BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN RELIGION

THE FINE ART OF MARRIAGE

TAKING THE NAME OF SCIENCE IN VAIN

THE RELIGION OF EXPERIENCE

OUR FELLOW SHAKESPEARE

THE GOD OF FUNDAMENTALISM

AS I WAS SAYING

ETC.

THE
EMERGING FAITH

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON ETHICAL RELIGION

BY

HORACE J. BRIDGES, D.Litt.

Leader of the Chicago Ethical Society

WITH A FOREWORD BY

THE RT. HON. LORD SNELL, C.B.E., LL.D.

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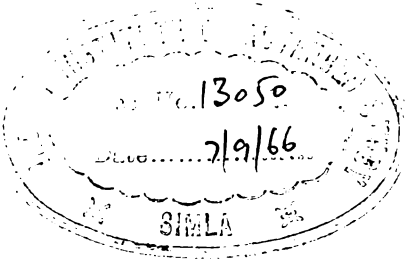

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TO

STANTON COIT

FOUNDER IN ENGLAND OF THE ETHICAL MOVEMENT
AND THROUGH FIFTY YEARS ITS INSPIRER
AS MUCH BY HIS RARE EXAMPLE
OF CONTINUOUS AND SELFLESS DEVOTION
AS BY HIS MOVING ELOQUENCE,
RARE SCHOLARSHIP,
AND DEEP PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL INSIGHT,
THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR AND BY THE ENGLISH ETHICAL UNION
AS AN INADEQUATE
JUBILEE TRIBUTE OF GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION.

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FOREWORD

THIS book gives a descriptive account of the thought and purpose of the Ethical Movement by one of its most accomplished and loyal advocates. Dr. Horace James Bridges began the main work of his life in connection with the Ethical Societies in London. Here he served with an appreciated capacity and vigour until he accepted a call to the leadership of the Chicago Ethical Society, which he has now led for twenty-five years with success and with an enviable distinction.

When the Council of the English Ethical Union decided to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the first Ethical Society in England, it was fortunate in being able to induce Dr. Bridges to prepare this Jubilee summary of the thought and teaching of Ethical Societies as they exist in England and America.

I earnestly commend his book to the thoughtful appreciation of a wide circle of readers throughout the English-speaking world.

A further justification for the appearance of this volume is the desire of the members of the English Ethical Union to dedicate it to Dr. Stanton Coit, whose pioneer service in establishing and sustaining Ethical Societies in England cannot be over-valued. His contribution to the clarification of ethical teaching has been both unique and fruitful. He has been not merely preacher, author, and organizer in the English Ethical Movement; he has in a special degree been the discoverer, guide, and inspirer of

many who have either served the Ethical Societies with distinction or who—stimulated by his faith and zeal—have passed on into other work of a socially redemptive character.

Dr. Bridges has written a clear account of what Ethical Societies think and aim to do. Can anyone looking at the world to-day say that these centres of moral regeneration are unnecessary? Are they not needed in every land and city? The need for the continued moralization of public life is seen everywhere. Perfect machinery and a full treasury are not enough for a nation. "Always," as Dr. Bridges points out, "the quality of individuals will determine the quality of society. . . . The Ethical Movement stands squarely with all the older religions in conceiving its task to be the life-long moral education and spiritual development of the community in and for which it works."

The Ethical Societies aim to further the religion of the open mind. Those who have been disillusioned with, or who can no longer accept, the old faiths, find in these societies a new happiness and a larger outlook upon religion and life. I earnestly hope that this book will induce those who are separated from other churches and creeds to accept the free thought and share in the consolations which Ethical religion provides.

SNELL.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: THE BASIS AND MISSION OF THE ETHICAL MOVEMENT

I.—"A Religion for the People"

Fifty years ago, Dr. Stanton Coit, the veteran sage to whom this little work is dedicated, began in England the exposition and practical application of the principles of the Movement for Ethical Culture, which had been established by the late Felix Adler in New York in 1876. No attempt will here be made to narrate the history of this Movement, or to describe the various enterprises undertaken by its leaders and adherents during this half-century. That work has already been admirably performed by Mr. Gustav Spiller, one of the ablest and most faithful spokesmen of the English Ethical Societies, whose retirement from active service, under the compulsion of failing health, is a deeply lamented loss to the cause. It has seemed more fitting to mark this jubilee occasion by a simple restatement of certain of our fundamental principles, in the form of answers to the questions which are invariably asked by newcomers when they are first made acquainted with what, to the majority, is still a novel and extremely puzzling phase of the religious life of the age.

Every movement which demands fundamental and thorough thinking is destined to make but slow

progress, since the majority of people have always lacked the time, or the capacity, or the inclination for strenuous mental effort; and even the minority who have both the leisure and the gift for such work turn rather to the fields of science, economic enterprise, or politics, in which concrete "results" are speedily obtainable by ambitious workers, than to the more abstract realms of philosophy and religion, about which few seem really to care nowadays, and in the latter of which an age-old and formidable orthodoxy is still entrenched, with immense power to exercise those subtle and indirect pressures which discourage independent thought and innovating action.

Hence, although the Ethical Movement from the beginning announced its ambition of offering "a religion for the people," its first half-century, on both sides of the ocean, has necessarily been a period of pioneering, of the hard labour of clearing the ground, preparing it for the plough, and planting the seed. Nowhere has it as yet become widely popular or attracted large numbers of adherents. But inasmuch as its founders in America and England were entirely aware that this must needs be the case, the fact can be recorded with no trace of bitterness or disappointment. We are sowing for the future, and have always known that the harvests would be reaped by other hands than our own. And the discipline which this knowledge has involved for us has done us the inestimable service of constantly deepening our faith in the impregnable validity of our principles and the indispensableness of their wide understanding and adoption, if the

human scene is ever to be changed into that glorious order of world-wide fraternity which the spiritual ideal demands.

Religion is the focussing of steadfast and reverent attention on all the sources of good in man and in the world, in order by appropriate action to make that good prevail, and thereby to extrude the evils which arise through the uncontrolled operation of Nature's impersonal forces and through the still frequent dominance of the animal over the properly human elements in mankind.

A religion for the people would be one which enlisted the multitudes, with glad spontaneity and free enthusiasm, in the progressive achievement of this unending task. It would inspire them with reverence for the sublimely authoritative dictate of conscience which summons man thus to assume responsibility for advancing the evolution of the cosmos at its highest growing-point. It would teach them that the eternal realities of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty possess an inherent, underived, and uncancellable authority over all rational natures whatsoever, whether human or (if there be any such) superhuman. It would impel us to transform into creative actuality all the powers of mind and will which are deposited in us as latent potentialities. And it would constrain us to recognize the intrinsic and inviolable sacredness of personality—that essential constituent of humanity which is the same under all the accidental and irrelevant differences of race, colour, sex, stage of mental development, nationality, or economic circumstances.

It is plain that the general realization and

application of these fundamental principles would make a speedy end of war, of the loathsome myth of permanent and unchangeable racial superiorities and inferiorities, of the exploitation of individuals and classes, and of the crass and anti-human egoism which is the fount and origin of them all.

II.—Mental Liberty and Moral Obligation

One of the cardinal principles which every Ethical Society has always upheld is that of freedom of thought for all its members. Our Movement is differentiated from all other religious bodies by the fact that it is based upon no common creed. It embraces people of various religious ancestries and wide diversity of conviction regarding matters theological and metaphysical. The one condition for membership in an Ethical Society is the recognition of the validity of the distinction between right and wrong, and of the duty of choosing the right and eschewing the wrong in every decision. Free thinking, as Dr. Coit has well expressed it,* means bondage to truth. Nothing deserves the name of thought except that mental process by which we adjust our minds to objective reality as we find it, at the sacrifice of every prejudice, preconception, or wish lurking in our minds or our subconsciousness. Now, the Ethical Movement is based on, and stands or falls by, the conviction that the difference between right and wrong is no more of our arbitrary making than that between true and

* See his Conway Memorial Lecture on "The One Sure Foundation for Democracy." (London: Watts. 1937.)

false. We find this difference; we do not make it. The moral law, as Cicero said of *ius naturae*, is not a law that we have made, but one in accordance with which we are made. It is one of those everlasting realities which "in the highest heaven had their birth; neither did the race of mortal men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep."

Naturally, our discernment of this law and its requirements, like our understanding of the unchangeable relations which make the world of the senses a cosmos instead of a chaos, is a matter of gradual development. This fact is strangely seized upon by the modern brood of ethical sceptics to justify their theory that morality is nothing but traditional prejudice, or the survival of the baseless fears of superstitious savages, or the codified and enforced behaviour necessary to sustain the interests and privileges of any dominant caste, class, aristocracy, priesthood, or plutocracy. From the wide variations of moral judgment exhibited by different tribes and races, or by the same people at different times and stages of its development, it is concluded that morality is nothing but what it suits the convenience of some dominant group to make the many believe and practise. What is overlooked is that this same argument would invalidate science and æsthetics on the selfsame ground as that on which it undermines ethics. For men have disagreed about the processes of Nature, and varied in their notions of what is beautiful and ugly, far more than they have differed regarding what is right and wrong. And even in this department, the conflicting theorists have all steadily maintained that

they were appealing to objective fact; that it was Nature, and not they themselves, who made that right which they called right, and that wrong which they stigmatized as wrong. Never did any thinker in the sphere of ethical theory presume to offer his own subjective fancy as the criterion of good and evil; and, in the controversies that have occurred, none was ever accused of this, but only of an inadequate reading of the objective data.

This fact of moral objectivity is the one common conviction among the members of Ethical Societies which could be called their "creed," in the sense that no person who did not accept it could possibly wish to join such a fellowship. But each person is left entirely free to form his own views as to what this fact implies, and the modes by which it is to be justified to reason and reconciled with the world-view which commends itself to him. So it happens that in each of our Societies will be found persons who call themselves theists, atheists, agnostics; materialists, idealists, or neo-realists. It is conceivable that at some remote future time the whole human race may arrive at an unanimity in philosophical conviction parallel to that which is already universal (*i.e.* among all who are adequately informed) regarding the principles and methods of science and the order of physical Nature. But if this ideal solidarity of conviction is ever to be reached, it can be only as the outcome of the freest range of thought and speculation upon the nature and working of the human mind and the facts of conscience and moral experience. Through diversity to unity by the road of freedom—that is the one possible way. Meantime,

each must bear his individual testimony. The hard labour and heavy responsibility of free thought are the costly privilege and arduous duty imposed upon us.

And the prerequisite for the competent discharge of this duty is the study of man's moral history and the development of insight into the worth or worthlessness of contemporary conduct—our own and other people's. "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" asked the great master of moral insight. In point of fact, we all do this in a hazy, lazy, headlong, and haphazard fashion. But we do not take the task seriously, realize its momentousness, or strive to reduce our successive judgments to consistency and formulate the principles which regulate them. We weight the scales in favour of the people we like; those of our own set or sect, class or party; and we load the dice against those towards whom we entertain any prejudice or antipathy. To judge a member of another race or nation, another creed, political party, or social class (especially a hated one), by exactly the same criteria as we should apply to our own children, our intimate friends, our fellow-countrymen, co-believers, or party comrades, is a reach of scientific objectivity and humane fairness which few of us have attained, or indeed even recognized as obligatory upon us. Yet it is obviously the one way to fulfil the precept of Jesus or carry out the method of Socrates or Aristotle. In morals as in physical science, freedom of thought is bondage to truth.

III.—The Transient and the Permanent Tasks of Religion

Every Church has from time to time been divided and perplexed by the common tendency to seize upon some immediate evil or injustice and make the remedying thereof the sole concern of its adherents. This general human impulse has naturally manifested itself among the members of Ethical Societies. Some years ago, the campaign for Woman Suffrage became such an *unum necessarium*, and many of our women members were disposed to feel that the Societies should leave all and follow it. They felt an almost fanatical horror at the bare suggestion that any ethically minded person could question either the justice of bestowing the political franchise on women, or the radiant certainty they then entertained that every existing political, social, and economic evil would be compendiously and promptly remedied the moment their "one thing needful" was secured. How wildly exaggerated were these anticipations experience has now made abundantly clear. The victory of the Woman Suffrage Movement was a genuine democratic reform; it was eminently just and necessary. But, like all such reforms, it has turned out (as its saner advocates knew and said that it would) to be only the thrusting upon women of a new burden of responsibility, which most of them have taken no more seriously and borne no more competently than the average man has done.

In our American Societies, many of the members were beguiled by the iridescent dreams of the advocates of Prohibition. The preachers of that

utopian reform drew the most idyllic pictures of emptied gaols, poverty abolished, political corruption terminated, cruelty in the home replaced by kindliness, children benefiting by the money formerly spent on drink, and endless other such beatific visions. Those of us whose reading of history had led us to doubt it all were regarded with a kind of bewildered horror. The late President Taft's grim prophecy of what would really happen (a prophecy which failed only by its under-estimate of the incredible horrors that actually ensued) was considered, by the more charitable, as evidence of mental derangement; by the less kindly, as proof that he had been bribed to propagandize for the liquor trade. Yet after fourteen years of such criminality as even America had never seen before, and such hypocrisies as Gilbert himself could never have imagined, the nation revolted against the silly scheme, with a majority so overwhelming in every State as to testify to the universal disgust and indignation provoked by the attempt to make righteousness compulsory.

Now, what would have happened to any Church or Ethical Society which had allowed itself to be persuaded by its headlong enthusiasts into making the achievement of Woman Suffrage or Prohibition its sole purpose, committing all its members to belief in these panaceas, incidentally compelling the resignation of all who were sceptical about them, and forgetting that religion has other and more important tasks, which were imperative long before these political cure-alls were heard of, and will remain so long after they have been forgotten?

At the present moment, the *unum necessarium*, both in Britain and in America, which beguiles many of our members, and especially the young enthusiasts (as it does many people in almost all the Churches), is Socialism; or—short of the pure milk of the Marxian word—the organization of State action for the abolition of poverty and inequality of incomes, the levelling of class distinctions, the "nationalization" of this, that, and the other enterprise created by individual and group initiative, labour, and foresight. Well, there is so much practical Socialism in both countries already, and much of it has proved so advantageous to the general public interest, that any man who should now oppose it in the thorough-going fashion of Herbert Spencer would merely convict himself of unteachable stupidity. But students of history, and careful observers of what has happened under all our eyes in the dictatorial countries, are keenly conscious of the urgent and vital problem that every advance in political domination over economic and industrial life renders more instant and crucial: the problem, namely, of how to maintain, under contemporary technological conditions, that freedom of individual initiative, responsible self-determination, and choice, which is the only air in which the spirit of man can live and grow and bear its glorious fruits.

The task of religion is a perennial one. It is the perfecting of personality, through that type of free action of spirit upon spirit which simultaneously quickens and elicits the latent potentialities both of him who acts and of him who is acted upon. "Perfection" is the unattainable ideal which, like

the North Star, dictates the course we are to steer. The spiritual nature in us is infinite; and it is a contradiction in terms to think of realizing the infinite under those finite conditions of time and space, and the brevity of individual existence, to which human society is fettered. But it is only through the ever-renewed effort to free personality from its imprisoning limitations that we win the assurance of its reality and its infinite and unconditional worth and dignity.

Now, to one who has learned this truth in the only way it can be learned—which is through the sacrificial devotion of years and decades to the service of men regarded as spiritual beings—all those utopian schemes which concern themselves with bodily well-being and economic improvement will fall necessarily into a secondary and merely instrumental rank. Such a thinker will be as eager as the keenest Socialist to abolish that pit of destitution into which it is still possible for men and women to fall. He will be earnestly concerned to remove that possibility of attaining riches by lucky guessing and gambling on stock exchanges which, by making parasitism possible, ensures the spiritual degradation of the successful gamblers. But he will never be the sort of Socialist who can believe that " the nationalization of the means and instruments of production, distribution, and exchange " is, in and of itself, *the one thing needed to bring about the moral perfecting of the human race.* He will never accept the notion that mere economic equality, assuming it to be attainable (which he will doubt, but will care little about), will *ipso facto* remedy the

moral and spiritual ills which to him will be immensely more important than the defects of an economic system. For he will realize the uniqueness of each individual soul, and the indispensable necessity of so arranging the common life that each may elect for itself that service which for it will be perfect freedom.

John Stuart Mill relates in his *Autobiography* how he had faced in youth the question that everybody ought to face, but almost nobody does: namely, "How would you feel now if all your hopes were fulfilled, all your wishes realized, all your ideals —political, personal, and social—actualized?" His answer, in substance, was that he would have felt utterly miserable. This reminds one of a certain reviewer who, when Morris's *News from Nowhere* was first published, said that, despite all the beauty and charm of Morris's utopia, he (the reviewer) would rather live in the London of Dickens. He was right. For in that London was ugliness to be replaced with beauty, falsehood with truth, a myriad forms of wrong with right, justice, and mercy. That is, it offered the sort of environment for which man is made, the tasks for which he is equipped, and scope for the powers and impulsions which prove his spiritual nature and dignity by differentiating him from all other animals.

This train of thought drives us back to the unwelcome but unchallengeable truth that human character is the determinant of human destiny; and that beneath and behind all economic, political, and social injustices lurks some sinister and selfish

prompting of human will. No man can read with open eyes the history of Russia from 1917 to 1937 without having this invincible certainty brought home to him. No man can observe the moral heroism daily displayed in the foulest slums, alongside of the villainy prompted by the same surroundings, without realizing that the process of transforming sows' ears into silk purses is too complex to be achieved by changes in political or economic machinery. The present writer has lived for a quarter-century in America; and among the many differences between the United States and his native England he has been forced to realize that, at the present stage of development of the two countries, the selfsame measures of public ownership and control would produce vastly different results, owing to the different levels of character and social responsibility prevalent among the seekers and holders of public office in the two nations. Generally speaking, America to-day still stands politically at the level of the England criticized by Edmund Burke in his *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* and satirized by Dickens in his picture of the election at Eatanswill and his account of the return of Mr. Veneering for the constituency of Pocket Breaches. No man who knows America can doubt that in time it will purge its public life as England has done; but neither can he doubt the present dreadful need for the purgation.

The saying that every nation gets the government it deserves is unjust. No nation ever deserved such ghastly travesties of free institutions as those under which Germany, Russia, and Italy are groaning

to-day. Nor do those American cities and States which are still ridden, robbed, and disgraced by gangs of corruptionists deserve their fate. But if we say that every nation has to undergo an apprenticeship (which may require many centuries) in self-government, in the art of selecting persons of the requisite level of character and capacity to administer its affairs with integrity and efficiency, and in the technique of subjecting them to the right motives and exempting them from the wrong ones, we shall be well within the truth. This, however, brings us back at once to the fact that man is a partially and potentially free agent; that it is the task of religion to influence his free decisions—*i.e.* to educate his character; and that, no matter how good or bad the machinery by which a community is governed politically and regulated economically, still its fortunes will depend upon the *character* (first and chiefly) and the *capacity* (second and instrumentally) of its public administrators. Make your machinery ideally perfect if you can: its success in practice will still depend upon whether those who operate it are thieves or honest men, patriots or traitors, greedy egoists or public-spirited servants of the community.

IV.—The Forgotten Individual

The reaction against the atomistic individualism of the mid-nineteenth century was unquestionably necessary. It had to be learned that individuality is itself a social product, and that even the rare genius of the inventive originator of machinery and creator of wealth is no mere achievement of his own,

but a gift of Nature transmitted to him and fostered in him by the labours and sufferings of collective mankind. Self-made men, although they are said to "adore their creators," do not make their raw material, and can work only with what is given to them.—All true, and all now obvious; but we have run so far away from Samuel Smiles and the creed of *Social Statics*, we have concentrated so exclusively upon social factors, "the group," the environment, and above all on the State—as though that were, as its Continental idolators pretend, a sort of super-personal divinity—as to neglect, down to the point of forgetting and practically denying, the truth that every social aggregate, from a nation to a bridge-party, consists of individuals. The collective character and capacity of every such aggregate, although far from being the mere arithmetical sum of the wills and abilities of its members, is yet what it is solely in virtue of what they are. Each person influences his "group" as much as it influences him. This self-evident truth is usually forgotten or neglected; so that we now often hear apologies for all sorts of failures in duty—from some trivial negligence up to the worst forms of criminality—which when logically analysed turn out to mean that the individual is the object of an irresistible determinism exercised by aggregates which are free, and therefore responsible! Crimes are excused on the ground that their perpetrators could do no other than they did. If true, this means that the "society" which is blamed for punishing them—having made them what they are—can do no other than it does. If a moral appeal to the

collectivity can be effectual, it can be also to the individual; for in truth any such appeal is addressed not to the collectivity, but through it to its individual units. *Per contra*, if the excuse offered for the individual is sound, the appeal addressed to society is self-evidently absurd.

The slushy muddle-headedness of this sort of thinking has had at least as much as the post-war economic breakdowns to do with the decline in morals and manners which has certainly taken place. You cannot teach two successive generations that the world owes everything to them, whereas they owe nothing to the world, without producing what, on a vast scale, has been produced in many nations: namely, the attitude called "modern," which upon analysis is found to mean that whenever duty and happiness conflict, it is the path of reason to jettison duty and cling to happiness. And we need never expect to see health, nobleness, and true progress restored until this fatal malady is attacked at its source, by a return to the ancient common sense that every man must first learn his duties, and only afterwards learn the rights that these involve—that is, the rights that are either the conditions under which duty is to be done, or are conditional upon its being done. Until then, we may expect still to see kings renouncing their thrones on the scarcely veiled ground that they prefer self-indulgence to duty, and men and women by all sorts of chicanery refusing to work, and turning the relief offered to involuntary unemployment into a dole for deliberate idleness.

