

**SUGGESTIONS**

**FOR**

**THOUGHT**

**2**



*Florence Nightingale*

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**THE ANNOTATED EDITION**

**in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of  
Florence Nightingale's birthday (12 May 1820)**

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## **Practical deductions**

In the hope of reaching different minds, the same subjects have been differently (and not always consecutively) dealt with in the several portions of this book. A feeling of their extreme importance has dictated, and it is hoped will excuse, this course, which has rendered repetition, even to the frequent use of the same phraseology, unavoidable.





# 1

Is the idea, that evil is pleasant a correct one?

It is a common idea that sin is so easy and pleasant that, if we did not believe it to be our own fault when we sin, and did not believe that we shall have to account for it and receive its punishment hereafter, every bulwark against sin would be broken down – and that this is the main check upon the successful enjoying sinner, while the expectation of future reward is the main support of the broken-hearted suffering saint.

Can we suppose this to be God's view of it? What a confusion there is in men's minds with regard to happiness! The mind of low nature is incapable of imagining that which alone is happiness in the conception of God. Such may be satisfied with success in selfish ambition, or other gratification *untrue* to our nature. There may be insensibility to suffering from sin. But if God's happiness is the only real happiness, those who approach the nearest to oneness with Him are the happiest. Was Napoleon,<sup>1</sup> who cared for no one person in the world but himself, the very type of selfishness, even at the height of his success, a happy man?

Sufferers from sin do not consider themselves sufferers.

Perhaps, indeed, he did not think himself, and other men may not have thought him unhappy. Though insensible to suffering he was insensible to happiness. His was the privation inseparable from wrong. (2)<sup>2</sup> Now, as far as appealing to the selfish nature will keep man right, if he can be brought to perceive, believe, and feel this as true, would it not do more to preserve him from sin than a vague fear of an indefinite future punishment, which besides may be escaped, if he repents in time, by means of something which is called God's forgiveness?

What is forgiveness of sin? What is granting forgiveness to faith?

But forgiveness can only be granted to faith, it is said.

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- 1 Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was a French statesman and military leader who rose to prominence during the French Revolution and led several successful campaigns during the French Revolutionary Wars. He was Emperor of the French as Napoleon I from 1804 until 1814 and again briefly in 1815 during the Hundred Days. (Wikipedia)
  - 2 Pagenumber in the printed, unpublished version of 1860. (*Suggestions for Thought to Searchers after Religious Truth*. London, George E. Eyre & William Spottiswoode. 1860.)

Does that mean faith that the law of consequences<sup>3</sup> will be altered – that the same course being pursued, different effects will follow? What does Christian theology tell us that forgiveness means? Does it mean change in the mind of God? that He thinks one thing at one time and another at another? that He is what is called “just” to-day, “merciful” to-morrow? What is the meaning of that cowardly prayer, “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.”<sup>4</sup> Rather let us say, put all my sins into the full light of thy countenance, let me see them as thou seest them. Teach me, by its consequences, that sin is not desirable; – teach me what to desire – how to desire it – how to attain it. But, happily for us, there is no more occasion for the one prayer than for the other.

How can the Spirit of Right, of right law, forgive?

The Spirit of Right could not forgive without an absurdity. Will God make that which has been, not to have been? alter that which is past? The prayer would be impertinent, if it were not absurd. For it is asking the Spirit of Right to produce a contradiction, to be in opposition to Himself. But He is always the same; “yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”<sup>5</sup> (3)

But the truth is, that man’s advance in goodness will be extremely limited while it depends upon his selfish fear, that, if he individually is not good, he will not be happy; or his selfish hope, that if he is good, he will be happy. He cannot advance towards that oneness with the Divine Spirit, in which true happiness consists, by thoughts and feelings diametrically opposite to that Divine Spirit. “God is love, and he that loveth not knoweth not God.”<sup>6</sup> To make happy is His happiness. And it is the beautiful arrangement of love, that happiness to the individual shall be the result of exercising his powers for the happiness of others. Appeals to the selfish nature do not touch the affections, the conscience, or the spiritual nature; they do the part of the policeman, who will never help a man to be very happy, or very good.

Does the belief that “other than myself” is the ultimate cause of all evil, as of all good, in what I am or do, cut off any motive to deter me from sin?

If we *really* believed that not only sin, but every ignorance of God’s law (be it a spiritual, intellectual, physical, or if there be any other law) brings certain suffering or privation, but that the keeping of particular laws brings equally certain and ever

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3 The law of consequences refers to God’s law that identical circumstances always lead to identical effects.

4 Ps. 51:9: <sup>9</sup> *Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.*

5 Heb. 13:8: <sup>8</sup> *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

6 1 John 4:8: <sup>8</sup> *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

increasing happiness, which shall be beyond what the “eye hath seen, or the ear heard, or what it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive;”<sup>7</sup> shall we be induced to do wrong, *and suffer for it*, if we believe that, should we do so, we may say, “other than myself was the cause of it?” If another man knocks me down, does the being able to say, “I did not bring this misfortune upon myself, another did,” prevent me from trying to get up? It is not the want of belief that sin was entirely attributable to my individual self, but the absence of conviction, that (4) suffering or privation are certainly attendant upon it, which prevents my going right.

If it were not the thief’s fault, was it God’s fault?

The thief, it is said, knows perfectly well, while he is thieving, that what he is doing is wrong, and that he can help doing it, if he will. Certainly he can help doing it, *if he will*, but it never has been possible to him *not* to will to do it; if we could disentangle every, the most minute circumstance which has affected the will of the thief, we should perceive that it could not have been otherwise at any particular moment at which we contemplate him in the commission of his crime.

Can any reasoning convince us that God is the author of sin?

No reasoning, it is often said, can ever convince the human mind of this. It would rather doubt the capability of its own powers than believe it. For it has that within, which tells it absolutely and authoritatively that God is good, and it could not consider him good, if through the effect of His laws it has been impossible, when a man commits a theft or any other wrong action, that he should have done otherwise. It cannot believe this of a God who is omnipotent and benevolent, and it believes that there is more truth in doubting its own capability of meeting or understanding this subject, (in which there are certainly difficulties,) than in giving up its feeling and conviction that God is omnipotence and benevolence.

Not the isolated assertion that the sinner could not have done otherwise,  
but the right understanding of the laws, of which this is an instance,  
will teach man in what relation he stands to God, to others, and to himself.

Unquestionably we should be more true in doubting our own powers of understand-

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7 1 Cor. 2:9: <sup>9</sup>But as it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. [1]

[1] See also Isa. 64:4: <sup>3</sup>When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. <sup>4</sup>For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

ding any subject than in giving up our belief and our feeling that God is omnipotent and benevolent. But this belief may be weaker or stronger, and its degree will materially influence our present practice and our future progress. Shall we not (5) be able to give “a reason of the hope that is in us”?<sup>8</sup> Not indeed the isolated assertion that the sinner could not have done otherwise, but the right understanding of the laws, of which this is an instance, would contribute immensely to man’s belief in the benevolence and power of God, to his help and sympathy for his fellow-creatures, and to his conduct of himself, – would, in fact, as is elsewhere explained, influence the whole field of his practice with regard to his God, his neighbour, and himself. Therefore in making any attempt to investigate those laws, if it is not conclusive to us, it is certainly more true to doubt our own finite capability of understanding the ways of the Infinite, than to doubt His infinite perfections; – but in as far as we can follow His track and learn the ways of His providence, no subject can be so interesting or indeed so practical.

