

EDEN AND THE CŒNACULUM.

IT was shown in a former article¹ that the mysteries of the supernatural order can only be made known to intelligent creatures who are in the inchoate, initial state of preparation for the intuitive vision of God, through a divine revelation to be received by faith in the veracity of God. This revelation was made to the angels in a way accommodated to their sublime, intellectual nature. Their probation consisted in the exercise of faith in this revelation and a corresponding obedience to the revealed will of God. Those who made the act of submission which God required of them, were immediately elevated to the state of beatitude. It is not with them that we have to deal in the present discussion, but with man.

The supernatural order in which man has been constituted has its own remarkable peculiarities, and presents certain problems which have been found by many to be very perplexing and difficult of solution.

The Christian faith teaches that the first parents of the human race were, at their creation, constituted in a state of original integrity and righteousness. They were subjected to a trial of their faith and obedience as a condition of the permanence of this state, and of translation, without dying, to the eternal state of beatitude, after their term of natural life on the earth was finished. All their posterity were included in this gracious covenant, so that the human race would be entitled to the privileges of this original constitution, if its head and father fulfilled its conditions; but would forfeit them, in common with their first parents, if he failed to do so. He did fail and fall from grace, and consequently his posterity are conceived and born in a state of lapsed or fallen nature. The human race was not, however, left without hope of redemption and restoration. The supernatural order was not abolished. It was changed. The Son of God took on Himself the expiation of the original sin and of all the actual sins of mankind, by the suffering and death which, in due time, He underwent in His human nature. He merited the restoration to grace and the reopening of the gate of heaven, the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting for the children of Adam, and became the Redeemer and Saviour of the world.

Now, the problem which this Christian creed presents to every

¹ "The Christian Agnostic and the Christian Gnostic," January number.

thinking mind is this: How could there be this solidarity of all men under one head and representative?

This is one of those questions, which we said in our first article, can only be solved by Catholic theology and by means of a correct idea of the supernatural; but remains insoluble in every other system of professedly Christian doctrine.

Let us take the one and only system of Protestant theology which is coherent and logical, the Calvinistic.

On this theory, the state of original integrity and righteousness was merely the ideal, normal perfection of pure human nature. When Adam sinned, he lost all spiritual goodness and capacity for good works, became totally depraved, liable to the inexorable anger of God and to everlasting torments. We all sinned in him and fell with him. Either we were actually existing in Adam, and actually sinned, or we were regarded as one with him, and his sin was imputed to us as if we had really committed it. So we are conceived and born totally depraved, under a doom of everlasting sin and torment. We are incapable of doing anything except sinning, and yet bound to keep the whole law of God perfectly. Christ has become a substitute for a certain number of men, the elect, has suffered the penalty of sin and obeyed the law in their stead. All these are justified by the imputation to them of the righteousness of Christ, and immediately after death are translated to heaven. The rest of mankind are passed over and left to endure their doom without any power of escaping from it.

It is needless to waste time in proving that this doctrine is absurd and incredible. Probably, no one who reads these pages has the slightest inclination to believe it. The majority of those whose formal creed is Calvinistic have been and are trying to modify and soften its harshness. It is impossible, however, to avoid its logical conclusiveness, which is as inexorable as the embrace of the *Eiserne Jungfrau*, at Nürnberg, so long as the premises from which these conclusions are inferred remain unaltered. While the normal state and destiny of the human race is regarded as in the purely natural order, there is no alternative except to deny outright that there ever was an Eden and that man was ever banished from it. With Eden, Bethlehem and Calvary, in short, all Christianity, vanish into the region of myths.

The correct idea of the supernatural changes the whole aspect of things. As when, in the early morning, an entire landscape of mist, with mountains, valleys, lakes, streams and castles, made up of real objects exaggerated and distorted, and of vaporous clouds, all mixed together in a fantastic picture, is dissipated by the rays of the rising sun; so in this case. As the true landscape, with its real features, is disclosed in the sunlight, so the genuine Christian

creed is presented to our view in the light of this luminous idea of the supernatural.

We have already shown that the whole state of man, and his ultimate destination in a purely natural order is devoid of any exigency, capacity or aspiration for the direct, immediate, intuitive vision of God as He is in His divine essence. This natural order is one which God might have established for the whole universe in perfect consistency with His wisdom and benevolence, and might have left as the ultimate limit of His creative work, the completion of the movement of return to Himself as final cause. The elevation of intelligent beings to a higher plane, and the introduction of a higher order into the universe, ordained for the highest possible culmination of the creative act in the Incarnation and the assimilation of many adopted sons in glory to the Son of God, is a purely gratuitous act of goodness, a grace in the strict and proper sense.

The attainment of this nobility, this truly royal dignity, could justly and reasonably be made dependent on any conditions which would not violate any natural rights. The Son of God Himself underwent a humiliation, a passion, a death unparalleled by anything else in the annals of the universe, on the way to His coronation with glory. The angels had their trial and probation on the way to receive their crowns.

The human race, as being one species, having a common origin, having a common relationship of consanguinity, a solidarity of social and political development, have a constitution proportioned and accommodated to their nature. The race was instituted in one pair of first parents, from whom all individuals were to inherit their nature, with its rights, endowments, and all things springing out of human life, whether appertaining to the body or the soul. The gift of grace and the right to celestial beatitude were also made an inheritance, transmissible along with the human nature. The inheritance was not given absolutely, but conditionally. The offspring of Adam were not entitled to it simply because they received existence by natural generation from him. By virtue of this natural generation they received only human nature. The natural inheritance became a vested personal right in each individual, simply by the fact of his conception and birth. But the gifts of grace to Adam were superadded to his nature, as a gratuitous ennoblement and enrichment, which he could transmit to his descendants only in virtue of a special covenant. This covenant contained the condition that, if he transgressed a certain precept, all his supernatural gifts would be forfeited. He did transgress, and, consequently, the remote and initial right of the human race to the inheritance of the estate of nobility lapsed and was