The older ones of us happily escaped the sort of teaching which produces this paralysis of the moral

nerve-centres. We were taught a catechism which, whatever its faults of detail, and however erroneous its theological basis, did possess the sterling and indispensable merit of affirming the primacy of duty and proceeding on the principle that the only condition on which any man can enjoy his rights is that every man shall fulfil his duties. And it is obviously, for all who do not wish to be deceived, the first and essential condition of restoring social health and sound relations, within nations and between nations, that education should be reconstructed on this sound ancient principle. Always and inexorably, the quality of individuals will determine the quality of society; and, so long as moral flabbiness and self-indulgence are encouraged or condoned in individuals, it is midsummer madness to expect a sound and improving community.

V.—The Resultant Policy and Outlook

It follows from the foregoing considerations that the Ethical Movement stands squarely with all the older religions in conceiving its task to be the lifelong moral education and spiritual development of the community in and for which it works. It combines inflexibility of principle, on the fundamental issue before defined, with liberty of thought concerning the metaphysical implications of its essential principle and the various means of applying it to effectual social improvement through personal, educational, social, and political action. It affirms that ethics is independent of all theological, philosophical, scientific, and political systems, and rests as securely upon its own data in man's nature

and experience as science does upon the reason whereby man reads law and causal linkage into the phenomena encountered by his senses. We discover moral law by the same means as we discover physical law; which is by applying a particular mode of attention to a defined area of phenomena revealed in experience. And we have to proceed in educating ourselves ethically exactly as we do in mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, or any other discipline: by the contemplation of many facts, the elicitation of their grouping laws, the ever keener discernment of remoter and less obvious relations and implications. This means that the moral education of the human race reaches different levels with different individuals and communities, and is ever dependent, like science and art, upon the unique insight of exceptional geniuses. It also means that our moral progress, although it has a number of established certainties to proceed upon, will never be completed under any conditions of life that we can foresee. For, like the endless efforts after Truth and Beauty, the impulsion towards the Good—*i.e.* towards Moral Perfection—is the striving of the Infinite within us towards the Infinite beyond us; and this points to a consummation which, while ideally conceivable, is not achievable by finite beings in a finite world. But so far from being a cause for discouragement, this is the sublimest inspiration and incentive to unwearied effort that the human mind can conceive.

And, unlike the furtherance of scientific progress or æsthetic enrichment, this is a task to which every man and woman can effectively contribute. For its

unique feature is that it depends upon that in us which is achievement, and not gift. High character can be, and most fortunately often is, associated with lowly intellectual capacity; just as, alas! great gifts of mind are often wedded to perverted will and ruthless egoism. What we *have*, in the way of mental powers, depends on uncontrollable nature and the lottery of heredity; what we *are*—what we become morally—depends upon ourselves. Only experts can judge what is true in a proposed theory of physical relativity; but the man in the street can judge what is right or wrong in the experts' conduct.

In the fifty years' preparatory labour of the Ethical Movement, methods have been devised and tested for the moral education and humane service of people at every age and every stage of development, from infants in the slums of London, New York, and Chicago to post-graduate students of universities and people in every walk of family, business, professional, and public life. These methods require further elaboration and improvement; and doubtless, in some cases, time will show that they need supersession and replacement.

The following chapters are addressed to all men and women who share our conviction that the religious impulse and need is a native and permanent part of our human make-up, but one that can no longer be satisfied by the doctrines and practices which met that need in our forefathers. The remaining contents of this book represent the author's attempt to answer questions actually addressed to him in the course of his public work as an ethical teacher.

CHAPTER II

"DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?"

I.—The Misunderstanding the Question Betrays

[illegible] were told by the newspapers that under the new Russian Constitution full liberty of religious belief and worship had been accorded to the people of that nation. It was also reported that a census was being taken in Russia, and that one of the questions addressed to every person was, "Do you believe in God?" Rather to the disgust of the census-takers, it was said that a surprisingly large number of those interrogated answered this question in the affirmative. We can well imagine how disappointing this must have been to the dictatorial clique, who for so many years had striven earnestly, with all the elaborate resources of modern propaganda, to root out from the nation all theological belief.

Now, this question, "Do you believe in God?" is one of those which are often addressed to members of Ethical Societies. These societies are by definition, and in some cases by official recognition, religious fellowships; and the question is asked by outsiders who cannot clear their minds of the notion that every religious fellowship must be founded upon a common creed accepted, and in some fashion subscribed to, by all who become its members. It is in vain

that from the beginning of the existence of these societies, on both sides of the ocean, we have explicitly stated the contrary. We have declared times without number, in all our publications, that neither a theological nor a philosophical creed is the basis of membership in these organizations; yet neither in our fifty years of work in England nor in the more than sixty years of the American Movement—despite the ever-renewed explanations of such outstandingly clear thinkers and speakers as Felix Adler and Stanton Coit—has the confusion on this point in the public mind been effectively cleared up. When we tell people that in reply to this question some of our members would answer "Yes" and others "No," they seem to be merely bewildered, and quite unable to understand how persons differing over this, which to them is *the* fundamental question, can be united in the same religious fellowship. What we call the independence (meaning the inherent authority) of ethics, the autonomous and original sovereignty of the conscience native in every man, is apparently still a puzzle to the majority of our contemporaries. For the majority seem still to be persuaded that the word "God," whatever else it may mean, denotes the only possible reason why men should be honest, just, merciful, temperate, and loyal.

This is to be attributed to the still pervasive influence of the ancient habit of regarding morals as an inference from theology, instead of the exact opposite, which is the truth: that all theological doctrines have been deduced from the actual moral experiences arising out of the social and human

relations of men.* But such is the fact; and we must deal with the situation as it is.

Most people fail to recognize that whatever may be the truth about the ultimate mysterious nature of things, and whether or not human life persists after bodily death, the practice of the virtues mentioned, and of others, is the sole condition upon which our life here and now can be worthy, dignified, joyous, and successful in the one true sense of success—which is that each human being should become in actuality what Nature has made him in potentiality. To us it is a matter of fact, so patent that we have difficulty in understanding the state of mind of those who do not realize it, that, irrespective of any theological or metaphysical doctrine, we have the same sort of reasons for behaving ethically as we have for obeying the laws of health and taking account of the fact called gravitation. The moral law is as clearly a part of the order of the world as are its physical laws. To be sure, man is so far a free agent that he can contravene the laws of Nature in any department. He can disobey the conditions on which health depends; he can ignore the fact of gravitation; and in the same way he can ignore the uniform relations between conduct and consequences disclosed by experience in the ethical field. But in the one domain as in the other, we can do this only to our individual and collective ruin. If anybody needs proof of this

* The author of the First Epistle of John recognized this: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen."—I John iv, 20.

statement, we need but point to the present state of the world, which is full of tragedy, fear, and terror arising manifestly from the unethical ways in which men and nations have behaved and are behaving towards each other.

But suppose that the Russian census-takers, when some man answered the question about God with a "Yes," had proceeded in the Irish fashion to ask another: "Pray, what do you mean by this word 'God'? What exactly is the being or object to which, according to your understanding, the word points?" The answers, alike in Russia and elsewhere, would either have been in the stereotyped terms of creeds that people had learned from their Church and repeated without understanding, or else they would have shown that scarcely any two thinking men understand the word "God" in precisely the same sense.

When I was a young working man in London, one of my fellow-workers was an ardent evangelist, who devoted all his Sundays to the preaching of what he understood as "the Gospel"; and naturally he and I had many discussions. In the heat of one of these, he suddenly, with horror on his face, flared out at me, "Why, you don't seem to believe in God at all!" I was puzzled how to answer on the spur of the moment. But the answer I made was, "Well, at all events, I don't believe in *your* God." Great was my delight many years later, when Adler's *Ethical Philosophy of Life* was published, to find his record that he had given this same answer to the same question when it was put to him in his early days by his Jewish friends and associates.

What I meant by my reply was that my friend's God was the God of Calvinism; the God who, as Robert Burns, in that scathingly satirical poem of his,* says:

> Sends ane to Heaven and ten to Hell,
> A' for Thy glory,
> And no for ony guid or ill
> They've done afore Thee.

Those to whom these words sound shocking may be reminded that no less eminent a Christian pietist than John Wesley sharply rebuked his Calvinist friend, George Whitefield, by telling him that he attributed to God the character and acts of the Devil, and confused the identity of the two beings.

But the ambiguity, or rather the endless variation, in the meaning of the word "God" extends much farther than this. Indeed, when we survey the entire history of religion we find that the name in different times and places has meant every conceivable thing, from the crude fetish of the savage and the animal- and bird-gods of Egypt to the creative Father-God of Judaism and Christianity and the impersonal energy of Nature worshipped by Spinoza and other pantheists. The result of such an investigation shows that the word "god" denotes no object in particular, but indicates the relation between given men and given objects. Logically, we should say that the word "god" is a relational term. It means any object of worship: real or unreal, personal, impersonal, inter-personal or super-personal; moral or immoral; good, bad, or indifferent. A thing that really exists will be a

* *Holy Willie's Prayer.*

god to one man and not to another. If the Greek Poseidon was a god, it was not because some people believed in his existence; it was because some people worshipped him. To many peoples the sun and moon have been gods; to us they are not, though they are no less real to us than to those who deified them. Thus we see that denying the deity of an object has no necessary connection with any doubt or denial concerning its existence.

II.—What Cannot be Worshipped

By "an object of worship" we mean that the deified person or thing is looked upon with reverence or fear, as a source of possible good to be secured through prayer or sacrifice, or a source of evil to be warded off by petition and propitiation. And this is not an "either-or" in the German sense, for many times both views have been taken of one and the same object. Indeed, survivals of the primitive attitude towards the evil-sending god, the god who does harm to men and must therefore be feared and placated, remain in the highest religions and the most elevated forms of worship. In the Christian liturgies now in use there are still prayers for the kind of weather needed, or for relief from plague, pestilence, famine, and other disasters of non-human origin; which can mean only that the God addressed is regarded as the source of the evils of life.

When I told my friend that I did not believe in his God, I meant (and I should mean exactly the same to-day) that I for one have far too much reverence for the ultimate, inscrutable spiritual

reality, whatever it may be, to attribute to it the hideous cruelties and injustices which his theology asserted to be committed by the deliberate will and purpose of God. Calvinism, more than any other theistic system, has been thorough-going in its logic; it has faced the implications of the doctrines of creation, omnipotence, and predestination, without shrinking. Everything that happens in this life, and that Calvinists expect to happen in the life hereafter, is ascribed without hesitation to one single Will, which does what it likes, unhampered by any limitation of possibility or any moral obligation external to itself. In many other systems of theology these implications are shrouded in a graceful veil of comparative vagueness. But upon examination we find that they all logically imply that the evil in the world represents the Divine Will as truly as the good. We find that, in the teeth of the plain teaching of Jesus,* they make salvation (meaning escape from a hell which God has made and destined men to) dependent upon correctness of theological belief far more than upon character and conduct.

What I had in mind when, at the age of twenty, I told my friend that I did not believe in his God, was that this doctrine is a libel on the universe. Later, I seized with eager pleasure upon Plato's account of the teaching of Socrates concerning God. Socrates declared that God is to be regarded as the author only of the good in the world and in human life, and not of the evil.† Now, this sounds like a

* Matt. xxv, verses 31–40.
† *Republic*, Bk. II, section 379.

great release; but it carries its own difficulties with it; and it is in any case woefully inconsistent with those religions which regard God as the Almighty "Creator of all things visible and invisible," as the Nicene Creed says, without any limit upon his power or his knowledge.

As a matter of mere accuracy, the purely negative term "atheist" (which in the minds of those who hurl it generally carries a definitely dyslogistic connotation) is an inexact one to apply to people who, like Socrates, refuse to identify the source of good with the source of evil; who refuse, that is, to regard as divine the power answerable for those shocking tragedies and disasters of non-human origin which the usage of our own law still describes as "acts of God." It is a feeling of reverence that prompts the refusal of this identification. The term "atheist" should be used to designate only those thinkers who themselves use it to describe their position. Any man has a right to apply this label to himself; but, unless he does so, nobody else is justified in pinning it on him. And, inasmuch as it tells only what a man does *not* believe, throwing no light on his positive views, it is hardly surprising that comparatively few people find it satisfactory to them.

Francis Bacon, in all probability, had no doubt about "the existence of God," and presumably held the main doctrines of Christianity; but he nevertheless made the following excellent statement:

> "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him. For the one is unbelief, the other is contumely; and certainly superstition is the

> reproach of the Deity. Plutarch saith well to that purpose: *Surely* (saith he) *I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man at all as Plutarch, than that they should say that there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born; as the poets speak of Saturn.* And as the contumely is greater towards God, so the danger is greater towards men. Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men." *

Our natural feeling, I think, is well expressed in these words of Bacon and Plutarch: it were indeed better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him. The main objection to many of the conceptions of God that are proposed to us is that when we turn our minds upon them we see them to be unworthy of any Being who should be worshipped.

III.—God in Man's Image

For myself, if I could be sure that those who ask whether I believe in God would understand, if I said "Yes," that I meant by "God" the source of all the good in the world and in human life, what Matthew Arnold called "the enduring Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness," and what Dr. Shailer Mathews has called "the personality-producing factors of the cosmos"—no less and no more than that—I should be glad enough to answer

* *Essays*, No. xvii: "Of Superstition."

"Yes." It would be convenient to have a mutually understood, simple term to denote these realities in which reason and experience compel one to believe. But it is unhappily certain that this would not be the case. It seems to me that there is no more cowardly form of intellectual dishonesty than to answer "Yes" to such a question when a man has one meaning for the term in his own mind, but knows very well that his interrogator and all his hearers will suppose him to be using it with another meaning. This kind of insincerity and verbal double-dealing has played the gravest mischief with religion in the Western world in the last half century. It has caused endless harm and enfeeblement to the Churches; and it keeps in them many men who, if their real convictions were known, would have to be excluded—unless, indeed, the Churches were ready to change their entire historical basis.

I therefore accordingly refrain, in general, from using the word "God," solely because, in my estimation, the claims of intellectual honesty are paramount. I am quite clear that I do *not* believe in such a God as people usually have in mind when they ask this question. Not only does the traditional conception defined in the creeds and assumed by the liturgies of the Churches seem to me to contain elements and implications which it is insulting to attribute to the Ultimate Spiritual Reality, but there are also most formidable difficulties of a rational and philosophical kind in the way of accepting it.

To put the matter briefly, the conceptions of God in all the creeds are cut to the measure and

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cast in the mould of man. God, they tell us, must be a *person*, a *creator*, a *father*. But we know nothing of persons or fathers except human ones; and these are constituted as such precisely by their limitations. Personality in the only types of it of which we have experience (and therefore in the only sense in which we have a right to use the word) requires its limitations and depends upon them. It is exactly because I am not you that I am I; and *vice versâ*. This being the case, it is contradictory to speak of an infinite personality. The adjective denies what the noun asserts. Far different is it, however, if we proceed on the fruitful hint given by Herbert Spencer in the *First Principles* and introduce the conception of the *super-personal*.* The super-personal we may think of as the inexhaustible reservoir whence the personality manifested in mankind is derived and by virtue of which it evolves.

In like manner, the traditional conception of creation is infected with this same similitude to the

* "Duty requires us neither to affirm nor deny personality. Our duty is to submit ourselves to the established limits of our intelligence, and not perversely to rebel against them. . . . This, which to most will seem an essentially irreligious position, is an essentially religious one. . . . In the estimate it implies of the Ultimate Cause, it does not fall short of the alternative position, but exceeds it. Those who espouse this alternative position assume that the choice is between personality and something lower than personality; whereas the choice is rather between personality and something that may be higher. Is it not possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion? Doubtless we are totally unable to imagine any such higher mode of being. But this is not a reason for questioning its existence; it is rather the reverse."—Spencer, *First Principles*, Part I, chap. v, section 31.

works of man. It is, as Felix Adler says, the imaginative bridge by which we link the finite with the infinite, the temporal with the eternal order; and the piers of the bridge are grounded on the argument from *design*. This is that similitude to the works of man which is fatal to it. "Design" is a purely human conception—the procedure of a being of limited power selecting whatever means, not of his making but only of his finding, are available to foreseen ends. Not only is this true, but many things happen in this world which seem irreconcilable with any notion of design at all. On the other hand, among those many works of Nature which do suggest design, we seem to be confronted rather with a host of rival and mutually thwarting purposes than with any single one that can be regarded as leading to a comprehensible and admirable end. It was the Christian mystic William Blake who asked "what immortal hand or eye" had "framed the fearful symmetry" of the tiger, and whether he who made the lamb had made the tiger too.

By far the ablest apology known to me for the cruelties and wastes involved in the predatory system of Nature is that of a philosopher whom I enormously admire—James Martineau, in his *Study of Religion*. But being a thoroughly honest thinker, after having done his best—which was, in my strong conviction, the best that any man could do—with the subject, Martineau ends with the admission that there are elements of evil in the world simply irreconcilable, so far as our understanding can reach, with the goodness of the Creator-

God. The *Study of Religion* was written fifty years ago. If Martineau were writing to-day he would have had to take account of a fact which in the 1880's was only beginning to be known: I mean the fact that not only do the carnivorous animals live by preying upon one another and upon the herbivorous species, but that there is also a seemingly endless variety of germs, bacilli, and viruses which flourish by preying upon and destroying animal and human life; and if the natural consequences of a "designed" system are the index of its purpose—as they are with the works of man—this fact is fatal to the doctrine that both unlimited beneficence and unlimited power are to be read in the book of Nature.

All this, however, means no indictment of the universe, nor any failure to recognize the abundant good our life contains. But it does mean that the whole mystery is beyond the reach of our intellects, and that we presumptuously indulge in unwarranted affirmations when we attribute the world and all that therein is to a personal and paternal creator, infinite alike in power and in goodness. We cannot *know* this; it is beyond us; and such facts as we do know do not accord with this interpretation.

Many who would be ready to confess that they could not know these things of their own knowledge, nevertheless profess to hold them upon the authority of the Church. They have the notion that although *they* cannot know—*their* minds are not equal to the task—yet somehow, at some time, somebody else has known; and that they are trusting an authoritative guarantee of a truth which their own

intellects could never have reached. But this is an historical illusion. The Church has always consisted of men who knew no more about the matter than we do, and had no other sources of information than we have; and they have always proved this, and prove it still, by their chronic inability to solve any of the moral problems inevitably provoked by what they teach. The solid, unanimous confession by theologians—sometimes reluctantly and disguisedly made—that the problem of evil is absolutely unsolvable, because all appearances are irreconcilable with their doctrines, is the evidence, repeated from age to age, of what has just been said.

IV.—Intellectual Agnosticism and Moral Certainty

But such a confession of ignorance (or, to use the pleasanter and more fashionable Greek word, "agnosticism") is poles asunder from that atheism which is based on materialism and the denial of any design or purpose in the world. Dr. Adler said, in one of his weightiest passages,* that "agnosticism on the intellectual side is the very condition of the transcending ethical certitude subsequently attained. Without intellectual agnosticism there is no ethical certainty." Experience and thought warrant this startling claim.

In this book I am making a purely personal statement; one which, it is to be understood, commits neither the Ethical Societies as a whole nor any single member of them. With this clear understanding,

* *Ethical Philosophy of Life*, p. 357.

I may venture to put the matter in this fashion: Many atheists whose works I have read make their denials because to them the world seems *less wonderful and mysterious* than it does to the theists. My position is exactly the contrary of this. I feel the world to be infinitely *more* wonderful and mysterious than any theology known to me presents it as being. The reality so far outruns these attempts to encompass it and imprison it in definitions that the attempts themselves seem pitiable.

Consider, for instance, the attitude of those who have abandoned the old theology solely because of its failure to solve the problem of evil. Their case is that because of the evil in the world we cannot find anything like mind or will or purpose behind the system of things. Without exception, these writers fail to notice that the only effect of this is to impale them upon the other horn of the dilemma; because it creates a certainly not less unsolvable problem of good.

One of the most clear-sighted, learned, and eloquent atheistic writers of the day is Bertrand Russell. And he quite clearly sees this problem; but he simply refuses to be bothered with it. He sheers off from it by calling the existence of mind, and, above all, the existence of conscience, a "strange mystery." * Strange indeed would the

* "Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they are achieving; . . . his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms. . . .

"*A strange mystery it is* that Nature, omnipotent but blind, in the revolutions of her secular hurryings through the abysses of space, has brought forth at last a child, subject still to her power, but gifted with sight, with

mystery be if absolutely blind, sub-mental, sub-human forces by their unplanned and uncontrolled interaction had cast up those things that we know as mind, consciousness, and conscience; if Lord Russell were right in regarding these as the "accidental" products of the collisions of an aggregate of atoms, no one of which, nor all of them together, contained any element, or even any prophetic rudiment, of these supreme realities of our human nature, which nevertheless they were collectively to produce! What dogma of traditional theology is more arbitrary, what legend in any hagiology of the Dark Ages is more incredible, or a greater affront to common sense, than this?

What must we say of Lord Russell? Simply that he has displayed the folly of deliberately committing again that intellectual sin of dogmatizing for which he and his school justly rebuke their theological opponents. Dogmatizing is the confident and positive proclamation of unverifiable statements; and it is every whit as wrong and as inevitably misleading on the one side as on the other.

