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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE IV.

THE MINISTRY OF PAIN.

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II.

A PREVIOUS article indicated the great importance of the susceptibility to pain in connection with the development and nurture of the body, and the value of pain in the diagnosis and treatment of disease and injury. To guard against exaggeration it also pointed out that pain is not always so dreadful as it seems, as proved by the actual experiences of the sick and wounded, even death itself, in the great majority of cases, being accompanied by little or no physical pain.

2. *Pain and the Development of Mind.* In his mental attributes man is unique. The difference between him and the lower animals is not simply one of degree but of kind, corresponding to the fundamental difference between instinct and intelligence.¹ "What a piece of work is man! How infinite in faculties! in apprehension how like a god!" Yet the lower animals though they do not possess our intensity of consciousness, and from the absence of language can have no trains of feelings, have a consciousness which more or less foreshadows our own. In the study of actions associated with this consciousness, as also in the study of the human mind, it is found that pain has been a most important factor in mental development.

In the evolution of the nervous system much has been gained when all the impulses and activities of the organism are

¹ Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (1911).

brought under the control of one center or brain, which determines and directs the responses of the body, immediately and harmoniously, to environmental changes. Such reactions in the lowest forms of life are termed "fatal," not because they bring certain death, but because the response is inevitable and indiscriminating, being fixed by the structure of the nervous system. In the dark, a moth is drawn irresistibly to small white objects. If the object is a flower, the impulse is advantageous to the moth. It is otherwise if the object is the flame of a candle, yet the impulse to fly towards it is equally irresistible. The first time the moth flies near or through the flame it may be scorched only; but, as it has no faculty to enable it to profit by its painful experience, the impulsive reaction is repeated until the moth is destroyed. Therefore, the next step in the ascent of the scale of life must be the modification of the nervous system so as to render possible the education of the individual by past experience. Consequently, a certain part of the developing brain comes to act as an organ of memory. In this new nerve center, traversed by all the impulses coming from the lower centers, the response to the attractive impulse of the flame, after the first painful experience, is succeeded immediately by a strong inhibitory impulse which prevents any repetition of the act. Painful impressions must be always predominant, because the very existence of the animal may depend on the reaction caused by them taking the precedence of and inhibiting others. Such reactions quickly become reflex or instinctive. This educable part of the nervous system in which the direction of impulses depends on past experience and habit, is represented in man by the cerebral hemispheres. The possibility of all education rests on the power which the nervous system possesses of organizing conscious actions into more or less unconscious or reflex op-

erations. A burnt child dreads the fire, and instinctively shrinks from its contact. It follows that "pain is the great educator of the individual, and is responsible for the laying down of the nervous paths which will determine his whole future conduct, and the control of his lower by his higher centers."¹

But the registration of experience, primarily of a painful kind, would not have availed man so powerfully in his ceaseless struggle for existence, if he had not been able to communicate that experience to those who combined with him for mutual protection and service. The great advantage of the gregarious state lies not so much in the increased physical strength of the many over the one, as in the mental strength of the combination. And to evoke this mental strength and coöperation in the presence of danger, there must be means of communication between the different members of the group. Hence the signs, gestures, and intonations exhibited by the higher animals, and the acquisition of speech by primitive man. The necessity of being constantly on the alert to avoid pain and death has, therefore, been a powerful stimulus to the acquisition of a faculty which has been described as the main factor in the mental evolution of man. For as soon as individual experience can be symbolized in speech and writing, it becomes a part of the common heritage; and so can be utilized for the education of others, and for the general welfare of the whole community.

The growing ability to profit by painful experience gave primitive man the intelligence and cunning which was of more importance to him in the struggle for existence than sheer physical strength. He had to contend with the forces of

¹ Starling, address to Physiological Section, British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1909.

nature, with wild beasts, with the foes of his own species. He was constantly in labor and travail; in cold, hunger, and nakedness; in peril of wounds, disease, and violent death. These various emergencies developed new capabilities. As the struggle became keener and more general, intelligence became, more than ever before, the condition of life or death; and man's wits developed correspondingly. "Fitness, in the stormy days of the world's animal youth, meant fighting fitness." One of the main factors in the higher brain development of man was the conversion of the upper limbs into true hands, for the purpose of attack and defense. From the first moment that the advantage was recognized of using a club or a stone in attacking his prey or defending himself from his enemies, the direct incentives to a higher brain development came into existence, for the hands began to educate the brain. In the course of time, still urged onward by the necessities of war and the chase, other weapons and tools were invented, and the foundations of the various arts were laid. "If we could rid ourselves of all pride, if, to define our species, we kept strictly to what the historic and prehistoric periods show us to be the constant characteristic of man and intelligence, we should say, perhaps, not *Homo sapiens* but *Homo faber*."¹

When men became welded into tribes and nations, war, with all its pain and sorrow, continued to shape human thought and history.

