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FW Newman

MORAL THEISM.

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A RECENT writer in one of our foremost reviews, while undertaking to refute Theism, and scornfully claiming that he has fulfilled his task, yet in the close asserts that “all the essentials of *religion* can be retained by the so-called Atheist.” The *so-called!* A man who tramples on Theism is unwilling to be called an Atheist! He has to define Religion in his own way, in order to make out that an Atheist may be religious. Mr. John Stuart Mill preceded him in this, and has been followed by many; but it certainly is very unfair to go back to the derivation of a word for its sense, when for ages a well-defined meaning has been given to it, which cannot be deduced from its derivation or its earliest use in a foreign tongue. No sensible Englishman, however learned in Greek, will employ the word *sycophant* to mean one who gives information concerning figs; no one goes to the Latin derivation to determine the sense of a king’s *prerogative*. It is quite true that *religio* originally meant a reflecting or reconsidering, and hence a *scruple*; whence *religious* meant “reflective and scrupulous,” as a first sense; but a secondary sense, even in Latin, was coupled with a belief in Gods or God, insomuch that Cicero applies the epithet to things and buildings which are peculiarly sacred, as, “a most religious temple.” Under Christianity, the words *religious*, *religion*, have been from the first used as translations of the Greek θρησκευος, θρησκευία in St. James’s epistle, and universally imply reverence and devotion to a superior power; hence no one feels any contradiction if he hear a Greek pirate or Italian brigand called “very religious, but very unscrupulous.” Louis XI. of France was not morally scrupulous, but he was highly devout, highly religious to the saints whom he revered. When a word has thus assumed for very many centuries in various

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θρησκευία in St. James’s epistle, . . . [epsilon omitted, ostensibly by a printer’s error, Misc.]

25 nations a *sharply-defined* sense, it can only promote confusion and sophistry
 to try to alter it. We have a right to insist on retaining for “religious” the tra-
 ditional sense of *devout towards some superior unseen being*; and if any one
 is scornful against the belief in any super-human mind, he has no right to deny
 that he is irreligious. He ought rather to boast that the epithet is justly applied
 30 to him. But this is said only as a protest against the sophistry of confusion;
 just as against the denying of Theism and yet resenting the epithet Atheist.

Christians in general have been absurdly apt to confound Deists or Theists
 with Atheists. One might indeed almost think that the writer just quoted mis-
 took Voltaire, Hume, and Paine for Atheists. But it may be hoped that such
 35 attacks on Theism, and such contempt of Theists will do us the service of at
 length teaching Christians how vast is the chasm between us and Atheists. It
 is indeed high time that this matter were published clearly everywhere. When
 we sympathize a hundred-fold more with Swedenborgians or Evangelicals than
 with any who renounce the idea of a Holy God, it ought not to cause surprize
 40 that we are unwilling to be confounded with those who really, avowedly, and,
 as they boast, successfully, cut away the roots of devout faith, confounding
 indeed faith with wilfulness, and maintaining that it has no root in the soul,¹
 but is only a prejudice retained from Christian tradition.

Against the formula, “Personal God,” the main attack is directed. Many
 45 condescend to the meanness of asserting that by a personal God is understood
 a God who has a *body*, while well aware that even the Anglican Thirty-nine
 Articles open with declaring that God is Three Persons, but *without body*,
 parts, or passions. Others dogmatically assert that a Person can only be said
 of one who is limited, which is a subtle attempt to assume Atheism as an axiom.
 50 Of the same kind was Mr. J. S. Mill’s calm assumption, that “of course, we can
 know nothing but phenomena;” well knowing that no Theist is frantic enough
 to say that God is a phenomenon. One might have thought nothing was plainer
 than the popular sense of the word Person. No one calls a dog or a horse a
 Person, much less an unthinking and unfeeling force, such as gravitation or
 55 cohesion. Hardly do we call an infant a Person, but only those who have Mind
 in the higher sense; so that to call God a Person is just equivalent to entitling
 him a Mind or a Spirit. Mr. Matthew Arnold, who, in his book, “Literature and
 Dogma,” rudely flouts and banters two bishops for belief in a Personal God
 (as if in all Christendom and Jewdom only two bishops held this creed), shows

I. I am glad to add the caution that Herbert Spencer here distinctly maintains the
 contrary. But his position is peculiar and quite his own.

