SIN AS A PROBLEM OF TO-DAY.

I.

Nature and Magnitude of the Problem.

What we name Sin is, from the religious point of view, the tragedy of God's universe. What it is, how it came, why it is permitted to develop itself into the havoc and ruin it surely entails, what is to be the end of it, above all, how its presence and working are to be reconciled with goodness, holiness, love, in the God who has permitted it—these are the crushing questions that press upon the spirit of every one who thinks deeply on the subject. In its very conception sin is that which *ought not to be;* which ought never to have been. How, then, or why, is it here, this awful, glaring, deadly, omnipresent reality in human history and experience?

For sin *is* here: this conscience and universal experience attest. The evidences of its presence are not slight or intermittent. Men may belittle it, try to forget it, treat it as a superstition or disease of imagination—there are, as we shall see, no lack of such attempts in the thinking of to-day—but the grim reality reasserts itself in the dullest consciousness, and compels acknowledgment of its existence and hateful power. Drug conscience as deeply as one may, a time comes when it awakes. Turn in what direction one will, sin confronts one as a fact in human life—an experience of the heart, a development in history, a crimson thread in literature, a problem for science, an enigma for philosophy.

Sin—moral evil—is but a section of the larger problem of evil generally in the universe. But it is the hardest part of it. The strain of suffering and death in the natural system, the physical ills attendant on sentient life, are difficult enough facts to explain, and one knows the use to which they are

often put as arguments against the wisdom, benevolence, and omnipotence of the Creative Power.[1] Theodicy cannot leave these facts out of account, and is not at liberty to minimise them. One stands appalled, sometimes, at the terrific and seemingly indiscriminate way in which Nature hurls about destruction in the earthquake, the tornado, the avalanche, the flood, the thunderstorm.[2] Physical suffering, however, is, after all, only a relative evil, save as moral considerations are connected with it; whereas moral evil, as Kant would say, falls under the unconditional "ought not" of the imperative of duty. The connexion also of physical evil with moral evil in the sphere of humanity is often very close—closer than is always realised. Eliminate from the sum of human suffering in time all that is due to the play of forces that are morally evil—to the follies, the vices, the inhumanities, the oppressions and cruelties of men themselves—and the problem of natural evil becomes reduced to very moderate dimensions. One has only to cast the mind abroad, and think of such facts as the horrors of the slave-trade, the devastations and brutalities of wars, of Congo atrocities, of barbarian feuds and savage immolations, of the misgovernment and oppression under which millions of the race groan, of Armenian massacres, of the connexion of poverty and distress among ourselves with drunkenness and vice, of economic evils, as "sweating," due to selfish greed of gain, to feel the force of this consideration. Cure moral evil—sin—and the root of most of the evils that afflict society

[1] J. S. Mill's indictment of Nature in his *Three Essays on Religion* (pp. 28 ff.), and the theological consequences he draws from it, are familiar. Hume had already said nearly all that is to be said on the subject in his *Dialogues on Natural Religion* (x.–xi.). As a modern specimen, see St. George Stack's essay on "The Problem of Evil," in the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. ii. pp. 767 ff.

[2] An interesting account of the celebrated controversy of Voltaire and Rousseau on the Lisbon earthquake, which is typical here, may be seen in Appendix V. to Janet's *Final Causes* (E.T.).

will be removed; the problems that remain will prove easy of solution.

