the exercise of God's mercy, (which seems to be a not very unfrequent supposition) results from an evident confusion of ideas. If a sin be sincerely repented of, the sin ceases. The consequences may remain, and he who committed the sin may have to suffer for the consequences; but he has ceased to be a sinner so soon as repentance became real and sincere.

One great purpose of punishment is to enforce or compel compliance with the law. To forgive in this sense, a sin unrepented of, such as wilful disobedience to the law or commandment of God . in other words, not to enforce obedience, would evidently be an injury done to every one of God's subjects. It would be for the Judge of the Universe to do wrong.

Another, or *the other*, purpose of punishment is educational. It is to cause the recognition of the sin and to render that recognition distinct by making the consequences more direct and palpable to the offender, and

thereby to strengthen him against the future commission of sin.

The supposition (which is contained in Mr. Parker's doctrine) that the mere suffering belonging to punishment expiates sin, meaning that the suffering itself neutralizes and does away with the sin, does not appear to be reasonably tenable. If the sin be not repented, it continues, sin being a condition of mind which expresses itself in the overt act when the opportunity occurs for it to do so; it is certainly not difficult to understand that the pardon of a sin or of sins by God, in the sense of an exemption from any suffering as the consequences, might frequently be the reverse of mercy; * to the individual human-being it would probably be the loss of a very useful and salutary lesson, and, perchance, have the effect of misleading other men into the commission of similar sins. The relation of punishment and fear to law and justice is exemplified in the disciplinary regulations of an army. If a soldier, or officer of inferior rank, refuses to obey the lawful command of the general, he is punished. This is held to be necessary, for otherwise the army would become disorganized and suffer defeat or be rendered useless. Is it then a reasonable conclusion that every soldier and officer obeys the orders of his commanding officer out of no better or higher feeling than that of a craven fear of the punishment which he knows would be a consequence

* The effect of extreme leniency (false leniency), carried so far as to almost exempt the convict from actual punishment, has been in some measure, submitted to experiment in England within the last few years, notably so, it is said, in the prison of Millbank. Even those who most favoured such a method of reformation, together with the many who would gladly avoid the infliction of unnecessary pain, appear to be now in agreement that to teach and enforce the indispensable obedience and respect to law and order, justice absolutely requires that merited punishment should be administered.

of his failing to obey? We opine that such conclusion would be certainly false. If each and every human being, perfectly apprehending the necessity of obedience to public law, correctly appreciating the fact that he is under the control of his own will, and that his will must be exercised in harmony with and submission to the public law, and having, by experience, education, and training, gained a perfect control over his passions, inclinations, and perverseness, was then to carry out in practice a resolution to act in strict conformity with the law . . . punishment, as a part of the human administration of justice in the affairs of the world, might cease.

Intellectually, a man's conclusions are his actions; to think wrongly is to act wrongly. For the mind to willfully agree to a false judgment involving criminal consequences, is to commit a crime. Sin is evidently dependent upon knowledge, and unavoidable ignorance prevents sin; but wilful ignorance is unlawful, and is, in itself, a great sin.

Free-will means that the intellectual-being has, by his will, the immediate control of his actions; but it does not follow that the exercise of his will may not be subjected to rules, regulations, and restraints. As already stated, the unrestrained exercise of free-will by several individuals dwelling together, is a self-evident impossibility; it is what Euclid terms an absurd supposition. Absolute free-will can belong only to one Person, the Infinite Supreme Governor. But by the term absolute is not to be understood an unreasonable, unintelligible, metaphysical sense. There is a sense, (we say it with all reverence) in which the Will of God may appear to be restricted. It is, in fact, a case in which, if subjected

to the direct control of the restraining power, the thing or existence referred to would, in the nature of things, cease to exist. By an intellectual being, is meant an individual intelligence who possesses free will, *i. e.*, has immediate self-control, subject to lawful restraint. Now this restraint prevents the infliction of the consequences of the misuse of his self-controlling power, upon others, and, perhaps, upon himself, by restraining him as far as possible from the overt commission of sinful or criminal acts. But if the Will of God were to actually supersede and take the place of the individual will of the man, or other intellectual being, and thus to cause him to act and to do right, independently of, and contrary to his own individual volition, the volition of the individual would cease to exist; in fact, there would no longer be an individual, intellectual being. Any action there might be, would, in that case, become strictly mechanical. . . simply a manifestation of the Deity Himself. Therefore, God may by assistance of all kinds: by counsel, instruction, the assurance of gentle and loving sympathy, by stern repression, by punishment....exercise an almost unlimited influence in rectifying the judgment of the individual being, and enabling him to bring himself into harmony with the law of goodness and truth: but, however greatly God may desire a sinner to cease to sin, He cannot (we say it with all reverence and care) compel or directly cause him to repent his sin and to sin no longer. To suppose otherwise is, we opine, not to honor God, but to confound language and reasoning, and to darken counsel with misused words.

