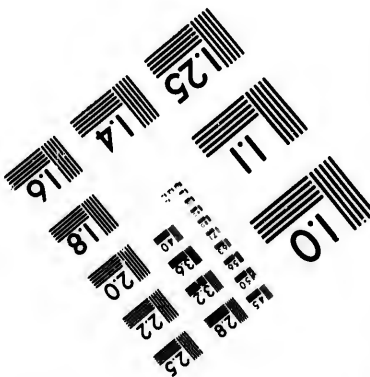
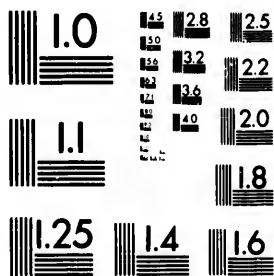


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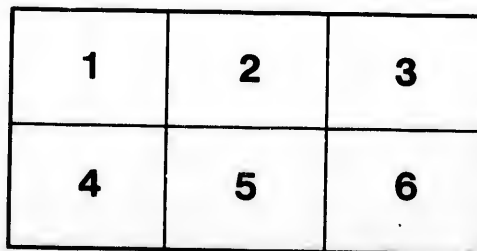
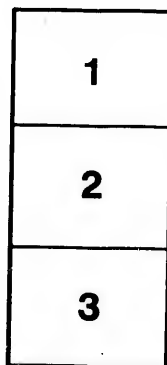
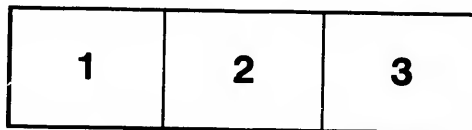
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AUGUST, 1884,

BY THE

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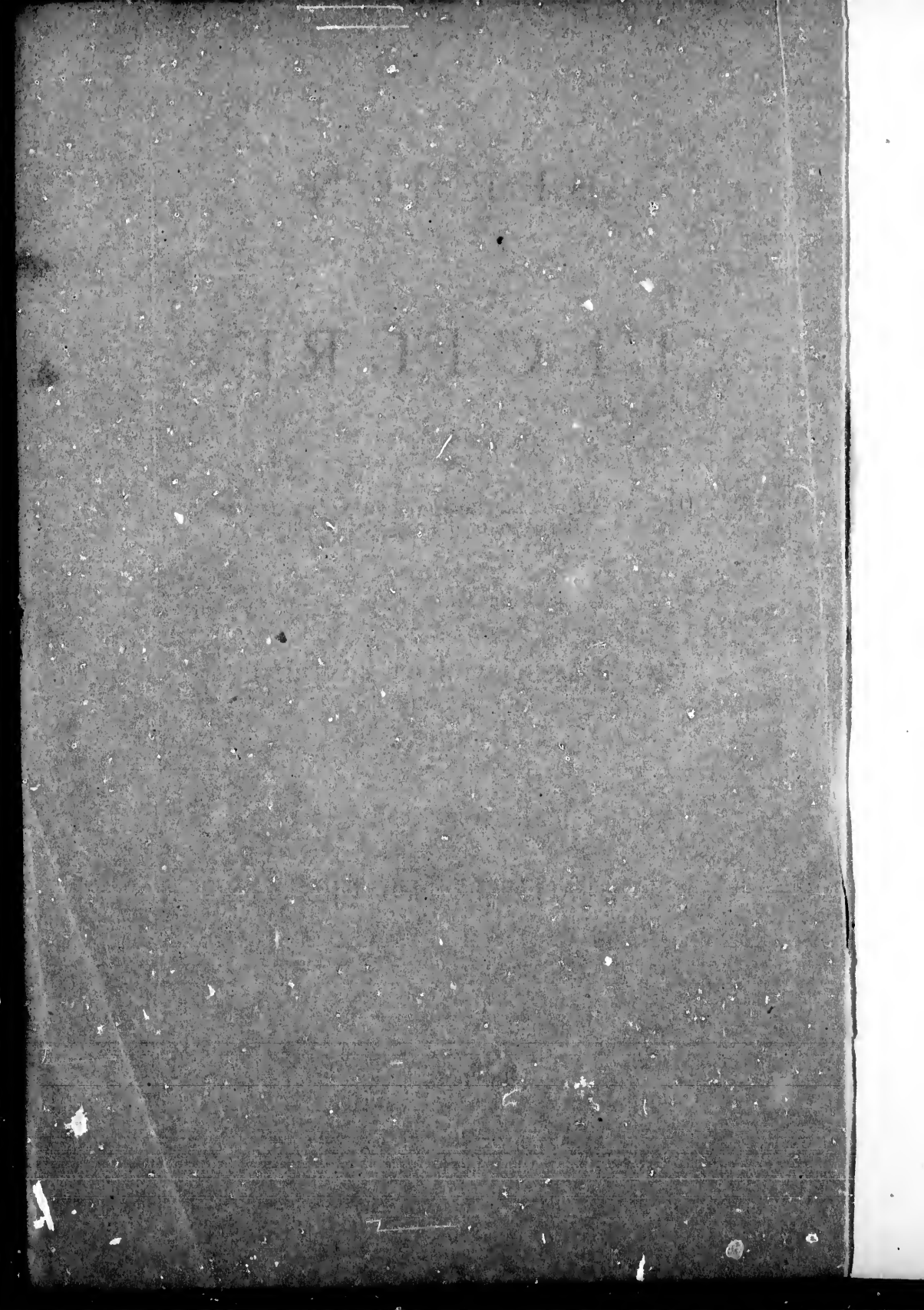
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THE PROBABILITY OF A DIVINE MORAL MANIFESTATION ON MAN'S BEHALF CONSIDERED
IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT
SCIENCE.

I select as preliminary the following passages from the New Testament, viz. :—

1. Jno. XIII, 8-9.—Philip saith unto Him, Lord shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto Him, Have I been so long time with you and dost thou not know me Philip! He that hath seen me *hath* seen the Father; how sayest thou then show us the Father?
2. Jno. X, 29.—I and my Father are One
3. Jno. II, 10.—I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
4. Jno. XVIII, 36.—My Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my Kingdom not from hence.
1. Cor. XV, 25.—So he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.