This deep-seated presence and baleful operation of moral evil in the world, prolific of such untold mental and physical anguish, has pressed as a frightful burden on the minds of men in all ages, and has given rise to every sort of theory and effort—to great world-systems in thought and elaborate penitential and propitiatory devices in religion—for its explanation and alleviation. What an array of speculations and of methods for obtaining deliverance and peace, arising from this cause, has the world witnessed—witnesses still! Who shall recount them—dualisms, Gnosticisms, asceticisms, Manichæisms, pessimisms? As instances in religion it may be sufficient to name the Persian Zoroastrianism, and Indian Brahmanism and Buddhism. The Jewish and Christian religions are penetrated by the sense of sin in a way that no other religion is, or can be; of this we shall speak after. Sin, therefore, is a terrible fact, the reality, seriousness, and universality of which cannot reasonably be gainsaid.[1] It is possible to exaggerate the aspects of natural suffering, as, in the opinion of many modern evolutionists, is done in the over-emphasising of the keenness of "the struggle for existence" in the organic world (the "Nature red in tooth and claw" view of things);[2] but it is, in soberness, hardly possible to exaggerate the persistence, the gravity, the depraving and destroying power of this evil thing we call sin.

[1] Professor J. H. Muirhead, writing from a different standpoint, says in a discussion on the subject: "There can be no question of the reality and significance in human life of the sense of sin. Controversy can only be concerned with the manner of interpreting the relation in which sin places us to the Father of our spirits, and of the nature of the process of reconciliation" (*Hibbert Journal*, iii. p. 32).

[2] Cf. R. Otto, *Naturalism and Religion* (E.T.), pp. 183–4. There is sound sense in Paley's remark: "It is a happy world after all. The air, the earth, the waters, teem with delighted existence" (*Nat. Theol.*, chap. xxvi.). Cf. also Dr. H. Stirling's *Darwinianism*, pp. 205 ff.

It is a gain in studying any subject when one is able, as here, to start from a basis of assured fact. Jesus, in meeting the questionings of Nicodemus, expressed surprise that a Jewish teacher should be ignorant of those things of which He spoke. "Verily, verily," He responded, "I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?"[1] In dwelling on the need of regeneration by the Spirit as the condition of seeing, or entering into, the Kingdom of God, Jesus had been speaking of things the evidence of which lay within and all around His hearer ("earthly things"). If these were not understood or credited, how could Nicodemus understand or believe when He spoke of matters relating to His own mission, and to God's purpose of love in man's salvation ("heavenly things")? It is because sin is an "earthly thing" in the sense of being evidenced and verified in human experience, that we have a sure που στῶ in dealing with the thoughts of the day about it.

What sin is in Christianity will become clearer as the discussion advances. It is enough at this point to observe that it is connected with two ideas, without the right apprehension of which it cannot be properly conceived. The one is the idea of the *Divine Holiness*; the other is the idea of *Moral Law*. To these may perhaps be added a third—the idea of the *moral end*, of the Chief Good, identified, as Ritschl rightly held,[2] with the Kingdom of God. Transgression of moral law alone does not give the full idea of sin in the Christian sense; even as the moral law itself, in Christianity, cannot be severed from the idea of the holy God, whose law it is, and whose character is expressed in it. Sin, in

[1] John iii. 11, 12.

[2] *Justif. and Recon.*, iii. (E.T.), pp. 35, 329 ff.

other words, is not simply a *moral*, but is peculiarly a *religious* conception.[1] Sin is transgression *against God*; the substitution of the creature will for the will of the Creator; revolt of the creature will from God. It is this relation to God which gives the wrong act its distinctive character as *Sin* (cf. Ps. li. 4). It is, therefore, only in the light of God's character as holy—perfected in Christ's teaching in the aspect of Fatherly love—and of God's end for man, that the evil quality and full enormity of sinful acts can be clearly seen. Hence the impossibilty of so much as discussing the Christian teaching about sin without reference to the Divine holiness, and to man's relation to this. Hence also the vital importance, as Christ's words to Nicodemus suggest, and as will afterwards be seen, of just conceptions of sin for the right understanding of the higher Christian doctrines. It is in inadequate and mistaken views of sin that the root of so much misapprehension of these doctrines lies.