A very wise preacher ended his sermon on the vanity of those things which usually constitute the objects of

the desires and ambitions of men, in these words:—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments."

Let us conclude this examination of the conclusions come to by writers on Religious Philosophy, by also inculcating the supreme importance of a loving fear and reverent love of God: of a willing and trustful submission to His Will: and a ready obedience to His Commandments. Remembering that He has given a primary Commandment to each of us, each of us who by education has become enabled, hearing, to understand the Voice of God speaking to us by the mouth of reason: 'Of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.'

APPENDIX.

The following quotation from Theodore Parker's writings, on the place actually filled by the Bible in the past and present time, will serve the double purpose of furnishing an example of that author's eloquence and literary ability, and a further illustration of the inconsequential character of his judgment in rejecting the claims of the Bible to reverence as the inspired Word.

* "View it in what light we may, the Bible is a very surprising phenomenon. In all Christian lands, this collection of books is separated from every other, and called sacred; others are profane. Science may differ from them, not from this. It is deemed a condescension on the part of its friends, to show its agreement with Reason. How much has been written by condescending theologians to show the Bible was not inconsistent with the demonstrations of Newton! Should a man attempt to re-establish the cosmogonies of Hesiod and Sanchoniathon, to allegorize the poems of Anacreon and Theocritus, as divines mystify the Scripture, it would be said he wasted his oil and truly.

This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as no other. The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land of temples and heroic deeds, has not half the influence of this book from a nation alike despised in ancient and modern times. It is read of a Sunday in all the thirty thousand pulpits of our land. In all the temples of Christendom is its voice lifted up, week by week. The sun never sets on its gleaming page. It goes

* Vol. I. Book IV. Chap. 1.

"equally to the cottage of the plain man and palace of the King. It is woven into the literature of the scholar, and colours the talk of the street. The bark of the merchant cannot sail the sea without it : no ship of war goes to the conflict, but the Bible is there ! It enters men's closets : mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The affianced maiden prays God in Scripture for strength in her new duties : men are married by Scripture. The Bible attends them in their sickness ; when the fever of the world is on them, the aching head finds a softer pillow if such leaves lie underneath. The mariner, escaping from shipwreck, clutches this first of his treasures, and keeps it sacred to God. It goes with the pedlar, in his crowded pack ; cheers him at eventide, when he sits down dusty and fatigued ; brightens the freshness of his morning face. It blesses us when we are born ; gives names to half Christendom ; rejoices with us ; has sympathy for our mourning ; tempers our grief to finer issues. It is the better part of our sermons. It lifts man above himself ; our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man, about awaking from this dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture, and his eye grows bright ; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the death-angel by the hand and bid farewell to wife, and babies, and home. Men rest on this their dearest hopes. It tells them of God, and of His blessed Son ; of earthly duties and of heavenly rest. Foolish men find it the source of Plato's wisdom, and the science of Newton, and the art of Raphael ; wicked men use it to rivet the fetters on the slave. Men who believe nothing else that is spiritual, believe the Bible all through ; without this they would not confess, say they, even that there was a God.

Now for such effects there must be an adequate cause. That nothing comes of nothing is true all the world over.

"It is no light thing to hold, with an electric chain, a thousand hearts though but an hour, beating and bounding with such fiery speed. What is it then to hold the Christian world, and that for centuries? Are men fed with chaff and husks? The authors we reckon great, whose word is in the newspaper and the market-place, whose articulate breath now sways the nation's mind, will soon pass away, giving place to other great men of a season, who in their turn shall follow them to eminence, and then oblivion. Some thousand famous writers come up in this century, to be forgotten in the next. But the silver cord of the Bible is not loosed, nor its golden bowl broken, as time chronicles his tens of centuries passed by. Has the human race gone mad? Time sits as a refiner of metal; the dross is piled in forgotten heaps, but the pure gold is reserved for use, passes into the ages, and is current a thousand years hence as well as to-day. It is only real merit that can long pass for such. Tinsel will rust in the storms of life. False weights are soon detected there. It is only a heart that can speak, deep and true, to a heart; a mind to a mind; a soul to a soul; wisdom to the wise, and religion to the pious. There must then be in the Bible, mind, conscience, heart and soul, wisdom and religion. Were it otherwise how could millions find it their lawgiver, friend and prophet? Some of the greatest of human institutions seem built on the Bible; such things will not stand on heaps of chaff, but mountains of rocks.

What is the secret cause of this wide and deep influence? It must be found in the Bible itself, and must be adequate to the effect. To answer the question we must examine the Bible, and see whence it comes, what it contains, and by what authority it holds its place. If we look superficially, it is a collection of books in human language, from different authors and times; we refer it to a place amongst other books, and proceed to examine it as the works of Homer

and Xenophon. But the popular opinion bids us beware, for we tread on holy ground".