But people will discuss the merest trifles interminably, and leave such questions unsettled, as why man is what he is, none caring to know. Could mankind but reach mankind’s sense upon the matter, and compare each other’s opinions, some progress might be made. But everybody is afraid of everybody else on this subject; men of being thought to sap the “foundations of religion;” women of being thought pedantic and presumptuous; religious professions<sup>9</sup> of saying anything but upon authority. Thus (6) nothing is said and little thought upon the matter.

In what sense is it true that a man could not have willed otherwise  
than as he did?

To return to the assertion that no man who has committed a wrong action could have willed otherwise than to commit it.

It is not that God *decreed* it, *i.e.*, that there was an absolute definite express voli-

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8 1 Pet. 3,15: <sup>15</sup> But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you *a reason of the hope that is in you* with meekness and fear:

9 **FN:** A profession is a set of men paid to *profess* some kind of opinions; the clergy are paid to profess one kind of religion, the Wesleyan [1] another. In the medical profession, the allopath is paid to profess one system of medicine, the homœopath another. And all have their small families to support. [2]

[1] Wesleyan theology, otherwise known as Methodist theology, is a theological tradition in Protestant Christianity that emphasizes the "methods" of the eighteenth-century evangelical reformers John Wesley (1703-1791) and his brother Charles Wesley (1707-1788).

[2] All footnotes of Miss Nightngale herself are preceded with **FN**.

tion to that effect, unconnected with any other, in the Almighty mind. If we could read in the thought of God, we should not see there, "Mrs. Manning<sup>10</sup> shall will to commit a murder:" we should see certain unvarying laws, by which such circumstances and such natures being brought together, such effects will follow.

Each human being who has lived differs from every other human being. What A is was not *decreed* by God, *i.e.*, God did not will "A on coming into existence shall have exactly such and such capabilities;" but God's laws (that such and such uniformities of succession and of coexistence shall be) made him what he is; or, in other words, that A is what he is at the moment he begins to exist, arises entirely, to the very most minute particular, from the laws of God, *i.e.*, from the uniformities of nature, referable ultimately only to God's will as a cause. Exactly the same circumstances never arise, therefore, never the same natures; therefore, one identity can never have exactly the same thought, feeling, will, as another.

Do children begin existence in a certain definite state,  
which could not have been other than it is?

We acknowledge that there are certain laws, the consequence of which is that the child's physical, intellectual, and spiritual nature is affected by the parents. We acknowledge, therefore, that children begin their existence in a (7) certain definite state, which would have been different from what it is, had the parents been different from what they were.

In consequence of the first individuals being ignorant of some of God's laws (which is the natural consequence of its being God's plan that men should learn by experience), the children inherit some deficiency of organization.

Are the "sins of the fathers" thus "visited on the children?"

The "sins of the fathers are visited upon the children," not only "unto the third and fourth generation,"<sup>11</sup> but throughout all generations. This process has been going

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10 Marie Manning (1821-1849) was a Swiss domestic servant who was hanged on the roof of London's Horsemonger Lane Gaol on 13 November 1849, after she and her husband were convicted of the murder of her lover, Patrick O'Connor, in the case that became known as the "Bermondsey Horror". It was the first time a husband and wife had been executed together in England since 1700. The novelist Charles Dickens attended the public execution, and in a letter written to *The Times* on the same day wrote, "I believe that a sight so inconceivably awful as the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd collected at that execution this morning could be imagined by no man, and could be presented in no heathen land under the sun." (Wikipedia)

11 Ex. 20:5: <sup>5</sup> Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the*

on as long as man has existed. The laws which influence descent and which concern the well-being of man are almost unknown. Yet each has taken its natural effect since the beginning of the race. It is probable that, knowingly or unknowingly, from self-indulgence or inevitably from the state of society and circumstances, all parents have more or less disregarded the laws for securing a well-constituted nature to their children.

Is there, then, a constant degeneration going on in mankind?

This is not supposing a constant degeneration in the race of mankind; because another process is also going on, a process of regeneration. Man improves by experience. God and the divine spirit in man are ever at work to turn the evil into good.

Had none of these laws been disregarded by the parents and ancestors of A, A would have begun existence with good and well-balanced dispositions. Had all the wills which have influenced A been true, that is, known what experience only can teach, these dispositions would have been truly cultivated.

Is there any truth in the doctrine of "original sin?"

We may truly say that there is "original sin"<sup>12</sup> (8) in each of us; that is, sin which originated with our first parents, and the effect of which exists in us; we sin because the first man sinned.

Wherever there is sin, is it the consequence of ignorance?

Suppose, then, it were admitted that, wherever there is sin, there has been previous ignorance on the part of the sinner or of others, ignorance of God's laws; this has been the antecedent to his sin, of which it is the certain consequent, or, in other words, without which the sin would not have been, with which it could not but be.

Even when we know that we are sinning?

But we often sin, it is said, with the clearest knowledge that we are breaking God's law.

But we did not know how to incline our hearts to keep it.<sup>13</sup> We knew it intellec-

*third and fourth generation* of them that hate me; <sup>6</sup>And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

12 Original sin, also called ancestral sin, is a Christian belief in the state of sin in which humanity has existed since the fall of man, stemming from Adam and Eve's rebellion in Eden, namely the sin of disobedience in consuming the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Wikipedia)

13 Paraphrase of the responses to the recitation of the 10 commandments: "Lord have

tually, but not *by heart*. Perhaps at one time we did not perceive the full consequence of what we were doing, and when we did the habit was so strengthened that we did not know how to overcome it.

Is it not acknowledged that the will of any individual would have been different from what it is, had his antecedents been different?

It is acknowledged that each individual is, *in some respects*, what he is, in consequence of the laws of God regarding the effect of parents upon children, and that the will of any individual would have been different from what it has been, *in some respects*, had those antecedents been different.

Perhaps this is all we can say. We are so ignorant of what these laws or uniformities are, that modified as they are by other laws, we cannot with any accuracy assign the effects which arise from our immediate ancestors, still less from those who have preceded them, up to the beginning of the human race on this earth. We may safely affirm, however, that had these ancestors of A been different, A, and consequently A's will, would have been differently affected. (9)

What is a man's will?

Whether a man's will is a separate something, or whether it is merely some part of his nature in activity, or, rather, the effect of the balance of his various capabilities upon one another at the moment we speak of his will, is a separate inquiry.

Can a man will what he pleases?

The question is often put, can a man will what he pleases? *He is willing what he pleases*; he cannot will anything else but what he *does* please.

What are the antecedents which make will what it is?

But whatever the will be, let us now look for other antecedents which make it what it is.

From the first moment of A's existence in this world, he freely does, as far as power goes, what he wills; he stretches his limbs, he cries, he takes his food. But why does he will to do these things? At each moment of existence what his capabilities and wants are, depends upon the laws of God; and out of these capabilities and wants arises the will of the man for all he wills. What he wills at any particular moment arises, not from a decree of God, "this man shall will so and so," but from a will in God, "certain laws or uniformities shall be."

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mercy upon us, and *incline our hearts to keep this law.*" (*Book of Common Prayer*) [1]

[1] All phrases cited or paraphrased by Miss Nightingale are printed in italics.

The man's will is thus really just as much occasioned by the will of God as if He decreed it.

Only what is God's will? Not that A shall murder B; not that Calvin shall burn Servetus.<sup>14</sup> But that man shall attain to oneness with God by the exercise of his own capabilities, and that God, the Spirit of Right, shall supply him with the means and inducements to do so, which are afforded by His laws.

What is the effect of circumstances?

Let us now see the effect of circumstances upon the child already in the world. (10) The nation, the age, the family, the education, we acknowledge produce an effect. Any individual would have been different from what he is, had he been differently placed in these respects. Where, then, is the line between what he wills through these and other influences, and what he wills because he wills it?

Is there any meaning in the word "free-will"  
applied either to man or to God?