Nor will it do to say that this is a case where one or the other dogma "must" be true; that either a creative intelligence or an "accidental collocation of atoms" *must* have produced life, mind, and consciousness. For this is to assume that Reality cannot possibly be wider, deeper, or subtler than our logical processes. Bacon long since uttered the needed reminder that our systems are

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knowledge of good and evil, with the capacity of judging all the works of his unthinking Mother."—Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*. (Italics mine.)

"inadequate to the subtlety of Nature"; and Herbert Spencer, in the passage above cited, wisely and truly followed Bacon's lead. There may be infinitely many modes of being wholly different from ours and unimaginable by us. Even Spinoza laid it down that the "Infinite Substance" has "infinite attributes," only two of which—thought and extension—are apprehensible by man. The idea that either creationism or the Russellian "accident" *must* be the truth—that this is a valid case of the logician's "excluded middle"—merely illustrates the fallacy of identifying the limits of human intelligence with those of cosmic possibility.

It is much to be wished that free thinkers could be persuaded to study their own greatest classics—which are Thomas Henry Huxley on the scientific side and Felix Adler on the ethical side. A real assimilation of the principles of these two great minds would, I believe, cure the two defects that are all too prevalent among free thinkers—these being that they have not attained to real mental freedom, and have not learned how to think.

We are left, then, regarding our intellectual relation to "the riddle of the universe," with radical agnosticism, admitted without qualification. The minority who confess this are but making an admission which everybody ought to make. The authoritarian systems, both theological and metaphysical—and, among the latter, the idealistic and the materialistic alike—are expressions of presumption; pretences covering a real, albeit an unconfessed ignorance.

V.—"Praised be the Fathomless Universe"

Neither can I, for one, side with those Humanists who assume (sometimes without precisely saying so) that man is the highest being in the universe, the only bearer of mind, conscience, and the sense of beauty. Setting aside the troublesome fact that this view of man regards him as an effect without a cause, a river without a source, this attitude likewise betrays what seems to me a new kind of intellectual arrogance, and, what is more, the profound impiety of unthankfulness. For nothing is more obtrusively obvious than the fact that man is utterly derivative from and dependent upon the unexplorable physical, mental, and spiritual sources and resources of the universe. To him is now entrusted the task of his further self-creation; but his origin—was that his own work? Did any individual man or the race of men create itself—having first thoughtfully pre-established the conditions indispensable to its life?

Here it will appear that, as the violinist sometimes does, I am touching upon two strings at once. I am envisaging an intellectual problem, and the inadequate solution of it that the humanistic scheme seems to offer; but at the same time I am attempting to convey an emotional or temperamental attitude toward the world; and these are matters in which men's natures differ. My own feelings are best expressed in Charles Lamb's charming essay called "Grace Before Meat," and in the question he raises: "Why before meat only?" * Why not

* "I own that I am disposed to say grace upon twenty other occasions in the course of the day besides my dinner.

also words of thankfulness for sunsets and autumn days, for the blooms and odours of spring, for Shakespeare and Milton and Goethe, for Raphael and Beethoven, for Newton and Darwin and Einstein; for poetry and music, art and science? Are these blessings so much less significant than the mere food of the body that we should feel and express gratefulness only for it and not for them?

It has long seemed to me that the best excuse I could discern for the intellectual presumption of the old theology—the presumption of cramping the inexpressible and immeasurable life-energy and dynamism of the cosmos into the image of a magnified man—is one that seems never to be mentioned in all the many disputes about the question. This excuse is the profound gratitude for the glorious and opulent gifts of life which, as it seems to me, every healthily constituted heart must perpetually feel; and as we do not know where to address our thankfulness, we invent the addressee. To me there is something simply inhuman in the churlish pessimism of so great a scholar as Bertrand Russell, who throughout his writings does nothing but grumble and sneer at the lavish hospitality of this great inn of the world, in which he has so long been one of the most favoured and pampered of guests.

For my part, then, I lean towards another sort

I want a form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, or a solved problem. Why have we none for books, those spiritual repasts—a grace before Milton—a grace before Shakespeare —a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading the *Fairy Queen*?"—*Elia*, as cited.

of humanism: a humanism which, precisely because of its profound and loving sense of obligation for all the good that the race of men has flung around us, extends its gratitude beyond man, to every element in the cosmic order which has rendered possible the existence and development of mankind. I suppose it seems almost an eccentricity to sound this note of thankfulness nowadays: we all feel so superior and so misused! But why should we not remember our absolute indebtedness not only for all the songs of all the poets, but also for the realities discerned by them which inspired and prompted their songs, and which they have taught us to see; not only for the marvellous mentality of all the scientists, but also for those tremendous riddles of reality which they are progressively deciphering; and for all the factors in the objective world which have supplied the subjects for the painters, sculptors, and musicians? Is it not an honour and privilege to live in a world which produces (for one of a myriad of examples) the materials of a violin, the skill to convert them into the instrument, and the genius to evoke unimaginable heavens from a touch upon its strings? Who has ever listened to a master musician working Browning's miracle—"that out of three sounds he make not a fourth sound but a star"—without feeling, unless some crochety kink of his intellect comes in to check it, a spontaneous impulse of gratitude as well as joy?

The elements, then, of our religion—so far as I may venture to speak for others besides myself—are three: intellectual agnosticism, radical, unqualified, and undisguised; ethical certitude—

absolute conviction of the reality and authority of the moral nature in man and in those elements of the cosmic order that have mothered it; and, along with these, a conviction of the worth of life and of man so deep that words cannot utter it, and only the staunchest and truest lifelong devotion to our duty can suitably express it.

The spiritual universe is the real one, as Adler says. This means that it is the aspect of reality with which we are most directly in touch and of which we are most sure. For it is only through our consciousness, and our faith in its testimony, that we can even affirm the reality of an objective world. This spiritual universe we encounter in ourselves and in our human neighbours; and we find in them the unmistakable hint of that which transcends them and links our humanity with the very root and heart of the world.

The reader may, if he wishes, call this ethical mysticism. I shall not object to the term; on the contrary, I consider it highly appropriate.* Such as it is, it is my religion. I beg nobody to accept it because it is mine. I offer it as a suggestion that may elicit the independent testimony of others, and as a reading of life upon which other minds may work critically, using it as a foil. It is the outgrowth of my life and experience, which I desire only to measure against the results of the wrestlings and strivings of others.

* See the chapter "A Rational View of Mysticism" in my *Signs of the Times in Religion.* (London: Watts. 1936.)

CHAPTER III

"DO YOU BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY?"

I.—Prevalence of the Belief

It has already been explained that the question concerning God is one on which the members of Ethical Societies are not required to express any conviction, or to agree with each other, but is a matter on which liberty of thought is accorded to each member in the Movement. The same is the case with the problem we are now to consider. There are differences of conviction not only among the members but also among the leaders of the Ethical Movement on this question; and no man is required to hold any particular view of it, or to agree with the opinion of any leader. For the purposes of a fellowship like ours, which is engaged in working towards the perfecting of human society by improving the conduct and relations of men, and thereby advancing the personality of each member in the direction of its own perfectibility, these questions are strictly irrelevant, and agreement concerning them is unnecessary.

Nevertheless, this issue remains for us, as mankind has always found it, inexhaustibly interesting; and it is one upon which we are constantly questioned. This at least is my own experience, and I cannot doubt that others have shared it. For this reason, I shall here again submit my strictly personal views,

in a spirit diametrically opposite to the dogmatic temper—that is, not wishing any man to hold these views because I do. This is a matter on which absolute *fact*, in the scientific sense, is unattainable. But it is worth while to answer the questions addressed to us, because any man's testimony on so profound a problem may have some value in guiding or stimulating—if only by the challenge of contradiction—the thought of others.

The question of immortality, let us note, has no necessary connection with any system of theology. Most of us in the Western world hardly realize the striking fact that there have been great religious systems in which this belief played no part at all. We are apt to forget that Buddhism, which is to this day the religion of at least as large a portion of the human family as Christianity, is a faith which seems (in its original and purest form, at least) to have made the negation of immortality, as it is understood by Christians, its very goal. The particular kind of "immortality" which Buddhists think does occur—namely, the passing of the individual through a whole cycle of lives entailed upon him by the law of Karma—appears to them as an evil. It is that very evil, indeed, from which their religion aims to emancipate men. The whole of the Buddhist discipline, the prime reason for entering and persisting in the Eightfold Noble Path of right conduct as Gautama defined it, has for its purpose to ensure the individual's escape from this cycle of successive lives into the peaceful apathy of Nirvana. This shows that the idea common in the West, that men naturally desire an endless

life, is far from being universally true; it is demonstrably untrue of vast numbers of men in Asia.

It is also of interest and importance to remember that Judaism in its greatest prophetic period either had no belief at all in immortality or, at all events, laid no sort of stress upon it as a motive for right conduct in this life. Henry George was so impressed by this fact that he thought it must have been due to the conscious and deliberate statesmanship of Moses. Moses, he argued, had been educated in Egypt, the land which laid more stress on the doctrine of immortality than any other before or since; and Moses must have seen in Egypt the monstrous abuse of which this doctrine is susceptible. He saw the masses of people enslaved, living in grinding poverty under the hardest and most inhuman conditions; and he saw how they were reconciled to these conditions, and deterred from demanding their human rights or revolting against the wrongs they suffered, by the assurance, continually drummed into them, that the suffering they endured in this life would be rewarded with luxury and joy in inconceivable over-measure in the next.

No Biblical scholar to-day, I presume, would accept this theory of Henry George in regard to the motives of "Moses." Yet the fact remains that, whatever the reason, the Jewish religion, until after the Exile and throughout the long period when the writings of the greatest prophets were produced, regarded the full circle of moral experience as completed within the present life, and never appealed to the idea of immortality either as a fact or as a motive to conduct.

In order further to disentangle the central problem here involved from the misleading and irrelevant considerations with which it is commonly bound up, let us remember that a man who had never heard of the New Testament or the Christian religion, and who did not know or did not believe that Jesus had ever lived, might nevertheless believe in immortality with Plato and Socrates (who also had never heard of Christianity); and he might do so either for the reasons that seemed convincing to them or for others.

II.—Perversions of the Doctrine

I stress these facts to justify my prior assertion that the question of immortality has no necessary or logical connection with any system of theology; so that our believing in the one in no wise depends upon our believing in the other. But it is undoubtedly true that much of the prejudice against the belief in an after-life which exists to-day is due to the fact that it has become tangled up with a set of traditional ideas originating in the Jewish Apocalyptic period—that is, in the period from a century or two before the Christian Era to one or two hundred years after, when Judaism had become soaked with this idea, which it had appropriated through contact with the religions of Persia and other lands. And these apocalyptic notions were taken over by the first Christians and still further developed in the later theology of the Church.

The modern conscience—inside the churches, one is glad to find, as well as outside of them—has revolted against these ideas and their unethical

implications, and in many cases has somewhat illogically abandoned the belief itself along with the perversions of it.

The perversions are three in number. The Heaven of traditional theology is a bribe, offered to induce the kind of conduct which is really worthy and truly ethical only when it is wholly disinterested. It is the offer of a colossal over-payment, far exceeding any desert possible to men in this life, to persuade them to do what they ought to do gladly and freely. Therefore (so the modern conscience feels) the traditional doctrine of Heaven vitiates the motives of all who do for the sake of this bribe what otherwise they would not do. I have too much respect for the goodness inherent even in average human nature to believe that the majority of people who have held this doctrine and who have done the right did that right for the sake of the bribe. Nevertheless, the *tendency* of the doctrine taught to them was to vitiate their motives in proportion as they held it firmly and realized it imaginatively.

On the other hand, Hell is a threat to induce abstention from wrong action, the intrinsic wrongness of which, to consciences properly educated and disciplined, is an all-sufficient motive for refraining from it. Not only does the doctrine of Hell thus pervert motives from the opposite side to that on which the bribe of Heaven vitiates them, but it also affronts men's moral sense by reason of the infinite disproportion between any possible human demerit and the nature, the endless length, and the futile vindictiveness of the punishment which is threatened.

The third perversion against which the conscience of the world is in revolt is the doctrine of Purgatory —an idea which at first glance looks less unethical than the two preceding. It has, however, two decisive defects. The first is that, as taught throughout the Middle Ages, and still to-day in the official theology of the Roman Catholic Church, the conception of Purgatory is purely penal and vindictive. It is God's punishment for those members of the human race who are indeed "saved" and destined for Heaven, but who in their earthly life, after their salvation was secured, committed sins unexpiated and unatoned at their death. Therefore they are not ready at death to enter the Heaven which is to be their ultimate reward. The fire of Purgatory is the divine penalty for these unexpiated and unatoned sins. It is a kind of suffering which does no good to anybody except the sufferers, and to them does only a negative kind of good, the very conception of which rests upon a misunderstanding. For what we need is not "purgation" in the ascetic sense of the medieval saints—the trimming off and cutting away of evil parts of our nature—but rather the enrichment and enlargement of our powers and the direction into serviceable channels of the so-called "evil" tendencies, which in truth are in their nature neutral. They are no more evil than good; because, like all other parts of our nature, they become productive of good when rightly directed.

III.—Evolution and Immortality

These, then, are the three perversions, in disgust with which many people nowadays abandon the doctrine which they spoil; but this is obviously not a logical procedure. They are all legendary; they rest upon no basis of fact or experience. Setting them aside, we turn to examine the possibility, or at least the conceivability, of a kind of immortality that would be purely evolutionary. This idea does rest upon a basis of fact and experience, because it is the imaginative projection forward of a line of development that we can trace through all the stages of our present life. It is thus free from those conceptions of adventitious reward and punishment which have hitherto tainted the doctrine. And this is the form in which the problem is conceived to-day by those who are interested in it. Men are debating two questions: one, as to whether any such future for the individual is *possible*; the other, whether any such future, if possible, would be *desirable*.

This second question, as to the desirability of an after-life, can arise only because certainty as to the former question is unattainable. If the unending continuance of our individual personalities could be proved as a fact, there might indeed be occasion to rebuke men for thinking too much about the future, to the neglect of present duties, or for thinking too little about it, to the neglect of their mental and cultural preparation for it; but it would obviously be futile to ask whether or not they *desired* what they were in any case bound to experience and could

not escape. On the other hand, if there could be conclusive evidence that death means the final dissipation of our personal consciousness and memory, then the discussion of the desirability of any alternative would be equally idle; for no sane person continues to desire anything after its attainment has been shown to be inherently impossible. Only children cry for the moon. So that if this negative demonstration were possible (as it certainly is not), then those who now look forward with joy to immortality would for a time feel a pain akin to that entailed by the sorrow of bereavement; but they would not, if they were wise, persist in a lament known to be wholly vain. They would train themselves to readjust and redirect their minds and wills within the limits of the finally restricted horizon; and, in the spirit of W. K. Clifford (who lost his faith in immortality), instead of saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," they would say, "Let us take hands and help, for this day we are alive together."

But the very first matter for us to get luminously clear in our minds is that no such negative demonstration has been made or can be made. The arguments against man's survival of death which are based upon the view that the mind is the product and effect of the body are mere dogmas. Not only are they unsupported by any evidence, but they are irreconcilable with such evidence as we have.

Let me emphasize that I am not concerned to persuade anybody that our continuance after death is a fact. I cannot pretend to know any such thing. Whatever attitude we take, be it affirmative or

negative, on this question, it must inevitably remain one of faith or speculation. Demonstrative certainty is unattainable.

But the steady, realistic contemplation of the actual development of man's personality through this life seems to me, when we come to the balancing of probabilities, to render some kind of continuance after death *more probable* than absolute extinction. I am not at the moment considering the moral aspects of the question—the thought, which troubles so many people, that the universe would be proved irrational and unmeaning unless there is immortality. That involves a highly complex discussion of what ought to be. It is a question wholly distinct from the one we are contemplating at the moment. Here we are endeavouring, by the best light we can get, to evaluate the facts of our earthly development in the spirit of scientific disinterestedness.

The progress of this life is one towards integrating personality, and towards rendering it progressively more the master of the physical machinery with which it is associated; and in fortunate cases a relatively high degree of independence of the bodily machinery for the distinctively human part of our nature is attained. This is most clearly manifested in the careers of those whose mental activity and health have been continued into great age. Indeed, it seems the very tragedy of this world that powers so enormous as those developed by a Socrates, a Gladstone, or a John Henry Newman, which are at their very maximum when the physical machinery finally collapses, should be withdrawn from the human scene and the sphere of human service

precisely at the time when they are more valuable and serviceable than ever before. This is the poignant meaning of the French saying, "*Si la jeunesse savait, si la vieillesse pouvait!*"—If only youth could know, if only age could effectively apply what it knows!

However this be, the point to which I would draw attention is the undoubted fact that there is no necessary correlation between the ageing or impairment of the body and its powers and any similar ageing and impairment of the mind and its activities. The great thinker is at his greatest and profoundest when many of his physical functions are already outworn, when the body has lost most or all of its pristine vigour, and when, indeed, the whole physical machinery is obviously verging upon final collapse. One of my favourite philosophers, James Martineau, although he had been constantly writing and publishing throughout his life, never did anything to compare in depth and strength, in power and insight, with the five great volumes that he wrote between the ages of eighty and ninety. Even his literary style is more youthful, elastic, and vigorous in these works than in what he wrote half a century earlier. Mr. Justice Holmes of the American Supreme Bench, and the late Lord Halsbury in England, were both making their finest legal discriminations and decisions when they had passed their ninetieth birthdays.

We must remember, too, the quite certain fact, verified in everybody's experience, of the unity and continuity of personality throughout the vicissitudes of an ever-changing organism. The body

does not remain the same from moment to moment. Like all aggregations of living matter, it is in constant flux. Our very life, as animals, consists in the perpetual assimilation of new material and rejection of old. My body to-day is quite certainly not that with which I was born; it is but the latest of a series of aggregations of matter upon which a certain partial continuity of form has been imprinted. Everything goes on as if this perpetual process of displacement and replacement, assimilation and shaping, were the work of a total personality, partly conscious, partly unconscious, which organizes and uses the machinery with increasing facility in the service of mentally apprehended ends, the apprehension of which grows clearer in proportion as the power to progress toward them develops. Hence the figure used of old by Socrates, that the body after death is like the old and worn-out coat of the cobbler, and that the fate of the coat throws no kind of light upon the destiny of its vanished wearer.

This is, it seems to me, a true account of human evolution both in the race and in the individual. To be sure, that evolution is thwarted in some individual cases, and also in the case of some entire tribes and nations. But any evolutionary process must be judged by the specimens that illustrate its success rather than by its failures. It is from the dog or the horse that wins the race or prize that the potentialities of the variety to which it belongs are inferred, and not from those that lose.

We may, then, take it that for the purpose of our argument two things are verified. One is that a continuous and ever-growing personality in this

life utilizes a succession of discontinuous material aggregates called the body; the other is that for all the distinctively human purposes of intellect, conscience, and the æsthetic powers, this progress can and does continue with even enhanced momentum while the physical machinery is wearing out, and up to the moment of its definite collapse. These are the facts which seem to me to favour (although I not only admit but stress the fact that they fall short of proving) the view of those who argue, as Browning did, that our life here finds its most rational explanation if conceived as a schooling or apprenticeship, "to find Life's purpose out, educe the man." On this view, we are not here and now *doing* our full work, but *learning* it, and preparing ourselves to be of more fruitful service to the universe when the period of our apprenticeship is over.

IV.—Psychical Research, "Inner Assurance," and Immortality

I repeat that I am not urging this view. My point is only that it is a view which has been held by eminent thinkers on strictly rational grounds, and in no sort of connection with "revelation" or theological dogma; and it is a conviction that none of the arguments directed against it seems to me to render untenable. Indeed, no such argument seems to possess any real force. The fact that when bodies die minds disappear from human society, and there is no further manifestation of them or communication with them, was every whit as obvious in the days of Socrates as it is now. But

the materialistic view, for anybody who will analyse it steadily, turns out to rest upon contradictory assumptions and logical absurdities. So that with those of our friends who still persist in saying, as some do, that the idea of a life after death is *impossible*, the best answer is to refer them to the amusing satire of Samuel Butler in *Erewhon Revisited*, where he introduces two unborn embryos holding a discussion as to whether it is possible to conceive a life after birth. They argue the matter back and forth. One hopes that there may be some continuance beyond that stupendous change; but the other points out that as all the environing conditions upon which their life depends will be absent, it must be impossible; and he closes the argument by saying, "Depend upon it, when we're born we're born, and there's an end of us." The logic of Butler's jest is identical with that of those who, by a similar analogy from material considerations, affirm a life after bodily death to be impossible.

Many persons now think that this question of survival has been settled in the affirmative by the revelations of psychical research and what is called spiritualism. I cannot agree with this; and I say so after having given careful attention to many volumes of the results of these researches. I admit that, as conducted by the ablest of their devotees, they have proved useful in developing enormously our knowledge of the *present* powers of the human mind, many of which were previously unsuspected. It is to these studies, for example, that we owe the conclusive establishment as a scientific fact of telepathy—the giving and receiving

of impressions, both consciously and unconsciously, through some means other than the usual channels of the senses. But by this very triumph of demonstrating the mind's unsuspected present powers they have rather tended to defeat their original purpose; for they have provided a "natural" explanation—an explanation complete within the human circle—of phenomena which before had seemed to involve communications from a realm of "departed spirits."

Many years ago I urged (and I rejoice to find my plea repeated in the recent famous book of Dr. Carrel, *Man the Unknown*) that this whole problem of the more elusive and uncommon powers of the human mind needs further study, in a spirit even more stringently scientific than that in which it has hitherto been investigated. Pending the results of such research, we can but say that although our knowledge of the powers of the living human mind has been enlarged, still the question whether the dead survive and can communicate with us remains where it was before.

