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THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE



The
Religion of the Universe

BY

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London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1904

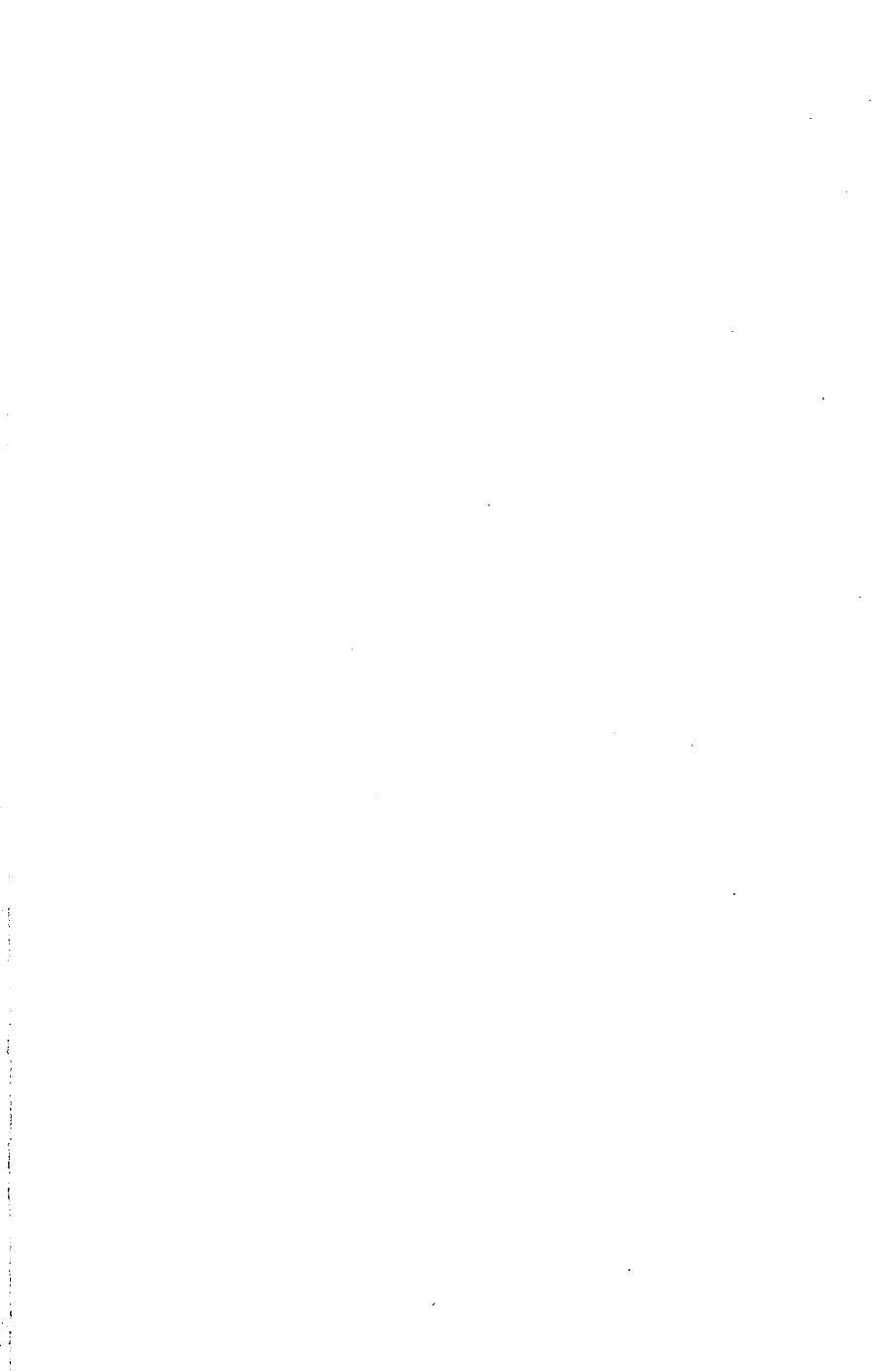
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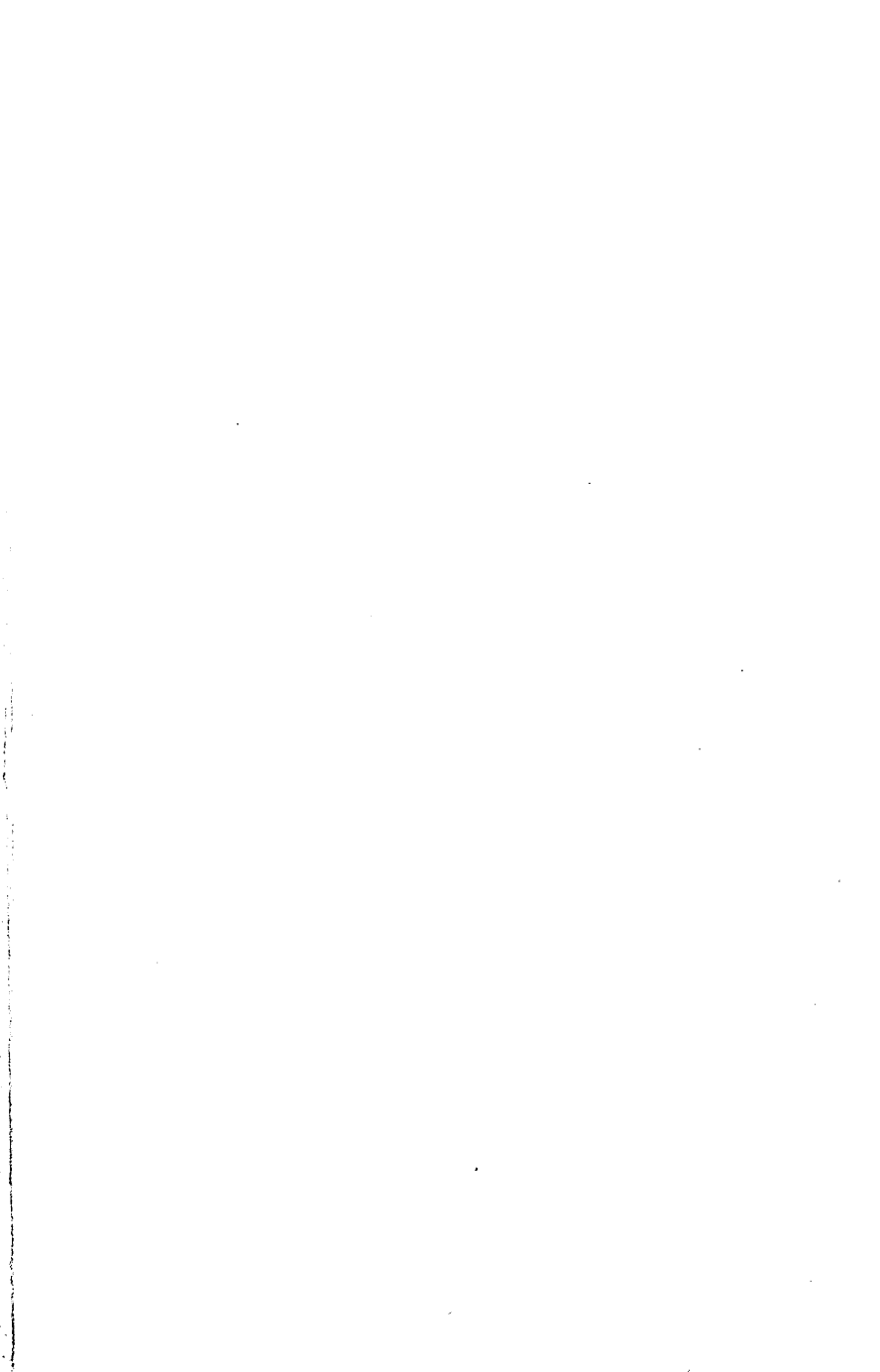
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To the Memory
OF
HERBERT SPENCER
THE FIRST TRUE RECONCILER OF
RELIGION AND SCIENCE
THIS VOLUME
IS REVERENTLY INSCRIBED



Das ewig Eine

Lebt mir im Leben, sieht in meinem Sehen.
Nichts ist denn Gott; und Gott ist Nichts denn Leben.
Gar klar die Hülle sich vor dir erhebet.
Dein Ich ist sie: es sterbe was vernichtbar;
Und fortan lebt nur Gott in deinem Streben.
Durchschaue was dieß Streben überlebet;
Da wird die Hülle dir als Hülle sichtbar,
Und unverschleiert siehst du göttlich Leben.



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INTRODUCTORY

IN any attempt to forecast the spiritual future of mankind surely we ought to discard all expectation of the ultimate survival of either supernatural religion or materialism. Such terms as these may perhaps seem to need definition before we say much about them. But to any one who cares to read what follows the sense in which they are employed will, we hope, become clear enough. And meantime we may be content with the meaning attached to them by nine-tenths of those who care to read about such subjects at all.

Our justification for doubt, and more than doubt, as to the permanence of supernatural creeds, does not need any long argument. For not only scientific method, but also the spiritual atmosphere, has quite changed its character during the last century, much more during the last two centuries; and the clouds which lent themselves to imagination in the old days have disappeared in a drier light. Who, for instance, in reading *Paradise Lost* can now wholly suppress regret that the "organ voice of England" should have been tuned to such a theme? Not that the theological debates of heaven, or even the Calvinistic sermons delivered from the eternal throne, can mar the splendid music of the verse, or obscure the alternate beauty and tragedy of the poet's visions in earth and hell. They

Both
super-
naturalism
and ma-
terialism
doomed.

The old
super-
naturalism
even now
impossible.

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may even be said to deepen the interest of Satan and heighten his sinister glory. But faith can scarcely avoid a shudder when the ineffable Father and Son re-edit the Westminster Confession in the language of eternity, while scepticism hints that here the incongruous and unreal are nearly related. Yet at the time when that epic of the Bible was conceived and written, the only addition it was thought to make to actual fact was the vivid detail and heightened colour of poetic imagination. How changed is the habit even of religious thought in this day!

Vanishing
of the
Miltonic
world.

Still, it is easy for some, though they are a lessening number, to persuade themselves that the plan of salvation picturesquely set forth in *Paradise Lost and Regained* is a real scheme of God, though they cannot fit it into human history as aptly as Milton did. But others, and they are an increasing number, feel painfully the discord jarring at every point between the portentous procession of miracles attributed to the past, and the ordinary work-a-day world as we know it. They have no prejudices—these of whom we now speak. They are not vain enough to pit their notions of possibility against genuine and sufficient evidence. But they note a habit cherished by their former teachers of filling up gaps in evidence by assumptions that the world of old was somehow different from our own in its moral needs, in its demand for miracle, in the divine response to that demand, and in the frequent occurrence of rents in the veil between the seen and the unseen. During the last half-century, however, the earth has given up her dead in a manner never anticipated by seers; and from Egyptian, Chaldæan, and Mycenæan graves “the kings of the nations” that “lay in glory, every one in his own house,” have come forth with their records and

Encroach-
ments of
the doctrine
of uni-
formity

favoured by
the spade-
work of
science.

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their proclamations, and have made the world of their day almost as familiar as London streets. Was then that world so much different from our own as the fond faith in ages of miracle would have us suppose ?

Doubtless in that unburied literature myth and fable find their place. But in any actual inscriptions ordered by monarchs themselves during their own lifetime, do we find portents such as a miraculous solstice, or a backward movement of the shadow on the dial ? Certainly they believed that their gods spoke to their priests or soothsayers, and, when convenient to themselves, kings such as Mesha meekly received these divine oracles as commands. Certainly, also, they interpreted lightning and storm, plague and pestilence, or fruitful seasons and prosperity as direct tokens of divine wrath or favour. The compilers of our Prayer-book did the same ; but we never dream of concluding on that account that the moral and physical order of the earth was different in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from what it is now. On the other hand, the picture presented to us by the Assyrian or Egyptian chronicles, by the laws and the business transactions recovered from history, is one of ordinary routine life, such as we ourselves lead, and of patient submission to natural order. Into such a setting it is as difficult to fit the plagues of Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Jericho's walls by a blast of rams' horns, as it is to fit the adventures of Baron Munchausen into the life of modern Europe.

It was my fortune only the other day to hear a well-meaning and earnest young clergyman preach on Pharaoh's question to Jacob, "How old art thou?" and on the patriarch's reply. The preacher reminded us, as though citing an established scientific fact, or an

Patriarchal
ages and
contempor-
ary records.

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authoritative law report, that in primeval times human life was eight to ten times as long as it is now, and that consequently Jacob's hundred and thirty years were literally "few" for that period. It never seemed to have occurred to the speaker that we have contemporary records of the centuries assigned to the "patriarchs," and that these records prove human life to have been, on the average, of very much the same duration as now. He might have read of explorations in the East, and was probably under an impression that they generally "confirmed the Bible." But the prosaic facts and figures had never been realised. The number of people, however, is rapidly decreasing who can put the Egyptian records of the great Rameses and his successor Merentpah into one pocket of memory, and the story of the plagues of Egypt and the Exodus into another so widely apart that they are never compared together. And when these people are reduced to a minority of the population, the end of supernatural religion will have come.

Material-
ism impos-
sible.

But will materialism take its place? It is forbidden by philosophy, by metaphysics, and by the constitution of human nature. For, according to materialism, everything in the universe can be explained by molecular mechanics. We are nearer to reality when we have increased the powers of the microscope, because the ultimate reality lies in vibrating atoms. The inner world of spirit is to be explained by matter and force; and though we are a long way from it yet, we need not despair of some eventual deduction of consciousness and will from the subtle interplay of still cryptic forces and infinitesimal corpuscles. But against any such view of the universe and of life there has been, during the present generation, a marked and persistent reaction, which shows no signs of any cessation, but rather of

The tend-
ency of
modern
thought
shows an
irreversible
reaction
against it.

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final and unchallengeable triumph. Indeed, materialism has never been anything but a morbid concomitant of the wonder excited from time to time by fresh glimpses into the maze of natural phenomena. This is the impression made by the impassioned music with which Lucretius celebrates his delight in the gospel according to Democritus and Epicurus. There is nothing coarse or sordid or base in the materialism of the *De Rerum Natura*. The fervid joy of the poet, and at the same time his sense of awe before the vision of heaven and earth, as well as his sacred scorn for superstition, make him more like a prophet than a natural philosopher. His worship of atoms was surely only a morbid effect of the glamour that fascinated him on his supposed introduction to the ultimate secret of the universe he adored. And something of the same kind happened to the modern generations to whom were revealed in rapid succession the magnificent uniformities of astronomy, geology, chemistry, and electricity. Many of them thought that the telescope, microscope, and analysis were truer prophets than religion had ever given them.

The secret of materialism as illustrated by Lucretius, and by wonders of modern discovery.

But in these last days philosophy and metaphysics have dissolved away the solid atoms that seemed to give final rest to physical research. And for this reaction against materialism, future generations will perhaps acknowledge that the chief honour belongs to Herbert Spencer,¹ the completest thinker of the past century. The names of Green, Herbart, Bradley—and of Huxley in some of his half-metaphysical essays—will naturally

But solid atoms are dissolved away.

¹ Of course the reference is mainly, though not exclusively, to *First Principles*. The reason why a different opinion about Spencer's teaching has been so widely prevalent is suggested hereafter. Briefly, it is because in succeeding volumes he treats so vividly and lucidly of the groupings and successions of phenomena that many readers forget pp. 40-83 of his *First Principles*.

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occur to some as deserving of even more honour in this rebellion against the tyranny of "matter." But according to the old proverb, we "praise the bridge that carries us over"; and Spencer's treatment of the illusion of materialism was most effective with many of us in the days now long past when the mental nebula was beginning its process of evolution. Indeed, though there may have been philosophers of more daring originality, and in certain directions, of profounder thought, there does not seem to be any teacher of the highest and widest truths who has so conspicuously united lucidity with depth. True it is that his resolve to occupy himself mainly with the order and succession of phenomena has misled materialists here and there. But his exposure of the inherent impossibility of finding ultimate reality in that direction has been so decisive and overwhelming as to justify the righteous anger he has occasionally shown at such a misinterpretation.

Spencer's
place in the
reaction.

A story of
experience.

Meantime, there are some of us now nearing that "bourn" whence "no traveller returns," whose experiences may possibly be of some help in solving, at least for individuals here and there, the dying discords of religious strife. For the discords *are* dying, however occasional spasms of noise may jar upon our ears. And it is worth while to think why they are dying, and what is that wider religion in which they appear likely to be lost as brawling torrents in one peaceful lake. Perhaps nothing but experience can show this. Some of us have been from early youth among the people blessed by the Psalmist because they "have known the joyful sound"; and no discord seemed possible then. The majesty of divine law, the horror of sin against it, the pathos and glory given to human life by the divine drama of salvation answered the question "Is life worth living?"

The joy of
spiritual
life un-
diminished.

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before we were fools enough to ask it. Nothing rang more true within us than "the joy of the Lord" as sounded from the burning lips of St. Paul: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." John Wesley could not improve upon that. And yet the lilt of his homely rhymes on his birthday, ringing as they did with the love of God and man, seemed to us an echo from the harps of Heaven.

Wesley renews the rapture of the *Epistle to Diognetus*.

All honour and praise
To the Father of Grace,
To the Spirit and Son I return !
The business pursue
He hath made me to do,
And rejoice that I ever was born.

In a rapture of joy
My life I employ,
The God of my life to proclaim ;
'Tis worth living for, this,
To administer bliss
And salvation in Jesus' name.

Then, when we could read for ourselves the records of the early post-apostolic church, what pleasure it gave to find that the spirit of St. Paul never died in those times, and that Wesley was anticipated so long ago. The strange, rough prose chant of Christ's mission, as it sounds in the *Epistle to Diognetus*, gave to us a wiser explanation of the spread of the Gospel than all the sophisms of Gibbon. "So then in old time he suffered us to walk as we chose in illicit ways, led on by pleasures and lusts ; not by any means that he took pleasure in our sins, but he endured them ; not as conniving at that period of iniquity, but preparing the

Ep. ad Diog. ix.

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sense of righteousness. So that having been convicted in that age by our own works as unworthy of life, we might now be made objects of his benignity. . . . O amazing philanthropy! The one only love of God did not hate us, did not cast us off, did not bear any grudge against us; but he was generous and forbearing; he himself took on himself our sins; himself he gave his Son as our ransom, the holy for the unholy, the sinless for the evil, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the perishable, the immortal for the dead! For what else could have blotted out our sins but the righteousness of that (Son)? How else was it possible for us, lawless and impious, to be justified but by the only Son of God? O sweet transformation! O inconceivable achievement! O the blessings beyond all hope;—that the sin of many should be hidden by One righteous, and that the righteousness of one should justify many sinners. Having then proved in former times the impossibility that our nature could attain to life, and now (in this age) having set forth the Saviour, by both dispensations he took counsel to persuade us of his goodness, to look to him as our protector, father, teacher, counsellor, physician, reason, light, honour, glory, strength, life.”

The form
changes
but the
spirit is
immortal.

Sancta simplicitas! cry some. But we did not then, and do not now. The human nature that feels a spiritual passion like this for goodness and love and self-sacrifice can never find in materialism the secret of the world. A light has faded from myth and dogma. The old legends have been shattered by pickaxe and spade. We know now that God is more than we thought, and that order is greater than miracle. But somehow the old charm remains. And why that is, we understand when we recall the traditional words, “It is

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the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

But the religion we cherish now is not confined to the old forms. It is not given by portent or oracle. It is, in a more real sense than even Hooker dreamed of, "drawn out of the bowels of heaven and earth." It is not the religion of Eden and Palestine ; it is the religion of the Universe.

CHAPTER I

FAITH AND PARADOX

The issues between religion and science have no definite finality.

IN the issues between knowledge and faith there can be no finality, either in this world or in any possible world to come. What is wanted for peace and truth is some general formula which, while satisfying the needs of the present, will adapt itself, so to speak, automatically, to the altered needs of the future. One purpose of this book is to urge that such a formula is found in Mr. Herbert Spencer's "reconciliation," as given in his *First Principles*. Now we should not venture to suggest this if the proposed reconciliation consisted in the definite surrender by religion of so many doctrines as untenable, and the definite acknowledgment by science, on the other hand, that certain fundamental doctrines may be retained. But that is not the proposed reconciliation at all. Rather what is suggested is (a recognition on both sides that Science and Religion alike contemplate the same Infinite Unknowable Being, whose finite phases may indeed, in different aspects of them, be harmoniously interpreted by each, but whose absolute Totality is beyond the conception of either. Moreover, the interpretation of those finite phases, whether by Science or Religion, may and does change with almost every generation. But the fact that these phases belong to one and the same mystery of Eternal Being does not

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CHAP. I.

change, and is unchangeable. The advantage of such a reconciliation, permanent in essence but in form continually adaptable to increased knowledge of finite things, will, I hope, be presently made obvious.) For the horizon of knowledge is always widening, and any definite pronouncement on those issues which fits the facts of to-day is continually found to be discordant with new facts in sight to-morrow. Thus, if we assume with so many liberal theologians in these times, that faith must at least include belief in a creation by a personal God, in our own immortality, in some sort of "fall of man," in some kind of "plan of salvation," and in a divine redemption through the incarnation and self-sacrifice of the Eternal Son—it may, even to scholarly and rational men, be possible so to "restate" the old beliefs in these dogmas that there shall be no obvious and palpable incongruity with facts as known at present. But if some unsuspected store of papyrus letters or other records of the first Christian century should be discovered, plainly contradicting any essential historical elements in the Gospel tradition of the Incarnation, or the Resurrection, such a restatement would have to be remodelled. It may be said that such a discovery is unlikely. But with the Tel-el-Amarna letters, and the Logion fragments before us, it is unreasonable to affirm that such a thing is impossible. And, at any rate, the suggestion may illustrate the incongruity of staking, as it were, eternal truth on temporal and contingent evidence.

Such a reflection is confirmed by the record of concessions made by religion to science. For it is within the memory of those who have attained the Psalmist's term of human life, that, when they first begin to think, they were told to withstand the very beginnings of

Vain use
of the
maxim
*Obsta
principiis.*

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doubt. And the reason given by prudent elders for this advice was that the "scheme of revelation" was a compacted whole, of which each part was vitally necessary to all the rest. Thus, if the historicity of early Genesis were denied, the doctrine of the Fall of Man must be surrendered, and the original promise of redemption become a myth. Such an amputation of the tap-root of historical faith would loosen and shake the whole organic growth therefrom. If the first chapters of the Bible were not guaranteed by divine revelation, which, in the absence of any human records, was so obviously necessary, where did that guarantee begin? Should succeeding Jewish tradition be more impregnable to criticism than the majestic creation story, bearing the ineffable impress of the very Word of God? No; the apparent contradictions, the alleged anachronisms, would, after such a concession, be indefensible, and the real portents proper to the story of a progressive revelation must necessarily lose the divine stamp of authenticity. Thus torn from its beginning, the whole account of the preparation for Christ by the ministry of patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings, would soon be regarded as a cunningly devised fable. But in that case, what would be the worth of the Gospel itself? At the best it would be a dying echo of a sweet story prevalent in an uncritical time, the story of a spiritual genius too great to be understood by lowly Galilee, and deriving, like the setting sun, a splendour existing mostly in our eyes alone, from the earthly mists that veil to us the final hours of his sad glory.

This conservatism found impracticable.

The impolicy of such counsel to the young was not generally seen until its impracticability was realised. Then when the lateness of the supposed Mosaic writings

FAITH AND PARADOX

CHAP. I.

became so obvious as to be owned in orthodox pulpits, and the mixture of Jewish tradition with Chaldaean mythology was made apparent by exploration of the tombs of ancient nations, the task of "restating" Christian doctrine was commenced, and by various methods, some plausible or even fascinating, others only ingenious, efforts were made to reconcile an entirely new view of history with the old faith.

But it will scarcely be contended that any of these efforts have achieved a final solution of the difficulty, or indeed show any promise of doing so. Whether they are the outcome of Broad Church freedom of thought, or of High Church supersession of reason and conscience by a standing miracle of authority, the only result is a provisional expedient of relief which makes the previous strain on conflicting candour and devotion a little easier, until the pressure once more accumulates through growing knowledge, and the torture becomes intolerable again. Every devout and honest thinker on religion has, according to his own temperament, been attracted for a while, either by rationalistic attempts to make the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection both natural and supernatural, or by High Church commands to leave such subjects in the imagined region where *credo quia impossibile* is the highest reason. But in neither case has the expedient given the repose always found in loyal surrender to a law of the Universe. There has been no sign of an effortless and stable equilibrium between faith and knowledge. The pressure of the will has always been needed on one side of the balance to keep it straight. Matthew Arnold's words, "We know such things do not happen," are as irrepressible as Galileo's "E pur si muove." No doubt it may be momentarily soothing to be told that the

Failure of
provisional
restate-
ments.