"The strongest nation has always been conquering the weaker; sometimes even subduing it, but always prevailing over it. Every intellectual gain, so to speak, that a nation possessed was in the earliest times made use of—was invested and taken out in war; all else perished. Each nation tried constantly to be the stronger, and so made or copied the best weapons; by conscious or unconscious imitation each nation formed a type of character suitable

¹ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*.

to war and conquest. Conquest improved mankind by the intermixture of strengths; the armed truce, which was then called peace, improved them by the competition of training and the consequent creation of new power."¹

The pains of injury and disease also contributed to man's mental growth; because, in the search for relief and health, he was eventually driven to ascertain the physical cause of the pain, and then to connect it with the effect. Such investigations increased the precision of the perception of causation in nature generally, and revealed the close relation of man to nature, so that he came to see that all things were subject to the same physical laws. In this search he has won great triumphs over disease and pain, the discovery of anæsthetics, and of the connection of micro-organisms with disease, being only two of the successes in the struggle for man's physical redemption of man.

In addition to being smitten by war and scourged by disease, man has had to contend with fire, earthquake, storm, flood, and other calamities of nature. The efforts to protect himself against them has added largely to the sum of human knowledge and accelerated human progress. Where nature is so kind that people can live with little effort and in perfect security, they may have the happy carelessness of children, but in intellect also they are as children. Nothing great has ever come from the lands of the lotus-eaters. But Nature, with beneficent sternness, allows few of her children to remain in this state. The naked nomads of sunny Paleolithic times appear to have inhabited the wooded banks of rivers, living on fruits and the small fauna, till the advent of the piercing cold of the Glacial period forced them to take shelter in caves, and to protect their bodies from the cold by the skins of ani-

¹ Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*.

mals. It is difficult to realize how much the severe climate which then supervened contributed to the development of their physical and mental attributes. It roused their dormant energies to the pitch of being able to adapt their mode of life to the changing conditions of their environment. When the Paleolithic people finally emerged from their contest with the forces of nature, they were physically and mentally better than ever equipped for the exigencies of life. A greater power of physical endurance, improved reasoning faculties, an assortment of tools adapted for all kinds of mechanical work, and some experience of the advantage of housing and clothing, may be mentioned among the trophies which they carried away from that long and uphill struggle.¹

Lastly, intellectual progress is itself accompanied by its own peculiar pains. New ideas rouse men from comfortable mental torpor; what is unwelcome must be considered, and cherished notions, perhaps, must be abandoned. Within and without there is incessant and sharp conflict between the old and the new. Out of the turmoil and struggle, new truths emerge, old truths are seen in clearer light, error and ignorance are dispelled. As a very large proportion of the disorders and tragedies of life is due to the want of clear thought and intelligent foresight, it will not be until all men have learned wisdom,—earthly and heavenly wisdom,—that we can expect such disorders and tragedies to occur no more.

Considering the subject as a whole it must be admitted that physical and mental distress has been an indispensable aid to the development of the human mind and the progress of all knowledge.

¹ Art. "Anthropology," *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (1910).

“Behold the life of ease, it drifts,
The sharpened life commands its course;
She winnows, winnows roughly, sifts,
To dip her chosen in its source.
Contention is the vital force,
Whence pluck they brain, — her prize of gifts.”

3. *Pain and Moral Development.* The problem of practical ethics is the formation of character in the presence of all the evil in the world; and without pain and sorrow coming into the individual life, it is hard to see how moral character can be formed. For his successful progress as far as the savage state, man has been largely indebted, in the words of Huxley, to those qualities which he shared with the ape and tiger: his exceptional physical organization, his cunning, his sociality, his curiosity, his imitativeness, his ruthless and ferocious destructiveness when his anger was roused by opposition. Standing by himself, he had to be self-assertive, to obtain a foothold in the world; for the most alert and strongest seized and held with unscrupulous energy all they could grasp, leaving the weak to perish. Pain and injury, besides the actual suffering, meant more or less disability for the pitiless struggle, and so had to be avoided. Intellectually, primitive man had the mind of a child; morally, he identified right with pleasure, and wrong with pain and deprivation.