In this connection, we cannot, if we think dispassionately, attach scientific value to the mutually-exclusive "subjective certainties" entertained by many on this subject. I have some friends who feel as sure about immortality as they do about the Rule of Three; other friends of mine feel an identical inward assurance that death is the end of us. One must respect both convictions; but we cannot share the one more than the other, for the plain reason that they *are* subjective, unverifiable by evidence, and, in some cases of both types, strongly

influenced by the wishes of the believer. For it must be repeated that there are many people who desire extinction at death as strongly as others long for immortality. The prevalence of the Buddhist religion would lead one to suppose that persons of this type are more numerous in the East than in the West. This I believe to be the case; but certainly this type of temperament is by no means unrepresented in the Western lands.

My own feeling of comparative indifference to the matter, at least as regards my personal fate, led me in youth to wonder whether Swinburne really meant what he said in that exquisite poem in praise of death, "The Garden of Proserpine." The last two verses are both beautiful and familiar:

From too much love of living,
  From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
  Whatever gods may be.
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
  Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
  Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
  Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
  In an eternal night.

Those of us who read this in our youth were all charmed by its magical beauty; but I nevertheless wondered whether it represented a real mood of the poet's spirit. Since then, however, I have met

men both good and able who so strongly hoped for this utter end to life as in my judgment to bias extremely their balancing of the alternative probabilities.

Personal testimony is here in order. That the reader may compare his own feeling on the subject with mine, let me say that, increasingly with the years, my own attitude toward the mystery is an odd blend of mental curiosity and emotional indifference. By this I mean that, so far as I understand myself, if I could know to-morrow whether I am to live for ever or to be extinguished at death, either answer would leave me unmoved. The affirmative demonstration would not, I think, to any marked degree enhance my feeling of joy in life; and I do not believe that the negative demonstration would diminish it.

V.—The Reality of the Eternal Values

But we cannot leave the subject without a glance at its moral aspects. And on moral grounds I should put it that my hope respecting the universe at large is different and distinct from the personal unconcern which I have confessed regarding my own fate. I mean this: I share the feeling that our conviction of the rationality and goodness of the universe would be enhanced if we could know, on the one hand, that the really great minds and spirits of our race are a permanent achievement of the world-process; that all that is signified by the names of Socrates and Shakespeare and the other giants, did not merely blaze up and flicker out finally in the brief moments of their earthly careers. And, on

the other hand, our sense of goodness and rationality in the world-scheme would be strengthened if we could know that the personalities here and now most frustrated, whether by poverty or early death or unavoidable ignorance, would have a further opportunity of realizing what it was in them to become.

Among the leaders of our Movement several have believed in personal immortality, and only one or two have definitely denied it. The most interesting, and I think the most profoundly philosophical view was that taken by Felix Adler. He says that immortality as currently conceived is unacceptable because, like the doctrine of creation at the other end of the time-process, it is an attempt to understand what cannot be understood, to conceive what is inconceivable. But, on the other hand, he affirms "the real and irreducible existence of the essential self"; and he continues:

> "Or rather, as my last act, I affirm that the ideal of perfection which my mind inevitably conceives has its counterpart in the ultimate reality of things, is the truest reading of that reality whereof man is capable. I turn away from the thought of the self, even the essential self, as if that could be my chief concern, toward the vaster infinite whole in which the self is integrally preserved. I affirm that there verily is an eternal divine life, a best beyond the best I can think or imagine, in which all that is best in me, and best in those who are dear to me, is contained and continued."

To hasty readers, especially those who bear in mind what Adler has previously admitted about

the disintegration of the empirical self—the vanishing of all that really does depend upon the bodily organization—this may sound contradictory. It may seem to affirm and deny immortality with the same breath. But this is not so. Adler was too coherent as well as too profound a thinker to be capable of such careless inconsistency. The immortality that he does *not* affirm is something that can be understood or imaginatively conceived; the "eternal divine life" that he does affirm is altogether beyond our conceiving. The great lesson that we have to learn in dealing with ultimate problems is the blunder and the presumption of mistaking the limitations of our understanding and imagination for the limitations of possibility. The mind of man is indeed a stupendous thing relatively to all that lies below it; but when measured against the innumerable series of possible stages of development and achievement in an infinite universe it is an unspeakably poor and inadequate instrument. Who can dare to say, without convicting himself of arrogant folly, that of this boundless universe all that there is is disclosed to us by an apparatus of five senses evolved in the struggle for existence in order to adapt an animal organism to the conditions of earthly life?

Adler, then, affirms an eternal divine reality *beyond our conceiving*. What makes him do so? Not egotism; not a blind desire on his part for the perpetuation of his own existence. The essential reason for this affirmation is that the discipline of life leads us to discern the absolute reality of *ideals*, which are none the less real for being ideal, and which

are "eternal" in the proper sense—that they are timeless. They have nothing to do with time; they never begin to be valid or cease to be so. They are always there, objective and authoritative for any intelligence that can discern them. The elementary truths of mathematics, for instance, must at some time have been first stumbled upon by some prehistoric, nameless Euclid in the unrecorded eras of man's pilgrimage. But they did not come into existence with the genius in whose consciousness they were first perceived. He *found*, he did not *create*, the Rule of Three and the properties of the circle and the triangle. A million years earlier or later the reality of these truths would have been identically the same. The fullness and clearness with which they are realized depend in no wise upon themselves, but solely upon the competence of the perceiving mind. What is thus true of the norms of mathematics is equally so of the norms of ethics and æsthetics. Truth, right, and beauty stand all on the same footing. They are abiding essences that are discerned and not invented by the exploring thinker; and, once discerned, they become valid for all subsequent minds capable of the same degree of insight.

This is the simple meaning of the doctrine which the philosophers express by saying that the True, the Good, and the Beautiful are eternal. But in the absence of personalities, of minds adequate to the needed degree of discernment, they remain eternally latent; real but unrealized. And the true question which lies at the bottom of this riddle about immortality is the question whether the

personalities on which their realization depends share their own eternity or not. To ask this is to ask whether the highest possibilities of the world are realized or frustrated.

The question cannot be answered demonstratively by beings at our level of development. Adler himself, in the passage above quoted, was affirming his moral *faith*, declaring what with passionate intensity he *believed*, although he knew that anything like scientific proof of its truth was out of the question.

But what we do know is that our lives acquire human worth and dignity only in the measure in which they incarnate and express these eternal values. As Clutton-Brock well said, "All the beliefs of man have been tainted with his egotism; they have supplied him with reasons for righteousness other than the right reasons, and have therefore perverted his very conception of righteousness." * So has it been with all the absolute values; yet we must cling to them, while purging them and ourselves of the egoistic ideas that have been associated with them. The humility man has to learn is that of accepting finally the limitations imposed by Nature, in his present stage of development, upon his intellectual powers. "We are men, and we know not how," said Sir Thomas Browne. Yes; but we are only men, and we cannot attain to the knowledge and insight of gods.

But even as the ultimate values are distinct from and independent of time, so is the worth of man's

* Essay on "Presuppositions and Prejudgments" in volume on *Immortality* edited by Canon Streeter (1917).

life unrelated to duration. It is a matter of quality, not of temporal prolongation. It depends wholly upon the degree to which the human in us achieves the mastery of the physical. He that in mind and will, in thought and word and deed, embodies, expresses, and identifies himself with the eternal, thereby attains that end and purpose of being which is the highest conceivable achievement of any life, whether ephemeral or everlasting; and the worth of every life depends upon that achievement, whether attained for one day or for ever.

CHAPTER IV

"DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE DEVIL?"

I.—The World as Our Fathers Saw It

It is only by means of a serious and protracted effort of imagination that we of the twentieth century can place ourselves at the view of the world which was held by the entire human race until a century or two ago, by vast numbers of people much later than that, and, in theory at least, by many down to the present day. For that world-view was diametrically opposed to the one which has become habitual with us; so habitual, indeed, that we can hardly conceive ourselves regarding the universe from any other standpoint.

The difference is that our ancestors placed various kinds of personal causation—will, intent, and design—behind most of the happenings which we attribute to the wholly impersonal working of what we call natural forces. They held, as we do, that the universe is infinite; but they understood that infinity in a different way than most of us do. They did not think of it so exclusively as we in terms of space. They believed that the cosmos was a graded system of which our five senses disclose to us only superficial and fragmentary aspects. And the fact that the vast multitude of personal beings in whose existence and activity they believed could neither be seen nor heard, nor yet touched, constituted in their minds no

sort of obstacle to believing in their reality and their activity.

But at the outset, in noting the direct opposition between their view of the world and our own, we must be most careful to avoid the arrogant inference (so frequently drawn by the thoughtless) that this difference in world-view is due to any mental superiority on our part or any inferiority on theirs. In this connection, we shall do well to ponder these wise words of Charles Lamb :

> "We are too hasty when we set down our ancestors in the gross for fools, for the monstrous inconsistencies (as they seem to us) involved in their creed of witchcraft. In the relations of this visible world we find them to have been as rational, and shrewd to detect an historic anomaly, as ourselves. But when once the invisible world was supposed to be open, and the lawless agency of bad spirits assumed, what measures of probability, of decency, of fitness, or proportion—of that which distinguishes the likely from the palpable absurd—could they have to guide them in the rejection or admission of any particular testimony? That maidens pined away, wasting inwardly as their waxen images consumed before a fire—that corn was lodged, and cattle lamed—that whirlwinds uptore in diabolic revelry the oaks of the forest—or that spits and kettles only danced a fearful-innocent vagary about some rustic's kitchen when no wind was stirring—were all equally probable where no law of agency was understood. That the prince of the powers of darkness, passing by the flower and pomp of the earth, should lay preposterous siege to the weak fantasy of indigent eld—has neither likelihood

> nor unlikelihood *a priori* to us, who have no measure to guess at his policy, or standard to estimate what rate those anile souls may fetch in the devil's market. Nor, when the wicked are expressly symbolized by a goat, was it to be wondered at so much, that *he* should come sometimes in that body, and assert his metaphor. —That the intercourse was opened at all between both worlds was perhaps the mistake; but, *that* once assumed, I see no reason for disbelieving one attested story of this nature more than another on the score of absurdity. There is no law to judge of the lawless, or canon by which a dream may be criticized." *

So wrote Lamb, with characteristic insight and kindliness of judgment. Our ancestors held a belief that to us seems plainly baseless. But we must not think ourselves wiser or better than they because what they held for truth appears to us so palpably erroneous. What is more, some of our wisest scientists (so cautious a thinker, for example, as Thomas Henry Huxley) have pointed out and stressed the fact that it is impossible to disprove the old theory. Huxley said that if the recognition that a thing *may be* were equivalent to proof that it *is*, then it would be easy for us to people the universe with personalities on an ascending scale, until we reached something humanly indistinguishable from omniscience and omnipotence.

Logically, the difference between our fathers and ourselves may be stated thus: With regard to the existence of infinitely many invisible personal beings, they reasoned, "We cannot prove that it is *not* so;

* *Elia*, essay on "Witches and Other Night Fears."

therefore we must assume that it *is* so." We say, "We cannot prove that it *is* so; therefore we must assume that it is *not* so." Our procedure is more rational, and has proved itself immensely more fruitful in serviceable results for mankind. It is based on the old logical maxim that beings or causes are not to be needlessly multiplied.* When we have found a regular phenomenal antecedent that sufficiently accounts for an occurrence, we must not heedlessly and superfluously drag in an invisible personal agent in addition.

But the very willingness of some scientific men to engage in the study of psychical research shows that their minds are not dogmatically closed against the possibility that there may be other personal agency besides our own in the world. Such students, however, rightly understand that in investigating any phenomenon, all the possibilities of impersonal and human causation must be clearly exhausted before any happening can begin to be attributed to any form of personal causation which is not human.

II.—Christianity and Demonology

This I take to be the true scientific attitude. It marks off the path of reason and wisdom from two brands of dogmatism which are equally baseless; one, the dogmatism of certain schools of theology, based on the old animistic assumption; the other, that of the contemporary materialists or mechanists, who assume that they *know* personality to be only a product and effect of visible bodily organization,

* "*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem.*"

and therefore impossible in the absence of such organization. We actually *know*, in the scientific, demonstrative sense of the word, nothing about the matter. And, as we have seen, such evidence as there is makes far more heavily against the materialistic assumption than in its favour.

Let us endeavour, then, to make the needed effort of imagination; let us try to look at the world through the eyes of our ancestors. They conceived it as an illimitable and innumerable spiritual hierarchy; or rather two vast armies of beings of all grades of development, from the gnomes, fairies, and brownies up to virtual or actual infinity. Moreover, they conceived these multitudes to be under the guidance and governance of two contending powers which were respectively good and evil. Usually—though not quite always—these supreme powers were themselves conceived as individualized personalities. The few great intellects of antiquity, such as Socrates and Plato, who suspended judgment on this point, nevertheless did not doubt the general theory that the explanation of the course of things in this world was to be found in a vast range of personalities, other than men, who interposed in human affairs. "The divine Socrates" believed himself to be guided by a benevolent daimon. Indeed, this Greek word "daimon" originally meant a friendly being, a protective "genius," and not the malevolent type of imp to which we apply our English modification of it, "demon." The daimon of Socrates was, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from those guardian angels which later Christianity assumed to escort every man through the perils of the world.

For historic Christianity, we must remember, was not solely a theology. It was also an angelology and a demonology. Some of the Christian Fathers thought that there were two attendant spirits constantly watching the course of every man; one of them beneficent, and acting on behalf of God; the other maleficent, and serving the interests of the Devil. This system had been thought out down to the minutest details of practical application. It enabled the Christian Church to take over the whole retinue of paganism, merely varying the characters and functions of its hordes of imaginary beings, and turning its gods into devils.

Thus the Christian scheme of the world regarded the soul of man as the battle-ground of an æonian struggle between the two contending powers, God and Satan. In this warfare, the Devil and his legions played every whit as essential a part as God and his angels. To St. Paul, to any of the Fathers of the Church, and even to later thinkers until two or three centuries ago, it would have seemed as gross an outrage to deny the existence of the personal Devil as to deny that of the personal God. We have numberless testimonies reporting encounters between individual men and members of the diabolical hierarchy. Martin Luther, for instance, was constantly conscious of the presence and the hostility of Satan to himself. After one of his charmingly naïve records of a tussle with the Devil he concludes thus:

> "As I found he was about to begin again, I gathered together my books and got into bed. Another time in the night I heard him above

> my cell, walking on the cloister; but as I knew it was the Devil, I paid no attention to him and went to sleep."

Like thousands of others, I have seen that stain on the wall of the Wartburg in Eisenach, which is supposed to have been made when Luther hurled his inkpot at the Devil. Whether he actually did this or not is uncertain; but his words, here and elsewhere, abundantly prove that he was quite capable of doing it. He manifestly believed in the reality of the Devil in the same literal, matter-of-fact sense as he believed in that of his next-door neighbour.

I repeat, that to consider St. Paul and Origen, or St. Augustine and Luther, fools for believing these things would be presumptuous arrogance on our part. Not only so, but it would be sure proof of the failure of anyone who so thinks to imbibe the historical spirit—which is the spirit that can see the past through the eyes and from the point of view of those to whom it was the present. All the world believed as Luther did; and, what is more, all the world would still believe so to-day, but for the fact that during the past four centuries a handful of men (who at the outset—and indeed until very recently—had to fight against a most bigoted and universal prejudice) have achieved marvellous results by working on that opposite assumption which we have defined as the principle of science. Instead of saying, as our forefathers did, that everything is to be attributed to a personal cause which cannot be proved not to have so originated, they have assumed that nothing is to be attributed to a

personal cause which cannot be proved to be due thereto.

What is more, these old Christian thinkers were much more logical than their modern successors. They had constructed a balanced scheme of salvation which did hang consistently together. They believed in a real Devil, the commander-in-chief of an army of devils, and a real fiery pit of Hell from which men needed to be saved. This furnished what seemed to them (and what, granting their premises, really was) a perfectly sufficient reason for believing in the sacrifice of Christ, and in that pardon from God and reconciliation with him which had thereby been purchased. It also gave them a coherent and conclusive reason for what many people now regard as the "magic" of the sacramental system. From their point of view, the sacraments of Baptism, the Mass, Absolution, and Unction, and such practices as making the sign of the Cross, using holy water, and burning incense, served the practical purpose of protecting men from the malice of ubiquitous devils. In our ancestors' eyes, these things were on all fours with our modern practices of inoculation and antisepsis to secure immunity from various kinds of disease-germs.

III.—Defoe and Dr. Garvie

That queerly interesting genius Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, was not a theologian; but he was a devout and earnest believer in the Christian system as Protestants in his day understood it. Some seven years after the publication of

Robinson Crusoe he issued another book, which is less known than it deserves to be: an extremely curious work entitled *The Political History of the Devil.* It is partly satirical and humorous; but its essential idea and main purpose are thoroughly earnest. In this book Defoe proclaims what was then the conviction of practically all men: that the reasons for believing in a personal Devil and in a personal God are substantially identical. As the book is now so little known, I may quote a few sentences from it:

> "The truth is, God and the Devil, however opposite in their nature, and remote from one another in their place of abiding, seem to stand pretty much upon a level in our faith: for as to our believing the reality of their existence, he that denies one, generally denies both; and he that believes one, necessarily believes both.
>
> "Very few, if any, of those who believe there is a God, and acknowledge the debt of homage which mankind owes to the supreme Governor of the world, doubt the existence of the Devil. . . .
>
> "As the belief of both these stands upon a level, and that God and the Devil seem to have an equal share in our faith; so the evidence of their existence seems to stand upon a level too, in many things; and as they are known by their works in the same particular cases, so they are discovered after the same manner of demonstration.
>
> "Nay, in some respects, it is equally criminal to deny the reality of them both; only with this difference, that to believe the existence of a God is a debt to nature, and to believe the

> existence of the Devil is a like debt to reason; one is a demonstration from the reality of visible causes, and the other a deduction from the like reality of their effects."

So wrote Daniel Defoe in 1726, thereby making himself the spokesman of practically everybody in the world at that time who believed in a personal God. But now let us contrast with this frank and clear statement the assertion of a representative modern theologian. For this purpose I quote the following words of the late Dr. Garvie:

> "It may be confidently affirmed that belief in Satan is not now generally regarded as an essential article of the Christian faith, nor is it found to be an indispensable element of Christian experience. On the one hand, science has so explained many of the processes of outer nature and of the inner life of man as to leave no room for Satanic agency. On the other hand, the modern view of the inspiration of the Scriptures does not necessitate the acceptance of the doctrine of the Scriptures on this subject as finally and absolutely authoritative. The teaching of Jesus, even, in this matter may be accounted for as either an accommodation to the views of those with whom he was dealing, or more probably as a proof of the limitation of knowledge which was a necessary condition of the Incarnation; for it cannot be contended that as revealer of God and redeemer of men it was imperative that he should either correct or confirm men's beliefs in this respect. The possibility of the existence of evil spirits, organized under one leader, Satan, to tempt man and oppose God, cannot be denied; the

> sufficiency of the evidence for such evil agency may, however, be doubted; the necessity for any such belief for Christian thought and life cannot, therefore, be affirmed." *

Here we have the measure of the change that two centuries have witnessed regarding this doctrine. I must plainly declare that my sympathy and respect go rather to Daniel Defoe and the older view than to the less consistent modern substitute. The views Dr. Garvie here expresses strike me as a salient instance of what Mark Twain called the "spiral twist" that he alleged to characterize the mentality of persons who had received a sacerdotal education. There seems something quite strange in the mental procedure of men who abandon one entire half of a coherent dogmatic system—and do so for reasons which are of equal force against the other half—yet leave that other half standing, like a house that a tornado has cut through, denuded of the reason for existence which the destroyed parts had supplied. These men deny the old assigned causes of the disease, yet insist more strongly than ever on the value and efficacy of the medicines devised to counteract those causes.

This is exactly what has happened. The vast majority of Protestants to-day have no belief either in a single personal Devil or in the innumerable multitude of lesser demons whose monarch was Satan. Neither do they believe in hell-fire. Their moral sense, fortunately, has revolted against that

* Rev. Alfred Ernest Garvie, D.D., Principal of New College, Hampstead, a distinguished Protestant thinker and writer; my quotation is from his article "Devil" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition.

monstrous doctrine. Nevertheless, they profess to adhere to a scheme of salvation which found its whole purpose, meaning, and reason for existence in those doctrines regarding hell and the devils which they have thus rejected. Such seems to be the dilemma of modern Protestant thought on this subject. As to the actual personal views of educated Roman Catholics on the question, one naturally cannot presume to speak with certainty. But their general culture (which of course is the same as that of the rest of us) and their habitual conduct prompt the surmise that their real views are widely different from those traditional dogmas that are still officially upheld by the authority of their Church.

