

# Theodore Parker: from *Ten Sermons of Religion*

## III

### Of Justice and the Conscience

1852

Turn and do justice. — *Tobit* xiii. 6.

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Everywhere in the world there is natural law, that is a constant mode of action, which seems to belong to the nature of things, to the constitution of the universe; Everywhere in the world there is a natural law, that is a constant mode of action, which seems to belong to the nature of things, to the constitution of the universe; this fact is universal. In different departments we call this mode of action by different names, as the law of Matter, or the law of Mind, the law of Morals, and the like. We mean thereby a certain mode of action which belongs to the material, mental, or moral forces, the mode in which commonly they are seen to act, and in which it is their ideal to act always. The ideal laws of matter we only know from the fact that they are always obeyed; to us the actual obedience is the only witness of the ideal rule, for in respect to the conduct of the material world the ideal and the actual are the same.

The laws of matter we can learn only by observation and experience. We cannot divine them and anticipate, or know them at all, unless experience supply the facts of observation. Before experience of the fact, no man could foretell that a falling body would descend sixteen feet the first second, twice that the next, four times the third, and sixteen times the fourth. The law of falling bodies is purely objective to us; no mode of action in our consciousness anticipates this rule of action in the outer world. The same is true of all the laws of matter. The ideal law is known because it is a fact. The law is imperative; it must be obeyed, without hesitation. In the solar system, or the composition of a diamond, no margin is left for any oscillation of disobedience; margins of oscillation there always are, but only for vibration as a function, not as the refusal of a function. Only the primal will of God works in

the material world, no secondary finite will

In nature, the world spread out before the senses, — to group many specific modes of action about a single generic force, — we see there is the great general law of attraction, which binds atom to atom in a grain of sand, orb to orb, system to system, gives unity to the world of things, and rounds these worlds of systems to a universe. At first there seem to be exceptions to this law, — as in growth and decomposition, in the repulsions of electricity; but at length all these are found to be instancial cases of this great law of attraction acting in various modes. We name the attraction by its several modes, — cohesion in small masses, and gravitation in large. When the relation seems a little more intimate, we call it affinity, as in the atomic union of molecules of matter. Other modes we name electricity, and magnetism; when the relation is yet more close and intimate, we call it vegetation in plants, vitality in animals. But for the present purpose all these may be classed under the general term Attraction, considered as acting in various modes of cohesion, gravitation, affinity, vegetation, and vitality.

This power gives unity to the material world, keeps it whole, yet, acting under such various forms, gives variety at the same time. The variety of effects surprises the senses at first; but in the end the unity of cause astonishes the cultivated mind. Looked at in reference to this globe, an earthquake is no more than a chink that opens in a garden-walk, of a dry day in summer. A sponge is porous, having small spaces between the solid parts; the solar system is only more porous, having larger room between the several orbs; the universe yet more so, with vast spaces between the systems; a similar attraction keeps together the sponge, the system, and the

universe. Every particle of matter in the world is related to each and all the other particles thereof; attraction is the common bond.

In the spiritual world, the world of human consciousness, there is also a law, an ideal mode of action for the spiritual force of man. To take only the moral part of this sphere of consciousness, we find the phenomenon called Justice, the law of right. Viewed as a force, it bears the same relation in the world of conscience, that attraction bears in the world of sense. I mean justice is the normal relation of men, and has the same to do amongst moral atoms, — individual men, — moral masses, — that is, nations, — and the moral whole, — I mean all mankind, — which attraction has to do with material atoms, masses, and the material whole. It appears in a variety of forms not less striking.

However, unlike attraction, it does not work free from all hindrance; it develops itself through conscious agents, that continually change, and pass by experiment from low to high degrees of life and development, to higher forms of justice. There is a certain private force, personal and peculiar to each one of us, controlled by individual will; this may act in the same line with the great normal force of justice, or it may conflict for a time with the general law of the universe, having private nutations, oscillations, and aberrations, personal or national. But these minor forces, after a while, are sure to be overcome by the great general moral force, pass into the current, and be borne along in the moral stream of the universe.