He was non-moral rather than immoral, and the path to moral freedom and greatness stretched before him through the realm of toil and pain. Further, the more he advanced, the richer his intellectual and moral nature, the more vulnerable he became to pain. In thinking beings it is anticipated with fear, brooded over when present, and often resented. If the physical senses alone were affected by pain, it would possess only momentary power. It is in the broader sense of the word that pain is now to be understood.

In the earlier and purely animal stages of existence, it was right for each individual to pursue pleasure and avoid pain, for this selfishness did not endanger the welfare of the species, but rather favored it. In its origin, avoidance of pain was the surest safeguard for the perpetuation of life, and, with due qualifications, this is still the case. But as soon as sociality became established, and Nature's supreme end became the maintenance of the family or clan organization, rather than the life of the solitary individual, the standard of conduct became different. Limits were interposed, at which pleasure must be resigned and pain endured, even certain death encountered, for the sake of the organization to which the individual belonged.¹ Devotion to his family and the desire to perpetuate his kind, meant that he had to fight desperately and unceasingly. The children who had no fathers to fight for them perished, and so that particular family or line became extinct. So with larger associations. The clan or the nation composed of men able and willing to combine and fight on its behalf conquered those who lacked this cohesion and strength, either because they were weak, or were too wild and reckless to be brought under discipline. "Order is Heaven's first law," and those who first learned to govern their wayward impulses and obey a chief gained a great advantage over their rivals, as the slightest bond was then sufficient to turn the scale.

In spite of its dark and cruel side, military warfare seems to be necessary, certainly in the rough and early stages of civilization, to implant in man the habits of trained obedience, the dignity of duty, valor, veracity, chivalry, self-sacrifice, and other masculine virtues, and to weed out weak and corrupt communities. To the Romans, the most powerful military nation of ancient times, the word "virtue" meant courageous

¹ Fiske, *Through Nature to God.*

manhood; and the Roman soldiers, at their best, reached a high moral standard. In them, courage

“was not merely animal daring. It was duty, obedience to will, self-surrender to the public good. The Roman legions subdued the world; but it was not their discipline alone, nor their strength, nor their brute daring. It was rather, far, their moral force—a nation whose legendary and historic heroes could thrust their hand into the flame and see it consumed without a nerve shrinking; or come from captivity on parole, advise their countrymen against peace, and then go back to torture and certain death; who could devote themselves by solemn self-sacrifice (like the Decii), bid sublime defiance to pain, and count dishonor the only evil. The world must bow before such men; for unconsciously, here was a form of the spirit of the Cross,—self-surrender, unconquerable fidelity to duty, sacrifice for others.”¹

From their life, St. Paul drew many metaphors to illustrate the spiritual conflict which all have to wage against the evil in their own hearts and in the world outside, and in the early days of the church, Christians were fond of calling themselves soldiers of God. The moral code, or *Bushido*, of the brave Japanese, is essentially military, its five principal virtues being loyalty, propriety, courage, fidelity, and simplicity. Perhaps it is in Christian lands that we have the finest exhibition of the soldierly spirit. “Who does not admire,” says a recent writer, “the quite unmistakable note that you get in a very few people who, in one way or other, have actually accepted death, and are only, so to speak, alive in the meantime. It belongs to the flawless perfection of the military spirit, with its entire detachment from life itself, from self-will, from fear, from ease, and from all pretences.”

Not only in the military profession, in every occupation and rank, thousands have been conspicuous for moral bravery and self-sacrifice, men who reach the high mark of their calling by not counting their lives dear when the welfare of others is at

¹Robertson's Sermons.

stake. In countless cases, the risk of loss, pain, and death has been incurred without the hopes which strengthen and cheer the martyrs of the great religions. Pain has already wrought a noble work when men apply to themselves and to each other the words of the old Greek poet:—

“O mine own friend! If haply by escape
From this one field, thence forward we might live
Immortal and unaging, nor myself
Would risk me thus, nor bid thee with me seek
The glory that such onset brings a man,
But—since ten thousand deadly dooms beset
Our lives, and vain the hope to shun them all,
Let us still onward.”¹

Conflict, incessant and severe, nourishes the manly virtues, but these form only a part, and not the very highest, of man's moral equipment. Among the warlike there is often callousness to pain and suffering, and a heartless disregard of the rights of the poor and weak, especially of women and children. The warrior has little esteem for what are known as the feminine virtues, of patience under injury, forgiveness of enemies, charity of judgment, meekness, and personal humility. It fell to woman to develop the softer side of human nature through the pains and sorrows of motherhood, in accord with the primeval judgment: “In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children” (Gen. iii. 16).