This leads now to the fact which it is a main object of this series of studies to take account of, viz., that in a large part of the thought of our time there is *a wide, often a complete, departure* from these presuppositions of the Christian doctrine of sin, with, as the result, a serious alteration—a weakening down, sometimes almost an obliteration—of the idea of sin itself. There is need, indeed, for guarding here against exaggeration, and also for reminding ourselves that this defection from Christian ideas is not, as some would seem to imagine, a peculiar product of the twentieth century, but is a phenomenon constantly reappearing, with altered intellectual and moral conditions, in the course of the ages. There are tens of thousands to-day in all the Churches, many of them as intelligent and well educated as others, to whom sin is as serious and vital a fact as ever it was; who

[1] Ritschl, *ut supra*, p. 27.

are not deluded into underestimating it by the "winds of doctrine" which blow on them from so many different quarters, but who go on their way, and do their Christian work, with ever-growing assurance of the truth of the Gospel on which their faith reposes. It suits the objector largely to ignore this class; he is too busy digging the grave of Christianity, and looking about for a substitute for it, to notice their existence.[1] But they are there, the force behind most of the earnest, self-denying, religious and philanthropic work done in the land, and they have too fixed an experimental ground for their conviction to be readily moved away from it. As regards the past, there has ever been plenty of denial and perversion of the Christian idea of sin—in early Gnosticism, at the Renaissance, in the Deism and Rationalism of the eighteenth century, whenever there has been a decay of religious life, with marked change in mental and social conditions. It is hardly necessary to recall Bishop Butler's often-quoted words in the "Advertisement" to his *Analogy* on the prevalence of unbelief in his age; but a sentence of David Hume's in one of his Essays may show that it was not reserved for the iconoclasts of our own time to trumpet the downfall of Christianity. "Most people in this island," writes the philosopher, "have divested themselves of all superstitious reverence to names and authority; the clergy have lost much of their credit, their pretensions and doctrines

[1] One is reminded sometimes in reading articles of this class of Professor Huxley's caustic comments on Mr. Harrison's advocacy of Positivism: "There is a story often repeated, and I am afraid none the less mythical on that account, of a valiant and loud-voiced corporal, in command of two full privates, who, falling in with a regiment of the enemy in the dark, orders it to surrender under pain of instant annihilation by his forces; and the enemy surrenders accordingly. I am always reminded of this tale when I read the Positivist commands to the forces of Christianity and of science; only the enemy shows no more signs of intending to obey now than they have done any time these forty years" ("Agnosticism," in *Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1880). We would not, however, as seen below, minimise the very formidable character of the attack, from various sides, on Christianity.

have been ridiculed, and even religion can scarcely support itself in the world." [1] Yet a mighty spiritual movement, with the sense of sin in the heart of it, soon came, as had happened before at the Reformation, and has happened frequently in the history of the Church since, to change the omens, and render the description of the prince of sceptics obsolete.

Nevertheless, it cannot be questioned that, for the present, a large, meanwhile perhaps a growing, section of our modern thinking has definitely broken with the presuppositions of the Christian teaching on sin; and that in the *spirit* of the time, as reflected in current speech, books, and discussions, there is a notable and unfavourable change in the manner of the consideration and the treatment of the fact of sin itself. What are the peculiarities of this changed temper of the times, what forces have contributed to its production, and how should Christianity relate itself to it?

1. A particular *diagnosis* is not easy. It is becoming common to hear it said that the world no longer troubles itself about sin, and there is a truth in the statement, though it is not one to rejoice over. A good deal of this apparent change, possibly, is more on the surface than in reality. It may spring from new modes of thought and altered ways of expression, rather than from a really weakened sense of the evil of wrong-doing. Something may also be set down to love of smart phrases and paradoxes—to rhetorical flippancies and clevernesses, which are not to be taken *au pied de la lettre*. No earnest mind, one would hope, can really be insensible to the gravity in a moral system of deliberate transgression. If Sir Oliver Lodge, a serious thinker, jars on us by saying: "As a matter of fact, the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment; his mission, if he is good for anything, is

[1] *Works* (1854), iii. p. 51.