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CHAP. I. Resurrection simply afforded a glimpse of the "spiritual body" as distinguished from the natural. But, after all, can the spiritual body digest broiled fish? Is it consistent for a spiritual body to say "A spirit hath not bones and flesh as ye see me have"? Or what is the meaning of "bones and flesh" that can pass through a closed wooden door, and leave no trace? On the other hand, if we are told to refer such things to the transcendental mode of existence in which transubstantiation is a constantly recurring fact, why are we to refuse similar submission to other commands equally based on catholic authority maintained through apostolic succession? How can we consistently withhold our awe from the liquefied blood of St. Januarius, or from the Holy Coat of Treves? What term can be set to this division of the Universe into two worlds, in one of which eternal order reigns, and in the other a mysterious caprice?

The strain-
ing of
Butler's
Analogy.

In our own time more than one attempt has been made, by means of a singular development of Bishop Butler's laboured *Analogy*, to effect a permanent re-adjustment of the issues between reason and faith. The great bishop showed, of course with triumphant success, that we do not escape from perplexities by surrendering revelation, inasmuch as many, if not most of the difficulties confronting us in Christianity occur in some other form in nature. But the new apologists are more daring. They insist that since elements of doubt lurk about the most generally accepted philosophic beliefs, therefore we ought to be content with a working hypothesis in religion.

Mr. A. J. Balfour, if I understand him aright, argues that as we allow the opinions prevalent in the social medium amidst which we live and move to silence any

FAITH AND PARADOX

philosophic doubts we might have about space and time, or matter and motion, or the uniformity of Nature, we should treat in the same way any tendency to scepticism about generally received religious doctrine. Perhaps not one man in a million knows how the law of gravitation is proved. Perhaps, also, nearly every one possessing common sense can realise when it is put to him, the intellectual difficulty of conceiving action at a distance. Of course, telegraphy, even wireless, is not conceived as action at a distance. The electric force is thought of as traversing a continuous medium. But the mass of civilised mankind allow the prevalent opinion which forms their educative medium to silence all doubt, and thus in a very real sense they believe on authority. Mr. Balfour recommends us to accept a similar practical solution of our religious difficulties, and to believe because it is the established custom to do so.

There is a certain plausibility in the suggestion, because, as a matter of fact, it represents the position of the vast, indeed the overwhelming, majority of those who have any religious belief at all. What we are seeking, however, is not a *modus vivendi* at the present time, but a settlement of those issues between faith and knowledge which, though they may only trouble a small minority just now, are much more clamant than they used to be, and which affect precisely the few who are likely to be the creators of the future.

Such a settlement cannot possibly be found by Mr. Balfour's method. For, first, the philosophic or scientific truths which the majority take on trust, or, in Mr. Balfour's phraseology, accept on authority, are not fairly comparable to the religious doctrines now proposed to be similarly treated. To take the familiar instance already cited, the unscientific majority accept the law of

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The
"Foundations of
Belief."

No foundation given
by such a
method.

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CHAP. I. gravitation, not as requiring no proof, but on the assurance of competent mathematicians and physicists, whom we trust on the general testimony of the learned world. It is true that this ground of belief does not appear in ordinary consciousness. The belief has been in the air since we began to breathe, and we grow up taking it as a matter of course. But, if ever it should be disputed, we fall back on what we know about Newton and his successors, and are sure that if we could understand mathematics as well as they, we should be no less satisfied than they. Besides, the familiar experiences of everyday life confirm us in our confidence, at least so far as concerns the relation of weight to mass, and of acceleration to decreasing distance. So that while we do not understand the proof, the theory seems to work right in practice.

Difference between grounds of popular belief in scientific truths and in theological doctrine.

How different is the position of any theological doctrine, such, for instance, as that of the Incarnation! The same "authority," using the word in Mr. Balfour's sense, which imposes this doctrine upon us, has also impressed us with the unsearchable mystery of the divine nature. It is part of the whole system defended by our apologists, that beyond certain simple inferences from creation, nothing whatever can be known of God unless by revelation from himself. This is not, therefore, a case in which others more cultured than ourselves in the arts of knowledge can have wrought out proofs by a process beyond our understanding. However superior to us doctors of divinity may be, they can only know that God is incarnate in a resurrection body if he has told them so, or else told others before them, whose testimony is proved on ordinary laws of evidence. The whole issue is a question of fact, Has God told mankind this thing, or has he not? Now, questions of

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fact are considered so simple an issue that they are every day submitted, with universal approval, to petty juries composed of men whose education does not exceed, and sometimes does not reach, the higher standards of elementary schools. And this distinction between scientific and theological doctrines is always felt at once by the humblest mind in which a spirit of inquiry is awakened. Such an innocent sceptic would not dream of making his lack of mathematics a reason for doubting Kepler's astronomical laws of motion. His common sense is readily satisfied of the fact that Kepler's calculations have been accepted by all competent mathematicians since that discoverer's day. But when he is told to believe in the Incarnation because Athanasius did, and because all divines considered sound have followed him, he naturally enough asks how Athanasius knew; and there can be no answer given him at all parallel to the case of Kepler and his laws. If it is said that Athanasius got it out of the Bible, the innocent sceptic has been taught that he himself is as capable of interpreting the plain English of his Bible as any doctor or saint. But, besides, a further question may inevitably arise as to the date, authenticity, and authority of those very portions of the Bible from which the Incarnation is inferred. Here, again, we come upon questions of fact from which not the most learned Judge can warn off the common juror.

But, again, the form of authority to which Mr. Balfour refers us is effective only when it is least needed, and at once loses command when the Protestant principle of the right and duty of private judgment is pushed home to the conscience. The unthinking many are, of course, docile under the prescriptions of social custom whether in religion or in diet, or in the cut of

Authority
effective
only when
needless,

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CHAP. I. their clothes. But they do not need to be reminded of such authority ; indeed it is a waste of literary genius to explain it to them, and the only effect upon them of such misdirected effort is to suggest in their minds a confusion between lazy acquiescence and living faith. When, however, a challenge to give a reason for the faith that is in him reaches the conscience of any one of them in a form to which honesty and self-respect respond, the folly of the answer "I believe because all my neighbours do so," becomes at once apparent. For, if he has the sort of intelligence which honesty and self-respect would imply, he must know that previous generations believed in witchcraft for precisely the same reason. The duty of being "fully persuaded in his own mind" pricks his conscience ; and if he finds that he can give no other reason than one which has maintained, and still maintains, in the dark places of the earth, so many forms of base and brutal superstition, an uneasy feeling arises that he is neither loyal to truth nor just to his own soul.

and incon-
sistent with
honesty.

Further, in such a case the degree of resistance to the challenge of doubt is exactly proportioned to the stolid obstinacy which can exclude honest inquiry. And it is difficult or impossible to distinguish between such a temper of mind and the sanctimonious conservatism of priests and lawgivers and mobs, which for ten thousand years or more has been a blight on the spiritual and intellectual growth of man. We do not forget that this appeal to authority is now urged by men rightly honoured and admired as gifted with a large, liberal, and sympathetic outlook on human progress. But they have earned and maintain this reputation by asserting, in all ranges of human thought save one, an unfettered freedom of speculation. Amongst the most

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learned and accomplished of their day, they are wise enough to know their own ignorance, because they have reached and touched the impassable limits of human knowledge. It is in a mood of misguided virtue that they turn back to fix on religious thought fetters which they would scorn to impose on merely philosophic or historical or scientific doubters. They are convinced, and as we think, rightly convinced, that the highest welfare of humanity depends on the maintenance of a ground tone of religious reverence through all modulations, concords, and discords, of our intellectual systems and social institutions. Their fatal error is that they believe this pervasive reverence and the truth, humility, self-sacrifice, and charity virtually related to it, to be imperilled, or indeed destroyed, unless certain so-called "fundamental" doctrines of an unproved, and in the last result unthinkable theology are upheld.

Our main purpose here is to show that such a fear is groundless, and that neither religious reverence, nor any other fruitful virtue associated with it depends in the least degree on the arbitrary stoppage of free thought. But, before passing on, it is well to note some evil consequences, which, for the most part unobserved, have followed upon this arbitrary attitude adopted by "men of light and leading." Readers of scientific periodicals, especially those concerned with nature and its wonders, must surely have noted of late years that any questions affecting religion are often treated in a manner entirely alien to the spirit of science. If books are reviewed in which a dignitary of the Church too frankly abandons such opinions about the Old Testament as are sanctioned by social authority, he is treated as a culprit to be condemned, rather than as a critic to be criticised. Thus if in his zeal for a plausible theory—

The fear
groundless,
but de-
moralising

to science.

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CHAP. I. say, about Mizraim—he should go a step beyond the firm grounds of evidence, he is scolded as a faithless trustee set to conserve far other interests than those of truth. Any investigator, on the other hand, who dares to suggest and almost assume one or two missing links in a half-proved biological theory, such as that of natural selection, is praised for so boldly extending the empire of knowledge.

Explorers
of dead
worlds
hampered
in their
work.

Perhaps no achievements of the past century have excited a more thrilling interest than the light which has been thrown on very ancient history by excavations in Egypt, Assyria, or Palestine. But even here the evil influences of "authority" in religion have been felt, and subscriptions have been obtained much more readily for the purpose of "confirming the Bible" than of digging up the actual truth. The truly distinguished men employed on such work have been incapable of perverting their discoveries to the maintenance of superstition. But their plan of operations has necessarily been affected by the policy of societies, and the policy of societies has been influenced by demands of subscribers. The utter incongruity of the story of Joseph, and of the succeeding slavery of some three million Hebrews in Goshen, and still more of the portentous doings of Moses, with the natural course of Egyptian history as told us by our explorers of the tombs, is surely too obvious for denial. Yet how studiously is it ignored; and how constantly it is assumed that while the great dynasty of Rameses was building and keeping accounts and corresponding with foreign rulers, and sending out armies, and practising worldly diplomacy, all in dependence on the ordinary working of nature—a startling series of supernatural events consequent on the personal intervention of the

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deity was distracting their minds, yet was left by them entirely unrecorded! In a word, the advocacy by leaders in the church and the world of conventional submission to the authority commended by Mr. Balfour, is in the first place unnecessary, because the thoughtless multitude have no idea of rebelling. And in the next place where such advocacy is at all effective it operates against the progressive impulses of the exceptional few who are the pioneers of a better time. In Biblical criticism, in antiquarian research, in university life, and even in the village school, this bias in favour of a blind authority in religion always hampers and sometimes paralyzes our national progress.

But great as are the intellectual gifts of the author of *The Foundations of Belief*, it has been left to a scarcely less brilliant, and perhaps more popular essayist to enumerate a still more plausible and possibly to some minds a more fascinating hypothesis. For in a volume entitled *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, Mr. W. H. Mallock has devoted 218 pages to a demonstration that religion is utterly incredible; and has thought 69 succeeding pages sufficient to restore annihilated faith, and to leave it securely based on a "practical synthesis of contradictories." The method is said to be justified by the ancient and established habit of common sense, to think, speak, and act according to its recognition of practical necessity in the teeth of theoretic proofs that its procedure is impossible or absurd. Any one with moderate powers of abstraction may amuse himself with the endeavour to find any sufficient answer to the Eleatic Zeno's demonstrations of the impossibility of motion. But where Aristotle is not generally considered to have been successful, the amateur philosopher may be content if he can realise clearly his own failure.

CHAP. I.

Mr. W. H.
Mallock

on the
"practical
synthesis
of contra-
dictories."

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CHAP. I. Yet, notwithstanding, men have since Zeno's time continued to use their organs of locomotion in the serenest confidence that motion is a reality. Whether, however, that reality is just what they think it to be is another question, on which they rightly do not trouble themselves.

Case of
"free will."

Similarly Mr. Mallock holds, with many others, that if we listen to reason alone the notion of "freewill" is incredible and even unthinkable. Nevertheless he applauds the common sense of humanity according to which we think and speak and act in the calm assurance that the reality of free will is as clear as the existence of motion. Here again, while we agree on the practical issue, we may reserve the question whether free will is in the last result, entirely and all through what common sense takes it to be. And such reservations ought to be borne in mind when we follow Mr. Mallock into his applications of this analogy, as he deals with the possibility and the duty of religious belief. It may be true for instance that belief in God emerges as a practical necessity in any contemplation of the universe as an organic or even as an ordered Whole. But when we come to ask "What God?" Mr. Mallock does not help us much. Again it may well be that the indestructibility of being, our own equally with that of the Universe, is as necessary to a sound view of life as a recognition of the indestructibility of what we call "matter" is to sound physical science. But it is surely going too far, and altogether outside the analogy, if we make the same claim on behalf of the eternal continuity of that special and infinitesimal *mode* of being which we call "self."

Theism and
immor-
tality.

Be that as it may, however—for these are questions to which we must hereafter return—the upshot of Mr.

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Mallock's proposed settlement once for all of the issues between knowledge and faith is this; there are "two worlds—the cosmic world and the moral"—which are "apprehended by us in different ways or by different faculties of our nature."¹ We gather also that these two worlds are so opposed to each other that what is true in the first is often utterly false in the second, and that the laws of evidence and probability inferred by the experience of ten thousand generations in the one, have no force whatever in the other. The Universe is not one, but two, and divided by a schism which goes right through all being, and makes God Himself the cynical author of an eternal paradox.

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Are there two kinds of truth?

A divided Universe.

Since Alexander cut the Gordian knot with a sword, never has there been a more impatient or violent solution of a difficulty. And to what does it amount if we try to reckon up its practical value to the honest and devout sceptic? He may presently find that it is only a variation on that very Spencerian doctrine of the Unknowable which is the object of our author's confident contempt. But it is a variation for the worse, a variation by arbitrary limitation of the doctrine and by perverse substitution of phantasms for reality; a variation which leaves us still to agonise for the foundation of dogmas on nothing, and entirely deprives us of that soul-rest which is found in the humble recognition of things as they are. But deferring such points for the present, let us ask what is the extent and nature of the religious satisfaction promised us if we submit to Mr. Balfour's doctrine of authority, or accept Mr. Mallock's "practical basis of belief"? Neither of them gives us a creed, though the latter makes more show of doing

A mere variation on the doctrine of an Unknowable,

a but a variation for the worse.

¹ *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 273.

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CHAP. I. so than the former. In the absence then of any definite application of their principles by our teachers, we must try to make the application for ourselves.

What religion is given by such methods of paradox?

We may call to mind the words of Fielding's Parson Thwackum in his debate with Philosopher Square: "When I say religion, I mean the Christian religion, and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion, and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England." The tide of time has considerably shifted the issues between faith and knowledge since those words were written, and we need not suppose that either of our Defenders of the Faith undertakes to shore up, by his particular prop, the articles and formularies, or the creed of any separate Church or denomination. Still we must presume that it is Christianity they think to be thus secured. Here again, however, a difficulty arises. For, after all, the content of the word depends very much upon the historic period at which you choose to take the consensus of believers or the religious "common sense of most" as the index to Christianity. Thus, if we take our section, so to speak, through the Christian world of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, no attitude of mind would be regarded as fully Christian which does not accept hierarchical authority, supernatural sacraments, and purgatory, to say nothing of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. But if we go back, by such light as we have, to Galilean times, it is safe to say, with the Synoptic Gospels before us, that no disciple then in sympathy with Jesus could possibly have anticipated any such dogmas or sacraments, or even the doctrine of the Trinity, Incarnation, or Atonement. This, however, is not worth arguing, and it is interpolated only because it is by taking their stand on the soil whence the Synoptic

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CHAP. I.

Gospels grew, while accepting these books not as infallible documents, still less as God's word, but as relics of primitive tradition, that some of us persist in calling ourselves "Christian" still, though we do not believe in the creed of any surviving Church.¹

Let us return to our authors. Since, considering their well-known position and their freedom from sectarian bigotry, we cannot suppose them to have written in the interest of Romanism, or Anglicanism, or Presbyterianism, or any other denominational form of Christianity, is there any other conception that they might probably have in view? Perhaps such a conception is suggested by a phrase much in vogue at the present day, since the Education controversy has taught us the value—at least on public platforms—of "undenominationalism," or, less reverently, "School Board religion."² It must not be supposed that this means anything so absurd as theology without dogma. What it really indicates is that body of doctrine which is left when, after eliminating all Unitarians and rationalists, however devout, we strain out all dogmatic differences between the remainder and retain only what, roughly speaking, they hold in common. It means, in fact, that evangelical interpretation of the Bible which is favoured by

¹ True, the name Christian was not given to followers of Jesus in Galilean days. But the term "Jesuit" has unfortunately received an undesirable connotation, and after all "Christian" may well describe a follower, not in the letter, but in the spirit, of Jesus, called the Christ.

² Perhaps this remark is not obviously applicable to Mr. Mallock, who says (p. 94): "The doctrines of religion which concern us in the present volume are not any doctrines which Christianity professes to reveal, but merely the doctrines which it, like other religions, presupposes." Yet certainly he appears to intend his readers to apply his argument to such popular ideas of religion as are necessary to find bones and flesh for the sacred ghost of which he gives us a vision in his first chapter, pp. 7, 8. Indeed "the practical synthesis of contradictories" would most dismally fail to fulfil the promise of the first sentence of the book unless it were supposed capable of reassuring the average Christian of the day about his supernatural beliefs.

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CHAP. I. Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Independents, Baptists, and also—subject to protests against its shortcomings—is substantially approved by Anglicans, and Romanists as well. This residuum has such a peculiar sacredness, that the children or successors of “Church Rate Martyrs” think themselves quite justified in forcing those who do not share their devotion to it, to pay taxes and rates for its propagation.

There is perhaps a difficulty in pinning any member of this new denomination—for such it is—to a single article of his creed, except the duty of compelling all national teachers, whether they themselves believe the Bible or not, to interpret it to their scholars in accordance with the views held by the majority of the local education authority. But, judging by the syllabuses of religious instruction adopted by the great School Boards of 1871—that fatal year!—to 1903, we may assume this unsectarian Christianity to include the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Fall of Man, of a primeval promise of redemption, of divine revelations to the Patriarchs, to Moses and the Prophets, of the Incarnation, of the atoning death of the incarnate Deity, and of the Resurrection.

Depend-
ence of
dogma on
history,

Now the truth of all these dogmas depends very largely, and in some cases entirely, upon the actuality of certain alleged historical events. Of course a vague idea of a divine Trinity may be found in the teachings of Plato and of Philo ; but the Christian doctrine thereof, together with that of the Incarnation as set forth in the Creeds, is certainly dependent for proof of its revelation on the miraculous conception of Jesus and on the inspired authority of the Gospels, especially the Fourth, together with the Epistles attributed to St. Paul. The case is even clearer as to the Fall of Man and the bodily

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resurrection of Jesus. These either occurred, or they did not. And the question for us is, of what use is the "authority" to which Mr. Balfour appeals, or of Mr. Mallock's *Practical Basis of Belief* for the decision of such an historic issue. Shall we say with the former that it is on the highest ground expedient to fall in with the traditional and popular belief because it works well? Shall we say with the latter that no more obvious contradictions to reason are involved in such a belief than in the admission of free will, or even in the recognition of objective space and motion? Shall we then draw the inference that in the interest of morality we may and should maintain a synthesis of contradictories in this case as well as in the others?

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and history cannot be determined by authority or customary belief.

Surely all such attempted solutions of the issues between faith and knowledge break down at this point.¹

For to say that we must maintain moral responsibility, though philosophers tell us that it involves insoluble contradictions, is one thing; but to say that in the interests of religion we must hold to the historic actuality of a portentous miracle, even though such a belief should outrage all canons of evidence, is a wholly different and utterly incommensurable demand. Certainly in the case of moral responsibility or the phenomenal sense of "free will"—whatever be the ultimate reality underlying it—we have to deal with a matter of direct consciousness, always and uniformly present in normally constituted men. We have, of course, no right to attribute infallibility to their interpretation of the mental

Phenomenal freedom of the will is a matter of consciousness.

¹ Of course there may be possibly some still surviving who think that the evidence for the physical resurrection of Jesus is as good as the evidence for the Battle of Waterloo. They are quite right in maintaining their belief; but I am not writing for them. I am concerned only for those who recognising the absurdity of the evidence offered find a precarious refuge in such substitutes for evidence as "authority" and the "practical synthesis of contradictories."

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CHAP. I. phenomenon, or even to that given by philosophers. For between what consciousness perceives and the ultimate reality is an unsounded depth. Loyalty to eternal order forbids us to say that the universal consciousness lies. But neither, on the other hand, have we any right to be so confident as some are, that if consciousness speaks truth, here is a "causeless miracle."¹ We simply do not know, and so far as our duty is concerned, there is an end of the matter.

Not so the historic reality of an alleged event,

and sentiment cannot conceal the difference.

How incommensurably different is the case of an isolated miracle, alleged to have been wrought some thirty-five years after the conventional beginning of the Christian era! For that portent in its very conception outrages all laws of vital physiology, and in its factitious evidence contravenes all principles of judgment observed either by forensic or by scientific authorities. But to balance this, there is not, as in the case of free will, any appeal whatever to consciousness, though there is to sentiment—a very different thing. To say our souls tell us Christ rose from the dead, because something divine within us demands such a wonder, is surely mere levity; and if we look at substance instead of form, it is levity as irreverent as anything of which the *Rational Free Press* is accused, because it mocks with mere phrases the infinite pathos of human longing. Before the practical synthesis of contradictories can be made as imperative in regard to a historic miracle as it is said to be in regard to moral responsibility, it must be shown that the one as much as the other is an essential element of moral consciousness.

Same principle applicable to all demands for belief in

The same observations are applicable to all demands for belief in any alleged events, whether natural or

¹ We may suspect that in the region of reality the phrase is meaningless, but it expresses a popular notion.

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supernatural, on the ground that they are essential to a religion said to be implied by man's moral needs. The apologists for what is called the "plan of salvation" are not alone in making such demands. And apart from historic evidence, a devotee of Mohammed or of Buddha has just as much right as a Christian to apply to the story of the Founder's creative mission the reasoning we have criticised. Each of the religions referred to has, we believe, if not as large a number of adherents as Christianity, yet certainly a formidable proportion of the world's population within its fold. On this ground they might with some force claim an equal right with ourselves to appeal to general assent. Remembering also the interpretation they would naturally put on the term "civilised world," we must recognise that the following sentence from Mr. Mallock's chapter on "The Reasonable Liberation of Belief" would be quite as forcible from their point of view as from that of our author :—

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history on
other than
evidential
grounds.

In assenting to the judgment of the civilised world generally, and imputing an objective validity to that subjective value which alone gives any meaning to the higher experiences of mankind, we need no more be committing ourselves to a guess or sentimental conjecture than we are when we assent to the proposition that there are other minds besides our own, and that there are stars and tables and chairs external to ourselves and them (p. 277).

To do justice to Mr. Mallock we must admit that he leaves us quite uncertain how far he would regard his *Practical Basis of Belief* as justifying a sincere and devout recitation of even the Apostles' Creed. He guarantees to us, indeed, "an intelligent God," but though he is sure of the intelligence, he treats that intelligence with very scant reverence when he describes

Mr. Mallock's
"intelligent
God."

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CHAP. I. its doings as observed by science. Indeed, when we read his remarks on evolution as viewed by human intelligence, when we hear that what "will principally strike us in it, and indeed one may say astound us—is, firstly, its cynical cruelty; and secondly, its mad stupidity" (p. 165)—we cannot help wondering whether, when he speaks of his "intelligent God," he does not use the epithet in a sense akin to mere cunning. At any rate, having travelled so far on a "practical synthesis of contradictories," he does not seem to get much further. And if that paradoxical basis for a religion will not bear even the Apostles' Creed, what advantage has he over the Agnostics? If he cannot guarantee even that much, the comfortable assurances with which he undertakes to heal our doubts must raise entirely false hopes in the heart of the devout sceptic.

