

# FRIEDRICH MAX MÜLLER

THOUGHTS ON LIFE AND  
RELIGION

Friedrich Max Müller  
**Thoughts on Life and Religion**

«Public Domain»

**Müller F.**

Thoughts on Life and Religion / F. Müller — «Public Domain»,

## Содержание

PREFACE	5
THE ART OF LIFE	6
THE BEAUTIFUL	7
THE BIBLE	8
CHILDREN	10
CHRIST, THE LOGOS	11
CHRISTIANITY	14
DEATH	19
THE DEITY	23
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	27

# **F. Max Müller**

## **Thoughts on Life and Religion / An Aftermath from the Writings of The Right Honourable / Professor Max Müller**

### **PREFACE**

This book has been prepared in accordance with a wish expressed by many known and unknown admirers of my husband's writings, who desire to possess in a portable form the passages that have specially appealed to them in his different works, and in the *Life and Letters*.

I have taken this opportunity of adding extracts from private letters, and from the writings he left unfinished, which would not otherwise have become known to any but his own family or a few intimate friends.

Those who have read the *Life and Letters*, do not need to be told that Max Müller lived from his earliest years in the firm conviction that all is wisely ordered in this life, and 'all for our real good, though we do not always see it, and though we cannot venture to fathom the wisdom guiding our steps through life.'

To others his unswerving trust and faith as shown in these extracts may be a revelation, for he seldom talked on such subjects. This trust and faith gave him strength through the bitter struggles of his early life, taught him resignation during the years when the dearest wish of his heart seemed unattainable, supported him later when those he tenderly loved were snatched from him by death, and upheld him in his last long and depressing illness.

My earnest desire is that this little book may prove a help and comfort to many exposed to like trials, and strengthen those whose path now stretches before them as a sunny avenue, to meet the sorrows that almost surely await them as life advances.

*Georgina Max Müller.*

*June 11, 1905.*

## THE ART OF LIFE

To learn to understand one another is the great art of life, and to 'agree to differ' is the best lesson of the comparative science of religion.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

There is a higher kind of music which we all have to learn, if our life is to be harmonious, beautiful, and useful. There are certain intervals between the young and the old which must be there, which are meant to be there, without which life would be monotonous; but out of these intervals and varieties the true art of life knows how to build up perfect harmonies.... Even great sorrow may be a blessing, by drawing some of our affections away from this life to a better life ... of which, it is true, we know nothing, but from which, when we see the wisdom and love that underlie this life, we may hope everything. We are meant to hope and to trust, and that is often much harder than to see and to know.... The greatest of all arts is the art of life, and the best of all music the harmony of spirits. There are many little rules to be learnt for giving harmony and melody to our life, but the thorough bass must be—love.

*Life.*

One thing is necessary above all things in order to live peaceably with people, that is, in Latin, *Humanitas*, German, *Menschlichkeit*. It is difficult to describe, but it is to claim as little as possible from others, neither an obliging temper nor gratitude, and yet to do all one can to please others, yet without expecting them always to find it out. As men are made up of contradictions they are the more grateful and friendly the less they see that we expect gratitude and friendliness. Even the least cultivated people have their good points, and it is not only far better but far more interesting if one takes trouble to find out the best side and motives of people, rather than the worst and most selfish.... Life is an art, and more difficult than Sanscrit or anything else.

*Life.*

We become chiefly what we are more through others than through ourselves, and happy is the man whose path in life leads him only by good men and brings him together with good men. How often we forget in judging others the influences under which they have grown up. How can one expect a child to be truthful when he sees how servants, yes often parents, practise deceit. How many children hear from those to whom they look up, expressions, principles, and prudent rules of life, which consciously or unconsciously exercise an influence on the young life of the child. Yet with how little of loving introspection we pass our judgments.

*MS.*

If you want to be at peace with yourself, do not mind being at war with the world.

*MS.*

## THE BEAUTIFUL

Is the Beautiful without us, or is it not rather within us? What we call sweet and bitter is our own sweetness, our own bitterness, for nothing can be sweet or bitter without us. Is it not the same with the Beautiful? The world is like a rich mine, full of precious ore, but each man has to assay the ore for himself, before he knows what is gold and what is not. What, then, is the touchstone by which we assay the Beautiful? We have a touchstone for discovering the good. Whatever is unselfish is good. But—though nothing can be beautiful, except what is in some sense or other good, not everything that is good is also beautiful. What, then, is that something which, added to the good, makes it beautiful? It is a great mystery. It is so to us as it was to Plato. We must have gazed on the Beautiful in the dreams of childhood, or, it may be, in a former life, and now we look for it everywhere, but we can never find it,—never at least in all its brightness and fulness again, never as we remember it once as the vision of a half-forgotten dream. Nor do we all remember the same ideal—some poor creatures remember none at all.... The ideal, therefore, of what is beautiful is within us, that is all we know; how it came there we shall never know. It is certainly not of this life, else we could define it; but it underlies this life, else we could not feel it. Sometimes it meets us like a smile of Nature, sometimes like a glance of God; and if anything proves that there is a great past, and a great future, a Beyond, a higher world, a hidden life, it is our faith in the Beautiful.

*Chips.*

## THE BIBLE

The fault is ours, not theirs, if we wilfully misinterpret the language of ancient prophets, if we persist in understanding their words in their outward and material aspect only, and forget that before language had sanctioned a distinction between the concrete and the abstract, between the purely spiritual as opposed to the coarsely material, the intention of the speakers comprehended both the concrete and the abstract, both the material and the spiritual, in a manner which has become quite strange to us, though it lives on in the language of every true poet.

*Science of Religion.*

Canonical books give the reflected image only of the real doctrines of the founder of a new religion; an image always blurred and distorted by the medium through which it had to pass.

*Science of Religion.*

The Old Testament stands on a higher ethical stage than other sacred books,—it certainly does not lose by a comparison with them. I always said so, but people would not believe it. Still, anything to show the truly historical and human character of the Old Testament would be extremely useful in any sense, and would in nowise injure the high character which it possesses.