made void. It has always been recognized as just human law that hereditary dignities and possessions, when forfeited by the crime of the actual possessor, may be forfeited for his heirs, although not accessories to his crime, or not even born. In like manner, as the special honors and endowments conferred on Adam for himself personally, and for all his race, were purely gratuitous, and not due to human nature, it was just that they should be withdrawn when the original crime was committed. There was no actual participation in the transgression of Adam by his posterity, not one of whom could sin, because not one existed. There was no imputation of his sin to this unborn multitude of future human beings, which would be not only unjust, but impossible, because purely fictitious. There was no wrong done to any individual of the human race. Adam and Eve sinned knowingly and wilfully, and were, therefore, liable to suffer in their own persons the just punishment awarded by their Creator. Their posterity were deprived of the privilege of receiving sanctifying grace with their conception, and the right to supernatural beatitude on condition of keeping the law during the time of probation. The nature of Adam was not changed by his sin; it was despoiled and denuded. The nature of Louis XVI., of Charles X., of Louis Phillippe, of the First and Third Napoleon, was not changed by their dethronement, and their offspring and relatives did not receive by natural heredity an inferior character and personal qualities. So human nature in Adam and Eve was not depraved, either totally or partially, and their descendants do not inherit a depraved nature. The pure nature of man is the nature of a rational animal. He is a spirit having intellect and will as its constituent elements, together with an exigency and a capacity for animating an organic body. Man is substantially and essentially completed by the union of an organic body with the soul, which is its form and vital principle. He has not lost anything pertaining to his essence, either in soul or body, by the fall. He retains his reason, his free-will, and his bodily organs. Everything in his nature is good, and he is capable of knowing the truth, choosing the good, and acquiring and practicing moral virtues.

Moreover, the supernatural order was not abolished, the destination to celestial beatitude was not changed, when our first parents were expelled from the Eden of their primitive state. The state of repaired nature succeeded immediately to the lapse from the state of original integrity and righteousness. In this state the destination to supernatural beatitude is the same. Sanctifying grace has the same entity. The way to the final end is by faith, hope, the love of God, acts and works which have a merit of con-dignity. The difference is in the method and the environment.

Each one is conceived and born in the state of privation of supernatural grace. He must be regenerated and sanctified by an act subsequent to his natural generation. The natural endowments and privileges which accompanied the state of grace in Eden and made the earthly abode and life of men Paradisiacal, have not been restored. The discipline of penance, conflict, suffering, has been substituted for the discipline of innocence. The law of death has regained its power over the human body, and until the ascension of Christ even the souls of the saints were excluded from the kingdom of heaven and detained in Hades.

Another grievous misapprehension of Christian doctrine must be corrected, and this can easily be done by applying the principles already explained to this particular instance.

It is affirmed, namely, that God requires of men, as a condition of his favor, to perform what is to them impossible. Faith is the first and indispensable condition of justification. From faith proceed hope and charity, and those good works of faith and love which alone are helpful to salvation. But man is naturally incapable of exercising these virtues and producing these acts. They can proceed only from a supernatural principle. The grace of God is absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, God requires of men, even when they are destitute of grace, to fulfil these impossible conditions, under penalty of His displeasure and of severe punishment.

Now, we must make a distinction which our previous explanation of the difference between the natural and the supernatural order enables us to make.

There is a moral law which is one of the laws of nature. To keep this law is a natural obligation. It is a rule of conduct prescribed to reason and free will. Its precepts relate to duties which arise out of the natural position of man in the world toward his Creator and his fellow-men and toward the purpose and end of his own life. This law must be known to him and recognized by his conscience before he can be held accountable for keeping it. Particular precepts must be known to him before they can bind his conscience. He is bound to keep the law just so far, and no further than he knows it, or can and ought to know it. The law cannot affect an infant, an idiot or a person who is asleep or otherwise impeded from making use of his reason. So, also, a man must be able to keep these precepts. He is bound to preserve his own life. But if he fall into the sea and have no means of escaping from drowning, he is not bound to save his life. Whenever a man is bound to keep a certain precept, he is able to do so, whether the precept requires him to do a certain good action, or to refrain from doing a bad action. It is false that man, in his lapsed state and without grace, is unable to do anything morally good, and

must necessarily sin in his every thought, word and action. If he does sin, he sins freely, with power to the contrary. If he does what is according to his reason, what his conscience dictates as right, he does a good moral act. He can love virtue and hate vice. He can abstain from murder, theft, calumny and lying. He can resolve to order his life according to reason. He can labor in the field or the workshop, pay his debts, give alms to the poor, succor the afflicted, love his neighbor, obey the laws of his country, go to battle in her defence, suffer death sooner than desert his post of duty. He can improve his mind, seek after truth, be honest, faithful and honorable. He can love God and offer to Him worship and prayer. All that God requires of him is to do what he can in keeping the commandments, and avoiding deliberate, wilful transgressions of known law.

Suppose, now, that he does not know that God has made a revelation! He is not bound to believe in it. Suppose that he knows only the Old Testament! He is not bound to believe in the New. Suppose that he does not know the true church! He is not bound to submit to it.

When the truths of faith are sufficiently proposed to him, he is bound by the natural law to receive them. When the precept to be baptized, and to fulfil the other duties of a Christian is proposed to him, he is bound to obey. Yet, to believe, to hope, and to love in the right manner, is above the faculty of human nature. Faith, hope and charity are supernatural acts. Grace is necessary to their performance. And how can one be bound to do that which does not lie in his power? It is true that it is not in the power of man to elicit these acts without grace. But he is not commanded to do this. Grace is a common gift, granted to all. It is like air and water, diffused everywhere. Every one can make the beginning of his conversion to God by the right use of reason and free-will, aided by divine grace, and if he does this, he will receive more grace which will enable him to make the acts of faith, hope and love, and ever after to keep all the commandments, and by good works merit eternal life.