In a word, if the method can give us no more than a glimpse of the misty, fleeting robe of "an intelligent God" and the bare probability of our persistent existence somewhere and somehow after death, the confidence of his brilliant rhetoric is altogether out of proportion to the vague result. If we cannot accuse him of "keeping the word of promise to the ear while breaking it to the hope," it is because he does not even do the former. There is no sentence in which he definitely asserts that his "practical basis" will sustain belief in the historic incarnation, atonement, and resurrection. Nor is this the only criticism to be made upon the failure of his promises. For even the shadowy wisps of spiritual cloud which he evokes from the void are found on scrutiny to have a very earthly origin.

The
necessary
assumption
of an

Thus, after triumphantly showing that, though none of us can prove the existence of an external world, we all act on the assumption that there is one, and that,

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though the power of free choice apparently involves a synthesis of contradictories, we all treat each other and ourselves as responsible beings, he turns to the doctrines of a Personal God and immortality, and confidently treats them in the same manner. But are these doctrines *in pari materia*? Are they, to use a common expression, "on all fours" with the paradoxes of consciousness? Are they equally definite, equally palpable to common sense? Are they equally clear to introspection? This last question, so far as it bears on belief in a Personal Deity, is often answered in the affirmative on the ground that Eternal Being, in some mode of conception, has always dawned in consciousness wherever human thought has been much stirred to reflection. But this dim inference—"things exist, therefore Something always has been"—certainly does not automatically bring with it the notion of "an intelligent God," and though the vague conception thus given has always tended, by a very natural process, to take the image of the thinkers, that process has been arrested and repudiated just in proportion to the earnestness and honesty, or the profundity of the contemplative soul. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," is ever the scornful echo from the skies of the self-reproach with which true reverence detects itself in likening the "intelligence" of the Eternal to its own.

By what right, then, does any apologist point to this halo of the Infinite always brooding around the narrow sphere of mortal thought, and treat it as a testimony of consciousness to an impossible personality, an *opifex Deus*, an "intelligent God," capable of carpentering the Universe? The two notions are totally incommensurable. They have no more relation to one another than a two-foot rule to immeasurable space.

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external world is not *in pari materia* with a theological opinion.

Anthropomorphism intruding.

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CHAP. I. No more, but just as much. For the two-foot rule is a mode of space, and the "intelligent God" is a pictured mode of Eternal Being, but just as inadequate.

The
cruelty of
apologists.

When we remember with what agony of desire many devout but honest souls struggle to realise the certainties so temptingly described to them by the new school of apologists, it seems nothing less than cruel to tell them that Eternal Being, confessed by the Bible itself to be unknowable, is as clearly manifest or implied in human consciousness in the form of a Personal God, as is an external world or power of will.

Immortal-
ity and the
argument
ad
absurdum.

But although Mr. Mallock would appear to promise a certainty about God and immortality, equal or, at least, strictly similar in kind to our certainty—such as it is—about our possession of will and the existence of an external world, this is not exactly what he really offers. In regard to immortality, at any rate, he makes no appeal to consciousness. He is satisfied with the argument *ad absurdum*. "Let us then suppose," he says, "as we have supposed with regard to the doctrine of Free Will, that the doctrines of immortality and of God have been altogether eliminated from our consciences, and consider what effect their elimination would produce in life, besides depriving us of the satisfaction which we derive from the exercise of devotion." Here it is assumed, as a matter of course, that the surrender of the Sunday School notion of "an intelligent God," and of the bare word immortality, must paralyse devotion. But surely, while the memory of Spinoza survives, it is arbitrary to take this as a settled question. There have been times when devotion was impossible without idols; but we can do without them now. Is it not just conceivable that an age may come in which such helps as the imagination of a Personal Deity and

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the assurance of our little self's persistence after death may be as needless as the sacred dolls and pictures of Western and Eastern Churches are considered by British Protestants? CHAP. I.
—

Indeed the argument *ad absurdum* is always dangerous unless, as in its mathematical applications, we are quite sure that all possible alternatives are within our ken. When Dr. Livingstone's Makololo friends received back their travelled tribesmen, who had accompanied the great explorer from the Zambesi to Loando, they refused to believe the reports given by their restored comrades, of houses with two or more stories. For they could only picture such a structure as one hut on the top of another; and, said they, the lower hut must project its conical roof through the floor of the upper—which was absurd. Their experience had not enabled them to conceive the actual alternative—that the lower hut or story had no conical roof at all. And amongst more enlightened races, many applications of this same mode of argument are fallacious from an analogous cause. For sometimes we are not capable of realising all the possible alternatives which infinity has in store; and sometimes, perhaps, we have not taken sufficient pains to observe facts outside our own experience, or that of our own branch of the human race. Dangers
of the
argument.

Surely there is a touch of the latter defect in Mr. Mallock's assumption of the consequences that must result from an abandonment of "a belief in God and immortality," as commonly held. He suggests that the loss must diminish the importance of individual manhood, and that this diminution of importance must dry up the sources of sympathy, compassion, and self-sacrifice for others. Unless this is the meaning, it is difficult to see what is intended when, after an eloquent In this case
much of
highest
human
experience
is ignored.

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CHAP. I. allusion to the moral struggles of humanity, stimulated by its realisation of a moral order, our author proceeds to urge that all this spiritual glory must depart if we relinquish his notions of "God, freedom, and immortality," described in his opening chapter as "the three essential dogmas." But what, then, are we to say to the stupendous phenomenon of Buddhism? Without affectation of knowledge other than is open to the unlearned, we may all gather from the works of Pāli scholars that its teaching distinctly excludes two of Mr. Mallock's "essential dogmas." It has not the impertinence to speak of Eternal Being as an "intelligent God," and if it admits a sort of continuity of individual existence so long as the karma begotten by desire is effective, it regards that continuity as a curse; and the final reward of virtue is the blowing out or extinction of all desire in Nirvāna, which, whatever else it may mean, absolutely and utterly excludes any succeeding continuity of individual existence, or immortality as taught by average Christianity.¹

Buddhism
and
Nirvāna.

Parallelism
between
Buddhistic
and Christ-
ian ideals,

Is there, then, any reason to believe that the temper produced by Buddhism has been indifferent to the moral struggles of humanity, as attested "from

¹ See *Buddhism* by Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids, 20th ed., pp. 94-98. Also his *Hibbert Lectures*, 1881, pp. 91-115; and *Buddhist Psychology*, by Mrs. Rhys Davids, London, 1900, p. xxxvi., etc. The words I have used in the text might perhaps be objected to as not quite technically accurate. But the learned Professor in response to a question has kindly favoured me with a reply which shows that practically what I have stated is true. "The Buddhist salvation," he writes, "which they call Arahatsip, and which we, selecting one out of many epithets for it, call Nirvāna, has nothing at all to do with a future life. It means a state, to be reached and enjoyed in this life, of ethical and intellectual perfection, involving, of course, the dying out in the heart of all evil desires and the cultivation of right ones. Nirvāna—Pāli Nibbāna—is the dying out of a flame or a lamp, and is used metaphorically of the dying out in the heart of the threefold flame of lust, ill-will, and stupidity, or *dulness*. This third is a peculiarly Buddhist touch" (24th Dec. 1903). That Nirvāna so attained in this life is neither a promise nor an earnest of immortality is abundantly shown in the works cited at the beginning of this note.

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generation to generation," to use Mr. Mallock's words —"by its blood, by its tears, by its joys, by its sorrows, and by its prayers"? Is not that religion rather accused, even as the Sermon on the Mount has been accused, of an exaggerated altruism and an impossible standard of purity? Like Christianity, it has suffered more from its professors than from its persecutors. But the pretended followers of Jesus, who, in rebellion against his "perfect law of liberty," count gain as better than godliness and human slaughter the noblest vocation of the Christian, can scarcely, for very shame, fling a stone at corrupt and degenerate Buddhism. The religion supposed to be derived from the Galilean has, since its conquest of Europe, been no more proof against the pretence and hypocrisy attending any attempted coalition of God and Mammon, than the Gospel of Buddha since its conquest of Central Asia. But the writings of the great teachers of the latter, and the lives of its saints, give an overwhelming contradiction to the assertion that without the notions of God and immortality no elevation of character is possible. However we may explain it—and we shall not shrink from an attempt at explanation in due course—there are clearly more methods of sustaining the moral dignity of human life than Mr. Mallock has allowed.

and corruption of both.

The same thing might be shown by not a few examples of the great and good who have dared to stand alone in their preference for imperfect reality to more splendid pretence as the foundation of character. Bruno, Thomas Campanella,¹ Spinoza, Darwin, Huxley, and Herbert Spencer, have not only uttered inspiring

Individual independence of heavenly bribes.

¹ True, Campanella remained a monk to the end of his heroic life; but if he had submitted to the "authority" exalted by Mr. Balfour, or if he had been willing to accept a "practical synthesis of contradictories" from his inquisitors, he might have escaped all his trials.

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CHAP. I. words but have lived inspiring lives, though every one of them has refused the "practical basis of belief" as now taught. It is the custom, of course, to say that such men, like plants in shadow, have lived on reflected light, and owe more than they themselves confess to the Sun of Righteousness. But their own consciousness of their experience is surely entitled to some credit. They disown no real obligation to Christ or any other revealer of truth. But so far from having lived in the shade, they think they have rather traced the focussed rays of such luminaries to their larger sources in nature, history, human experience, all of them finite modes of eternal verity, and they find the sacred fire of prophets to be of sevenfold force when they feel something of the infinite energy from which it breaks forth as a spark.

Alleged belittlement of man.

Finally, so far as concerns this attempted argument *ad absurdum*, the repugnance of both Protestant and Catholic bigots to new-born science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is said to have been suggested by "an instinctive prevision" of the belittlement of man which must follow the expansion of the universe in human thought. Mr. Mallock, of course, would not justify their obstinacy, but he thinks they were not altogether stupid, and apart from the safeguard proposed by himself, he considers the danger even greater now.

Still more efficacious have been the means of rapid travel, and the rapid communication of news which have pointed the moral already taught by the stars, and increased our miserable familiarity with the littleness of man in space; whilst the facts which are now being revealed to us with regard to his social evolution are diminishing, though they seem to be enlarging, his importance in terms of time (p. 251).

FAITH AND PARADOX

It may have occurred to some readers, as it does to me, that if the greatness of man were not entirely a negligible quantity, "because the scale is infinite," the achievements noted in this extract would at least show human powers at a higher range than they had attained before the discoveries so strangely perverted to his "belittlement." But it is of more importance to remark how perversely discordant with the Religion of the Universe is this nervous anxiety about man's dignity. In earthward relations, as lord of his little kingdom and master of nature by obedience to her laws, he is "the beauty of the world and the paragon of animals." But it is no humiliation to him, it is indeed his true bliss and his supreme glory to recognise that in the light of the Eternal he, in himself, is nothing. It is not a question of degree of worthiness or dignity; he is nothing. The Mystics, though sometimes too venturesome in their aspirations to know the Eternal as he is, did at any rate suggest a truth essential to any real religion in their interpretation of the words, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Perfect worship would have no hankering conceit of the dignity of man. It must be peaceful, joyful, triumphant acquiescence in the nothingness of self "that God may be all in all."

But returning to Mr. Mallock and his anxiety for human dignity, we find that against the "miserable familiarity with the littleness of man," he would set "the practical synthesis of contradictories" in God and immortality.

The great primary effect which a belief in God and immortality produces on human life, is to free it from the stifling limitations imposed on it by time and space, by failure and

CHAP. I.

"Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Iteration of the false note of human pride.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. I. — imperfection, and to give us, in spite of our isolated position, and our transient inheritance in the universe, some elevating and sustaining connection with the infinite, with the perfect, and with the eternal (p. 252).

We have here again the false note already deprecated of the need for some self-assertion in the presence of the Eternal ; whereas it is precisely our limitation, our failure and imperfection, which, when willingly realised, inspire in us the unreserved self-surrender demanded by religion. To assume that our "inheritance in the universe" must needs be "transient," unless our petty self be continued in its "stifling limitations" after death, is to "intrude into those things which we have not seen." But whether that inheritance be transient or not, it is quite enough to overwhelm the contemplative soul with a sense of infinity and eternity. And it is difficult to see how the forced or self-determined belief in "an intelligent God" can modify the devout feeling of nothingness into which the Universe awes us. Shall we, in our "synthesis of contradictories," make God less than the Universe ? And if not, how does the above-mentioned belief lessen the incommensurable disproportion between ourselves and the infinite ? Does not our ever-widening contemplation of stars and systems, with their bewildering interplay of subtle forces, undreamed by Galileo or Newton, make a word like "intelligence," though proper enough to characterise the maker of a mouse-trap or a steam-engine, monstrously incongruous with the Power evolving a Universe ? Recognise that the vision we behold is eternal and is One, the ever-changing, yet ever the same manifestation of an Energy unbegotten and imperishable ; then the sense of our own littleness involves no humiliation. Our familiarity with it, so far from

Our true
dignity.

FAITH AND PARADOX

being miserable, is our glory and our joy. Sufficient for us that we have the faculty to contemplate and adore. CHAP. I.

The grounds on which we are urged to retain, by an effort of will, a belief in the sort of personal immortality included in the "undenominational" creed, will have to be examined hereafter.¹ Meantime it is to be observed that our modern apologists do not seem to base their belief therein on the one supreme miracle of Christ's resurrection. If that were their position, there would be no need for the strained application of philosophic paradoxes, or for insistence that the immortality of the creeds must be true because we think it ought to be. Indeed, the most recent methods of defending the faith raise a suspicion that the general question of human immortality is first settled, and then the great miracle is maintained because thought necessary to justify the decision. Such a method may give a conventional, but scarcely a practical, basis of belief. However deep and just may be our faith in the indestructibility of being, the effort to synthesise contradictions in an assurance that after the disappearance of all defining forms and bounds the dead man is just the same individual as when he was alive, and must remain for ever so, is simply an effort of despair.

Relation of such arguments to the great Christian miracle.

When the nameless maker of the Book of Job asked "If a man die, shall he live again?" he clearly assumed that the answer must be "No!" And if we are not so sure as the Hebrew poet was that this is the conclusion of the whole matter, it is not because of miracle or myth. It is rather because Science, which religion has blindly accused of materialism, has refined away matter into nothingness, except as the mysterious veil of an

Dissolution is not annihilation.

¹ See Chapter XI.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. I. Unknowable but adorable¹ Power. The body is as innocent of materialism in the old, gross sense, as the assumed soul was supposed to be. Its dissolution is not annihilation. The fragmentary existence it defined before, though undefined now, is in being still, and its relations to the universe, though different from what they were, are neither more nor less inexplicable. What right have we to assume that to merge in the universe, as a stream in the ocean, is to fall to a lower life? But the hope or faith or belief of the contrary is perfectly consistent with inability to see how any synthesis of contradictories can justify the phantasm of "eternal form" when all its bounding lines are erased.

Spencer's
"recon-
ciliation."

Having now examined at considerable, but I hope not disproportionate, length the attempts made at various times, and especially in our own day, to impose on faith and knowledge some definite terms of compromise in the shape of an arbitrary limit to be observed by an effort of will on both sides, we may next turn to the alternative to be offered and explained in the following pages. As already premised, it is based on Mr. Herbert Spencer's reconciliation of Science and Religion in his book of *First Principles*. There is, I hope, no presumption in making such an acknowledged use of the great philosopher's teaching. For a humble student may sometimes help equals, and even superiors among his fellow-students, to an appreciation and practical use of some point in the Master's lessons which that master's particular aim at the time required him to leave comparatively undeveloped. There are, of course, various passages in Mr. Spencer's writings in which he has reiterated and emphasised his doctrine on this

¹ If the two epithets seem incongruous, reasons for their combination will be offered in succeeding chapters.

FAITH AND PARADOX

CHAP. I.

subject, and has insisted that it is not the mere negation of faith, as critics both religious and otherwise have too hastily supposed. But the grand conception of his Positive Philosophy was, after all, limited to an exposition of the finite working of phenomenal evolution as it is defined in his celebrated formula. This purpose of necessity excluded from notice except in *First Principles*, and at occasional points of contact with popular creeds,¹ the background of infinity against which we behold the phenomena of evolution in movement. For an exposition of the possibility that a contemplation of the Unknowable fragmentarily revealed and infinitely veiled in the Universe may at an advanced stage of progress do all for mankind that has hitherto been achieved at times by the best religions, was not within his purpose. If the present writer humbly attempts such a thing it is not that he has much confidence in his intellectual powers. But no one else has tried to do just what he has in view; and in the last years of his life he feels it an imperative duty to show, if he can, the adaptability of Mr. Spencer's solution to relieve man of all the moral and spiritual anxieties, distresses, and struggles, of which during the greater part of the nineteenth century he suffered his own share with the people of that age.

Scope of the present effort.

Two observations only are necessary to complete this introductory chapter and prepare the way for the intended exposition. The first is that Mr. Spencer's reconciliation is precisely the open and endlessly adaptable formula which at the beginning of this chapter we suggested as necessary. There is no arbitrary assertion that some selected dogmas must be retained by an effort

Spencer's reconciliation affords the universal formula needed.

¹ E.g. in *The Study of Sociology* the "Theological" and "Anti-Theological Bias."

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. I. of will whatever may be the arguments against them.

Not that there is an Unknowable separate or separable from the knowable.

The place of mystery in religion.

It is not what men think they understand which awes them.

There is no desperate acknowledgment that, in the last result, faith and knowledge are alike unreasonable, and that therefore it matters not if we force contradictories together in a creed. There is simply the recognition which true science never refuses, that all paths of knowledge end in an Unknowable, and that all depths of contemplation merge in an Unknowable. It is not merely that we inhabit a luminous isle of beauty amid a trackless, unknown ocean; but the isle itself with all its rocky shores and coral caves and glorious mountains and cathedral forests and sweet flowers and luscious fruits is everywhere instinct with mystery, and awful through the sense of the vast Unknowable which every sparkle suggests. Now, that mystery is precisely the "dim religious light" which reverence loves to haunt. We need not go to ruined shrines and mouldering books to learn this. For we feel the truth ourselves whenever we look up to the starlit abyss of space, or try in vain to gaze right into the ultimate secret of beauty in a flower, or yearn to know what it is that melts the heart in the cadences of music. Thus in vain do theologians preach about the need of definite and articulate truth to command the soul; for when such truth can be had, it commands the intellect, but fails to sway the religious feelings. This is indeed the case even in definite creeds with the very articles supposed most to touch the heart. For the incarnation of the Son of God, the story of his earthly mission, the atonement by his sacrifice, the coming of the Holy Ghost, alike touch the hearts of believers, not by what the intellect can understand but by what it cannot. The orthodox grammatical terms in which such themes are dressed are of no effect unless they stir the soul with the sense of an unfathomable

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mystery. And no religious contemplation touches ineffable bliss unless it ends, like St. Paul's rhapsody, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? . . . For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever and ever."

Our final observation at this stage is that Mr. Spencer's reconciliation of faith and knowledge accepts the Universe as it is—as it now lies open to the contemplative eye. It needs no theory of origin, it demands no theological preconception. It takes things just as they are, and finds therein ample scope for both science and religion. Nor is it by any effort, by any arbitrary repression of inquiry or of any healthy form of intellectual or emotional activity, that this peace is attained. The remark of the sensible Bishop that "things are as they are, and the consequences will be what they will be," suggests no chill of fatalism to the heart loyal to the Universe as it is. Nor can any possible vicissitudes of scientific or philosophic theories about processes of evolution or devolution, in the past or future, disturb the rest found for religion in present contemplation. For whatever has happened, or may happen, the future and the past meet in the present vision. And in every minutest, as in every grandest element of the Whole, science finds its interest and religion its rapture. Thus the newly-discovered "electrons,"¹ seven hundred or a thousand vibrating within the hydrogen "atom," or making five hundred

Acceptance
of the
Universe
as it is.

¹ From a lecture by Sir Oliver Lodge at the Bedford College for Women, reported in *Nature*, March 12, 1903. See also Romanes Lecture, by Sir O. Lodge, 1903.

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CHAP. I.

billion revolutions round it in a second of time, may dazzle us with the intellectual brilliancy of the discovery, or fill us with wonder and awe at the new depths of the Unknowable suggested when we try to co-ordinate these inconceivable motions with the form of consciousness produced in us through sense-impressions. The present sight of stellar storms actually taking place in the early seventeenth century, may afford us keen delight in the splendid achievements of our astronomers and mathematicians ; but deeper and more permanent than every other feeling stirred within us, is a devout acquiescence in our own nothingness. The enigmas of matter and space, and time and light and consciousness, overwhelm us again with the "weight of all this unintelligible world." The extensions of knowledge make vaster the majesty of the Unknowable, and while the intellect trembles with joyful excitement, the soul is touched with solemn rapture.

But the present Universe involves the past and the future.

Of course, it is true that, though the object of contemplation is the present Universe, with all that it now enshrines or inspires of consciousness, thought, and feeling, yet the faculties to which the vision appeals are of ancient and dateless evolution. Observation also brings us evidence that the Universe, as we see it, is marked by ripples of endless change. And the more accurate our record of these changes becomes, the better are we able to recount them in the past and to predict them for the future. Thus a depth of perspective is given to our contemplation which would be impossible if the present could conceivably be isolated from previous and coming time. (Still, the meaning of the moment does not depend either upon cosmology or teleology, upon history or revelation. The present may be the richer and more interesting because of our

FAITH AND PARADOX

human projection of time into the processes that have led up to it, or into the future changes with which, to our consciousness, it is pregnant. But it does not in the least need infallible records or miraculous prophecies to make it at once letters of flame to the intellect, and "dark with excess of light" to the soul. CHAP. I.

In a word, our religion does not need revivals from the dead past, nor vague promises of a problematical future. Our God for ever lives, and if he shines upon us now more splendidly than in the times of ignorance, this is not because of any change in him, nor in his dispensations, but because larger powers of contemplation have been evolved in man. The heart of the devout Pantheist answers to many a living word in the Bible, as untouched harp-strings to passing strains of music; and none appreciates more keenly than he that appeal of the Eternal to the contemplative soul: "This commandment which I command thee this day is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?" "But the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." The object of the religion is the one Eternal Being.

CHAPTER II

SPENCER'S DOCTRINE OF THE UNKNOWABLE

Misunder-standings of Spencer's doctrine.

SPENCER's suggestion of the true reconciliation between Science and Religion has probably suffered not a little in popular esteem from a very natural tendency to think of it as entirely negative, and as affording, therefore, no relief from blank agnosticism. Now, agnosticism has, or ought to have, a very definite significance. The name was invented by the late Professor Huxley, as he himself has told us, to express the attitude of a mind which, where knowledge obviously cannot be had, is content not to know, and declines to speculate further. Yet that Mr. Huxley's commendation of this attitude was consistent with a certain pathetic interest in contemplative religion, is evident from many of his non-controversial references to the Bible, and notably from his prophetic foresight of a possible dedication of our noble cathedrals to "worship, for the most part of the silent sort, of the unknown and unknowable." It is to be feared, however, that many disciples, pleased with the new name, endeavour to live up to it in modes never taught by the Master. Thus they deprecate any habit of contemplation that occupies itself with an object not scientifically knowable, even though the reality of that object be more certain than the law of gravitation. The result is sometimes the

His Un-
knowable
not a
negligible
entity,

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assumption of a rather vain-glorious "flat-land" patriotism, which looks with contempt on dreamers who persist in pondering on the possibilities of existence outside their native two dimensions. CHAP. II.

Now this is not Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable at all. So far from thinking that this ultimate goal of contemplation, where knowledge and faith meet together, can ever be excluded from thought, he again and again insists not only on its inexpugnable reality, but upon its persistent presence in consciousness, even when not recognised for what it is. Thus, in his *Study of Sociology*, he wrote :—

but the most persistent content of thought.

No one need expect that the religious consciousness will die away, or will change the lines of its evolution. Its specialities of form, once strongly marked and becoming less distinct during past mental progress, will continue to fade ; but the substance of the consciousness will persist. That the object-matter can be replaced by another object-matter, as supposed by those who think the "Religion of Humanity" will be the religion of the future, is a belief countenanced neither by induction nor by deduction. However dominant may become the moral sentiment enlisted on behalf of humanity, it can never exclude the sentiment alone properly called religious, awakened by that which is behind Humanity, and behind all other things.¹

This passage suggests what is really true, though sometimes regarded as a mere paradox, that Spencer's treatment of religion is positive, while that of the A difference between Spencer and Agnostics.