We seem, then, to be confronted here by a huge and gross inconsistency. Into the views of those who do not realize this inconsistency it naturally imports chaos and confusion. But where it is realized, one is sorely tempted (in spite of every desire to judge charitably) to impute a measure of intellectual insincerity in the attempt to evade a logic which, frankly faced, would be found irresistible. Dr. Garvie's argument amounts to accusing Jesus Christ of deliberately and cruelly countenancing a gross deception. This is the only alternative our author can find to charging him with an ignorance of fact entirely impossible to reconcile with the doctrine that he was himself the omniscient Creator of the world present under human form.* The

* When Dr. Garvie attributes the acquiescence of Jesus in the current demonological views to ignorance—or, as he more tactfully puts it, to "the limitation of knowledge which was *a necessary condition of the Incarnation*"—he is assuming general consent to a particular theory which

statement that "it cannot be contended that as revealer of God and redeemer of men it was imperative that he should either correct or confirm men's beliefs in this respect," strikes the non-sacerdotal mind as monstrous. One would think this question of personal diabolical agency concerned only some harmless speculation that had no sort of bearing on practical life; that it were such another as the question whether Mars is inhabited. Dr. Garvie knew as well as we do that this idea of diabolical activities was a belief which for thousands of years had filled life with terror. It produced the most appalling horrors and cruelties in practice; it led to the sentencing to torture and death of countless innocent people, including many poor, ignorant old women afflicted with various forms of mental or psychical disease. And not only did it work this positive evil, it also wrought the immeasurable negative harm of stopping the search for the natural and remediable causes of the ills that were attributed to the action of the devils. For in antiquity, and even down to recent times, the devils were held to be the authors of sickness as well as of insanity. We still retain in our language words like *possession*,

many orthodox theologians would indignantly repudiate. It is indeed one that was invented only about forty years ago; and it was invented to meet precisely this difficulty. It is called the theory of "Kenosis," which is Greek for "emptying"; and it asserts that in becoming man Jesus deliberately emptied himself of the knowledge that he possessed as God. The psychological monstrosity of this notion of a voluntary and lifelong amnesia on the part of Jesus only shows to what fantastic lengths some theologians will go rather than abandon an old dogma when they have themselves discovered and circuitously admitted the proof of its baselessness.

seizure—*epilepsis*—which are fossil monuments of this old belief. So long as such an imaginary cause was believed in, who would search for the real causes of disease and madness? Yet Dr. Garvie, an eminent liberal theologian, calmly declared that for the purposes of redeeming men and revealing God—purposes effected, according to him, through the most stupendous of all miracles, no less a one than the Incarnation of the Infinite Godhead in human form—it was unnecessary for the one power which *could* have corrected this hideous error to do so! Truly, the spectacle of a highly intelligent man like Dr. Garvie saying such things presents an enigma that is altogether beyond a plain man's power to solve.

IV.—The Devil as God's "Alibi"

But the reasons for the general abandonment of belief in the Devil are more complex, perhaps even more confused, than Dr. Garvie recognized. He treated the matter as exclusively a question of *evidence*; but, if this were so, the doctrine of God would be affected to the same degree as that of Satan. For plainly the evidence against Satanic agency to which Dr. Garvie refers—the evidence that psychology and physical science have put in our possession—tells every whit as strongly against supposed divine agencies, operating through sacraments and answers to prayer, as against diabolical ones; because it is evidence against *any kind* of extra-human personal agency. "Possession" is reduced, in the scientific view, to disease-germs and

to abnormal nervous or psychic conditions entailed either by heredity or by some shock to the individual. This is the account which Dr. Garvie himself recognized as adequate to explain all that was formerly attributed to the operations of Satan and his legions. He explicitly asserts that it "leaves no room for Satanic agency." Well, but what other account than a similar reference to hereditary and environmental influences (albeit favouring instead of adverse ones) is to be given of good health, of good character, and psychic soundness? If the reasoning is valid on the one side it cannot be less so on the other.

The true reason for the modern abandonment of diabolical agency is a vague and half-conscious desire to mitigate the pressure of the insoluble problem of evil; to take away, in part at least, the burden of that reflection on the divine goodness which was felt to lurk in the notion that an infinitely good God created a great spirit which he must have foreknown would become the author and embodiment of evil, and continues to sustain him and permit his ravages after he has done so.*

In the Bible we can see this moral difficulty developing. There was a time when it did not press at all on the consciousness of the Hebrew people; but a few centuries later it had become acute for them. The old version of Jewish history is contained in the Books of Samuel and Kings, which in substance

* Having earlier quoted Defoe, I may refer to the famous question put by "Man Friday" to Robinson Crusoe when Crusoe was endeavouring to make a doctrinal Christian of him: "Why God no kill the devil, so make him no more do wicked?" Crusoe, being no theologian, honestly gives it up.

are prior to the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people—that is, written before this idea had seized upon their minds. Consequently, in those books we find the very same act attributed to God which in the later presentation of their history was directly attributed to Satan. At the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel we find these words :

> " The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, saying : ' Go, number Israel and Judah.' "

Several centuries later, after the exile, the old record was re-written in the Books of Chronicles; but there this same episode is thus explained :

> " And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel." *

What does this mean? It means that in the interim, partly under the influence of Persian religious thought, the Hebrew mind had learned to recoil from the blunt and direct ascription to God of acts regarded as evil. As may be seen by a critical study of the growth and contents of the Book of Job, their conception of God had in those centuries changed from that of a non-moral nature-force to that of the embodiment of ethical will. Hence some of their thinkers were glad to seize upon this imported notion of a superhuman evil person as a device to help in vindicating the goodness of God, by placing a limitation upon his power, or, at all events, assuming the constant agency of an enemy capable of confounding

* I Chron. xxi, 1.

his plans to some extent. In other words, it was a pious concern for the divine character which led to the introduction of the Devil. But now we see that it is also, in part, a similar pious purpose which has led our modern theologians to give the Devil his congé. Some of these modern theologians have, however, failed to notice that they have thus returned the problem of evil to its earlier status, besides making the entire historical and official orthodox story of the fall and redemption of the human race meaningless.

Now if we simply refuse to colour or twist the realities of experience, to make them conform with our wishes or our preconceptions, two facts emerge quite plainly. One of these is the utter impossibility of understanding the world-order which we encounter as the expression of one single all-powerful and ethically perfect will. The experiences of life cannot by any device be reconciled with that hypothesis. The other fact is that those considerations which make it rationally impossible to personify the power in the world which makes for evil, also make it no less impossible to personify the power in the world which makes for righteousness, justice, and mercy. We may admit that the figure of Satan, especially as depicted by Milton, is the grandest of all mythological conceptions. But it is impossible to doubt that it *is* mythological. It is as manifestly so as the gunpowder and artillery which Milton feigns were invented by the Devil and used during the war in heaven against the troops of loyal angels. The poet conceived these material weapons as used against spiritual beings whom he is obliged to admit

that they could not in any real sense injure. Milton created his grand character of Satan as truly as he did this ludicrous episode which mars his glorious poem.

V.—The Divine and the Diabolical in Experience

These thoughts, as many of us know from experience, may be painful when they are new. But we must not hesitate to endure pain rather than sacrifice truth. And the time is undoubtedly coming when what most men now see to be true regarding the personal Devil they will see to be equally true (and for the same reasons) regarding the personality of the Divine power in the world—the Father-God.

Both of these beliefs were prompted by perfectly real facts of experience; only they are imaginative constructions projected from those facts. They are cut to the measure of man. The orthodox doctrine of God is a magnified picture of the best in man, just as the old doctrine of the Devil was a magnified picture of the worst in man. Life contains both the diabolical and the divine elements. The worth of life despite all its tragedies, the joy, the mental fulfilment, the spiritual development and achievement that are possible to man, and the profound thankfulness that these should and do evoke in normal spirits—these are the facts which occasioned the belief in God. The horrors, the tragedies and evils independent of human causation and beyond man's control, which hang like a frequently falling sword of Damocles over the heads of the human

race—these are the realities that prompted the belief in the Devil.

But if we now reduce the evil in the world (as our modern theologians admit that we must) to a blend of impersonal, non-purposive causation with the animal and sub-moral elements in humanity itself, and find that evil thereby sufficiently accounted for; what can hinder us from sooner or later explaining the good in the world as an analogous blend of impersonal causation with the higher and distinctively human mind and moral will in man? As to the first, all parties, we may say, are agreed; or at least it is certain that the liberal theologians are. But how can they accept and apply this logic in the one case while continuing to deny its equally obvious cogency in the other?

Let me hasten to add that this position involves no denial of the reality of that infinite spiritual universe in which, as Dr. Adler taught, each of us holds his or her original and uncancellable place. It is only a recognition of the radical incompetence of the human intellect to explain and to reconcile the co-existence of the eternal and perfect with the transient and tragically imperfect empirical world of our experience. In the eighteenth century Rousseau said, "Man, seek no longer the origin of evil; thou thyself art its origin." The statement is as superficial as were most of the ideas of that mischief-breeding sentimentalist. The human race has indeed originated many types of evil; and we must at once admit that the special category of evils that are properly called moral ones depend absolutely on personality. But even the corrupt and sub-human elements which survive in our own

nature and thrust us into these evils are not of our making, nor do they begin with man. They are our heritage from the "ape and tiger."

This, to be sure, is no excuse for us. But it suffices to refute Rousseau, who in his fantastic idealization of Nature, and of man in an imaginary "state of Nature," ignored the fact that the processes of the world, which are themselves impersonal and therefore are not to be measured by an irrelevant ethical standard, produce enormous evil in some of their impacts upon us. The application of moral categories here is of course absurd. One does not blame disease-germs or tigers for their ravages; one does not blame the volcano or the tornado. But to deny that these and other elements of the natural system work evil in the life of humanity is simply to blind oneself to the most palpable facts and to talk nonsense.

In March, 1937, an agonizing disaster occurred in Texas, where a school was wrecked by an explosion, with the loss of over five hundred lives, mostly those of young children. This was only an exceptionally dramatic and appalling manifestation of a phase of Nature's work that is ever in operation. It seems to me that such a happening would drive one to distraction if one felt compelled to find its cause in a personal will which at the same time one felt bound to recognize as both all-good and all-powerful. To ascribe such a disaster (as our fathers would have done) to the agency of the Devil does not remove the difficulty, but only thrusts it a stage farther back; because the Devil also, on their showing, was God's creature. God was the source and repository of all the power there is; and the power

of the Devil was as derivative from God and as dependent upon his constant sustentation as any other embodiment of it. Hence to me, at least, the full confession of unqualified agnosticism concerning the mode of the co-existence of the imperfect with the perfect is not only, as Dr. Adler said, the condition of ethical certitude, but is also the condition of peace of spirit in the face of these tragedies. It is an infinite relief to think that disasters arising in the natural order from causes beyond man's control are not expressions of any conscious purpose, and therefore that blame for them is not to be visited upon any personal agent whatsoever.

We must indeed agree with Rousseau that we should "seek no longer the origin of evil." But not because, as he foolishly thought, we have found it; rather because we recognize that it never can be found. It is one phase of that ultimate mystery which is as far beyond the comprehension of our intellect as the abysses of space are beyond the reach of our hands.

Let us freely recognize this; and then let us, with due humility, dedicate ourselves to the sublime task which the order of the world has placed in our hands here and now—the task of eliminating evil so far as we can from our own lives, from the entire society of mankind, and from the effects upon us of the hitherto uncontrollable forces of Nature. The mental energy which has been expended on the solution of problems that are insoluble, on the investigation of a mystery that must be frankly and finally recognized as unfathomable, will be more modestly and more fruitfully applied to this sternly practical task.

CHAPTER V

"WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF HUMAN NATURE?"

I.—The Chaos in Psychology and the Battle Over Evolution

Among the many puzzles which the haphazard developments of science present to a thoughtful mind, few are stranger than that occasioned by the general neglect, on the part of psychologists, of what would naturally seem the most interesting, as well as the most important, phase of their subject. To be sure, psychology to-day, by the admission of one of its ablest practitioners (Dr. Joseph Jastrow), is in a state of chaos. It is subdivided into almost as many sects as there are experts; and Dr. Jastrow assures us that every one of them is wrong—except himself, of course. The Freudians are certain that everything important arises from and is determined by the subconscious sex-impulse. The Behaviourists are equally sure that the subconscious does not exist, and that even "consciousness" is but a mystifying misnomer for the reflex responses of the body and nerves to stimuli. Between these insane extremes, there are all grades of moderate and helpful treatment of various phases of the subject. Abnormalities ranging from mere harmless eccentricity to total madness have been extensively studied. The sensations, emotions, and mental processes of

normal people have been the subject of close and careful examination. But the overwhelmingly important questions of the actual moral experience of mankind, and of the elements in human nature which render that experience possible, have been neglected. One may read a hundred treatises of general psychology without coming upon one word on the subject.

Accordingly, it may be in order for some ideas on this theme to be submitted by one who makes no pretension to being a psychologist; by one, indeed, who is profoundly sceptical as to whether anything remotely deserving the name of a *science* of psychology as yet exists. If these ideas have no other value, they may at least ring the bell at the psychologists' door, and provoke them into undertaking the vital task they have so long neglected.

With this end in view, I invite the reader to accompany me on a brief tour over an old and famous battlefield of human thought.

At certain stages in the development of civilization, new discoveries are made, or new mental standpoints are adopted, which have the effect of changing fundamentally the prevalent conception of the nature of the world, the place of man in it, and the prospects and possibilities which the universe permits to him. It is in the history of thought much as when, ascending a mountain road, we reach a turn in it which discloses a new horizon, wider than the one visible before.

With the passage of time and the progress of criticism, it usually happens that these accretions of new knowledge, or these new mental outlooks,

become absorbed and assimilated by the generality of men—so completely, indeed, that later generations are often astonished when they recall the perturbation or horror occasioned to their forefathers by the original promulgation of doctrines and views that to themselves have become commonplace.

An epoch of this character occurred in the seventeenth century, with the conquest of men's minds by the astronomical doctrine elaborated by Kepler, Galileo, and Newton. Another took place in the nineteenth century, with the conscious and thoroughgoing application of the conception of evolution to all things in the heavens and the earth, living and non-living, including man himself. The idea of evolution, as students of the history of thought are well aware, was not then new. We can trace it in ancient Greece, and it cropped out sporadically through the centuries that divide us from Greece; but the conception had never been applied all round, with the aid of comprehensive scientific knowledge, nor had it ever before been generally accepted. This, however, was what happened in the nineteenth century—the wide application of the idea to a constantly growing mass of experimentally verified data and observed phenomena, and its general, even popular, acceptance, induced by the apparently overwhelming mass of evidence marshalled in its support.

So extensive was the disorganization this caused in human thought, and the reorientation of men's minds thereby necessitated, that in the seventy-eight years which have elapsed since the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* the necessary

mental readjustment has not yet been made by many people; possibly not really completed by any man.

The *Origin of Species* itself was cautiously restricted by its author to the plant world and the animal world below the human level. It undertook to establish the kinship, the genetic linkage, of species with species throughout that entire sphere. Only in the closing chapter of the book did Darwin drop the disturbing hint that the line of research he had followed might be expected later to throw light upon the genesis of man himself.* But this mere hint was sufficient to cause a tremendous fluttering in the dovecotes of traditional theology.

It was a hint that speedily bore fruit, to the inexpressible horror of the orthodox clergy and laity of the time. Within a few years of the publication of the *Origin of Species* came a volume by a brilliant young biologist called Thomas Henry Huxley, on *Man's Place in Nature*; and this again was followed, some years later, by Darwin's own definitive treatise on *The Descent of Man.*

These books unequivocally proclaimed that, instead of being a direct and special creation of God Almighty, man was lineally descended, by strictly natural processes, from an ape-like creature or creatures in whom what we regard as the specifically human endowments of reason, æsthetic sense, and conscience existed—if they were present at all—only

* "In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. . . . Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history."—*Origin of Species*, first edition, p. 488.

in the barest, most doubtful, and most completely un-self-conscious rudiments.

II.—The Emergence of the New in Evolution

It was over this challenge that the famous "warfare between science and theology" chiefly raged for several decades. In the course of that contest, battles were fought in every possible field; but the question of the genesis of man and his place in the scheme of things was unmistakably the occasion of the war. Every reader of the endlessly interesting and stimulating essays of Huxley will admit that it was his compelling interest in making Darwin's position good on this fundamental question which led him into the sphere of theological study and Biblical criticism, and provoked his fascinating controversies with Gladstone, Wace, and others.

We may now say that *in principle* the Darwinian view has conquered all along the line. In principle: because the matter is complicated when we descend to details. An eminent biologist some few years ago declared that men of science to-day—experts in every sphere of research directly bearing on the question—are more sure than ever they were about the *fact* of evolution, although in certain departments, including the thorny question of the descent of man, they are still extremely uncertain about its *factors*.

This means that no competent scientist can now hold, in any form, the view presented in the two accounts of creation which are woven together in the opening chapters of Genesis: the view that man was a special

and separate creation; that he came into being as the result of an immediate fiat of the Almighty, and that his advent had no genetic linkage with any part of the rest of creation. *That* view of man is completely obsolete, no matter what elements of uncertainty may still hover around the actual stages in the process of natural development. Over these there are, and for some time must still be, controversies. For instance, it is uncertain what particular type of simian creature was man's ancestor. There is doubt still whether all the varieties of mankind sprang from a single ape-like stem. We do not yet know where the human race originated, nor whether it began in only one locality or in several. But that the human race did spring from one variety or several varieties of the ape species is not questioned, I believe, by any specialist in the biological field. Neither does any such competent authority question that the existing apes are, so to say, the cousins of man—collateral branches of what was originally one family. The truth of this is held to be demonstrated by many facts, including particularly the remarkable blood-tests which have been made in recent years—tests which have resulted in establishing the same sort of affinity between man and the apes as subsists between one variety of man and another.

Now, when this mental revolution first took place, it was thought that the ideas of evolution and creation were opposed to one another, to the extent of being mutually exclusive. It was held that the entire world-process could be explained in terms of only one of the two doctrines. It must be a process *either* of evolution *or* of creation; it could not be

both. Later reflection showed, however, that this does not logically follow. What *does* follow is that the idea of creation can no longer be applied in the retail fashion—as proceeding by a series of separate, disconnected acts. If it can be retained at all, it is only on the wholesale scale. Evolution does exclude separate and partial creations. But in the judgment of many scientists and philosophers of the post-Darwinian age, the question of creation as a general process remains untouched. It is the thesis of Bergson, for example, that evolution is itself a mode of creation—although he of course understands "creation" in a sense widely different from the anthropomorphic one of the traditional religions.

It was also assumed hastily at the outset that if man is the ape's great-grandson there can be in his nature nothing essentially new; nothing, in fact, except a higher degree of those elements which were already present in the ape. But the criticism of many later evolutionists, especially those expert in biology, has shown that this view also rests upon a fallacy; that is, upon an unduly narrow conception of what evolution means, or may mean. The problem is to account for the presence, in a world of purely natural development, of new realities which cannot be analysed into the antecedent elements in combination with which they appear.

If nothing radically new emerges in the process—if everything that exists is only, so to say, the arithmetical sum of pre-existing constituent elements, and can be theoretically, if not actually, resolved back into them—it is hard to see how the term "evolution" could be seriously applied at all. If

we could take any of the later manifestations of the world-process—man, animal, or plant—and by analysis reduce it to pre-existing elements, thereby completely exhausting and dissipating it, then the only change would be in the complexity of the combination of those elements, and nothing radically new would emerge in the world. "Evolution" would then be only a re-shuffling of the same old cards.

Closer attention to the actual process has shown that in every traceable case of development all the pre-existing ingredients do indeed continue to be utilized; but they become transformed under the influence of a new mode of energizing, or a new principle of activity, which is itself no less real than any of them. A plant, for example, is a synthesis of physical and chemical elements otherwise dispersed about the world, and discoverable almost everywhere; but when these elements are co-ordinated in such fashion that we can accurately call the result "a plant," there is operative in their combination a new factor called *life*, which factor is never associated with any one or any number of the elements in their separateness.

Again, when we pass from the plant to the animal we do not leave the sphere of physical and chemical elements. All those that were present in the plant turn up again; but we now find the synthesis still more complex than it was in the plant; and consequently the life is more highly developed and more independent. Another stage on the long road towards free activity has been achieved. There are still vegetative processes in the animal; but the

animal is active, where the plant is passive; it enjoys a free mobility, where the plant is tethered to one point of space by its fixed rootage in the earth.

Within the animal world, once more, a wide and various differentiation is manifested. The organization of animals represents almost infinitely many variations played upon a single theme, the most primitive overture of which (at least, the most primitive now extant) is found in the spine-and-fin mechanisms of the simplest fishes. By "descent with modification," to use Darwin's phrase, these have developed into the wings of birds, the legs of land animals, and the legs, arms, and hands of apes and men.

The general formula for evolution, then, may be put roughly thus: Elements originally dispersed become synthesized; in their synthesis they operate under the influence of a directive principle, which principle is not resolvable back into the elements among which it is manifested; it is neither the arithmetical sum nor the resultant of the factors through which it operates. This is the very reason why we have to speak of "evolution" rather than mere aggregation or complication.

III.—The Old and the New in Human Nature

Accepting this as the general *modus* of the process, so far as we can observe and check its manifestations, we find that it becomes possible for us to recognize real differences of kind, as well as of degree, within any given evolutionary series. There is, for example, a quite definite transition, an ascent from a lower to

a higher plane of reality, when the organic, in the form of even the simplest of plants, supervenes upon the inorganic, in the form of even the most complex of crystals. There is evidently another such transition by way of ascent when animal life becomes differentiated from plant life.

This way of regarding the matter is in no wise hindered by the circumstance that the course of the development is flawlessly continuous; so completely so that between the plant and animal kingdoms there are border-line cases—organisms concerning which the botanists and zoologists dispute inconclusively as to whether they are properly to be classed as plants or as animals. But however uncertain the frontier between these two provinces of life may be, there is no doubt that at some point lying between fairly narrow limits it is effectively crossed. When we find animals in free motion we cannot doubt that this has happened, and we are quite sure about it long before we reach the stage at which we see birds nesting amid the leaves of a tree or apes disporting themselves upon its branches. The differentiation of animals from plants is quite unquestionable when we consider developed specimens of both, even though the precise point of bifurcation remains doubtful.