Those who do not know the Christian revelation, are not deprived of sufficient grace to live up to what light they have. If they do what is in their power, God will give them, in an extraordinary way, the sanctifying grace which will make them His children and heirs of eternal life, before their souls depart out of this earthly state of existence.

This is a rapid and succinct sketch of the state of mankind after the fall. Human nature was reduced to a state substantially like that which the state of pure nature would have been. Despoiled of supernatural gifts, but not depraved, it was good, but incapable

of supernatural virtue and good works, and needing divine grace to restore it to the plane of its original destiny. This divine grace was provided for all through the redemption promised to our first parents, and given to all who were able and willing to receive it. Moreover, there was a merciful provision for all who sinned, to obtain forgiveness and recover lost grace, so long as their moral probation continued.

Now, arises to view another difficulty, from the actual history of mankind. This is, the general prevalence of moral and physical evil in the world. There is much natural and supernatural good manifest in the history of mankind from the beginning until now. Nevertheless, the ignorance and degradation, the crimes and miseries presented to view by the annals of mankind give apparent reason to those who take a dark view of human nature, and who question the universality of divine grace. According to these gloomy theologians the history of mankind proves what they assert to be the teaching of the Bible; that by the sin of Adam, human nature was plunged into wickedness and misery, that men are naturally bad and irresistibly inclined to sin and vice, which bring after them the necessary consequences of misery and punishment in the present and in the future life. The great mass of mankind, according to them, are doomed to sin and misery in this world and in the world to come. A small number only, are excepted from this general doom, and by the special mercy and grace of God are partially delivered from their evil natures, so that they become somewhat better than the rest, are in a greater or less degree made virtuous and holy, and after death are translated to a state of complete and unending holiness and happiness.

Others, again, casting away all Christian belief, or even all religious and moral ideas, make out of human history only some kind of evolution and development of nature by necessary laws, tending either to an optimistic result by a slow progress or to the final absorption in the original nothingness of the pessimists.

The question about the origin and nature of physical and moral evil now confronts the mind, the problem of all problems in all ages.

What is evil? It is not substance or being and has no essence. This is a most important and fundamental truth, and without a clear conception of it, no progress can be made in a solution of the problem of evil.

Being, truth and goodness are all one and the same thing, under different aspects. They have no positive entities opposed to them as contraries, but only negations. The Being who is the "I am Who am," who is Being existing by His essence in the

infinite plenitude of being, in One, having no other who is like Him, and no other who is unlike. He is absolute Truth. That is, He is what he is, without contradiction or inconsistency in any of His attributes. And He is the intelligible, perfectly comprehended by His infinite intelligence. He is the absolute good. That is, He is infinitely lovable, the object of His own supreme complacency. He is the archetype and source of all finite, contingent being. Everything which He has created has received from Him its actual existing essence, which is a diminished copy of Himself, and therefore, in so far as it has being, has truth and goodness in a limited measure. These finite essences lack, each one, some finite being and good which is in other essences. The inorganic bodies lack organic life, the plants lack sensation, the purely sensitive animals lack reason, pure spirits lack the qualities of bodies, and all, singly and collectively, lack the self-existence and infinite perfection which is in God. This has been called the metaphysical evil which is inherent in all creatures, and is a recession from absolute being toward nothing. It is not, properly speaking, evil, but only a possibility and liability to evil properly so called. Evil is, properly speaking, only the lack of some mode of being and some good quality in a creature which it ought to have, that it may perfectly conform to its type, and fulfil its reason of being. It is a disorder arising from some defect or excess of the constituents which make up the due and complete perfection of anything, according to its proper place and purpose in the world. A picture-frame, though made of costly stuff, is evil by excess if it is too large for the picture and the wall, evil by defect, if it is too small. One day, a witty gentleman, looking at a small dog which barked incessantly and had no tail, remarked: "That dog is an illustration of St. Thomas' definition of evil; he is evil both by excess and defect."

The consideration of merely physical evil in the world need not detain us. A plan which proceeds by way of evolution and development may be better than one of the instantaneous creation of the universe in its ultimate perfection. Such a plan, by proceeding from a state of chaos through stages of gradual reduction to order and unity, involves an incidental, partial and temporary toleration of disorder and physical evil.

The problem is the question of moral evil in rational beings. What is it, and how does it arise?

Intelligent creatures, whether they be purely intellectual or specifically rational, are essentially beings having intellect and will, the latter being dependent on the former and directed by it. The object of intellect is truth, the object of will is the good. There is no faculty which by its nature terminates in falsehood, none which has

evil for its object. Error in the intellect is an accident, a failure and deficiency in apprehending and judging according to the objective reality of things intelligible. Fault in the will is a misdirected love of the good issuing in a choice of some inferior good, not suitable to a rational nature, and thus, lacking that kind or degree of good which makes it a fit object of rational choice. This lack is what makes it to be evil and the choice is morally evil. Yet, it is an apparent good, apprehended as the true and eligible good by an error of judgment. It is judged by the intellect to be the good which is most desirable to make the person happy, and is chosen under this aspect of good and not under the aspect of evil. A being whose intellect is so perfect that it is liable to no error, cannot be deluded into this wrong choice. He is impeccable by reason of his unerring apprehension of the true object of his love and choice.

But in the inchoate, imperfect state of rational existence, there are a multitude of particular, inferior goods which attract the natural desires in various directions, and sometimes in opposite ways. The supreme good, and the relation of inferior goods to this supreme felicity, are not so clearly manifest to reason as to compel its assent and determine its judgment. It is capable of erring in its practical judgment, and the person to whom this rational faculty belongs, having free will, can determine himself to a perverse judgment and a perverse choice, which is an act morally evil, a sin. This is the source of that freedom of the will which is the liberty of choice between contraries, that is, between moral good and moral evil. The will is left undetermined and in equilibrium, because of the obscurity of the object which is the true and supreme good toward which it ought to direct its desires and efforts. The good in general, it must seek by its nature. But all the particular goods which attract it do not show their connection with the supreme good so clearly as to determine its choice. It can turn whichever way it determines itself. It is variable and flexible. And this is the condition which puts the rational creature in a state where it can become subject to a moral probation.