The essential fact in reproduction is the separation of part of the parent organism to start a fresh life, and from first to last the process has been linked with death. In growing unicellular organisms the increase in volume is greater than the increase of surface, and as it is the surface through which the functions of nutrition, respiration, and secretion are carried on, the organism is threatened with physiological difficulties.

¹ *Iliad* xli. 322–328.

To escape disaster the cell divides, halves its mass, gains new surface, restores the balance, and so staves off natural death. Unless killed by violence, these lowly forms of life are immortal. But with more complex organizations, which rise higher and higher in the scale of life, death cannot thus be held at bay: it becomes the Nemesis of reproduction. From the biological point of view, it is not death that makes reproduction necessary to save the species from extinction, but animals die because they have to reproduce. Many organisms die at once on reproducing their kind. The birth of the human child is attended by pain and danger to the mother. Hence the epigrams already quoted, "Death is the price paid for a body," and "Immortality was pawned for Love."

Evolutionists ascribe the full development of the maternal virtues to the long and helpless infancy of the human being. Not for days, or weeks, but for months, as the cry of her infant's helplessness went forth, the mother had to stand between the flickering flame and death. So she became patient. When the child was in trouble, she observed the signs of pain; its cry awakened associations, and in some dull sense she felt with it. So she became sympathetic. From feeling with her child, sooner or later she was led to do something to help it, then to do more things to help it, and finally to be always helping it. Hence carefulness and tenderness. On occasion, sympathy was called out in unusual ways. Crises occurred — dangers, sicknesses, famines. When she rose to the occasion, forgot and denied herself to succor her child, self-sacrifice was born.¹ So woman finds salvation in motherhood (1 Tim. ii. 15). The father, obliged to defend and provide for his wife and children, and to be patient with their weakness and infirmities, also acquired the gentler virtues. These

¹ Drummond, *Ascent of Life*; Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*.

are rated very high in the Christian religion. For the strength of Christianity, as St. Paul declares, is above all things a feminine strength. "Its masculine features are recognized as mutable and perishable; prophecies were to fail, tongues were to cease, knowledge was to vanish away, but the strength that seeketh not her own, that suffereth long and is kind, that is not easily provoked, that vaunteth not herself, that beareth, believeth, hopeth, and endureth all things, this was to be the permanent essence, the abiding power of the new evangel."¹ Without the circumstances of infancy, human beings might have become formidable among animals, through sheer force of sharp-wittedness, but they never would have comprehended the meaning of such phrases as self-sacrifice and devotion. The phenomena of social life would have been omitted from the world, and with them the phenomena of ethics and religion; for love of mates is enhanced by love of offspring, and love for offspring eventually broadens out into love for mankind, and for God. True enough, "it is only after ages of social discipline, fraught with cruel affliction and grinding misery, that the moral law becomes dominant, and religious aspiration intense and abiding in the soul," but much can be said to justify the ways of God with men when the lofty moral heights are considered to which pain and sorrow have already lifted mankind.

"I can believe, this dread machinery
Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else,
Devised — all pain, at most expenditure
Of pain by Who devised pain — to evolve,
By new machinery in counterpart,
The moral qualities of Man — how else? .
To make him love in turn and be beloved,
Creative, and self-sacrificing too,
And thus eventually Godlike."

¹ Matheson, *Spiritual Development of St. Paul.*

4. *Pain and the Development of the Spiritual Nature.* It must be confessed that in the study of the origin and development of religions there is very much to perplex and sadden, — the age-long and painful gropings of primitive races after God if haply they might find him; their misconception of his nature and character; the appalling cruelties often connected with religious rites and ceremonies; the persecutions and wars perpetrated even in the name of the highest religions; the distance mankind still is from the universal reign of righteousness, love, and peace. This is partly explained by the very great disparity between man as he is originally, and man as God means him to be.