These passages are not chosen as the basis or text of a discourse, but are taken as expressive indices of the main lines for reasoning and thought. I shall not argue from, and for texts, as for foregone conclusions, but I use them that I may discuss without bias the affirmations they make. These passages suggest the broad lines of my theme; they shall bind me to nothing but the calm consideration of the subjects they open. I desire to approach a great moral question, as much in the spirit that ennobles science, as the nature of subject will permit. Rarely,

in any department of knowledge, are our loftiest movements wholly accurate; our highest attainments, in even physical knowledge, are never unalterably right. Then we may well be patient with earnest truth-seekers in the department of Psychology and Morals. Truth there, is indeed precious beyond all utterance; and it is our highest vocation as Christians,—from the very nature of Christian morality—to seek truth, and to receive it, come from whence, or lead to where it may. But in pursuing this quest we must forever remember its nature. It is not a physical enquiry, nor a mathematical enquiry, nor a problem of numbers. The *methods* of science have no application to it, although the spirit of science has, profoundly. And, if in a search for some visible and rational basis, for the most ennobling beliefs of our lives, we can make congruous and fair deductions from the deepest truths of science, it becomes our most elevated duty to do so. The Theologian, as such, forfeits all right to the ear of science, when he dares to usurp dominion over its facts, its deductions, or even its hypotheses. But, on the other hand, science may fain listen patiently, when, claiming a higher authority than nature for its highest truth, theology yet, takes the deepest facts of science and, surrendering supremely to their truth, still deduces coincidence and support from them, with, and for, the highest beliefs held by our moral nature. It is on this line I enter upon, and shall prosecute, my enquiry. These scriptural passages then, suggest the Divine character, the lofty spiritual purpose, and the permanent object of Christ's advent to man. Without question, the appearance of Christ in human history has proved itself the advent of a new moral power, a new formative factor for the higher spiritual development of man. Was this interjection of a new energy into the moral movement of the human race, a sequence of the past, or a miracle for the ennoblement of the future? Philisophically Christ is without doubt a

phenomenon. History is absolutely at fault in seeking to explain His appearance, the principles of His life and teaching, and the tremendous power projected into every succeeding age, following upon His ignominious death. If the philosophy of history has no solution, is miracle—a great moral interposition for great moral ends—even conceivable? We know that many deep, earnest truth-loving minds, masters of science, and others, declare, apparently by deduction, that any miraculous interposition in the sequences of Nature is simply inconceivable; in fact impossible. But it must ever be remembered that this is not an affirmation that there *can* be no miracle; it merely declares that miracle does not happen, and so far as our observation and knowledge of it go, could not happen. All that we know of Nature, shows, that all the phenomena that *do* present themselves, or so far as we can see, that ever have presented themselves, are sequences in obedience to rigid law. An interruption of this at any point, it is urged, cannot be thought. But in all fairness note how much there is of physical law and mental action that we do *not know*. It is negation only I know, but we have learned that even negations should at times incite our modesty. *But* to those who insist on the existence of a *personal Creator*, this inability on his part to act beyond the prescriptive borders of known law has no actual mental standing place. The fact is admitted—all the phenomena of the universe is a chain of sequences; but granted a Divine Creator as the Power that produced the *Cosmos*, it is asked, is it conceivable that he should so order, and cause, the laws of phenomena, that he could never more alter them? Can it be thought, that, if there were an Almighty Creator, He, by the very act of creating, would surrender His almightiness? Is it thinkable that He planted the crown of infinite sovereignty on the brow of matter and force by the act of creation, and forever-more became a slave—a sheer subject of His own laws?—im-

prisoned within the phenomena he has produced? That it is difficult—almost infinitely difficult—to explain how a miracle could be wrought in the physical universe as we know it, without a dislocation of the cosmos, is plain to all who think. Yet it is a difficulty of equal magnitude to any *Theist* to think that he should have abdicated his omnipotence by the omnipotent act of creation.

Now, what I shall endeavour to show is that certain scientific facts, involved in the modern hypothesis of the genesis of the earth and man, give the highest presumptive probability to the divine advent of Christ as a moral uplifter of man. To pursue the argument we must follow science without fear or carping. At the outset the momentous question meets us "Is there a God?" a question which may have almost infinitely diverse meanings. We cannot at all fairly discuss it, and, if deductive evidence be required, I doubt if it can be given. The question eludes a demonstrative answer. But moral certainty, in its own domain, may be as absolute as the evidence of measurement, or weight, or quantitative analysis, where *they* apply. I can employ to-day but *one* chain of argument out of hundreds, and that but brief and simple—look at it for a moment. The intelligence of man is the topmost wonder of all that we know; conscious and thinking man is, in the midst of mysteries, himself the mystery that is deepest. But, nevertheless, man can investigate and *interpret* the phenomena of nature. It is his intellect alone that does this. It is in this that man infinitely transcends the brute. The tender ripple of the ruddy dawn upon the margin of the eastern sky, and the opulent interchange of gorgeous hues that glorify THE WEST as the great sun goes down, awake no thrill—arouse no quiet joy—no suggestion of the infinite in the mental nature of the brute. Visually, these things are to man and beast alike; but to the higher mind of man, the colour and the form and the spatial relations—image as

it were the thought that lies behind creation, and kindle conceptions of sublimity and beauty. To illustrate this, remember there is no colour in the *object* that under the influence of light excites it; the perception of colour is in the organ that perceives—it is a special affection of the nerve and brain. So the sense of infinity in the arch of heaven; of beauty in the undulating earth, of majesty in alp and sea, and of repose in summer wood and meadow, are not in the objects; they are in the synthetic power of the spirit who sees. The mind—the soul—in man, is responsive to, and recipient of, the thought that lies behind matter and space, and which matter and space can only be made to embody by such an act of mind. There is no emotion evoked by nature's masses and heights and forms and colours and spatial extensions, in the mind of the ox. The same picture is upon the retina of the horse or the ape, or the beaver, as is imaged on the retina of man; colour, height and distance are presented to each, but they kindle no similar mental state. It is not the retinal picture,—the brain impression, that makes the sublimity the beauty, the sense of awful power and greatness in the phenomena of nature; it is the *mind* which perceives. Even to understand nature, to become in any sense percipient of its meaning and relations, requires a quick and strong intelligence. Then can it be, that that which requires mind to *understand it*, and to discover in any sense, its beauty and grandeur, did *not* require mind to produce it? The profoundest mathematical knowledge and insight is required to interpret and express the related, but intensely complex movements of the moon about the earth and the sun. Then, can we conclude that it required *no* mind to *devise* these movements and adjust the bodies that were so to move? We stand amid the heather in a summer morning, and perceive without effort the prismatic beauty radiant in dew drop. *That* is an eminent act of mind. But to apply ourselves to the study of it until we