40 confounded with these last, who avowedly, and, . . . [rev. Misc.]

equal aversion to the doctrine that God is a Spirit; and has the infatuation to correct the translation of the celebrated verse in John iv. into “God is an influence.” This completes the proof that in denying God to be a Person, he means to deny that God is a Spirit. After this he does but contradict himself if he alledge that God is Holy, and may as well justify the Trinitarianism, at which he so remorselessly scoffs, or any other self-contradiction.

If we allow to materialists such assumptions of *philosophy* as they make, of course they easily prove Atheism. They seem resolutely blind and deaf to the assertion that we reject the first principles on which they dogmatize. Those who appear to walk in the steps of Mr. J. S. Mill (for whom, on many grounds, I have an earnest respect and esteem) prevalently assert that Experience is the only factor of knowledge, carrying it to the ridiculous extreme of forbidding us to assume the laws of arithmetic as invariable “beyond our experience.” This is a cardinal subversion of the very logic by which they mean to build up Science; for its essence consists in extending to regions of which we have *no* experience the laws which we discover in regions of which we have *some* experience; and in affecting to believe that two and two may make five in some unknown world, they are blind to the fact that this is a self-contradiction everywhere and always false.

Another thing which I observe to pervade the reasonings of our Atheists is the inability to understand the source whence Theists *profess* to learn the moral qualities of God. One might imagine that they suppose (what is just the opposite of the truth), that ancient men had an immensely extended acquaintance with external Nature, and very little knowledge of the internal world of the human Mind, and evolved their belief of the qualities of God from the former alone, just as these modern materialists are attempting to do. We concede, or rather maintain, that by mere material observation you cannot discover a Divine Mind—nay, you cannot in this way discover a *Human* Mind. Anatomy will not reveal that a brain can think, nor that the brain of a man is nobler than that of an ape; but, knowing beforehand the superiority of the man to the ape, we are taught what structure and what convolutions belong to a nobler brain. It is mere waste of words and a throwing of dust into our eyes to amass argument in proof that external Nature, *treated as alone the men of material science choose to treat it*, does not reveal a holy and perfect God. No doubt we see without us fitnesses so marked and striking, so abundant and pervading, as forcibly to suggest Design; also mental phenomena in animals and men so peculiar as to convince us that there is Mind permanently at work in the Universe. *Deus anima brutorum*, said an older wisdom. But in speculating on the *qualities* of the Divine Mind, we reason primarily from the qualities of our own mind, *not* from external Nature. Nay, the most decisive proof of the

100 existence of a Divine Mind with Socrates and Cicero is derived directly from
 contemplating the human mind itself. “Whence did you pick it up?” they ask.
 Mankind at large has everywhere inferred that the perishable and the temporal
 mind is but an offshoot of a higher and abiding Mind, which they discern as
 active in the Universe. If any persons are blind to this Designing Mind, and
 105 choose to be scornful and dogmatic against nearly the whole human race, it
 would be manlier to put their names to their writings, and not hide themselves
 under an anonymous mask. The real leaders, who proclaim their names and
 have an honourable position to maintain, do not indulge in this arrogance.