All men are, by nature, "children of wrath," of fierce impulses, and passions hard to restrain; for original sin, according to the evolutionist, is the brute inheritance which every man carries with him.¹ Yet as sin is not imputed where there is no moral law, his first estate is unmoral rather than sinful. For in the earliest stages of human history, man was compelled to be self-assertive, with little or no regard for the rights and welfare of others. If he were not, he went under in the struggle. Having obtained a physical foothold in the world, his further development proceeded in the line of moral growth. With the dawn of moral consciousness, the aggressive self-seeking natural to lower creatures becomes in man actual badness and wickedness. This is his fall. At his best he now learns to care for others beside himself, and to obey laws necessary for the well-being of the community in which he lives.

¹"The development of the highly complicated doctrine of Original Sin was less the outcome of strict exegesis than due to the exercise of speculation: speculation working indeed on the lines laid down in the Scripture, but applied to such material as current science and philosophy were able to afford" (Tennant, *The Fall and Original Sin*, p. 345).

Then comes the evolution of the spiritual, when the I, the My, the Me, of the mystics, is more and more lost in the willing service and sacrifice of the self, in love of God and man. For personality can reach individual self-satisfaction only through complete individual selflessness. Self-sacrifice is self-realization. On this upward path, man does not travel alone and unaided. The same infinite and eternal Energy from which all things proceed, calls and raises him from his low estate, inspires him with all good thoughts and holy desires, trains him by contact with the world, and by all the experiences of life. As Wallace says, "The love of truth, the delight in beauty, the passion for justice, the thrill of exultation with which we hear of any act of courageous self-sacrifice, are the workings within us of a higher nature, which has not been developed by means of the struggle for existence."

It is God's will that man, in moral character, shall become like unto himself. God is holy, loving, without one selfish thought for himself, whose glory is the goodness and happiness of his creatures. Before man can acquire such a loving, unselfish character, in the degree possible to him, he must pass through the refining fires which transform the natural into the spiritual, and these fires are sorrow and pain. No one can escape this severe discipline without great loss. Even the select souls who are drawn to God almost solely by consideration of his goodness and loving-kindness, must share in their Master's sufferings if they are to be like him. The vast majority of men, however, are not so drawn, but are driven to God by affliction. In the universality of suffering, which must be redeeming even more than it is punitive, lies a great hope for the race, for it points to that divine, far-off consummation towards which the whole creation is moving. God himself is our Redeemer. "All the evils of contrariety and

disorder in fallen nature are only so many materials in the hands of infinite love and wisdom, all made to work in their different ways, as far as possible, to one and the same end, viz., to turn temporal evil into eternal good." The hope of final deliverance from evil is also for the individual, for if the words spoken to Jeremiah the prophet are in a measure true of all, "Before I formed thee I knew thee, and before thou camest forth from the womb, I sanctified thee," then every man is a thought or word of God, and we have the divine promise that no word of God shall return unto him void, but shall accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. At first, there must be a fall or descent of this heavenly thought, word, ideal, or seed into man's earthly nature; there it must be humiliated, and seem to die. At the last, the seed sown in a mortal body will rise immortal; sown disfigured, it will rise beautiful; sown weak, it will rise strong; sown a human body, it will rise a spiritual body. If man is indeed moving towards such a glorious end, the long, dark, and painful stages of the journey may be surveyed with greater equanimity.

First, as to the lowly beginnings of the spiritual life. As defined by Sabatier, religion is "a commerce, a conscious and willed relation into which the soul in distress enters with the mysterious power on which it feels that it and its destiny depend." Religion cannot be said to have its origin solely in either thought, will, or feeling, for any human need or longing may be its starting point, and in its highest form it is a movement of the whole nature towards God and goodness. Still, certain aspects may be considered separately. A prophet of old, weary of himself, weary of trying to put the world right, retired to the wilderness, and there passed through a strange spiritual experience.

A strong and mighty wind passed by, but the Lord was not

in the wind; after the wind an earthquake occurred, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still, small voice. When Elijah heard the voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and listened to the voice of the Lord. The incident may be taken as a parable, the wind being the symbol of all that is mysterious in nature which appeals so strongly to the emotions; the earthquake suggests inquiry into the forces of nature, and so appeals to the understanding; the fire may be taken as an emblem of the judgments and fiery experiences of life which subdue and refine the will, and bring it into harmony with the will of God. These are not the direct revelations of the Divine, but they lead to where the Divine voice can be heard. For God "makes the winds his angels, and the fiery flames his servants."