see *why* the dew-drop bends and opens out the light, causing it to untwist its clustered radiance of hue—to invent means of doing all this *without* the dew-drop—to cause the sun to send his shafts of light through the cunningly devised prism—to study the gorgeous spectrum that results; and by that means, to mount transcendently above the facts of earthly chemistry and physics, to the facts of the chemistry and physics of the sun and stars; that is surely one of the grandest acts of mind effected by man. But it has called forth all the forces of human intellect to *discover*—to understand—to perceive all these sublime relations of light to the physics and chemistry of the universe, the disclosure of the physical condition of suns and stars. Can it be conceived that they could have been devised, brought about and established in heaven, without mind? without thought? without cause? If it be mind alone that can *perceive* the order and beauty of earth and heaven as established, could it be anything less than mind, that conceived and produced all this? Verily this is an inevitable sequence in the normal human intellect—it is impossible not to think it. True, there is a conspicuous philosophy—powerful and impressive—that seeks to account for all, including the mind of man, by sheer matter and motion. But Herbert Spencer, its great author, is compelled, with all students of modern science, to start with a beginning. But in the beginning what? The homogeneous becomes heterogeneous, that is the formula! Matter is assumed as existing as a limited, but still measureless mass of unified inertness. The homogeneity is perfect and there are no external influences, and yet, lo! the homogeneous becomes suddenly heterogeneous! and that is the beginning! Now, perfect homogeneity is infinite stability; more than once Spencer admits this, and there is nothing outside the homogeneous that can affect it; this is the actual assumption. Yet somehow—the perfectly homogenous is not so—it is in unstable equili-

brium—its equilibrium breaks—and that is “the beginning,”—the first movement in the great wave of genesis that has reached its highest point in the heavens, the earth, and man! But does this satisfy us? Surely not. The origin and the nature of matter and force I believe may never be known. But what are their relations? Do not let us deceive ourselves by supposing that matter and force are inseparable. Force is not a necessary property of matter. The two are not inalienable. Matter may be complete without force. A bar of iron is hot; it is possessed of the force or energy of heat. But it can become colder, and colder, until it might reach an absolute zero. But we can only think of it as iron still. Then what is the relation of the force of heat to the iron? It is simply an affection of matter. The force of heat *affects* the iron and makes it hot. So with all force or energy, it is not a property in matter, but an affection of it. Then if matter, homogeneous or otherwise, is to be directed into rhythmic order, such as we see in this universe, is it conceivable that it could be done by any other influence than that which we can only think of as beyond, above, and outside matter—in short—competent mind? There is a Minnie Rifle: there is a bullet; there is some powder. The powder has potential energy; the bullet has weight; the rifle has adaptation. Leave them alone, let no directing agent touch them, and what will happen? Nothing—should they remain there forever. But put the powder with the bullet in the tube; complete the charge and direct the needful action, and in an instant you have evoked the spark—set free the energy within the powder, and the bullet flies forth with murderous power. There was force, there was matter; but they could do nothing even to eternity, until the force was intelligently directed to affect the matter. Then look at a measureless expanse of homogeneous matter; it is infinitely inert. It cannot alter itself; there is, we are told, nothing outside itself to

alter it. Yet lo! it alters! "In the beginning" it throbs and pulsates itself into differences—it begins to segregate and change and take infinite varieties of form and property—and it goes on until it has produced all that we see and are conscious of!—the infinite of heaven and the universe of earth. The homogeneous, in fact, causes the heterogeneous. Is it not hard indeed to think this? Is it in fact thinkable? To the majority surely *no*. No doubt force operated on and affected matter in the first throb that stirred the stillness of the beginning; but what *directed* the force? There must be a direct relation between the first thrill of force that stirred the matter of the universe, and the movement of a planet, or the formation of a lily, or the throat of a nightingale, and the love of a human mother. Then if the force affecting matter at the beginning were not directed, by what to us is thought of as infinite mental wisdom, how did these issues arise? There appears to most men at least no answer. God, as the great mental cause, is the only solution of the problem. But some will ask, is even *that* a solution? Why should God produce and not be Himself produced. If God made all things—if there must be a cause of all that we see—then must not God be caused? And who caused Him? That question is the *primus* amongst paradoxes. Study it. What is it that the human intellect is forever subjecting to analysis and experiment? Finite phenomena. Finite facts. Concerning these, what is the universal inference of man—savage and civilized—and with no semblance of an exception? Simply that every finite phenomena, every finite effect, must have had a cause, must have originated. This is a deduction which we can only make concerning the *limited*—the finite. Only that which has limits *can be* the subject of experiment and research. We cannot experiment on the infinite. Our deduction is, that whatever had a *beginning* must have had a cause. But by what right do we carry this deduc-

tion over to the infinite? Because I *know* that the finite on which I can experiment must have been caused, have I any logical right to infer that the infinite on which *no* experiment can be made, and no experience obtained must have had a cause also? Surely not; a competent cause of all things is a final necessity of mind; and is also of necessity inscrutable. Truly it is no explanation of *how* anything arose or was caused, to conclude from all that we see that their cause was infinite mind. This does not *explain* the mode of creative evolution. The mystery is as great as ever. But the mind is at rest in an infinite cause. The origin of matter none can ever know. We cannot clearly think of it as eternally existing; and we cannot conceive how even limitless power could have called it into existence from nothing. But we are conscious that matter exists, and we know its various forms by their properties. Extension, impenetrability, and figure belong to it everywhere. Now we have the strongest and clearest modern evidence, that all forms of matter, are, in ultimate structure, similarly composed. They are made up of inconceivably minute and indestructible particles which, because they cannot be conceived of as admitting of further mechanical division, are called *atoms*. All matter is ultimately atomic. But also, various forms of matter have various properties. Hydrogen is light, and inflammable. Carbonic acid is heavy and adverse to combustion. Gold is malleable; glass is transparent and brittle. But matter has these and all other differing properties and qualities, because the *ultimate atoms* belonging to each is differently endowed. Chlorine is different in properties from phosphorous, because the atoms of chlorine are differently endowed—as atoms, possessed of wholly different properties—from those of phosphorus. Then it is to the endowment of the atoms that we must look for the properties of the various forms of matter. Now how did these *atoms* become endowed with or pos-