*Life.*

If we have once learnt to be charitable and reasonable in the interpretation of the sacred books of other religions, we shall more easily learn to be charitable and reasonable in the interpretation of our own. We shall no longer try to force a literal sense on words which, if interpreted literally, must lose their true and original purport; we shall no longer interpret the Law and the Prophets as if they had been written in the English of our own century, but read them in a truly historical spirit, prepared for many difficulties, undiscouraged by many contradictions, which, so far from disproving the authenticity, become to the historian of ancient language and ancient thought the strongest confirmatory evidence of the age, the genuineness, and the real truth of ancient sacred books. Let us but treat our own sacred books with neither more nor less mercy than the sacred books of any other nations, and they will soon regain that position and influence which they once possessed, but which the artificial and unhistorical theories of the last three centuries have wellnigh destroyed.

*Science of Religion.*

By the students of the science of religion the Old Testament can only be looked upon as a strictly historical book by the side of other historical books. It can claim no privilege before the tribunal of history, nay, to claim such a privilege would be to really deprive it of the high position which it justly holds among the most valuable monuments of the distant past. But the authorship of the single books which form the Old Testament, and more particularly the dates at which they were reduced to writing, form the subject of keen controversy, not among critics hostile to religion, but among theologians who treat these questions in the most independent, but at the same time the most candid and judicial, spirit. By this treatment many difficulties, which in former times disturbed the minds of thoughtful theologians, have been removed, and the Old Testament has resumed its rightful place among the most valuable monuments of antiquity.... But this was possible on one condition only, namely, that the Old Testament should be treated simply as an historical book, willing to submit to all the tests of historical criticism to which other historical books have submitted.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

What the student of the history of the continuous growth of religion looks for in vain in the books of the Old Testament, are the successive stages in the development of religious concepts. He

does not know which books he may consider as more ancient or more modern than other books. He asks in vain how much of the religious ideas reflected in certain of these books may be due to ancient tradition, how much to the mind of the latest writer. In Exodus iii. God is revealed to Moses, not only as the supreme, but as the only God. But we are now told by competent scholars that Exodus could not have been written down till probably a thousand years after Moses. How then can we rely on it as an accurate picture of the thoughts of Moses and his contemporaries? It has been said with great truth that 'it is almost impossible to believe that a people who had been emancipated from superstition at the time of the Exodus, and who had been all along taught to conceive God as the one universal Spirit, existing only in truth and righteousness, should be found at the time of Josiah, nearly nine hundred years later, steeped in every superstition.' Still, if the writings of the Old Testament<sup>1</sup> were contemporaneous with the events they relate, this retrogressive movement would have to be admitted. Most of these difficulties are removed, or considerably lessened, if we accept the results of modern Hebrew scholarship, and remember that though the Old Testament may contain very ancient traditions, they probably were not reduced to writing till the middle of the fifth century B.C., and may have been modified by and mixed up with ideas belonging to the time of Ezra.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

May we, or may we not, interpret, as students of language, and particularly as students of Oriental languages, the language of the Old Testament as a primitive and as an Oriental language? May we, or may we not, as true believers, see through the veil which human language always throws over the most sacred mysteries of the soul, and instead of dragging the sublimity of Abraham's trial and Abraham's faith down to the level of a merely preternatural event, recognise in it the real trial of a human soul, the real faith of the friend of God, a faith without stormwinds, without earthquakes and fires, a faith in the still small voice of God?

*MS.*

Is it really necessary to say again and again what the Buddhists have said so often and well, that the act of creation is perfectly inconceivable to any human understanding, and that, if we speak of it at all, we can only do so anthropomorphically or mythologically?

*MS.*

---

<sup>1</sup> The reader is reminded that these lectures were published in 1891, before English theologians had reached any generally received results in the study of the dates of the various parts of the Old Testament. It would be more correct now to substitute 'the Pentateuch' in the above sentence for the 'Old Testament.' For a statement of the modern views of the several periods to which the different books may be assigned, see Canon Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*.

## CHILDREN

All seems so bright and perfect, and quite a new life seems to open before me, in that beloved little child. She helps me to look forward to such a far distance, and opens quite a new view of one's own purpose and duties on earth. It is something new to live for, to train a human soul entrusted to us, and to fit her for her true home beyond this life.

*Life.*

I doubt whether it is possible to take too high a view of life where the education of children is concerned. It is the one great work entrusted to us, it forms the true religion of life. Nothing is small or unimportant in forming the next generation, which is to carry on the work where we have to leave it unfinished. No single soul can be spared—every one is important, every one may be the cause of infinite good, or of infinite mischief, for ever hereafter.

*MS.*

## CHRIST, THE LOGOS

An explanation of *Logos* in Greek philosophy is much simpler than is commonly supposed. It is only needful not to forget that for the Greeks thought and word were inseparable, and that the same term, namely *Logos*, expressed both, though they distinguished the inner from the outer *Logos*. It is one of the most remarkable aberrations of the human mind to imagine that there could be a word without thought, or a thought without word. The two are inseparable; one cannot exist or be even conceived without the other.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

In nearly all religions God remains far from man. I say in nearly all religions: for in Brahmanism the unity, not the union, of the human soul with Brahma is recognised as the highest aim. This unity with Deity, together with phenomenal difference, Jesus expressed in part through the *Logos*, in part through the Son. There is nothing so closely allied as thought and word, Father and Son. They can be distinguished but never separated, for they exist only through each other. In this matter the Greek philosophers considered all creation as the thought or the word of God, and the thought 'man' became naturally the highest *Logos*, realised in millions of men, and raised to the highest perfection in Jesus. As the thought exists only through the word, and the word only through the thought, so also the Father exists only through the Son, and the Son through the Father, and in this sense Jesus feels and declares himself the Son of God, and all men who believe in Him His brethren. This revelation or inspiration came to mankind through Jesus. No one knew the Father except the Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and those to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him. This is the Christian Revelation in the true sense of the word.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

