

guilt upon his soul. It might not make him a believer, but it ought to make him an inquirer—and in this indifference of his there is the very essence of sin—though it be against a God who is unknown.

24. And, thirdly, we may thus learn to appreciate the plea on which the irreligious of all classes in society would fain extenuate their heedlessness—from the homely peasant who alleges his want of scholarship, to the gay and dissipated voluptuary who, trenched in voluntary darkness, holds himself to be without the pale of a reckoning, because he demands a higher evidence for religion than has ever yet shone upon his understanding. This antecedency of the ethics, not to the conception, but at least to the belief of the objects, places them all within the jurisdiction of a principle—the violation of which brings guilt and danger in its train. Instead of waiting till the light of an overpowering manifestation shall descend upon their spirits, it is their part to lift up their attention to the light which is offered. It will not exempt them from blame that they have never found the truth which would have saved them—if their own consciences can tell that in good earnest they have never sought it. Their heedlessness about an unknown though possible God, is just the moral perversity that would make them heedless of a God who had been fully ascertained—and, rudely unsettled though they may deem their Theology to be, it may be enough to make them responsible for deepest seriousness about God; and if they want this seriousness, enough to convict them of most glaring impiety. This principle tells even at the