If we say that in that case man has no "free-will," and therefore can have no likeness

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14 Michael Servetus (1511-1553), was a Spanish theologian, physician, cartographer, and Renaissance humanist. In 1553 Michael Servetus published *Christianismi Restitutio* (The Restoration of Christianity), a work that sharply rejected the idea of predestination as the idea that God condemned souls to Hell regardless of worth or merit. God, insisted Servetus, condemns no one who does not condemn himself through thought, word, or deed. Calvin believed Servetus deserved death on account of what he termed as his "execrable blasphemies". As Servetus was not a citizen of Geneva, and legally could at worst be banished, the government, in an attempt to find some plausible excuse to disregard this legal reality, had consulted other Swiss Reformed cantons (Zürich, Bern, Basel, Schaffhausen). They universally favoured his condemnation and suppression of his doctrine, but without saying how that should be accomplished. Martin Luther had condemned his writing in strong terms. Servetus and Philip Melancthon had strongly hostile views of each other. The party called the "Libertines", who were generally opposed to anything and everything John Calvin supported, were in this case strongly in favour of the execution of Servetus at the stake (while Calvin urged that he be beheaded instead). In fact, the council that condemned Servetus was presided over by Ami Perrin (a Libertine) who ultimately on 24 October sentenced Servetus to death by burning for denying the Trinity and infant baptism. Calvin and other ministers asked that he be beheaded instead of burnt, knowing that burning at the stake was the only legal recourse. This plea was refused and on 27 October, Servetus was burnt alive – atop a pyre of his own books – at the Plateau of Champel at the edge of Geneva. Historians record his last words as: "Jesus, Son of the Eternal God, have mercy on me." (Wikipedia)



with God, is it inferred that God himself wills arbitrarily? Are not His love, His wisdom, so to speak, the antecedents in consequence of which, or the nature in co-existence with which, His will is what it is? And it would be a contradiction to suppose that His will could be different from what *He* is. But God has formed us in the image of Himself.<sup>15</sup>

God wills what He wills, because He would not be God if He willed otherwise.

It is not that God cannot, but that He will not, will anything contrary to perfect wisdom.

God wills the law of attraction to be in force at this moment, because His goodness desires the well-being of His creation, and His wisdom knows this to be a means of promoting it. That He should will otherwise may truly be said to be an impossibility, unless we suppose the absence of goodness and wisdom. But then He would not be God. This is not saying that another will than His own obliges God to will what He does will. It is not necessity. It is that He would not be God if He willed otherwise.

Thus it is with man. No other being at any particular moment obliges his will to be what it is. But he would not be himself, he would be somebody else, if his will were different from what it is.

It is not correct to say that he cannot if he will, will to do what he knows to be cruel and foolish, in as far as he is good and wise. (11)

He *will* not will. It is impossible that he should will. Will is only the emanation<sup>16</sup> of the being. It is as impossible that a being should will contrary to itself, as that a flint should emit carbonic acid gas, or charcoal silicine acid. And if he is selfish, and has not the wisdom to see that he cannot himself enjoy as much as if he were in a different state, is it possible, in the state in which he is, that he should will otherwise than as he is?

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15 Gen. 1:27: <sup>27</sup> *So God created man in his own image*, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

16 Emanation, from the Latin emanare meaning "to flow from" or "to pour forth or out of", is the mode by which all things are derived from the first reality, or principle. All things are derived from the first reality or perfect God by steps of degradation to lesser degrees of the first reality or God, and at every step the emanating beings are less pure, less perfect, less divine. Emanationism is a transcendent principle from which everything is derived, and is opposed to both creationism (wherein the universe is created by a sentient God who is separate from creation) and materialism (which posits no underlying subjective and/or ontological nature behind phenomena being immanent). (Wikipedia)

May we not, then, conclude, 1st, that a human being, such as he enters the world to-day, is such, in consequence of the laws of God, which regard the effect of the parents upon the child from the time that man began to exist upon the earth?

2nd. That certain effects take place respecting that human being the first moment he is in existence, which influence his state the second moment, in accordance with certain laws of God, and so on from one point of time to another through his existence; so that at any moment he is what he is from the operation of these laws.

What are the laws which make man what he is?

To point out what these laws are, and to trace their effects in every instance and at every moment, is not in our power, and this inability leaves the subject in uncertainty. Moreover, the existence of law at all in the spiritual world is hardly yet acknowledged; and, therefore, it is not extraordinary that we cannot, perhaps, as yet point out a single law. But the more we study human character and history, the more glimpses shall we have of law making it what it is. We acknowledge, generally, the effect of country, of soil, of climate, of age, of race, of family, of associates, of what we call education – (a true **(12)** word, if we mean *leading out of*, for the circumstances of every kind which affect the nature of man, spiritual, intellectual, and physical, do *lead*, or educate, *out of* the being which enters the world that which he is during his existence). We hear it said, even in common conversation, “there is the man who grows upon the green sand.” Do we doubt that a thief under certain circumstances would have been, under others, an honest man?

What we see *in a degree* is perplexing and unsatisfactory with regard to God’s providence, unless we can see it pervade throughout. Either it is a defect, or it is, if rightly understood, complete – a part of a perfect whole.

The Englishman has his national character; the member of a family his family character; the age has its character, so has the race, so has the soil, so has the climate, so has the profession. This does not mean that an individual cannot will as he pleases, because England, or his family, or the age, or the climate he lives in, wills for him. But his will is in some respects what it is, because his nation, his family, the age, and the climate in which he lives, are what they are; and his will would, in some respects, have been different, had they been different.

Now, does it not seem improbable, that the influences of Providence on the will should be so great and distinct in these instances; but that beyond these instances, another state of things prevails, and a man can will what he wills, merely because it is his will; independent of any past or present influence on it? If we could trace each separate volition from the time **(13)** there has been volition in a human being, we should see a spring for it, which, according to God’s laws, could not have had

another sequence than it had; we should see the effect upon him of circumstances at a time, when he is acknowledged to have no capability of “choosing to will one way rather than another,” as we call that supposed mysterious process; the effect of nation, age, climate, education, which he could not have made other than they were.

Is man not the arbiter of his own will by his own will?  
Is man’s will not, at all times of his existence, at all times of his existence,  
and in all that concerns it, determined by himself?

Man is indeed the arbiter of his own will, in the sense that he wills for himself, and no one else wills for him. His nature determines his own will always; but, as to determining his own nature, sometimes he does, and sometimes he does not. The child does not, and ought not; but the object of law is to bring us to that point, that we shall determine our own nature.

Is it nation, climate, age, &c., which have power over us,  
or which give us our power?

How can we do that, it is said, if we have no power over ourselves? if nation, climate, age, all these things, have power over us?

All these things are what *give* man his power. They give him the power of seeing the desirableness of certain things. God *works out* in man (we will not say, *gives* to man) such an organization as shall have the power of finding out, –

1st, that not any but a well-constituted nature is desirable.

2nd, what is a well-constituted nature.

3rd, how to desire it.

4th, how to attain it, and this *by the exercise* of human nature. And all that he is suffering is to bring him to this.

How near are we to creating mankind?

And how near are we to that? it will be asked. Very far indeed from it at present. In fact, in (14) the sixth thousand,<sup>17</sup> or perhaps a great deal more, of the world’s years,

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17 Reference to the controversy between religion and science about how many ages ago the creation took place. On the side of religion stood James Usher (1581-1656), Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland between 1625 and 1656. He was a prolific scholar and church leader, who is famous for his chronology that sought to establish the time and date of the creation as “the entrance of the night preceding the 23rd day of October . . . the year before Christ 4004”; that is, around 6 pm on 22 October 4004 BC, per the proleptic Julian calendar. On the side of science stood Charles Lyell (1797-1875), a Scottish geologist, best known as the author of *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), which presented to a wide public audience the idea

men are still carrying on life, without knowing any one of the four. But what are six thousand years to educate a being meant for eternity?