Small as may be the emphasis that we now lay on the *Logos* doctrine, in that period (*i.e.* of the Fourth Gospel) it was the centre, the vital germ, of the whole Christian teaching. If we read any of the writings of Athanasius, or of any of the older church fathers, we shall be surprised to see how all of them begin with the word (*Logos*) as a fixed point of departure, and then proceed to prove that the Word is the Son of God, and finally that the Son of God is Jesus of Nazareth. Religion and philosophy are here closely related.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

What is true Christianity if it be not the belief in the true sonship of man, as the Greek philosophers had rightly surmised, but had never seen realised on earth? Here is the point where the two great intellectual currents of the Aryan and Semitic worlds flow together, in that the long-expected Messiah of the Jews was recognised as the *Logos*, the true Son of God, and that He opened or revealed to every man the possibility to become what he had always been, but had never before apprehended, the highest thought, the Word, the *Logos*, the Son of God.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

Eternal life consists in knowing that men have their Father and their true being in the only true God, and that as sons of this same Father, they are of like nature with God and Christ.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

Why should the belief in the Son give everlasting life? Because Jesus has through His own sonship in God declared to us ours also. This knowledge gives us eternal life through the conviction that we too have something divine and eternal within us, namely, the word of God, the Son whom He hath sent. Jesus Himself, however, is the only begotten Son, the light of the world. He first fulfilled

and illumined the divine idea which lies darkly in all men, and made it possible for all men to become actually what they have always been potentially—sons of God.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

We make the fullest allowance for those who, from reverence for God and for Christ, and from the purest motives, protest against claiming for man the full brotherhood of Christ. But when they say that the difference between Christ and mankind is one of kind, and not of degree, they know not what they do, they nullify the whole of Christ's teaching, and they deny the Incarnation which they pretend to teach.

*Gifford Lectures, IV.*

The Ammergau play must be very powerful. And I feel sure just now nothing is more wanted than to be powerfully impressed with the truly human character of Christ; it has almost vanished under the extravagant phraseology of hymns and creeds, and yet how much greater is the simple story of His unselfish life than all the superlatives of later Theology. If one knows what it is to lose a human soul whom one has loved—how one forgets all that was human, and only clings to what was eternal in it, one can understand the feelings of Christ's friends and disciples when they saw Him crucified and sacrificed, the innocent for those whom He wished to guide and save.

*MS.*

Jesus destroyed the barrier between man and God, the veil that hid the Holiest was withdrawn. Man was taught to see what the prophets had seen dimly, that he was near to God, that God was near to every one of us, that the old Jewish view of a distant Jehovah had arisen from an excess of reverence, had filled the heart of man with fear, but not with love. Jesus did not teach a new doctrine, but He removed an old error, and that error, that slavish fear of God, once removed, the human heart would recover the old trust in God—man would return like a lost son to his lost father, he would feel that if he was anything, he could only be what his God had made him, and wished him to be. And if a name was wanted for that intimate relation between God and man, what better name was there than Father and Son?

*MS.*

Those who deprived Jesus of His real humanity in order to exalt Him above all humanity were really undoing His work. Christ came to teach us, not what He was, but what we are. He had seen that man, unless he learnt himself to be the child of God, was lost. All his aspirations were vain unless they all sprang from one deep aspiration, love of God. And how can we love what is totally different from ourselves? If there is in us a likeness, however small, of God, then we can love our God, feel ourselves drawn towards Him, have our true being in Him. That is the essence of Christianity, that is what distinguishes the Christian from all other religions. And yet that very kernel and seed of Christianity is constantly disregarded, is even looked upon with distrust. Was not Christ, who died for us, more than we ourselves? it is said. Or again, Are we to make ourselves gods? Christ never says that He is different from ourselves; He never taught as a God might teach. His constant teaching is, that we are His brethren, and that we ought to follow His example, to become like Him, because we were meant to be like Him. In that He has come near to God, as near as a son can be to His father; He is what He was meant to be. We are not, and hence the deep difference between Him and us.

*MS.*

Then it is said, Is not Christ God? Yes, He is, but in His own sense, not in the Jewish nor in the Greek sense, nor in the sense which so many Christians attach to that article of their faith. Christ's teaching is that we are of God, that there is in us something divine, that we are nothing if we are not that. He also teaches that through our own fault we are now widely separated from God, as a son may be entirely separated and alienated from his father. But God is a perfect and loving Father—He

knows that we can be weak, and yet be good, and when His lost sons return to Him He receives them and forgives them as only a father can forgive. Let us bestow all praise and glory on Christ as the best son of God. Let us feel how unworthy we are to be called His brothers, and the children of God, but let us not lose Christ, and lose our Father whom He came to show us, by exalting Jesus beyond the place which He claimed Himself. Christ never calls Himself the Father, He speaks of His Father with love, but always with humility and reverence. All attempts to find in human language a better expression than that of son have failed. Theologians and philosophers have tried in vain to define more accurately the relation of Christ to the Father, of man to God. They have called Christ another person of the Godhead. Is that better than Christ's own simple human language, I go to my Father?

*MS.*

Christ has been made so unreal to us, He has been spoken of in such unmeasured terms that it is very difficult to gain Him back, such as He was, without a fear of showing less reverence and love of Him than others. And yet, unreal expressions are always false expressions—nothing is so bad as if we do not fully mean what we say. Of course we know Christ through His friends only, they tell us what He told them—they represent Him as He appeared to them. What fallible judges they often were they do not disguise, and that, no doubt, raises the value of their testimony, but we can only see Him as they saw Him; the fact remains we know very little of Him. Still, enough remains to show that Christ was full of love, that He loved not only His friends, but His enemies. Christ's whole life seems to have been one of love, not of coldness. He perceived our common brotherhood, and what it was based on, our common Father beyond this world, in heaven, as He said.