The problem of discovering or discerning that a Divine Mind exists is one
 110 thing; the problem of judging what are the qualities of that mind is another. In
 the former nearly all nations are agreed. In that argument the main part is played
 by outward observation; yet we can never dispense with self-consciousness
 that we ourselves partake of Mind. Of course, if we did not know this, it could
 not occur to us to impute mind to any one else. This is precisely a rightful
 115 reasoning from what we know directly to what we cannot know directly—in
 short, from experience rightly applied. But the Atheist absurdly attacks us for
 this very thing, saying that we are adoring our own shadow. No; but we reason
 from the known to the unknown—to the best of our power. We are liable to
 mistake in applying the method; but the method is sound, is philosophic, is
 120 the only possible method; and it is corroborated most widely by mankind,
 almost as widely as are the great principles of practical morals. The Greeks,
 hardly observing the element of Metaphysics contained in this argument,
 regarded the investigation of the Deity (or Theology) to be a part of Physics.
 So long as it is confined to Physics, it is quite evident that it can have nothing
 125 to do with Morals, and must be wholly without practical interest to human life.
Moral Theism alone concerns us. Modern Atheists prevalently hunt down the
 very idea of “Metaphysics” with scorn, identifying it with groundless assump-
 tion. If we permit them to do this, again I say, we permit them to make an Axiom
 of Atheism.

130 Metaphysics play a very small part in the argument which establishes
 the existence of a God, but this small part is still certainly essential. Just so in
 the demonstrative or deductive Sciences the metaphysical part (so called) is
 extremely small; yet it is indispensable, generally very difficult—at least
 vehemently controverted. Given the definitions and Axioms of Geometry, there
 135 is no dispute among geometers as to the deductions from them; but concerning
 the first principles there is active controversy to this moment. All agree as to
 what propositions are true: the question is, How we know them? or, How we
 prove them? The ancients frankly assumed the first principles as true upon
 Intuition, *i.e.*, justified by the mind as soon as it gazes or dwells upon them:

and this remains a certain fact. We moderns think we can *deduce* some of 140
 them from admitted truths, and find substitutes for others. But after all, we
 are driven to admit that *some* primary truths in this earliest and most demonstrative
 of Sciences are known only by Intuition, and the ancients felt as certain as
 we do about the principles—with good reason. In that very necessary science,
 still incomplete, called Logic, which discusses the *Laws of Evidence*, it is a 145
 trite and obvious remark that “the Laws of Proof cannot be proved;” for in the
 attempt to prove them you would have to *assume* the laws of proof. All that
 can be done is, to state them lucidly, and leave them to be approved or rejected
 by what is called Common Sense, *i.e. here*, the good sense of thoughtful and
 cultivated minds. This is evidently another appeal to Intuition. In Mechanics 150
 also, both as known to Archimedes, and also in the modern developments,
 notoriously we cannot evade delicate and difficult questions concerning the
 attainment of first principles. The reasonings or thoughts which convince
 us of their truth, are necessarily *different* from those which pervade the science,
 and are often called Metaphysical, while those of the science are Physical. 155
 The Metaphysical part, though very small, is absolutely essential—is vital;
 so is it in Theology. With a true instinct do those who would subvert Theology
 and degrade Morals dogmatize against *all* Metaphysics, the one class aiming
 to deny Godhead, the other to deny Free Will. They must be opposed in their
 first stealthy assumptions, if we are to resist them logically and consistently. 160

In the second problem, which discusses the qualities possessed by that
 God, whom we already believe unhesitatingly to exist, the Metaphysical argu-
 ment quite takes the lead: that is, we argue from what we know *within ourselves*
 to what we are to believe concerning the Most High. Atheists constantly 165
 reproach us with this, and try to make us ashamed of this most legitimate and
 necessary process: then, supposing that by reproof and reproach they have
 annihilated the argument, they proceed to confute us as if we had reasoned
 from a presumed full acquaintance with the Universe as a whole, and from a
 comprehension of the Divine Government. They produce special cases in
 which they arraign that Government as *stupid* and *cruel*, and, despising our 170
 God, most naturally despise us for adoring Him. A matter very unwisely
 broached by the late Mr. J. S. Mill has been reiterated triumphantly as a decisive
 proof that if there be a God, He is a very clumsy or malicious contriver. “The
 pains and danger of childbirth,” forsooth, are adduced as the terrible pheno-
 menon which ought to make us all Atheists. The stress laid upon this does 175
 not indicate a sound judgment nor a strong case. Are they unaware that in
 certain races, as the North American Indians, mothers suffer little from this
 cause, and after half a day’s rest, tramp about fearlessly with their young one?
 Civilized man, by his own errors, has made the mother’s travail severer. We