Yet man determines his own will,  
it is not something else which determines it for him.

Yet this system does not prove that man cannot determine his own will, that something else determines it for him.

Can man choose to will *any* thing?

Every one will acknowledge that man cannot choose to will *anything*, *i.e.*, that to every man there are conceivable volitions which are impossible to him. The uneducated thief could not will to be a man of cultivation and refinement. He could not even wish it.

Some things we may will, but not be able to obtain.

What is will? Will includes wish, purpose, conviction that you can effect your purpose. Now you ask, can I will as I please? Certainly: you *are* willing as you please. You will not please to will what you believe impossible, what you *know* that you cannot effect, or in other words, what is contrary to the laws of God. Whether you can do as you will is another thing, and depends upon the *knowledge* with which you have previously willed.

What is "will"?

If you have willed unwisely, that is, in ignorance of the laws of God, which alone will enable you to carry your will into effect, the want of *knowledge* with which you have willed prevents you from having the *power* to do as you will. The more knowledge you have, the fewer rash resolutions you will make. If "I will" includes, "I wish it, I intend it, I have the conviction that I can bring it to be;" the absence of any one of these three **(15)** prevents the will; it does not prevent the "*free will*." In the thief the wish may be absent; but we do not include in "free will," the power of willing what we do not wish. Or the intention may be absent; but it would not be absence of free will, if a person wished to have lived in the 14th century, and did not will it. Or the belief that he can obtain his wish may be absent; but then he would not will it: as, we do not will to go up to the moon. Lastly, there may fail the knowledge, whether the laws of God permit his carrying his will into effect, and then he may will in ignorance, and not be able to do as he wills. What we would rather ask

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that Earth was shaped by the same natural processes still in operation today, operating at similar intensities. With his geological findings he proved that the earth was much older. (Wikipedia)

is, can a man always will what he wishes? Certainly not, because in the very definition of the word will, there must be purpose, and there cannot be purpose unless with a belief that he can accomplish it. But the truth is, that the whole controversy about free will and necessity is a jargon. Free will is the very definition of conscious intelligent being acting from within. Necessity is the law of inorganic or unconscious nature, being acted upon from without. This is the whole mystery of these oft-disputed words.

Can a thief will not to steal, at the moment he is tempted?

There are laws which concern each particular volition, and if at one moment a man wishes that a future volition shall be, or shall not be somewhat, he may, in accordance with these laws, take means to make his volition what he wishes it to be; that is, some can and some cannot. It depends upon the state of his knowledge of the laws of God, and upon his power of applying them.

Can I know whether I can or cannot will a thing?

This is a matter which comes within the proof of our own daily individual experience. How (16) often have many of us resolved in this way – by this day next month or next year, I will have completely conquered such and such a particular fault. I may have taken means, too, for my end. But it was not within my will. Human nature was not in such a state, and my nature was not in such a state as to enable me to do what I willed. Either I was ignorant of the laws, or it was not possible within the time, or, &c., &c. All that we assert here is, that no past volition could, by the laws of God, have been other than it was; the laws of God must have been different, or it could not have been different. And if they had been different, God would not have existed. If that speck of dust had not been on the table, the whole universe would have been different, and if the whole universe had been different, there would have been no God.

And as in the physical, so is it in the moral world.

As in the physical, so in the moral world.

I once saw an extraordinary storm on the Nile. The river seemed flowing bottom upwards; the whirlwind of sand from the desert literally covering it, and blowing up in ridges upon it. The Israelites might have almost passed upon dry land. Our eyes, mouths, and ears were filled with sand, and it was impossible to drink, for, instead of water from the river, we drew up sand. To try to stand against the wind was useless. Presently five vessels floated past us, keel uppermost, and we saw a little whirlpool of oranges, the unfortunate passengers having broken open the cabin in

their efforts to escape. At 3 p.m. it became quite dark, and the waves were like a moderate sea in the Channel. The Arabs (17) thought that the day of judgment was at hand, and were quite helpless.<sup>18</sup>

Now, we know that there was not one molecule of sand or water in that confused whirlwind, which was there by chance, which had not a sufficient cause, so to speak, for occupying the place which it did, which was not rigorously where it ought to be, according to the laws or uniform rules of God.

“No atom of this turbulence fulfils  
A vague and unnecessitated task,  
Or acts but as it must or ought to act.”<sup>19</sup>

In other words, a natural philosopher, who knew the acting forces and the properties of the atoms acted upon, would demonstrate that each atom acted with precision in the way it ought to act, and could not act otherwise than as it did.

Has, then, every crime in history been brought about by the law of God?

In the terrible convulsions which have shaken Europe, have upset empires and annihilated liberty, there has not been one single action, one single word, one single thought, or will, or passion, in the destroyers or the victims, which was not the infallible sequence of its antecedent, which had not uniformly its allotted succession or coexistence in this moral whirlwind. An intellect which could appreciate the acting forces and the character of the nations acted upon could have demonstrated like a Q. E. D. the results. (18)

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18 This story is based on what Miss Nightingale herself experienced in Egypt. (Gérard Vallée (ed.) *Florence Nightingale on Mysticism and Eastern Religions*. Collected Works of Florence Nightingale. Volume 4, pp. 197-199. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003. Referred to in this edition as CW 4.)

19 Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). *Queen Mab, A Philosophical Poem*. VI:171-173.

## 2

What is our relation towards God, towards others, towards ourselves?

In order to see where our doctrines will lead us practically, we must push them to the extreme and ultimate limit which they will admit of. This is the only test. Now, our whole real relation with God, with each other, with ourselves, is practically overthrown by what is commonly called the “free will” doctrine. These relations cannot be based upon any other idea than that of (not necessity but) law.

Take, first, our relation towards ourselves. Our belief amounts to this: that I may look back on any particular moment of the past, and truly feel, it was impossible at that moment (God’s laws being what they are, and having operated on all preceding that moment as they did,) that I should have willed otherwise than as I did.

Is it true that at any given moment it was impossible to us  
to will otherwise than as we did?

We believe this to be just as true as that it was impossible at any particular moment that the earth should not have pursued the course she did: God’s laws being at that moment and having been till that moment what they were.

It is, therefore, untrue and useless for me to cry out, Oh! how worthy of blame, how deserving of punishment I was! My good friend, I should rather say to myself, don’t be afraid, you will have suffering enough in what you have done. You exhaust the powers which you have in you for finding out the laws to alter nature or circumstances, by these exclamations. “Come back,” I would say kindly to myself, “I know you could not help it. Let us have patience with ourself, and (19) see what we can do.” But it is the custom in our religion to appeal almost exclusively to the conscience. A wretched drunkard tries to awaken himself by tormenting this faculty. He says, I am very wicked; I hate myself; I am a dreadful sinner. He exhausts himself till he too often flies to that very drink again to escape these terrors of his conscience which he has roused to save himself. A butler once denounced himself to his master, in great agony of mind, and before 12 o’clock the next morning when he was to meet his master, to be dismissed, as he had himself entreated, in order to escape a temptation too strong for him, he was drunk again. That we would not have him go on in his course without troubling himself about it, we need hardly say.

Is sin not to feel repentance?

