

MORALITY AND LIFE.

WHEN we consider the dishonesty and fraud of our times, the vices and crimes destructive of all confidence of man in man and almost of society itself, we must acknowledge that life is out of joint with morality in this nineteenth century. The pomp and parade of wealth, the deference it commands, the honors paid to it, the influence it exerts, if they mean anything at all, mean certainly the worship of mammon, which renders the poor discontented with their lot and creates a universal desire and a universal scramble to get rich, honestly if possible, but to get rich at any rate. Public opinion is but slightly scrupulous as to the means employed to gain wealth or to obtain control of it. Offences against the person which spring from heated blood or untamed passion are bad enough, but they are not nearly as bad as the cool, deliberate offences against the rights of property which constitute the chief characteristics of modern society, and so numerous and gigantic have these become that the strongest governments are impotent to redress or to restrain them. The moral sense of society appears stunted and suffering from a radical defect.

That life should be moral, and that the degree to which genuine moral principles penetrate thought, will and action, determines the greater or lesser value of life, both as regards the individual and as regards society, are propositions just as clearly recognized now as of old. The absolute necessity of a moral code for the regulation of conduct is not in the least contested. But the notions as to what constitutes morality, on what basis ethics must rest, and what office they have to perform, have undergone material changes. The issues of life are now being viewed from entirely different standpoints, so much so that the reasoning which thoroughly satisfied the tenor of mind of the mediæval period, and of our more immediate ancestors, though it has lost neither its force nor its correctness, is no longer applicable in our times. Large numbers nowadays believe that our age is a great movement in behalf of intelligence against ignorance, of reason against blind authority, of mental freedom against mental bondage, of rational scientific belief against bigotry and superstition. The world, which once held that morality is inseparably bound up with religion because of the direct influence which religious belief exercises upon human actions, no longer thinks so. Religion is now superseded, so people try to persuade themselves, by "enlightenment," "the culture of the

nineteenth century," "the creed of science." This view resulted quite logically in the secularization of the schools, that is to say, in a system of education which carefully avoids engrafting any religious principles upon the juvenile mind. The fruits of this system confront us in the present moral condition of society, for it has now been long enough in existence to show what fruits it can bear. Its success, as a Protestant divine tersely states, ought to be apparent in politics and upon the bench, upon boys and girls, men and women, and upon the statistics of crime. In all these respects, however, a decided deterioration has taken place wherever "advanced ideas" and "modern cultured thought" appear in the foreground. In the most civilized countries we behold corruption in the legislative bodies, bribery at elections, juries equally deficient in learning and integrity, politics a regular and rather disreputable business, repudiation of debts, betrayal of financial trusts, crookedness in mercantile life, adroit embezzlements of public funds. Nor is this all. We behold, moreover, the magnificent offenders flaunt their crimes with impunity in the face of a helpless community, divorce legalize concubinage, and free-love administer the death-blow to the family. This sad picture of the moral condition of our times resembles only too closely the period of the decadence of the Roman Empire, and yet it is by no means overdrawn. As has already been stated, the rueful deficiency of the ethical code, construed by the leaders of thought of this age, offers the only explanation. The code of morality, based solely upon scientific truths, no matter how admirable a structure it may be in its way, no matter what a wonderful evidence of the keenness of human intellect, has proven an ignominious failure in its effects upon the life of mankind.

Strong suspicions begin to arise now in the minds of many that these systems, after all, present to us nothing but the achievements of fanciful mental gymnastics; the impotency and the hopeless incapability of appealing by science to more than the intellect is being more and more understood; society gradually awakens to a proper realization of the fact that these modern systems of morality are far from furnishing a basis upon which society could rest without most serious misgivings for the "morrow"; and in proportion as this recognition grows, in the same proportion grows the desire in earnestness and intensity to find the one vital force by virtue of which society may be reconstructed on the basis of true morality. The great question, then, is this: how can the re-acceptance of the true code of morality be brought about, and how can the world be taught where the same is to be found?