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 311, edition of 1873. The phrases "behind humanity" and "behind all other things," are probably an instance of the difficulties imposed on great thinkers by the insuperable limitations of even the noblest languages. But they do not justify the attribution to Mr. Spencer of the grotesque notion of the Unknowable as something apart from knowable phenomena. Indeed such a misinterpretation is forbidden by the following context here, "a Power which was in course of ever-changing manifestations before Humanity was, and will continue through other manifestations when Humanity has ceased to be."

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CHAP. II. Agnostics, properly so called, is only negative. The
— latter say to the contemplative soul : Force we know, and matter we know, at least as phenomena, but what is your God, and where is he ? *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* Therefore we cancel him ; not because we know he does not exist, but because we know not and cannot know anything at all about him. Spencer, on the other hand, said :—

The consciousness of an Inscrutable Power manifested to us through all phenomena, has been growing ever clearer, and must eventually be freed from its imperfections. The certainty that on the one hand such a power exists, while on the other hand its nature transcends intuition, and is beyond imagination, is the certainty towards which intelligence has from the first been progressing. To this conclusion Science inevitably arrives as it reaches its confines ; while to this conclusion Religion is irresistibly driven by criticism. And, satisfying as it does, the demands of the most rigorous logic at the same time that it gives the religious sentiment the widest possible sphere of action, it is the conclusion we are bound to accept without reserve or qualification. (*First Principles*, p. 108, § 31, 3rd edition, 1870).¹

Or, if we may paraphrase this in vulgar speech : Force, when closely scrutinised, turns out to be a name for one aspect of the Unknowable ; matter is nothing but an undefinable precedent or condition of changes in our perceptions, and thus is another aspect of the Unknowable. Your apparently simplest intuitions of Space and Time, if deeply considered, soon become an inextricable tangle of contradictions, which suggest not that your intuitions are false, but that your own consciousness is an aspect of the Unknowable. To this

¹ The passage does not appear in the final edition of 1900. But since it embodies and sums up the argument of many preceding pages, and is constantly assumed in what follows, the words seem to have been omitted as unnecessary rather than as incongruous with the philosopher's later thought.

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CHAP. II.

phenomenal consciousness, thoughts of a beginning and an end seem inevitable, but yet are soon recognised as wholly incongruous with the implication of eternal being involved in your own existence. The universe, like its firmaments and winds and streams and oceans, varies from moment to moment, yet is for ever the same. To think that all is illusion is impossible. But the only reality is infinite, and all experiences are aspects of that Unknowable. Your God whom you ignorantly worship is to your deepest devotions a confessed mystery. Surely the mazes of science merge in that same infinite temple of the Unknowable wherein you already worship.

Thus mere agnosticism tells us that when we pass outside science we are nowhere. But Spencer insists that if our progress through the realm of Science has been rightly directed, our next step brings us into the arms of Religion. And if it be asked what we mean here by the phrase "rightly directed," the answer is best given in Mr. Spencer's words:—

The better interpretation of each phenomenon has been, on the one hand, the rejection of a cause that was relatively conceivable in its nature, but unknown in the order of its actions, and, on the other hand, the adoption of a cause that was known in the order of its actions, but relatively inconceivable in its nature. The first advance¹ manifestly involved the conception of agencies less assimilable to the familiar agencies of men and animals and therefore less understood; while at the same time such newly conceived agencies, in so far as they were distinguished by their uniform effects, were better understood than those they replaced. All subsequent advances dis-

¹ In earlier editions the words were "the first advance out of universal fetishism." The omission of the latter phrase leaves something to be desired in the new form of the sentence, because the reference of the comparative "less assimilable" is now not quite clear. Presumably we are to refer it to the "cause relatively conceivable, etc.," in the previous sentence.

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CHAP. II. play the same double result ; and thus the progress has been as much towards the establishment of a positively unknown, as towards the establishment of a positively known. Though as knowledge advances, unaccountable and seemingly supernatural facts are brought into the category of facts that are accountable or natural ; yet at the same time all accountable and natural facts are proved to be in their ultimate genesis unaccountable and supernatural.¹ And so there arise two antithetical states of mind, answering to the opposite sides of that existence about which we think. While our consciousness of Nature under the one aspect constitutes Science, our consciousness of it under the other aspect constitutes Religion." (*First Principles*, 6th ed., p. 91.)

In reading such words it is impossible to repress a wish that the great philosopher, who thus strenuously insists upon the positive character of his doctrine concerning ultimate reality, had chosen a positive instead of a negative term to denote it. For the impression made upon us by the above passage—and I believe rightly made—is that his "positively unknown" is what ordinary people call "the Eternal." And while it is easy to see from his criticism of the hypothesis of "self-existence" why the word "eternal" repelled him, yet that does not in the least diminish my regret that he felt himself shut up to a negative term. For however high the value which such great teachers may set upon exact accuracy of language, Spencer himself has repudiated any attempt at exact accuracy in dealing with this great subject. Thus in earlier editions he limited the meaning of the negative term employed, by speaking of the ultimate reality as "unknowable in the strictest sense of knowing," and in the latest form of

¹ *I.e.* according to my understanding of the epithet here, outside our map of categories and orders of succession, but not in a realm of caprice, accident, or irregularity. Perhaps this word and "opposite sides" further on are both owing to the inherent limitations of language above mentioned.

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CHAP. II.

First Principles by his acknowledgment that "very likely there will ever remain a need to give shape to that indefinite sense of an Ultimate Existence, which forms the basis of our intelligence" (pp. 96, 97). Since then inaccuracy of language was in any case inevitable, it is permissible to regret that the less glaring inaccuracy of the word "Eternal" was not preferred to the more obvious defects of the term "Unknowable." At the same time it is only fair to remember that the latter term is used mainly, and almost exclusively, in that introductory portion of *First Principles* which notifies his intention to exclude from detailed treatment in his great scheme anything outside the phenomena of evolution. These phenomena in his view are knowable in the strict sense of knowing, by "Relation, Difference, Likeness." But he never ignored the fact that all such phenomena have an aspect toward "Ultimate Existence" which cannot be known by "Relation, Difference, Likeness." This "Ultimate Existence" he preferred to call the Unknowable. And, after all, it *is* unknowable in the strict sense of knowing. In this acknowledgment all the greatest saints are at one with Herbert Spencer.

It is, at all events, obvious that the above-quoted words leave no room for the common misinterpretation which supposes the author to teach that there is no scope for Religion until the limits possible to human science have been passed, and the finally Unknowable is reached. On the contrary, every step of progress in knowledge occasions "two antithetical states of mind," and in our march we never for a moment leave the presence of the Unknowable. For instance, while the Ptolemaic astronomy was giving place to the Copernican, and the Copernican was perfected by Kepler and Newton, the Unknowable brooded over the whole

A common misinterpretation.

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CHAP. II. process as immovably as the abyss of space beyond and around the heavenly movements studied. Appearances, order, succession were made clearer to human knowledge, but the "deeper and more general power" of gravitation was less conceivable than the cycles and epicycles which were but an enormous orrery, a projection of familiar machinery into space. And in its nature that power remains inconceivable still. But even if it should be superseded by some action of etherial wavelets or "electrons," we should only exchange one aspect of the Unknowable for another, and the succeeding aspect, involving, as it must, infinite energy at every infinitesimal point of boundless space, would be even more impressive in its mystery than the present idea of an inconceivable attraction between distant worlds.

Plurality
of the
knowable.

Returning to our own argument above, in speaking of our passage through science to religion, we did not imply that this is possible only by a definite adjustment of the frontiers of the two. For everything, small or great, while phenomenally knowable, is essentially unknowable, and the mathematician, or the chemist, or the physiologist is as near the shores of the abyss as the watcher of the stars. For the Unknowable is One, not many. It does not signify the myriad riddles of Nature waiting to be solved by progressive knowledge. For they are, after all, only puzzles in the relations and succession of phenomena. But that in which they move and have their being is One, whatever their diversity. Of this the contemplative soul may say with the Psalmist who appears to have had a vision of the truth :—

Oneness
of the Un-
knowable.

Thou dost enfold me behind and before,
And layest Thy hand upon me—
A knowledge too wonderful for me,
It is all too high, I cannot comprehend it.

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Whither can I go from Thy spirit ?
Or whither flee from Thy countenance ?
If I ascend to heaven Thou art there !
If I make my bed in Sheol Thou art there !¹

CHAP. II.

We may admit without fear that this oneness of the Unknowable is of faith, in the same sense that the existence of an external world, or the uniformity of Nature, is a matter of faith. That is, though incapable of proof, it forces itself upon us as a hypothesis without which consciousness cannot be unified. In the passages above quoted from *First Principles*, the considerations pressing upon us the unity of the Unknowable are sufficiently given, though their application to this particular point is assumed rather than stated. But it becomes much more obvious in succeeding passages which call the Unknowable "the Ultimate Cause," a phrase perhaps to be regretted,² and which suggest "a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion" (p. 93, 6th ed.).

The Oneness of the Unknowable is or faith.

It may possibly be wished that the great philosopher had in this part of his exposition given more heed to the needs of humbler folk, who, though making no pretence to be philosophers, are yet very anxious to follow as far as they can a teacher who so fully recognises the immortal functions of religion. Any attempt to fill up a gap in his philosophy might be impertinent. But not so the attempt to show that there is really no gap at all. For it needs but a little reflection to see that the oneness of the Unknowable is a necessary

Perhaps regarded by Spencer as a necessary postulate.

¹ Psalm cxxxix. from translation given in the Polychrome Bible, the Psalms being edited by J. Wellhausen, D.D.

² Because it inevitably suggests a creation, or at least a beginning of the Universe. Of course, if we take "cause" as identical with the sum of the conditions, and therefore the same as the effect, the phrase is exact.

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CHAP. II. assumption. And as the point is of great importance to the view of Religion to be developed in the following pages, we may dwell upon it a moment longer. For though the purpose of this work is not philosophical, but religious, it is essential to that purpose to give a full exposition, and as popular in terms as may be possible, of the real significance of the Reconciliation suggested by Mr. Spencer between Religion and Science.

The Un-
knowable
is not
merely the
unknown.

Let us think then once more what the term Unknowable stands for here. It does not mean merely the unknown, as, for instance, the farther side of the Moon. Nor does it include the matter of any problem which, though it has not yet been solved, may conceivably be solved next week, or next century, or next millennium. Still less does it connote any finite forms of existence about which all we can at present say is that we do not know whether they are in being or not; as, for instance, angels, or devils, or the sea-serpent. The term Unknowable in our treatment of it here signifies only that ultimate innermost reality of which the non-being is unthinkable, while at the same time the mode of its being—if such a phrase may be pardoned to necessity—obviously and for ever transcends, not only our means of knowledge, but our very faculty of knowing. The use of the term is quite consistent with the recognition of an ever receding veil whose withdrawal expands from age to age the realm of known phenomena. The use of the term is quite consistent also with the acceptance of known phenomena, as a “revelation” of laws imposed upon us as parts of the Infinite Whole by eternal order and immeasurable power. But all known phenomena have still an unknowable aspect, and so remain in their essence indis-

All known
phenomena
belong also
to the Un-
knowable.

DOCTRINE OF THE UNKNOWABLE

solubly one with the infinite mystery remaining yet behind the receding veil. What we mean by calling impressions on our consciousness "known phenomena" is that they fit into familiar categories, such as form, colour, number, motion, stillness, and the like. The oftener such impressions occur the more easily do they rest in the little system of our experience. But if we try to think out things, we cannot conceive of such impressions as existing by themselves outside us, *in vacuo*, apart from an ordered whole to which they belong. We may hope that the modern abjuration of "things in themselves" is prompted by the just consideration that the "things" have no "selves" in which to be. But precisely that relation to the oneness of Being by which alone they are at all is neither known nor knowable. And however far, however widely, research goes forth to bring in triumphant results, what we remain more assured of than all the splendour of arranged and rearranged phenomena is the indefeasible certainty and transcendental reality of the Unknowable that enfolds and permeates all.

We may perhaps with advantage illustrate our meaning here by help of the previously cited brilliant speculation on "Electricity and Matter," which in the early part of 1903 was set forth in a lecture delivered by Sir Oliver Lodge, and reported in *Nature* for 12th March of that year. Before these pages see the light the observations and conclusions there described may have been extended into at present unimaginable realms, or superseded by unexpected revelations. But the use here made of them can never be superseded, because, *mutatis mutandis*, the vision they give of the ever receding boundary between the known and the unknown sheds a prophetic light on every possibly

CHAP. II.

Illustration
from Sir
Oliver
Lodge on
"Electricity
and
Matter."

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CHAP. II. succeeding stage of knowledge. In fact, the unceasing permutations of scientific theory enable us the more clearly to realise the irreducible difference between the merely unknown and the unknowable.

The distinguished Principal introduces us to "electrons," which, besides being infinitesimal embodied charges of electricity, may be, provisionally, regarded as ultimate constituents of the "atom" which now belies its name by proving to be amazingly divisible. Sir Oliver says that these electrons are measurable, that their diameter is about the one hundred thousandth part of that of a hydrogen atom, and that a thousand of them, the number reckoned to be within the volume of that atom, may be compared to a thousand typographic "full-stops" thrown into a large church. Such particles in certain cases "give rise to visible radiation," and to do so they must "revolve with terrific velocity" around the atom. "The number of vibrations which constitute visible light is from 400 to 800 million million times per second." The radiant electrons are supposed to revolve at that speed round the atoms to which they are attached.

Phenom-
enal order
known.

Well, let us assume that the supposition turns out to be correct. In that case we have clearly made a considerable step in explaining the mechanism, that is, the phenomenal successions in the production of radiant matter—though, indeed, these electrons are said to be neither solid, liquid, nor gaseous. But how much nearer are we to an explanation of the emergence of these revolutions or vibrations in our sense-perception or consciousness of light? Just as much nearer as the advance of an inch might be towards the other end of infinity. In these wonderful revelations there is not the faintest shadow of a suggestion of any possibly

Mode of
conversion
into con-
sciousness
unknow-
able.

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conceivable mode of the conversion of material or ethereal vibrations into consciousness. The mode of that hypothetical conversion is not merely unknown but unknowable. Nor need we wonder that it must be so. For both terms, the vibrations and the conscious perceptions, are in their essence unknowable, that is in their reality as resting in that which is. The mode of the conversion of one unknown into another unknown is necessarily inconceivable. There may be no conversion at all. They may be interchangeable aspects of the infinite Unknowable and therefore identical. CHAP. II.

We must be careful to distinguish between what is absolutely unknowable and problems that are insoluble only because of their incongruity with the terms in which we try to solve them, or because of the extreme complexity of the phenomenal movements whose order of succession we seek to know, or because some elements essential to an ultimate equation are lacking. The last case need not detain us. The present impossibility of measuring the distance of all but the nearest stars because of the insufficiency of the base afforded by the diameter of the earth's orbit, and the impossibility—let us hope only temporary—of deciphering the seals and records of Knossos in the absence of parallel inscriptions in any known ancient speech, or through want of certainty as to the language nearest akin, will readily occur to any one. Such problems are not insoluble through any inherent mystery, but because some element, easily recognisable were it present, happens to be missing.

As an instance of the first case, that of incongruity in the terms, let us take the wonder we perhaps felt in our very juvenile days at the impossibility of squaring the circle. When we understood better the nature of

Distinction between what is unknowable, and problems merely insoluble :

(a) through insufficiency of material ;

(b) through incongruity of terms.

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CHAP. II. measurement, and the fact that the statement of area is always in terms of the number of square figures, such as square yards, square feet, inches, tenths, hundredths, thousandths of inches which would exactly fill it, we began to see that there was no mystery at all. We perceived that however minute we conceive our little squares, which we in imagination fit into the segments of circumference always left unfilled, we are still baffled because smaller segments yet remain. The process is like the curve of the asymptote, always getting nearer to a straight line, but demonstrably incapable of reaching it. Our multiplication of decimal places only gives us millionths, billionths, trillionths of a square inch, but however small, they must still leave segments outside of them. The difficulty is occasioned simply by the incongruity of our notation with the problem, and it has no element of the unknowable in it.

Impos-
sibility of
squaring
the circle
clearly
explicable.

Not so
with the
supposed
conversion
of motion
into con-
sciousness.

Here we have a clear reason why the "squaring" of the circle is impossible in the nature of things. But it is not a transcendental reason. It is well within the province of spatial mathematics. The impossibility and the explanation of it are both *in pari materia*; they both deal with forms and measures of phenomenal space. Very different, however, is our case in trying to explain the emergence of conscious impressions from material vibrations. For here we not only find that explanation is impossible, but we cannot explain the reason of the impossibility. Or, to put it another way, the impossibility of squaring the circle is *in pari materia* with the easy possibility of squaring a triangle or a polygon with exactitude. In both cases we try to fill the space with ideal little squares, and even in the triangle we can do it by using, when we approach the sides and angles, half squares or other definite fractions

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cut off by diagonals; and we can see why this is impossible except by a process of infinitesimal approximation when we try to fit our ever diminishing squares into the ever diminishing segments of the circumference of a circle. But the impracticability of following in thought the conversion of supposed material vibrations into consciousness is not at all *in pari materia* with the explanation given by science of the change, for instance, of white light into a rainbow. For in the former case we are no longer in the region of mathematical optics at all. Yet we hardly know at what point we leave that region, and still less where we are when we have left it. The transition is transcendental, in the sense that it is outside all methods of observation or calculation. And we not only have no conception of any calculus which would bring that transition within the domain of mathematics—or, indeed, any other mode of knowledge—but we cannot assign any meaning in such a connection to the word calculus at all.¹

The abnormal weather of the period during which I write, the first quarter of A.D. 1903, suggests another illustration of the difference between temporary, or at least possibly temporary scientific ignorance on the one hand, and, on the other, the positive assurance of a transcendental reality which absorbs us when we confront the Eternal Unknowable. Every one is lamenting the cold winds and bitter rains which oppose the advent of spring; and many are grumbling at science because meteorology is not able to explain such seasonal irregularities, still less to prophesy them in advance, or show how to circumvent them. It is admitted that the forces which play on the atmosphere and oceans, especially in this north-western outpost of Europe, are many and

¹ Cf. Prof. Tyndall on Scientific Materialism.

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CHAP. II. complicated, and apparently confused. Yet many of us have faith enough to believe that by means of sufficiently numerous and extensive observations kept up for a century or two, the meteorologists of the distant future will be enabled to account for such abnormal seasons and even to anticipate them. For, however difficult such knowledge may be of attainment, there is in its pursuit no fear of any possible transition into a transcendental region where calculations of physical forces, such as heat, atmospheric pressure, revolving speed of the earth, ocean currents, and attraction of sun and moon, shall cease to have any rational application. We may come to know at last, because all the elements of the problem, however bewildering at present, are *in pari materia* with other problems already solved. Here, then, is a case in which, so long as we deal only with the phenomenal successions that interest us, we have no right to think ourselves directly confronted with the Unknowable. But in regard to the process—if so it can be termed—by which what we call vibrations effected through physical forces emerge into consciousness, the problem is not in the least *in pari materia* with any problems hitherto solved. It is transcendental. It confronts us with the Unknowable, and within the range of the Universe as experienced by us we have an intuitional certainty that this must ever be so.¹ Never-

¹ The strangest thing about human treatment of such a question is the common assumption that the attempt to get consciousness out of vibration is made in obedience to the principle that all explanation consists in reducing the unknown to terms of the known. But surely in this instance it is the former, consciousness, that is known, and the latter, viz. vibrating matter or ether, that is unknown. As you cannot reduce the notion of unity to a simpler notion, so you cannot reduce further the subjective feeling of light, *i.e.* light in apperceptive consciousness. Of course its relations to the rest of the contents of the inner world may be obscure or unknown, though not necessarily unknowable. Thus the connection of the vivid sensation of what we believe to be an external light with the fainter impression of the same light in memory is not clear. To say that

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theless, the consciousness of light is more certain and more real than any mathematical conclusion. So likewise is the contemplative sense of one infinite, all-pervasive Unknowable with which we are confronted by the mysteries both of matter and of mind.

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Why do the starry heavens affect us with awe? The Psalmist says it is because they "declare the glory of God," and he was right, though the God that they declare is greater than a Hebrew poet of the Psalmist's time could think. It would be a dishonour to the soul of man to suppose that mere physical vastness could affect him so. Dr. Martineau has truly said that "homage to an automaton universe is no better than mummy worship."¹ But we may, with all respect for so great a name, complain of the application of the words. Indeed, were it not for fear of irreverence, Pantheists might retort that homage to the wire-puller of a puppet universe is no better than worship of a showman. But the heavens suggest neither an automaton nor an engine-driver.² For it is not the mazes

Deprecation of an "automaton universe."

the latter is a slighter vibration of the nerve substance previously agitated more violently, is to say nothing to the point, because it simply reintroduces the irrational and unrealisable identification of the known thing, consciousness, with the unknown vibrating matter. But the impression, the living consciousness of light, is simplicity itself, and cannot possibly be reduced to lower terms, though it may be classed with other forms of consciousness and generalised. In itself it does not want explanation, and indeed is incapable of it; it is rather the mystery of what we think to be vibrating matter that needs explanation. To fancy we make things clearer by identifying our sense of light with inconceivable modes of motion in an unthinkable medium, is to mistake words for things.

¹ *Study of Religion*, vol. i. p. 12.

² In the book above quoted Dr. Martineau himself quotes the pregnant words of Lotze in his *Mikrokosmos*, 3te Band, p. 562, 2te auflage, 1872: "How little possible is it by resort to the notion of a natural *law* of mere phenomena to escape the assumption of reciprocal action of things, or to explain their apparent effects. Were it even clear what is to be understood by the *mandate* of a law it would be still inconceivable how things, or phenomena, manage to *obey* it; only an essential unity of all existences could bring it to pass that changes in any one should be operative conditions of changes in another." The italics are as given by Dr. Martineau.

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CHAP. II. of the lines of light, nor the eternal throbbing of the burning orbs, nor even the suggestion of firmament beyond firmament crowded with worlds, that touches the heart. It is rather the majestic self-sufficiency of the marvellous Whole, the stillness and peace occasioned by an "eternal power and godhead" in some way identified with the vision. "Identified," I say, not in the sense of being exhaustively manifested in it, still less limited by it; but in the sense of being felt there somewhat as the soul of a people is felt in the silent temples in which, though there is now "no speech nor language," the life of the past stirs again in the emotions of the present. For life has flowed into the grandest human monuments, and almost breathes upon us in their ruins. But it is not the individual life or lives of the designers or builders that so affect us. It is rather the superpersonal soul of the people whose multitudinous energies, memories, hopes, and aspirations expressed themselves in stone.

The super-
personal
soul.

A living
universe.

Yet all analogies fail in presence of the infinite. The point is, that whatever may be the habit natural to the child or the barbarian, the men of largest contemplation feel the "eternal power and godhead" to be *in* the universal frame of things, and not a mere outside force. Recurring to Dr. Martineau's salutary warning against "homage to an automaton universe," we may remind ourselves that an automaton is a mechanical figure made to imitate the actions of life, without having life itself. But surely no one suggests, or ever did suggest, a mechanical universe made to imitate the action of a living universe? Perhaps, indeed, the term "life" or "living" is misleading, because the idea is taken from a limited energy continually balancing the action of internal changes against external changes—a conception

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absolutely inapplicable on an infinite scale, since there can be no external changes to be balanced by internal. Our best working hypothesis—and for the present it does not matter in the least whether it approximates to the ultimate reality or not—is that of an infinite system of fluctuations kept rhythmical by one eternal energy capable of endless variations.

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But whether that be accepted or not, we are face to face with a power that is at once real and unknowable “in the strict sense of knowing.” To deny the reality of a power that is not ourselves, and not the sense-impressions called “matter,” is what we cannot sincerely do. And to deny the unity any more than the variety of its action is surely to mock our common sense. But the moment we attempt to conceive what that power is, or how it works—that is, how it moves “matter” here or there, or changes its forms—we feel that the problem is of the same transcendental kind as the attempt to identify the velocity of “electrons” with the consciousness of light.

Its eternal energy real but unknowable.

Surely we may go farther, and say that the Unknowable with which we are confronted in the “eternal power and godhead” impressed upon us by the heavens is not another, but only an infinite expansion of the same mystery realised in the endeavour to translate ethereal vibrations into consciousness. True, it is possible that in the latter case the problem may from time to time be varied in its terms. For it is possible that research may discover yet more infinitesimal phenomena within the electrons, as it has found electrons within and around its atoms. But such new phenomena would bring us absolutely no nearer the still infinitely distant solution of the question, how vibrations can become consciousness. Therefore, making all allow-

And it is identical real with the unknowable in consciousness.