When we arrive at man, we find the whole of this old story once again repeated. Man is an animal, in whom not only are all the organs and functions of other animals duplicated, but in whom also all the promptings to action, the impulsions to self-expression and self-satisfaction, and the emotional accompaniments of muscular and neural processes which we

either observe or infer in other animals, are similarly operative. But now the question arises whether the obvious differences which accompany these fundamental identities between men and other animals amount only to an enhanced complexity within the animal sphere, and still on the animal level, or whether they are to be regarded as an evolutionary new departure, comparable with the earlier one which distinguished the animal from the plant, or the one still earlier which marked off the plant from the inorganic world. In other words, are we here confronted with a difference of *kind*, or one that can be accurately described as only of *degree*?

This question is really crucial for science, as well as for the self-understanding of men in general. The way to answer it is to observe, as closely and exactly as we can, the psychic and mental processes of animals (assuming that they do have mental processes), and compare these with our own. In the animal we undoubtedly find four kinds of action involving psychical, cerebral, and possibly mental accompaniments, to which the nervous system is instrumental. To begin with, we observe in all animals the reflex action of nerves and muscles, an action that *seems* at times to be accompanied by no degree of consciousness whatsoever. This has been abundantly demonstrated by experiments upon decapitated frogs, chickens, and other creatures. We observe in them also sensation, and not only sensation but sensible perception as well—that is, clusters of sensations integrated into the perception of objects; and we undoubtedly see in them likewise the association of these sensible perceptions, in a

way that seems to amount to a kind of organic memory.

But, as was pointed out by an able biologist, St. George Mivart, so long ago as the publication of Darwin's *Descent of Man* (in a critical essay on that book), all these operations in animals are "indeliberate" ones. They consist, he says, of "mere presentative sensible ideas, in no way implying any reflective or representative faculty."

In ourselves, however, we further distinguish two other kinds of mental activity. The definition of these I shall give in Mivart's own admirable words. There is, he says, that activity "in which sensations and sensible perceptions are reflected on by thought, and recognized as our own, and we ourselves recognized by ourselves as affected and perceiving." This is *self-consciousness*. Again, there is that mode of mental action "in which we reflect upon our sensations or perceptions and ask what they are and why they are." This is his definition of *reason*. And he continues :—

> "These two latter kinds of action are deliberate operations, performed as they are by means of representative ideas implying the use of a reflective representative faculty. Such actions distinguish the intellect or rational faculty. Now, we assert that the full possession of all the first four (presentative) kinds of action, by no means implies the possession of the last two (representative) kinds also. All persons, we think, must admit the truth of the following propositions :—
>
> "Two faculties are distinct, not in degree but in kind, if we may possess the one in

> perfection without that fact implying that we possess the other also. Still more will this be the case if the two faculties tend to increase in an inverse ratio. Yet this is the distinction between the instinctive and the intellectual parts of man's nature." *

In other words, when we have tried to survey and mark out the equipment common to ourselves with the other animals, in regard to our psychic and mental operations, we find that what differentiates man from them is not the possession of a wholly different set. Man has all that the animals have and does all that they do; but, in addition, there are in man two modes of mental activity which we cannot verify as existing and operating below the human level.

Chiefly for this reason, I have long ventured to think that the distinctive elements of our humanity must be held to constitute a new departure in evolution. The difference between ourselves and the apes, to say nothing of animals still lower than the apes, is one that should be accounted a difference of kind and not merely of degree.†

But this difference, this emergence of novelty, is still part of the unbroken continuum of evolution. I do not suggest—on the contrary, I vigorously repudiate the suggestion—that it involves anything such as the earlier theologians called a special

* Essay on *The Descent of Man*, 1871, reprinted in Vol. II of Mivart's *Essays and Criticisms*, 1892.

† The reader will find the developed defence of this thesis in my essay on "Evolution and the Uniqueness of Man" in the volume entitled *Aspects of Ethical Religion*, edited by me in 1926. (New York: American Ethical Union.)

creation, or the intervention in the cosmic process of a supernatural energy, originating from beyond the one all-embracing order of reality. So far am I from holding this view, that the hypothesis of such intervention seems to me both self-contradictory and superfluous. To my thinking, it is inconsistent with the very idea conveyed by the term *universe*. For what do we mean by this word? Is not the idea of "the universe" made up of the concept of infinity—the boundless multiplicity of parts and elements—and the recognition that all these are nevertheless held together as a unity? The unity consists in the insunderable and inalienable interrelatedness of all the multifarious contents and constituents. Things that are as far asunder as the poles of heaven, and seem to have no element of mutual identity, nevertheless turn out to be connected with and to influence each other through unbroken chains of causation and interaction. The star-dust and the brain of man are both elements of the universe; and there is, if we were patient or wise enough to trace it, an ascertainable linkage between them. Hence the creative cause of evolution, whatever it be, is to be held as existing and working within the "order of nature," and not "from without"—for there is no "without."

In other words, I hold the evolution of man to be as strictly and truly a "natural process" as the growth of a flower or the formation of a crystal. Whatever the word *natural* means in the case of the crystal or the flower, it means the same in the case of man. Man can be considered as "created" only if everything can, and only in the same sense as everything can.

IV.—The Animal and the Human in Mankind

But now let us come more precisely to our problem of the association of animal and human elements in man. Remember the suggested general formula for evolution: that in every new product all the old elements turn up again, but are more complexly synthesized and function under the influence of a new directive principle. In listing the psychological elements common to the animals and man, I shall follow, with little modification, the tentative classification long ago adopted by James Martineau. It is the reproach of psychology that almost nothing has been done, in the half-century since he wrote, to develop, to correct, or to supersede his splendid pioneer survey in this, the most important and interesting province of the subject.* Martineau regards these elements of our make-up as comprising four main classes, each of which is subdivided into three subordinate groups. He distinguishes, in the animals and in ourselves, *propensions*, *passions*, *affections*, and *sentiments*.

It should be added, as a preliminary qualification, that with regard to this last group, the sentiments (which embrace wonder, admiration, and reverence), the only one of which we find plausibly clear evidence in animals is the first of the three. Of the second—admiration—we find at best but an indistinct and questionable vestige, and no trace at all of the third. This, however, is a matter which need not here be developed.

* *Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol. II. See especially pp. 135–186 in second edition (1886).

By "propensions" are meant the organic appetites of food and sex, indispensable in a race of creatures needing individual nourishment and collective renewal, and a third, often overlooked because there is no single or specific object on which it is directed. Let us, with Martineau, term it provisionally "animal spontaneity." It is the undifferentiated tendency which gives rise to the love of play, the hankering for exercise and exertion. It prompts the sportive gambols that we love to watch in kittens and puppies, in colts and children. In man it is the spring of athleticism, and of the tendency—which seems to be half need and half desire—to engage in manifold activities involving exertion, hardship, and risk; it is the adventurous, the exploratory impulse. The human characteristic has its roots in a primitive spontaneity which, in the animal as in ourselves, falls into the same class with the indispensable appetites of food and sex.

The group of "passions" is so called because, as Martineau says, "they do not arise as forces from the needs of our own nature, but are rather what we suffer at the hands of other objects." They are defensive repulsions against what would advance upon us from the outer world to our injury. When any such object is immediately present, we and the other animals feel toward it a positive, clear *antipathy*. In the case of any such object that has already hurt us, the spontaneous repulsive awakening is one of *anger*; and in the case of one from which we apprehend menace in the future, we are endowed with *fear* to impel us to take measures for our protection.

Antipathy, anger, fear—these are the main elements of our nature to be listed under the head of passions.

As to the "affections," they are springs of action so called because they engender a certain feeling and attitude towards other living beings; and also, in the case of man, by a complex process of transference, towards expressions or emanations of other living beings, such as things of art, books, handwriting, portraits, etc. This psychological group we can subdivide into the three classes of parental, social, and compassionate affections. There is no doubt whatever that the first two of these—the parental and social—are very definitely present in some animals; and even of the third, the compassionate class (which seems most nearly related to intellectual activity), there are, according to many able observers, clear evidences of its presence and operation in some of the higher animals and birds.

We enter admittedly upon more doubtful ground when we take the last main group, which have been called sentiments. This group is subdivided into the three elements of wonder, admiration, and reverence. There seems no good reason to doubt that the first of these, the sentiment of wonder, is present in unmistakable rudiment in several of the higher animals; and if we consider such a phenomenon as the attitude of a specially intelligent dog toward its master, although certainly the chief and most obvious ingredient in it is affection, still one may suspect that it cannot be completely analysed without disclosing also a distinguishable element of admiration. In the case of a really intelligent dog, there is a difference between the

kinds of affection it will manifest towards different persons; and the difference, I believe, is that in the one case there is present, but not in the others, an element that may properly be called admiration.*

Setting aside the last sentiment, *reverence*, as being possible only to fully self-conscious beings, and beyond the range of those that are merely conscious without being self-conscious, we may take this outline as roughly covering the ground of animal psychology, in the sense that it enumerates and exhausts the distinguishable elements present alike in other animals and in man. Each of these elements is as unmistakably a part of our own make-up as any of them are of the make-up of birds, dogs, apes, and creatures still less evolved.

V.—Transformation of Animal Elements by Reason and Conscience

What, then, of the differentiating factor in mankind? We are dealing, I repeat, with a new chapter in the old, old story of evolution; and Nature always repeats whatever has proved a sufficiently economical method of attaining its ends. The difference is not that man possesses a further set of springs of action additional to this common stock; the difference is that the operation of every one of them becomes transformed in man through the influence of his self-consciousness. Man is "a self-distinguishing subject." He can set himself over-against the contents of his psychic being; he brings them under

* A wealth of finely recorded observations on parallel phenomena among chimpanzees will be found in Köhler's charming book, *The Mentality of Apes*.

mental survey, contemplates them, and reasons about them. And this no animal below his level can do. The kinds of activity that involve conceptual thinking and can be verifiably manifested through speech alone—these, we say, are the novelties in the evolutionary equipment of the human race. These man possesses, and other animals do not; and through these, the old elements take on new meaning and operate in a different fashion.

For example, in the animals the appetites of food, sex, and neuro-muscular activity operate only instinctively and therefore simply; but in man, whose self-consciousness qualifies them by combining with them the elements of memory and foresight, they give rise also to what the psychologist would call secondary affections and sentiments. They occasion a self-conscious and thought-determined love of various kinds of pleasure and of power; and, by a still further derivative process, they beget the love of money and personal influence, as the instrumentalities by which such pleasures and powers can be obtained.

In parallel fashion, the spontaneous antipathy, anger, and fear which we discern in the animal become in man, at the second remove (*i.e.* through the metamorphosis of self-consciousness), such qualities as malice, vindictiveness, suspiciousness, or the nobler expression that we call righteous indignation —a disinterested anger at wrongs that affect others but not oneself.

As I have earlier remarked, I am attempting simply to lay out the rudiments of ethical psychology.

This is why I have troubled the reader with a mere dull enumeration of these elements, without proceeding at length to the analysis of any one of them. My desire is only to illustrate the general principle that, whereas man throughout his physical and emotional being is an animal, nevertheless the psychical elements common to him with other animals undergo a gigantic transformation through the operation upon them of reason and reflective self-consciousness. This fact is the root of ethics. Upon it, all the possibilities of moral evaluation and disvaluation, of right and wrong action, must, and do, depend.

I have ventured elsewhere to suggest that the formula "struggle for existence" does not adequately characterize the life of man, but that to describe his life in its specifically human aspect we must substitute the idea of a struggle for self-respect. I shall conclude this chapter with the following observation: When self-respect is lost, by ourselves or by others, we can generally analyse the loss and trace its cause by unearthing the fact that in some given exigency we have acted from the purely animal side of our nature, rather than from its differentially human side. This, I believe, is one of the fundamental laws in the department of our moral experience.

It is doubtless quite true to say that, whenever we act, we act always from a "strongest motive." No doubt it is also true that the animal can act only from a motive; and the mere fact that it acts at all proves that, at the time and in the circumstances, the motive which prompted the act was the strongest one. But there remains the fundamental difference

that in the case of the animal the motive is the simple, unmodified driving force of an elementary natural impulsion. In the case of man, however, the complicating factor of his self-consciousness and reason enters, and renders the process of *forming* a motive very different and less simple. The animal's motive is *given* to it; man's is *formed* by himself. Man finds that there is present in his nature a further regulator of his activity, besides the mere stock of natural impulsions of which alone the animal is conscious. It is this which complicates the human problem. Man discovers that in his nature there is not only an order of relative *strength* among the propensions that set him going, but there is also among them a scale of *worth*; and the scale of worth by no means coincides with the gradations of strength.

It is the fact that when we feel a solicitation to action, while we are acutely conscious of the urgency of the inner force and the enticingness of the object upon which it focusses our attention, we are simultaneously conscious also of a question as to its worth. We find ourselves asking whether, despite the strength of the impulse, we *ought* not to thrust it aside, and act upon one weaker in driving force but felt to speak with higher authority. This we perceive to have the greater claim upon us. The non-correspondence between the scale of worth detected in our impulsions to action and the order of their natural strength is the effect of the introduction of reason into the process. The perception of this clash is the typical form of the operation of conscience. The reality of conscience is validated

whenever we perceive the difference between the worth and the strength of a solicitation.

This is the basis for the assertion that man, in order to be truly human, must always side with and act from the more complex and difficult human leadings of his nature, instead of the simpler, easier, and more spontaneous animal ones. Ethics arises from the fact that it lies in man's power to take at times the line of greatest resistance. He has not only the consciousness of power to do this, but the sense of obligation to do so. By interrogating his own nature he finds that the fulfilment of its higher aspects, the earning or maintaining of his own self-respect, depends upon his following the *discerned order of worth* rather than the *felt order of strength* among the solicitations of those psychical ingredients which he shares with the animal world. This is the fact which accounts for the possibility of there being such a thing as a science of ethics. It also renders necessary a science of moral psychology, differentiated from the general psychology which deals with sensation, emotion, and intellect.

The equipment of the Ethical Movement for fuller and more efficient functioning requires that some competent worker should undertake to supplement the work done by Felix Adler in elaborating an ethical philosophy of life and by Stanton Coit in experimenting upon a discipline of public moral edification. This residual task will be the development of an ethical psychology that can be applied throughout the whole range of education. Here is a field in which our Societies can profitably investigate and experiment. Since I can make no claim to being a

psychologist in the academic sense, I am forced to intrude in this department much as Samuel Butler did when, not being a biologist or in any strict sense a man of science at all, he nevertheless made, both through critical and constructive suggestions, valuable contributions to the theory and the philosophy of evolution. The most such an amateur as myself can hope to achieve in the psychological field is to act as a gadfly to the specialists, and worry them until they turn their energies upon a palpably indispensable task which, for far too long, they have most amazingly neglected. But even so humble an effort may turn out to be not unfruitful.

CHAPTER VI

"DO YOU BELIEVE IN RESURRECTION?"

I.—History of the Idea: St. Paul

If a teacher of history in some college or high school were to ask each of his students to prepare a list of the chief founders and builders of empire in the course of the world's history, one wonders what names such lists would include. Supposing the teaching to have been up-to-date, they would presumably all begin with the name of Ikhnaton, the great reforming Pharaoh who was the first to expand Egypt into an empire; and we can all guess at many of the names that would follow. We may suppose the lists ending variously, according to the particular instruction received, or the bias of the students, with the name of Washington or Napoleon, Bismarck or Cecil Rhodes, Lenin or Mussolini. In every list prominence would undoubtedly be given to the names of Alexander and of Julius Cæsar. But I for one should be agreeably surprised if, in examining the returns from such a class, I discovered in a single one of them the name of St. Paul.

Now, from the standpoint purely of secular history, and the interest of accurately listing facts which have permanently changed or influenced the course of the world, the omission of Paul's name from such a catalogue would be a manifest

error and injustice. To me, as an habitual though non-expert reader of history, nothing is more surprising than the general extent to which this error and injustice are perpetrated and perpetuated by historians. For obviously, if the extent and duration of an empire are to be counted criteria of the greatness and success of its founder or builder, the one established by St. Paul has been among the greatest, if not *the* greatest, in the whole of history.

I have seen attributed to Napoleon the following assertion: "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires on force, and they perished; Jesus of Nazareth alone, a crucified Jew, founded his kingdom on love, and at this hour millions of men would die for him." The general accuracy of the idea these words convey is beyond question for anybody who thinks realistically. Jesus certainly was, despite the fantastic denial of the Comtists, the founder of that extraordinary spiritual empire called the Christian Church. But the early and sudden termination of his career left his work at a point where it was bound to be nipped in the bud and collapse unless it had been promptly taken over and carried through by some extraordinarily gifted successor.

Such a successor appeared in the person of this man Paul. He built the empire that Jesus founded; he carried out the architect's plan. And not only was he statesman and organizer enough to do this with remarkable efficiency, but it is also unquestionable that, next to Jesus himself, Paul was the most original religious genius in the entire history of Christianity.

It is fortunate that the accidents of time have spared to us a group of letters of this man's writing; letters with an extraordinarily strong personal flavour, in which the peculiar characteristics of the writer are displayed with fascinating vividness. When we read these documents in the light thrown upon them by history and archæology (particularly if we have the benefit of the clear and accurate impression of Paul's background and surroundings provided by the charming books of Sir William Ramsay *), it becomes evident that what I have called Paul's empire-building was no accident, but the conscious and deliberate carrying out of a carefully devised plan.

For in these letters we can see his mind working in terms of the great provinces of the Roman Empire as they were constituted in the first century of our era; and we learn of his determination to plant the new spiritual kingdom at the best strategic point in each of them. Those interested in the subject should study a map of the Mediterranean world as it was in those days of "the most high and palmy state" of the Roman Empire, and note the cities in which St. Paul preached and founded the centres of the new religion: Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Rome. In the course of writing to his friends at Rome to say how anxious he was to come there, he adds that after visiting Rome it is his desire and purpose to push on farther

* *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen; The Cities of St. Paul; Pauline and Other Studies in Early Church History.* The queer theological conservatism of the author detracts nothing from the value and interest of his vast and accurate archæological and historical knowledge.

west into Spain. Spain, of course, was the western-most province of the Empire. These details thus make it clear that Paul had the whole map of the Mediterranean area in his mind, and had worked out a plan to cover it by the establishment of churches from Jerusalem to "the Pillars of Hercules," which we call Gibraltar. At the main strategic centre in each of these provinces, at the chief cross-roads of traffic in each of them, it is his purpose to plant the flag of Jesus alongside of the eagles of the Empire. He works, too, in a perpetual hurry, like a modern American hustler, because he feels that he is fighting against time. The great task must be completed speedily; or, if not completed, then carried as far as humanly possible. For Paul was convinced, as all the early Christians were, that "the time was short," because a marvellous transformation of human society was about to be effected by a supernatural interposition of the Deity, which might occur at any moment.

Some of the adventures and vicissitudes he encountered in this enterprise we can gather from his own letters, and more can be gleaned from those chapters of The Acts of the Apostles which deal with him. The most vivid chapters of this little book—those written in the first person—are, beyond reasonable doubt, the work of a fellow-traveller of Paul's, who was an eye-witness of the events he narrates. In these particular chapters the story becomes intensely living and moving; particularly the account of the last voyage, and the shipwreck off the Maltese coast which interrupted Paul's journey to Rome to lodge his appeal to the supreme

legal authority of the Empire against the charges he had to face.

The whole story is a record covering years of hardship, persecutions, arrests, imprisonments, floggings, and shipwreck, endured with undaunted courage and dogged persistence, as romantic as any tale in the whole range of literature. The account breaks off abruptly; there is an ominous silence concerning the fate of Paul, and that of his part-biographer, the author of Acts. The meaning of this almost certainly is that Paul was executed at Rome; or, if not executed in the course of law, then murdered in one of the pogroms that frequently broke out there against Jews and Christians. Certain it is that his ambition to move on to Spain and found a church there was never accomplished. One legend of early date tells, indeed, that Paul actually did leave Rome and journey to Britain; but it is a mere legend, devoid of historic confirmation. It probably arose from the circumstance that Christianity (which was certainly introduced in the Island of Britain at a remarkably early date) was planted there by members of the Roman army or colony who had been in direct touch with Paul.

The society, or *imperium in imperio*, that Paul established, not only survives to this day but has grown world-wide; whereas the great materialistic Empire of Julius and Augustus Cæsar, which scorned and persecuted him, crumbled into ruin in less than four centuries. What is more, when that Empire collapsed, Paul's society had grown great and impressive enough to command the reverence even of the barbarian conquerors. It was the one

and only thing in the Roman system that did thus compel their respect; so that to it was due the preservation of whatever actually did survive of the old Roman civilization. Thanks to that society cultivating its half weed-choked garden of the mind and spirit through the Dark Ages, the seeds were sown of teaching, both moral and practical, which in the course of centuries produced from the barbarized soil the efflorescence of a new civilization, higher than the old and vanished one.

Here, then, is a record which, solely from the point of view of secular history, is obviously of vast importance; but its importance has been quite inexplicably overlooked or under-rated by the majority of secular historians.