*MS.*

## CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is Christianity by this one fundamental truth, that as God is the father of man, so truly, and not poetically, or metaphorically only, man is the son of God, participating in God's very essence and nature, though separated from God by self and sin. This oneness of nature between the Divine and the human does not lower the concept of God by bringing it nearer to the level of humanity; on the contrary, it raises the old concept of man and brings it nearer to its true ideal. The true relation between God and man had been dimly foreseen by many prophets and poets, but Christ was the first to proclaim that relation in clear and simple language. He called Himself the Son of God, and He was the firstborn son of God in the fullest sense of that word. But He never made Himself equal with the Father in whom He lived and moved and had His being. He was man in the new and true sense of the word, and in the new and true sense of the word He was God. To my mind man is nothing if He does not participate in the Divine.

*Chips.*

True Christianity lives, not in our belief, but in our love, in our love of God, and in our love of man founded on our love of God.

*Chips.*

True Christianity, I mean the religion of Christ, seems to me to become more and more exalted the more we know and the more we appreciate the treasures of truth hidden in the despised religions of the world. But no one can honestly arrive at that conviction unless he uses honestly the same measure for all religions.

*Science of Religion.*

The position which Christianity from the very beginning took up with regard to Judaism served as the first lesson in comparative theology, and directed the attention even of the unlearned to a comparison of two religions, differing in their conception of the Deity, in their estimate of humanity, in their motives of morality, and in their hope of immortality, yet sharing so much in common that there are but few of the psalms and prayers in the Old Testament in which a Christian cannot heartily join even now, and but few rules of morality which he ought not even now to obey.

*Science of Religion.*

It was exactly because the doctrine of Christ, more than that of the founders of any other religion, offered in the beginning an expression of the highest truths in which Jewish carpenters, Roman publicans, and Greek philosophers could join without dishonesty, that it has conquered the best part of the world. It was because attempts were made from very early times to narrow and stiffen the outward expression of our faith, to put narrow dogma in the place of trust and love, that the Christian Church often lost those who might have been its best defenders, and that the religion of Christ has almost ceased to be what, before all things, it was meant to be, a religion of world-wide love and charity.

*Hibbert Lectures.*

The founder of Christianity insisted again and again on the fact that He came to fulfil, and not to destroy; and we know how impossible it would be to understand the true position of Christianity in the history of the world, the true purport of the 'fullness of time,' unless we always remember that its founder was born and lived and died an Israelite. Many of the parables and sayings of the New Testament have now been traced back, not only to the Old Testament, but to the Talmud also; and

we know how difficult it was at first for any but a Jew to understand the true meaning of the new Christian doctrine.

*Gifford Lectures, I.*

There is no religion in the whole world which in simplicity, in purity of purpose, in charity, and true humanity, comes near to that religion which Christ taught to His disciples. And yet that very religion, we are told, is being attacked on all sides. The principal reason for this omnipresent unbelief is, I believe, the neglect of our foundations, the disregard of our own bookless religion, the almost disdain of Natural Religion. Even bishops will curl their lips when you speak to them of that natural and universal *religion* which existed before the advent of our historical religions, nay, without which all historical religions would have been as impossible as poetry is without language. Natural religion may exist and does exist without revealed religion—revealed religion without natural religion is an utter impossibility.

*Gifford Lectures, I.*

There can be no doubt that free inquiry has swept away, and will sweep away, many things which have been highly valued, nay, which were considered essential by many honest and pious minds. And yet who will say that true Christianity, Christianity which is known by its fruits, is less vigorous now than it has ever been before? There have been discussions in the Christian Church from the time of the Apostles to our own times. We have passed through them ourselves, we are passing through them now.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

When we think of the exalted character of Christ's teaching, may we not ask ourselves once more, What would He have said if He had seen the fabulous stories of His birth and childhood, or if He had thought that His Divine character would ever be made to depend on the historical truth of the *Evangelia Infantiae*?

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

Much of the mere outworks of Christianity cannot hold the ground on which they have been planted, they have to be given up by force at last, when they ought to have been given up long before; and when given up at last, they often tear away with them part of the strength of that faith of which they had previously been not only the buttress outside, but a part of the living framework.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

What we call Christianity embraces several fundamental doctrines, but the most important of them all is the recognition of the Divine in man, or, as we call it, the belief in the Divinity of the Son. The belief in God, let us say in God the Father, or the Creator and Ruler of the world, had been elaborated by the Jews, and most of the civilised and uncivilised nations of the world had arrived at it. But when the Founder of Christianity called God His Father, and not only His Father, but the Father of all mankind, He did no longer speak the language of either Jews or Greeks. To the Jews, to claim Divine sonship for man would have been blasphemy. To the Greeks, Divine sonship would have meant no more than a miraculous, a mythological event. Christ spoke a new language, a language liable, no doubt, to be misunderstood, as all language is; but a language which to those who understood it has imparted a new glory to the face of the whole world. It is well known how this event, the discovery of the Divine in man, which involves a complete change in the spiritual condition of mankind, and marks the great turning-point in the history of the world, has been surrounded by a legendary halo, has been obscured, has been changed into mere mythology, so that its real meaning has often been quite forgotten, and has to be discovered again by honest and fearless seeking. Christ had to speak the language of His time, but He gave a new meaning to it, and yet that language has often retained its old discarded meaning in the minds of His earliest, nay sometimes of His latest disciples also.

The Divine sonship of which He speaks was not blasphemy as the Jews thought, nor mythology as so many of His own followers imagined, and still imagine. Father and Son, divine and human, were like the old bottles that could hardly hold the new wine; and yet how often have the old broken bottles been preferred to the new wine that was to give new life to the world.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

If we have learnt to look upon Christianity, not as something unreal and unhistorical, but as an integral part of history, of the historical growth of the human race, we can see how all the searchings after the Divine or Infinite in man were fulfilled in the simple utterances of Christ. His preaching, we are told, brought life and immortality to light. Life, the life of the soul, and immortality, the immortality of the soul, were there and had always been there. But they were brought to light, man was made fully conscious of them, man remembered his royal birth, when the word had been spoken by Christ.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

We must never forget that it was not the principal object of Christ's teaching to make others believe that He only was divine, immortal, or the son of God. He wished them to believe this for *their own sake*, for *their own* regeneration. 'As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God.' It might be thought, at first, that this recognition of a Divine element in man must necessarily lower the conception of the Divine. And so it does in one sense. It brings God nearer to us, it bridges over the abyss by which the Divine and the human were completely separated in the Jewish, and likewise in many of the pagan religions. It rends the veil of the temple. This lowering, therefore, is no real lowering of the Divine. It is an expanding of the concept of the Divine, and at the same time a raising of the concept of humanity, or rather a restoration of what is called human to its true character,—a regeneration, or a second birth, as it is called by Christ Himself. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

There is a constant action and reaction in the growth of religious ideas, and the first action by which the Divine was separated from and placed almost beyond the reach of the human mind, was followed by a reaction which tried to reunite the two. This process, though visible in many religions, was most pronounced in Judaism in its transition to Christianity. Nowhere had the invisible God been further removed from the visible world than in the ancient Jewish religion, and nowhere have the two been so closely drawn together again and made one as by that fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the Divine sonship of man.