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ance for farther analyses of phenomena, we must feel that any such knowledge of new phenomena can only confirm the transcendental unknowableness of the link between these presumed movements of matter or ether and consciousness. Now, the very same kind of faith which, inspired by certain suggestions of experience, believes, notwithstanding that proof is impossible, the reality of an external world, and dares to recognise in it order and not chaos, responds here to the obvious presumption that the ultimate Unknowable in the midnight heavens and the ultimate Unknowable in the mystery of consciousness through perception are not two, but one.

The Un-
knowable
within us.

Or take the connection of consciousness with the organic life of our own bodies. No word in the Bible, perhaps, has been more vividly illustrated than the words erroneously¹ attributed to the Hebrew Psalmist, in our English version, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." But we need not study the secrets of anatomy to realise the truth of that saying. For each one of us, when he wills to lift his hand to his head, and does so, performs an act as much beyond his understanding as the evolution of the Pleiades. It is all very well to trace the afferent and efferent nerves, the merging of the former in brain-cells, and the ending of the latter in the various muscles used. But they are no more identifiable with the conscious impulse and effort than the racing electrons are with the sense of light. Ply the scalpel never so keenly; measure the speed of "nerve force" never so exactly; calculate the degradation of nerve tissue and the chemical changes in contracted muscle to the last decimal; yet what you do

¹ This is the opinion of Dr. Wellhausen; and certainly the Septuagint version agrees in Psalm cxxxix. 14 more with him than with our authorised version.

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when you lift your hand to your head is just as utterly unknown and unknowable as before. I say what "you do"; not what are the phenomena to be observed at the time in your brain-cells, and nerves and muscles. You may in some transcendental sense be identified with these and such like things for aught I know. But then it *is* in a transcendental sense, and what that sense is you will never know, however immortal you may be, or whatever heights of knowledge you may attain in possible worlds to come. You have come once more upon the unknowable relation of the Infinite Energy to finite manifestations. And this you can never transmute into knowledge unless your consciousness could expand to infinity.

Through all this part of our argument we are only trying to set forth in a more popular and therefore more superficial form the deeper exposition given by Herbert Spencer in his *First Principles* of the fact that all paths of inquiry are lost sooner or later in an Unknowable, and that there are not many unknowables, but one. We cannot, however, pass on without referring to a satirical comment by Dr. F. H. Bradley in *Appearance and Reality*.¹ He says:—

The universe upon this view (whether it understands itself or not) falls apart into two regions; we may call them two hemispheres. One of these is the world of experience and knowledge, —in every sense without reality. The other is the kingdom of reality,—without either knowledge or experience.² Or we have on one side phenomena; in other words, things as they are to us, and ourselves so far as we are anything to ourselves; while on the other side are things as they are in themselves³ and as

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Dr. F. H. Bradley's criticism on Spencer.

¹ P. 127, 2nd ed.

² Have we no "experience" of the Unknowable?

³ It is unfortunately true that Spencer does speak of "things in themselves," as e.g. p. 73, *First Principles*, 6th ed. But my interpretation, and I

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CHAP. II. they do not appear ; or if we please, we may call this side the Unknowable. And our attitude towards such a divided universe varies a good deal. We may be thankful to be rid of that which is not relative to our affairs, and which cannot in any way concern us ; and we may be glad that the worthless is thrown over the wall. Or we may regret that Reality is too good to be known, and from the midst of our own confusion may revere the other side in its inaccessible grandeur.¹ We may even naively felicitate ourselves on total estrangement, and rejoice that at last utter ignorance has removed every scruple which impeded religion. Where we know nothing we can have no possible objection to worship.²

Is it true that the Unknowable cannot in any way concern us?

I do not recognise this as a fair description of the doctrine I support. I regard it as incorrect in two points : by assuming (1) that the Unknowable "cannot in any way concern us," and (2) that our ignorance is purely negative. But in the first place Spencer shows that the observed facts of being with which we concern ourselves every day expand, without at once losing themselves, into wider and wider generalisations, which are at last merged in one universal and eternal fact, the basis and substance of all. How can this be irrelevant to human life? True, in building a house, or riding a bicycle, we do not every moment think of our dependence on the final mystery of power which takes the various forms of inertia, cohesion, tenacity, gravity, and muscular contractility. But when we think of our

think the true one, is that he means things in their aspect toward, or as they rest in, the Unknowable.

¹ Just as if it were a sort of other side of the moon, quite within the scope of our telescopes if we could only get round to it.

² Of the note to this passage I will only say that I have no doubt Dr. Bradley approves very cordially of the late Matthew Arnold's concession to orthodox feeling in withdrawing from latest editions of *Literature and Dogma* his notorious illustration of the Trinity by the "three Lord Shaftesburys." But reverence and susceptibility to pain at desecration of what we revere is not in these times confined to orthodox Christians. Surely Dr. Bradley might do well to imitate the example.

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moral responsibility, our aspirations, our disappointments, and our limitations, we can hardly help realising the relevance of the Eternal Power that fixes and conditions our lives. It is not another half or "hemisphere" of the universe. It is the whole. Every part is fixed in its relations to other parts by being *of* the whole. And to our moral purity, reverence, and sense of responsibility, the sense of being parts of that whole is essential. It is in vain to say that this has not been realised in popular and effective religions. For every emotion of awe, from the lowest level of fetishistic terrors up to the contemplative absorption of an Augustine, has really been caused by an imperfect glimpse or ecstatic vision of the nothingness of self and the ineffable mystery of the Eternal.

Then as to the second point mentioned above, that what is unknowable cannot, *ex hypothesi*, affect us,— Dr. Bradley himself allows in a succeeding paragraph that "it is natural to feel that the best and the highest is unknowable in the sense of being something which our knowledge cannot master." He hastens, however, to add that "of course this is not what it" (the Spencerian doctrine) "says, nor what it means when it has any definite meaning. For it does not teach that our knowledge of reality is imperfect. . . . There is a hard and fast line, with our apprehension on the one side, and the Thing on the other side, and the two hopelessly apart" (p. 128). I cannot think this criticism to be quite just. For Mr. Spencer was careful to urge that if the infinite reality cannot be known "in the strict sense of knowing,"¹ it certainly cannot be ignored because it

A significant concession,

and a scarcely fair criticism.

¹ *First Principles*, p. 98, 3rd ed. And though omitted in the 6th ed. the same idea is even better and more fully expressed in the postscript added, p. 107.

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CHAP. II. is a "necessary datum of consciousness with a higher warrant than any other whatever." Even Dr. Bradley, speaking in the rarefied atmosphere of these high regions, has not always succeeded in making himself perfectly plain. And the difference between his own words, "something which our knowledge cannot master," and Mr. Spencer's something which cannot be known "in the strict sense of knowing," hardly justifies his strong language. Certainly it does not justify his speaking of our ignorance of infinite reality, or of the Absolute, as being similar to our ignorance of flowers in a garden into which we have never looked. For the latter is purely negative ignorance; we do not even know whether they exist or not; whereas our attitude toward the Unknowable has something positive in it, because we cannot eliminate from thought the certainty that there is actually an ultimate reality "which our knowledge cannot master." We abjure understanding only because we are perfectly sure of having reached the presence of the Eternal and Infinite. And this certainty is the hope of religion in the coming day.

The hope
of religion.

Not a
limited or
exceptional
experience.

Nor can we regard this as a mystic experience confined to the desert between the "two hemispheres" into which Spencer is wrongly supposed to divide the world. For, in the treatment of ultimate religious ideas, and of ultimate scientific ideas alike, he shows that whatever be the immediate object of thought, any attempt to get at—not the "thing in itself," since it has no self, but the innermost meaning of that object, very soon brings us to the infinite Unknowable. The "flower in the crannied wall" is just as open a portal to that ultimate mystery as is the Milky Way, the hesitations of a troubled conscience as the raptures of the saint. The question of world origins, or of world teleology, is not

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one whit more directly suggestive of the Unknowable than is the mode of present existence. The mythical elephant and tortoise as supports of the earth, and the bewilderment of the devout as to the support of the tortoise, are only a parable concerning all ages and races in their contemplation not of the dateless past or dim future, but of the immediate world. "Raise up the stone, and there thou shalt find me ; cleave the tree, and there am I," says one of the ancient Christian Logia dug up at Oxyrhynchus.¹ We pierce, or think we pierce through the molecules to atoms, and through atoms to "electrons," and through electrons to ether, the heavenly manna of the scientific soul. But the name, like that which the Israelites gave, is only equivalent to the question "What is it?"

We are not here concerned to maintain that in the course of his voluminous exposition of the Positive Philosophy, or in any occasional essays, Mr. Spencer has never by word or phrase given any justification for the criticism that he treats the Unknowable as a thing apart, which may be neglected in our practical relations with the world, and in our inductions of moral principle. No man, however great, is infallible ; and those who make use of a teacher's root-idea need not bind themselves to all his applications of it. At all events in the *First Principles* the Unknowable is not a thing apart, but is everywhere the inmost reality of heaven and earth, man and beast, flower and tree, everywhere the secret and hallowed spring of wonder, veneration, hope, and faith. And when we think of our moral

Spencer not
infallible.

¹ The words have not the limpid simplicity or clear profundity of the words of the Lord Jesus as given in the earliest traditions. But they may very well represent ideas of the early second century, when Jesus, as the incarnation of the Unknowable, began to be more to men than Jesus the teacher and prophet.

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CHAP. II. responsibility, our aspirations, our failures, our sins and sorrows, we can hardly help realising the relevance of the eternal reality that fixes and conditions our lot. At any rate, the line taken here will henceforth be an effort to show that herein lies the whole scope of religion.

CHAPTER III

THE UNKNOWABLE AS GOD

THE unknowableness of God, "in the strict sense of knowing," has been a commonplace of religion since the dawning of human consciousness. True, the knowledge of God is continually spoken of in the Bible as a condition of blessedness. But generally, where the phrase occurs with emphasis it is tolerably obvious that the "knowledge" so-called belongs to the feelings rather than to the intellect.¹ So when the prophet Hosea, predicting a return to what he regarded as the ancient faith, says in the name of Yahweh, "Israel shall cry unto me, 'My God, we know thee!'" or when he says, "I am Yahweh, thy God, from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me,"—it is clear that not an intellectual familiarity, but an emotional recognition by loyalty and worship is meant. For the very hypothesis of the oracle is that by name Yahweh had been long previously known to Israel, though there had been an equal familiarity with the names of other gods. Therefore the change predicted was a conversion of heart, more than an enlightenment of mind. To say

"Knowledge of God" in the Bible is moral rather than intellectual.

¹ Thus Gesenius on the root *yr*, after mentioning various meanings which grow out of the fundamental *vidit*, saw or perceived: "*inde est etiam curavit aliquid. Quae enim nobis curae sunt ad ea diligenter animum advertimus. . . . (b) de hominibus deum curantibus, colentibus.*"—Hos. viii. 2; xiii. 4; Psa. xxxvi. 10, etc.

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CHAP. III. that at any future time no god but Yahweh should be within the cognisance or memory of Israel, would have been an affectation utterly discordant with the fiery earnestness of the prophet. When also the Psalmist sings, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee," it would be absurd to suppose that theological knowledge in the sense of the divinity student is meant. It is more likely the devotion jubilantly echoed in a somewhat later Psalm (lxxxix. 15), "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Yahweh, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." That we need not lose such inspiring emotions because God in his infinite reality is to us another name for the Unknowable, will, we hope, be acknowledged hereafter.

In the intellectual sense the greatest prophets and saints have acknowledged God to be unknowable.

Meantime we may remember that the most devout of the contemplative ancients were here in like case with ourselves. For they certainly deprecated with a holy horror any pretence of "finding out the Almighty to perfection." The well-known protest put by the nameless poet of the Book of Job into the mouth of Zophar the Naamathite (xi. 7) leaps to memory at once. Nor does the passage stand alone in the Old Testament. Even the revelation made to Moses according to the story in Exodus, points to a veiled and unknowable majesty whose power might be experienced, but who could not by any possibility be known "in the strict sense of knowing." When Moses asks after the name of the Power veiled by the burning bush, the solemn and mysterious answer is, "I AM that I AM," or, as some scholars would render it, "I AM because I AM." True, the narrative as we have it is modern in comparison with the supposed date of the

The name "I AM."

THE UNKNOWABLE AS GOD

mythical events described. And the particular words just quoted have apparently been fitted into the context by the more spiritual piety of a still later edition.¹ But however that may be, the passage affords evidence that the progress of Hebrew poetry was from a very simple, not to say barbarous faith, towards the worship of one only God, unknowable because infinite. And all the noblest, most inspiring, and heart-searching utterances of Hebrew religion belong to the period when the unknowableness of God had been consciously acknowledged.

It is indeed too obvious for denial, and we may be glad it is so, that this Unknowable Majesty was treated by prophets and psalmists as though he were a personal saviour and guardian. But the possibility of such a frame of mind depends not so much on any assumption, or pretence, or dream of knowing "in the strict sense of knowing" the particulars of divine intentions and motives as a man knows the intentions and motives of an earthly friend, but rather on verification by experience—not individual only, but racial or generic—of the fact that conduct guided by certain laws whose sanction lies in the Unknowable leads, not necessarily

CHAP. III.

Yet the Ineffable Being touched the affections of the moral nature.

¹ See *The Hexateuch*, by J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby, on Exodus iii. 14. But even the unlearned English reader can hardly help noticing the redundancy of the two answers to the question of Moses, and the acknowledgment of a repetition by the obviously interpolated word "moreover," עוד, v. 15. Or to put it in another way: two names were apparently given to Moses in reply to his question, when one would have been more adequate to the needs of a simple people. The connection of these names has been a puzzle to Hebrew scholars, while to ordinary students one of the names looks like an attempted play upon words. The one name is אֲנִי־אֵלֹהִים, I am; the other is הוּא־יְהוָה, now generally believed to have been pronounced יְהוָה, Yahweh, and interpreted—though not on sufficient authority—"He is," or "That which is." Now the first is far the more noteworthy name, and more likely to impress the memory. Yet it is never once used again in all the exhortations and divine laws ascribed to Moses, while Yahweh is of frequent recurrence. Why is this? Surely because the first and interpolated name is of later date than the original text, and occurred only to the inspired genius of an editor living in times of more exalted spirituality.

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CHAP. III. to enjoyment, but to a purer, larger, and fuller life. This was the result of experience. "Lo this, we have proved it and searched it out; hear it and know it for thy good," is the language of all genuine religious experience, and it is the real substance of what is called "revelation." For never prophet yet roused by his voice the hearts of men unless by force of some overpowering impulse rising into his soul from unsounded depths, and compelling him to put on a character and pursue a line of conduct which, whether it brought agony or rapture, was felt to be a higher life than that of the world around him.

It may be said by some, "Broad Church" interpreters of the creeds, that this is all they mean by inspiration. Be it so. But then the fact remains that the source from which the impulse comes, being, as it is, the whole energy of the universe in its relations to the particular and specially constituted soul, is unknowable. The accord or discord of this impulse with the line of evolution as perceptible to human faculty is to be tested, like the sprouting of feathers on the limbs of the Archæopteryx or its predecessors,—by experience. That is, if the new form of scales had proved to be of no use, human faculty reading the story in the Solenhofen rock would not have recognised therein the true line of evolution. But seeing the enormous extension and wonderful variety of aerial life portended by that transmutation of cells, we, assuming to ourselves geological experience as though it were our own, recognise therein "the finger of God." So with the prophetic impulse. If, as in the case of Elijah, or Isaiah, or Mohammed, or Buddha, or a still diviner Man, it is found that the inspiration breathed by him "saves souls" in the sense of exalting the degraded, and nerving the coward and purifying the vile, the prophet and, at least for a time,

Legitimate anthropomorphism.

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disciples and successors feel an intenser rapture of faith than the previous generation. And it is natural enough, indeed, always remembering that in such high matters we fall short of the "strict sense of knowing" it is by a true instinct, that in memory of the sublimest of such prophetic missions, the brightness of the inspiration should have reflected a soft human light on the unknowable source of the impulse, and clothed it with impossible personal attributes.

CHAP. III.

For Mercy has a human heart ;
Pity a human face ;
And Love the human form divine,
And Peace a human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

But such experience is not quite universal. For certainly so far as I can understand his learned interpreters in English, Gotama, the Buddha, never attributed the results of his meditations to the descent of a personal Wisdom from heaven. I do not for a moment suggest that on this account he was nearer to the truth than other creators of religion. On the contrary, I should be disposed to think him farther from it. For though it is certainly an error to attribute personal limitations to the Unknowable, it is a still greater and a more mischievous error to think of the emergence of a new form of moral energy in a human soul apart from the Whole, of which that soul is an infinitesimal phase.¹ Therefore in the interest of the

Contrast of
Buddhism.

The
Christian
doctrine of
prophetic
inspiration
preferable.

¹ Though I have admitted and indeed urged above the injustice of confounding the base corruptions of either Christianity or Buddhism with the ideas of the Founder, I believe there is more power of recuperation and resurrection in Christianity, and that this is owing to its retention of faith

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CHAP. III. adaptation of religious evolution to the needs of human nature it was expedient and indeed essential that prophets should keep in mind their dependence, even at the cost of superficial errors as to the source of their inspiration. Balaam spoke as a true prophet when he said to Balak, "Have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."¹ The truth was expressed with as near an approach to accuracy as is possible on these high themes, by the mysterious author of the Fourth Gospel when he attributed to his Ideal the words: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."² The words are applied to the new birth, but they are true of every inspiration.

Loyalty to the Unknowable not simply a "synthesis of contradictories."

We may hold then that the personal lines and colour given by the devout of old to the Source of their inspiration are perfectly consistent with our suggestion that all of them in their moments of supremest worship regarded their God as "something which our knowledge cannot master." But Mr. Mallock thinks it sufficient to say of this worship of the Unknowable that it rests on a "practical synthesis of contradictories." Thus, referring to St. Augustine's magnificent strains of devotion, he tells us³ that "one of the most remarkable passages" in those glorious writings "is an eloquent

in an "eternal Power and Godhead" to which we all return as rivers to the ocean, and from which, like them again, we are continually renewed and refreshed.

¹ Numbers xxii. 38. It is surely unnecessary to say that the venerable narrative is quoted for its spiritual truth, and not as history.

² Of course this utterance may have belonged to some special tradition of the words of Jesus, preserved in the particular brotherhood amongst whom the writer lived. I hope it did. And when I compare them with some of the discourses elaborated by the writer for his own purpose, the contrast makes such a conjecture likely.

³ *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 223.

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address to the Deity, which is neither more nor less than a long Magnificat of contradictions." The passage, I presume, is that in the exordium to the *Confessions*, which begins "*et quomodo invocabo Deum meum?*" After a number of impassioned sentences, quite capable of a pantheistic interpretation,¹ it proceeds:—

What art thou then, my God,—what, I ask, unless Lord God? For who is Lord but the Lord? Or who is God but our God? Highest, best, mightiest, almightiest, most pitiful and most just, most undiscoverable, and closer to us than aught else, fairest and strongest, certain and inconceivable, changeless, changing all things, never young, never old, renewing all things, and bringing the proud to senile decay while they know it not; always working, always at rest, gathering while needing nothing, supporting and completing and protecting, creating and nourishing and perfecting, seeking when there is nothing wanting to thee! Thou lovest, but knowest no passion; thou art jealous and indifferent; it repenteth thee, and thou grieveest not; thou art angered and art unruffled; thou changest thy works without altering thy design; thou takest back what thou recoverest and hast never lost it; never in need, yet thou rejoicest in gain; never acquisitive, thou exactest usury. Thou sufferest to be given thee more than is required, that thou mayest be a debtor; and who has anything that is not thine? Thou payest debts though owing nothing to any; thou forgiveest debts, and losest nothing. Yet what have we said, my God, my life, my holy delight? And what does any one utter when he speaks of thee? Yet woe to those who are silent about thee, since even the eloquent are but dumb!

At first sight it may seem that the new school of Apologists are right in claiming this and similar rhapsodies of this greatest of post-Apostolic saints as illustrations of "the practical synthesis of contradictories." But

¹ E.g. "Non ergo essem, Deus meus, non omnino essem, nisi esses in me. An potius non essem, nisi essem in te, ex quo omnia, per quem omnia, in quo omnia?"

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CHAP. III. surely there is a great difference between the mystical fervour of such utterances and the huckstering practicality of present-day compromisers between faith and knowledge. Can any one conceive of St. Augustine satirising the contradictions involved in the holiest of mysteries, or glorying in the logical rapier skill with which he pins "theists" to an admission that "if there is anything at the back of this vast process,¹ with a consciousness and a purpose in any way resembling our own—a Being who knows what he wants, and is doing his best to get it—he is, instead of a holy and all-wise God, a scatter-brained, semi-powerful, semi-impotent monster"? Would St. Augustine, after his conversion from heresy, have tolerated even from a Manichæan the coarse jeer that "the thunder and the whirlwind, if they suggest anything of a personal character at all, suggest merely some blackguardly larrikin kicking his heels in the clouds"? No, the profound instinct of an infinite unity which saved him from Manichæism, compelled his reverence for what he could not understand in Nature as well as in Revelation. The purpose of his piled-up paradox is not to exhort us to a smug acquiescence in a business-like basis for profitable and comfortable beliefs, but rather to overwhelm us with the unknowable majesty of God. It is the unsearchable mystery that fascinates him. True it is that his awe before the secret of the Lord does not interfere at all with his assurance that as the Unknowable becomes light in the sun, and beauty in the flower, so does that same eternal Being become in the worshipper's soul wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. But this confidence, instead of lessening his awe, only increases his wonder.

¹ That is—as the context shows—the evolving universe. The words are from *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 176.

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The Eternal, in the mystery of his being, is, if the phrase may be allowed, more unknowable and not less so because he makes his temple in the heart. CHAP. III.

Let us turn to the saint's use of the ineffable name occurring once only in the legends of Moses. In the exposition of Psalm cxxxiv. (A.V. cxxxv.) commenting on the words in verse 3, "Sing praises unto his name for it is pleasant," or, as Augustine's Latin version had it, "Psallite nomini ejus quoniam suavis est"—"Sing praises to his name for he is delightful,"¹ he says to his congregation :—

St. Augustine on the ineffable name.

Perhaps you have had longings² to see the good above all other good, the good from which all good things are, the good without which nothing is good, and the good which is enough in itself without any others. You longed to see it, and perhaps in straining your mental perception you failed. This I conjecture from my own case; it is my own experience. But if there is any one, as there may be, and easily may be, of greater mental vigour than myself, any one who has for long fixed the gaze of his soul on that which is—let that man praise as he (alone) can, and as we cannot praise.³ Thanks, however, to him⁴ who in this Psalm has so tempered his praise that it may be possible both to the strong and to the weak. For in that commission of his servant, when he said to Moses, 'I AM that I AM, and thou shalt say to the children of Israel *He who is* has sent me unto you'—inasmuch as it was hard for the mind of man to conceive his essential being (*ipsum proprie esse*), and as (Moses) was sent as a man to men, though not by man—immediately God veiled his glory,⁵ and said that concerning himself which can be easily understood. It was not his will to

¹ "Suavis"—Benedictine Edition. Our word "sweet" could scarcely be used in such a connection.

² "Tendebatis videre," etc., *i.e.* you used to long, etc.

³ There is a certain gentle irony, or at least excess of humility in this. For the whole context shows that in Augustine's view the Incarnation was needed, because without it God is the Unknowable.

⁴ Evidently not the Psalmist but the inspiring God.

⁵ "Temperavit laudem suam."

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CHAP. III. abide in a majesty to which the worshipper could not attain.
— ‘Go,’ he said, ‘tell the children of Israel, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you ; this is my name for ever.’ Verily, O Lord, thou hast such a name ; because also thou hast said ‘I AM, *He who is* has sent me unto you.’ Why now, hast thou changed, that thou shouldst say ‘the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’? Does not his wisdom seem to answer and say :—‘In that I said I AM, it is true, but you apprehend it not ; but in that I said I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, it is not only true, but you apprehend it? For inasmuch as I AM who I AM this pertains to me ; but inasmuch as I am the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, this pertains to thee. If thou art inadequate to that which I am to myself, apprehend what I am to thee.’

Subtleties
of inter-
pretation.