180 know that in like manner the domestic cow has often great suffering, and even
 danger of life, from which the wild cow is free. Moreover, on the one hand the
 Turkish and Greek women are reported as suffering very much less than our
 English women; and on the other, it is alledged in certain quarters that, by a
 judicious use of the bath, even among ourselves, parturition becomes perfectly
 185 safe and comparatively mild. The case is evidently one out of many in which
 the ignorance or folly of man has intensified human pains. It is not here asserted
 that in any case maternal travail can be wholly free from pain; but moderate
 pain may have moral results so valuable as to be even a good.

I find it difficult to read the bold, confident, and coarse attacks which are
 190 made on the physical order of things as *bad*, and, indeed, if it proceed from
 a God, *culpably bad*, without supposing that the writer fancies (as Alfonso
 the Wise, while believing the Ptolemaic system) he could have made the world
 more wisely if the power had been put into his hand. The arrogant folly of this
 is so manifest, that one may expect such an interpretation to be indignantly
 195 disowned. What then does such a writer mean? Will he say that he merely
 means to point out to Theists that from a Universe which has such a Mixture
 of Evil with Good they cannot decisively infer the perfect goodness of its
 Author and Regulator? Probably this is all that Mr. J. S. Mill meant. Then our
 reply is, that we entirely agree with him, and never drew any such decisive
 200 inference from outward facts alone. We positively and unhesitatingly infer
 the Divine Goodness from our consciousness of what is in our own hearts,
 not from an Induction based on phenomena of the external Universe, though
 it evidently abounds with manifold goodness. It is true that (at least, speaking
 for myself) I regard their estimate of the Evil in the Great World to be an extra-
 205 vagant and enormous exaggeration in comparison to the Good. I believe the
 preponderance of Good over Evil to be vast and decisive, especially if we
 exclude the moral world and look (as the objectors prevalently look) to the
 animal and vegetable kingdom. Animal pain, in brutes and men, so far as it
 results strictly from the conditions of our animal existence, appears to me at
 210 worst small compared to animal happiness; moreover, a liability to pain is obvi-
 ously essential to life and welfare. If this be admitted (and I do not see how
 it can reasonably be denied) no mortal ought to regard himself as competent
 to argue against Divine Benignity by alledging that the *quantum* of pain in the
 Universe is too great. This topic, however, deserves enlargement. A recent
 215 writer, very hostile to the Theism received in Judaism and Christianity, but (I
 believe) not intending to argue for Atheism, tells us of the horror felt by a child
 whose pet bird was killed by a hawk. Having been taught that God made all