*Gifford Lectures, IV.*

Christ spoke to men, women, and children, not to theologians, and the classification of His sayings should be made, not according to theological technicalities, but according to what makes our own heart beat.

*Life.*

The yearning for union or unity with God, which we see as the highest goal in other religions, finds its fullest recognition in Christianity, if but properly understood, that is, if but treated historically, and it is inseparable from our belief in man's full brotherhood with Christ. However imperfect the forms may be in which that human yearning for God has found expression in different religions, it has always been the deepest spring of all religions, and the highest summit reached by Natural Religion. The different bridges that have been thrown across the gulf that seems to separate earth from heaven and man from God, may be more or less crude and faulty, yet we may trust that many a faithful soul has been carried across by them to a better home. It is quite true that to speak of a bridge between man and God, even if that bridge is called the Self, is but a metaphor. But how

can we speak of these things except in metaphors? To return to God is a metaphor, to stand before the throne of God is a metaphor, to be in Paradise with Christ is a metaphor.

*Gifford Lectures, IV.*

The Christian religion should challenge rather than deprecate comparison. If we find certain doctrines which we thought the exclusive property of Christianity in other religions also, does Christianity lose thereby, or is the truth of these doctrines impaired by being recognised by other teachers also?

*Gifford Lectures, IV.*

Love—superseding faith—seems to be the keynote of all Christianity. But the world is still far from true Christianity, and whoever is honest towards himself knows how far away he himself is from the ideal he wishes to reach. One can hardly imagine what this world would be if we were really what we profess to be, followers of Christ. The first thing we have to learn is that we are not what we profess to be. When we have learnt that, we shall at all events be more forbearing, forgiving, and loving towards others. We shall believe in them, give them credit for good intentions, with which, I hope, not hell, but heaven, is paved.

*Life.*

Our religion is certainly better and purer than others, but in the essential points all religions have something in common. They all start with the belief that there is something beyond, and they are all attempts to reach out to it.

*Life.*

How little was taught by Christ, and yet that is enough, and every addition is of evil. Love God, love men—that is the whole law and the prophets—not the Creeds and the Catechism and the Articles and the endless theological discussions. We want no more, and those who try to fulfil that simple law, know best how difficult it is, and how our whole life and our whole power are hardly sufficient to fulfil that short law.

*MS.*

Christ's teaching is plainly that as He is the Son of God so we are His brothers. His conception of man is a new one, and as that is new, so must His conception of God be new. He lifts up humanity, and brings deity near to humanity, and He expresses their inseparable nature and their separate existences by the best simile which the world supplies, that of Father and Son. He claims no more for Himself than He claims for us. His only excellence is that which is due to Himself—His having been the first to find the Father, and become again His Son, and His having remained in life and death more one with the Father than any one of those who professed to believe in Him, and to follow His example.

*MS.*

If Jesus was not God, was He, they ask, a mere man? A *mere* man? Is there anything among the works of God, anything next to God, more wonderful, more awful, more holy than man? Much rather should we ask, Was then Jesus a mere God? Look at the miserable conceptions which man made to himself as long as he spoke of gods beside God? It could not be otherwise. God is one, and he who admits other gods beside or without Him degrades, nay, denies and destroys the One God. A God is less than man. True Christianity does not degrade the Godhead, it exalts manhood, by bringing it back near to God, as near as it is possible for the human thought to approach the ineffable and inconceivable Majesty of the true God.

*MS.*

If I ventured to speak of God's purpose at all, I should say, that it is not God's purpose to win only the spiritually gifted, the humble, the tender hearted, the souls that are discontented with their own shortcomings, the souls that find happiness in self-sacrifice—those are His already—but to win the intellectually gifted, the wise, the cultivated, the clever, or better still, to win them both. It would be an evil day for Christianity if it could no longer win the intellectually gifted, the wise, the cultivated, the clever, and it seems to me the duty of all who really believe in Christ to show that Christianity, if truly understood, can win the highest as well as the humblest intellects.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

## DEATH

Trust in God! What He does is well done. What we are, we are through Him; what we suffer, we suffer through His will. We cannot conceive His wisdom, we cannot fathom His love; but we can trust with a trust stronger than all other trusts that He will not forsake us, when we cling to Him, and call on Him, as His Son Jesus Christ has taught us to call on Him, 'Our Father.' Though this earthly form of ours must perish, all that was good, and pure, and unselfish in us will live. Death has no power over what is of God within us. Death changes and purifies and perfects us, Death brings us nearer to God, where we shall meet again those that are God's, and love them with that godly love which can never perish.

### *Life.*

Would that loving Father begin such a work in us as is now going on, and then destroy it, leave it unfinished? No, what is will be; what really is in us will always be; we shall be because we are. Many things which are now will change, but what we really are we shall always be; and if love forms really part of our very life, that love, changed it may be, purified, sanctified, will be with us, and remain with us through that greatest change which we call death. The pangs of death will be the same for all that, just as the pangs of childbirth seem ordained by God in order to moderate the exceeding joy that a child is born into the world. And as the pain is forgotten when the child is born, so it will be after death—the joy will be commensurate to the sorrow. The sorrow is but the effort necessary to raise ourselves to that new and higher state of being, and without that supreme effort or agony, the new life that waits for us is beyond our horizon, beyond our conception. It is childish to try to anticipate, we cannot know anything about it; we are meant to be ignorant; even the *Divina Commedia* of a great poet and thinker is but child's play, and nothing else.... No illusions, no anticipations; only that certainty, that quiet rest in God, that submissive expectation of the soul, which knows that all is good, all comes from God, all tends to God.