We are inclined to wish that God might have spared all rational beings this trial, by giving them a brighter light, so that they could not err in choosing the way to felicity. But this is a vain wish. We know, both by reason and faith, that since God has chosen to put His intelligent creatures in a way of probation, this must be consonant to His goodness, justice, and benevolence. Still more, it must be the best way, in view of the highest good of the universe, and His own greatest glory. We would gladly understand how and why this is so. Can we find the reason and the motive for choosing this way of probation, in spite of its risks, and not-

withstanding the results which have followed, viz., the inroad of moral evil, and the loss of the final and supreme good by a multitude of those who have been put into the combat in which it is won or lost? In part, we can. It is more glorious for those who win to win by victory and merit; to be enthroned, as under God, the authors of their own perfection and final felicity. This sublime and supernatural destiny was not due to their nature; it was a free, gratuitous grace. It could, therefore, be offered on any reasonable conditions, and be made a prize to be contended for on the arena of probation.

The probation of the angels was over, and their eternal state irrevocably fixed before the probation of man began. The principal arena of the conflict between good and evil is on this earth. The period of human probation has already lasted for thousands of years, and is not yet finished. The contest is chiefly between the Son of God and Lucifer, the originator and head of the rebellion; and the object contended for is the dominion of the earth and the human race. There are two standards; the standard of Christ, and the standard of Lucifer. The trial, on which salvation depends, lies in the choice between those two leaders. Lucifer, the old serpent, came into the garden of Eden; deceived, and seduced to his allegiance, Eve, and through her, Adam. Thus, paradise was lost for all mankind; and paradise can be regained only by labor, sorrow, penance, and combat. The heaviest burden in this toilsome, painful, long-continued march and warfare of mankind for the reconquest of its lost inheritance, has been laid on the shoulders of the Redeemer and King of men, Jesus Christ. But all share in it; in its dangers, labors, and sufferings; their future and final destiny depends on their loyalty, valor, and perseverance in this struggle for eternal life. The history of the world is a record of the vicissitudes of this war, whose field is co-extensive with the earth, and whose duration is coeval with time.

The wide extent, the multitudinous numbers, the long series of ages, the complex relations embraced in the history of human probation, make the subject a difficult one, and, in many respects, a perplexed and perplexing problem. The chief difficulties are summed up in the one general and comprehensive question, how to show that all men without exception are under conditions of probation which are just and benevolent.

II.

We have already seen that the kingdom of heaven has to be won by passing successfully and victoriously through a period of probation.

Also, that the first trial of humanity in the person of Adam

resulted in his defeat and fall. That by the fall the gratuitous and supernatural gifts conditionally granted to mankind in Eden were forfeited. That to the first covenant of grace immediately succeeded another with very different conditions. It was explained that the offspring of Adam, inheriting from him nothing but human nature despoiled of grace, are conceived and born in a state which, in its entity, is the same with that which would have been the state of pure nature in a purely natural order. Moreover, that through the universal grace of the Redeemer, all human individuals are capable of receiving from Him singly the supernatural endowments by which they are restored to a state in which they are able to merit eternal life.

In this state of nature lapsed and repaired, human probation is in the exercise of free-will, keeping the natural law by living virtuously, and also by the aid of divine grace, keeping the supernatural law disclosed by divine revelation, so far as that is known and sufficiently proposed to belief.

We have now to complete and finish the treatment of our general topic, the relation of the natural and supernatural orders. That is, we have to present the idea of that revelation and order of grace of which Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher, and to define more clearly the relation between the natural order and the human kind in its native-born condition, to this order of grace and redemption.

The difficult part of the subject lies in the problem of the conditions of human probation under this new order, in view of the actual state of mankind as shown by history and experience. Those who are thrown into perplexity or even into doubt and unbelief by this difficulty, cannot see that the majority of men have any just and fair probation in this life according to Christian doctrine. It seems to them that men have not a sufficient natural ability to keep the law of nature, that they are naturally and unavoidably more or less depraved and vicious. Their imagination presents a dreadful picture of the wickedness and misery prevailing in the world in all times and places. Then, again, the religion of positive revelation with all the means of grace belonging to it, has not been universal in time and place. Therefore, it does not appear to furnish an adequate provision for the moral and spiritual needs of mankind.

A certain old school of theologians, which has still a few survivors left, thought it quite enough to explain all the moral and physical evil in the world by total depravity, and total depravity by the sin of Adam. They say that we are all made holy and happy in our first parents who were created in the Garden of Eden. We sinned and lost all, and now mankind are under a curse, and

being swept down by the tide which flows into the abyss of everlasting perdition. The elect receive infallibly the grace of faith through the divine mercy and are saved, and it is for them alone that a way of salvation through Christ has been opened. Those who revolt against this dire and dismal doctrine desire to invent some other theory, either by giving a new interpretation to Christianity, or contriving some scheme of philosophy, or lapsing into pure materialism and agnosticism.

We cannot do any of these things, or accept any kind of desperate measures for cutting the gordian knot. There is some solution of this problem, whether we are able to discover it or not. We cannot shut our eyes to moral and physical evils in the world. But it is perfectly certain that God is just and good, and that He cannot condemn any rational creature for anything except his own deliberate and wilful sins, or require of him anything which is impossible.