Having to guard against misinterpretation by sects to us inconceivable, who might find a pleasure in distinguishing between permanent and temporary names of God, Augustine is careful to explain that both names are alike permanent ; but where there could possibly be any uncertainty the Almighty had carefully guarded against it. In regard to the ineffable name, there was no need for any assertion of its eternity, because it bears the seal of eternity upon it. But as the title God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob might possibly be regarded as temporary, the Lord was careful to add “this is my name for ever.” “Not,” says Augustine, “that Abraham is eternal and Isaac eternal and Jacob eternal, but that God makes them afterwards eternal in a future without end. They had indeed a beginning, but they will not have an end.”¹

These now
negligible.

Of course it must not be supposed that I attach the

¹ The same idea occurs in Matt. xxii. 32, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

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slightest value to the conventional ingenuities of interpretation which in the fifth century even the intellect of Augustine could not avoid. The primary point on which our attention should be fixed is the recognition by this great saint that it is just the unknowableness of God which raises worship to its holiest rapture. Nor is this an empty paradox, as I hope and trust we shall come to see when we realise that true worship involves absolute, utter, and unreserved self-surrender. For that is a sacrifice not due to any Being but one in whom, whether we will or no, we are merged as mere points in infinity, and who entirely transcends all our conceptions of power and wisdom and goodness. But a secondary yet most important point in our lessons from St. Augustine is that if we cannot apprehend what the Eternal absolutely is, yet we may apprehend what he is to us. If he were no more than what he is to us we should not worship him, any more than we now worship the shining heaven, or the thunder, or the sun, moon, or stars, though many of our ancestors did so when these things were to them an unsolved mystery. We worship because what he is to us suggests and in a sense reveals an infinite Being before whom we bow in unreserved self-abnegation. Such mystical adoration of "something which our knowledge cannot master" is surely distinguishable from a desperate assertion that obvious contradictories are equally true. St. Augustine does not say that the Eternal is, as the Eternal, knowable and unknowable at the same time and in the same sense. What he seems to mean is that any hint or suggestion of that Eternal through phenomena, or through a felt but indefinable communion of the soul, humbles and overwhelms us with a vision unutterable of a Power and Godhead never to be known

CHAP. III.

The main point of Augustine is that only infinity can demand unreserved self-surrender.

A second point is that we may know God relatively by experience.

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CHAP. III. "in the strict sense of knowing." Now this is the sense in which all through this book I speak of God as "Unknowable." At the risk of iteration I must again and again insist that the epithet is not used in the blank negative sense attributed to it by eminent critics of Spencer. He himself has repudiated it with a vehemence unusual in his serene style. He urged that the sense of an ultimate and infinite reality remains after abstraction and generalisation have been carried to the utmost limits of our capacity. He held that in this case ignorance is positive, inasmuch as it implies that what it does not know is more real than any other content of consciousness, and on that very account unknowable.

Question of
Divine
Personality.

To worshippers equally characterised by reverence and by candour, the point which seems most painful in such reflections is the implied necessity for a frank surrender of the personality of the Unknowable in any conceivable sense of the phrase. The late Matthew Arnold, in whom, notwithstanding his poetic gifts, intellect predominated over sympathy, was contented to dismiss this scruple with his usual exquisite banter. Herbert Spencer is at once more sympathetic and more serious. For the sake of clearness his words are reproduced.

In the estimate it (*i.e.* his doctrine of the Unknowable) implies of the Ultimate Cause, it does not fall short of the alternative position, but exceeds it. Those who espouse this alternative position, make the erroneous assumption 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 just possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will, as these transcend mechanical motion? (P. 93, 6th ed.)

This last question exposes unanswerably the weak-

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ness of confident dogma on this mystery. For this rests not upon any ultimate necessity, but upon a mere assumption. And the assumption is this:—that throughout the endless chromatic scale of finite life, there is just one note which echoes the life of the Eternal, and that the note is human consciousness. The late Professor Clifford proposed as a hypothesis the universal inherency of elementary consciousness or “mind-stuff” in matter. It was a suggestion worthy of his luminous mind. But whether the hypothesis was sound or not, at any rate from the amoeba to the oyster, and up to the eagle, the elephant, the man, we can hardly help reading, in the phenomena they present, almost infinitely graded forms of consciousness, shading off in course of evolution, one into the other. By a very natural conceit, owing to the vividness of self-feeling, we treat the consciousness of mankind as the summit of evolution. We do not, indeed, say that there can be no higher form of consciousness, for that would at once debar us from treating it as a type of the divine consciousness, which, as piety acknowledges, must be higher. But the superiority we try to imagine is that of greater intensity and wider outlook, rather than that of infinite comprehension or universality. Though we talk of angels and archangels, we assume as a matter of course that there cannot be any creature-consciousness so incommensurable with man’s as that of man is with the life-sense of an oyster. Accordingly, as, for us, the ascending grades of consciousness practically cease at man, and thence expand into infinity, we hug the notion that even infinite expansion is consistent with an essential identity in the personal form into which consciousness has been evolved in us. So far as imagined consciousness is concerned,

CHAP. III.

Fallacies of the argument for Divine Personality.

Infinite graduation of finite consciousness.

But the passage from human consciousness to that of eternal Being is transcendental.

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CHAP. III. therefore, God is to us an infinite man—a contradiction in terms.

Inconceiv-
ability of
any con-
sciousness
but our
own.

For that is really what we must mean when we insist on the "personality" of God. I am not metaphysician enough, nor, for that matter, do I believe that any one else is, to know how human personality is differentiated from the next grade of life-sense below—say that of a chimpanzee. Still less can we sound the depths of lower consciousness, or think what it feels like to be a frog or a sea-anemone. In fact, though there must be grades of consciousness downwards, we are quite incapable of picturing them. How then should we conceive of higher grades, and what right have we to insist that through all the possibly infinite scale the very recent and temporary form of "personality" must be retained? Still, though we are all evolutionists now, and none of us would deny the imperceptible gradation of life-sense upwards from the elementary consciousness of matter, yet most of us draw the line at twentieth-century man, and say that between this and God there is nothing. Therefore God must be like that!

Possibility
of higher
finite
modes of
conscious-
ness in-
volved in
evolution.

Of course students of Milton may say that they draw no such line. They believe that there are "Powers and Dominions," hierarchies of angels of whose minds we can have no sufficient conception. Good. Then so far as this argument is concerned, they are in the same position with us who think that there may be many, nay, innumerable grades of life-sense higher than that of man. Or, if the earth should continue long enough, we need not look beyond it for such a possibility. I am not aware of any good reason for thinking that the process operating in evolution has ceased on reaching human personality. Nor is the mere inability to conceive of a super-humanity as much above our

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race as we are above the oyster, any conclusive argument against its future possibility. Certainly the oyster never conceived of man. But if the process of evolution is not ended on our earth, and if the adaptability of terrene conditions to higher forms of life is not exhausted, it is only through man that the line can be continued. No other creature is now "in the running." We have, then, a practical certainty that this personality, which so many insist on making into a type of God, is not even the highest possible form of creature life.

I have admitted that the mental condition of that farther evolved humanity is inconceivable; but there are some signs of the direction in which evolution will proceed. In the beginning of what we call organic life a higher life-sense seems to have been reached in proportion to the progress made in the differentiation of unicellular into multicellular organisms. The protozoa became metazoa by the distribution to differentiated cells of functions which had been discharged by the one cell. But it was a costly process. For, if we are to believe naturalists, it was this, and not "man's first disobedience," which "brought death into the world." But however that may be, certain it is that the more and more complete integration of innumerable and endlessly varied cells, each having a distinct though not independent life, brought with it a more and more exalted life-sense or consciousness. Yet, if we might commit the absurdity of imagining protozoan cells to have been consulted as to the course of evolution, it is certainly not an additional absurdity to assume that they would have regarded with alarm and indignation the sublime fate represented by the integration of many differentiated cells into one organism. They would have been eloquent on the rounded completeness of cell-life,

CHAP. III.

Suggestions
from
evolution.

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CHAP. III. on its intense unity, on its dignity in comparison with the non-integrated matter around, out of which it drew, by a mysterious prerogative, the sustenance of its energies. Why should it forgo all this, and "fusing all the skirts of self" grow incorporate into an inconceivable organism? And it must sacrifice its own existence in doing so. As long as it could replenish the world by splitting into two, four, or eight separate selves, it was at once creative and immortal. But if it became only a unit of living material in a complex organism, subordinating all cell activities to an inconceivable whole, not only would the interest of life be gone, but life itself, as soon as the temporary function had been performed. Fortunately, however, the opinion of the cells was not asked; neither are the individuals who "wither, while the world is more and more," consulted as to the part they would prefer to take in the future evolution certain to go on within the eternal All.

Indications
of advance
toward an
aggregate
human con-
sciousness.

Even now and on earth there are signs of a process tending to evolve one larger and higher life out of many smaller. Not only are social organisation and the general consciousness which we call public opinion merging the individual in the greater soul, but physical invention is promising to make an aggregate of individuals resemble to a startling degree the integration of protozoan cells in metazoic organisms. The telegraph and telephone are in their infancy, but already they appear capable of bringing all the world into as constant and intimate communication as that which is effected by the neural system for the cells of the human body. Railways and other channels of trade are like the circulation of the blood. The rapidity with which a popular impulse can act, as in the recent creation and transport of an army of 250,000 men for the South

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African war, is analogous to the speed with which the muscular system acts when passion has inflamed the nerves. We can set no bounds to this vivifying process. And, though the initial or incidental steps may seem ignoble, as when political poltroons sacrifice to the mob what little of moral principle they possess, yet faith assures us that the end will be transcendently good. A hundred thousand years hence all human society may be one gigantic man, with a single consciousness integrated out of thousands of millions, and incessantly informed by electric currents running through the world and reaching, as nerve currents do in the human body, just the constituent parts whose action is to be excited or modified. Any great trouble afflicting any portion of mankind from pole to pole will then rouse the whole organised humanity as a wound in a limb pervades with its irritation the individual body now. Then no one will need to buy a newspaper in order to know of the fortunes of incorporated Man, for there will be one consciousness, and any one in Europe rising in the morning, will know as much of the feelings of his brethren in Japan or New Zealand as he does now of the condition of his fingers and toes.

At any rate we can set no bounds to the evolution of the one more perfect consciousness out of many imperfect, on the analogy of the merging of innumerable sub-conscious cells in the Person. But can that just conceivable racial consciousness, compounded out of persons, itself be called personal? It may and it may not. So far as it feels itself marked off from the medium in which it exists, and contrasts itself with earth, ocean, and stars, it may have that sense of separation from the not-self which is so large an element in personality. Yet, on the other hand, the expansion of

CHAP. III.

Would
such an
aggregate
conscious-
ness be
personal?

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CHAP. III. the life-sense to that extent would surely produce as
utter a transformation of self-consciousness as the integration of protozoic cells has produced in the elementary consciousness of animated molecules. But, if so, how can we maintain that the expansion of life-sense to infinity can never exceed personality? The conceit we have of our little self-centred life-sense, as the perfect mode of being to which the Eternal Himself must conform, is really a base idolatry.

Here we may leave the irreverent attempt to substitute a "practical synthesis of contradictories" for the mystic contemplation of the Unknowable. The subject was in fact partly worked out in an early essay by the same pen more than thirty years ago.¹ But at that time Agnosticism was not born, or at least had not been formally named. The new method of defending faith's territory by opening wide the floodgates of the intellect to the deluge of infidel² denial, and then of floating out in the leaky boat of conventionalism to scatter a few withered seeds of traditional belief on the surface of the waters, had not then been conceived. But even in view of such innovations, the illustrations there given from St. Paul, Tauler, Spinoza, Wesley, and other devout men of the worship which owns the Eternal to be Unknowable but yet, in St. Augustine's words, "apprehends what he is to us," are still applicable to the present argument.

Use of the
name of
God.

From this point then I shall reverently presume to apply to that Unknowable Whole of Being which philosophy, science, and contemplation alike acknowledge,

¹ See *The Mystery of Matter, and Other Essays*, Macmillan and Co., 1873—particularly "The Philosophy of Ignorance, and Christian Pantheism."

² The epithet is often misused. But if ever it be appropriate, it must be in such cases of blasphemy against nature as are apparently condoned by Mr. Mallock.

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the venerable name familiar to the little child as well as to sages and saints. I only ask that, when I speak of God, I may be understood in strict accordance with what precedes. It would be worse than vanity, it would indeed be the sort of insanity upon which that foolish quality often verges, if I expected to avoid inconsistencies. Human language, to the extent of ninety-nine hundredths of it, or perhaps nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths, has been evolved by the efforts of men to impart to each other impressions, feelings, wants, and resolves all suggested by material surroundings. On the other hand, contemplation has been largely silent, or when it has sought utterance, language so evolved has failed it. But this, at least, I may promise, that I shall not summon the sword of arrogant will to cut the Gordian knot of apparent contradictions. For the solution is rather to be found in absolute and unreserved self-surrender of ourselves to God. CHAP. III.

Before going further, it is needful to explain how I take St. Augustine's advice "apprehend what He is to thee."¹ Though the saint is far from infallibility, his profound sense of the inmost life of religion gives us many a hint which works like a fruitful inspiration. And this is one of them. It is a favourite theme with him. Again and again, in direct, forceful appeals to his congregation—which would to God that modern preachers would take as a model—he insists that the ineffable and unknowable reality of the divine Being may touch and enter the soul through phenomena, or, as the word might be preferred, through experience. He was not consciously a Pantheist, though, like all the greatest theologians, he often used language which implied that God is the only reality, and All in All. St. August-
tine's ex-
hortation.

¹ "Si deficiis in eo quod mihi sum, cape quod tibi sum."

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CHAP. III. world was to him as the burning bush to Moses. It burned with God and was not consumed, while from the mystery of it was heard the voice, "*I AM that I AM.*" But to profit by his teaching, we need not be as ecclesiastical as he.

The teaching of nature

in the childhood of the world.

The resurrection of nature in spring is a manifestation of God dear to all eyes and hearts in every generation, and it is an exuberant source of poetic myth. The dreams, the personifications, the dramatic scenes, the tragic and festive observances to which it gave rise in the childhood of the world, so brightly sketched by Edward Clodd, have been set forth at large in Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Through the bewildering variety of the imaginations and ceremonial cited in the latter work, there runs a persistent thread of identity in motive, and that is the impulse of primitive and early mankind to picture in a personal form any startling or vividly presented action of the Unknowable, such as specially affected themselves. Not only the lightning and the thunder and the hurricane, but far gentler movements of nature were for them manifestations of a life "such as their knowledge could not master." The return of the sun after winter, the relenting of the skies, the gathering of a green mist of buds in the woodland, the sparkle of opening flowers, were inevitably thought of as the breath and the touch of a deity returning from the under world and brightening the face of the earth.

Mr. Frazer on Spring Myths.

The Greek myth of Demeter and Proserpine (says Mr. Frazer¹) is substantially identical with the Syrian myth of Aphrodite (Astarte) and Adonis, the Phrygian myth of Cybele and Attis, and the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris. In the Greek myth, as in its Asiatic and Egyptian counterparts, a goddess—Demeter—mourns the loss of a loved one—Proserpine

¹ *Golden Bough*, 2nd ed. vol. ii. pp. 168-170.

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—who personifies the vegetation, more especially the corn, which dies in summer to revive in spring. But in the Greek myth the loved and lost one is the daughter, instead of the husband or lover of the goddess; and the mother, as well as the daughter, is a goddess of the corn. Thus, as modern scholars have recognised, Demeter and Proserpine are merely a mythical reduplication of the same natural phenomenon. Proserpine, so ran the Greek myth, was gathering flowers when the earth gaped, and Pluto, lord of the dead, issuing from the abyss, carried her off in his golden car to be his bride in the gloomy subterranean world. Her sorrowing mother, Demeter, sought her over land and sea, and, learning from the Sun her daughter's fate, she suffered not the seed to grow, but kept it hidden in the ground, so that the whole race of men would have died of hunger if Zeus had not sent and fetched Proserpine from the nether world. Finally, it was agreed that Proserpine should spend a third, or, according to others, a half of each year with Pluto underground, but should come forth in spring to dwell with her mother and the gods in the upper world. Her annual death and resurrection, that is, her annual descent into the under world and her ascension from it, appear to have been represented in her rites. . . .

In Germany the corn is very commonly personified under the name of the Corn-mother. Thus, in spring, when the corn waves in the wind, the peasants say, "There comes the Corn-mother," or "The Corn-mother is running over the fields," or "The Corn-mother is going through the corn." When the children wish to go into the fields to pull the blue corn-flowers or the red poppies, they are told not to do so; because the Corn-mother is sitting in the corn, and will catch them. Or again she is called, according to the crop, the Rye-mother, or the Pea-mother, and children are warned against straying in the rye, or among the peas, by threats of the Rye-mother or the Pea-mother. In Norway also the Pea-mother is said to sit among the peas. Similar expressions are current among the Slavs.

In such a rude manner did ancient "children of a larger growth" anticipate or apply the teaching of St.

An anticipation of St. Augustine.

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CHAP. III. Augustine, "If thou failest to apprehend what God is to Himself, apprehend what He is to thee." The use made of the principle may not at first sight appear encouraging, for though the poetry inspired by the myth is often very beautiful, it is impossible to suppress a fear, or even a conviction, that the ceremonial observances which crystallised round the same myth were in early ages coarse and cruel.¹

But this need not dismay us in our endeavour to base religion on things as they are or have been, instead of trusting to the perilous support of what, in our view, ought to have been. We may hope to learn hereafter how, in religion as in everything else, evolution has left the unfit behind, while promoting the fit to higher and higher forms, ever advancing toward some unrealised and indeed only half-revealed ideal.

God as the
life-giver.

Meanwhile we may surely admit that the conception of some spirit mourning in winter the loss of a loved one, and, by the triumphant rescue of that loved one from Hades, bringing life and immortality to light in the Spring, was not altogether an unworthy apprehension of God as the life-giver. The parable was capable of indefinite modification and refinement. Nor need we hesitate to recognise a culmination of that process in the Easter celebrations of the Christian Church. For the powers of darkness that "killed the Prince of Life" were more cruel than any sunless winter. And though the imagined embodiment of the resurrection of grace and truth be as much a parable as the annual rising of Proserpine, yet, when we call to mind the spiritual

Parable
of the re-
surrection.

¹ Mr. Frazer makes it too clear for doubt that the observances used to include human sacrifice. The victim selected was often a casual passer-by; and the practical jokes of hop-pickers, who roll the visitor in the gathered hops, unless he redeems himself with silver, is almost certainly a last relic of such rites.

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realities that loom through the confused traditions of the Church's birth from the tomb of Jesus, the sublime and lonely Man on the one side with all Hell on the other, the tragic sacrifice, the un murmuring love, the undying faith, and the transfusion of the departed spirit into the organisers of a religion that moved the world, we too, with St. Paul, may be thrilled by the spiritual wonder ; we too may feel that to know Jesus "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death," is the highest reach of life. The infinite energy suggested in the processes of evolution and devolution, and in all the fluctuations of apparent existence, is unknowable in itself ; but what it is to us we apprehend in experiences like this.

Let us turn again to nature's inspirations in the spring. No "victorious analysis" has yet given us to see or feel the first faint stirring in the snowdrop bulb when the tide of life begins to return to field and wood. As Mr. Haldane has well said in his *Gifford Lecture* for 1902-1903, p. 244 :—

We have not the slightest reason to think that, if our microscopes were increased in power indefinitely, we should be any nearer reaching a particle of living matter which could be seen to be constructed mechanically. Such a result is as inconceivable as that the microscope should disclose to us an ultimate and indivisible atom. What, for our observation, characterises living matter, even in its simplest form, is the capacity already referred to, of quasi-purposive action in which the particular material is indifferent, is taken in, passed away and changed, while the character of the whole remains.

Such is the process when the little bulb begins to swell with the sap of life and to exude it upward in new cells, which push onward as green shoots that

CHAP. III.

Mr. Haldane on living matter.

Parable of the snowdrop.

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CHAP. III. expand into lustrous leaves or are transformed into
Infinity of the vistas opened by the microscope. exquisite white bells, holding within them the secret of a future life. What we have here is not construction, not the addition outwardly of material to material as in a bricklayer's work, but continuous differentiation in some specially conditioned infinitesimal part of the infinite continuity of being. And perhaps this is why between organic and inorganic tissue the microscope reveals such an impassable difference. The subtilest and airiest works formed by arts of combination and arrangement, and, setting aside crystals, which some consider quasi-organic, the hardest, most highly polished stone compacted by the tremendous force of earth-pressure, alike reveal their elements under the object glass in hairy threads or rough, discreet grains. But under such scrutiny the supposed ultimate particles of living tissue are only gates to fresh avenues of wonder; and could the power of the instrument be raised a million fold, the gazer feels a moral certainty that his experience would still be the same.

Perhaps recognised in the Buddhist formula.

If I understand Professor Rhys Davids aright, it was in the contemplation of this mystery of organic growth, or perhaps of world-wide evolution, that the Buddhist formula "*om mani padme hum*" had its origin, "Ah! the jewel (is) in the lotus, Amen."¹ The precious secret of life is not that of a gift from outside. It is within and it rises from the Unknowable. Nay, we need not say "rises from"; it *is* the Unknowable, though to our perceptions seeming conditioned and limited, we know not how. For we have excellent authority now for holding that if the word "cause" can ever be used with any approach to absolute truth, it then only expresses the sum of the conditions under which a phenomenon comes into

Modern view of "cause."

¹ Kindly so rendered for me in the Professor's letter above mentioned, p. 34.

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perception ; and the sphere embracing those conditions widens out by an illimitable process toward infinity. The sum of the conditions—a form of expression inevitable but imperfect—is in truth identical with the unknowable All. Or, as Mr. Haldane puts it, from another point of view :—¹

In the end we are driven to the conclusion that not only is the cause not a thing nor an event distinguishable in time or space from the effect, but that if we try to define it accurately, we can come to no other result than that it is just the sum of the conditions ; in other words, it is the effect itself.²

But the sum of the conditions is infinite. And so in the case before us this means that in contemplating the life and grace of the snowdrop shining on a background of mystery, we may apply to our experience the word spoken by St. Augustine as a prophet of God, “If thou failest to apprehend what *I AM* to myself, apprehend what I am to thee.”

It is surely a legitimate exercise of fancy to transpose this objective contemplation into a subjective experience. Let us imagine the snowdrop to be conscious of an inward stirring when the spring comes,

Transposition to a supposed subjective experience.

¹ *Gifford Lecture*, 1902-1903, p. 217.

² If the application of these words to our illustration would seem mere paradox, that is only because we are in the habit, and rightly so, of unconsciously taking as a working hypothesis in everyday life the isolation of phenomena as things apart :—

The primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

But the isolation, though, as a counter in our calculations it works out well enough in practical life, is not real. Nothing exists as part inseparable from its whole. Says Mr. Haldane, “To me it seems that by God we mean, and can only mean, that which is most real, the Ultimate Reality into which all else can be resolved, and which cannot be resolved into anything beyond ; that in terms of which, for instance, ‘being,’ ‘force,’ ‘harmony,’ etc., all else can be expressed, and which cannot be itself expressed in terms of anything outside itself.” The snowdrop can be resolved into the Unknowable, but not the Unknowable into the snowdrop.

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CHAP. III. and of a yearning toward fuller life and ideal beauty.

— In its pushing and groping upwards, in its magical transmutation of earthy materials, in its thirst for the dew and the rain, in its striving toward the light, in its evolution of a type of beauty latent in its germ, it is actuated by an energy not itself, which is yet its infinite self. And when at length the type is achieved, when the white bells glittering in the sun hang over the living green of the leaves, our parable would have the inward stir and longing and struggle recognised by the flower-soul as the inspiration of the Unknowable Power manifest everywhere in the bewildering world around. But the bewilderment may be turned to peace by the word, "If thou failest to apprehend what *I AM* to myself, apprehend what I am to thee."

The path
of the
Eternal
in the
whirlwind
and the
storm.

I am not guilty of the folly of ignoring the darker aspects of what the Eternal is to us. If what we have said is true of infinitesimal beauties inspired by the Unknowable, it is true of the whirlwind and the storm, of pestilence and famine and death. Such apparent discords must hereafter receive attention. Even in such a case as that of our parable, they would intrude. Frosty rigours and unseasonable winds and blasting hail and the struggle for life with the germs that swarm in the soil and air would trouble our dream. They are all parts of the bewildering world surrounding the flower-soul supposed. But in the case put, the inspiration prevails, and the imaginary consciousness of it need not be neutralised by the mystery of other forms in which the Unknowable Power is manifested. With unreserved submission and acquiescence peace must come. For we are not dealing with any question of government or rights, or constitutional law, but with the relation of infinitesimal (phenomenal) parts to the

No ques-
tion of
rights.