### *MS.*

As one gets older death seems hardly to make so wide a gap—a few years more or less, that is all—meantime we know in whose hands we all are, that life is very beautiful, but death has its beauty too.

### *Life.*

We accustom ourselves so easily to life as a second nature, and in spite of the graves around us, death remains something unnatural, hard and terrifying. That should not be. An early death is terrifying, but as we grow older our thoughts should accustom themselves to passing away at the end of a long life's journey. All is so beautiful, so good, so wisely ordered, that even death can be nothing hard, nothing disturbing; it all belongs to a great plan, which we do not understand, but of which we know that it is wiser than all wisdom, better than all good, that it cannot be otherwise, cannot be better. In faith we can live and we can die—can even see those go before us who came before us, and whom we must follow. All is not according to our will, to our wisdom, but according to a heavenly will, and those who have once found each other through God's hand will, clinging to His hand, find each other again.

### *Life.*

If we are called away sooner or later we ought to part cheerfully, knowing that this earth could give no more than has been ours, and looking forward to our new home, as to a more perfect state where all that was good and true and unselfish in us will live and expand, and all that was bad and

mean will be purified and cast off. So let us work here as long as it is day, but without fearing the night that will lead us to a new and brighter dawn of life.

*MS.*

Annihilation ... is a word without any conceivable meaning. We are—that is enough. What we are does not depend on us; what we shall be neither. We may conceive the idea of change in form, but not of cessation or destruction of substance. People mean frequently by annihilation the loss of conscious personality, as distinct from material annihilation. What I feel about it is shortly this. If there is anything real and substantial in our conscious personality, then whatever there is real and substantial cannot cease to exist. If on the contrary we mean by conscious personality something that is the result of accidental circumstances, then, no doubt, we must face the idea of such a personality ceasing to be what it now is. I believe, however, that the true source and essence of our personality lies in what is the most real of all real things, and in so far as it is true, it cannot be destroyed. There is a distinction between conscious personality and personal consciousness. A child has personal consciousness, a man who is this or that, a Napoleon, a Talleyrand, has conscious personality. Much of that conscious personality is merely temporary, and passes away, but the personal consciousness remains.

*Life.*

One look up to heaven, and all this dust of the highroad of life vanishes. Yes! one look up to heaven and that dark shadow of death vanishes. We have made the darkness of that shadow ourselves, and our thoughts about death are very ungodly. God has willed it so; there is to be a change, and a change of such magnitude that even if angels were to come down and tell us all about it, we could not understand it, as little as the new-born child would understand what human language could tell about the present life. Think what the birth of a child, of a human soul, is; and when you have felt the utter impossibility of fathoming that mystery, then turn your thoughts upon death, and see in it a new birth equally unfathomable, but only the continuation of that joyful mystery which we call a birth. It is all God's work, and where is there a flaw in that wonder of all wonders, God's ever-working work? If people talk of the miseries of life, are they not all man's work?

*Life.*

Great happiness makes one feel so often that it cannot last, and that we will have some day to give up all to which one's heart clings so. A few years sooner or later, but the time will come, and come quicker than one expects. Therefore I believe it is right to accustom oneself to the thought that we can none of us escape death, and that all our happiness here is only lent us. But at the same time we can thankfully enjoy all that God gives us, ... and there is still so much left us, so much to be happy and thankful for, and yet here too the thought always rushes across one's brightest hours: it cannot last, it is only for a few years and then it must be given up. Let us work as long as it is day, let us try to do our duty, and be very thankful for God's blessings which have been showered upon us so richly—but let us learn also always to look beyond, and learn to be ready to give up everything, —and yet say, Thy Will be done.

*MS.*

It is the most painful work I know looking through the papers and other things belonging to one who is no more with us. How different everything looks to what it did before. There is one beautiful feature about death, it carries off all the small faults of the soul we loved, it makes us see the true littleness of little things, it takes away all the shadows, and only leaves the light. That is how it ought to be; and if in judging of a person we could only bring ourselves to think how we should judge of them if we saw them on the bed of death, how different life would be! We always judge in self-defence, and that makes our judgments so harsh. When they are gone how readily we forget and

forgive everything, how truly we love all that was lovable in them, how we blame ourselves for our own littleness in minding this and that, and not simply and truly loving all that was good and bright and noble. How different life might be if we could all bring ourselves to be what we really are, good and loving, and could blow away the dust that somehow or other will fall on all of us. It is never too late to begin again.

*Life.*

The death of those we love is the last lesson we receive in life—the rest we must learn for ourselves. To me, the older I grow, and the nearer I feel that to me the end must be, the more perfect and beautiful all seems to be; one feels surrounded and supported everywhere by power, wisdom, and love, content to trust and wait, incapable of murmuring, very helpless, very weak, yet strong in that very helplessness, because it teaches us to trust in something not ourselves. Yet parting with those we love is hard—only I fear there is nothing else that would have kept our eyes open to what is beyond this life.

*MS.*

It is strange how little we all think of death as the condition of all the happiness we enjoy now. If we could but learn to value each hour of life, to enjoy it fully, to use it fully, never to spoil a minute by selfishness, then death would never come too soon; it is the wasted hours which are like death in life, and which make life really so short. It is not too late to learn to try to be more humble, more forbearing, more courteous, or, what is at the root of all, more loving.

*Life.*

The great world for which we live seems to me as good as the little world in which we live, and I have never known why faith should fail, when everything, even pain and sorrow, is so wonderfully good and beautiful. All that we say to console ourselves on the death of those we loved, and who loved us, is hollow and false; the only true thing is rest and silence. We cannot understand, and therefore we must and can trust. There can be no mistake, no gap, in the world-poem to which we belong; and I believe that those stars which without their own contrivance have met, will meet again. How, where, when? God knows this, and that is enough.