Men have taken extravagant views of human nature in opposite directions. Some have made out men to be gods, others demons, and others beasts. At present this last opinion is fashionable, whereas, formerly, the human intellect was almost worshipped, and was supposed to be a measure of all truth, and the human will was exalted to the position of an autocrat with its categorical imperative. Now, certain men who claim to be the leaders in the most advanced science, reduce man to the common level of animals. They assign him a bestial origin, and although they kindly allow the more perfect men a superiority over their kindred, they depress the lowest class of men below the more perfect beasts.

Now, it is an unquestionable fact that man is an animal, according to his genus. He is also rational, and his specific definition is rational animal, which places the human species at an immeasurable distance above all other species of animals. Yet, although by his rationality he is akin to purely intellectual spirits, he is the lowest of all intelligent beings. He could not be any lower than he is by nature in the scale of being, and still remain intelligent. For his mode of cognition by the instrumentality of sensitive perception of sensible objects, is the lowest that is conceivable. Moreover, he is not actually intelligent and possessed of the use of reason at the beginning of his life. His ignorance in infancy is absolute, he is but feebly rational in the early stage of his mental development. Long and arduous labor is necessary for him, that he may be educated and instructed. His mind is very dependent upon the body, and his whole nature is dependent on the physical environment which surrounds him, and subject to its laws.

By the fall of the first progenitors of the human race, and the

universal lapse from the primitive state of Eden, man has been reduced to a merely natural condition. In this condition, he is subject to those vicissitudes and disasters to which all organized beings on the earth are liable. This is in the physical order.

In the moral order, he is subject to passions by which he is inclined to the sensible good pertaining to the animal life. By his reason and the higher tendencies of his nature he is inclined to the good which is proportioned to his spirit, and pertaining to his spiritual life. He has free-will for the moderator over these opposing impulses, and his ethical task consists in their close regulation according to reason and the dictates of conscience. The task is more difficult in the actual order of things, than it is by the very nature of the case. For this actual order and environment have not been arranged in view of a state and destiny within the plane of pure nature. They have been made so as to fit in with a dispensation of grace. Left to itself, and unaided, human nature is in the condition of a weak person obliged to do too much and too heavy work. Therefore, in keeping the natural law, especially in cases of difficulty and strong temptation to the contrary, the aid of grace is morally necessary; much more, is this the case, when the regenerate man must begin and carry on to the end the life of faith, hope and charity.

Now in a state of probation of this kind, where the end to be pursued is sublime and supernatural, where the virtue required is above human capacity, what wonder that the upward road should be the more difficult and the downward path easier? Each one being left to choose for himself, the moral and physical miseries which have come upon such a great number of men who have taken the broad highway leading to death, must be ascribed to their wrong and fatal choice. The largest and worst part of the actual evils with which mankind has been afflicted, is not to be laid at the door of Adam, of original sin, or of human nature, but to the wilful, actual sins which men have committed.

It may seem to a superficial consideration, that it was rather hard on the children of Adam to make them suffer the loss of Eden without any fault on their part. When the sin of our first parents had been forgiven, when they were restored to grace, when the Redeemer was promised, and the way of salvation opened to all mankind, why should not the original covenant have been renewed, and all the privileges of the pristine state of Eden have been restored?

St. Francis of Sales, has said that the state of redemption is worth a hundred times more than the state of original righteousness. It is not always and necessarily best in the end for rational creatures on probation to be placed in the most exalted and privi-

leged position. Probably Lucifer was the most highly endowed and favored of all the angels, yet he and a multitude of other similar spirits fell from their sublime elevation. Adam and Eve sinned in Eden. Many of the most wicked men have been the most highly gifted by nature, the most favored in respect to advantages of education, and the most enriched with means of grace and opportunities of acquiring virtue and holiness.

On the other hand, many who have been placed in the most unfavorable circumstances, surrounded by the greatest temptations, have preserved their innocence and practiced heroic virtue; or, after a period of sin and vice, have repented and become models of holiness.

Falling from a low elevation is not so dangerous and hurtful as a fall from a great height. Sins against faint light are not so grievous as sins against clearer light. The weakness of human nature, the difficulties which beset the path of virtue, the struggles which men have to undergo, the many miseries with which human life is surrounded, open the way to a wonderful display of divine mercy in pardoning transgressions and reclaiming wanderers from the way of salvation. Probation is prolonged to the end of rational life. And at the close of life, when the departing soul is unconscious of everything which comes to it through the senses, it is open to the direct influence of God, and his angels, and can by the aid of extraordinary grace repair the negligence and faults of a whole life, securing in a moment by one act, its eternal well-being. Although after death there is no probation, yet there is an intermediate state of expiation, of purification, of preparation for that state of perfection and blessedness for which the soul is unfit at the moment of departing from the body.

Such a vast and complicated drama as that which is presented by the history of mankind in general, and of the thousands of millions of its single individuals, cannot be comprehended by our limited intelligence and imperfect knowledge. This world is the Waterloo of the universe. It is the great battle-field between the Prince of Light and the Prince of Darkness, with all the powers of good and evil arrayed in two contending hosts. It is the arena on which free-will is left to its fullest scope, working out the problem of human probation, in order that the heroism which human nature, especially when elevated and inspired by the grace of God, is capable of, may achieve the noblest works, gain the most splendid victories, and merit the most glorious crowns. It would be absurd to suppose that the human mind can fully understand and explain the reasons for permitting the rebellion and warfare of intelligent creatures against their Creator, which has brought on this conflict between good and evil. Vain would be the attempt to

show how each one of the human race who attains to the full use of reason has a sufficient and fair probation, in which he can form his own character and secure his own destiny. We must fall back on certain fixed principles and indubitable truths, from which we unerringly draw the conclusion that every rational creature must be treated with justice and benevolence by the Creator. Those who are placed in the conditions of moral probation have all the means and all the self-determining power necessary to pass through it successfully. If they fail through their own fault, it is just that they should be deprived of that supreme good which is not due to nature, but a boon of grace promised to those only who win it by merit.

