

perseverance of this ethical instinct, as I may call it, can easily be explained—partly by mere habit, partly by the pressure of public opinion, partly by the undoubted seemliness and beauty and attractiveness of the ethical ideal taken in itself. But as soon as men begin to think for themselves, they cannot help realising the absence of an ultimate basis for their ethics, at least when regarded as an obligation or duty. Hence, even when they continue to practise morality, they do so merely because it is in the atmosphere, and not because it is a thing incumbent upon them in principle; and thus the real meaning and value of morality, in the theistic or traditional sense of the word, is lost.¹⁶ They live as the green branch—soon to wither and die—lives for a space when cut off from the parent stem. Their philosophies can claim no credit for the real soul of good that exists in our personal, domestic, and social life. These are the triumphs of Christian teaching and practice, and of the Christian sentiment that is in the very atmosphere of our civilisation.

4. GROUNDS OF DUTY IN THE HOME: AS FURNISHED BY RELIGION.

It is sufficiently clear that, inside the shell of this-worldly 'modern' philosophies, we look in vain for adequate grounds of, for an effective inspiration to, for moral duty (with its implication of daily restraint and self-sacrifice) within the circle of the family. For such motives and inspirations we must (as already stated) turn to religion, under its two following aspects: (a) religion is a body of truths or beliefs respecting God and our relations to Him, and, flowing from these, a collection of duties, which have God for their primary object; and (b) religion is also a special virtue by which we acknowledge our absolute dependence on God, and signify our sense of such dependence by an external sign. This recognition of our dependence and its external manifestation are called worship. All down the course of human history religion has furnished the highest motives to ordered conduct in the family and the social circle; it has ever been the motive-force at the back of the nations and the people who have given the fullest and most beneficent shape to actual life. Greece and Rome and Judea have left their mark deep in history. All three had their respective notions of domestic and social life and duty—but (as we have in part seen) of duty based upon very diverse motives. In and through Christ, the Messiah, Judea 'has given us the loftiest and noblest idea of duty the world ever received—a view of duty that permeates the whole moral being—that makes the true liver and doer, that makes all men who rise to it pure, upright, transparently truthful to the inmost recesses of the heart.'¹

The bankruptcy of moral codes independent of, and antagonistic to, religion, is sufficiently admitted in words already quoted above from French atheistic philosophers of our day. The great variety and the oft-times contradictory nature of the reasons such codes offer for personal, domestic, and social duty and self-restraint also betray the difficulty which their authors find in establishing morality, without religion, on a firm foundation. A striking evidence of the futility of any attempt to build up a binding system of morals, without religion, is nut-shelled as follows by Garriguet in 'The Social Value of the Gospel' (pp. 211-2 n): 'The remark has been justly made that the three great minds which have pursued the methodical and objective study of human society the furthest; and have helped to found social science—Frederick Le Play, Auguste Comte, and Taine—agree in declaring the social necessity of religious teaching and of belief in a divinity. At first all three professed an opposite doctrine, and yet all three have been obliged to the necessity of social fact.' 'No sociologist,' says the same writer (p. 211), 'is so ill-informed as to be ignorant of "the effective share of quite tangible social products" which belief in God has furnished, and continues daily to bring forth.' 'To quote only one example,' says Professor Paul

Bureau: 'Who would venture to deny that, in our time, the idea of God is the true and only rampart for the triple principle of purity in the young, conjugal fidelity, and the fruitfulness of marriage? Who can say into what muddy depths we should plunge, were religious sentiment no longer present to maintain, on these three points, a firm doctrinal barrier? How would society fare if we were to eliminate the religious principle of action in the moral struggles which the growing disorganisation of conduct renders each day more heroic?' The 'three principles' set forth above are essential conditions for the moral and material well-being of the individual, the home, and the nation.

The standard of duty external to us (and independent of us) is the moral law—the law of nature² and the revealed law of God. The internal and personal standard of duty is conscience³—God's appointed guide of man's free actions, great and small. God has traced upon our understanding His natural moral law and the rudiments of our duty, in characters sufficiently clear to enable us, to an extent, to guide and regulate our conduct. The most perfect epitome of the natural law is the Decalogue or Ten Commandments. It is the expression, in substance, of what He had already impressed upon right reason, but set forth in a form that gives to the multitude a brief, clear, working law of duty. But history amply proves that the moral law, merely as revealed in reason, is insufficient to impress greatly or to lift up men for long to high standards of duty in the home and the nation. As someone has well remarked, our nature craves and needs the contact and force of personal authority—of the Divine Will, of which all law is, at least remotely, the expression. Hence, in God's gracious Providence, 'the light of revelation has always supplemented that of reason in teaching our race its duty.' For Christians, that duty is based upon two fundamental beliefs—belief in a Personal God, and belief in the obligation of obedience to His law, whether natural or revealed, and in all human laws built thereon. God's supplementing revelation of duty (as we know on grounds that bear the test of reason) culminated in Christ, the true light 'enlightening every man that cometh into this world.'

'He was, and is, the final Teacher of duty, its Alpha and Omega, in whom ethical truth, gradually unveiled in the Old Testament, finally culminated. And, as true God, He has made due provision for its preservation and application to the complex, ever-changing moral problems of the day—without losing any of its fulness, beauty, and splendour—in the one holy, world-wide body called the Catholic Church. She holds up, without fear or favour, the highest, holiest, purest standard of duty of any teaching body in the world. Even those who dislike her dogma are compelled to admire the loftiness, reasonableness, and speckless purity of her teaching on the vital subject of duty.'

No recognised school of morals even claims to uphold a higher or holier mode of living. By listening reverently and attentively to her teaching, we easily learn what our duties are in all the various relations of life. The heads of what we owe, by way of duty, to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, are briefly and clearly set forth in the Catechism put in the hands of all children. Indeed, in what are called the "essentials"—what every Catholic is bound to know, viz., the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the moral dispositions of heart needful for worthy reception of her chief Sacraments—even the lowest in the kingdom of

2. The law of nature (also called the natural law) is so called because it is demanded by the nature of things—chiefly by the nature of God and His relation to man; by the nature of man and his relation to God, to himself, and to his fellowmen. It is a real law. God, the Author of nature, is its Author also. It is (so to speak) written in man's reason, whose dictates (through conscience) declare its existence and its enactments, and tell us what it commands, forbids, approves, or allows. God's revealed law is also known as the divine positive law.

3. Conscience is a practical judgment which passes a verdict on an act, before we perform it, as to whether such act is right or wrong. Under the name, 'an act,' are included a thought (which is an internal act), speaking, and an omission, which, in moral matters, is equivalent to an act. Conscience itself, as a practical judgment, is, strictly speaking, itself an act (of the mind), and lasts only while it is being produced. But it is also, and not without reason, spoken of as a permanent thing, as its judgments are formed by a permanent faculty, and belong to a special department of the understanding.

16. 'Why Should I Be Moral: A Discussion on the Basis of Ethics,' p. 102. Ethics may be defined as 'the science of the moral rectitude of human acts in accordance with the first principles of natural reason.'

1. 'Duty,' by Rev. William Graham, p. 28.