But take the common course of a drunkard. He may abstain once, by force of conscience or even feeling, or some other motive, but his physical state, which has been

accustomed to stimulus, will want it more at the end of 24 hours than of 12. We must consider the whole of the nature on which we wish to work, whether it be our own or any one else's. It is not enough to address yourself to the conscience, while, perhaps, the nerves, the spirits, which have also their laws, may be in a state of severe suffering, from want of the stimulus to which they have been accustomed. But what do we do? Twice a week, we say, we have done nothing we ought to have done, and we have done everything we ought not to have done (in order to make sure of leaving nothing out). And we mean to lead an entirely new life from this moment, to do (20) something entirely different.<sup>20</sup> But it is very certain that we do not, because we intend to say the same thing again in the afternoon.<sup>21</sup> The science of moral recovery is at least as intricate as that of physical recovery. Imagine if a man with a broken leg, or an inflammation of the lungs, were to say, there is not a fibre in my body that does not give me pain – every function I have is going wrong; but I mean, as soon as it is half-past twelve, to walk about as if nothing had happened. I propose that nothing more shall be the matter with me (intending to repeat the same thing at a quarter before three). You would say, he may well say the same thing again, because there *will* be no difference. His intellects are affected, as well as his frame.

Of all the fatal mistakes that have been made to impede the progress of the human race, this perhaps has been the most fatal, viz., the superstition that we have nothing to do but to exert the will, as it is called, and all former error will be rectified, all future good secured. If this mistake had been made with regard to the physical health, mankind would probably have come to an end. If we believed that a man with one diseased lung has nothing to do but to will, in order to have two good ones; if we believed that a man when he is hungry has nothing to do but to will in order to eat, the human race would soon perish. Are not the laws of the spiritual world at least as numerous, important, and worthy of study as those of the physical?

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20 Paraphrase of part of the Confession of Sin: "Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done;* And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; *That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,* To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

21 In Miss Nightingale's days most people went to church on each Sunday for Mattins (morning prayer) and for Evensong (evening prayer) only.



What are the “means of grace?”

But we don’t *only* say “will!” There are “means appointed” for our “growth in grace.”<sup>22</sup> The means usually enumerated are, self-ex-(21)amination, observance of the Sabbath, public worship, including the communion of the Lord’s supper, reading the Scriptures, and prayer.

1. Self-examination.

Self-examination. – We undertake the practice, over and over again, of examining ourselves once or twice a day, and insensibly leave it off from dislike to the operation. Which of us who have ever tried it cannot tell the same tale? Suppose you were to say to a man afflicted with tic-douloureux, now twice a day examine yourself diligently for one quarter of an hour (that is not much) to see where the pain lies, whether it is better or worse. And be very sorry for it, remember to be very sorry for yourself while you are doing it, and reproach yourself bitterly that you are no better. Then make a resolution that you will be quite well for the rest of the day, and observe yourself carefully from time to time to see whether you are keeping your resolution. Why, it would be better to try and forget your pain or your sins altogether than to do this. But no, it would not, anything is better than to be altogether careless, because the pain you feel may drive you at last to take some means for cure.

2. Sunday.

With regard to the Sabbath, one day in seven set apart by common consent of all the world for finding out the spiritual laws of God is indeed an inestimable advantage. We should like to have two. Even in discovering the material laws which everybody acknowledges to be very important, how many hindrances people find, in consequence of the consent of mankind not being with them. Some are hindered by hunger, others by the “laws of conventional (23) society,” unfortunately not the same as those of God. Those who are prevented by the fear of starvation, and those

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22 See Samuel Seyer (1757-1831): “In order to attain that sanctification of the spirit and holiness required of christians, *there are certain means appointed* by the spirit of God whereby *we are to gain a growth in grace* and increase in christian knowledge. The chief of these are the sacraments, reading of Gods word, prayer, and meditation. By the use of these means the soul as truly gains spiritual nourishment, as the body does proper support by natural food , and as the latter for want of due sustenance must necessarily grow faint, and languid, and at last consume and die; so the former without the help of these means will grow insensible to divine things, and at last lose it’s union with God in which it’s spiritual life consists.” (S. Seyer. *Essays on the important truths contained in the holy Scriptures*. A. Millar & C. Richardson, 1761, p. 53)

who are frightened by that of being “thought odd,” are therefore equally out of the pale of true discoverers. Now, a Sunday which is granted by universal consent both to the very poor and the very rich is inestimable. Only let us use it as such.

3. Worship.

As to a “common worship” as it is called, instead of having it once a week, we would have it every day, twice a day. The word “*worship*,” however, seems hardly to express what God wants of us. He does not want to be praised, to be adored, to have his glory sung. We can scarcely conceive a good man, a very limited edition of God’s perfections, wishing it. How inappropriate, then, to Him all this praise! And many only give it, because they are afraid of Him, for how can He be really thought good, with such qualities as are ascribed to Him, vanity, anger, revenge.

What He desires seems to be accordance with Him, that we should be one with Him, not prostrate before Him.

Is humility an essential of goodness in man?

It is said that the parallel between a good man listening to the singing of his own praises, and God doing the same, is no parallel, because humility is one of the essentials of a good man. What is meant by humility we do not well know. Great harm is done by striving after what is called “humility,” by checking what is called “pride.” It is a cry of nature to wish to be something – to do something. To check it is to check the appetite for activity which God has placed in our nature. (23)

What is humility.

Humility is thinking meanly of ourselves, placing ourselves below others, and being willing that others should do so too.

Is not this rather absurdity and untruth? What I want is a true estimate of myself, not a false one. I want to see myself as God sees me. If a man with great physical strength were to say to one who has none, you are stronger than I, you can cut down that tree better than I: we should. say “how wrong!” If Macaulay<sup>23</sup> were to persuade himself (for the sake of being humble) that he could not write history so well as any of the people at that moment walking down the Strand,<sup>24</sup> would that be true or

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23 Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) was a British historian. His *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second* was a seminal and paradigmatic example of Whig historiography, and its literary style has remained an object of praise since its publication, including subsequent to the widespread condemnation of its historical contentions which became popular in the 20th century. (Wikipedia)

24 Street in the City of London.

desirable? The maxim, let a man know what he can do, and do it,<sup>25</sup> is not compatible with that of humility. Humility, if logically carried into our conduct, would lead to our giving up everything we do into the hands of those whom we are to strive to think can do it better than ourselves.

Are we to have pride, then, instead of humility.

Pride and conceit are not qualities either which will contribute to our oneness with God. But pride and conceit become impossible when we have a knowledge of the laws of God. If his laws have made me what I am, if without them I could not be what I am, and with them cannot be than what I am, how can I possibly be proud of what I am? They do away equally with pride and humiliation. The laws of God have brought me where I am. His laws will carry me through.

You wish to believe that God has done everything. We wish to prove it. You say, how horrible for man to think that he has merit – that his virtues are self-derived. We say, too, it is un-(24)true, for God does everything (by means and inducements).

4. Bible.

What is morality to be referred to? Is it not to our sense of right? But we have referred it to a book, which book makes many contradictory assertions. Discoveries

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25 Reference to Fourierism, the economic, political, and social beliefs first espoused by French intellectual Charles Fourier (1772-1837). In contrast to the thoroughly secular communitarianism of his contemporary Robert Owen (1771-1858), Charles Fourier's thinking starts from a presumption of the existence of God and a divine social order on Earth in accordance with the will of God. Fourier saw himself as a figure of world-historical importance akin to Isaac Newton (1643-1727) for having identified the fundamental force driving social development, which he called "passional attraction" (attraction passionelle).