There is, it is true, the Church of Rome, which says to mankind, with the same unalterable firmness as in the days of the apostles,

“Turn to my form of Christianity for genuine morality.” She presses her claim of being sole possessor of an ethical code by which life is rendered worth living, and all incongruities of time and place and circumstances harmonized. But let us not deceive ourselves. To outsiders this apodictic statement appears as an arrogant assertion, entitled to no more weight than that of any other religious belief. Add to it the fact that there are but too many who, though nominally at least belonging to the Catholic Church, belie by their lives the purity of the moral code they profess as their own, and it is easily understood that the situation is not much improved by the attitude of Catholicity. It is idle to hope that dogmatic assertions, no matter how strongly emphasized, will change the tenor of mind of our age, and whoever indulges in such belief betokens only a gross misunderstanding of the intellectual attitude of society. The only road which, to our mind at least, promises a fair share of success, consists in a careful re-examination of the true meaning of morality, and in evolving by such a study what basis ethical principles demand in order to hold humanity with the grip of omnipotence. Such inquiry will soon convince us that true morality does not float in the air, but can be generated and sustained only by the true teachings of Christianity. By following this road we are at once free from all objections that might be raised against any other method of inquiry, for we adopt then the very line of thought of our times and keep thus abreast of the tendency of the age.

Now, “life,” that dire fact, staring us in the face with a tale of crime, of misery, of suffering, of wretchedness; life, exhibiting to us the unceasing struggle of human passions, the victories and, alas! the defeats also of virtue; life, this conglomeration of volition, reasoning, and sentiment, issuing forth in energy and activity; this great enigma, life,—shall we, can we, believe it to be unable to tell us wherein true morality consists, and what its origin, its sustenance, if we attentively read the lessons of that stupendous drama? Ah, it would be the extreme height of sadness if life could make no answer. To feel that reason imposes an obligation which it cannot instruct us how to fulfil; to find ourselves with broad conceptions which we know not how to realize, with a sense of duty hanging over us which we cannot practically discharge—to hesitate between probabilities, to balance between uncertainties, to find the darkness increasing as we advance, and finally to lose ourselves in doubt and bewilderment, this would be our cruel fate if life had to remain silent. But though, engrossed with the world, with its cares, its follies, its gayeties, its dissipations, we may for a time silence the voice within and disregard the admonitions of conscience, the day must come in each individual life, for it comes to all men, when

all of a sudden we realize the true inwardness of morality, and at that time conscience imparts a knowledge to us which we feel and know by intuition to be true, irresistibly true knowledge. But for conscience morals would be an idle phantom, ethical codes superfluous brain-speculations. This conclusion, to which the introspection of life in individuals drives us, is also corroborated by the study of the lives of nations; that is to say, by inquiry into the true meaning of public morality.

Before proceeding further, it may not be superfluous to make some few remarks, or rather statements of facts on morality itself, because most of the errors into which men fall generally arise from the attempt to solve questions without the necessary preparatory knowledge and discipline. Now, morality means a set of first principles which, by taking hold of thought, will, and action, regulate our conduct in life. First principles in ethics, as well as in anything else, must, of course, possess the character of universal applicability, that is, the character of truth. And if absolutely true, they are necessarily so irrespective of time and place. If we do not insist upon what is strictly true, independently of our notions of truth and justice, but insist merely upon what appears to the actor to be so, we make right and wrong vary with the varying notions of each individual, and deny all invariable standard of right and wrong. Morality would then depend solely upon the private notions, caprice, or idiosyncrasies of each separate individual. The same thing might be right for one and wrong for the other, which is obviously preposterous and absurd. We know very well by natural reason that the distinction between right and wrong is not arbitrary, accidental, and variable, but immutable, independent, and eternal. The moral law is consequently the same at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, and, instead of being the creature of our notions and convictions, is independent of and unaffected by them. For, the moment we substitute our views of truth for the truth itself, we deny virtually all truth and all falsehood, all right and all wrong, make them relative matters, one or the other, according to one's mode of seeing, feeling, or thinking. The laws of logic and of reason forbid us, if we think at all, to think otherwise. Consequently there can be but one absolute and invariable standard of morals which is not subject to change, but remains, all the wide world over, the same.