sessed of their various properties. Either these properties must have been acquired by accident in a measureless past, or else they must have been imparted to the atoms by competent wisdom and power. If we may take so strong and deep a mind as Clark Maxwell for our guide, the highest point made by modern mathematics and philosophy is, that the properties of the atoms could never have been *acquired*. With force (undirected by mind) for one factor, and unlimited time for another, we yet, could never even conceive, that the atoms could have slowly *acquired* their properties. The splendour of the universe is its stability. Who doubts the unchanging certainty of the laws of heaven and earth? The properties of matter *cannot* alter. The sublimity of the material universe, in its farthest extension and its nearest area; in its mightiest constellation and its minutest mote, is that the power that produced it—commanded and it stood fast. There can be no change. In living things there is generation, variation, destruction. But in ultimate atoms there is no generation. No new atom is ever produced; and no single atom can change or perish or disappear. Then, there can be no atomic evolution. Atoms cannot change and acquire new properties. They do not now—as the most accurate science affirms—and they never could have done in all the past. If atoms had ever been without permanence of property, matter of all forms would have been unstable in quality and relations. There could have been no law, no permanent phenomena. Instead of a *Cosmos* Time would have reigned over chaos. No property in any form of matter could have been unaffected by change. Properties acquired a thousand millenniums since, could have no existence now; and there could have been no certainty but the certainty of chaos, and no onward rhythmic movement from the higher to the lower—from the simple to the complex—which is the indispensable necessity of modern thought and science. The strongest

mathematical mind of our century affirms that if the atoms had not possessed, at the beginning, all the properties they now possess, nothing now existing could be permanent, and nothing in the universe could be as it now is. From the first, then, the atoms must have been possessed of their properties. And what is that but an affirmation that the atoms were—to employ human language—*made*—endowed by creative power and wisdom with their forms and properties. The beginning, then, of this finite universe was when creative power wrought the atoms, all the properties of all the matter that has built up heaven and earth, lay folded up in the created atoms. But with such atoms, so endowed, and by such a Power, there is no reason within the horizon of man's mind, to prevent us from believing that with time and law these atoms, by their inconceivable interactions and relations, could not be caused to *evolve* into the splendid majesty of heaven, and the beauty of earth. We can attach no more definite idea to the conception of creation by fiat, whatever that may mean, than we can to the idea of majestic and slow advance by evolution guided by law. But mark, the impulse of the beginning was from without. The atoms were wrought by God:—i. e. by a competent power—and this is interposition—it is *miracle*—it is the divine affection of matter from without, to make evolution by law possible. Here, then, is our first irresistible position. Divine, that is, competent action from without, was logically and, in fact, inevitably necessary to construct the atom before evolution was possible. This is the first great miracle. But was this group of atoms, so constructed, competent to evolve into living things; into the teeming flora and fauna of the world, and ultimately into man?—The strictest experimental science shall give the answer; and it is *No*. The most accurate and most recent research definitely proves that to produce life and living forms other factors were wanting. The atoms of the not-living

world did not contain *all* the properties of the world as we know it. Life is not the function of any atom, nor is it the property of any combination of atoms, as such, that we know. The properties of that which has life transcend to infinity the properties of everything that is not-living. Life is always the property of a certain highly complex matter. It is called protoplasm. There is no life anywhere apart from protoplasm. But we can analyse this compound; and we know perfectly the elements that make it up. They are common elements of the not-living world—carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen and the rest. But we further know, that none of the properties of these, separately or in combination, can give us the least suggestion of the properties of the living compound which they make. It is not a property of any of their combinations. Life is a new factor in the universe. No power now acting on earth—the latest science allows—can change what is not living into what lives. Only the living can perpetuate and produce the living. All the powers of chemistry and physics are tried in vain. How, then, in the great past did matter, when it had reached the highest pinnacle of development as not-living matter, become endowed with the powers and properties of life? Not by discoverable law—for none such exists—not by force for none such is anywhere acting. How then was it wrought? Surely by the imminent action of a power competent to bring it about. And what is this but a second “interposition,” a second “interference,” a second *miracle* in the onward movement of evolution? But having obtained upon the earth by this means, that which was living;—one or more primordeal masses of life—we have all that the great hypothesis of Darwin demands. And he suggests no other method of its production. To his profoundly logical mind life could not be accounted for by known and existing law, and it was no part of his mission to account for it. But, granted its existence by a competent cause, is there

any difficulty in conceiving that, as the atoms might by the action of law roll out into the splendour of heaven and earth *without life*; so this *living matter*, endowed with simply infinite powers of multiplication, might be caused by the same power, through laws of variation, laws of change of environment, and laws of survival, go on operating, and reaching higher and higher, until even man himself was by this process created "of the dust of the earth." Surely that is conceivable? But note with care, it could never be man *as he is as we now know him*. Man is conscious of himself—he can look within all the outer mysteries of his life and see *himself*—know that he exists apart from all others. Is this consciousness; this knowledge "It is I" a property or sequence of even living matter? Verily not. No movement of atoms, no interaction of molecular properties, can ever pass over into consciousness, or result in the knowledge "It is I."

Listen to Prof. Tyndall. He asks, "What then is the casual connexion, if any, between molecular motions and states of consciousness? My answer is, he continues, "I do not see the connexion; nor have I as yet met any body who does. . . . Does water think or feel when it runs into frost ferns upon the window pane? If not, why should the molecular motion of the brain be yoked to this mysterious companion—consciousness?" Again, he says, "While accepting fearlessly the facts of materialism, . . . I bow my head in the dust before the mystery of mind, which has hitherto defied its own penetrative power, and which may ultimately resolve itself into a demonstrable impossibility of self penetration." And finally, he says, "The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is *inconceivable* as a result of mechanics The problem of the connection of body and soul is as insoluble in its modern form as it was in pre-scientific ages."

With equal force Prof. Huxley says: "But when the

materialists stray beyond the borders of their path, and begin to talk about there being nothing but matter and force and necessary laws and all the rest of *their Grenadiers*, I decline to follow them. . . . All our knowledge," he continues, "is a knowledge of states of consciousness; 'matter' and 'force' are, so far as we can know, mere names for certain forms of consciousness."

Manifestly, then, if you identify mind and its activities with matter, you annul matter by the act; in brief, you mentalize what we have hitherto looked upon as matter. The result is that all mental phenomena, beginning in consciousness, and ending in the largest thought, and the 'grandest moral action, transcends all the properties of matter, and cannot be formulated on any terms of law and force.

The properties of life may produce a vital machine that can be impelled by hunger and thirst and desire, but never a conscious person—a self-distinguished ego—a consciousness, that can realize relations with, but also absolute distinction from, every other thing or being in the universe. But more than this, man, as we know him, is a *moral* being. The majesty of right, the baseness of wrong, are part of his knowledge of himself. "I ought," "I ought not," is the woof, of which "I am" is the web.