Fourier believed that the structure of the world – that is the economic, political, and social system – inhibited humanity from the pursuit of their God-given individual passions, thereby preventing mankind from achieving a state of universal harmony. Rather than seeking to mold individuals to fit the existing form of economic, political, and social life, as had been the traditional goal of the educational and what we today call the socialization process, Fourier believed that instead the form of economic, political, and social life should itself be altered to fit the inherent passions of the individual, since these economic and social structures were man-made and not God-given. Through conscious understanding of this process, which Fourier characterized as "social science," new economic and social formations called "Associations" could be created, structured in such a way as to allow individuals to follow their passions and in this way advance towards the state of universal harmony. (Wikipedia)

are being made every day in physical science; but in the most important science of all no discoveries are made or can be made. Why? because the book is final. Supposing Moses had written a book about mechanics, and this book was regarded as the ultimatum, we should have made no progress in mechanics. Aristotle was supposed to have written such a book,<sup>26</sup> and for 1,800 years people disbelieved their own actual experience before their eyes, because they could quote chapter and verse of Aristotle to a contrary effect. Yes, with the sound of two weights falling simultaneously in their ears, they maintained that the weight which was ten times heavier than the other fell in one-tenth of the time of the other, *because Aristotle had said so*. Is not this an exactly parallel case?

Religion under this view, it will be said, will consist partly of assertions considered to be proved, partly of subjects for further consideration among mankind. Much is to be learnt from the Bible, and probably from all books which have been accepted by large portions of mankind as inspired;<sup>27</sup> but man's capabilities of observation, thought, and feeling exercised on the universe, past, present, and to come, are the source of religious knowledge. But how may we ever hope to accomplish such improvement of our capabilities? Let us look at (25) our foundations for hope. We have principles to go upon:

- I. Religion is discoverable to man through the exercise of his nature.
- II. Life ought to be the manifestation of the religion so discovered.
- III. It is possible to man to make life the manifestation of religion.

#### 5. Prayer.

In the doctrine of prayer unbelief and inconsistency reign triumphant in England. Did we really believe in the efficacy of prayer (in the sense of *asking*), there are things which we wish for so much that we should be all day and night upon our

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26 Reference to *Mechanica*, a book written by Aristoteles (384-322 BC). (Wikipedia)

27 Miss Nightingale endorsed the view of many biblical scholars of her time that we should read the bible like any other book, or as professor Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893) put it: "When interpreted *like any other book*, by the same rules of evidence and the same canons of criticism, the Bible will still remain unlike any other book; its beauty will be freshly seen, as of a picture which is restored after many ages to its original state; it will create a new interest and make for itself a new kind of authority by the life which is in it. (...) No one can form any notion from what we see around us, of the power which Christianity might have if it were at one with the conscience of man, and not at variance with his intellectual convictions. There, a world weary of the heat and dust of controversy – of speculations about God and man – weary too of the rapidity of its own motion, would return home and find rest." (B. Jowett. *On the Interpretation of Scripture*. In: *Essays and Reviews*. London, 1860, p. 377)

knees till we obtained them. But how many do we ever see on their knees in England? except twice a-day, when they say what is called a “form of prayer.” That is a good word – a *form* of prayer. The Evangelical Germans are different, they really kneel down in the middle of what they are saying, and go on, in the same voice, “Now, dear Lord, give me” so and so. They believe in prayer, and they act upon their belief. But we say we believe, and we do not. We care so little about it that we don’t even note what the effect is which follows our prayers. We don’t look to see whether it comes or not. The Prussian mystics believe that prayer has a distinct objective effect, that it influences an external will to do something for them which is beyond their control, and they act accordingly. We are not quite sure whether it does or not; but we think it as well to try and take the chance.

What is belief in prayer?

A clergyman once asked to be told a certain fact, on the plea that without such information he would not know which of two things to pray for. (26) Here was a distinct practical belief. He believed that if he gave God certain information, and asked for one set of things, a certain definite effect would follow, different from what would follow, if he informed God of something else. This is real belief, logically pursued to its practical consequences. But this we rarely find in England.<sup>28</sup>

28 **FN:** Mademoiselle du Vigean requested S. Vincent de Paul *not* to pray for her conversion, because, he having “*credit* with God,” she might be converted against her will. But S. Vincent continuing to pray without her consent, she became a nun (according to her own account). [1] This is real practical belief.

[1] See Michel Ulysse Maynard (1814-1893): “Une prédiction plus remarquable encore est celle dont fut l’objet mademoiselle Marthe du Vigean. La marquise sa mère étant malade, Vincent l’alla visiter, et, à défaut de la marquise, il fut reconduit par la jeune Marthe. Mademoiselle, lui dit le saint dans le trajet, vous n’êtes pas faite pour le monde. – Moi, répondit la jeune fille, je n’ai aucun goût pour la vie religieuse, et je vous prie fort, mon père, de ne pas demander à Dieu, vous “si en crédit auprès de lui, qu’il me fasse changer de sentiments.” En effet, à cette époque, la jeune Du Vigean, célébrée par Voiture et tous les poètes pour sa beauté et aussi pour sa vertu, était l’objet de la seule passion qu’ait jamais ressentie peut-être le duc d’Enghien, le futur grand Condé, et elle n’avait pas perdu tout espoir de l’épouser un jour. A sa réponse si franche et si naïve, Vincent sourit et ne répliqua rien. Mais, à quelque temps de là, Gondé n’ayant pu rompre son mariage avec Glaire-Clémence Maillé de Brézé, nièce du cardinal de Richelieu, si digne de lui, du reste, pour son dévouement et son courage, et Marthe Du Vigean ne voulant être à lui que par une union légitime, ils se séparèrent, et, en 1647, mademoiselle Du Vigean, âgée alors de 25 ans, se retira au couvent des Carmélites de la rue Saint-Jacques, où elle mourut, jeune encore, en 1665. C’est trois mois après la mort de Vincent, qu’elle rendit et signa de sa main ce

At least it will be allowed that belief in the objective effects of prayer, in its changing something in the will of God, is less often found than it was. But belief in its subjective influence, in its changing something in our own wills, this, it will be said, still exists.

Is there a “reflex” action in prayer?

A religious mind in prayer *is* already observing the laws of God; is already *one with* Him. But to send a drunkard or a profligate to prayer, would probably be to send him back to vice. He would be disgusted with an employment, for which he was so little in tune, which had no relish for him.

What is the “power of prayer”?

I gave up praying, in the sense of *asking*, from experience, and not from theory. When I was young, I could not understand what people meant by “their thoughts wandering in prayer.” I asked for what I really wished, and really wished for what I asked. And my thoughts wandered no more than those of a mother would wander, who was supplicating her Sovereign for her son’s (27) reprieve from execution. The Litany<sup>29</sup> was not long enough for me. I wished for all those things, and many more; and tried to cram in as many requests as I could, before the *spell* at the end came in the form of St. Chrysostom’s prayer<sup>30</sup>. I liked the morning service much better than the afternoon, because we asked for more things. In private prayer I wrote down what I asked for, specified the time by which I prayed that it might come, continued in prayer for it, and looked to see whether it came. It never did.

Does God ever grant a definite request directly?

I have papers upon papers, “by the 7th of July I pray that I may be” so and so. When the 7th of July came, I looked, and I was not.

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témoignage.” (M.U. Maynard. *St. Vincent de Paul: sa vie, son temps, ses oeuvres, son influence*. Paris, 1886, 4:449-450)

29 A litany, in Christian worship and some forms of Judaic worship, is a form of prayer used in services and processions, and consisting of a number of petitions. The word comes through Latin ‘litanía’ from Ancient Greek λιτανεία (litaneía), which in turn comes from λιτή (litê), meaning “supplication”. (Wikipedia)

30 Prayer of St. Chrysostom: “Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests; Fulfill now O Lord the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.” (*Book of Common Prayer*)

Is prayer ever answered?