Those who do not attain to the full use of reason are not in the way of probation at all. They are not accountable, and the pure goodness of God will provide for their final perfection and felicity without any effort on their part. No rational creature will ever forfeit any of his natural rights or suffer any penalty except in accordance with a strict rule of justice tempered with mercy, and in consequence of his deliberate wilful transgression of the law of his Sovereign Lord dictated to him by his own conscience.

In order to solve completely this great problem of the permission of moral and physical evil in the world we should be able to see the consummation of the great drama of human history; to see the final and perfect triumph of good and subjugation of evil, and the good brought out of evil by the wisdom and power of God. This we cannot do, for the end has not yet come. But we have the prediction of the Sacred Scriptures to assure us of the final result:

“He must reign until He has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death; for He has subjected all things under his feet.” (1 Cor., xv. 25, 26.) “God hath exalted him and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee may bend, of those who are in the celestial and the terrestrial and the infernal regions, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. ii., 9-11.)

“I consider that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the future glory which shall be revealed in us. For the expectation of the creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation has been subjected to vanity, not willingly but on account of him who hath subjected it in hope; for the creation itself shall be liberated from the servitude of corruption into the liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans in the labor of parturition even until now.”—Rom. viii., 18-22.

In a recent poem entitled "The Holy Child," the author, after describing how, during the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, an angel turned aside a vast boulder hurled upon them by a demon, makes St. Joseph exclaim :

" Oh ! how my heart within me leaps,
As fervid fancy paints the coming time
When the great Lord of Life and Light and Blessing,
Now shrined in Thee—an infant's feeble form,
Shall be the Lord supreme of Earth and Heaven ;
When evil after evil shall be crushed
Like serpent after serpent, or rolled off
As was that loosened crag !
Or turned to good,
Said the young mother, looking gently up ;
And as she did so, darkness left the sun,
And e'en the barren ghor appeared to smile."¹

The world which presents now such a dark aspect will then be
" transformed from carbon into diamond."

" Dies venit, dies tua
In qua reflorent omnia."

The day cometh, Thy day, in which all things shall reflourish. This is the day of which St. Peter spoke in his sermon in the Solomon Porch of the Temple of Jerusalem. " Him heaven must receive until the time of the restitution of all things ἀποκαταστασις of which God hath spoken through his holy prophets, from the beginning of the world."—Acts iii., 21.

The superb temple, in whose principal porch St. Peter preached was, after forty years, totally and finally destroyed, and within a few centuries, all the splendid fanes of heathenism throughout the Roman Empire, were razed to the ground or converted into Christian temples. Near by the temple was the cœnaculum. This was a large upper room or hall in one of the princely dwellings of the city, probably the house of Joseph of Arimathæa. It was the first Christian church; afterwards in the time of Constantine, and again under the crusaders, rebuilt and beautified.

In this cœnaculum, on the night before His crucifixion, Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover, finishing the Jewish dispensation, and instituted the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the New Law. " Antiquum documentum novo cedit ritui." There He bade farewell to His disciples, and devoted Himself to die on Mount Calvary, " factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis." There, again, on the evening of Easter-Sunday,

¹ *The Holy Child*, by Thomas E. Van Bibber, pp. 154-55.

² *Ibid.*, p. 172.

and on the Sunday following, He appeared alive among His disciples. And there, on the following Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, who went forth and preached to the people, thousands of whom were converted and baptized. Here, then, is the focus to which all the rays of grace, from the first promise of the Redeemer to the parents of the human race in Eden converge, and from which they diverge through all future time to the end of the world. The centre of light is the Person of Jesus Christ, for Whom all previous history was a preparation, and Whose action upon mankind is the theme of all subsequent history to its final consummation. In all our histories, the birth of Jesus Christ, the year of Our Lord, is the central date, and all the ages of the world are divided into those which were before and those which are after Christ. The culminating point of the natural and supernatural orders is in Him. He is the flower of human nature, the Man by excellence, free from all distinguishing peculiarities in the character of different races, and from all limitations of idiosyncrasy, the ideal type and form of humanity, in infancy and manhood, in suffering and glorification. The human character of Jesus Christ is one in which the ideal makes the reality of the object of mental apprehension and admiration self-evident, aside from all extrinsic evidence. It is absolutely without its like, in history or in the creations of imagination, above the capacity of the highest human genius to conceive ideally, much more of any of the early Christian writers and preachers who have preserved and handed down memorials of their Master. If there should be discovered somewhere a masterpiece of art, the mere sight of it would show its excellence and prove that it was the work of a master. If it were far superior to the works of the greatest masters, it would be evident that an artist superior to them all had produced it. The ideal of the character of Jesus Christ, the portrait of His person, which has been handed down to us, shows that he was the living original, whose beauty was the work of the Creator. The same may be said, in due degree, of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Creator, who made Adam and Eve in their pristine excellence, made the second Adam and Eve in their surpassing perfection. The greatest painters have found no subject equal to the Madonna and Child. And although Raphael and Murillo cannot adequately express the divine beauty of the real Jesus and Mary, yet their pictures charm the most cultivated and the rudest alike, in a way that no other representations can approach.

The living Jesus was the original of that ideal which was impressed upon the minds of His disciples.

The clearest and most vivid impression which He has made upon the minds of that first, and of all subsequent generations, is

that of His absolute sinlessness, of the moral perfection and sublimity of His character, which is unique and unapproachable. He gave the example of that high and pure morality which He taught. And it is this moral perfection of conduct and teaching, this actual exhibition of an ideal excellence and virtue in human nature, which is the evidence of His superhuman dignity, of the supernatural origin and character of his sanctity. Canon Liddon and Dr. Fisher have drawn out the argument for the divine character and mission of Jesus Christ, from his human perfection, in a way which has not been equalled by any other writers in the English language.