Then, is there one amongst us can believe that all this is an outcome, or a sequence, of atomic structure and properties, or of molecular interactions? Can any thrill or movement of even living nerve matter be believed to originate and account for all this? If not, it must have been imparted. Just as the atom had to be omnipotently wrought; just as the living matter had to be made vital by the mystery of a new potency in the compound that gave rise to its properties; so this further "intrusion" into the rhythmic flow of evolution, this further *miracle* to consummate man—the latest product of the slow majesty of creative evolution, had to be effected.

Now, be it remembered, I have made no departure from, or expansion of a single fact of science in all this. My inferences have been made along a path of strict scientific deduction : and if these inferences commend themselves it follows that, granted that evolution is the means by which God created the earth and man, and all the vast circumference of heaven ; yet these have been direct and palpable interruptions, visible interpositions, miraculous movements upon matter, by an inscrutable power, outside and above matter, without which matter could never have been what are now see.

In the production of the original atoms, in the origination of life, and in the engendering of mind and moral sense in man, we see fresh impulses, omnipotent movements, miraculous acts, giving higher and higher inertia to the splendid dilations and progressions of evolution. But having reached this point why may we not rise still higher? If three great interpositions of a competent power are necessary inferences from our latest and most accurate scientific knowledge, to account for all inclusive evolution from the beginning until now ; why, if need be, may there not be another, and even a vaster miracle? The world with man in it, we have seen, embodies a moral element. That element was as much Divinely caused as the shapes and properties of atoms. But it is an element that is not self balanced. It is the loftiest part of man's nature, but it is capable of the deepest degradation. Sin is the transgression of the law of conscience, even where that is a law unto itself, and is guided by no higher, Diviner Code. But Sin is co-extensive with man, in every age, and every area. We need not try to explain its origin, enough that we are all agreed that it is there. It involves man by his own action in pain sorrow and unrest, and blights him with conscious, as well as visible, degradation. Now if an Inscrutable Power whom we call God, would move at the beginning to create atoms, if he would

give new and vaster impulses to evolution by quickening the not-living into the living, and if he would once more intervene to breathe into man's evolved physical nature the living soul ; need any philosophy be averse to see in Christ, God stepping in once more in a miracle Divine above all others to ennoble and bring to its proper altitude the moral nature of man? Should it surprise us, if in a world of physical life, we find all needful arrangements to support, adapt and improve it, that we find in the higher moral world, special means provided for *its* uplifting in truth, and purity and freedom? Then is not this what Christ is? is not that otherwise inexplicable moral factor in history thus explained? His purpose was to disclose God—to show us The Father. But not on the side of his awful attributes; only on the side of his moral splendour—his character. It was not God's infinitude he came to reveal; the vast arch of heaven, the awful abysses of space lit up with constellations and galaxies, and streams of suns could do that infinitely better. It was not God's wisdom and power he sought to disclose, the dancing atom, the flying bird, the rolling planet, the forces of heaven and earth, and the rhythm of each with all had revealed, and would yet further reveal that. Nature is transparent to the glory and beauty of the mental light and power of God. But in all the star-lit heavens, in all the beauty and strength of the sunset and the sea, there is no moral radiance. Earth and heaven are opaque to the resplendent light of character. A star can speak of mind, but not of morals; a solar system may tell of mental strength and greatness, but can utter no syllable of moral purity. A person alone can be moral. It is not, and cannot be, an attribute of things; and a person only can give a moral revelation. Hence Christ, a spotless human person, becomes to man a revealer of otherwise unsearchable divine moral splendours. He and His Father were one. In

their thirst for a vision of God in ghastly and unutterable terrors men asked Christ to show them the Father. His answer was sublime: "They that have seen me have seen the Father also." His moral attitude, His spiritual character, His reality, His inflexible adhesion to truth, His yearning pity and love for man, these were the unseen Father's character shining through His son. He taught that the Infinite Father was a spirit—a righteous spirit—not God because He was omnipotent, but God because he was good; and all this great Father's nature was love. It was to initiate a *moral kingdom* of God that Christ had come. God's mental dominion as a power was absolute through all the domain of being. But in the fullness of time to establish God's moral dominion Christ came. To give imperishable permanence to right, to goodness, and to truth, Christ came, affirming "My kingdom is not of this world," and therefore, once inaugurated, this kingdom should endure forever." This declares the ultimate victory of right; the final enthronement of goodness and freedom, and truth. It is the proclamation of a principle—of what must be. It is not a revelation of what shall be because God chooses it—it is not omnipotent election—it is the invisible Father disclosing to man the very basis on which rests his being as Eternal Godhead. God's mind is sovereign and supreme in matter and its laws: God's heart—his character—shall be supreme in the dominion of moral life. Hence Christ was a king, and for God He established on earth an eternal kingdom. But His dominion was alone the spirit, and the loyalty he sought was alone the obedience of love. To all who call him King and Master, to all who come under the influence of the lonely grandeur of His life and the unostentatious sublimity of His death; in short, to all who feel the power of His character—as an unseen and Divine friendship,—he becomes indeed the way to the Father, and lifts us into the noblest

phases of a Divine Sonship. In all this I have uttered no theological shibboleth—no sectarian note. I have dealt with a great question bound up with the dearest hopes of most of us and intimately associated with the welfare of the world. I have relied, not on dogma, or even creed; but on what I am fain to think reasonable deductions from irresistible scientific facts. If a ray of helpful light shall have entered any mind as the result of our study, if any shall have been helped to see that there is no higher improbability of Divine interposition in the moral than in the physical, my fullest purpose will have been accomplished.

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Psa. VIII., v. 1-3-4.—O Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth,
who hast set Thy glory above the heavens * * *
When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon,
and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou
art mindful of him? or the Son of Man that Thou visitest him?

We will not venture to determine the period in the history of David, when this lofty poem was composed. It is at least redolent of *memories* of a shepherd of life, and the unutterable calm of an eastern midnight, when "all the stars shine, and the immeasurable heavens break open to their highest," and in this lies the nucleus of its grandeur. In the opening sentence of the Psalm, there is a grammatical difficulty, it is contained in the expression "who hast *set* Thy glory above the heavens." But the authorized version has evidently caught the Spirit of the profoundest analysis. The Seventy render it more gorgeous: "For Thy magnificence is exalted above the heavens"—but in both versions the power of the poet's insight is preserved, and presented; which is that there is a glory in God too high for expression in matter: the essential sublimities of His Nature are *above* the heavens. The heaven of heavens cannot *contain* Him. Few were ever interpenetrated with a consciousness of the greatness of Nature more deeply than David. But to-day our insight is immeasurably greater. The vastness, the beauty, the overwhelming majesty of creation opened to modern thought, defies competent expression; in the direction of vastness alone how sublime is it! Unnumbered worlds in tireless motion; a motion so beautiful that it is purest music:—not to the ear, but to the soul. Suns, carrying their dependent orbs with awful swiftness through untravelled space; and isolated Universes of suns steered together