II.—Paul's Personality and Background

What sort of person was this gifted organizer? History has fortunately preserved for us enough information to enable us to form a tolerably clear although necessarily incomplete picture of him, and to note how the man's personal history and antecedents luckily conspired with his individual genius to fit him for the task he was called to undertake. In the first place, he was not merely a Jew by race, but a man of most intense and zealous Jewish orthodoxy; with a deep pride in his family's Pharisaic tradition. One of his fortunate circumstances, however, was that he happened to be born not in Palestine, but in a Greek-speaking community, at the city of Tarsus in Cilicia. Moreover, he possessed by right of birth the much-coveted rank of *civis Romanus*, a Roman citizen.

In this too we know that he felt considerable pride, because at one of the critical points in his career, when he was charged with an offence that the local authorities proposed to deal with, he asserted his Imperial citizenship to justify his appeal to the supreme authority in Rome. The officer who had him in charge exclaimed, "You a Roman citizen! At a great price I obtained this freedom"; but Paul proudly retorted, "I was born free."

As the elements were thus blended in his background, so were they also in his personal education. There is good evidence in his undisputed writings that he had imbibed much of the best Hellenistic and Jewish culture of his day. With regard to the Jewish part of his education, he himself records that he had been in Jerusalem the pupil of Gamaliel, the most famous master of rabbinical scholarship then living. It is likewise probable, although not certain, that he had been a student in the Cilician university which is known to have existed in his native town of Tarsus.

Like a modern Swiss citizen, he had the easy use of at least three languages. He must have spoken Latin, or it would not have been possible for him to justify his claim to Roman citizenship and his appeal to Cæsar. That he spoke Aramaic (the then current dialect of Hebrew), his Jerusalem training and recorded speeches in Palestine suffice to demonstrate. But his native tongue was Greek; and we have an interesting piece of evidence that the use of it came most readily and naturally to him. This evidence is that he customarily and habitually used not the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament

but the Greek translation of it. The interesting circumstance which demonstrates this is that more than once in his writings he follows, and even bases arguments upon, mistranslations from the Hebrew which occur in the old Greek version.

Here, then, we have a man of Jewish tradition placed in the midst of a relatively cosmopolitan culture, and having other interests and other claims upon his loyalty and justifiable pride, besides the Jewish part of his inheritance. He insists throughout that he is "debtor" to Greek and Jew alike. He sets out in life as an intensely earnest disciple of the most strict and puritanical sect of the faith of his fathers, animated with all the zeal, and not a little of the narrowness and controversial bitterness, that are customarily characteristic of such sects. Nor may we dismiss this as mere fanaticism; because, from his point of view, the things he valued most in his tradition were at that juncture in grave danger. He saw the peril of the assimilation of the "dispersed" Jews (those living outside Palestine) in the morally lower life of the Roman Empire, and he was alert and eager to avert this. He also felt strongly the inadequacy of Greek morality and philosophy, as they then existed, to furnish the dynamics necessary to enable men to fulfil the high and exacting ideal of righteousness which in the course of centuries the Jews had elaborated out of the Law and the Prophets.

He was no believer in automatic progress, like the naïvely optimistic evolutionists of the nineteenth century; his conviction regarding the course of the world being much more like that of our post-war

prophets of decline and degeneration. He did not, indeed, in precisely the manner of Spengler, anticipate an "inevitable" collapse; because, as we have already noted, he expected the course of events to be preternaturally changed. But he clearly saw that the world around him was not making upward progress, it being, according to his standards, definitely on the down-grade. If we could read the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans with minds clean-swept of Puritanical Protestant ideas of its meaning—if we could study it as we should a passage in Plato or Tacitus—we should find that it contains the outline of a philosophy of life, a theory of "natural religion," and an account of the corruption and perversion into which natural religion in that day had fallen. Paul, as a man earnestly concerned for "righteousness," knew by tragic personal experience the desperate losing fight which commonly resulted from the efforts of men in the Roman environment to live the ideal life (as pious Jews conceived it), even with all the aids provided by the Jewish faith and its ritual and ceremonial system.

Thus must we envisage Paul, starting out in life with high ideals, with a keen devotion to his people's tradition, and an eager concern that that tradition in the lives of its inheritors should be kept high, whole, and undegenerate. So concerned was he about this ideal life that he abstained from marriage —a thing very uncommon among young Jews of good social position; and all the time he feared that the ideals he reverenced were falling upon evil days, and possibly into complete eclipse.

III.—Psychology of Paul's Relation to Jesus

In the early part of his mature life (probably in his early thirties), this man underwent a remarkable mystical experience called conversion. Being a zealot of Jewish orthodoxy, he was naturally eager to repress heresies; and he had engaged personally in the persecution of an upstart sect which had just come upon the scene proclaiming that the Messiah, whom all pious Jews were eagerly expecting, had actually appeared, but had been put to death. To Paul this was abominable heresy; and, with the ruthless fanaticism of the conscientious zealot, he had devoted himself to the attempt to suppress it by force. But somehow—by stages that we can partly surmise, but cannot prove—he became convinced, in the midst of his persecutions, that the audacious claim was true; that the Messiah had actually appeared; and that he, Paul, had taken the wrong side of the cause and was "fighting against God."

While he was on a journey from Jerusalem to Damascus in pursuit of this persecuting mission, he saw a vision of a man in the heavens, whose voice he heard saying to him, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." We can interpret this psychologically as a purely natural experience. All kinds of people have been liable to subjective visions of this character. We need have no doubt what it meant. Suddenly, at this moment of inner illumination, there took place the maturing of a conviction that had long been forming by gradual stages in Paul's subconsciousness.

Whatever the precise psychological antecedents, he always maintained that this was the central and pivotal event in his life, and as such he always looked back upon it. Thenceforward his relation to Jesus is so deep, so intimate, so transforming, that he can never find language to express adequately what it meant to him. He is always fumbling for words, and applying old words in novel ways, in the attempt to convey to others how enormously much this experience had involved. He talks of himself as being "apprehended" by Jesus; and he means it in the literal sense of being arrested, seized upon, pulled up short. He talks of being "crucified" with Jesus, of "dying" with him; and he declares repeatedly in different ways that although he, Paul, still lives, it is really no longer he, but Christ that lives in him. In the midst of the greatest hardships of his adventurous and much-persecuted career he finds a passionate joy in his extremest sufferings, because of the inexpressible enrichment of spirit of which he was conscious through what he called "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Phrases like these, particularly to those of us who were brought up in Protestant Christianity, have usually become hackneyed by theological misuse. As they are mouthed by "fundamentalist" preachers nowadays, they have about them a flavour of cant that is repugnant to us. By an effort of constructive imagination, we must try to lay hold of them as they were first used by this man himself, as they came hot out of the depths of his spirit. What was the secret of the spell cast on him by Jesus? It was a perfectly natural fact; one that has been illustrated

to some degree in every man's experience, and that we can perhaps realize to a still clearer degree through our contact with great literature. Paul saw in Jesus everything that he himself longed to be but could not be. Jesus was the man who simply, naturally, and as it were effortlessly, was and did what Paul hitherto had struggled in vain to be and to do. Paul groans about the obstacles that beset his efforts to realize his chosen goal in life. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he asks—using an expression that compares him to one laden with the corpse of a criminal. He yearns to escape from what he calls "the law in his members"; that is, the downward-pulling tendency which brought it about that "the good that I would I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do."

Paul may quite possibly have seen Jesus before his crucifixion; it is far from certain that he did not, his reference to the matter being deliberately non-committal. He certainly knew everything that was to be known of the teaching and career of Jesus from those who had been his personal companions. Not only did he see in Jesus the man he wanted to be, but somehow, by the magical influence of a greater personality on a less, by the experience which Paul called "dying with Jesus" and living anew in his spirit, Paul found his moral vision widened, saw, as it were, new provinces of the moral empire unveiled before his eyes, and found his power to live according to his own standard of a worthy life most wonderfully enhanced and quickened.

Without resorting to technical psychology, but

simply by consulting our own experience, we can realize the naturalness of this transmitted radiance of a great personality. I have many times experienced it myself in the company of the late Jane Addams. She was a woman in whose presence one could not be for ten minutes without somehow feeling the finer springs of one's own nature touched, without being lifted above one's average self, and feeling an influence emanating from her to turn one's mind to better things and to stimulate and quicken one's power of attaining them. Many times too I have felt the same magical influence from my friend and leader, Felix Adler. And do we not derive the same vivifying touch when through literature we draw really close to some master-spirit like Sir Thomas More, or St. Francis of Assisi —or Jesus himself, if the dogmatic blinders have been removed from our eyes, so that we can feel the natural and human truth in the old stories? When we reflect upon such experiences, which we have all had, we can readily understand, without resorting to anything preternatural, the nature of the transformation that was brought about in the personality of Paul.

It is here that Paul's extraordinary sincerity and his remarkable originality come in. He is candour itself about his own faults, and crystal-clear about the essential problem of getting rid of them; of "subduing," as he would put it, "the flesh to the spirit." He believed in a physical resurrection, already experienced by Jesus and later to be experienced by all men; but this physical miracle he takes not as the all-important thing, the very

end in itself to concentrate upon, but simply as a type and symbol of what had already happened spiritually in himself, and what he wished to see happen likewise to everybody whom he could influence.

IV.—Genesis of the Resurrection Doctrine

With this word *Resurrection* we encounter one of the keywords for interpreting this period of history, a main clue to the minds of Paul and his contemporaries. It was one of those "catchwords" of which every age invariably has its crop. By catchwords I mean expressions that begin as the coinages of original thinkers, but are afterwards borrowed, defaced, worn, and exploited as talismans by the thoughtless. The fate of the word "evolution" in the nineteenth century, in the contrast between the meaning it bore in the minds of the pioneer thinkers, and the absurd and quasi-magical meaning it came to bear in the mob-mind, is an illustration in point.

Resurrection in Paul's day was such a word as this. It denoted a theory devised by thinkers among the Jews to extricate themselves from the difficulty which had sprung out of the naïve ethical doctrine of their national infancy. In those early days they had conceived the moral order of the world to be such that righteousness, the right way of living, was always (by natural consequence or divine ordinance) rewarded in the present life; so that the good man might confidently count on "seeing his children's children" and sitting comfortably and joyously in old age under his own vine and fig-tree. Experience soon

pricked the pretty bubble of this simple theodicy. It showed that the just man often suffers in this life; and suffers not only in spite of his justice, but sometimes precisely because of it. Such is the dilemma, the facing of which by the Hebrew mind is immortally commemorated in the grand dialogues of Job. According to all the standards authoritatively presented to him, Job had fulfilled the demands of the moral law. Yet not only was he overwhelmed with misfortunes, but after this had happened he found that his friends, still full of the old childish theory, regarded his very misfortunes as clear proof that he must have been a great sinner.

In this desperate extremity, Job throws out the first hint—only the first bare hint—of what later developed into the doctrine of Resurrection. He clung passionately to the conviction that, unless the world is unjust and mad at heart, there *must* be a vindication of his integrity, even if it is to come about only after his death.

Thus the doctrine of Resurrection was invoked in aid of the belief that, in spite of appearances, the universe was morally sound—or, in the traditional language, that "God was just"; and the triumphs of injustice on earth afforded no real disproof of this when the ideas of resurrection and just judgment hereafter were added to the range of moral phenomena previously surveyed.

Such was the notion as originally developed in the minds of thinkers. What it had become in one or two centuries of "popularization" we can see clearly by many evidences; by such a text, for instance, as the second verse in the fourteenth chapter of the

Gospel according to St. Matthew. There we see that the popular Jewish mind in the age of Jesus was full of this belief, not in Job's fine sense, but in that of the gaudy thaumaturgy of Daniel and later apocalyptists; that is, in its most literal and materialized form. The verse in Matthew records that when Herod, tetrarch of Palestine, heard the reports concerning Jesus, he "said unto his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore do these powers work in him.'"

Bishop Westcott, a considerable scholar, but an orthodox theologian so intent on justifying the traditional beliefs that he often could not see the plainest evidence against them, goes about to prove the reality of the physical resurrection of Jesus by saying, "There was no popular belief at the time which could have inspired them [the Apostles] with faith in an imaginary resurrection." It is an amazing misstatement. How could he manage to overlook the clear proof to the contrary furnished by the verse just quoted? Matthew's text proves that the popular belief in resurrection was so strong and so general that a mere guess about Jesus being John the Baptist risen again from the dead could be, and was, accepted without any thought of investigation. Herod, according to the evangelist, merely states it as a self-evident fact; it never occurs to him to inquire whether it was so or not.

Now, in dealing with the Gospel miracles, we must remember that this is how the mind of that age regularly worked. Not only does Herod take it for granted, without a thought of investigation, that Jesus is John risen from the dead, but the evangelist

in reporting the incident manifests no surprise at this. Remember, too, that our first witness for the resurrection of Jesus is St. Paul, whose Epistles are older than all the Gospels; and in his account of the resurrection it is transparently clear that his faith in it as a physical fact rested on a subjective vision—a vision of the same nature as those of St. Joan of Arc and many another person who has had the peculiar psychological quality which engenders them. The later accounts, in the Gospels, of the resurrection and the incidents that followed it are so utterly self-contradictory and irreconcilable that they can be explained only in the same way. Nobody questions the good faith of the writers; but it is clear, to those who are not determined to be deceived, that they fall into the once universal error of confusing the objective with the subjective.

Now, St. Paul to the end of his days undoubtedly believed in this physical miracle. His vision remained for him not only morally authoritative (as it had a right to be), but factually so as well. He believed that, after the body of Jesus had been placed in its grave, there emerged from that grave a body transformed, indeed, in some mysterious way, yet "identical" with the one that had been buried, in the sense that it was the medium of manifestation of the same personality. And as Paul's sense of the immense greatness of Jesus, and his belief that Jesus was God's Messiah, predisposed him to see the preternatural in the career of Jesus, he accepted this physical miracle as a pledge, an assurance, that he and all other true believers were destined to a like experience after their bodily death.

So far, Paul is talking the common language of his time and his "set." But his originality, like that of any man, is to be tested and judged, not by the extent to which he shares the ideas that were "common form" in his day, but by the extent to which he rises above them and improves upon them. The extraordinary and (in his time) the unique thing in Paul is the fact that he does most wonderfully improve upon this idea, by making the centre of his religion not the physical miracle at all, but that present moral experience which he describes under the figure of "dying" in this life, and "rising again" in this life on a new and nobler spiritual level. Alone among his contemporaries, alone among the immediate followers of Jesus, Paul grasped the real significance of one of Jesus's great key-words: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it."

That this was a fundamental maxim with Jesus is proved by the fact that it crops up several times, with slight variations of wording, even in the fragmentary record of the first three Gospels. By it Jesus clearly meant, and Paul certainly understood, exactly what in the language of modern evolutionary psychology we express by saying that we are called upon to live under the governance of that rational and moral life which distinguishes us as men, instead of under the enslaving dominance of the blind, inharmonious, and discordant impulses of the life we share with the lower animals. His firm grasp of this is one of the great and original elements in Paul's mind and teaching. It is a theme to which he is constantly returning.

V.—Truth of Poetry and Truth of Science

There is, he would say, a spiritual resurrection which would be necessary for every one of us, even if there were no physical death at all, or even if our continuous existence after the death of the body were absolutely certain—known as a fact instead of being hoped for by faith. He knows this by experience. Something had happened within him which released him from what he felt to be the intolerable bondage of a set of downward impulses that constantly made him do what he wanted not to do, and estopped him from doing what he wanted to do. He interpreted this experience as due to the influence of the personality of Jesus upon him. This is why he would have himself and all his followers, as he puts it in one place, "everywhere carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that in our body the risen life of Jesus may be displayed." Such passages leave no doubt that this is Paul's idea, and that he grasped and applied it not in a vaguely mystical but in an intensely practical fashion.

Matthew Arnold, in his essay on *St. Paul and Protestantism* (which to me seems the most original, if not quite the most valuable, of his prose writings), traces the course of Paul's experience, and lays open the development and sequence of his ideas, with the mastery of a great literary critic and the insight of a true poet. Not only did Arnold understand St. Paul better than any other modern writer, but he likewise shows how that monstrous misunderstanding of Paul arose which the

theological systems have displayed, from Augustine onward—but most especially Lutheranism and Calvinism.

The root and core of this blunder is that the theologians took and applied what in Paul was fluid and literary language as though it were exact and scientific language. They treated the words, burning with emotion, in which he strove vainly to utter the unutterable experience he had undergone, as if they were words written in an Act of Parliament or a mathematical text-book.

To repeat an illustration I have used elsewhere, a geographer writing a text-book describes the earth as an "oblate spheroid"; but a poet speaks of the earth as "the mighty Mother of mankind." These are two ways of using language, each of which has its own special kind of truth and fittingness. The poet's language, the "mighty-Mother-of-mankind" order of language, is actually and literally true in describing *our sense of dependence* upon a certain reality, and conveying the emotion accompanying that sense of dependence; but it is not, and does not pretend to be, exact and true in *defining* the reality on which we are thus dependent. The "oblate-spheroid" sort of language, on the other hand, means precisely and exactly what it says in defining the reality denoted, but gives no account of our sense of relation to that reality, or our accompanying emotion.

Now, there can be no worse confusion, no blinder criticism, no more certain source of misunderstanding, than to suppose any writer to be talking "oblate-spheroid" language when he is really

talking "mighty-Mother-of-mankind" language; or *vice versâ*. But the whole of orthodox dogmatic theology is based on the blunder of treating language of the latter order as though it were language of the "oblate-spheroid" order. Never shall we have the clue to the great literature of the Old and New Testaments until we realize that all the key-words there (beginning with and including especially the word "God" itself) are words of the poetic and not of the scientific kind. When we realize this, we shall come to see that all the great word-castles of orthodox dogma are truly "in the air," not based on anything solid, because they rest on this fundamental blunder.

No man has suffered worse or more chronically from this process of blind misinterpretation than St. Paul. Taking his language in this wrong fashion, the dogmatists also ignore the essential ethical ground of his arguments. They fail to see that his own moral experience is the central matter that he is perpetually studying, as a type-case illustrating the universal human problem; and that everything else with him is subordinate and secondary. In similar fashion, they have strained to death his literary allusions to the old Scriptures. The physical miracle, which only partly occupied his mind and which he rose above, occupied their minds centrally and almost exclusively; so that they missed, or preposterously subordinated, what with him was demonstrably central and essential.

Let us return to the real Paul: a man who begins as a bigot and a persecutor, who continues to suffer from certain faults of temper, and who

most candidly says so; a man who, like all great organizers and directors, had about him a certain asperity, a certain imperiousness and tendency to dominate; but who becomes, as his own writings beautifully prove, full of the very moral qualities that were most against his natural grain. This is the most striking fact about Paul. If ever there was a man who by temperament and predisposition was disinclined to gentleness, patience, forbearance, and tolerance, it was he. Behold, then, the transformation from Paul the persecutor, the hounder-on of those who were stoning men to death, to the man who in later years writes to his converts, "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be born in you"! Think of the man who, while his contemporaries and even his fellow-apostles were looking for the sort of heaven described in the Book of Revelation, with its gates of pearl, walls of jasper, and streets of gold, was translating the idea of the kingdom of God into "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, mildness, and self-control." For *that* is Paul's account of what the Kingdom of God consists of. And meantime he was developing his grand conception of that "charity" which is above all miracles and all gifts of genius.

Everybody has read the classical thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Yet few notice how systematically and deliberately Paul there puts this ethical quality above miracles. What is more, the "charity" of which he speaks is not alms-giving, nor a condescending philanthropy; because he says, "Though I give all my

goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, I am nothing." There is a deeply ironical insight in this perception that great giving may be without charity! It clearly shows that by charity he meant something other than mere giving. What he meant was essentially deference to the unique and divine element latent in every man and woman.

I have spoken of the neglect of Paul by secular history. One instance of this is the fact that he was the first man, not indeed to discern the truth of the spiritual equality of all men, but clearly and emphatically to preach against race-prejudice of every kind. All the barriers are to be broken down, particularly the old barriers between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free. Even the slave is to be contemplated in this spiritual light,* and the attitude towards him is to be that of "charity," which Paul clearly means in the primary sense of the Latin word *caritas*, holding precious what is distinctively human in your neighbour. But is this great and fertile idea, so fruitful of momentous developments, unimportant to secular history?

With resurrection in the materialistic and miraculous sense, our scientific age can have nothing to do. We see all too plainly the lack of evidence for it in the stories told about Jesus. But, far more important than that, it is obvious to us that if a man were to die and remain dead for some time—three days or longer—and then return to life with

* See the Epistle to Philemon, which, even if not Paul's, is certainly the work of a disciple of his, full of his spirit.

no change for the better in his character or his mentality, with all his old follies and vices still in full bloom, then the experience of dying and rising physically, however miraculous, would still be utterly worthless and unmeaning. Hence our conviction that with resurrection in this sense minds which have imbibed any tincture of the spirit of science can have nothing to do.

But what of resurrection in Paul's special and novel sense—the sort of resurrection which, if universalized, would turn a world of grasping egoists and exploiters into a society of friends and brothers, each finding his highest delight and fulfilment in deeds of sacrifice and service? With resurrection in this sense we cannot have enough to do. Here is a process with which science has no quarrel; and this is Paul's grandly original contribution to the understanding of the teaching of Jesus. Here he is following the line of Jesus, and developing it in a permanently valuable way.

This is the key that we need to the interpretation of the old idea. Our age needs it. The world needs it, whether it knows it or not; and, most lamentably, it is only the tiniest fraction of the world on whom this conception has even begun to dawn. In this sense religion is immortal, and whenever it dies will rise again. The true greatness of Jesus and Paul will be realized and justly appreciated only when their experience, and the effects it produced in them, shall have become universally shared and understood.