Again, all morality necessarily pre-supposes an objective law—a law out of man, above man, to which he is accountable, which he is under obligation to obey, obedience to which constitutes virtue, and disobedience to which constitutes vice. This conception, let it be emphasized, is essential to the very idea of morality. If there be no such law, or if it is not and cannot be known to us, then

man would simply cease to be a moral being. Nor is this all. From the necessity of a moral law out of and above man springs also the necessity of a moral lawgiver, who has the sovereign right to impose the law. "Duty," that which a man is *bound* to perform, is conceivable only if there is an absolute sovereign law which binds us. There is no use trying to smooth over these very plain facts or to invent fine phrases for covering up an intolerable and unjustifiable ignorance on this subject. If we do not recognize the existence of the supernatural, we cannot, consistently, recognize any moral law whatsoever. The attempt to separate religion and morals, and to obtain a solid foundation for our moral superstructure independent of religion, has for this reason proved and always will prove disastrous. The men who propound in our times theories and systems of ethics, which in reality are far from being in accord with true morality, do not profess to break with Christian civilization, or to reject religion and morals; but they strive to assert a morality without God and a Christianity without Christ. It is but a little while and all their works need recasting, because their systems are giving way. Sincerity or firmness of conviction on the part of those who dish up the modern vague theories of morality, does not render what they announce true and of moral obligation. Uncertain opinions, unproved theories, unverified hypotheses, have no claim to be listened to in the moral sphere. From a moral point of view, from a rigidly ethical standard, the codes of Darwin, Sir John Lubbock, Taine, Buchner, Schopenhauer, Huxley, Tyndall, and Herbert Spencer are simply opinions, theories, hypotheses, which are, at best, plausible conjectures under the imposing name of science, and which, being nothing more, should not unsettle men's minds, bewilder the half-learned, mislead the ignorant, undermine the very bases of society, and assail the whole moral order of the universe. It will not do to arraign the faith and the convictions of enlightened and living mankind and try to overrule them by science which is not proved with apodictic certainty to be science, and by truth which is not demonstrated to be truth. Yet this principle of ethics and of logic is disregarded by the whole tribe of contemporary moralists. Let us not deceive ourselves. The merit or the demerit of earthly career is measured only by the absolute and invariable standard of morality; that alone determines the individual, the intrinsic, as well as the sociological, the extrinsic, value of our morality. People are not moral because they frame their lives in accordance with an essentially deficient standard of morality; else all we would have to do to be truly moral would be to adopt a code in harmony with our propensities, whatever these may be. Relative morality does not count in life; un-

less we are moral in the true sense of the word, we possess no right to call ourselves so, nor does the world call us so.

We are now prepared to go one step farther. We will inquire first what does morality embrace in the surging ebb and flow tide of life, and what is the principle upon which it can rationally rest. Individual morality is twofold; it is negative and it is positive. It is negative in so far as it enjoins us not to perform any inherently immoral acts; and it is positive in so far as it bids us to exercise and practice virtue. For the shunning of vice is by no means the practice of virtue. The groundwork on which the regard and esteem of our fellow-men does rest, comprises hardly more than negative morality. Our social intercourse is conditioned upon certain civic virtues; our actions are constantly watched by those around us; the laws of every land impose certain restraints upon us. To steer clear of the criminal code does not consequently imply a really moral character. It is not enough to be honest, straightforward and truthful, because the thief is imprisoned, the liar dishonored, and the murderer hanged. Fear is, then, our motive power rather than love, and such morality is hardly worthy of the name. To be truly moral requires a subduing of our passions, a curbing of every inordinate appetite, a checking of undue ambition; but it requires much more still. It is not action alone, but will and thought likewise that must be governed by our moral principles. Licentiousness of thought, though less reprehensible than licentiousness of word and deed, remains nevertheless a criminal offence against the moral code, and differs from immoral actions not in kind, but only in degree. Consequently, the inward disposition, the habit of the mind, the principles we cherish and live up to, these are essential elements of any truly moral character. Morality, therefore, is not put on like a garment from without, but issues forth from within. And these principles adopted for the guidance of conduct must prevail to such an extent that we would part with life itself rather than forfeit one iota of these principles. And not only that, but all moral virtues, as for instance, chastity, temperance, charity, must not remain passive, but become active in us: they must inspire our thoughts, fill our hearts and bring tangible fruits during our lives. Now, if this has to be conceded, as it must needs be conceded, we perceive at once that a stronger motive than the world must impart life-giving power to those principles which are to produce all that. Let us consider a few striking examples. The virgin, who prefers cruel death to the loss of virtue, displays a conduct which remains utterly inexplicable by any moral code which makes the "here-below" the all of life. We must reach higher than science, higher even than this world, to realize what can and does prompt this preference of cold,