the birds, the child at once indignantly declared that God must be wicked for making so cruel a bird as the hawk. The same child would probably have thought his father wicked, had he heard him give orders for the scourging of a criminal. In the latter case the moral reasons are not understood or imagined; nor in the former, half the facts. Inexperience and ignorance are of necessity sadly embarrassed in the attempt to reconcile the conduct of the wise with its limited moral notions. But as the child who believed that its father must be good, *in spite of* his scourging a fellow man, would be wiser than he who at once renounced faith in his father's goodness; so too the child who audaciously rejected the parent's teaching concerning God's goodness because of the hawk's predatory nature is ill held up as an instance of wisdom or sobriety of mind. Pain is, and ought to be, painful to us to contemplate; but surely not only is it clear that (as said above) susceptibility to pain is necessary to inculcate the avoiding of danger, but also it is highly probable that the idea of being possessed of a body which can feel pleasure and cannot feel pain is a simple contradiction, like a square circle. That if we are to be susceptible of pleasure in body or mind, we must be susceptible also of pain, is a *primâ facie* truth. Who of us pronounces his pleasure in life so small and his pain so great that he wishes he had never been born? This is, at any rate, excessively rare in the most miserable. Violent death is rightfully shocking and distressing to contemplate, but it is not necessarily distressing to the sufferer: unconsciousness may follow so swiftly on the death-stroke as almost to annihilate pain. Such is indeed the case in very many of the most appalling catastrophes. In a great conflagration the torrent of smoke or of carbonic-acid gas suffocates instantaneously. Death to those overwhelmed by a volcanic eruption, or swallowed by an actual opening of the earth, is probably quite painless. Death by drowning, there is reason to believe, brings with it only the delirium of a pleasant dream. Dr. Livingstone instructively gives us his experience of being caught in the jaws of a lion. The beast leapt upon him, seized him by the shoulder, and tossed him up in air; this tossing made his brain swim as in a delicious dream, and absorbed all sense of pain. Evidently therefore, if he had been killed and eaten, death would have been painless. But his companions fired into the lion, and forced him to drop his prey. The doctor was saved, but suffered very severe pains in the healing of his wounds. The delicate skill with which rapacious animals kill their victims is wonderful. A spaniel that overtakes a leveret gives it but a single bite in the flank, and the little animal falls dead. Probably when its pulses are highly excited by running, a bite which

in the former reasons, half the facts. [rev. Misc.]

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tossed him up in the air; . . . [rev. Misc.]

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255 severs an artery instantly empties the heart of blood, and at once all consciousness departs. If our improvers of Creation mean to lay down that there ought to be no violent death, we understand this argument, which at bottom demands that we should fall over precipices with impunity. As to rapacious animals, it is notoriously by their means that the balance of species is preserved. The
260 scheme of the Creator, as known to us and as admired by Plato, is to give a superfecundity especially to the weaker, yet check their undue excess by the attack of stronger species. The timid and weak little birds keep down the grubs and worms, as they are themselves kept down by the hawks and falcons.

The same battle for life between all the trees and shrubs was announced
265 by De Candolle as a result of the very high fecundity of plants. Now, if our Atheists take on themselves to reconstruct the world as it ought to have been, and insist that fecundity ought to be prodigiously diminished, and that no carnivorous creatures—beasts, birds, fish, insects—ought to exist, it will suffice to discuss their scheme when they present it in a shape which can be criticized.
270 At present it is enough to insist that, accepting the Divine arrangement which ordains that life should be a struggle, and violent death a contingency, we find evidence that an end so unacceptable to the individual is most merciful when least artificial. Thus, compare an ordinary earthquake, as suffered by savages, and as suffered by civilized men, who build houses to be their tombs (to borrow
275 a taunt of the native Americans to the Spaniards), and you find that the savage suffers little or nothing from a mere *tremblement de terre*, which yet may inflict on the others lingering agonies, when half buried in stone or brick rubbish with broken limbs. As disease is intensified in pain by human errors, so are the calamities of nature; and this is the process whereby we are severely recalled
280 into sounder Methods of life.

The levity with which men who found science on the belief of invariable laws flout the argument of Theists that pains and suffering resulting from those laws do not derogate from supreme benevolence, is to me wonderful. That fire should burn, but not burn *us* or our crops; that water should drown, but not
285 drown good men and women, are simply puerile demands. These reasoners are apt to pretend that they do not attack the Universe as an imperfect and clumsy fabric, but only attack an imaginary Being (namely, the author of it *imagined* by Theists), as clumsy and incompetent, reckless of misery or deficient in power, *if there were* such an author. But it is evident that they have
290 nothing to say against our God, except by adducing against him what we call the works of God,—that is, by attacking *the world itself* as known to them equally as to us; thus, if no Theist or Theistic arguments appeared anywhere, their invective would still rave against this world as a miserable abortion. At such attacks is it wonderful if we feel deep disapproval as well as sorrow? To

me the question occurs: If there be such a thing as blasphemy, is it not here 295
before us? It is not a human being that the Atheist arraigns, nor merely the
imperfect ideal mentally drawn by fallible men, but the actual system of the
vast world into which this pigmy mind is born.