(1) *A strong and mighty wind passed by, but the Lord was not in the wind.* Blowing where it listeth, so that men hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, the wind has always been a symbol of the mysterious natural forces by which we are surrounded, the "powers of the air" as they are called in the New Testament; and it is also a symbol of the human spirit with its mysterious origin and destiny, the same word in nearly all languages being used for breath, wind, life, mind, spirit. One of the rudimentary forms of religion is the belief in the existence of ghosts or spirits, and their animation of the visible things of the world. It is a remarkable fact that no people has yet been found who did not or do not believe in the possible existence of the soul apart from the body, the survival of the soul after the death of the body, and in the power of the spirits of the dead to intervene in the affairs of the living. Together with spirits which were the personification of the objects and forces

of nature, these ghosts were held to be the authors of human misfortunes. To appease their wrath, to forestall punishment, to avert calamity generally, resort was had to prayer, sacrifice, and other religious rites and ceremonies. Fear was the impelling emotion. "The religious sentiment is composed first of all of the emotion of fear in its different degrees, from profound terror to vague unconscious uneasiness, due to faith in an unknown, mysterious, impalpable power."¹ Therefore it was pain or the fear of pain which first led men to pray. For a very long while it remained unethical, being offered for long life, health, wealth, victory over enemies, and other material advantages. A familiar instance, in a period comparatively near to us, is the prayer of Jacob: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall Jehovah be my God." And God, who is ever more ready to hear than we are to pray, gives more than is asked. It is the testimony of anthropologists, that, looking on prayer in its effect on man himself through the course of history, it must be recognized as a means of strengthening and purifying emotion, of sustaining courage, and exciting hope. "Even in the life of the rudest savages, religious belief is associated with intense emotion, with awful reverence, with agonising terror, with rapt ecstasy when sense and thought utterly transcend the common level of daily life."²

As men become more spiritual, prayer passes into supplication for the pardon of sin, and at last, in Jesus Christ, it becomes pure communion with the divine. This is God's ideal for man, when prayer is no longer wholly petition for benefits,

¹ Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*.

² Tylor, *Primitive Culture*.

but the fellowship of friend with friend. Not many climb to such spiritual heights of disinterested love. As in dim remote ages, so now, it is pain, fear, and sorrow which usually lead us to the mercy-seat to obtain the grace and strength we sorely need.

“Where is the valley of Man’s Ideal
His trysting-place with the Divine?
It lieth afar between mountains,
And God and his angels are there,
And one is the dark mount of Sorrow,
And one the bright mountain of Prayer.”

Prayer was early accompanied by sacrifice. This was regarded as a gift of supposed value to the heavenly recipient; or the sacrifice was offered as an act of homage; or, as the sense of personal unworthiness deepened, and punishment was felt to be deserved, the offering became propitiatory or even substitutionary, a sacrifice of something greatly valued by the worshiper, or of that which represented this value. It is a melancholy chapter in the history of religious development which deals with the privation and tortures of human beings, either voluntarily or involuntarily borne, to placate angry deities, — the severance of human relationships, the solitude, loneliness, fastings, watchings, the flagellations, wounds and mutilations, the sacrifice of human lives, “yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed, and the land was polluted with blood” (Ps. cvi. 37-38). Less than twenty-five years ago, when the king of Uganda died, two thousand human beings were sacrificed at his grave. Yet by means of it all the lesson was engraved indelibly on the hearts of barbaric and semi-barbaric men, that sin is a deep offense to heaven and an injury to mankind, and cannot be removed without pain and suffering. The first

great step in the religious life is taken, when the worshiper cries to the object of his adoration: "Take my goods, my health, let me suffer hunger and pain, take even the lives of those dearest to me, and cease to be angry with my sin." Then man is ready for the next stage, when he discerns that the divine favor can be won only by obedience to the moral law. "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" And the prophet of God replies: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 6-8). The gift without the giver is bare, and only by the most painful discipline could men learn that gifts and sacrifices cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshiper perfect.

What of those who suffered among the heathen, of those who voluntarily became pathetic object-lessons to their fellow-men, keeping vivid in them the sense of the heinousness of sin, the desperate need of purification, and the necessity and glory of vicarious suffering? If in Christ's words "I thirst" we can believe that "all fiery pangs on battle-fields, on fever beds, where sick men toss, were in that human cry he yields to anguish on the cross," then under the shadow of the cross may be placed all the pain and suffering of imperfect religions.

"Up from undated time they come,
The martyr souls of heathendom,
And to His cross and passion bring
Their fellowship of suffering."