to be up and doing"[1]; this has to be taken with what he says elsewhere of "Divine wrath as a real and terrible thing" against "blatant" sins: "I am sure what may without irreverence be humanly spoken of as fierce Wrath against sin, and even against a certain class of sinner, is a Divine attribute."[2] If Mr. R. J. Campbell makes merry over the absurd notions of "ordinary Church-going people," who actually think of God as "stationed somewhere above and beyond the universe, watching and worrying over other and lesser finite beings—to wit ourselves. . . . This God is greatly bothered and thwarted by what men have been doing during the few millenniums of human existence. . . . He takes the whole thing very seriously"[3], he must pardon those who charge him with inexcusable levity in dealing with so grave a subject, but he would resent the imputation that he thinks more lightly than others of selfishness, ingratitude, or crime. If there is here and there the open denial of sin, attempts to explain it away, wilful revolt against the restraints on individual liberty which the opposite doctrine imposes, it is to be granted that far oftener one meets with serious attempts—inadequate enough, perhaps—to understand this condition of vice and misery in humanity, and trace it to its causes—to explain it, to work out a solution of it. This effort confronts us in all directions—in science, in

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, ii. p. 466.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii. pp. 12, 13. In explanation: "When we are speaking of the sin against which God's anger blazes, we do not mean the sins of failure, the burden of remorse, etc. . . . There are many grades of sin; and any one may know the kind of sin which excites the anger of God by bethinking himself of the kind which arouses his own best and most righteous anger. . . . The fierce indignation that would blaze out if one were maliciously to torture a child or an animal in view of an ordinary man or woman, would surely be a spark of the Divine wrath; and we have been told that a millstone round the neck of a child-abuser is too light a penalty" (pp. 13, 14).

[3] *The New Theology*, p. 18; cf. pp. 52–3. Mr. Campbell has no room for the "wrath" which Sir Oliver Lodge is willing to recognise.

psychology, in philosophy, in literature, in sociology—and if the theories which are its results are not always Christian, are often violently antipathetic to Christianity, they are yet evidences of how profoundly the problem exercises the mind of the age.

Two leading tendencies, in fact, will, it is believed, make themselves apparent to every careful observer of the time on this subject of sin. There is the tendency already noticed to *weaken down* the idea and sense of sin, to belittle it, to get rid of the elements of fear in connexion with it, to assert liberty, and throw down the restraints by which moral conduct has hitherto been guarded. This tendency finds plenty of soil to work on in the secularism, and moral and religious indifferentism of the time, as well as in the natural desire of the sinful mind for unrestricted freedom in choosing its own paths. But alongside of this, in singular contrast with it, is to be traced, often in the most unlooked-for quarters, the other tendency—a *deepened sense* of sin, a feeling, even if it be in the temper of rebellion, of sin's awfulness, of its tragedy, of its irresistible seductiveness, its deceitfulness, its certain disillusionments ("apples of Sodom"), of the relentless Nemesis which dogs it, the hell of remorse it brings to its victims—the bitter desire and craving, too, for *atonement* which awakens, often when it is too late.

Which of these two tendencies is the stronger, or which is more likely for the time to prevail, it is difficult, in the existing readiness to break down existing sanctions, to predict; but, despite superficial appearances to the contrary, one would like to believe it is the latter. There can be no question, at any rate, as to which is the *deeper*, and which it is one's duty to ally oneself with to the utmost. The novel, the drama, poetry, as well as more serious literature, may be appealed to in proof that the tendency is there, and powerfully operative,[1] and there are many indications of a more

[1] Illustrations will come later.