What a variety of men and women in the world! Two hundred million persons, and no two alike in form and lineament! in character and being how unlike! how very different as phenomena and facts! What an immense variety of wish, of will, in these thousand million men! of plans, which now rise up in the little personal bubble that we call a reputation or a great fortune, then in the great national bubble which we call a state! for bubbles they are, judging by the space and time they occupy in this great and age outlasting sea of human kind. But underneath all these bubbles, great and little, resides the same eternal force which they shape into this or the

other special form; and over all the same paternal Providence presides, and keeps eternal watch above the little and the great, producing variety of effect from unity of force. This Providence allows the little bubbles of his child's caprice, humors him in forming them, gives him time and space for that, understands his little caprices and his whims, and lets him carry them out awhile but Himself, with no whim and no caprice, rules there as universal justice, omniscient and all-powerful. Out of His sea these bubbles rise; by His force they rise; by His law they have their consistence, and the private personal will, which gives them size or littleness and normal or abnormal shape, has its limitation of error marked out for it which cannot be passed by. In this human world there is a wide margin for oscillation; refusal to perform the ideal function has been provided for, redundancy made to balance deficiency; checks are provided for every form of abnormal action of the will.

Viewed as an object not in man, justice is the constitution or fundamental law of the moral universe, the law of right, a rule of conduct for man in all his moral relations. Accordingly all human affairs must be subject to that as the law paramount; what is right agrees therewith and stands, what is wrong conflicts and falls. Private cohesions of self-love, of friendship, or of patriotism, must all be subordinate to this universal gravitation towards the eternal right.

We learn the laws of matter, that of attraction, for example, by observation and reflection; what we know thereof is the result of long experience, — the experienced sight and the experienced thought of many a thousand years. We might learn something of the moral law of justice, the law of right, in the same way, as a merely external thing. Then we should know it as a phenomenon, as we know attraction; as a fact so general, that we called it universal, and a law of nature. Still it would be deemed only an arbitrary law, over us, indeed, but not in us, — or in our elements, not our consciousness, — which we must be subordinate to, but could not become coordinate with; a law like that of falling bodies, which had no natural relation with us, which we could

not anticipate or divine by our nature, but only learn by our history. We should not know why God had made the world after the pattern of justice, and not injustice, any more than we now know why a body does not fall as rapidly the first as the last second of its descent.

But God has given us a moral faculty, the conscience, which is able to perceive this law directly and immediately, by intuitive perception thereof, without experience of the external consequences of keeping or violating it, and more perfectly than such experience can ever disclose it. For the facts of man's history do not fully represent the faculties of his nature, as the history of matter represents the qualities of matter. Man, though finite, is indefinitely progressive, continually unfolding the qualities of his nature; his history, therefore, is not the whole book of man, but only the portion thereof which has been opened and publicly read. So the history of man never completely represents his nature; and a law derived merely from the facts of observation by no means describes the normal rule of action which belongs to his nature. The laws of matter are known to us because they are kept; there the ideal and actual are the same; but man has in his nature a rule of conduct higher than what he has come up to, — an ideal of nature which shames his actual of history. Observation and reflection only give us the actual of morals; conscience, by gradual and successive intuition, presents us the ideal of morals. On condition that I use this faculty in its normal activity, and in proportion as I develop it and all its kindred powers, I learn justice, the law of right, the divine rule of conduct for human life; I see it, not as an external fact which might as well not be at all as be, or might have been supplanted by its opposite, but I see it as a mode of action which belongs to the infinitely perfect nature of God; belongs also to my own nature, and so is not barely over me, but in me, of me, and for me. I can become coordinate with that, and not merely subordinate thereto; I find a deep, permanent, and instinctive delight in justice, not only in the outward effects, but in the inward cause, and by my nature I love this law of right, this rule of conduct, this justice, with a deep and abiding love. I find that justice is the object of

my conscience, fitting that as light the eye and truth the mind. There is a perfect agreement between the moral object and the moral subject. Finding it fits me thus, I know that justice will work my welfare and that of all mankind.

Attraction is the most general law in the material world, and prevents a schism in the universe; temperance is the law of the body, and prevents a schism in the members; justice is the law of conscience, and prevents a schism in the moral world, amongst individuals in a family, communities in a state, or nations in the world of men. Temperance is corporeal justice, the doing right to each limb of the body, and is the mean proportional between appetite and appetite, or one and all; sacrificing no majority to one desire, however great, — no minority, however little, to a majority, — but giving each its due, and all the harmonious and well-proportioned symmetry that is meet for all. It keeps the proportions betwixt this and that, and holds an even balance within the body, so that there shall be no excess. Justice is moral temperance in the world of men. It keeps just relations between men; one man, however little, must not be sacrificed to another, however great, to a majority, or to all men. It holds the balance betwixt nation and nation, for a nation is but a larger man; betwixt a man and his family, tribe, nation, race; between mankind and God. It is the universal regulator which coordinates man with man, each with all, — me with the ten hundred millions of men, so that my absolute rights and theirs do not interfere, nor our ultimate interests ever clash, nor my eternal welfare prove antagonistic to the blessedness of all or any one. I am to do justice, and demand that of all, — a universal human debt, a universal human claim.