Austerities still have their place in human life. For the sake of others' welfare, the gratification of resentment and other primitive instincts must be denied. Rather than lead the weak and innocent astray, Christ said it was better that a man should lose his right hand or his right eye, for it was more profitable for him, that one of his members perish and not his whole body be cast into hell. And with regard to lesser things, St. Paul declares it is good not to eat flesh or drink wine, nor to do anything whereby a weak brother stumbleth; for the strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, and must often prove their sincerity by cutting themselves off from the ties and pleasures of life.

In the mission field, asceticism raises very difficult and practical questions. As the critics of Christian missions often truly urge, the religious influence of the missionaries might be greatly increased with certain classes, if they lived as the poorest of the natives among whom they labor. If convinced of its wisdom, many missionaries would undoubtedly take this course. Unfortunately, whenever it has been taken, results are doubtful. Usually the health is injured and the missionary either dies, or is compelled to retire from the field. Thus work is closed prematurely, knowledge of the language and ripe experience seems to be wasted, and the church has sustained heavy loss. Further, the spiritual results, as far as human eyes can see, appear to be small. In these days, the strongholds of heathenism cannot be captured by sudden assault in one direction only. Long, patient labor is required, much of it of an undermining character, as the secular side of educational work, and for this there must be physical fitness. Yet the ascetic ideal is regarded wistfully by many a missionary now living a plodding and not uncomfortable existence.

There must also be stern self-discipline in one form or an-

other if one's own spiritual life is to be developed. The self-assertion of the earthly nature against the will of perfect love and goodness, which can only bring forth sin and death, must be crucified. "I beat my body under," said the apostle, "lest having preached [self-control] to others, I myself should be a castaway." The gratification of instincts evolved when the struggle for physical existence was keenest, of course gives a feeling of security or pleasure, or the instincts would never have been evolved; and it cannot be easy or pleasurable to suppress these instincts in obedience to moral and spiritual law. But the choice is ever presenting itself between the primal nature, with its self-assertion and the giving of pain, and the new spiritual nature, with its loving self-abandonment and the willing endurance of pain. It is one aspect of Christ's atoning work that in all the circumstances of a sin-stained world he took our human nature and hallowed it. He did no sin, not because he suffered no temptation, but because he crucified in himself all that which in us becomes sin because it is not crucified. "Every pain which answered to the Father's will was the disciplining of some human power which needed to be brought into God's service, the advance one degree further toward the divine likeness, to gain which man was made." The natural resentment against injustice, insult, and cruelty is lost in the cry: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The doubt which assails the mind of the sufferer when the powers of evil seem to triumph, and goodness is defeated, when the Universe seems to be void of life, of purpose, of volition, even of hostility; as if it were one huge, dead, immeasurable, steam-engine rolling on its dead indifference to grind from limb to limb; the state of mind which made the Psalmist cry out: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" perhaps presented itself to the mind of Jesus in the

darkness of death, but yielded to the mood of perfect resignation: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Though he was Son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and our humanity was purified and made perfect by his suffering.

Human nature being what it is, there is no other way to spiritual life, purification, and freedom, than the way of the cross, the dying to self, the way of Jesus. We suffer because we sin; but the converse is also true, we sin because we decline to suffer. Hence all the trials and sufferings of life are to be welcomed for their purificatory value. They are also to be welcomed for the gifts they bring. The tree which can be cast into every *Marah* making the bitter waters sweet, is just the expectation of finding in all the painful experiences of life that which upbuilds our spiritual nature, and brings nearer the satisfaction of our ideals. So borne, pain brings with it the gifts of fortitude, patience, self-control, wisdom, sympathy, and faith. Of course, "no discipline is pleasant at the time; on the contrary, it is painful. But afterwards its fruit is seen in the peacefulness of a righteous life which is the lot of those who have been trained under it" (Heb. xii. 11). It is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away, for those who have acquired it have overcome the world. Religion may begin with the emotion of fear, but at the last, the perfect love of God casts out all fear.

Apart from the end to be accomplished, however, pain has no such virtue in itself that it is pleasing to the Deity, and meritorious to seek it for its own sake. Primitive peoples believe their gods are the lords of pain, themselves inflicting it with pleasure, and approving of its self-infliction by their devotees. Notions so old, and ingrained in the race, take a long time to disappear. Even among Christians the belief has long

existed that pain in itself is pleasing to God and brings spiritual benefits.