The disciples, and the early Christians of the primitive Church, believed in Jesus Christ as not merely a prophet of God, and a teacher of religious and moral truth, but as the Son of God, equal to the Father, Who had become incarnate by assuming a human nature, and being born of a Virgin. They preached this doctrine as the one which they had learned from their Master. Their written memoirs and records, as well as their oral tradition, related His own discourses and instructions, in which He distinctly declared Himself to be the Son of God, the Sovereign Lord and Judge of the world, Who laid down His own life by His own free will, to atone for the sins of the world, would take it again by His resurrection, ascend into heaven, and there reign over the Church and the whole earth until the consummation of His kingdom.

This profession of His own divinity would have been inconsistent with His moral purity and perfection if it had not been true. The hypothesis of those who would represent Jesus Christ as merely a perfect man, either a prophet of God or simply a moral teacher like Confucius and Socrates, will not bear a moment's investigation.

In the Cœnaculum, on the evening of Holy Thursday, we behold a divine Prophet, Priest, and King, forestalling, instituting, the sacrifice and priesthood of His New Law, legislating for the kingdom He was founding in His own name, and immediately before His own death and burial.

He was condemned to death for declaring Himself to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He was crucified and laid in a sepulchre, sealed and guarded by soldiers, in order to put an end to his Messianic claims, and to disperse His followers. He had openly committed Himself to rise from the dead on the third day, and had ceded the whole world to His Apostles as the heirs of His dominion.

From His crucifixion began His triumph, the victorious march of His religion to the conquest of the world. Faith in His resurrection was the animating principle which inspired the multitudinous host which rallied around His standard. The evidence

was the testimony of His Virgin Mother, the Apostles, and hundreds of other witnesses, whose loyalty, love, and courage were founded on their personal sight of His adored countenance and figure, their hearing of His words, during forty days; their view of His ascension, and their consciousness of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, according to His promise, on the day of Pentecost.

No possible cause can be assigned for the belief in the resurrection, and the effects which followed its public proclamation, except the fact itself. The Apostolic Church is a monument attesting all the facts of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, just as the Washington Monument is an attestation of the character and deeds of the Father of our country. It is a monument witnessing to the fact that from heaven He sent the Spirit of God upon the Apostles, giving them power to accomplish a superhuman work, the propagation of the Gospel of the crucified Redeemer in the world. These few men, destitute of all natural means, were utterly inadequate for such a work, in the face of the Jewish hierarchy, the Roman pagan empire and Greek philosophy. Yet, Christianity seized upon that treasure of divine revelation which Judaism had preserved, upon the wonderful political organization of Rome and upon Greek civilization, made them its subservient instruments, twisted these three strands into a golden chain which it bound around the world and brought it captive to the feet of Jesus Christ. Within seventy years, the Apostolic Church was spread through and beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire, and within a century and a half its particular dioceses with millions of the faithful under their numerous bishops were established among all nations from the Tigris to the British Islands. Before its third century closed, Christianity was so widely spread and so powerful that the Roman emperors, trembling for their idolatrous religion, which they regarded as indissolubly bound up with their political state, set all the might of their physical and moral power in motion to crush and exterminate it, only to give it the occasion of a complete and final triumph in the fourth century. This was no human but a divine work. It was the Divine Providence which had directed the destinies of the nations since their beginnings that sent Jesus Christ into the world at the critical moment to inaugurate a new epoch and a new, world-wide movement. If we consider only what He could receive from nature, from His human birth and the environment in which He lived, His character and work cannot be reasonably explained and accounted for. A simple Jewish youth of humble origin, without any other than the restricted education of the synagogue, however pure, religious and patriotic, however fer-

vent, philanthropic and self-sacrificing, however gifted with the endowments of genius and fascinating in person and speech, could never have soared into such a high atmosphere of the ideal, above all the real world known to Him, as to preach a moral doctrine and found a religion which should be world-wide, and raise humanity above all its former levels. What is true of the Founder of Christianity, is still more evident of the men who were His disciples and the apostles of His religion. They were naturally incompetent for the enterprise which they undertook, and incompetent in the most supreme degree. It was, therefore, a superhuman and supernatural power which wrought in Jesus Christ and His Apostles. The work which they accomplished was the work of God. The Messiah, the Christ, was the chief apostle or accredited messenger and ambassador of God; and His Apostles, sent by Him as His vice-gerents, were the subordinate ambassadors of God. Their teaching and precepts had a divine sanction. The perfect and unparalleled sanctity of Jesus Christ, His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, the heroic sanctity of the Apostles and their associates in the missionary work and the wonderful success of their labors, were the evidences of their divine mission. The proclamation which Jesus Christ personally and through His Apostles made of His true and proper divinity, is, therefore, in the highest degree credible, and rests on the veracity of God. The motives of credibility by which the revelation of God through Jesus Christ principally, and through the prophets who preceded and the Apostles who succeeded Him, are numerous and irrefragable. But the fact of the resurrection, the foundation of the apostolic church as the pillar of testimony to this fact, and the conquest of the world through faith in the resurrection and the divinity of Jesus Christ, amply suffice. God is revealed in the Person and through the teaching of Jesus Christ, giving evidence of Himself through His resurrection, and the manifestation of His supreme power from heaven through His earthly kingdom, the Church. He is God, descending from heaven and personally teaching and redeeming mankind through His human nature.

Here is the culmination of the supernatural order, of supernatural grace and supernatural revelation. Here, also, is shown the relation of the entire natural order to the supernatural and its subordination to it. The whole course of human history in its foregoing periods is a preparation for the coming of Christ, and its subsequent course is a progress toward the consummation in His second coming. The prophecy of His first coming has been verified in His actual birth, life, death and resurrection. The prophecy which He made to His Apostles, and especially to their Prince, that they should rule the world, has been, to a great extent,

fulfilled. It is credible, therefore, that it will be completely fulfilled when the great drama of human history attains its consummation.