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(real) infinite Whole. In such a case, as St. Paul CHAP. III.
rightly judged when using as an illustration imagined
claims of our bodily limbs, there are no terms to be
made.

The interpretation of the parable into human experience would be—and is, where it is realised—the end of all religious controversy. Not that such an experience implies the solution of insoluble questions; but it does involve an apprehension of the reason why they are and must remain insoluble, not only in this world, but in any other world. He who attains to this “peace of God which passeth all understanding” has once for all recognised that not faith only, but knowledge and thought merge in God as all the rivers run into the sea, and that God, though Unknowable “in the strict sense of knowing,” is no more a negation than the ocean is to the wondering child.¹ He who has this present faith is no more dependent for religious life on traditions of the past or hopes of the future. Things as they are form his divine revelation. He will not indeed undervalue, far less despise, the accumulated human experience which in a large measure has made him what he is, and has evolved the susceptibilities to which this universe becomes an ordered Whole. But whether that inherited experience comes of ancient illusion and delusion, or of later research and induction, is a question which does not trouble him. It is the present contemplative realisation, not its long preparation, that makes his actual spiritual life. The dissolving views of old mythologies disturb him no longer with

Spiritual
Pantheism.

¹ It is curious to remember that Livingstone's Makololo companions described their first sight of the ocean by negatives. “We came to a place,” they said, “where the land said, ‘I'm done; there is no more of me.’” But the boundless and inconceivable sea beyond was, after all, very real and positive indeed.

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CHAP. III. anxieties as to what will be left him at last. For Eden and Sinai and Carmel, prophetic portents and messianic visions, are but symbols of the universal longing, "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat." But this worshipper has found Him, and can never lose Him except through moral discord with the eternal order. And what that loss may mean is a question not to be ignored.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATION

IN the preceding chapter it is made apparent that from our point of view there has not been any "revelation" except that of human experience. But, on the other hand, this experience is not to be regarded as isolated and independent of its roots in the eternal All, or God. Not only does it include observation, contemplation, research, and reflection, but it is also moulded and directed by the divine life actuating evolution. It is never solely human, and it is never solely divine in the sense of being free from creature limitations. But there are forms of experience in which the sense of dependence on a "Power not ourselves" is specially prominent in consciousness. And these have been interpreted as divine inspiration or revelation. Nor is there any sufficient reason for denying the possibility of a substantial truth in many such interpretations of experience.

In what sense human experience is a divine revelation.

Let us consider the analogy of physical evolution. In these times it requires more moral courage to impugn the infallibility of "natural selection" than to controvert St. Paul. And yet eminent men of science have admitted that natural selection does not explain the impulse to variation without which selection would be impossible. But on our view of God, that impulse

The analogy of crises in physical evolution.

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CHAP. IV.

False analogies to be avoided.

to variation is the manifestation of his life urging growth toward a destined end. I am aware, of course, of the horror excited by such a suggestion amongst those who think that the economy of the Universe ought to conform to that of an impecunious and thrifty household, where "nothing is wasted." We shall have to discuss such questions again. In this place it is enough to repudiate decisively and unreservedly all the false analogies which lead from an insufficient apprehension of the infinitesimal to a misjudgment of the Infinite. The poet may weep over Nature because he finds that "of fifty seeds"—he might have said "of fifty million"—"she often brings but one to bear." Yet surely this is the point of view of the artificial gardener, whose resources are limited. Why should it be supposed that all the acorns in a forest which do not produce oaks are wasted? To say nothing of the function which many of them fulfil as food, even those which rot return to the bosom of Nature, and play their part in fresh movements of molecule or mass or organism. It is only the notion of a "workman god" bound to save material, that prejudices us against what we call the extravagance of Nature in the process of evolution.

The impulse to variation.

Putting that relic of anthropomorphism aside, then, we assume that in any growing world, by which we mean not a universe, nor a galaxy, but only an orb, the tide of the life of God is rising in organic forms and stimulating variations, which furnish the opportunity for "natural selection." But even this selection is not to be regarded as a matter of haphazard. (In the growth of an individual body there is selection of the cells which are to survive.¹ For since the epoch-making

¹ The belief in a struggle for survival amongst the cells of a developing

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observations of Von Baer in the third decade of the last century, it has come to be universally recognised by physiologists that the embryo of a late and highly developed species of animal passes during the brief period of gestation through stages of growth representing some ancestral forms through which its predecessors successively passed in the process of evolution by selection. So far as the microscope can reveal the structure of the impregnated ovum, it affords no indication whether it is to be a snail or an elephant. And in a slightly later stage, no naturalist could judge whether it might turn out to be a fish or a mammal. The multiplying cells which form the gastrula appear to be aiming at the embodiment of an idea long abandoned. What checks them and turns them aside from this apparent purpose? For in the embryo of a man those cells which would culminate in the primeval ascidian, or fish, or reptile, are somehow mastered or suppressed, or forced to conform to the strange new human type. There is nothing haphazard in this. Why then should we suppose that in the geological ages, when those lower forms of life succeeded one another on the wider fields of land or sea, the succession was caused by chance survivals? Surely it is more

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Elimination
of
"chance."

organism would seem to be confirmed by Mendel's observation of hybridisation. I take the following from a note in the *Pilot* of June 27, 1903. It refers to Mr. Bateson's rescue of Mendel's work from oblivion, and proceeds: "Peas with well-marked and differing characters were selected as parents, and it was then possible to determine how far the hybrid offspring resembled each of the originals. They inherited some characters pure from one parent and others pure from the other. Intermediate conditions with regard to these characters did not occur." Now, as all the elements of both sets of characters were presumably present in the impregnated seed, it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that in the course of development there was a struggle out of which the germs best fitted to survive in that particular case of generation emerged triumphant. In succeeding generations the permutations and combinations of characters were different, which suggests that the conditions were different, resulting in a variation of fitness to survive.

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CHAP. IV. rational to think that the same mysterious power which now co-ordinates the struggle of cells in an embryo so that the new type shall be produced, did also in those primeval times co-ordinate the apparently random action of selection so as to secure the true line of evolution. Either treat, as a matter of haphazard, the abbreviated and hastened evolution of the protoplasmic speck into a man, or confess that the evolution from a similar protoplasmic speck in the course of a million ages was equally "toil co-operant to an end."

Apparent mistakes of Nature.

What we call mistakes, measured by our infinitesimal scale, are made both in the short process and in the long, though more often in the former. Defects like club-foot, or arrested development of a limb, or again excess of production, as in the case of six-fingered children, are not uncommon. So also it is said that in the long process, variations are produced which are disadvantageous or even fatal to the creature affected. But as no sane person would argue that the above-noted misfortunes to the embryo prove the whole process of growth to be the result of a "fortuitous concourse of atoms," so it is difficult to see how we can fairly hold that the apparent mistakes in the longer course of evolution justify us in regarding its successes as a series of happy chances. I am not repeating the "argument from design"; for that belongs entirely to the theory of an "*opifex deus*." I only urge that in the evolution of species there is as much evidence of life acting by "law," as there is in the growth of a tree.

Crises of pregnant significance.

Further, if the whole process is rightly regarded as an infinitesimal manifestation of an Infinite Life, then surely any particular crisis of unusually significant change may, from the human point of view, be regarded as specially divine, or a revelation. Of course, to con-

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stitute it a real, that is, an informing revelation, the presence of a finite mind to read and appreciate it is essential. And we have no experience of any finite minds except our own. But if we had Miltonic imagination enough to conceive of angels and archangels in scientific conclave, watching, with a patience to which a thousand years was as one day is to us, the gradual formation of a notochord in the ascidian as inferred by Darwin, this prophecy of vertebrate creatures, with their enormous capacity for final adaptation to a mastery of the world, might well be a revelation of the coming "kingdom of God" as realised in the republic of man.

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So, too, when our immediately prehuman anthropoid progenitors began to occupy their anterior digits so much in the business of holding and carrying roots or fruits that they were forced to trust more and more to their hind-legs for progression, the celestial scientists supposed might have recognised a pregnant hint of the coming supremacy of co-ordinated hand and brain. For them, of course, nothing would be thinkable apart from God, and as they surveyed the whole course of development, God would be in all their thoughts. But being finite, however great, it would be inevitable that any specially significant step toward the fulfilment of the ideal foreseen would seem more than usually pregnant with God—a revelation.

E.g. formation of a notochord,

and specialisation of the human hand.

Now if such is the impression we should naturally conceive to be made on an exalted intelligence capable of appreciating the significance of any critical stage in physical evolution, much more should we be prepared to find that, from the human point of view, epochs or crises, or clearly-marked transitions in moral or spiritual progress have very generally been attributed to divine intervention. In this case the exalted intelligence of

Natural suggestion of divine intervention. How far true.

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CHAP. IV. contemplative angels is wanting, and religion assumes a lower form. But the principle remains the same. That is, though the presence and power of God are everywhere and in all things alike, the limited mind is roused to recognise God only in occurrences seeming to itself specially pregnant with purpose. From the point of view of the Infinite, if we may venture on such a phrase, these events are no more divine than any others, because all are alike so. But practically we have nothing to do with the point of view of the Infinite, or, as Augustine puts it, what God is to himself. We must be content to apprehend what he is to us. And the unconscious anticipators or imitators of Augustine have sought to do this by seeing the hand of God in what were to them significant and pregnant events. Naturally, they were very often mistaken in their interpretation; for moral evolution is no more free from apparent failures than is the evolution of species by selection. But the religion of the Universe must include all such things within its scope. The notion of failure is essentially human, and is caused only by our confinement to a limited point of view. While therefore we insist that what we call failure must surely find a place in the harmony of the Whole, we do perfectly right to treat it as a discord within our experience, and to regard as a divine inspiration the impulse to avoid it. The question how such discords ultimately merge in the universal harmony is not within our power to solve. But if we would apprehend what God is to us we must strive, as he inspires us, against what within our experience is evil and failure, while resisting any temptation to carry our inferences therefrom into the Infinite, which is "what God is to himself."

Meaning of
apparent
failures in
evolution.

The point immediately before us, the tendency of

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humanity to regard certain vivid and fruitful experiences as divine revelation, need scarcely be laboured ; for all the work of scholars on the sacred books of the ancient world goes to establish it. And the new science of Folk-Lore illustrates it by innumerable instances of dreams, visions, portents regarded as messages from the gods. That the Jewish and Christian scriptures have a peculiarly high value, as being in many parts specially pregnant with moral and spiritual inspiration, will not here be denied. But the time is coming, if it has not already come, when the lovers of the Bible, amongst whom I have been a fervent devotee from childhood to old age, will in candour allow that its worth must be measured not by the prosaic accuracy of its statements, but by the amount of moral and spiritual experience it enshrines in forms so quickening that such experience thereby renews itself in human hearts from age to age. Thus, so far as the Bible differs from other records of inspiring moral experience, it can no longer be contended that it differs in kind, but only in degree. It is apparently an unwillingness to admit this that forms the last barrier in many liberal minds against admission of the truth about revelation.

CHAP. IV.
Illustration
from the
sacred
books of
the world.

Superiority
of the Bible
a matter of
degree not
of kind.

Thus in a series of profoundly interesting lectures on *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*,¹ Professor George Adam Smith, of the Glasgow Free Church College, sets forth with ample learning, and accepts in a perfectly candid spirit, the results both of scholarly criticism of the Hebrew scriptures and of recent spade work in the East. But while fully recognising that the sacred literature of the Jews has had a very human development, so much so

Prof. G. A.
Smith on
Old
Testament
revelation.

¹ Delivered in Yale University, U.S.A., and published by Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1901.

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CHAP. IV. that it can lay no claim whatever to infallibility, he is still anxious to maintain that, after all, it does contain a "revelation" in a sense that no other ancient writings do. And his reason is that in no other way can the remarkable development of Hebrew monotheism be accounted for. He insists that "we have in the Old Testament a true knowledge of the character and ethical purpose of God, which we do not find original to any other race except Israel." He also urges that this knowledge is not explicable except by the acknowledgment "that God in His Love and Holiness drew near to this people and impressed Himself personally upon them through events of their history, and through the consciousness of their great men."

Mono-
theism not
final.

Now, with the exception of the adverb "personally" which implies a whole theology, this acknowledgment may very well be made by a devout Pantheist. But the succeeding context shows that the words are to be taken in a sense which connotes some sort of supernatural interference with the course of evolution. And Professor Smith thinks himself forced to such an admission by the exceptional, and especially by the ethical character of Jewish monotheism. Obviously, however, those who cannot recognise "monotheism" as the final stage of religious development, but regard it as very distant from ultimate truth, will not feel the same need for supernatural interference to secure so imperfect an approximation to reality. And with regard to the ethical ideal revealed to the nobler Jews in their visions of God, if we may keep our minds fixed on certain beautiful psalms, and on certain transcendent utterances of spiritual contemplation in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and other prophets, we prefer a reverent silence to any resumption of argument. But it would

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be uncandid, and even dishonest, to exclude other aspects of the Jewish ideal, and when we turn to them the illusion of any white light direct from the eternal throne vanishes away.

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Moral ideal
of Old
Testament
though sug-
gestive is
imperfect.

Recent explorations by which the arts and civilisation of Babylon and Nineveh have been raised from the dead, scarcely confirm our confidence in any such moral superiority on the part of Israel as would justify the favouritism attributed to the Most High by Jewish prophets. And although we may readily acknowledge that the survival and further development of the Yahwistic tradition was of immense importance to the future of moral evolution, yet the savage glee with which one psalmist contemplates the dashing of Babylon's babes against the stones, and the vindictive descriptions by the prophets of the massacre, pestilence, and desolation awaiting the greatest cities of their world, do not quite indicate such a startling advance in spiritual religion as to require miracle for its explanation.

On the other hand, Hebrew monotheism is not the only remarkable or even startling spiritual fact in the general evolution of man's higher life. The moral elevation of some of the great Greek poets and philosophers and the weird spiritual fervour of the professedly materialistic Lucretius, present quite as marked a contrast to the average level of human thought and feeling in their day, as the monotheism of the later Hebrews does to the average theology of their age.¹ Indeed, were it not that hereditary habit provides a mould into which all our interpretations of the Bible run, and become set in early life, it is very doubtful

Hebrew
spirituality
not an
isolated
phenome-
non.

¹ Recall, for instance, the martyr-like speech of Antigone to Kreon as imagined by Sophocles, and the protest of Lucretius against the impiety of popular religion.

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CHAP. IV. whether any scholarly and liberal theologian would construe as implying a supernatural revelation the

The "word of the Lord" a specially good inward impulse.

phrases "thus saith the Lord" and "the word of the Lord came." For such phrases only illustrate the practice of early generations, not in Palestine only, but all round the world, to attribute any specially good impulse, and, it must be admitted, also any specially bad impulse, to a superhuman source. This habit did not spring from any dishonest affectation. Indeed, in our view of the Universe it was based on truth. For just as in physical evolution the co-ordinating and directive life of God, that is, of the Infinite Whole, is of course always present in each part, but from our point of view may be specially manifest in critical changes whose importance we happen to understand, so is it with the relation of our spiritual consciousness to moral evolution. And not only is this the case in any contemplative survey of the evolution of the race, but there has been something analogous to it in the experience of individual men in every age, though it has necessarily been interpreted in accordance with the ideas of the time. Thus the dependence of the infinitesimal self on the life of the Eternal, while always real, has sometimes been more apparent to the prophetic soul than usual. Then it is that the impulse or impression is translated into "thus saith the Lord," or "the word of the Lord came." Or, on the other hand, the miserable self-assertion of the infinitesimal creature and the desire to shrink out of the whole harmony of things for the attainment of selfish ends, is sometimes more diabolically audacious; and then it is said "Satan entered into him."

The word of the Devil a specially bad impulse.

There is no need therefore to interpret the prophetic claim to divine inspiration as involving anything miraculous or supernatural in the ordinary sense of these

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words.¹ That prophets and apostles—notably St. Paul—were profoundly sincere in their belief that God spoke to them is as certain as anything can be in the story of humanity. For myself I go farther, and from the point of view advocated in this book I have no hesitation in acknowledging that God did speak to them in the sense just suggested. But the divine utterance was so coloured and limited by their own individuality and by that necessary accident of creature life, a want of sense of proportion, that though stimulative and exalting, it could not possibly be infallible.

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Inspiration
not
infallible.

The older interpreters of the Bible used to find revelation more immediately and clearly in signs and wonders than in prophetic utterance. Even those who allowed the story of the Almighty's conversations with Adam in Eden to be part of an "allegory," still for a long time insisted that the great Covenant with Abraham was solemnised precisely as narrated, by the perambulation of "a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp" between the severed carcasses of sacrificial victims. And still in our own day the thunders and lightnings, and awful trumpet of Sinai are emphatically declared by a majority of divines, and also by all instructors of the young in our State-supported schools, to have been real and material features of the revelation of the Mosaic law. It would appear that Professor George Adam Smith, while insisting on a "revelation" in the Old Testament, is prepared to surrender this particular mode of revela-

Revelation
by portent.

¹ It is necessary thus to guard myself. For in these days a tendency is very prevalent among all communions alike to harmonise freedom of thought with a desire "to make the best of both worlds." One part of the method is to explain away both inspiration and miracle as involving no suspension of natural law, nor any departure whatever from the order of nature as established by induction. In the residuum of fact, or idea left after this process, of course we may all believe. But then what is left is no longer distinctive of supernatural religion, and it may in many cases be quite sincerely adopted by Pantheists.

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CHAP. IV. tion by portent. But it would be an injustice to him to draw the inference that he would sanction any similar surrender of revelation by portent at the advent, during the ministry, and in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. We may conclude therefore that according to the most liberal interpretation of supernatural religion, revelation has taken two forms, more generally that of the prophetic word, and exceptionally that of portent.

Revelation
by portent
a matter
for historic
criticism.

Of the latter form of revelation we need not say much here; for it is largely a question of historical evidence, a question regarded by us as already decided. But it may be remarked that two points have to be proved, first, that the portent occurred, and next, that it had the meaning assigned to it. In the case of "the Thundering Legion" there can be no doubt that an extraordinary and timely thunderstorm occurred, and saved a Roman army from impending destruction. But the most eminent and devout amongst modern Christian historians do not agree with Tertullian and Eusebius in considering the storm to have been miraculously caused, or to have had the significance assigned to it. Moreover, the Roman augurs and priests, while acknowledging the event to have been a miracle, gave the credit to Jupiter, which Tertullian thinks to be a mere evasion, by the substitution of their god for his. In a much more modern instance, that of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, there is no reason to doubt his own testimony that in answer to his prayer for a sign of the divine pleasure as to the publication of his book, *De Veritate*, he heard, or thought he heard, a clap of thunder in a clear sky. But that which he treated as a portent is universally regarded as a strange coincidence, or an illusion. If, however, such scenes were enacted at Sinai as are described in the Pentateuch, it would be

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impossible to avoid one of two conclusions, either that some kind of superhuman being, though not necessarily the Eternal, declared his will to Israel, or else that Moses and his coadjutors had anticipated with amazing success modern pyrotechnics and theatrical engineering. But from such a painful alternative we are delivered by the certain conclusion of competent critics that the descriptions represent traditions gradually evolved during the course of five or six hundred years.

Subjective revelation by means of the prophetic word is free from any such perplexities. For it is its own witness, and it needs no other. The most notable and adequate illustration of this is to be found in the artless account given in the Synoptic Gospels of the effect produced by the first words of the young prophet from Nazareth. The pupils of rabbinical catechists were "astonished at his teaching." Why? Because he taught them "not as the scribes" but with power. And how then did the scribes teach? They taught as modern lawyers argue "from precedent to precedent." With regard to Sabbath observance, purification, sacrifice, tithes, and even social duty, they quoted one father against another, and struck a balance between them. But this Jesus rarely mentioned a book or a precedent. His words were like the colours of a glorious dawn, as plain to a child as to a sage, and yet to the sage who retains the heart of a child, infinitely richer in hidden treasure than in his infancy. They were like the cadences of a music that moves the simple heart, it knows not why, but which to the ear and brain of science unfold wonder beyond wonder of intricate relations, expanding to the last mystery of the finite and the infinite. He did not tell the people "Rabbi A. says this, and Rabbi B. says that, but on the whole

CHAP. IV.

Superiority
of the
prophetic
word.

Illustration
by the
words of
Jesus.

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CHAP. IV. perhaps we should prefer Rabbi C. who seems to be between the two." He said, "*I say unto you,*" and when the word was uttered they knew it was not his but God's. They knew it just as clearly as they knew a sunbeam in the morning, or the meaning of the responsive smile of first pure love.¹

All prophetic utterance has some degree of the same "power."

Now this instance of the "prophetic" word—or "word for God," though supreme in its interest for us, is at the same time suggestive of an element of power and inspiration common to all religions alike. Regarding, as we do here, no religion as exclusively divine, or supernatural, or infallible, it would be tedious and unprofitable to institute any detailed comparison between their various claims to our attention and gratitude. We proceed on the assumption that all alike are of both divine and human origin. They are of divine origin so far as they arise in the normal course of evolution, and tend toward an ultimate consciousness of God as ALL in All. They are human in so far as, to our limited vision,² they interrupt, delay, or pervert the normal course of evolution. In the former aspect and in that alone we may regard the prophetic utterances of all religions as revelations. By this I mean that they help us to realise what God is to us. They indicate the line of evolution marked out for us in the counsels of

¹ We may surely feel the superiority of new critical reverence for the Bible over old fetishism, if we recall how former commentators used to think it necessary to explain the wonder of the Galilean hearers by the tradition that miracles accompanied Christ's word, or that he spoke as the supreme Legislator of the world. Yet according to the Third Gospel, it was just when Jesus had fled from a mob of turbulent bigots, and showed no sign whatever of supernatural power to defend himself, that "they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power."

² Any separation whatever between the human and divine is an illusion, just as the supposed segregation of the ultimate "atom" from the mystery of force and space is coming now to be acknowledged as an illusion. But like the latter, the distinction of "human" and "divine" in the above sense is "a good working hypothesis."

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the Eternal, or in other words, they show how we may be consciously at one with the will of God, and therefore they teach the way of peace. But the instrument of revelation is experience, and the results of experience when rooted and grounded in the harmony of the whole universe are rightly regarded as sacred. CHAP. IV.

It is not surprising therefore that all ancient peoples, perhaps without exception, used to claim in some form a revelation peculiar to themselves. From the "medicine man" and the wizard, to sacred oracles, inspired prophets, and the "dæmon" of Socrates, every grade of culture has had its voices from behind the veil, its "god-intoxicated" men and women whose utterances under special conditions were regarded as the word of God. Limitations
of revela-
tion. But it may be observed that such utterances never seriously controvert established custom. They may in exceptional cases give a higher interpretation to that custom by embodying in definite form new lessons of experience vaguely emerging in the general consciousness. But unless in very rare instances of moral crisis, such as we may perhaps see at the time of Elijah in Israel, in the rise of Buddhism in North India, during the period of Socrates in Athens, at the Christian era in Galilee and Hellenistic Jewry, and in the Arabia of Mohammed, such revelations seek to give new reasons for established customs rather than to overthrow them. And even in the very exceptional cases just mentioned, it would have been impossible for the divine word to come with power if it had not recognised the sacredness of established custom even in giving it a new interpretation that evoked a response in souls unconsciously prepared by experience of their own. The immortal parable of the Sower and the Seed, pregnant as it is with a multitude of suggestions, expressly teaches that The seed
needs pre-
pared soil.

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CHAP. IV. prepared soil is needed for the spiritual harvest. And if that soil represents the souls of men, it is only experience added to congenital fitness that can prepare them.

Reason
for the
reference
of law
codes to
God.