through uncharted solitudes. Firmament on firmament of star suns, and out on the fringe of the very infinite, Nebulæ beyond Nebulæ curdling amain into new orbs, on the dilating verge these are but the faintest outlines, of but a portion, of that unspoken greatness which arrests and kindles intellect to-day. Then is not all this, in the sweep of its vastness, and the splendour of its detail, a fit portraiture of the Infinite God Himself? Has even He any splendours which *it* cannot utter? Without question the Universe as known to-day compels the deduction, that whenever or however it arose, it had its origin in a POWER infinite in capacity and extending through all extent. To the most atheous Science, the universe proclaims the presence of such power. But does the creation that proclaims His *presence*, in the loftiest sense, proclaim his character, pronounce the measureless sublimities of his mind? Do the grandeur of heaven and the beauty of earth tell us all we long to know of their awful cause? Perhaps the *details* of created nature—carefully and broadly studied—might lead us haltingly up to the conviction that He was an *Intellectual Unity*. Perhaps to some mind he might be thought of as a Person; but created and evolved nature could do no more. The universe cannot of itself reveal the glory of its Author. Only the pale shadow of God's highest beauty flits among the stars. Luminous as they are, they need a higher light to make them indubitably declare the *intellectual* unity and grandeur of their source. But there *is* a glory of God that is *higher* than intellect; and it is the *moral* splendour of His being. The attributes of the Spirit cannot be displayed in even the rainbow tints of sense. The subtleties of moral beauty, matter has no power to utter. God's *presence* is expressed in nature; but not His character. The grandeur of His *mind* is there, but not unequivocally the beauties of His *Heart*. It is a truth forever profound, "His magnificence is exalted above the heavens." I desire to engage

your minds with this line of thought, then, viz:—God's supremest glory is moral. Physical nature cannot utter this. But by revelation we have learned it. Then consider the works of His hands—the product of His mind—and see how profoundly He cares for, and is interested in *them*. May we now, then, as *moral* beings infer that His *moral* power would be equally exercised for the moral uplifting of our race?

I. There are many points in the physical nature of man which in some sense link him with the brute. But the empire of nature is his; all its forces animate and inanimate, within the reach of his arm, or of his intellect, are unresistingly tethered to his service. But is he *in vital attributes distinct* from the realm he governs? As living organisms, are the highest and most differentiated brutes, at an impassible distance from the lowest man? What are the features of man's nature, as man, which are inalienably his—of which the brute is no partaker, and which in *no sense* are shared by the realm of life below? Many such have been asserted, and the fiercest contests have been fought around them; many have vanished, some still remain; but I know of one which no vicissitudes can shake; no profundities of research can alter; it is that man alone PRAYS to the Infinite power that gave and that sustains his life. It has been said that it is the glory of man that he is erect; that his free brow fronts heaven. It may be; but I yet aver that the distinguishing and imperial attitude of man is *on his knees*. It is the Royal condition on which he wears the crown of nature. Prayer is universal. In every age, in every clime, savage or civilized, man willingly or despite himself, has uttered, and does utter, his anticipation or his anguish in prayer. Curses, themselves, are but prayer inverted. In the written literature of the world's life prayer is an imperishable factor. The great river of petition gathers up its waters from the sobbing rills, and swelling rivulets of multiform prayer

flowing out of every age and every clime. And it can never cease to flow. The act of prayer is immortal in the soul of man. Painting, Sculpture, Music, Poetry can never perish while man perceives and loves the beautiful. And prayer "uttered or unexpressed" can never cease to move the soul, while man is conscious—forever—of an awful and uplifted presence on which his very being is pillowed. For the *existence* of such a being I shall not argue. He cannot be found or demonstrated by reasoning. The methods of Science, and the Positive Philosophy, are too coarse to find him. We may penetrate into, and perceive, the exquisite adaptation of the physical universe, but we cannot push our way up to the splendid mystery of its *Cause*. The hard methods of induction, are unsensitized to the subtle chemistry of the light that is *above* the heavens. The all-encircling plenum "God" reacts to no method used in the thousand laboratories of science. You must come to the facts of Nature with your soul smitten into "fluorescence" by the light that is *above* the heavens, before God is indubitably seen.

Brethren, I speak from no cursery knowledge when I say, that foremost amongst the noblest truth-seekers on this earth, are the leaders in the work and thought of science to-day. And can there be any nobler work? Is it not better to follow Truth, though it lead to the grave of our hopes, than to be cushioned lustful indolence upon the Delilah-lap of falsehood? Should any man under heaven believe in the grandeur of truth more than they who constitute the Christian Church? Do we not own her empire? Have we not circled her brow with the rarest crown and laid at her feet the whole empire of thought? Then, as truth seekers, let us ask what are the lessons to be derived from modern science? What can it teach us? It has laden the world with a glorious heritage; its facts have made our age luminous with intellectual beauty and promise. But says the anxious onlooker

tossing on the troubled waters of doubt; swayed by the subtil and daring thought which distinguishes our times; "What does your splendid array of facts tell us of God—what is disclosed by it concerning the power from whom nature sprung?" Can He—will He—care for us? Is he loving, just, pitiful? Are we more to him than flowers or atoms? What can science tell us it has found concerning the character of God? The answer is calm as it is fearless: "Nothing." "We can nowhere *demonstrate* His presence; the method we have employed has led us to truths of the loftiest order, and to mysteries of the profoundest kind. But to a scientific proof of a personal God, we have nowhere come. Indeed to *our method* He is non-existent." Such is the answer of the latest searchers; and need I say it is an answer which has shocked and roused to scorn the Theological thought of the world. And yet it is profoundly true; it is the testimony of science to the unalterable power of the ancient question, "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" *No.* The physical method is incompetent for so sublime a work; and the masters of research avow it. Science could never have discovered for us an adorable Deity. Then may we not calmly ask *why* should Theology retort upon this confessed incompetence "then you are an Atheist,—an infidel,—a materialist?" Such weapons I am free to declare, are only forged in the armoury of pallid fear. They were not fashioned at the forge of charity; nor made to take form by the stalwart hands of faith. And the fear is absolutely groundless. Science is proving the validity of your Holy Book; it *cannot* find out God. But *that*—even to the men who make the avowal—is no *denial* of His being; far otherwise. It is a simple declaration that if you find the Infinite Father as a Unity—a personality—an adorable Power, you must come upon Him by other means than these. And it is not out very lifework to establish and amplify this truth? Is

not the rock on which the pillars of Christianity are based "no man—in spite of the tireless inquest of the ages—hath *seen* God at any time ; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him ?" Is not the completed Gospel—the Christ of history, the only true response to the despairing affirmation of the latest Science, "We cannot find God?" And does not He, as the consummation of all that preceded, reply, "Ye cannot ; but He has been authoritatively revealed to you ; and I have come to disclose His character—I and my Father are one ?"