Our Atheists seem helplessly unable to understand that the ascription 300
of WISDOM to God always limited in the thoughtful the crude interpretation
of Omnipotence. It is not necessary here to decide (if indeed man will ever be
able to decide) whether matter with its forces and laws was created and esta-
blished by the supreme Spirit, or had always existed side by side with him, or
whether the whole is a part of his own being, which last opinion, many persons, 305
with me, think to be the most reasonable interpretation of the facts. I venture
to entitle Gravitation a Divine Force. The instant it is understood that such
forces and laws are invariable (which our physical materialists of all men most
positively insist), it is manifest that God *works under conditions*, without
which in his works there is no room for Wisdom. A disputant quite lowers
his *status* as a reasoner who pretends that an Omnipotent God *must* mean a 310
God who can recall the past and undo what has been done. The pious whose
thought is quite superficial may imagine it; but no one can do so who looks
carefully into the meaning of words. It is not Milton only who flatly denies that
this falls within the competence of Omnipotent God; the Roman Horace and
the Greek Aristotle said the same thing; indeed, the latter said it in the words 315
of the Comedian Agathon, who cannot have intended to utter doctrine too
high and hard for the people.² I fear I shall not meet much approval in frankly
saying that, because of the gross misunderstanding, I wish we could exter-
minate the epithet *Almighty*. No one who declines traditional authority can
pretend to any sharp philosophical proof of Almightyness. All that we have 320
a right to say is, that *we do not* and cannot *know the limits of God's power* in
matters which constitute the sphere of power. (As to making contradictory pro-
positions simultaneously true, or a self-contradiction true, that is no sphere
of power at all, and the man is puzzle-headed and ridiculous who presents such
a conundrum for Divine solution.) Our dialect concerning God is necessarily 325
inexact, largely traditional, and naturally hyperbolic, as is often the language
of devotion and of love. Power of which we know no limit, and power absolute-
ly unlimited, are easily confounded and never sharply kept apart in religious
utterances. The Greeks, who on the whole had less temptation to hyperbole
and in their legends wonderfully degraded their supreme God, called him 330

2. "One thing alone the might of God transcends,
Undone to make what is already done."

παγκρατῆς or παντοκρατῆς (Almighty) quite as freely as μεγασθενῆς, ἐρισθενῆς (great in strength). We distinctly renounce the vulgar idea of crude Omnipotence, and claim that those who wish to refute us shall reason with discrimination and intelligence. If Wisdom is to receive praise, if it is to have
 335 any difficulties to struggle against, it cannot be associated with a power that is unconditional and strictly unlimited.

The majority of Theists, as indeed the majority of men, are very ill able to deal with so high a question as, What are all the limitations on Divine power cognizable to man? Some, who have struggled to reduce them to a minimum,
 340 *first* sweep away the human will as no obstacle to God's "sovereignty;" *next* (lest forsooth they fall into an "Oriental heresy" concerning the stubbornness of matter), vehemently insist that matter was created, and its properties (gravity, cohesion, &c.) imparted at a finite time. Yet even these generally shrink from asserting that Space was created, or that Time is a creature; and
 345 even Space in three dimensions is in itself a restriction on absolute omnipotence. If the Divine Fiat gave to matter its invariable qualities, of which the most important are known to us, God hereby created for himself conditions within which he had to work. Imperfections contingent on the essential laws of his Universe are not rightly accounted flaws in Creation. Perhaps under
 350 many forms and in different ages piety has discerned substantially the same explanation. The Persian may ascribe the imperfections to the stubbornness of matter; the Jew or Christian may comment on them by saying that in a great house there are vessels for honour and also for dishonour; that star differs from star in glory; that both the scales and the ranks of creatures are prodigiously varied. The Greek will rebuke his presumptuous and over-critical
 355 fellow-man by the taunt of Euripides—"You ought, it seems, to have been brought into existence on stipulations prescribed by yourself." After all, there is not much real difference in the Theistic answer to Atheists, from whatever longitude or latitude it comes.