But it extends further; it is the regulator between men and God. It is the moral spontaneousness of the Infinite God, as it is to be the moral volition of finite men. The right to the justice of God is unalienable in men, the universal human claim, the never-ending gift for them. Can God ever depart from his own justice, deprive any creature of a right, or balk it of a natural claim? Philosophically speaking, it is impossible, — a contradiction to our idea of God; religiously speaking, it is impious, — a

contradiction to our feeling of God. Both the philosophic and the religious consciousness declare it impossible that God should be unjust. The nature of finite men claims justice of God; His infinite nature adjusts the claim. Every man in the world is morally related to each and all the rest. Justice is the common human bond. It joins us also to the infinite God. Justice is his constant mode of action in the moral world.

So much for justice, viewed as objective; as a law of the universe, the mode of action of the universal moral force.

Man naturally loves justice, for its own sake, as the natural object of his conscience. As the mind loves truth and beauty, so conscience loves the right; it is true and beautiful to the moral faculties. Conscience rests in justice as an end, as the mind in truth. As truth is the side of God turned towards the intellect, so is justice the side of Him which conscience looks upon. Love of justice is the moral part of piety.

When I am a baby, in my undeveloped moral state, I do not love justice, nor conform to it; when I am sick, and have not complete control over this republic of nerves and muscles, I fail of justice, and heed it not; when I am stung with beastly rage, blinded by passion, or over attracted from my proper sphere of affection, another man briefly possessing me, I may not love the absolute and eternal right, private capillary attraction conflicting with the universal gravitation. But in my maturity, in my cool and personal hours, when I am most myself, and the accidents of my bodily temperament and local surroundings are controlled by the substance of my manhood, then I love justice with a firm, unwavering love. That is the natural fealty of my conscience to its liege-lord. Then I love justice, not for the consequences thereof, for bodily gain, but for itself, for the moral truth and loveliness thereof. Then if justice crown me I am glad, not merely with my personal feeling, because it is I who wear the crown, but because it is the crown of justice. If justice discrown and bind me down to infamy, I still am glad with all my moral sense, and joy in the universal justice, though I suffer with the private smart. Though

all that is merely selfish and personal of me revolts, still what is noblest, what I hold in common with mankind and in common with God, bids me be glad if justice is done upon me; to me or upon me, I know it is justice still, and though my private injustice be my foe, the justice of the universe is still my friend. God, acting in this universal mode of moral force, acts for me, and the prospect of future suffering has no terror.

Men reverence and love justice. Conscience is loyal; moral piety begins early, the ethical instinct prompting mankind, and in savage ages bringing out the lovely flower in some woman's character, where moral beauty has its earliest spring. Commonly, men love justice a little more than truth; they are more moral than intellectual; have ideas of the conscience more than of the mind. This is not true of the more cultivated classes in any civilization, but of the mass of men in all; their morals are better than their philosophy. They see more absolute truth with the moral than with the intellectual faculty. The instinct for the abstract just of will is always a little before the instinct for the abstract true of thought. This is the normal order of development. But in the artificial forms of culture, what is selfish and for one takes rank before what is human and for all. So cultivated men commonly seek large intellectual power, as an instrument for their selfish purposes, and neglect and even hate to get a large moral power, the instrument of universal benevolence. They love the exclusive use of certain forms of truth, and neglect justice, which would make the convenience of every truth serve the common good of all. Men with large moral power must needs work for all; with only large intellectual power they, may work only for themselves. Hence crafty aristocracies and monopolists seek for intellectual culture as a mode of power, and shun moral culture, which can never serve a selfish end. This rule holds good of all the great forms of civilization, from the Egyptian to the British; of all the higher seminaries of education, from the Propaganda of the Jesuits to a New England college. In all the civilized nations at this day, the controlling class is intellectual more than moral; has more power of thought than power of righteousness. The same fact appears in the literature of the world.

The foremost class in culture, wealth, and social rank have less than the average proportion of morality. Hence comes the character of laws, political, social, and ecclesiastical institutions, — not designed for all, but for a few, at best a part, because the makers did not start with adequate moral power, nor propose justice as an end.