Depend upon it if man *could* fathom the *meaning* of this Universe it would be the work of a finite mind. And if by the tirelessness of research we could in very deed scientifically demonstrate the nature of the Source of all things, and by our methods prove Him to be there, He would be not only *finite*, but *physical*. The demonstration would dethrone Him ! The diadem of sovereignty would fall from His creature-brow, and verily the Universe would be Godless !

It is true, by the study of Nature men have formulated a *conception*, and called it God,—Spinoza's magnificent mind did this ; but with what result ? Simply that God and the Universe were one. The splendour of the heavens, the beauties of the earth, and the soul of man were not God's creatures, they were God Himself. And never did naked intellect struggle so grandly with matter to find its source as did this lonely Jew.

And there can be no other result ; when the scientific student of nature has reached the outmost verge of human knowledge, straining his eyes into the impenetrable darkness, he is compelled to exclaim, "It is above, and beyond and around all this that the true mystery of the Universe is hidden."

II. And yet by a consent absolutely universal,—a consent wide as the world, and far-reaching as history—man

has in some form acknowledged and adored the unsearchable Power.

The philosophy of this fact I do not attempt. How the *Ego*, the I of human experience reached the *Thou* of Infinite personality I may not consider. Enough that it is an indisputable fact. But I am bound to ask what is it *in* the unsearchable Power that the noblest spirits of every age have bowed down to it and adored? What is it, that, in this age of thought and culture, impels enlightened Christendom to lift its hands and bow its knees to the Unseen? Not an intellectual abstraction filtered out of the facts of Science? As well might you suppose that a tropical luxuriance could be called into life by moonlight on the Arctic hills. Go into Nature and find if you *can* an object of adoration. You *must* make your own consciousness the foreground of the infinite perspective of your quest; but you may take with you the method of the sculptor, and from the rude block of your own intellectual life, you may, as taught by the spirit of created things, cut into beauteous form the fair image they disclose; or you may take with you the method of the limner, and with the splendours of heaven and earth for your pallet, you may depict in form and colour a glorified abstraction. Look at it. Yes! its features are sublime. See how the *forces* of nature have stamped themselves on the subtle pencillings. The swirl of suns, the onward roll of countless Universe—the awful energy in all things—this has depicted *Power*—calm, resistless, insentient, defiant Power. Can you worship that? No! You may tremble at it, but you cannot adore.

Look at the passionless splendour of your picture: you have been studying measureless activity—in invisible atoms and inaccessible suns. And everywhere you have seen the same impassible repose—the splendour of unconscious and eternal calm. Can you worship it? It awes you: but it does not bend your knee.

I can see traces in your mental picture that glow with evidence that you were awed by proofs of unsearchable wisdom, that you could find no limit to the greatness around you; while tints of benevolence gleam everywhere in your uplifted abstraction; though they are streaked and clouded; for dark hues of death and lurid shades of agony *would* flood your pallet. But there it stands in its imperfect grandeur: the mind's picture of the Godhead painted in the tints of nature. Does it kindle you into adoration? Does it fire you with a spirit of self-surrender? Do you feel for it "The speechless awe that dares not move and all the silent heaven of love." No! a thousand times, No!

III.—Then *what is it* in the unseen Power that softens us into adoration, and lifts us into trust? Ah, it is something that is not found in pale planet, or in fiery sun. It is something which light cannot reveal, and which all the forces of Nature would combine in vain to symbolize or disclose. *It is the moral grandeur of the Infinite Nature.* He is holiness, He is truth, He is spiritual beauty. His throne is justice, His dexter arm is righteousness, and His heart is love. It is this and this only that the soul of man can worship. But this is a magnificence *above* the heavens. Your chemistries cannot find it; your physics cannot formulate it; your mathematics cannot symbolize it. Matter can take no form that will disclose it, in all the radiance of Nature this supernal light is lacking. It is a light above the firmament; it is a glory above the heavens; it is a beauty seen from far;—the shimmer of that light in which *He* dwells; and which no man can approach unto.

And, sirs, this, and only this, is the reason why the Almighty is thought of and known as ineffably happy; *it is because He is good.*

The enlargement of a quality to infinity does not alter its nature. In Creator, or in creature it is not splendour

of circumstance, not magnificence of surroundings that makes happiness. God is not happy because he is circled by angels and throned amid stars. Happiness belongs *only* to condition. *He is good*; and thus He is *happy*; and it is the soft radiance of this moral magnificence that kindles our emotion and bends our knees.

How this inscrutable glory of the Almighty was first—in the far past, discovered to all the diverse branches of our race I know not. The morning rises on the night in forerunning streaks of purple; and in every age, amongst every people born to think, there have been noble spirits who have pillowed themselves upon a revealing God.

But the source and certainty of *our* knowledge, is the Gospel—the life, the character and the mission of Christ. He was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His Person. The otherwise unutterable perfections of the Deity *spoken* in a human life. He and His Father were one—He was the *Word* which nature could not articulate. And in what was the Revelation He brought us sublime and alone? Was it in the flash of omnipotent attributes, a hitherto unapproached dominion over law and force, that distinguished Him in His solitary greatness? No. Miracle there was, enough to attest His mission; but *His* work was to utter the otherwise unutterable mind of God. The invisible glories shining above Nature, and to which the heavens and the earth were opaque, had taken form in His soul. He was illimitable in power, but it was the power of holiness and love. He was a King, but His empire was the spirit. He was God's unsearchable splendour of character. "Manifest in the Flesh"—the glory that is above the heavens revealed.

IV.—Brethren, I have dwelt long on this, for it has a power and meaning in it. But I must lead you away from it now, that, furnished with other thoughts, we may approach it with an added meaning. It was a rare in-

sight that enabled David to proclaim it. Few seers have soared so high. But the delicate poise which kept his spirit high enough to see the glory that was above the heavens, was broken; and he fell again to the more lurid lustre of suns and stars and universes. That strangely divine insight could be *but* transient; and when it vanished, and the physical magnificence of the Universe took its place, one may not wonder that he fell to the human thought. "What—amid all this greatness—is *man* that *Thou* art mindful of him."