pitiless death to a life of luxurious ease, if conditioned upon the loss of virginity. And as with chastity so with all other virtues. Social upheavals may from time to time induce the amasser of wealth to disgorge some of his ill-gotten gain; but this is not charity, no matter how often it may be misnamed such. In order to behold true charity, we must seek the principle which teaches self-sacrifice, bids us forego pleasures in order to sit at the bedside of the sick and watch their feverish brow, and not until we reach the immolation of self in the service of fellow-man do the noblest and highest examples of charity stand before us. We may single out all typical figures of unquestioned morality, those that have received the unanimous plaudits of all succeeding ages, and we will find that the fundamental principles which actuated them to do what re-echoes to their praise from century to century, proceeded not from the senses, but from the soul, not from this world, but from belief in another world presided over by a sovereign lawgiver. True morality presupposes, thus, for a rational basis a common relation to a supreme lawgiver by which all distinctions of sex, of rank, of wealth, of age, of time and place are abolished. Only by perceiving in fellow-man the image of Him towards whom we have to discharge a duty, can we rise to an actual discharge towards that fellow-man of the debt we owe to the Creator. Thus belief in a supernatural life which centres in and revolves around God offers the only possible and real basis of morality. The law of love, the law of freedom, the law of equality by means of which mankind not only rose from the low plane of brute animalism, but recovered its own dignity and breathed again the pure atmosphere of genuine morality, these laws do not result from a contemplation of physical facts, nor can they be evolved from science. They are due, it must be acknowledged, to the all-embracing love of that transfigured Humanity, the God-Man crucified, who shed from the foot of the cross the life blood of all true morality, and bade us believe and hope and practice the moral law. As the love given of free accord by man to that central figure of the whole human race, proceeds not from the senses, but from the soul, so also do the affectionate devotion and observance of the moral code taught by Him proceed not from any mundane, but from supernatural motives. Let human nature act according to its present laws, give to each faculty its natural exercise, to each tendency its natural gratification, to the whole the natural objects craved for, and it is never further from having attained its goal. With all that nature can give, man remains infinitely below his destiny—a mere inchoate creature, wanting an object that can fill the deep void within; for though man, he is not as yet a moral being. It is both a remarkable and an undeniable fact that all who take reason alone for their

guide and disown conscience, fail to grasp the one essential principle of all ethics. It is an undeniable fact, for it is the standing reproach of all speculative systems, from Plato down to our own times, and it is remarkable because it is invariably reproduced in every department of life, if we trust ourselves in practical matters to the guidance of reason rather than of conscience, because it runs through all human life, when abandoned to simple nature. True morality, then, as far as the inquiry into individual life reveals, consists in the practical worship of those highest and purest virtues that are embodied in a real person, living and acting, the God-man, Christ, out of an affectionate devotion. The recognition of the relationship of man to God, and of God to man, and of man to man through and on account of the common relation to God, is, then, the very essence and substance of all morality. Only by referring all our actions back to God do we obtain rational, acceptable motives. Life, as we have seen, asks us to do a great many things which neither civic nor social relations can ever impose upon us, and these very acts, whose performance sometimes seems almost to defy reason and every law of nature, are those which secure to the performers the character of exalted and unquestionable morality. Sociologists and agnostics, together with all Christendom, point out, as prototypes of the highest ethics, acts which, without a supernatural motive, refuse altogether to be comprehensible, and thus, in point of fact, acknowledge that without a belief in God, an accounting for our deeds and a retribution in accord with their merit or demerit, the individual is bereft of, is *minus* that one motive power which alone can stir up his sluggish energies to overcome the low promptings of human nature.