*MS.*

God has taught us that death is not so terrible as it appears to most men—it is but a separation for a few short days, and then, too, eternity awaits us.

*Life.*

We live here in a narrow dwelling-house, which presses us in on all sides, and yet we fancy it is the whole universe. But when the door opens and a loved one passes out, never to return, we too step to the door and look out into the distance, and realise then how small and empty the dwelling is, and how a larger, more beautiful world waits for us without. How it is in that larger world, who can say? but if we were so happy in the narrow dwelling, how far more happy shall we be out there! Be not afraid. See how beautifully all is ordered; look up to the widespread firmament, and think how small it is in comparison with God's almighty power. He who regulates the courses of the stars will regulate the fate of the souls of men, and those souls who have once met, shall they not meet again like the stars?

*MS.*

Those who are absent are often nearer to us than those who are present.

*MS.*

We reckon too little with death, and then when it comes it overwhelms us. We know all the time that our friends must go, and that we must go, but we shut our eyes, and enjoy their love and friendship as if life could never end. We should say good-bye to each other every evening—perhaps the last good-bye would find us then less unprepared.

*MS.*

There is something so natural in death. We come and we go, there is no break.

*Life.*

What is more natural in life than death? and having lived this long life, so full of light, having been led so kindly by a Fatherly hand through all storms and struggles, why should I be afraid when I have to make the last step?

*Life.*

## THE DEITY

We clearly see that the possibility of intercourse between man and God, and a revelation of God to man, depends chiefly or exclusively on the conception which man has previously formed of God and man. In all theological researches we must carefully bear in mind that the idea of God is *our* idea, which we have formed in part through tradition, and in part by our own thinking. God is and remains *our* God. We can have a knowledge of Him only through our inner consciousness, not through our senses.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

Our duties toward God and man, our love for God and for man, are as nothing without the firm foundation which is formed only by our faith in God, as the Thinker and Ruler of the world, the Father of the Son, who was revealed through Him as the Father of all sons, of all men.

*Silesian Horseherd.*

Though Christianity has given us a purer and truer idea of the Godhead, of the majesty of His power and the holiness of His will, there remains with many of us the conception of a merely objective Deity. God is still with many of us in the clouds, so far removed from the earth and so high above anything human, that in trying to realise fully the meaning of Christ's teaching we often shrink from approaching too near to the blinding effulgence of Jehovah. The idea that we should stand to Him in the relation of children to their father seems to some people almost irreverent, and the thought that God is near us everywhere, the belief that we are also His offspring, nay, that there has never been an absolute barrier between divinity and humanity, has often been branded as Pantheism. Yet Christianity would not be Christianity without this so-called Pantheism, and it is only some lingering belief in something like a Jove-like Deus Optimus Maximus that keeps the eyes of our mind fixed with awe on the God of Nature without, rather than on the much more awful God of the soul within.

*Chips.*

The idea of God is the result of an unbroken historical evolution, call it a development, an unveiling, or a purification, but not of a sudden revelation.... What right have we to find fault with the manner in which the Divine revealed itself, first to the eyes, and then to the mind, of man? Is the revelation in nature really so contemptible a thing that we can afford to despise it, or at the utmost treat it as good enough for the heathen world? Our eyes must have grown very dim, our mind very dull, if we can no longer perceive how the heavens declare the glory of God.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

A belief in one Supreme God, even if at first it was only a henotheistic, and not yet a monotheistic belief, took possession of the leading spirits of the Jewish race at a very early time. All tradition assigns that belief in One God, the Most High, to Abraham. Abraham, though he did not deny the existence of the gods worshipped by the neighbouring tribes, yet looked upon them as different from, and as decidedly inferior to, his own God. His monotheism was, no doubt, narrow. His God was the friend of Abraham, as Abraham was the friend of God. Yet the concept of God formed by Abraham was a concept that could and did grow. Neither Moses, nor the Prophets, nor Christ Himself, nor even Mohammed, had to introduce a new God. Their God was always called the God of Abraham, even when freed from all that was local and narrow in the faith of that patriarch.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

To some any attempt to trace back the name and concept of Jehovah to the same hidden sources from which other nations derived their first intimation of deity may seem almost sacrilegious. They

forget the difference between the human concept of the Deity and the Deity itself, which is beyond the reach of all human concepts. But the historian reads deeper lessons in the growth of these human concepts, as they spring up everywhere in the minds of men who have been seekers after truth—seeking the Lord if haply they might feel after Him and find Him—and when he can show the slow but healthy growth of the noblest and sublimest thoughts out of small and apparently insignificant beginnings, he rejoices as the labourer rejoices over his golden harvest; nay, he often wonders what is more truly wonderful, the butterfly that soars up to heaven on its silvery wings, or the grub that hides within its mean chrysalis such marvellous possibilities.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

The concept of God arises out of necessity in the human mind, and is not, as many theologians will have it, the result of one special disclosure, granted to Jews and Christians only. It seems to me impossible to resist this conviction, where a comparative study of the great religions of the world shows us that the highest attributes which we claim for the Deity are likewise ascribed to it by the Sacred Books of other religions.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

We can now repeat the words which have been settled for us centuries ago, and which we have learnt by heart in our childhood—I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth—with the conviction that they express, not only the faith of the apostles, or of œcumenical councils, but that they contain the Confession of Faith of the whole world, expressed in different ways, conveyed in thousands of languages, but always embodying the same fundamental truth. I call it fundamental, because it is founded, in the very nature of our mind, our reason, and our language, on a simple and ineradicable conviction that where there are acts there must be agents, and in the end one Prime Agent, whom man may know, not indeed in His own inscrutable essence, yet in His acts, as revealed in Nature.