David had enlarged and noble views of the physical universe; he was oppressed with its awful greatness. the minuteness of the earth and the meanness of man flashed vividly upon him; a speck, in the measureless *All*, why should the ever-blessed One concern Himself with it? *What is man* in the unmeasured complexities of this vast Creation? This is intensely human; it is the poet, not the seer, that speaks. Then nature flings suggestions of the Infinite across the soul this thought *will* come. The Almighty may concern Himself with moving universes, or with molding the plastic nebulae into new realms of being: but this puny earth, and man, what a *o* these "that HE should be mindful of them?"

But brethren, knowing that the physical beauties around us *are* the product of a glorious mind; learning it not first from nature, but from God Himself, we may go to the "work of His fingers" to learn if He *does* lock Himself up with the *vast*:—to see if He does scorn the little and the lowly. Here and there, great and little, are not to God: and they certainly have no *true* place in the moral aspect of material things. Down to the uttermost verge of littleness the perfection of matter is absolute. The minutest objects in nature are those which are carved and chiselled with the most entrancing beauty. Nature's motes and atoms are more superbly finished than its masses. The lowliest living thing, which must be magnified

millions of times in area to be seen at all, is as perfectly adapted to its sphere as a swallow or a man. The great Power that wrought nature impressed the evidence of His care as much upon invisible organisms as upon peopled constellations. Could it be otherwise? As if the Care and Sovereignty of the Infinite could cease where our poor eyes must cease to follow! As if He, whose glory is above the heavens, would evolve *anything* over which His dominion would not stretch or His infinite benevolence be diffused!

No brethren, I turn from David to Christ in *this* matter;—from the human poet in a human mood to the Divine Instructor. Stand by the margin of that sheltered slope in Gallilee, its verdure tinted with the hues of flowers—and harken! It is Christ that speaks: “Consider the lilies of the field how they grow, they toil not neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these: WHEREFORE if God so clothe the grass of the field...shall He not much more clothe you?” Oh! that is a profounder insight! No suggestion of imperial splendours that cannot stoop to atoms there! David’s wonder, is the flutter of a human feeling; Christ’s assurance is the placid utterance of a Divine truth. God cares for the lilies; but ye are more than lilies; then fear not for God cares for *you*. Study the *power* of that lesson; look at the beauty and the force of the illustration. See Solomon in his glory. He is robed and crowned and canopied with the richest and the rarest from the farthest land and sea. How came that splendour there? Did earth and air and sky combine, in unintelligent caprice to glorify the voluptuous King? *No*; it was the result of intelligence, wisdom, will, design. Then behold the *lily* in its outer beauty and its inner life. Whence came it? Was it chance—the fortuitous concourse of soulless atoms smiting each other in their reckless onrush,—that produced the lily and preserves it? *No*—affirms the

Christ—it is God. Then if there be no fear for the lilies need I fear? No brethren! We are pillowed on the bosom of the Everlasting and why should we fear? Because He is infinite He cares for the lily: Then let not *man* dishonor Him by supposing that He does not care for him.

V.—What then have we learned? (1) That God's supremest glory is His moral beauty, and (2) that the evidences of His sovereign care in material things are as supreme in the minute as in the vast. There is one higher lesson. The lilies are cared for; but they know it not. Man—greater than the lilies—is cared for, and he may *know* it. He is in one respect above Nature; he has been taught by Christ to call the everlasting God his Father.

And what is the essence of fatherhood, but the impartation of the parental nature to the child? What is it but the giving of that which is purest and best in itself to its offspring?

Then what is the glory and beauty of God. What is that which is best in the Infinite Father? His CHARACTER, His moral beauty, His spiritual holiness. Then if He will stoop to the soulless lily, to nurture and to paint *it*, will He not watch and ennoble the soul of man? Shall *we* commiserate the stricken, the fallen, the depraved, and He have no power to do so? Shall He who wrought the capacity for love and pity in us be without love and pity Himself? Shall He who planted the eye not see?

Brethren, can you care more for your house, and your vineries, and your pictures than you do for your child? Have you more interest in your chinking gold than in the beating heart of your eldest born?

Then can you think that God cares more for passionless lilies than He does for the throbbing, yearning, sin-stricken soul of *man*? Nay! He cares more for men than for motes or mountains, or for the stars themselves. And if He cares for their physical good—their mental good—will He not care for their moral?

If He adjust light to the eyes and the eye to the light—need it surprise us, if He use means to lift the soul up? If He clothe the grass of the field, shall He not meet the moral necessities of immortal men? God delighted in all His creatures or He would never have made them. But how much higher must be His delight in beings radiant with his own image. Man *must be* nearer to God than the flowers of the field, or even the most exalted brutes. Nay more, a man of *ideas* must be nearer to God than a man of *sensations* only: and from the very nature of the Godhead a man of high moral purposes and great spiritual resolves *must be* dearer to the Divine nature than a man of the most brilliant intellect or the profoundest knowledge without this:

Hence it is that the obscurest human being may arrest the attention of the angels of heaven; nay, it may bring the infinite Father from the "housetop" of His glory to welcome and to kiss the soul stricken with great moral conviction and intense in the greatness of its spiritual resolve.

Moral movement on earth is a power in heaven. The keyboard of moral purpose, stricken on earth, produces the loftiest music round the throne; but the highest triumphs of our *intellect* are surpassed where the angels are. Intellect in His creatures is precious to God who breathed it there; artist, and poet, and sage—Handel and Raphael, Shakespeare and Homer, Spinoza and Plato—but there is to God a form that in the brightness of his beauty infinitely "excelleth" these: it is *the Saint*—the soul who by moral and spiritual conquest has fought his bloodless way to the mind of Christ, the moral likeness of God. Then this is the victory that overcometh the world—even our faith. The heavens are very great, but God is greater than they. The heavens are very glorious, but God has an infinitely above that which is seen in them. Throughout all the Universe man alone can perceive and reflect that

glory. But the mirror of man's soul is dim—a moral blindness has smitten him the world lieth in darkness. Nameless degradations demoralized the God-like possibilities of the race, some portions of the human brotherhood are in the nethermost darkness of spiritual decay.

But, brethren, God has interposed for man's uplifting. The everlasting Father has stooped down to save us. *We* have been permitted to see its meaning and to feel its power—God's method for the healing of the nations: and to *us* the mighty command and the awful responsibility is given—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." We are essential factors, in the moral evolution to which we are indebted: The world's uplifting is dependent—spiritually—upon the Church. The coronation day of Christ may be hastened by the holy resolve and faithful labour of the churches. We have the light for which the nations long.