Apart, however, from the consideration of morality in the individual, an inquiry into the moral aspect of nations and ages forces us to precisely the same conclusion, for history is by no means a silent book on this very point. Let us confine ourselves, first of all, to those three principal virtues or perfections which are most wanting in heathen society and most characteristic of true civilization, namely, humility, regard for maternity, and lastly, chastity.

The whole philosophical and moral system of the Stoic school, which must be acknowledged as the least discreditable of all ancient systems, is founded on pride. The Stoic, to be sure, taught self-denial, detachment from the world, contempt of riches and honors, and superiority to all accidents of fortune. But he taught so because a man should have too high an opinion of himself to be affected by such trifles. Very different is the view taken by Christian moralists. The truly moral man rises with them above the world, not by his pride but by his humility. He proves his superiority to the world and to fortune by proving that his capacity

to suffer pain, disgrace, and even death, is much stronger than the power of the world to inflict them. The Christian observes the moral law, not like the Stoic, from a contempt of the weakness that could violate it, but from love of the law itself, from a profound sense of its sacredness and justice, engendered by the love of its Author. The Stoic found himself not unfrequently compelled to lay hands on his own life, while the Christian triumphs in his weakness by relying on a greater strength than his own. The Greek, as well as the Roman, civilization, was founded on pride and respect for success, and exhibits, consequently, no trace of compassion and sympathy for the poor, the friendless, the helpless, and the aged. "*Vae victis!*" was a maxim most scrupulously observed. Not until we go back to the nations of old, and make ourselves acquainted with their manners and customs, usages and laws, prior to their conversion to Christianity, do we see their real deformity, or can we in any degree appreciate the immense change, as regards humility, wrought by the ethics of Christianity.

Coming next to the holy function of maternity, nowhere do we find in heathendom any conception of its true significance, its sacred character. It is well known that in Sparta all malformed children were put to death as soon as born, and, in Rome, also, the mother had no right over the child. The father had to say, when the nurse brought the child to him, whether it was to be reared or strangled. The prevalence of child murder, and the exposure of children in China and India, result likewise from the low estimate in which maternity is held. By placing maternity on the level of a mere animal function, society leads not only to the toleration and authorization of infanticide, but it degrades also womanhood, by making her a mere accomplice with man in sensual gratification. On the other hand, we observe that in proportion as the Christian view of woman and motherhood gains way, in like proportion child murder ceases.

As to chastity, suffice it to say that voluptuousness was worshipped as a goddess through nearly all polished heathendom, and, if what grave historians have recorded is to be believed, nothing can exceed the corruption of the moral atmosphere of Rome with a Julia and a Messalina. We cannot speak of really moral notions on any of these three virtues prior to the advent of Christ.

If we consider next the social position of woman, we arrive at the same result. The sale of women to the highest bidder for the gratification of lust was customary among the Babylonians, and if we mistrust Herodotus and turn to Strabo, we learn of still more revolting practices among other nations. Woman's position in Greece was hardly less degrading. She was the instrument of

lust, and the bearer of children, but not man's equal; on the contrary, his inferior, whom it was no crime to treat with contempt. Beauty of form constituted her main worth even at the time when the civilization of Greece had reached its summit. If we turn to savage tribes, we learn that men went wife-hunting as they went bear-hunting, and the captives were slaves. Judging by the foregoing crucial tests the morality of any age or nation, we are constrained to admit that except in Christendom none can be found. The normal current of human morals has flowed, and never ceased to flow, from the foot of the cross. Whatever real progress has been made during the last nineteen hundred years, came from the influence of Christianity upon society. No one can hold otherwise without confounding, change with progress. Changes, very great changes, have been wrought outside of that current, but no real progress. Fortunately, the world is pretty well agreed that the Christian code of ethics is so far superior to anything preceding it as to offer no longer debatable ground. Unfortunately, the world is not yet agreed that there is but one code of Christian morality extant, and that all others, whether sailing under the disguise of Christianity or not, are spurious fabrications. And here again, we take it, the questioning of life enables us to discern the genuine from the sham code.