general kind. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that, with all its weaknesses and follies, there never has been an age with conscience more sensitive to social wrongs—more sympathetic with the downtrodden, the helpless, the oppressed, more indignant at wanton cruelty, more bent on redress of injustice, more insistent in its demand for equity—than our own. If this spirit is sometimes found divorced from avowed religion, it may fairly be claimed that it is not to be divorced from Christianity. It is not simply that Christianity is in affinity with it, but, traced to its deepest springs, it may be discovered that Christianity—the teaching and ideals of Jesus—are the source of it. Unconscious evidence is constantly afforded that Christ's spirit has passed into the age, and is operative, frequently, where Christianity would not be acknowledged. When Mr. Blatchford, for instance, in his book, *God and My Neighbour*, assails Christianity, what is the ground on which he proceeds? Chiefly, strange as it may seem, the ground that Christian society fails to realise the ideals of its Master. "This is a Christian country. What would Christ think of Park Lane, and the slums, and the hooligans? What would He think of the Stock Exchange, and the Music Hall, and the race-course? What would He think of our national ideals? . . . Pausing again over Exeter Hall, I mentally apostrophise the Christian British people. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' I say, "you are Christian in name, but I discern little of Christ in your ideals, your institutions, or your daily lives' . . . If to praise Christ in words, and deny Him in deeds, be Christianity, then London is a Christian city, and England is a Christian nation. For it is very evident that our common English ideals are anti-christian," etc.[1] What does all

[1] From Preface. The book is full of such passages. E.g., "Is Christianity the rule of life in America and Europe? Are the masses of people who accept it, peaceful, virtuous, chaste, spiritually-minded, prosperous,

this mean, one asks, if not that it is the sin of Christendom that it is *not* obeying the precepts of Christ its Master who is still held up as the Ideal to be obeyed ? A stranger indictment against a religion surely never was penned !

All this being allowed for, the fact is still to be recognised that a very considerable part of the thought of the age, in its estimate of sin, as in other respects, has moved away from Christianity—not simply from Christianity as we have been accustomed to conceive of it, but from Christianity in its most essential ideas and declarations, as these are historically preserved to us. Men may, of course, if they will, extract from the teaching of Jesus, or the Creeds of the Church, some residuum which they are pleased to baptize with the name " Christianity." But this is not the Christianity of the Gospels and Epistles ; not Christianity as the world has ever known it. It is a residuum which tends constantly to become less—smaller in amount and vaguer in form.[1] But even the residuum, in many circles, is being parted with, and the confession of Strauss in his *Old and New Faith*, as far back as 1872, is freely endorsed : We are no longer Christians. Sin, as Christianity has understood it, the wrath of God against sin, are bugbears of which the world is to be happily rid.

2. The separate *causes* which have led to this altered trend of thought in the age are too numerous and complex to be here more than briefly alluded to. Some go far back, and

happy ? Are their national laws based upon its ethics ? Are their international politics guided by the Sermon on the Mount ? " etc. (p. 166, Pop. Edit.). This is a strange basis for the conclusion : " This is not a humane and civilised nation, and never will be while it accepts Christianity as its religion " (p. 197).

[1] As one example from a reverent thinker, E. Boutroux, in his interesting work, *Science and Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, finds the essence of religion, as of Christianity, in the two truths—the existence of a living, perfect, almighty God, and the living communion of God with man (E. T., pp. 391–4).

are related to causes still more remote. The whole must await more special investigation.

One general cause may be said to lie in the spirit of *emancipation* from all external authority which Hume spoke of in his day, and which now is widely prevalent. Some boast of this as the legitimate outcome of the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment. Genuine Protestantism, however, in substituting for the authority of man in the priesthood the authority of God speaking in His word of truth and salvation, did not construe its principle as the renunciation of *all* authority; and earnest minds, whether the seat of authority be placed without or within, will never assent to mere subjectivity in opinion, but will apply themselves to the search for objective standards of judgment. The sense of emancipation, none the less, is sweet to many, and they revel in knocking about established beliefs and institutions, simply to prove their superiority to their neighbours.[1] One thinks of the Sophists of ancient Greece whom Socrates had to deal with, and of the so-called "Illumination" (*Aufklärung*) of the eighteenth century, whose superficialities of thought and complacent optimism it fell to Kant and his successors to put an end to. The diffusion and popularisation of knowledge, leading to the spreading of the mind over a great variety of objects—hence to diffusion rather than to concentration—fosters the development of a new *Aufklärung*.