Sometimes, indeed, I was, but then I knew very well how it was, and that it would have been just the same if I had not asked; I could not bamboozle my own consciousness and say, as in the case of a sick man, “if I had not prayed, this laudanum<sup>31</sup> would not have given me sleep, or my doctor would not have thought of it;” or else, “this sleep is the effect of my prayer, and would have been, whether I had taken the laudanum or not.”

I always prayed for something definite, specifying the how, the when, and the where of my want. People generally take refuge in the indefiniteness of their prayers (so that they cannot say whether they have been answered or not), from the disappointment of finding out that God has not heard them.

I was always miserable if I was not at church when the Litany was said. How ill-natured it is, if you believe in prayer, not to ask for everybody what they want. If the burning of the “Amazon”<sup>32</sup> had taken place, and I had not prayed at the Litany (28) the Sunday before, with all my heart, for “all that travel by land or by water,”<sup>33</sup> I should have felt bitter remorse, and believed that their blood was upon my head, in proportion to my share among the prayer-sayers in England. I well remember when an uncle died, the care I took, on behalf of my aunt and cousins, to be always present in spirit at the petition for “the fatherless children and widows;”<sup>34</sup> and when

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31 Laudanum is a tincture of opium containing approximately 10% powdered opium by weight (the equivalent of 1% morphine). Reddish-brown and extremely bitter, laudanum contains almost all of the opium alkaloids, including morphine and codeine. Laudanum was historically used to treat a variety of conditions, but its principal use was as a pain medication and cough suppressant. Until the early 20th century, laudanum was sold without a prescription and was a constituent of many patent medicines. Today, laudanum is recognized as addictive and is strictly regulated and controlled as such throughout most of the world. (Wikipedia)

32 RMS Amazon was a British wooden hulled three-masted barque, paddle steamer and Royal Mail Ship owned by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. On Friday, 2 January, Amazon, commanded by Captain William Symons, loaded mail, embarked 50 passengers and late that day she sailed for the Caribbean. After entering the Bay of Biscay on Sunday 4 January the ship caught fire and sank about 110 miles west-southwest of the Isles of Scilly. Reports of the total number of dead vary from 105 to 115. A national appeal, championed by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, raised money for widows, orphans and survivors. (Wikipedia)

33 “That it may please thee to preserve *all who travel by land or by water*; all women in the perils of childbirth, all sick persons, and young children; and to show thy pity upon all prisoners and captives; We beseech thee to hear us good Lord. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

34 “That it may please thee to defend and provide for, *the fatherless children, and*

Confalonieri<sup>35</sup> was in the Austrian prison of Spielberg<sup>36</sup>, at that for “prisoners and captives.”<sup>37</sup> My conscience pricked me a little whether this should extend to those who were in prison for murder and debt, but I supposed that I might pray for them spiritually. I could not pray for George IV<sup>38</sup>. I thought the people very good who

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widows, and all who are desolate and oppressed; We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

- 35 Count Federico Confalonieri (1785-1846) was an Italian revolutionist. On the outbreak of the Piedmontese revolt (1821) the Austrian authorities made some arrests, and, through the treachery of one conspirator and the foolishness of others, discovered the plot, if it could so be called, and arrested Silvio Pellico and Maroncelli and afterwards Confalonieri. A long trial now began, and Confalonieri, outwitted by the astute examining magistrate Salvotti, contradicted himself, made fatal admissions, even compromised others, and together with several companions was condemned to death for high treason, but through the intercession of his wife and father, who went to Vienna to plead his cause in person, the emperor Francis commuted the penalty to perpetual imprisonment in the fortress of Spielberg (1824). His wife died in 1830, and in 1836, on the death of the emperor Francis, he was pardoned and exiled to America. He came back to Europe after a year's absence, and in 1840 obtained permission to return to Milan to see his dying father. He himself, broken in health and spirits, died on 10 December 1846, too soon to see the accomplishment of Italian freedom. (Wikipedia)
- 36 Spielberg is a castle on the hilltop in Brno, Southern Moravia. From 822 on, specially constructed cells for "state prisoners" in the northern wing of the former fortress were filled with Italian patriots known as Carbonari, who had fought for the unification, freedom and independence of their country. The poet Silvio Pellico, who served a full eight years here, made the Spielberg prison famous all over Europe with his book *Le mie prigioni* (My prisons). (Wikipedia)
- 37 “That it may please thee to preserve all who travel by land or by water; all women in the perils of childbirth, all sick persons, and young children; and to show thy pity upon *all prisoners and captives*; We beseech thee to hear us good Lord. (*Book of Common Prayer*)
- 38 George IV (1762-1839) was the first English monarch (1820-1830) during Miss Nightingale's lifetime. George's charm and culture earned him the title "the first gentleman of England", but his dissolute way of life and poor relationships with his parents and his wife, Caroline of Brunswick, earned him the contempt of the people and dimmed the prestige of the monarchy. He excluded Caroline from the coronation and asked the government to introduce the unpopular Pains and Penalties Bill in an unsuccessful attempt to divorce her. George's ministers found his behaviour selfish, unreliable and irresponsible. At all times he was much under the influence of favourites. He did not provide national leadership in time of crisis, nor act as a role model for his people. Taxpayers were angry at his wasteful spending during the Napoleonic Wars. (Wikipedia)



prayed for him, and wondered whether he could have been much worse if he had not been prayed for. William IV<sup>39</sup>. I prayed for a little. But when Victoria<sup>40</sup> came to the throne, I prayed for her in a rapture of feeling, and my thoughts never wandered.

In short, I believed what I believed about prayer, and I should have thought it as disrespectful to God not to wait for the answer as if I had been a servant, which I truly believed myself, sent on a message.

I thought it rather absurd to pray every night, "Give us this *day* our daily bread,"<sup>41</sup> but I supposed that people were not attending to what they said, and that they meant, give us *to-morrow* our daily bread.

Once a friend of mine who died of scarlet fever, showed an intense anxiety to live through the Sunday, in order to be prayed for in church. She died immediately after the service.

It did strike me as odd, sometimes, that we (29) should pray to be delivered

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39 William IV (1795-1837) was the second monarch during Miss Nightingale's lifetime. William was king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and king of Hanover from 1830 until his death in 1837. William served in the Royal Navy in his youth, spending time in North America and the Caribbean, and was later nicknamed the "Sailor King". As his two older brothers died without leaving legitimate issue, he inherited the throne when he was 64 years old. His reign saw several reforms: the poor law was updated, child labour restricted, slavery abolished in nearly all of the British Empire, and the British electoral system refashioned by the Reform Act 1832. At the time of his death William had no surviving legitimate children, but he was survived by eight of the ten illegitimate children he had by the actress Dorothea Jordan, with whom he cohabited for twenty years. Late in life, he married and apparently remained faithful to the young princess who would become Queen Adelaide. William was succeeded by his niece Queen Victoria in the United Kingdom, and his brother King Ernest Augustus in Hanover. (Wikipedia)

40 Victoria (1819-1901) was the third monarch (1837-1901) during Miss Nightingale's lifetime. Victoria was queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. On 1 May 1876, she adopted the additional title of empress of India. Known as the Victorian era, her reign of 63 years and seven months was longer than that of any of her predecessors. It was a period of industrial, cultural, political, scientific, and military change within the United Kingdom, and was marked by a great expansion of the British Empire. (Wikipedia)

41 See the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, *thy will be done*, on earth as it is in heaven. *Give us this day our daily bread*. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

“from plague, pestilence, and famine,”<sup>42</sup> when all the common sewers ran into the Thames, and fevers haunted undrained land, and the districts which cholera would visit could be pointed out. I thought that cholera came that we might remove these causes, not pray that God would remove the cholera.