Society, as is well known, depends upon the family, and the family, in turn, depends upon a sacred and sanctified relationship, marriage. Now, if we withdraw from marriage the moral principle by and through which it acquires a sacred character, the only supports left to virtue are the natural sentiments, instincts, and inclinations which lead invariably to crime, vice, and immorality. The moment we look upon marriage merely as a civil institution, the moment we remove from it the moral element, we leave, practically, the relation of the sexes to the concupiscence of human nature. Divorce is, in reality, nothing but successive polygamy or successive polyandry, as the case may be, and wherever divorce is not tabooed, there we need not look for the true code of ethics. Nor is this all. If marriage consists only in the operation of the unrestrained sensual appetites of men and women, it can have no regard to the birth and education of children, but must look solely to the self-indulgence and pleasure of the couple to which children would be a great encumbrance. Thus divorce and free-love are not only incompatible with true morality, but wherever they are, the atmosphere is far from pure.

But this is not all. A more careful investigation tells us more still. As morality in the individual must needs begin with a habit of thought, a belief in the authority of the moral law, and must next influence will, and finally issue forth in action; so morality begins

in society with the social unit, the family. And since the family is constituted by marriage, the morality of society depends entirely and solely upon the correct moral view in regard to marriage. Now marriage, in order to be in full accord with the true moral code, demands, or rather presupposes, three things : sanctity, unity, and indissolubility, three things which it lacked in the pagan world, and which it lacks even in the modern world in proportion as it ceases to be truly Christian. Social corruption, whether ancient or modern, begins always with the family ; and to destroy the family means, then, to destroy society and all that deserves the name of civilization. Whatever moral greatness modern nations possess, as compared with pagans, proceeds from the moral view of marriage, from the Christian view of the family. Let this be clearly understood, for it is the most important lesson history teaches us in order to find where true morality is now to be found in the world. Now, the "reformers" of the sixteenth century began by first denying the indissolubility of marriage ; and by next denying its religious character, viz., its sanctity, they entirely cut loose from true morality. To permit polygamy, not simultaneous polygamy, but successive, actual polygamy, by permitting the divorced man or woman to marry while wife or husband is still alive, is to proclaim a moral code, not on a higher, but on precisely the same plane with that of antiquity. It is strange, indeed, with what blind tenacity would-be Christianity clings to a shadow after having discarded the substance. It is sheer mockery to talk about morality alongside of divorce ; it is a mere play of words to acknowledge divorce, but to disown polygamy. Yet Protestantism could not help itself. The two cardinal principles underlying all its countless forms of belief, that of negation and that of private judgment, once admitted into ethics, destroy with deadly certainty. It needs but a denial of an absolute, invariable standard of morality ; it needs but an application of private judgment as to what is and what is not moral, in order to have, not only divorce, but free-love. Private judgment, guided on one hand by our rebellious inclinations, and on the other hand by our disinclination to morally reproach ourselves, easily coins a code by which the semblance of moral conduct, at least, may be preserved, by which that which is repulsive to truly moral notions may be seemingly moral by being in accord with a loose ethical code. Again, denying, as Protestantism does, that an infallible interpretation of God's law exists here below outside of human reason, the ultimate tribunal pronouncing upon right and wrong is transferred to that selfsame *Ego* which hates so much self-accusation. The repugnance within us to offend our own sinful propensities predisposes us to cling to every straw, if, by holding on to it, we appear a trifle less sinful in our eyes. If we

are immoral, we hate to so consider ourselves, even in the secrecy of our chambers, so strong is our innate desire to escape the censorship of conscience, and for this reason are people so ready to subscribe to ethical codes which apparently remove, or at least lessen, that odium. The old lines,