Yet the mass of men are always looking for the just; all this: vast machinery which makes up a state, a world of states, is, on the part of the people, an attempt to organize justice; the minute and wide-extending civil machinery which makes up the law and the courts, with all their officers and implements, on the part of mankind, is chiefly an effort to reduce to practice the theory of right. Alas I with the leaders of civil and political affairs it is quite different, often an organization of selfishness. Mankind reaches out after the absolute right, makes its constitutions to establish justice, and provide for the common defence. We report the decisions of wise men, and of courts; we keep the record of cases decided, to help us judge more wisely in time to come. The nation would enact laws: it aims to get the justest men in the state, that they may incorporate their aggregate sense of right into a statute. We set twelve honest men to try an alleged offender; they are to apply their joint justice to the special case. The people wish law to be embodied justice, administered without passion. I know the government seldom desires this; the people as seldom fail of the wish. Yet the mass of men commonly attribute their own moral aims to every great leader. Did the mass of men know the actual selfishness and injustice of their rulers, not a government would stand a year. The world would ferment with universal revolution.

In savage times, duelling and private revenge grew out of this love of justice. They were rude efforts after the right. In its name a man slew his father's murderer, or, failing thereof, left the reversion of his vengeance as a trust in the hands of his own son, to be paid to the offender or his heir. With the Norsemen it was deemed a crime against society to forgive a grievous wrong, and "nidding" is a word of contempt to this day. It was not merely personal malice which led to private revenge; which bade the Scottish mother

train up one son after another filled with a theological hatred against their father's murderer; not a private and selfish lust of vengeance alone which sustained her after the eldest and then the next of age perished in the attempt, and filled her with a horrid joy when the third succeeded. It was "wild justice" in a wild age, but always mixed with passion, and administered in hate; private vengeance edged the axe with which wild justice struck the blow. Even now, in the ruder portions of America, South and West, where the common law is silent, and of statutes there are none, or none enforced, when a wrong is done, the offended people come forth and hold their court, with summary process, brief and savage, to decree something like justice in a brutal way; rage furnishing the occasion, conscience is still the cause.

All these things indicate a profound love of justice inherent in mankind. It takes a rude form with rude men, is mixed with passion, private hate; in a civilized community it takes a better form, and attempts are made to remove all personal malice from the representatives of right. A few years ago men were surprised to see the people of a neighboring city for the first time choose their judges: common elections had been carried there by uncommon party tricks; but when this grave matter came before the people, they laid off their party badges, and as men chose the best officers for that distinguished trust.

The people are not satisfied with any form of government, or statute law, until it comes up to their sense of justice; so every progressive state revises its statutes from time to time, and at each revision comes nearer to the absolute right which human nature demands. Mankind revolutionizes constitutions, changes and changes, seeking to come close to the ideal justice, the divine and immutable law of the world, to which we all owe fealty, swear how we will.

In literature men always look for poetical justice, desiring that virtue should have its own reward, and vice appropriate punishment, not always outward, but always real, and made known to the reader. All readers of English history rejoice at the downfall of Judge Jeffries. In romances we love to read of some man or maid

oppressed by outward circumstances, but victorious over them; hawked at by villains whose foot is taken in their own snare. This is the principal charm in the ballads and people's poetry of England and Germany, and in the legends of Catholic countries. All men sympathize in the fate of Blue Beard, and "the guardian uncle fierce." The world has ready sympathy with the Homeric tale of Ulysses returning to his Penelope, long faithful, but not grown old with baffling the suitors for twenty years. It is his justice and humanity which give such a wide audience to the most popular novelist of our day. But when a writer tries to paint vice beautiful, make sin triumphant, men shrink away from the poison atmosphere he breathes. Authors like Filmer, Machiavel, and Hobbes arouse the indignation of mankind. The fact of personal error it is easy to excuse, but mankind does not forgive such as teach the theory of sin. We always honor men who forget their immediate personal interests, and use an author's sacred function to bear witness to the right.

The majority of men who think have an ideal justice better than the things about them, juster than the law. Some paint it behind them, on the crumbling walls of history, and tell us of "the good old times"; others paint it before them, on the morning mist of youthful life, and in their prayers and in their daily toil strive after this, — their New Jerusalem. We all of us have this ideal; our dream is fairer than our day; we will not let it go. If the wicked prosper, it is but for a moment, say we; the counsel of the forward shall be carried headlong. What an ideal democracy now floats before the eyes of earnest and religious men, — fairer than the "Republic" of Plato, or More's "Utopia," or the golden age of fabled memory! It is justice that we want to organize, — justice for all, for rich and poor. There the slave shall be free from his master. There shall be no want, no oppression, no fear of man, no fear of God, but only love. "There is a good time coming," — so we all believe when we are young and full of life and healthy hope.