At last, not from thinking what was likely to be, but from observing whether prayer was answered, and finding it was not, it occurred to me that this was not God’s plan, that His scheme for us was not that He should give us what we asked for, but that mankind should obtain it for mankind; that we were not paupers asking at a Poor Law Board<sup>43</sup> for relief, but men working for themselves and their fellow-creatures.

It always comes as a surprise when a prayer *is* answered. We record it in little books. We print “Encouragement to Prayer;” “Extraordinary Answers to Prayer.” A man prays for “three and sixpence” over night, and it comes by post the next morning; straightway it makes its appearance as being *extraordinary* in “Illustrations of Faith,” or some such like book. But is it not rather extraordinary, if there are so many millions praying twice a day all through their lives, and if that *is* the way in which God imparts His gifts, that there should be so few of these instances, instead of so many?

Prayer or communion, accordance with God, our chief support.

It will be said, if we are to have no prayer, we lose our chief support and comfort in this painful world.

Never, never let us be understood to mean that there is *no* communion with the One Perfect. Is there nothing but asking? Can it be that (30) man has nothing to say to the Perfect Spirit of Love, in whose presence he is always dwelling; to the Spirit of Power, of Wisdom, in whom is his trust, in the struggles which convulse his life; to whom he refers the bliss of existence to which he feels himself destined? Man is capable of love, reverence, sympathy with right, and truth, and goodness: shall he not feel these towards the only Being who can give them full exercise?

How are we to speak to God, if not in prayer?

How are we to speak to Him, if we are not to pray? it will be asked. We cannot dogmatise on this highest intercourse. There can be no “form of prayer” which will

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42 “From lightning and tempest; from earthquake, fire, and flood; *from plague, pestilence, and famine*, Good Lord, deliver us.” (*Book of Common Prayer*)

43 The Poor Law Board was established in the United Kingdom in 1847 as a successor body to the Poor Law Commission overseeing the administration of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834. (Wikipedia)

be the voice from all hearts. Yet, (to man in his true state,) to have intercourse with God, to be at one with Him, to feel devoted to His purpose, is the highest happiness that man can enjoy, is essential to give reality to every other interest. Unless we know what we are working for, and whom we are working with, we shall work with no zest or zeal. To be without God in the world leaves every joy without brightness, to be with Him makes every sorrow in some sense bliss.

But what is the intercourse we now have with God? Prayer, in its present sense, is to give utterance, at stated times, to a form of flattery and to selfish or unwise requests. It is, as in the Litany, to say to God, "Don't go this way, don't go that way," till we have marked out the whole line which He ought to go, and interdicted to Him the fulfilling of almost every law which He has made.

What ought to be our intercourse with God? It is not well with any man who does not desire (31) such intercourse. What it is to be in private, each enlightened man's nature must tell him. What it is to be in public, let us try to learn each other's hearts and discover – in order that when that solemn period of an eternal existence called a day, begins, we may meet with our fellow-creatures, and be sent forth to it with all that is within us of divine roused to activity by words of truth addressed to the reason, by music from the human voice, expressing the wish to go forth with right purpose, with love and gladness to God's appointed work, by sympathy with our brothers and sisters in this preparation for it, by true emotion resolved into true work; in order that, when evening comes, we may again meet to thank God and hail our fellow-workers before we sleep.

If we ask, we want an answer.

We want, it is said, the direct personal communication with God and Christ, that we may ask and hear them answer. Do not take from us, is the cry, our Saviour, the Christ who died upon the cross for us.

And does not God do much more than die upon the cross for us? Is He not in every one of us, going through sin and suffering, "descending into hell"<sup>44</sup> with us? Does he not suffer, not once for us, but every day in us? And can we want anything more than communion with the perfect and eternal Father?

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44 In Christian theology, the Harrowing of Hell (Latin: *Descensus Christi ad Inferos*, "the descent of Christ into Hell") is the triumphant descent of Christ into Hell (or Hades) between the time of his Crucifixion and his Resurrection when he brought salvation to all of the righteous who had died since the beginning of the world, or, as the third article of the 39 artikelen in the Anglican Church puts it: "Article III: Of the going down of Christ into Hell: As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell." (Wikipedia)

We want communion with a divine brother.

I want, it is said, communion with Christ, my divine brother, who feels for me.

And you will have it with the Son, the divine in man, with many Christs, who suffer for all mankind.

Does God want "intercession" from the Son?

But we want a Son "to make intercession for us."

Do you suppose that Christ is ever "making intercession" for us? It is true He "ever liveth," to work for us, but – to "intercede"<sup>45</sup> for us? He had better not exist at all, God had better not exist at all, than be employed in this way; the one in persuading, the other in being persuaded.

How can man receive an answer from the Eternal?

But we want an answer. It is no comfort to say that God may hear me, but He does not speak to me. Man wants an answer.

Can he receive it from the Eternal when he cannot comprehend what eternity is, – from the Infinite and Perfect, when infinity and perfection are beyond his understanding? Were God to speak to him, could he hear? Were God to tell him His plans, could he comprehend them?

Do we ever hear God speak?

But God does not refuse to answer the longing; devoted spirit, which says, Speak, Lord, for thy loving child heareth.<sup>46</sup> He hears as the Father; He answers as the Son, and as the Holy Spirit. I could not understand God, if He were to speak to me. But the Holy Spirit, the Divine in me, tells me what I am to do. I am conscious of a voice that I can hear, telling me more truth and good than I *am*. As I rise to *be* more truly and more rightly, this voice is ever beyond and above me, calling to more and more good.

If prayer is not asking, What is it?

But you have to invent what it says.

We believe that each man has his Holy Ghost; that is, the best part of himself

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45 Heb. 7:25: <sup>25</sup>Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to *make intercession for them*.

46 1 Sam. 3:9-10: <sup>9</sup>Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, *Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth*. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. <sup>10</sup>And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, *Speak; for thy servant heareth*.

inspired by God. But whether it is I who speak, or whether it is God speaking to me, I do not know. We call upon our fellow-creatures to study this subject. That prayer, as *asking*, will entirely cease, we are certain. If we give up *asking*, *confessing* our sins and formal *praising*, will it be said, what remains to (33) be expressed to God? Surely, infinite are the sympathies, infinite the thoughts and feelings, of man towards the Perfect Spirit, with whom he desires to be one.

If, though I have much to say to God, He has nothing to say to me,  
what does it profit me?

The Perfect exists in three relations to other existence.

1. As the Creator of all other existence, of its purpose, and of the means of fulfilling its purpose. This is the Father.
2. As partaken in these other modes of existence. This is the Son.
3. As manifested to these other modes of existence. This is the Holy Ghost.

What is the ground for belief?

What reason, it will be asked, is there for a belief so fanciful? We revert to what we have formerly said.

Grant a perfect being, as inferred from what is what has been, and what may thence be deduced is to come, and it follows that, if the two former of these relations be denied, the perfection we have asserted is denied.

The Being would not be perfectly benevolent, who, being omnipotent, did not will other modes of existence, with the purpose of producing happiness. The Being would not be perfectly wise, who did not will the means to exist for fulfilling his purpose.

Neither would the Being be perfect, who did not cause others to partake in that which constitutes well-being.

We find that that which constitutes well-being of the highest kind is the exercise of goodness, wisdom, power, those attributes which we have ascribed to God as existing in perfection in Him. These being the essentials of the highest mode (34) of well-being, God would not be perfect unless He caused other beings to partake in them.

To say, then, that God is perfect is to say that He exists in those two relations, which relations have perhaps been felt when He has been spoken of as the Father and the Son.

The third relation seems to consist in our consciousness of the existence of these attributes, in the communication which, if we seek it, these attributes hold with us. Ask of perfect wisdom, you will have an answer above and beyond yourself. Speak,