In contending that the phenomena of the Universe show an enormous preponderance of Good over Evil, I added, "especially if we exclude the Moral world." Moral Evil needs quite a separate discussion. Obscurity is thrown
 360 over this and some other subjects by the vagueness of popular words, which theorists adopt not only in their vagueness, but sometimes even with an extension of sense making them vaguer still. Thus Aristippus and his follower Epicurus dealt with the word Pleasure. Very many of the moderns also—for
 365 instance, Pope and Bentham—have applied the word Pleasure to feelings prodigiously diverse. Thus too self-love is made out to be the only possible

331-2 μεγασθενῆς, ἐρισθενῆς [*accent marks omitted in Misc.*]

spring of action. But having mentioned Pope, I must add that, in spite of his objectionable use of several vague words, I cannot read his “Essay on Man,” 370 and his “Universal Prayer,” without warm admiration and agreement in every substantial point. An acute friend has remarked to me that Pope’s essay is all through a flat denial of Mr. J. S. Mill’s essay on the same subject. But to return. *Evil* is, by most reasoners, and *Sin*, by very many Christians, employed with such immense latitude as to involve grave confusion and error. 375 The moment we approach the subject of *Moral Evil*, two peculiarities have to be considered—first, that the word is strictly relative; for to choose the less good is to choose evil; secondly, that it is complicated with the topic of human Free Will, with which Divine *Wisdom* has to struggle. Divine *Power* might annihilate the Freedom of the Will; but if God leave our will free, he cannot 380 simultaneously dictate how it shall act; which is, to enslave it. I am quite aware that many self-confident physical reasoners think to cut this knot by exploding Free Will as a dream. Their logic was well known, and was despised, in the whole school of Socrates. Cicero and Tacitus thoroughly understood (and we moderns claim no originality in discerning) that to deny *in toto* any freedom 385 of the human will is fundamentally to subvert all moral ideas and all just use of moral words. If each man does only what he must do—moves only in an inevitable course—it is absurd to call a man, as to call a planet, virtuous or vicious. It is absurd to praise him or to blame him. Against such doctrine every known language of every race protests, and so does its inevitable tendency 390 to ruin the morals of the next generation. If children are taught that they are the creatures of mere impulse, and that self-controul is impossible, they will follow impulse with no effort at self-controul; and when “I could not help it” is a current excuse for misconduct, it justifies the retort, “Then I cannot help beating you.” Law must and will become Draconically severe, when Fatalism 395 explodes the doctrine of Self-controul.

This is a digression, but not superfluous. Moral Theism of course presupposes Morality, and therefore fundamentally involves a belief in human Free Will and capability of sinning. This essentially implies a power in the human mind to act contrary to right, contrary therefore to the Divine mind. Let those 400 who choose to lay down that a Wise and Good God may indeed create irrational beasts, but never ought to create a rational being capable of Virtue, and therefore also capable of Vice. But if any persons admit that to create the human race was consistent with glorious Godhead, they ought to see how new a problem at once arises in the government of the world. From the uncontrouled passions and perverted minds of men the most cruel sufferings both 405 to men and beasts have arisen, and still arise; besides, mental agonies most terrible are complicated with it. From these considerations proceed to gentle,