God has made man with the instinctive love of justice in him, which gradually gets developed in

the world. But in Himself justice is infinite. This justice of God must appear in the world, and in the history of men; and, after all "the wrongs that patient merit of the unworthy takes," still you see that the ploughshare of justice is drawn through and through the field of the world, uprooting the savage plants. The proverbs of the nations tell us this: "The mills of the gods grind slow, but they grind to powder"; "ill got ill spent"; "The triumphing of the wicked is but for a moment"; "What the Devil gives, he also takes"; "Honesty is the best policy"; "No butter will stick to a bad man's bread." Sometimes these sayings come from the instinct of justice in man, and have a little ethical exaggeration about them, but yet more often they represent the world's experience of facts more than its consciousness of ideas.

Look at the facts of the world. **You see a continual and progressive triumph of the right. I do not pretend to understand the moral universe, the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways. I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. But from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice.** Things refuse to be mismanaged long. Jefferson trembled when he thought of slavery and remembered that God is just. Ere long all America will tremble. The Stuarts in England were tyrannical and strong: respectable and peaceful men kept still a while, and bore the tyranny, but men who loved God and his justice more than house and land fled to the wilderness, and built up a troublesome commonwealth of Puritans. Such as stayed at home endeavored for a while to submit to the wrong; some of them made theories to justify it. But it could not be; the tyranny became unbearable even to barons and bishops; one tyrant loses his head, another his crown; no Stuart must tread again the English soil; legitimacy becomes a pretender.

England would rule America, not for our good, but hers alone. We forgot the love which bound the two people into one family; the obstinate injustice of the mother weakened the ties of language, literature, religion, — the Old England and the New read the same Bible, —

kindred blood and institutions inherited from the same fathers; we thought only of the injustice; and there was an ocean between us and the mother country. The fairest jewel fell from the British crown.

In France, kings, nobles, clergy, trod the people down. Men bore it with the slow, sad patience of humanity, bore it out of regard for the "divinity that doth hedge a king," for the nobility of the noble, and the reverence of the priest. But in a few years outraged humanity forgot its slow, sad patience, and tore away this triple torment, — as Paul, escaped from wreck, shook off the viper from his hand, — and trod the venomous beast to dust. Napoleon came, king of the people. Justice was his word, his action for a while. The nation gathered about him, gave him their treasure and their trust. He was strong through the people's faith; his foes fell before him, ancient thrones tottered and reeled, and came heavy to the ground. The name of justice, of the rights of man, shook down their thrones, and organized victory at every step. But he grows giddy with his height; selfishness takes the place of justice in his counsels; a bastard giant sits on the throne whence the people had hurled off "legitimate" oppression; he fights no more the battles of mankind; justice is exiled from his upstart court; The people fall away; victory perches no more on his banner. The snows of Russia cut off his army, but it was his own injustice that brought Napoleon to the ground. Self-shorn of this great strength, the ablest monarch since Charlemagne sits down on a little island in the tropic sea, and dies upon that lonely rock, his life a warning, to bid mankind be just and not despise the Lord. No mightiness of genius could save him, cut off from the moral force of the human race. Can any tyrant prosper where such a master fell?

Look at the condition of Christendom at this day; what tyrant sits secure? Revolution is the Lynch-law of nations, and creates an anarchy, and then organizes its provisional government of momentary despotism. It is a bloody process, but justice does not disdain a rugged road; our King comes not always on an ass's colt. All Europe is, just now, in a great ferment; terrible

questions are getting ready for a swift tribunal. Injustice cannot stand. No armies, no "Holy Alliance," can hold it up. Human nature is against it, and so is the nature of God! "Justice has feet of wool," no man hears her step, "but her hands are of iron," and where she lays them down, only God can uplift and unclasp. It is vain to trust in wrong: As much of evil, so much of loss, is the formula of human history.

I know men complain that sentence against an evil work is not presently executed. They see but half; it is executed, and with speed; every departure from justice is attended with loss to the unjust man, but the loss is not reported to the public. Sometimes a man is honored as a brave, good man, but trial rings him and he gives an empty, hollow sound. All the ancient and honorable may bid the people trust him, — they turn off their affections from him.