After writing thus, however, Mr. Parker proceeds to examine the Bible precisely as he would do other books quite regardless, apparently, of the caution given by popular opinion.* What does he find? Considered as a possibly divine revelation, he finds everything different to what he would have it:—Narrative and History, where he would prefer Natural Philosophy—prophecies and psalms, figurative language and allegory, where he would like to have plain and simple statements in the most definite forms of ordinary language; wonders and miracles, where he would rather have only the laws of Nature; God communicating directly, and particularly, with men, as God of the material world and absolute King of men, where he feels sure the only correct manner in which God could or can communicate with His human creatures, is indirectly, and generally, through the inner consciousness. Consequently, he is "forced to conclude that the Bible is a human work, as much as the Principia of Newton or Des Cartes, or the Vedas and Koran." But how is this conclusion to be reasonably reconciled with what has just preceded it?

* Let the reader note the case here between Mr. Parker and popular opinion. In effect popular opinion cautions him thus:—There is sufficient evidence that the book is entitled to reverence. The matters treated of in it are such as no man can investigate by his own knowledge. Don't try to criticize or examine the book the same as though it were a merely human production, if you do, harm only will come of it. Mr. Parker then, disregarding the caution, proceeds to subject the Bible to the critical analysis of a learned man, self-reliant confident in his own knowledge and ability not only to pass judgment on the book, but to set it aside and substitute his own individual judgments and opinions. How stands the case? If Mr. Parker confounds himself, is not popular opinion justified?

But the above quotation will serve also another purpose, namely, as the manly and sincere testimony of one hostile to the claims of the Bible as a divine revelation, that it has actually up to the present time fully served its intended purpose as such, assuming it to be the inspired Word containing the divine Revelation.

The following will serve to illustrate that theory according to which the Creator, having at first provided certain laws for regulating the material world, called laws of nature, has thereby debarred Himself from exercising control over, modifying, or in any way interfering with those laws.

"A little while ago there came the cholera, scaring the world. Men attributed it to the 'wrath of God,' begged that dear Father 'to withdraw his hand,' thinking Him meddlesome and ill-tempered: Men had been ignorantly violating some of the natural conditions of bodily well-being, nay, of bodily existence. If we went on so we should all perish and the race die out. The disease brought pain and death, plainly telling us of our mistake and our consequent danger; bidding us avoid the special cause of that mischief. Would it have been well for the Infinite Providence to alter for our caprice the constitution of the universe and the pre-established harmony between nature and the frame of man? The public prayers changed not the purposes of God, nor His motive, nor His means. But the board of health swept the cholera out of many a town.

Man is sick, he prays for health. Shall God abolish the pain, or leave man to find out and remove the causes of his body's grief and seek medicine to palliate the disorder."

The question whether public and private prayer is or is not answered, and the petition of the prayer sometimes directly granted, is a question of fact to be decided by experience and evidence. Yet under ordinary or usual circumstances direct evidence cannot, from the nature of the case, determine the question with absolute certainty. If, for example, a man, being sick, prays that his health may be restored, and from that time commences to recover, he would probably conclude that his prayer had been answered, but an objector might argue: "Oh no, you are quite mistaken! it is simply the consequence of the medicine you took, or, if you took no medicine, Nature must have rallied and thrown off the disease; your prayers certainly could not have anything to do with your recovery." Now, when a question belonging to complex phenomena has to be decided by the experience of a number of observations made by a great number of observers; if a large majority, say eight or nine out of ten, agree that the evidence suffices to answer the question in the affirmative, it is scarcely reasonable for the minority, say one or two out of ten, to assert positively that the correct answer to the question is in the negative.

In the foregoing quotation Mr. Parker speaks of public prayers being offered up. The fact of public prayers being offered up, evidences that all those who joined in them belonged to the party whose experience agreed that the petitions of those who so prayed were sometimes granted. If we are not mistaken, the particular occasion referred to in the above furnishes a very strong and, to many persons, startling instance of evidence contradicting Mr. Parker's assertion. Writing from memory, we believe

the circumstance to have been as follows:—In England during the visitation of cholera, referred to by Mr. Parkes, the mortality, in the city of London especially, having become very great, public prayers were offered up on the same day in all the churches. A few days afterwards public attention was called to the fact, notably in *The Times* newspaper, in which the circumstance was dwelt upon as very noteworthy and remarkable, that up to the very day on which the prayers were offered up the mortality had steadily increased day by day; but on the day succeeding that on which the prayers were offered up, a very marked decrease in the numbers had taken place, and which decrease up to that time—of the publication of the article in *The Times*—had steadily continued. After which time, we may add, the decrease in the numbers continued and became more rapid until the cholera left the country.

On a much more recent occasion, when public prayers, not only in England, but throughout the British Empire, were offered up; the day of prayer was not very long afterwards succeeded by a thanksgiving day. We might, perhaps, safely assume that great numbers of those who joined in the thanks on the latter day, did so with the conviction that their prayer had been answered and their petition granted.

* If we remember rightly, the figures showing the precise daily mortality before and after the prayer-day, were given in *The Times* article.

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