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor,

have lost none of their force. They apply even to our unwillingness to see after we are no longer blindfolded; for to own up that the truth is perceived, and yet not to embrace the same at once, requires a moral courage much greater than to pretend to not having seen the truth, an avowal of moral cowardice with which, alas; our times are surfeited. Let it not be forgotten that we are responsible, morally responsible for our convictions, our belief, our actions, for all in which the *will is brought directly into play*. Great heroism is not required to plead ignorance, when ignorance suits our purposes; but to see and embrace truth, requires a complete attachment to truth, and very few in a period of laxity such as ours have the courage to do it. "Morality without foundation in the belief in God and the soul's immortality," so M. Emile de Laveleye, a Protestant, writes, "the vague sentiment which wavers between good and evil, without any exertion on our own part to awaken in us the consciousness of our imperfection and the aspirations after an ideal of the true and the just; in a word, human nature totally delivered up to its earthly instincts, how is it to follow the right path and accomplish its high destiny? Without doubt the animal species, directed by its instincts, subsists and perpetuates itself by gratifying the appetites. Savages live pretty much in the same way, without the ideas of duty and of another life exercising great influence over their actions; but their existence also is that of brutes; without ceasing, they fight over the prey, and the strongest comes off the best. What would become of our societies, which rest upon respect paid to law, were the duty and the very idea of justice to disappear? Atheism, conscious, universal, publicly avowed and everywhere taught, would it not inevitably lead us back to the barbarity of prehistoric times?" Evidently, M. de Laveleye recognizes the necessity of a supernatural belief as the only basis of morality, and hence of society. Whether the inability to believe in God proceeds from the cherished and unchallenged bias of atheistic education, or from a violent recoil from religious training, or from a habitual disregard of the voice of conscience, or from a too exclusive addiction to the methods and teachings of physical science, or to the combined action of these influences, it is quite certain that man is none the less morally responsible for his convictions. It is, therefore, not the relative, but the absolute

standard of ethics which alone applies universally. Of course, in the limited space of a review article, it is impossible exhaustively to treat as vast a subject as morality and life even in any one respect. The mere attempt would at once show a fatal delusion on the part of him who would venture upon so bold a task. Yet from the few outlines which we have jotted down, from the line of thought which we have tried to point out, certain conclusions are already inevitable, and it seems to us that more thorough inquiries into the aspects of the question on which we threw out merely a few suggestions, can not fail further to confirm these conclusions.

To sum up: We hold that the introspection of morality, as far as individuals are concerned, reveals to us the imperative necessity of belief in an omnipotent law-giver as a first and indispensable condition of morality. To render suffering meritorious; to impart contentment with our lot, no matter how humble and miserable it may be; to awaken in us a life-giving consciousness of our duties to our fellow man and to society; to make us consider ourselves not owners, but trustees simply, of what is given to us, stewards who have to render account; to render charity, compassion, love, chastity and all ennobling and elevating sentiments as active forces in life the priceless treasures which these virtues are acknowledged to be; in short, to put mankind above the level of the brute and prevent humanity from crawling along with gaze bent downward upon the crust of the earth, we need God, we need His moral law. But we need one thing more; and that is, we need an infallible interpretation of that law by the observance of which we rise to the heights of true moral beings. We must consider ourselves moral beings, for without a higher central force impelling us to forsake and overcome our corruption, the victory of our animalism is certain; we must believe ourselves moral, for without belief our intuitive consciousness of responsibility for all we do and leave undone would be fatal mockery; but we must believe, finally, also in an infallible interpretation, else the knowledge of the moral law would be wanting, and it would not be our inheritance, our birthright, our privilege to stand upon the elevation of the moral ground. And all this, let it be well understood, we must believe, not because the Catholic Church and the Pope in Rome say so, but because life bids us see that only upon the co-existence of these conditions can morality be predicated. Every truth taught by life is a truly Catholic truth, a dogmatic truth, not because the See of St. Peter proclaims it so, but because of its being a truth; and as Catholicity can hold only truths, it is then, *ipsissima natura*, a Catholic truth. This road we take, is the one best adapted in our times to lead society back to the re-acceptance of that incorruptible moral code of Christ which we must live up to, if we hope for true life as the reward of a truly moral earthly career.