The obstinate incredulity of the Jews, the stubborn, hitherto insurmountable obstinacy of the Mohammedans, the vast extent of paganism, are undoubtedly an apparent objection to the universality of the redemption and the religion of Jesus Christ.

But, on the one hand, we are not obliged to regard these multitudes of non-Christians as altogether destitute of grace and left to unavoidable perdition. And, on the other hand, we cannot foresee what is to be the future extension of Christianity and how great will be its moral conquests over incredulity and heathenism.

That part of the scroll of human destiny which is yet unrolled is not legible to us, and we can only make some probable forecasts and conjectures of the closing events of the history of the world.

We have, however, the most certain ground for expecting the final triumph of Jesus Christ over all the powers of evil, and that day of the restitution of all things in which the dominion of good order shall absolutely and universally prevail.

Here let us pause upon the summit which we have gained, and contemplate the admirable harmony and unity in which the natural and supernatural are combined in one order, and the universe brought to its most perfect consummation in the Incarnation.

We began by affirming that the Incarnation is the climax and apex of the whole order of nature and grace, the meeting point of God and His creation. In the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ, human nature in its ideal perfection, the microcosm containing all grades of being in the universal cosmos, is united with the divine nature.

He, who is the Man, *par excellence*, the representative of the human race, is, by the divinity of His person, the Sovereign and the Judge of mankind, the Arbiter of its destinies and the Supreme Lord and Disposer of the universe. The wisdom, the goodness and the power of Deity are in Him, transmitted through the medium of a perfect humanity, intellectually, morally and physically of the same essence with our own, but raised to the most sublime supernatural plane of intelligence and sanctity.

He is the Author of our spiritual and immortal being, the Light of our natural intelligence, our Law-giver, the revealed and revealing Word of God upon whose Truth our faith rests; and He is the source of all those laws which regulate the whole order of irrational and inanimate nature which is the object of the physical sciences.

Such a theme as this cannot be treated in an adequate manner in a few pages. As we are about to close, there is time only for

a brief peroration, in which to sum up and bring to a point, the principal scope I have had in view. What is this? It is to aid the *Fides quærens intellectum*, the searching of minds in which is the habit and virtue of faith, to understand the reason of belief, and to aid the inquiry of those who are seeking after a faith which is rational. It is also to aid those who are seeking for evidence of the universal love of God toward His creatures, behind the cloud of moral and physical evil which envelops the world.

The first demand is answered by the meeting of the highest human wisdom and science with the infinite divine truth, in the mind of the Incarnate Son of God. It is Truth from its primal source which we receive from Him, and which is credible with a certitude surpassing physical, moral or metaphysical certitude, when it comes to us from His mouth. The vast boundless realm of that which is itself intelligible, is intelligible to us, only in a very limited degree, in our present state of ignorance and feeble intelligence. The greatest part of human history is unknown to us and undiscoverable. The history of the earth, of the solar system, of the physical universe, the laws of nature, the principles and facts which are investigated by the natural sciences, are unknown to a much greater extent than they are known. In the higher region of metaphysics, the human mind can take but a short flight without becoming asphyxiated by the rarity of the atmosphere. The greatest part of what we do know in all these branches, with certainty or probability, we assent to on faith in human testimony and the authority of a few men of science. Everywhere we are met by problems which cannot be solved, and surrounded by an ocean of mystery whose coast-line has never been reached. Nevertheless, rational thinkers do not abandon themselves to skepticism or withhold their assent to facts and truths which are within the scope of our faculties.

It is far more reasonable to believe in all the truth revealed by a Teacher Who knows all things and Who cannot deceive. Perfect human intelligence and science in immediate contact with the Divine Omniscience is a just measure and rule of imperfect reason and knowledge. It is to that infallible authority we submit our minds in the obedience of Christian faith. This submission is no derogation to the dignity and honor of our rational nature. On the contrary, it is an act of supreme homage to human reason raised to its highest power. The human intellect of Jesus Christ is a prism through which the pure truth of the divine essence is transmitted in refracted rays to our minds. It is an evidence that the intellectual light in our mind is a participation in the eternal divine light; and that if the power and range of our vision were adequately increased, all invisible and obscure objects in the heaven

of truth would become clearly manifest to us as they are to beatified spirits. On a cloudy day we know that above the clouds the sun is shining in full splendor. So, likewise, the cloud of unknowing which hangs over our earth is only an exhalation from the surface of ignorance within the narrow bounds of our horizon. There are no contradictions in the sun of truth, or obscurations in its light. Difficulties and objections are phantasms of our imagination. We have motives of certitude for all rational and revealed truths. If their harmony is not in all points apparent, and the solution of their problems sometimes baffles our reason, common sense, as well as conscience, dictates that we should confide with tranquillity in the primal and eternal truth in God, and in the divinised mind of Christ, and await the clearing off of the mists of ignorance.

The only alternative is to wander away and be lost in the sloppy, muddy marsh of Agnosticism.

The first demand of our intellect for a sure basis of faith in revealed truths which transcend our understanding is, therefore, satisfied by the Incarnation of the Son of God in human nature.

The second demand of the heart, as well as the mind, is for assurance of the universal love of God, and the merciful as well as just treatment of every human being.

This demand is satisfied by the wonderful manifestation of love and mercy, which the Son of God made to men by appearing and living in humility and meekness, and by dying on the Cross. The destinies of all mankind are in His hands, who drank to the dregs that chalice of bitterness of which all men taste. These destinies we can safely entrust to such hands as these. Out of death He brought life, and the ignominious Cross was transformed by Him into a standard of glory. He overcame evil by good, and brought the highest good out of that deicide which was the climax of all evil. We may, therefore, calm all our trouble in respect to the existence and extent of evil in the universe by submission to His sovereign will, which is not only power, but also essential wisdom and essential love.