loving, and thoughtful natures the most painful doubts concerning Divine
 410 Government. The primitive expectation of piety was (and perhaps the childish
 claim still is), that God should interpose, and not permit human folly and
 tyranny to run to such awful lengths. The oppression is sometimes so peculiar
 and so lasting, that we can neither wonder nor censure if the sufferers, like
 415 Cassy in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's noble epic, cry out, "How can there be any God
 at all, when these things are permitted?" Mr. J. S. Mill somewhere wrote, that
 if there be a Divine rule in this world, yet at least things go on quite *as badly*
as if there were no Divine Rule; and indisputable facts give great plausibility
 to this remark, though we cannot justify it without the enormous concession
 420 that the world could go on *at all* without a God. Nevertheless, here is the true
 nucleus of difficulty: that human rule, even when bad from every point of
 view, is allowed to endure and entail lasting evils, moral as well as physical.
 Ancient Hebrew Psalmists and Moralists confessed that the facts startled and
 vehemently distressed them. They had supposed that Divine Rule would be
 425 supernatural, and then found, like Mr. Mill, only what was natural. The pious
 have slowly and reluctantly learned that, no more to save a nation from mis-
 government than to save a single patient from unwise physicians, does the
 Divine Wisdom break through any of its natural laws, but uses for its agencies
 only the human mind itself and the elements in which we live, so that the
 "carnal" (materialist) or non-religious mind easily fails to see the Divine Rule
 430 at all. History is too vast a field for any but the very few; and the explanations
 which a Bunsen might give, be they ever so wise, are not available to the mass
 of mankind; but these, at the same time, are happily without a taste of the
 bitterest dregs from the historical cup. Each of us, according to the extent of
 our knowledge, suffers inward pangs from this cause, but finds some remedy
 435 in widening knowledge, especially in the conviction that ever since the ages
 of convulsion, which overthrew in Europe the whole fabric of civilization and
 knowledge, this Western world of which we know most has steadily worked
 out an improvement *far more* than commensurate with the wisdom and virtue of
 the ostensible rulers and movers either in State or Church.
 440 Beneath the folly of man a deeper and wiser power seems to act, and
 constantly to carry events onward to a nobler future. Struggle and toil are
 fore-ordained; but without them there were no robustness of intellect nor of
 virtue. So too do these difficulties as to Providential Government serve to
 445 exercise our faith—a faith which is not arbitrary wilfulness, but is based on
 intuition or direct perception, convincing us that the Author of man's moral
 nature must certainly be far *better*, as well as greater, than man; and again,

437 this continent (of which we know most) has . . . [rev. Misc.]

that the Supreme Mind, which is many ways discerned as acting in this world, does not leave it unregulated, and must have a sublime and harmonious purpose, the knowledge of which would call forth our wondering and devout praise.

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And, forsooth, we are to be abashed by being told that faith is not home-sprung in our own hearts, but is come to us traditionally, and was originally a silly fetish-worship! We avow that our faith is not new, but is transmitted from age to age—moreover, is improved in the transmission. And why? Because it is criticized, and thereby purified. The very fact shows that, though traditional, it is not the less heartborn and native within us. Of course, in its origin it had plentiful imperfection, and in all these respects its history closely resembles that of Science. Is Science not traditional? If our mathematical books were annihilated, could any genius, even that of a Newton, reproduce by its own force that which thousands of young men now *so* learn as to know for themselves? Does any Atheist flout these young men by saying that they believe the doctrines only because they have received them traditionally? No one could say this but one profoundly ignorant of Mathematics. So also none could say the like of devout piety but one who is an utter stranger to devotion, one who is talking of what he does not understand. But, again, does the Atheist revile our modern chemists by declaring that their science sprung out of Alchemy, with its many ridiculous beliefs, and its mixture of magic, necromancy, and the doctrine of genii! All of that might be called “fetish,” but it does not discredit modern Chemistry. Rude and ignorant man makes his first essays clumsily, whether in Art, in Science, or in Religion. We learn from our predecessors, yet we need not enslave ourselves to them; we are bound to criticize them in hope of improving on them. Thus we make knowledge *our own*, and strive to guide it into the path of science. To reproach us as followers of tradition and descendants of a Fetish creed is an imbecile attempt to rob us of the noble boast that Moral Theism is the faith towards which enlightened man everywhere tends; the faith which shall unite mankind in a blessed brotherhood, and sounds forth everywhere Glory to God and Good Will to man.

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