CHAPTER VII

"WHAT CONSOLATION HAVE YOU FOR THE DYING AND THE BEREAVED?"

I.—Man's Prerogative and Its Penalty

Amid all the hateful divisions of men, the rival egoisms of individuals and groups, classes and nations, which make men treat each other as enemies and forget their common humanity, it is a fortunate circumstance that at certain seasons of the year the great universal facts of our earthly life reassert themselves and force us back to the realization of our identical nature and destiny. Mankind, both physically and psychologically, may be compared to a series of tiny islands rising above the surface of the sea. The islands look distinct and utterly separate from each other; but delve a few fathoms down, and we strike the huge sunken continent whence they all emerge, and in which they are all unified.

We are children of earth, all of us; born of the same common mother; and, unlike the individual child with its parents, absolutely dependent upon her throughout our lives, until the hour comes when we are summoned back, and all that is mortal of us is reabsorbed in her huge and aged yet ever youthful body. Birth and death by the fiat of destiny are everybody's portion. Resurrection, in the spiritual sense in which we have defined it, is

an achievement possible indeed to all, but not always attained. For before there can be a resurrection there must first be a death; and so it can be experienced only by those who have been willing to die to one kind of life—the animal life, the egoistic, self-asserting, self-centred existence—in order to rise again to the life distinctive of humanity, which is one of loyalty to universal principles and conformity to the spiritual direction of the cosmos at its highest level.

So over those who remain at the egoistic or self-centred stage of development we can but chant again the dirge-like organ music of Sir Walter Raleigh's famous apostrophe:

> " O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath presumed, thou hast done; and whom all the world flattered, thou hast cast out of the world and despised. Thou hast drawn together all the extravagant greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered all over with two narrow words: *Hic iacet.*"

Now of these three experiences—birth and death shared by all, resurrection possible to all but achieved only by the minority—Christmas and Easter are the recurrent festivals. Older than all the creeds and all the churches; older than all the existing nations; varying in the forms by which men give them conscious expression; but ever identically affecting the subconsciousness that prescribes the emotional tone and rhythm of our lives, they " make the many one." They bind the most

intensely self-centred and nation-centred modern man with all living humanity, and with all who have lived since the first dawn of the oldest Stone Age. For it is both the privilege and the penalty of man that, unlike other animals, he knows the inevitability of his destiny. The other creatures do not. Even when they see death around them, they are not conscious that it awaits them also. Denied the gift of reason, they are incapable of the simple syllogism which carries even to the child's mind its ineluctable truth: "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal."

The poet in his pessimistic mood expands this, but even in so doing achieves a beauty which defeats his pessimism. Of man he says:

His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death.
He weaves and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.*

But humanity collectively has never been willing to remain long in this mood of pessimism, or to surrender to its defeatist spirit. Always and everywhere our race has celebrated with defiant triumph the Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox, insisting upon the promise of life amid the death of winter, and finding in the annual miracle of Nature's resurrection the symbol of something deathless and invincible in itself.

Now, these celebrations of the epochal moments

* From Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*.

in the year's course have ever been a mingling of the mythical, the magical, and the ethical. It was so in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, where lofty moral ideas are mingled with barbarically superstitious prescriptions of ritual and magical procedures. It was so in the Egyptian practice of interring with the dead earthen images of Osiris, the resurrection-god—the images containing wheat-seeds, some of which have been found to have sprouted in the tombs; thus at once pathetically fulfilling and frustrating their intended symbolism. But these Egyptian practices of six millenniums ago were themselves inherited from the immemorial and recordless antiquity of the Stone Ages. For then too men placed in the barrows and tumuli of their dead the tools, the food, and the weapons which it was dreamed they would need in their second life.

Amid all the gross superstition of such practices there is ever latent the grand moral and spiritual idea of something in man that is intrinsically and inherently greater than the rest of Nature; something that ought not to be at the mercy of the world's blind ruthlessness and wastefulness, even if it actually is so.

Thus, despite the inescapable subjection of the body to Nature's ruling, despite the fact that we are environed on every side by an irresistible necessity, and have only a narrow scope for freedom and initiative between its impassable bounds, men have yet in many different ways achieved a spiritual triumph over death. Pascal expressed an essential element of this triumph by his famous figure of man as "the thinking reed." Man is but a reed; yet

the "thinking reed" is nobler than the universe that crushes it, because it knows its fate, while the vast blind world that breaks it knows not what it does.

II.—Spiritual Victory: The Christian Dramatization

We are thus in harmony with the whole of past and present humanity in facing the problem of how death is to be met. Around us men who hold the same essential faith, but disguised in a different dramatization or vesture of legends, are grappling with the same issue. The Jews by their Passover express their inward conviction of triumph under the form of the old tale of God's deliverance of them from the Egyptian tyranny. Enslaved and despised by the proud civilization around them, they could nevertheless glory secretly because an authority higher than that of the reigning Pharaoh loved them and was concerned for their preservation and their interests. And the Christian Churches throughout the world find in the resurrection of Jesus, as they understand (or misunderstand) it, the pledge and guarantee that they too shall win victory over death by rising from it as Jesus did.

Now, my purpose here is to stress the essential unity of humanity; to dwell rather upon the things that bind us together than on those that divide us. I therefore shall not add much to the reasons touched on in the preceding chapter which make it impossible for most members of Ethical Societies to hold the resurrection doctrine in the same form as that in which the Churches hold it. We do,

indeed, agree with them that a triumph over death is possible for man; we aspire and desire to share that triumph. But we cannot do so on the basis of a belief which seems to us to blend irrelevant legendary and magical elements with its truly spiritual and moral ones. The reasons that divide us from them deal with the contradictions in the evidence alleged for the physical reanimation of the body of Jesus after his death, and with what seems to us the manifest insufficiency of that evidence. Our arguments on this matter have never been met or answered from the orthodox side. They are, I am convinced, unanswerable. And the dealings of theological apologists with these arguments are for the most part nothing but a pitiful tissue of evasion of the facts and refusal to recognize their meaning. But I must deal in passing with one contention on which the apologists of orthodoxy frequently fall back. "How could Christianity have succeeded as it did," they ask, "if it is really based upon an error of fact? Is it conceivable that so many millions, through so many ages, could have placed their faith, with such triumphant results, in a system whose cardinal doctrine, as they understood it, was an illusion?" This is the contention frequently resorted to by theologians unable or unwilling to encounter the other facts and considerations urged against them.

Well, the obvious answer is that this argument, if it proves anything at all, proves far too much for the purpose of those who use it. For it applies with equal force to other and quite different religious beliefs. Does the success of these other creeds in

inspiring faith, devotion, heroism, and martyrdom prove the truth of the miraculous legends and revelations of *their* founders? What thousands of men, through many centuries, have died with passionate eagerness and readiness for their faith in Mohammed and the hope of the sensuous paradise he promised to all who gave their lives for Islam! Yet our apologists of Christian orthodoxy find in this no evidence of the reality of Mohammed's revelation, no verification of his claim that the Koran was actually dictated by God. Many, too, of our modern theologians no longer believe in that singular and special covenant of God with Abraham, and that direct revelation of the Commandments and the ceremonial Law to Moses, which are the basis of Judaism. No inference can be drawn from fervency of faith to the truth of the things believed. Martyrdom proves indeed the sincerity of the martyr's faith, but not its truth. For men have died for contradictory beliefs.

We saw when examining the old doctrine of the Devil that historical Christianity was a coherent dogmatic system, one-half, or more than one-half, of which has now been generally abandoned. But that demonology which no educated man can now believe was originally every whit as essential a part of the faith as the angelology and the theology. St. Paul lays as much stress on the transactions of God and Satan with Adam as upon the death and bodily resurrection of Jesus; and he always connects the one series of events with the other. The fall of Adam through Satan's temptation was as integral a part of Paul's belief as the salvation which it,

and it alone, made necessary. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The old theology took this stand logically and consistently. So did the medieval Church. But not so now. Liberal theology to-day (and by liberal theology we are to understand not only the creed of the so-called liberal Churches, but the actual personal belief of many members of traditional Churches) does not hold that "in Adam all die." In fact, it does not believe in Adam, any more than in Hercules; or in the talking serpent in the garden, any more than in the she-wolf that nursed Romulus and Remus. Yet it still, somewhat inconsistently, professes to believe with St. Paul that "in Christ shall all be made alive." But for St. Paul the sense of these words was that Jesus had rescued men from the hereditary curse entailed by the fall of Adam, which fall was the result of the solicitation of the talking serpent.

What is more, our apologists, when they urge that Christianity could not have succeeded if its central belief had involved an error of fact, forget that the original faith was not only in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, but equally in the imminence of his "second coming" to earth in their own lifetime. He was to appear again on the clouds, with the glory of God about him, and effect the final miraculous transformation which was to wind up the affairs of this bankrupt and hopeless world. This certitude is expressed most clearly in one of the earliest letters written by St. Paul which have come down to us—the First Epistle to the Thessalonians:

"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." *

By no amount of even theological ingenuity can it be pretended that the writer of these words did not expect the event he describes to occur prior to his own death. Accordingly, this statement, which remains to this day in our Bibles, proves the perfect good faith of these early Christian writers. For had they not been acting in absolute sincerity, this passage would have been cancelled or changed the moment the breath was out of Paul's body. But there it stands; and it shows us that in the minds of the first Christians the second coming of Christ from the heavens in their own lifetime was a Siamese twin to their belief in his bodily resurrection.

The lapse of time has proved that this eschatological expectation was erroneous. But it was the

* I Thess. iv, 13–18.

two ideas together that filled the whole mind of the faithful in the Apostolic age. Indeed, the New Testament closes upon the oft-repeated pathetic note: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus." This was a heart-cry on the eve of an expected persecution that speedily ensued. "Speedily—quickly—in our lifetime!" The entire primitive Christian community would have been astounded and incredulous if somebody could have told them that the word "quickly" in the Book of Revelation would turn out to mean at least something over nineteen hundred years. Only the slow lapse of those years could adjust men's minds to the truth. The world went on in its accustomed course; summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, maintained their stately cosmic rhythm. The mighty Roman Empire around them continued powerful and hostile. And as decades went by, and Paul and the other apostles who had predicted the second coming of Jesus in their life-time were one by one laid to rest, men recalled to their minds that "God's ways are not as man's," and found relief in such sayings as that of the Psalmist, "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." *

Here let me repeat emphatically what I have before insisted on: that erroneous beliefs are no proof of mental inferiority. Man's apprehension of truth is always fragmentary, inadequate, and destined to be superseded or amended. Many things that we now hold for truth will look to our

* Ps. xc, 4.

posterity as these erroneous beliefs of the past look to us. Let us then not be guilty of the arrogance of scorning our ancestors because they believed some things that we now know to have been wrong. Rather let us remember the great heroism of spirit, the lives of noble service, the deaths of glorious martyrdom, that the Christian resurrection-faith has inspired.

But when we remember these, we shall pierce through to the truth which our apologists unintentionally misstate. In these lives of heroism we see a tribute to the greatness and depth of the spirit of Jesus, which is a tangible fact manifested in his earthly lifetime, and entirely independent of whatever may have happened to him after his bodily death. In this world of our humanity his spirit lives in his teachings, and works through their power over men's lives; and neither the supposed physical miracle nor the mistaken belief in his speedy return, but *this* was the real fact which caused the success of Christianity; for this was the source of inspiration to his followers.

III.—Non-Christian Modes of Spiritual Victory

But now let us recall some of the other ways men have found effectual in achieving spiritual triumph over death. For this problem was faced and this victory won long before Christianity came into the world. The Stoics taught a noble discipline of resignation and acceptance of the requirements of Nature; because Nature, in their judgment, expressed the will of the gods. That beautiful spirit Marcus Aurelius, who as Emperor was responsible

for the well-being of the whole of Western civilization, was a man of whom James Martineau said that he " shames the whole calendar of the Saints." Marcus stressed this Stoic precept. Piety requires us to accept our place in the order of Nature, and be content with the will of the gods; and so he wrote this passage, which has become a favourite one with those who love his book :

> " Do not despise death, but be well content with it, since this too is one of those things which Nature wills. For such as it is to be, and to grow old, and to increase and to reach maturity, and to have teeth and beard and grey hairs, and to beget and to be pregnant and bring forth, and all the other natural operations which the seasons of thy life bring, such also is dissolution. This, then, is consistent with the character of a reflecting man, to be neither careless, nor impatient, nor contemptuous with respect to death, but to wait for it as one of the processes of Nature."

It always happens that we can get help from fine spirits, however widely we are obliged to differ from their general philosophy. So is it with the great Stoics. We can take this advice from Marcus Aurelius, and many of the similar counsels with which Seneca and Epictetus and Cicero abound, without adopting either their view of the world or their particular ethical theory.

But their teaching in this department was criticized by Francis Bacon on the ground that it required too much concentration on the thought of death :

> "It seemeth to me," said Bacon, "that most of the doctrines of the philosophers" [and he has in mind especially the Stoic school] "are more fearful and cautionary than the nature of things requireth. So have they increased the fear of death in offering to cure it. For when they would have a man's whole life to be but a discipline or preparation to die, they must needs make men think that it is a terrible enemy, against whom there is no end of preparing."

It seems likely that Bacon here had specially in mind the famous saying of Cicero, that the whole life of a philosopher is a *commentatio mortis*—a meditation of death. This, however, is one of the many rhetorical sentences in which the great lawyer-orator abounded, and which we need not take too seriously, because it is tolerably certain he did not take them so himself.

But Bacon, with his strong practical sense, having thus rebuked the Stoics, proceeded to ridicule still more contemptuously the fantastic exaggeration of the evils of death in which medieval superstition indulged, and to pour scorn on what he calls "some of the friars' books of mortification," which dwelt in great detail on the agonies of disease and the tortures of approaching dissolution. And then he made the following excellent psychological observation:

> "It is worthy the observing, that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak but it mates and masters the fear of death; and therefore death is no such terrible enemy when

> a man hath so many attendants about him that can win the combat of him. Revenge triumphs over death; Love slights it; Honour aspireth to it; Grief flieth to it; Fear pre-occupateth it; nay, we read, after Otho the Emperor had slain himself, Pity (which is the tenderest of affections) provoked many to die, out of mere compassion to their sovereign, and as the truest sort of followers." *

There is no passion, *good or evil*, in the mind of man so weak but that it "mates and masters" the fear of death!

True and important as this is, however, Bacon's characteristically close-knit essay still does not enter into the deepest aspect of the problem, which is this: that countless people, who for themselves have no fear of death, do yet dread the death of others. They shrink from bereavement; and this not selfishly, but because they truly love others better than themselves. We would far sooner die than endure the death of those we love; and gladly would we yield up our own lives to save theirs. This is the real and deep element of tragedy that the ineluctable fact of death introduces into our lives. The real victory of "the last enemy" is won not over those he strikes down, but over those whom he spares, while robbing them of their beloved. Every parent who has bent over the couch of a dead child has had this seared into his soul, and understands the poignant pain with which Edmund Burke wrote, after his son's death, "They who should have been to me as posterity are in the

* "On Death," in Bacon's *Essays*.

place of ancestors." This is the true tragedy of life to all who love; the ever-flowing source of the *lacrymae rerum.* Every man or woman who has lost a dear friend knows it. Every gallant soldier has felt a keener pang in seeing his comrades die than they themselves felt in yielding up their lives in the heat of battle.

For this reason it seems to me that we can accept only with qualifications the counsel of even so majestic a soul as Spinoza, when he tells us that "a free man thinks of nothing so little as of death, and his wisdom is a meditation not of death, but of life." I should answer that his "meditation of life" must include the settling of his accounts with death. Only after all its grim and tragic actualities have been embraced in a resolute survey that flinches from nothing; only after we have learned to affirm the sacredness and worth of life though it include this stern condition, can we wisely dismiss the thought of death from our minds and return to our "meditation of life" and our occupation with its activities.

There never was a more complete or perfect triumph over death than that of Socrates. But it was not achieved by banishing the spectre and refusing to face it. On the contrary, it was reached after carefully and patiently examining all the facts and all the surmisable possibilities. We read in the *Phaedo* how the great spiritual hero of Athens became convinced of immortality—because he clearly grasped the fact that the soul or mind of man is far more real than the body, and therefore could not be supposed subject to *the same*

vicissitudes as those of the body. Nevertheless, knowing the fallibility of human thought, and not sharing the belief of later centuries that we have super-human revelations to bring us the certain knowledge that our own searching could not reach, Socrates still remained serenely undogmatic and faced the alternative possibility—the possibility that death may be only a dreamless sleep. And he insisted that this too, after the storms and perturbations, the trials and sorrows of life, must be thought of as a blessing; only a lesser one than the alternative of further growth and experience for which he personally hoped.

But the essential truth which Socrates discerned was that, whatever may be our individual fate at the hands of Nature, it is in any case more important for us to avoid unrighteousness than to avoid death. This is the noble burden of the *Apology*:

> "I thought . . . that I ought not to do anything common or mean when in danger; nor do I now repent of the style of my defence; I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought I or any man to use every way of escaping death. . . . The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me; and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death—they too go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer

place of ancestors." This is the true tragedy of life to all who love; the ever-flowing source of the *lacrymae rerum*. Every man or woman who has lost a dear friend knows it. Every gallant soldier has felt a keener pang in seeing his comrades die than they themselves felt in yielding up their lives in the heat of battle.

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the penalty of villainy and wrong; and I must abide by my award—let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated—and I think that they are well."

IV.—Character *versus* Destiny

"*I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live.*" So spake Socrates to those who had falsely accused and unjustly condemned him. What lies behind this preference? The conviction of Socrates, as of every great spirit, that our character is in our own hands, though our destiny be not; the conviction that our business is to look to the quality of our life, which we *can* affect, and leave its quantity or its duration, which we cannot affect, to the inscrutable power that animates the world.

In all that has here been said, I have no desire to impose upon any reader my own particular views concerning either immortality or God. The point I am concerned with is that, whatever may be the truth regarding these matters, still the only way for us to attain a personal triumph over death is by the method of Socrates. Unless we ourselves, in the pure autonomy of our own consciences, elect some supreme value that commands our soul's allegiance, and by our own will and deed affirm it as supreme, then though there be a triumph over death, it will not be of *our* winning. For if it happens, it will be, so far as concerns *us*, destiny and not achievement; and from the standpoint of the spiritual universe our having lived will have signified not at all.

The triumph of Jesus and of Socrates lies clearly in this: that for the sake of the right and the truth they had embraced they freely surrendered their lives. This is the ultimate and indisputable proof that in them the spiritual had mastered the physical and animal, that they had wholly purged themselves of fear and of the lust of life, and steered by the light of nobler values than the sub-human nature in us can discern.

Herein they, and all who have done as they did, won a victory not only for themselves but for the evolving universe; for they furthered the process of its evolution, the emergence of its latent splendours. They extended the dominion of the highest of its elements over the lower and mindless ones. But if, as our Church friends say, we are to owe our salvation wholly to Jesus Christ, this is only to say in other words that we ourselves are to mean nothing to the world and the world's achievement; that spiritually we have been and are to be but parasitic burdens upon it.

Thus, then, if I read it aright, the victory won by Jesus and by Socrates is the true and worthy challenge to our spiritual ambition. If, when our time for entering the silence comes, we are to go, as the poet says, "not like the quarry slave at night, scourged to his dungeon," it must be through the consciousness that we have, in our infinitesimal degree, added to the achievement of the universe. Some touch of lasting good must be there that without us would not have been. He of whom this can be truly affirmed when he leaves the realm of time, has reached the end and goal of life. For he

has responded to the call which ennobles man by bidding him, the creature, become in his measure a creator—a factor of the creative force of the world.

The response to this challenge, which resounds in the soul of all of us, can be made by every man and every woman; for it depends not on the intellect, not on any special talent or anything out of our power, but on the quality of the moral will. And this, which Kant declared the only thing absolutely and always good, is in the power of us all. When this challenge is met, then comes in every life its Easter moment. Then is to be said what Dante wrote at the beginning of his story, "*Incipit vita nova*": "Here begins a new life." For then the man or woman concerned has contributed to the world an element truly new, one that enriches it for ever, and is carried forward independently of him or her who originated it.

The real resurrection of Jesus was the change he made in the lives of his friends and followers, who in turn, by virtue of the power they had drawn from him, changed the history of the world. It is clearly a materialistic delusion to think that he did this, or could have done it, by means of a physical miracle. This holds true whether the physical miracle occurred or not. For this transformation depended wholly upon his character, his quality, the spirit and the life in his words; not on any extrinsic event. And the one way of truly honouring him, and all great spirits, is to do in our tiny measure what he and they have done in their great measure; to be, each of us, an original fountain of spiritual life pouring into others and quickening in

them the responding spiritual life that is latent in them. Herein has lain the grandeur of the pilgrimage of man over the long, rough road of time. Here and there, the high potentialities that are latent in all have been actualized in the few. When this happens, we behold a miracle; for then we see what Bergson called the deepest fire from the heart of the world streaming from the crater of the lofty volcano; and the active volcanoes show us the possibilities of those that seem to be extinct, but are not, since they too have their access to the central fuel. We in our measure are to be to others what Socrates was to Plato and the young men of Athens; what Jesus was to Paul and his other followers. Thereby shall we achieve the true end of our life, which alone can give it worth and dignity, and fulfil the sublime purpose of humanity's existence: which is to carry to new heights of spiritual attainment the ascending process of the universe.

THE END