The deeper and real causes of the change, however, are to be traced to *more important* influences. Among these are specially to be reckoned the bold and independent course taken by philosophic thought during the last century—its roots go back as far as thought itself—the profoundly changed

[1] The thoughtful section on "The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Humanity—Redemption and Emancipation," in Martensen's *Christian Ethics* (pp. 191 ff.), is full of suggestion for our age.

conception of the universe, and of man's place in it, as the result of the advances of the physical sciences, specially of the entrance of the idea of evolution, the enlarged knowledge of other (including ancient) peoples and their faiths, and the comparative study of religions, the development and application of the methods of a rigorous historical criticism. One can hardly wonder if the effect of the co-working of these, and numerous related factors—especially at a time when material ideals tend to eclipse spiritual—has been, on the one hand, to undermine, or profoundly modify, older beliefs in God, man, the world, sin, human progress and destiny; and, on the other, to create an attitude of mind unfavourable to the reception of any system of beliefs which involves supernatural elements, as the Christian system, fairly interpreted, unquestionably does.

That this, in any case, has been the *result* of the new influences few will be disposed to dispute. And at no point is the change more apparent than in the treatment of the idea of sin. On the theological side, the immanence of God is being pushed to an extreme (where God is not resolved into the monistic Unknowable Power) which merges God's life in the life of the developing universe, and of necessity takes up sin as a strain into that life. On the scientific side, evolution is applied to show man's rise by slow gradation from the animal, to disprove the idea of a "fall," and to establish an "ascent," through perhaps half a million of years, from semi-brutishness, savagery, and prolonged barbarism, to his present happier intellectual and moral condition. Sin becomes, during by far the larger portion of his history, a negligible quantity. Philosophy sees in sin a necessity of man's development—of his coming to the true knowledge of himself—and speaks freely of it as good in the making.[1] Science,

[1] For a valuable criticism, see Galloway's *Principles of Religious Development*, pp. 324 ff.

philosophy, and ethics alike are often found arguing for a "Determinism" which strikes at the basis of moral responsibility. Still bolder tendencies are in operation, which, regarding existing moral ideas as the fruit of obsolete beliefs and outworn conventions, would sweep them away, with revolutionary results in the relation of the sexes, in family life, and in society.[1] As a culminating phase in the revolt, Nietzscheism would invert the moral standards of Christianity altogether.

These are only indications, for which proof must subsequently be given, but they leave no doubt as to the extent and complexity of the problems opened up to the Christian inquirer by the modern treatment of sin.

3. It is hardly necessary to point out how fundamentally the *whole system of ideas* in Christianity is affected by the changed attitude to the doctrine of sin now described. Professor Henry Jones has a remark in his Essay in the volume, *Jesus or Christ*, which tells in more directions than that in which he applies it. He observes: "Such is the unity of spiritual experience, even when it is not reflective, that no particular opinion can be adopted, rejected, or changed, except by modifying the whole of that experience."[2] It cannot be impressed too strongly that Christian doctrines are not a collocation of isolated conceptions, any one of which may be altered or abandoned without effect upon the rest, but have an internal unity and coherence, binding them together as a whole, so that one cannot be tampered with without injury to every part. Peculiarly is this the case with the doctrine of sin. It is in its doctrine of sin, apprehended in its own way, that Christianity bases its

[1] Startling illustrations of how far this has gone in public teaching is furnished, if with some one-sidedness and exaggeration, in papers by Mr. H. Bolce in the American *Cosmopolitan*, May, 1909, and after. Reference may be made to these again.