“Let fastings wear out the body; let coarse apparel grieve the flesh; let labor pinch it; let watchings dry it up; let cold make me curl together; let my conscience bark at me; let heat scorch me; let my head ache, my heart burn, let my reins chasten me; let my face look pale; let me be wholly diseased; let my life consume in sorrow; let my years waste in sighing and sobbing; let rottenness lodge within my bones; and let worms crawl under me, if only I may behold Christ and dwell with his saints.”¹

Fastings and mortifications so severe as to reduce body and mind to a state of misery, cannot be in accord with the mind and will of Him whose physiological laws are thus broken; and it must be remembered that self-denial is not necessarily the denial of self. Further, extreme asceticism may defeat the very purpose which alone can justify it, by rendering the ascetic incapable of ministering to his fellow-men. Self-preservation and fitness is the corollary of sacrifice for others.

It was the survival of this belief that somehow God derived satisfaction from the sight of human pain which, in the last century, when chloroform was first discovered, and it was given to relieve the pains of maternity, led many very good Christians to regard the procedure as a sinful evasion of God's decree that woman was to bring forth children in pain. Yet anæsthetics are now generally acknowledged to be one of the greatest discoveries of medical science, of inestimable benefit to the whole human race.

The appeal to the example of Jesus Christ as condemning the use of drugs to relieve pain, is not convincing. It is true that when about to be crucified they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall or myrrh, and when he had tasted it he would not drink. But there is no proof that wine so prepared has any anæsthetic effect, except that due to its intoxicating

¹The Contemplation of Christ (1577).

qualities. It was the custom then, as it is in China to-day, to give wine to them that are ready to perish, and so far as the doomed person becomes intoxicated, he is the less sensitive to pain. The reason why Jesus refused the wine may have been because it confused the intellectual faculties, and it does this all the more quickly when the body is in a state of exhaustion from pain and loss of sleep. Later, he alleviated his thirst, which indicates that he did not willingly seek the extremity of suffering, which of itself tends to obtund the mind and senses. In this respect, as in every other, the teachings of the Christian religion show their great superiority. In many primitive religions the priests by the use of narcotic drugs, by wild dancing and screaming, by fastings, contortions, flagellations, cutting the flesh, and other painful means, seek to please the gods, and to produce in themselves an abnormal psychical state akin to hypnotism, in which it is imagined that communication with the gods is easier and more availing. In the infinite love and pity of God, he may condescend to help his backward children who thus draw near to him, but with higher knowledge, the spirit of the prophet must be subject to the prophet. They that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth.

After all, the suffering deliberately selected by the individual himself, rarely searches and tries the heart, to such a degree as to expose its sinfulness, weakness, and want of faith. It is mainly in the unsought experiences of life, in the pain and suffering for which there is no immediate alleviation or cure, that men find or lose God. Sooner or later, troubles come to all far more severe and searching than those which are self-imposed. St. Paul beat his body under, but the beating did not make him cry out for relief as did the thorn in the flesh which he called an emissary of Satan. For this he besought

the Lord three times that it might depart from him. The prayer was not answered in the way he desired, but he was told that in and through his pain and weakness, divine power would be manifested.

That spiritual power comes through pain is part of the solution which the Christian religion gives of the problem of suffering. Not St. Paul only, but almost every great religious leader has had his own particular thorn in the flesh. Those who dwell in constant communion with God, to whom the things unseen and eternal are more real than the visible and temporal, find for the spiritual nature, for the emotions, imagination, and reason, such unending possibilities of wealth and satisfaction, as to create the danger that the very abundance of the revelations may interfere with the harmonious working of body, soul, and spirit, in their present condition and environment. Hence it is that

“even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholia during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, and seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities often classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence.”¹

These abnormalities, however, if so they must be called, do not invalidate their message. On the contrary, a thorn in the flesh which keeps the soaring religious life in touch with human weakness, pain and mental infirmity, not only gives sympathy, it also gives power. Men do not commonly surrender to the influence and authority of another without good reason, and the reason has to be all the stronger if the person

¹James, *Varieties of Religious Experience.*

exercising authority is abnormal. These men of religious genius derive their power from God through the conquest of pain. They have found the secret of what is so perplexing and distressing to the world, and their victory is manifest in their bearing. Except men see the print of the nails in the hands and feet, they will not believe. The disciple is not greater than his Master. The life and teaching of Jesus Christ would not have appealed to mankind so powerfully if he had not been crucified.