So have I seen an able man, witty and cunning, graceful, plausible, elegant, and rich; men honored him for a time, tickled by his beauty to eye and ear. But gradually the mean soul of the man appeared in his conduct, selfish, grasping, inhuman, and fraudulently unjust. The public heart forgot him, and when he came to die, the town which once had honored him so much gave him earth to rest his coffin on. He got the official praises which he paid for, that was all. Silence is a figure of speech, unanswerable, short, cold, but terribly severe. How differently do men honor such as stood up for truth and right, and never shrank! What monuments the world builds to its patriots! Four great statesmen, organizers of the right, embalmed in stone, look down upon the lawgivers of France as they pass to their hall of legislation, silent orators to tell how nations love the just. What a monument Washington has built in the heart of America and all the world! not by great genius, — he had none of that, — but by his effort to be just. The martyrs of Christendom, of Judaism, and of every form of heathen faith, — how men worship those firm souls who shook off their body sooner than be false to conscience.

Yet eminent justice is often misunderstood. Littleness has its compensation. A small man is seldom pinched for want of room. Greatness is

its own torment. There was once a man on this earth whom the world could not understand. He was too high for them, too wide, was every way too great. He came, the greatest moral genius of our history, to bless mankind. Men mocked him, gave him a gallows between two thieves. "Saviour, save thyself," said they, as they shot out the lip at him. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" was the manly answer to the brutal taunt. Now see how the world avenges its conscience on itself for this injustice: for sixteen hundred years men worship him as God throughout the Western World. His name goes like the morning sun around the earth, like that to waken beauty into life. This heart of ours is loyal; only let us see the man and know that he is King of righteousness, and we will do him homage all our days.

But we do not see that justice is always done on earth; many a knave is rich, sleek, and honored, while the just man is poor, hated, and in torment. The Silesian merchant fattens on the weavers' tears, and eats their children's bones. Three million slaves earn the enjoyment of Americans, who curse them in the name of Christ; in the North, capital is a tyrant over labor. How sad is the condition of the peasantry of Christendom! The cry of a world of suffering, from Abel to the slaves of America, comes up to our ear, and the instinct of justice paints a world beyond the grave, where exact justice shall be done to all and each, to Abel and to Cain. The moral instinct, not satisfied on earth, reaches out to the future world, and in an ideal heaven would realize ideal justice. But even there the tyranny of able-minded men has interfered, painting immortality in such guise that it would be a curse to mankind. Yet the instinct of justice prevails above it all, and few men fear to meet the eternal Mother of us all in heaven.

We need a great and conscious development of the moral element in man, and a corresponding expansion of justice in human affairs; an intentional application thereof to individual, domestic, social, ecclesiastical, and political life. In the old military civilization that was not possible; in the present industrial civilization it is not thought desirable by the mercantile chiefs of

church and state. Hitherto, the actual function of government, so far as it has been controlled by the will of the rulers, has commonly been this: To foster the strong at the expense of the weak, to protect the capitalist and tax the laborer. The powerful have sought a monopoly of development and enjoyment, loving to eat their morsel alone. Accordingly, little respect is paid to absolute justice by the controlling statesmen of the Christian world. Not conscience and the right is appealed to, but prudence and the expedient for to-day. Justice is forgotten in looking at interest, and political morality neglected for political economy; instead of national organization of the ideal right, we have only national housekeeping. Hence the great evils of civilization at this day, and the questions of humanity, so long adjourned and put off, that it seems they can only be settled with bloodshed. Nothing rests secure save in the law of God. The thrones of Christian Europe tremble; a little touch and they fall. Capitalists are alarmed, lest gold ill got should find an equilibrium. Behind the question of royalty, nobility, slavery, — relics of the old feudalism, — there are other questions yet more radical, soon to be asked and answered.

There has been a foolish neglect of moral culture throughout all Christendom. The leading classes have not valued it; with them the mind was thought better than the moral sense, and conscience a dowdy. It is so in all the higher education of New England, as of Europe. These men seek the uses of truth, not truth itself; they scorn duty and its higher law; to be ignorant and weak-minded is thought worse than to be voluntarily unjust and wicked; idiocy of conscience is often thought an excellence, is never out of fashion. Morality is thought no part of piety in the Church, it "saves" no man; belief does that with the Protestants, sacraments with the Catholics; it is no part of politics in the state, — not needed to save the nation or the soul.

Of late years there has been a great expansion of intellectual development in Europe and America. Has the moral development kept pace with it? Is the desire to apply justice to its universal function as common and intense with the more intellectual classes, as the desire to apply special truths to their function? By no means.

