

cumbent obligations, did such a Being become obvious to our convictions—but the thought of a God suggests what are the incumbent obligations which commence with the thought itself, and are anterior even to the earliest dawn of evidence for a Deity. We hold that there are such obligations, and our purpose now is, if possible, to ascertain them.

11. To make this palpable, we might imagine a family suffering under extreme destitution, and translated all at once into sufficiency or affluence by an anonymous donation. Had the benefactor been known, the gratitude that were due to him becomes abundantly obvious; and in the estimation of every conscience, nothing could exceed the turpitude of him, who should regale himself on the bounties wherewith he had been enriched, and yet pass unheedingly by the giver of them all. Yet does not a proportion of this very guilt rest upon him, who knows not the hand that relieved him, yet cares not to inquire? It does not exonerate him from the burden of all obligation that he knows not the hand which sustains him. He incurs a guilt, if he do not want to know. It is enough to convict him of a great moral delinquency, if he have gladly seized upon the liberalities which were brought in secret to his door, yet seeks not after the quarter whence they have come—willing that the hand of the dispenser should remain for ever unknown, and not wanting any such disclosures as would lay a distinct claim or obligation upon himself. He altogether lives by the bounty of another; yet would rather continue to live without the burden of those