[2] P. 83.

teaching on the indispensableness for man of redemption and spiritual renewal, and of the provision of God, in His abounding love, for the accomplishment of these ends. If, accordingly, from any cause, the facts about sin are misconceived, or are inadequately conceived, it is useless, as already hinted, to attempt to come to any understanding with these higher doctrines. It is not different with the Christian conceptions of duty and of the spiritual life.

One point at the very centre of Christianity may be referred to as vitally affected by the modern discussions about sin. It is no other than the question of the possibility of a *Sinless One.* Till a comparatively recent time there was a shrinking, even in advanced circles, from seeming to breathe a doubt of the moral perfection of Jesus. That can no longer be said. It is, no doubt, only logically consistent that, if humanitarianism is to rule, the claim to be without sin should be denied to Jesus. How should One arise without sin in a humanity to which sin belongs by essential constitution? In a world without miracle a sinless Being is excluded by the laws of human existence. It is entirely characteristic, therefore, that more and more the sinlessness of Jesus is coming to be challenged or surrendered by writers of the modern school. The highest grade of moral purity is conceded to Jesus, but not *perfect* holiness. His own words, "Why callest thou me good?"[1] are quoted against Him. Oscar Holtzmann, Wernle, Schmiedel, Bousset, G. B. Foster, now R. J. Campbell, a host more, will be found uniting here.[2] The question, with its implications, will occupy us

[1] Mark x. 18.

[2] The opinions of Schmiedel, Foster, and others are sufficiently well known. It may serve to refer to the first and last of the names quoted. O. Holtzmann, in his *Leben Jesu* (p. 36), expresses the view that the idea of the sinlessness of Jesus originated with Paul, and thinks that Jesus Himself is shown by Mark x. 18, xiv. 36 to have held a different opinion. Mr. Campbell, in his recent essay on *Jesus or Christ,* goes so far as to say: "To

later. It is glanced at here only to show to what results, in judging of Christianity, the newer speculations conduct.

These are the issues. What attitude, it is to be asked finally, in the midst of this whirl of conflicting opinions—of doubts, denials, speculations—is open to one who retains the Christian position, and believes it to be true and vital? How is he to deal with the fact and doctrine of sin? Very plainly a *theological* treatment of the doctrine—such a treatment as might be fitting in the circle of those accepting the fundamental Christian conceptions—is totally useless here. The mind of the age is proclaimed to be one that sits loose to all doctrinal formulations—that regards them as in the air, unscientific, antiquated, logical cobweb-spinning, untrue to fact and experience. As little will it avail to build on Biblical data (though these cannot wholly be neglected); for the authority of the Bible, in the old sense, is rejected; texts can be explained away; in any case are not held to bind *us*. This applies not only to the Old Testament—to the Fall-story in Genesis, for example—it applies equally to the New, where Paul is of no authority, and even the word of Jesus is not final. With every single postulate of the Biblical doctrine challenged, how is discussion to proceed?

One thing the believer in the Christian doctrine can do. He can take his own place in this restless whirl of the thought of to-day; can try to understand it, and to interpret it to himself and to *itself*; can seek, as we have already been beginning to do, to trace it to its causes, and to exhibit it in its workings. He can set over against it what seems to him to be the truth of fact and experience, and the Christian interpretation of the facts, and can try to show that it is in the latter that the true key for the understanding of the facts is

speak of Him as morally perfect is absurd; to call Him sinless is worse, for it introduces an entirely false emphasis into the relations of God and Man" (p. 191).

to be found. The Christian believer, in a word, can look this thought of the day in the face. If Christianity is worth anything, it does not need to shirk looking facts in the face. It will not profess to furnish a perfect solution of the problem of sin. Only Omniscience can do that. It is but parts of God's ways we can trace. Our seeing is through a glass darkly.[1] But the subject may be set in a light which brings it more into consistency with itself, with faith in God, with human experience, and with the other truths of the Christian revelation. This of itself will be a step to a Theodicy.

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[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.