*Gifford Lectures, II.*

The historical proof of the existence of God, which is supplied to us by the history of the religions of the world, has never been refuted, and cannot be refuted. It forms the foundation of all the other proofs, call them cosmological, ontological, or teleological, or rather it absorbs them all, and makes them superfluous. There are those who declare that they require no proof at all for the existence of a Supreme Being, or if they did, they would find it in revelation, and nowhere else. Suppose they wanted no proof themselves, would they really not care at all to know how the human race, and how they themselves, came in possession of what, I suppose, they value as their most precious inheritance? An appeal to revelation is of no avail in deciding questions of this kind, unless it is first explained what is really meant by revelation. The history of religions teaches us that the same appeal to a special revelation is made, not only by Christianity, but by the defenders of Brâhmanism, Zoroastrianism, and Mohammedanism, and where is the tribunal to adjudicate on the conflicting appeals of these and other claimants? The followers of every one of these religions declare their belief in the revealed character of their own religion, never in that of any other religion. There is, no doubt, a revelation to which we may appeal in the court of our own conscience, but before the court of universal appeal we require different proofs for the faith that is in us.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

Given man, such as he is, and given the world, such as it is, a belief in divine beings, and, at last, in one Divine Being, is not only a universal, but an inevitable fact.... If from the standpoint of human reason no flaw can be pointed out in the intellectual process which led to the admission of something within, behind, or beyond nature, call it the Infinite or any other name you like, it follows

that the history of that process is really, at the same time, the best proof of the legitimacy and truth of the conclusions to which it has led.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

There is no predicate in human language worthy of God, all we can say of Him is what the Upanishads said of Him, No, No! What does that mean? It meant that if God is called all-powerful, we have to say No, because whatever we comprehend by powerful is nothing compared with the power of God. If God is called all-wise, we have again to say No, because what we call wisdom cannot approach the wisdom of God. If God is called holy, again we have to say No, for what can our conception of holiness be compared with the holiness of God? This is what the thinkers of the Upanishads meant when they said that all we can say of God is No, No.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

If people would only define what they mean by knowing, they would shrink from the very idea that God can ever be known by us in the same sense in which everything else is known, or that with regard to Him we could ever be anything but Agnostics. All human knowledge begins with the senses, and goes on from sensations to percepts, from percepts to concepts and names. And yet the same people who insist that they know God, will declare in the same breath that no one can see God and live. Let us only define the meaning of knowing, and keep the different senses in which this word has been used carefully apart, and I doubt whether any one would venture to say that, in the true sense of the word, he is not an Agnostic as regards the true nature of God. This silence before a nameless Being does not exclude a true belief in God, nor devotion, nor love of a Being beyond our senses, beyond our understanding, beyond our reason, and therefore beyond all names.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

Every one of the names given to this infinite Being by finite beings marks a stage in the evolution of religious truth. If once we try to understand these names, we shall find that they were all well meant, that, for the time being, they were probably the only possible names. The Historical School does not look upon all the names given to divine powers as simply true or simply false. We look upon all of them as well meant and true for the time being, as steps on the ladder on which the angels of God ascend and descend. There was no harm in the ancient people, when they were thirsting for rain, invoking the sky, and saying, 'O, dear sky, send us rain!' And when after a time they used more and more general words, when they addressed the powers (of nature) as bright, or rich, or mighty, all these were meant for something else, for something they were seeking for, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him. This is St. Paul's view of the growth of religion.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

When God has once been conceived without 'any manner of similitude,' He may be meditated on, revered, and adored, but that fervent passion of the human breast, that love with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our might, seems to become hushed before that solemn presence. We may love our father and mother with all our heart, we may cling to our children with all our soul, we may be devoted to wife, or husband, or friend with all our might, but to throw all these feelings in their concentrated force and truth on the Deity has been given to very few on earth.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

If the history of religion has taught us anything, it has taught us to distinguish between the names and the thing named. The names may change, and become more and more perfect, and our concepts of the Deity may become more perfect also, but the Deity itself is not affected by our names. However much the names may differ and change, there remains, as the last result of the study of religion, the everlasting conviction that behind all the names there is something named, that there is an agent behind all acts, that there is an Infinite behind the finite, that there is a God in Nature.

That God is the abiding goal of many names, all well meant and well aimed, and yet all far, far away from the goal which no man can see and—live. All names that human language has invented may be imperfect. But the name 'I am that I am' will remain for those who think Semitic thought, while to those who speak Aryan languages it will be difficult to invent a better name than the Vedanta *Sak-kid-ânanda*, He who is, who knows, who is blessed.

*Gifford Lectures, III.*

However much we may cease to speak the language of the faith of our childhood, the faith in a superintending and ever-present Providence grows only stronger the more we see of life, the more we know of ourselves. When that Bass-note is right, we may indulge in many variations, we shall never go entirely wrong.

*MS.*

We do not see the hand that takes our dear ones from us, but we know whose hand it is, whose will it is. We have no name for Him, we do not know Him, but we know that whatever name we give, He will understand it. That is the foundation of all religion. Let us give the best name we can find in us, let us know that even that must be a very imperfect name, but let us trust that if we only believe in that name, if we use it, not because it is the fashion, but because we can find no better name, He will understand and forgive. Every name is true if we are true, every name is false if we are false. If we are true our religion is true, if we are false our religion is false. An honest fetish worshipper even is better than a scoffing Pope.

*MS.*

In the ordinary sense of knowledge we cannot have any knowledge of God; our very idea of God implies that He is beyond our powers of perception and understanding. Then what can we do? Shut our eyes and be silent? That will not satisfy creatures such as we are. We must speak, but all our words apply to things perceptible or intelligible. The old Buddhists used to say, The only thing we can say of God is No, No! He is not this, He is not that. Whatever we can see or understand, He is not that. But again I say that kind of self-denial will not satisfy such creatures as we are. What can we do? We can only give the best we have. Now the best we have or know on earth is Love, therefore we say God is Love or loving. Love is entire self-surrender, we can go no further in our conception of what is best. And yet how poor a name it is in comparison of what we want to name. Our idea of love includes, as you say, humility, a looking up and worshipping. Can we say that of God's love? Depend upon it, the best we say is but poor endeavour,—it is well we should know it,—and yet, if it is the best we have and can give, we need not be ashamed.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.