We have organized our schemes of intellectual culture: it is the function of schools, colleges, learned societies, and all the special institutions for agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, to develop the intellect and apply it to various concrete interests. No analogous pains have been taken with the culture of conscience. France has the only academy for moral science in the Christian world! We have statistical societies for interest, no moral societies for justice. We rely only on the moral instinct; its development is accidental, not a considerable part of our plan; or else is involuntary, no part of the will of the most intellectual class. There is no college for the conscience.

Do the churches accomplish this educational purpose for the moral sense? The popular clergy think miracles better than morality; and have even less justice than truth. They justify the popular sins in the name of God; are the allies of despotism in all its forms, military or industrial. Oppression by the sword and oppression by capital successively find favor with them. In America there are two common ecclesiastical defences of African slavery: The negroes are the descendants of Ham, who laughed at his father Noah, — overtaken with drink, — and so it is right that Ham's children, four thousand years later, should be slaves to the rest of the world; Slavery teaches the black men “our blessed religion.” Such is ecclesiastical justice; and hence judge the value of the churches to educate the conscience of mankind. It is strange how little the clergy of Christendom, for fifteen hundred years, have done for the morality of the world; much for decorum, little for justice; a deal for ecclesiastical economy, but what for ecclesiastical righteousness? They put worship with the knee before the natural piety of the conscience. “Trusting in good works” is an offence to the Christian Church, as well Protestant as Catholic.

In Europe the consequences of this defect of moral culture have become alarming, even to such as fear only for money. That intellectual culture, which was once the cherished monopoly of the rich, has got diffused amongst wide ranks of men, who once sat in the shadow of intellectual darkness. There is no develop-

ment of conscience to correspond therewith. The Protestant clergy have not enlightened the people on the science of religion. The Catholics had little light to spare, and that was spent in exhibiting “the holy coat of Treves,” or images of the Virgin, and in illuminating cardinals and popes. No pains, or little, have been taken with the moral culture of the people; none scientifically and for the sake of justice and human kind. So the selfishness of the rich has spread with their intellectual culture. The few have long demanded a monopoly for themselves, and with their thunder blasted the mortal life of the prophets of justice sent by God to establish peace on earth and good-will amongst men. Now the many begin to demand a monopoly for themselves. Education, wealth, political power, was once a privilege, and they who enjoyed it made this their practical motto: “Down with the poor!” The feudal system fell before Dr. Faustus and his printing press. Military civilization slowly gives way to industrial. Common schools teach men to read. The steam-press cheapens literature; the complicated tools of modern industry make the shop a college for the understanding; the laborer is goaded by his hate of wrong, which is the passion of morality, as love of right is the affection thereof; — he sees small respect for justice in church or state. What shall save him from the selfishness about him, long dignified as philosophy, sanctified as religion, and revered as the law of God! Do you wonder at “atheism” in Germany; at communism in France? Such “atheism” is the theory of the Church made popular; the worst communism is only the principle of monopoly translated out of aristocracy into democracy; the song of the noble in the people's mouth. The hideous cry, “Down with the rich!” — is that an astonishment to the leaders of Europe, who have trod down the poor these thousand years? When ignorance, moral and intellectual stupidity, brought only servile obedience from the vassal, the noble took delight in the oppression which trod his brother down. Now numbers are power; that is the privilege of the people, and if the people, the privileged class of the future, have the selfishness of the aristocracy, what shall save the darling dollars of the rich? “They that

laughed at the grovelling worm, and trod on him, may cry and howl when they see the stoop of the flying and fiery-mouthed dragon!"

The leaders of modern civilization have scorned justice. The chiefs of war, of industry, and the Church are joined in a solidarity of contempt; in America, not harlots, so much as statesmen, debauch the land. Conscience has been left out of the list of faculties to be intentionally developed in the places of honor. Is it marvellous if men find their own selfishness fall on their own heads? No army of special constables will supply the place of morality in the people. If they do not reverence justice, what shall save the riches of the rich? Ah me I even the dollar flees to the Infinite God for protection, and bows before the higher law its worshippers despise.

"What moral guidance do the leading classes of men offer the people in either England, — the European or American? Let the laboring men of Great Britain answer; let Ireland, about to perish, groan out her reply; let the three million African slaves bear the report to Heaven. "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," once said some learned fool; monopolists act on the maxim. Ignorance of truth, ignorance of right, — will these be good directors, think you, of the class which has the privilege of numbers and their multitudinous agglomerated power? "Reverence the eternal right," says Conscience, "that is moral piety I" "Reap as you sow," quoth human History. Alas for a church without righteousness, and a state without right! All history shows their fate! What is false to justice cannot stand; what is true to that cannot perish. Nothing can save wrong.

A sentence is written against all that is unjust, written by God in the nature of man and the nature of the universe, because it is in the nature of the Infinite God. Fidelity to your faculties, trust in their convictions, that is justice to yourself; a life in obedience thereto, that is justice towards men. Tell me not of successful wrong. The gain of injustice is a loss, its pleasure suffering. Iniquity seems to prosper, but its success is its defeat and shame. The knave deceives himself. The miser, starving his brother's body, starves

also his own soul, and at death shall creep out of his great estate of injustice, poor and naked and miserable. Whoso escapes a duty avoids a gain. Outward judgment often fails, inward justice never. Let a man try to love the wrong, and do the wrong, it is eating stones, and not bread; the swift feet of justice are upon him, following with woollen tread, and her iron hands are round his neck. No man can escape from this, no more than from himself.

At first sight of the consequences of justice, redressing the evils of the world, its aspect seems stern and awful. Men picture the palace of this king as hell: there is torment and anguish; the waters are in trouble. The car of justice seems a car of Juggernaut crushing the necks of men; they cry for mercy. But look again: the sternness all is gone; nothing is awful there; the palace of justice is all heaven, as before a hell; the water is troubled only by an angel, and to heal the sick; the fancied car of Juggernaut is the triumphal chariot of mankind riding forth to welfare; with swift and noiseless feet justice follows the transgressor and clutches the iron hand about his neck. It was to save him that she came with swift and noiseless tread. This is the angel of God that flies from east to west, and where she stoops her broad wings it is to bring the counsel of God, and feed mankind with angels' bread. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, from her own beak to feed its young, broods over their callow frame, and bears them on her wings, teaching them first to fly, so comes justice unto men.

Sometimes men fear that justice will fail, wickedness appears so strong. On its side are the armies, the thrones of power, the riches, and the glory of the world. Poor men crouch down in despair. Shall justice fail and perish out from the world of men? shall any thing that is wrong continually endure? When attraction fails out of the world of matter, when God fails and there is no God, then shall justice fail, then shall wrong be able continually to endure; not till then.

The unity of the material world is beautiful, kept by attraction's universal force; temperance in the body has fair effects, and wisdom in the mind. The face of nature, how fair it is; the face of strong and healthy, beauteous manhood is a

dear thing to look upon. To intellectual eyes, the countenance of truth has a majestic charm. Wise men, with cultivated mind, understanding, imagination, reason well developed, discovering and disclosing truth and beauty to mankind, are a fair spectacle. But I love the moral side of Deity yet more; love God as justice. His justice, our morality working with that, shall one day create a unity amongst all men more fair than the face of nature, and add a wondrous beauty, wondrous happiness, to this great family of men. Will you fear lest a wrong should prove immortal? So far as any thing is false, or wrong, it is weak; so far as true and right, is omnipotently strong. Never fear that a just thought shall fail to be a thing; the power of God, the wisdom of God, and the justice of God are on its side, and it cannot fail, — no more than God himself can perish. Wrong is the accident of human development. Right is of the substance of humanity, justice the goal we are to reach.

But in human affairs the justice of God must work by human means. Men are the measures of God's principles; our morality the instrument of his justice, which stilleth alike the waves of the sea, the tumult of the people, and the oppressor's brutal rage. Justice is the idea of God, the ideal of man, the rule of conduct writ in the

nature of mankind. The ideal must become actual, God's thought a human thing, made real in a reign of righteousness, and a kingdom — no, a Commonwealth — of justice on the earth. You and I can help forward that work. God will not disdain to use our prayers, our self-denial, and the little atoms of justice that personally belong to us, to establish his mighty work, — the development of mankind.

You and I may work with Him, and, as on the floor of the Pacific Sea little insects lay the foundation of firm islands, slowly uprising from the tropic wave, so you and I in our daily life, in house, or field, or shop, obscurely faithful, may prepare the way for the republic of righteousness, the democracy of justice that is to come. Our own morality shall bless us here; not in our outward life alone, but in the inward and majestic life of conscience. All the justice we mature shall bless us here, yea, and hereafter; but at our death we leave it added to the common store of humankind. Even the crumbs that fall from our table may save a brother's life. You and I may help deepen the channel of human morality in which God's justice runs, and the wrecks of evil, which now check the stream, be borne off the sooner by the strong, all-conquering tide of right, the river of God that is full of blessing.