Since law in its origin is only consecrated custom, and custom comes of experience, which again, whenever it was consciously considered, was of old referred to divine guidance, it was inevitable that ancient codes of law should be regarded wholly or partially as a revelation. The cases of Manu, Numa Pompilius, Epimenides the inspired adviser of Solon, and the mission of Lycurgus to the Delphic oracle, need only be mentioned to show that the Jews were not alone in their claim to have a revealed law. In no case does historical criticism sustain the claim in the sense in which it was made. But, on the other hand, to suppose that the moral, spiritual, and social evolution of mankind has been uninfluenced by a "Power not ourselves" is not less unreasonable than to think of physical evolution as a matter of haphazard. And if so, there is a real and substantial sense in which experience, custom, and law have been truly a revelation. While entirely inadequate to show what God is in himself, they have gradually suggested an approximately true recognition of what he is to us. Now, "what he is to us" is a "Power not ourselves,"¹ present within as an impulse toward the evolution of the ideal self. The impulse is not always recognised for what it really is. And that is the defect which Augustine seeks to remedy. The suggestion is applicable to humanity as well as to men.

The
element
of truth
therein.

¹ It would scarcely be reasonable criticism to say that this adoption of Matthew Arnold's phrase is inconsistent with Pantheism. For the "self" though of the substance of the Infinite is conscious of phenomenal limits. But, as will be apparent from the whole context, the Power working in us is felt, when we are conscious of it, to operate unconfined by those limits. It is only in this sense that we speak of it as "not ourselves."

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This may be illustrated by the gradual and still im-
perfect revelation of the moral ideal. In the first
beginnings to which we can trace humanity in its physical
form, we can hardly suppose that there was any such
thing as a moral ideal at all. For the survival of the
fittest meant then the survival of the strongest, and
hardly anything else. How then did any rudiments of
a moral ideal arise? To answer this in the absence of
records, we may fairly have recourse to conjecture based
on the careful observations made during the last century
of such remote and uncivilised tribes as still survived in
an obviously primitive condition.¹ Judging thus it
appears more than probable, indeed practically certain,
that as the mere horde became a tribe with some
consciousness of corporate unity, experience would soon
teach the supplemental value of other qualities besides
mere bodily prowess for the service of the community.
Thus keenness of eyesight might give worth to even
a comparative weakling; and, in a higher degree,
sagacity in suggesting a line of march or devising an
ambuscade.

But among all qualities of perception and temper,
none would be more precious than the ardour of heroism
which made warriors willing to perish themselves if
thereby they might secure the victory of the tribe.
Farther, all information so diligently collected of late
years about primitive customs goes to show that the
fetish-man or "medicine-man" very early indeed gained
through his supposed communication with invisible
powers a moral influence altogether incommensurable
with his physical qualities. And his office at a certain
stage of evolution included that of the prophet or bard.

¹ E.g. see the facts as to savage and barbarous life given in *Descriptive Sociology, or Groups of Sociological Facts*, classified and arranged by Herbert Spencer. London: Williams and Norgate.

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CHAP. IV. His blessing upon heroic ardour gave it a sacred character,¹ and to the reward of social admiration was thus added the favour of the god. Here were at least the beginnings of a revelation by experience which kindled the germs of a moral ideal.

Spread of
altruism.

Of the steps by which altruistic emotion, motive, and action were gradually extended so as to embrace confederations of tribes claiming common descent, and afterwards developed into an "enthusiasm of humanity," it is not my purpose to treat. For my object is attained if I can show that revelation by experience is a reasonable substitute for revelation by portent, now entirely discredited by historical criticism.

Digression
on the
mode of
ascertaining
the moral
ideal.

But here a digression is inevitable, though it will, I trust, be found to be not merely a digression, but a support, both to the past and the succeeding argument. For though the phrase "moral ideal" is very frequently used in these days, and even proposed as a substitute for God Himself in the cult of religion, it cannot be pretended that there is absolutely complete agreement as to what the moral ideal is. It is worth while, therefore, to devote a page or two here to an explanation of the sense in which it is used in the present argument. By that phrase, then, I mean the farthest conceivable result toward which the lines of moral evolution converge. For instance, to take a parallel case, any competent person who has watched the growth of an individual child up to the age of ten or twelve years can form a fairly approximate idea of what that child will be physically at adolescence. For after the former age the proportion of the limbs does not alter much. The head grows very slightly, and the general development is so

¹ In this light Æthelfrith's insistence on treating the Druids at Bangor-is-y-Coed as part of the enemy in arms, though barbarous, was not illogical.

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likely to be along the lines hitherto followed that certain ultimate characteristics may be safely predicted. You say of one boy, "He will be tall"; of another, "He will be short"; or of a young girl of that age, "She is not very pretty now, but she has the makings of a beauty in her, for the features are just of the kind in which maturity corrects defects." Well, just as we can to a certain extent forecast the ultimate development of a human body by following out in expectation the lines it has hitherto followed, so perhaps we may in this age of the world sufficiently mark the lines of moral evolution to tell how they will be focussed in an approximately perfect result.

Perhaps a different kind of illustration may help us. According to the late Professor Huxley the story of the development of the horse from a small five-toed animal to the modern massive cart-horse or the flying racer is so complete that every important step can be marked. Now, at a middle stage of this development any celestial being, on examining with adequate intelligence the preceding course of evolution and the mode of action of, say, the anchitherium,¹ might surely have predicted the ideal horse. For he might very well have argued that as two toes had already disappeared, while two others were tending to become useless appendages, the obvious movement of evolution was toward the isolation of one central greatly exaggerated toe, over which the original claw would be expanded into an elastic covering of horn. With a sufficient knowledge of the susceptibility of animal organs to variations in the course of conception, birth, and growth, and with an additional knowledge of the tendency of such variations to correlation in response to internal and

CHAP. IV.
—
The ideal horse and its story.

¹ Found (I quote from Mr. Clodd's memoir of Huxley) in the European early Miocene deposits. The preceding links in the chain were found in the Eocene formations of North America.

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CHAP. IV. external influences, such an intelligence might very well have predicted the homologous changes that would take place in other parts of the body and conduce to the production of the horse as we know it. That is, the fixation of certain points in the line of previous evolution would indicate the idea toward which evolution was moving.

Prehuman
indications
of the
human
form.

Similarly, any competent observer at a period not yet fixed, but almost certainly during the Tertiary ages of geology, might have been able to predict the human form. The immediately pre-human creature, I suppose, has not yet been unearthed ; but the imperfect skeleton of the *anthropopithecus erectus* enables us to form a good guess at the materials that would have been available for such a prophet in comparative anatomy as we are supposing. A number of such specimens belonging to previous millenniums would show a gradual alteration of the proportion between fore- and hind-limbs, an increasing differentiation of feet and hands, the growth of a heel, the tendency to an erect posture, and a marked enlargement of brain. Here again the fixation of such points in the line of evolution would enable a celestial observer though of only finite wisdom to say, "The ideal of this animal is a creature standing erect on two firmly planted and very slightly prehensile feet, while the fore-limbs will be endowed with digits capable of a vast variety of delicate operations, and the whole body will be dominated by a volume of brain likely to make the cunning of the creature more than a match for the elephant's strength."

Necessary
indefinite-
ness of the
predicted
ideal.

To any finite intelligence however exalted, the notion of an ideal thus gathered could not be precisely definite. Indeed, the penumbra of uncertainty around it would be ample enough to leave much scope for unexpected developments. Still, the ideal would be distinct enough to form a standard of judgment. Thus of two specimens

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of anthropoid creatures presented, it would be possible to say with confidence, "This is superior to that, because it has shorter arms and longer legs, because it stands erect more easily, and has a larger cranial capacity, all of them differences indicating a nearer approach to the ideal form suggested by the course of evolution." CHAP. IV.

By an application of the same method I venture to believe we may obtain a notion of a moral ideal not dependent on individual temperament or private preferences, but revealed by the moving order of the world. Suppose, for instance, we put the question whether the moral ideal of man should be found nearer to Christ or to Achilles. Surely the answer is not merely a question of taste or religious prejudice. For if we try to carry out in imagination the lines followed by moral evolution hitherto, they point not to the man of war, but to the man of peace, not to the man of the "mailed fist," but to the man of grace and truth, not to brilliant egoism, but to calm and fearless self-devotion, not to tribal patriotism, but to the love of all mankind. Granted that self-effacement to the extent of the non-resistance of evil, if ever taught by primitive Christianity was an exaggeration, or perversion of true doctrine; granted all that is said, and more than can be justly said, about the predominance of the feminine over the manly virtues in the Gospels,¹ yet still to deny that the moral ideal for which we are destined—if the race lasts long enough—will be nearer to Christ than to Achilles

¹ I lately heard a most interesting and accomplished "Ethical" orator disparage the New Testament as a text-book of moral instruction, for the reason that it does not teach us when to assert ourselves. I could not help calling to remembrance St. Paul's haughty message from his prison to the Philippian magistrates when they wanted to get rid of him quietly; and of the seeing blind man in John ix., with his imperturbable refrain, "And yet he hath opened mine eyes"; and of Paul face to face with Peter at Antioch. It is sometimes forgotten, too, that Gospel tradition has given us in Matthew xxiii. one of the most tremendous invectives known in literature.

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CHAP. IV. would be to ignore the whole tendency of moral evolution from prehistoric times downwards.

Religion an
essential
element.

Let us take a few of the principal waymarks in the pilgrimage of man, and consider their significance. The Catholic Church is more catholic in reality than it knows how to be in form. For however it may disdain the association, it is only one out of innumerable modes in which humanity has pictured its inexpugnable faith in an eternal significance of passing shows and in an everlasting life of which it is itself but as a momentary breath. Surely they who think that the moral ideal in its triumph will exclude religion, ignore some of the widest and deepest facts of past and present. Or take the more secular brotherhoods outside the Church, the confraternities, the "sodalities," or "hetæriæ" of ancient times, the freemasonries and "internationals" of later days. Whatever mystery may becloud the origins and mutual oaths and rites which they have chosen to keep sacred, there can be no doubt that in their best periods the main principle of their cohesion was the subordination of the part to the whole. "All for each, and each for all," is likewise the watchword of modern socialism, which whatever may be its incidental mistakes, derives its main strength from the truth that we are "many members in one body," and that "none of us liveth to himself," even though he may think he does.

Socialism.

Individual-
ism.

That this element of collectivism or socialism in the moral ideal of humanity will wholly suppress individualism, is not to be expected. The motto of "All for each, and each for all" should negative any such an idea. For "each" is an individual, and the rule of social justice would be contravened if the "all" were to destroy in him the limited independence, the self-respect and conditional freedom of thought and action

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which experience shows to increase his usefulness to the community. But the last words indicate the limits assigned to individuality. For if the apparent lines of social evolution point truly, there will be no room in the moral ideal of humanity for the sort of mad egoism pictured by Meredith in fiction, by Nietzsche in half-philosophic, half-poetic speculation, and approximately embodied in such brilliant monsters as Napoleon Bonaparte. On the contrary, though sometimes apparently sanctioned by prophets such as Carlyle, the histrionic pose of the individual as separate and indestructible, supreme in his own infinitesimal domain against the infinite which involves and co-ordinates him, is rebuked and condemned by the eternal order subordinating the part to the whole.

If, therefore, any individual has a quality or a gift such as adequate experience shows to be dangerous to the community, it is not of the least use for him to plead that its development and free exercise are necessary to enable him to be fully himself. For it is an altogether insufficient conception of his place in the Universe to suppose that it was given him in order that he may be fully himself. No; it was given him that he may realise himself only as an infinitesimal part of a co-ordinate Whole. And if I should be told that this is dangerous doctrine, inasmuch as all the mischiefs of bigotry and superstition have been wrought in the endeavour to root out qualities, or gifts, or opinions thought to be dangerous to the community, my reply is, that all such panic violence resulted from this very sin of impious self-assertion, which the ultimate moral ideal will condemn. For it is the duty of communities as well as of individuals to wait on the revelation of experience; and it is not until an individual quality or

Limits to the right of self-development.

No infringement of true liberty.

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CHAP. IV. gift, like that of a skilful burglar or a brilliant conqueror, is shown by experience to be hurtful to society, that society is justified in suppressing it. But of a new doctrine or a proposed innovation in practice neither individual nor corporate mind can infallibly prophesy the effect. Therefore, faith in the life of the community and loyalty to the law of its evolution should inspire us with courage to wait and watch.

Equality. The due co-ordination of socialism and individualism in the moral ideal of man will no doubt involve and be facilitated by that principle of equality which the French nation alone has realised hitherto,¹ but which, when social divisions come to be less marked by degrees of culture than they are at present, will be acknowledged everywhere. Of course by equality is not meant a false pretence that each man is in every sense as good as any other, but only that to each is assigned a necessary and worthy part in the welfare of the social whole, and that the loyalty due to that social whole includes a diffused respect for every member of it. The ridiculous assumption still suggested in many ceremonial forms, and, alas! in some of a religious kind, that the whole State exists for the health, wealth, triumph, and beatification of its crowned head, is a relic of the past, and by its resounding hollowness we are occasionally startled into a momentary recognition of the progress made by the principle of equality since the times of the Tudors and Stuarts.

Love of
truth for
its own
sake.

This tendency to honour all men for what they are worth, and if for no other reason because they are living elements of the Commonwealth that commands our devotion, is immediately associated with that thirst for

¹ In America it is abundantly acknowledged in word but very scantily in act. In England it is not very much acknowledged either way, though we are progressing.

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reality and love of truth for its own sake, which also is revealed as part of the ultimate moral ideal by the direction of evolution. There has been no entire lack in past times of individual worshippers of truth for its own sake. But the scornful words, "*populus vult decipi ; decipiatur,*" were more continuously applicable to ancient peoples than to modern. The shrewd saying of Abraham Lincoln as to the limits imposed on the art of "fooling the people"¹ is essentially modern in tone. In prehistoric times "medicine-men," in later days oracles and augurs, and hereditary tyrants with their canting pretensions to a consecrated fatherhood of their subjects, succeeded very largely in "fooling all the people all the time." Indeed it was only because the pursuit of truth for its own sake was quite out of the range of popular desire or conception that the comparative omnipotence of the many oscillated between blind submission to the few, and the even blinder rage of aimless revolution. But in recent times, and especially in the last century, the love of truth for its own sake has ceased to be merely the exceptional characteristic of a few daring scholars, thinkers, and pioneers of research. Prevalent anxiety for the "restatement of doctrine" shows that this passion has to some extent assailed large sections of the middle classes; and the success of "secularist" lecturers amongst craftsmen, together with the very considerable growth of Ethical Societies, indicates—whatever we may think of the conclusions urged—a very remarkable extension of a desire for truth at any price. It is safe, therefore, to infer that the moral ideal of humanity will absolutely exclude the consecrations of prejudice, and will require from all teachers

¹ "You may fool some of the people all the time, and you may fool all the people some of the time; but you can't fool all the people all the time."

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CHAP. IV. and preachers, and writers and orators, the pledge now only exacted in Courts of Justice, to speak the truth, the whole truth—or as much as can be had—and nothing but the truth.

Recogni-
tion of
things as
they are.

And slowly as this longing for the dry light of truth affects the multitude, there comes a feeling that truth is nearer than we thought, and is to be found only in things as they are. But though it is two millenniums and a half since the Moses of the Deuteronomist's imagination is said to have proclaimed this truth in words already quoted, it is precisely this element in the ultimate moral ideal which is least apparent yet in the lines of evolution. Metaphysical creeds, decrees of ecclesiastical councils about what not one member of them could understand, "Longer" and "Shorter" catechisms, containing scarcely an intelligible sentence except in statements of moral principles, arbitrary mystery, miracles, portents, all in glorification of "an intelligent God" the biggest among living beings,—such is the "vacant chaff well meant for grain" on which the souls of men have been and are still fed or starved. The respect due even to such beggarly elements as necessary accidents in the grand course of evolution I have not denied, and trust I shall never forget. But these have served their turn; they have done their work. They are henceforth among those things which decay, wax old, and are ready to vanish away. But while they fester and rot they hide actualities with miasmatic vapours. Things as they are go for nothing. Only a world in which men customarily lived each for about five hundred years, a world in which seas and rivers were divided for favoured pilgrims, in which shouting did the business of modern artillery, in which an ass spoke wisdom, and a prophet prophesied

Lingering
unreality of
creeds.

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in the belly of a whale,—a world in which the Eternal used to negotiate and make covenants like a petty chieftain, is deemed fit to have been the seed-plot of religion. CHAP. IV.

But signs of the ultimate ideal are appearing through the mists even here. For Lyell's doctrine of geological uniformity, new revelations of the ancient courses of nature, the established antiquity and gradual evolution of man, the recovery from the dust of ages of civilisations which flourished on ordinary lines centuries before the reputed times of Abraham, all suggest a very literal and sober interpretation of the church formula "as it was in the beginning, is now." In a word, whenever we are brought into something like living contact with the ancients raised from the dead, they seem very like ourselves, and the world they inhabit is as free from miracle as ours. How then can portent and signs and wonders have been needed to make the world a seed-plot for religion when the only contemporary and really authentic records of the past in our possession ignore the existence of such things, except in myths, or dreams of ages then vanished, or in the visions of seers? The seed-plot of religion must be found in things as they are, or not at all.

Of course no attempt is made here to give any complete picture of the ultimate moral ideal as it is indicated by the lines of moral evolution. Such a purpose would require a large book to itself. It is enough to have shown, or at least suggested, how by noting the direction followed by various lines of moral progress, we may, as it were, focus them on the horizon of the future, and imagine in outline the perfect man, or fully evolved humanity. And this is given us by the revelation of experience.

CHAPTER V

“WHAT MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD”

The craving for a theophany.

To the preceding account of the nature of revelation it is a natural and obvious objection that, as thus conceived, revelation has little or nothing to disclose about the being, attributes, providence, and judgment of God. But, like many another natural and obvious objection, it can only seem to be such if the very hypothesis of the argument be ignored. For the fountain and origin of all religion, not according to our theory only, but according to the devoutest confessions of the greatest saints of the Church, is the unsearchable mystery, not of darkness but of light, enshrouding “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” No mystery, no religion. We do not worship what we see all round and through and through; and the key-note of our whole argument is the word that came to St. Augustine as though the mouth of the Lord had spoken it—“If thou canst not conceive what I am to Myself, apprehend what I am to thee.” For obedience to this command all reflections are helpful which show the divine basis of human experience, or which illustrate the truth declared of old: “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord searching all the inward parts.”

I have already explained in the preceding chapter

“WHAT MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD”

CHAP. V.

what is the sense in which I speak of the divine basis of human experience. And that explanation ought, I think, to acquit of the charge of mere paradox the title of this chapter: “What may be known of God.” ‘The very formulation of your argument,’ I may be told, ‘is that God is the Unknowable; and now you are going to tell us what may be known of the Unknowable.’ Yes, but let it be remembered that this term has always been treated as applicable to the Eternal only “as he is to himself.” And even so I have taken my stand on Spencer’s explanation that the term, while it denotes no mere negation, actually connotes an assurance stronger than any other certainty, that the Eternal actually is. He is unknowable in his infinity in “the strict sense of knowing.” He is what “the intellect cannot master,” but at the same time he is assumed or presupposed in the very bases of experience. In trying to interpret the relation of those bases of experience to the Eternal, we learn, as Augustine said, what God is to us. And this is “what may be known of God.” But nothing that we can think, or conceive, or dream will make him in the least degree more knowable as he is to himself.

Still the desire for some more or less definite statement of “what God is to us” is perfectly legitimate. And within certain indefinite limits of time and experience we need not feel any difficulty in assenting to the words of St. Paul about mankind: “That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.” Some of the methods of such manifestation have already been indicated,¹ but a generation more or less used to definite creeds, and still inclined to insist on their value, may well ask for more

Within
what limits
legitimate.

¹ *E.g.* pp. 104, 112, 114.

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CHAP. V. than hints. At the same time we disclaim at once any pretence of "restating" the ecclesiastical or sectarian creeds about God in any intellectual form which could take their place. For the pathetic words in which, according to the author of Acts, St. Paul on Mars Hill described the scope of men's life, "That they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not very far from every one of us," hardly suggest an articulate creed, but rather a heartfelt experience, too often unrecognised for what it is. And unfortunately we must begin with negation: unfortunately, not because any sorrow need be felt for the loss of an incongruous and impossible conception, but because in such matters even necessary negation is too like the drawing of a tooth to be endured with complacency.

No Creator,
or begin-
ning or
end.

The revelation of experience, then, gives us no justification for asserting a creator, a beginning of the universe or an end. By this, of course, is meant not only that we have no experience of creation, in the sense of formation out of nothing, but that never to human experience has there been presented any evidence of such a thing, or any sufficient reason for thinking it to have ever happened. But inasmuch as in thinking of religion men have occupied themselves too much with origins and destinies to the neglect of things as they are, a habit of mind has become hereditary and general which is easily misled by very partial and inconclusive physical speculations. Thus the nebular hypothesis, which for aught I know still holds the field as the best account of the quasi-origin and real development of the solar system, is supposed by many to imply, if not directly, at least when taken together with other processes of integration and disintegration, that the universe

Fallacious
inferences
from the
nebular
theory.

cannot be eternal, and that it must therefore have had a beginning and a creator. For it is said that the tendency is toward the cooling down of the whole system and its consolidation into one frozen sphere, which can only be re-wakened into life by collision with some other similar body, the generation of a new nebula by fervent heat and the repetition of the whole process, ending in another frozen ball, another collision, and a fresh nebula. Such a process, it is argued, must inevitably end in the accumulation of all the orbs that form the stellar heavens into one inert mass, and thus the death of the Universe. But if so, it is clear that the Universe as we know it cannot have existed for an unlimited time, or otherwise the devolution of all worlds into death must have been accomplished by now. And this is taken to prove the certainty of a creation in some remote but not infinitely distant past.

We need not, however, take such a hypothesis so seriously now as it was the custom to do fifty years ago. For to say nothing of the assumption that the stellar universe is finite, for which we know of no adequate justification,¹ Sir Norman Lockyer has seen reason to believe that the possibilities of regenerating dead orbs are not confined to the very clumsy process just described.

Corrections
by recent
science.

¹ The allegation of blank spaces in the heavens and abysmal boundaries to the Milky Way, and the suggestion that if the stellar universe were infinite, light must be omnipresent, do not afford such a justification. For the Milky Way itself may very well be but a sort of atoll in an infinite archipelago, and the notion of universally diffused light makes no allowance for the possibility that dark orbs intercepting light are as numerous as radiant bodies. Since writing the above I have been shown, by my friend Mr. Herbert Rix, “A New Story of the Stars,” and other remarkable papers, by Prof. A. W. Bickerton of Canterbury College, Christchurch, New Zealand, which appear exceedingly suggestive. The theory of “shearing collisions” with consequent formation of two new suns and an additional nebula is, I believe, thought well worthy of attention by some of the most renowned lords of science. See also “Cosmic Evolution,” a paper by Prof. Bickerton, communicated to the *Philosophical Magazine* (vol. I. p. 216) by Prof. Rucker, Sec. R.S.

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CHAP. V. And, besides, recent theories of matter open up endless avenues of speculation concerning the dissipation of chemical elements into ethereal constituents and their reappearance in new forms. At any rate it is obvious that our knowledge of material existence and material changes is not so exhaustive as to warrant us in deducing a beginning and a creator by an argument *ad absurdum*.

Theory of a beginning and end an illusion of finite experience.

For ourselves, we take our stand with things as they are, and we decline to admit the totally foreign and arbitrary idea of a beginning. The delusion that anything of the kind is necessary arises from our familiarity with the birth, growth, and decay of the creature—that is, of finite things around us. For as the falling of the leaves touched the Homeric singer with a melancholy sense of the flux of human generations, so do autumn and harvest and old age fill us with bitter-sweet sentiment about beginnings and endings. But none of these beginnings is absolute, nor is any ending so. From the appearance of a new star in the heavens to the sprouting of a seed, every apparent beginning is simply a rearrangement of old material in new forms. And however impressive may be the sudden clothing of the fields and woods with green at the advent of Spring—a vision which has touched all generations of every race with the sense of a rising tide of life impelled by some divine energy—yet there is nothing in it to suggest for a moment the harsh and unthinkable miracle of the conversion of nothing into something.

Herbert Spencer's exclusion of self-existence inapplicable.

Of course it is not forgotten that Spencer considers the absence of a creative act to be as unthinkable as creation itself, or, in other words, that self-existence is unthinkable. But this is said of any self-existence, as, for instance, the self-existence attributed by theologians

to a creating God. For that was to Spencer equally unthinkable with the self-existence of the Cosmos. Nevertheless the Unknowable, as taught by him, though he does not say so, must needs be self-existent, for he assures us with solemn earnestness that the being of the “Inscrutable Power manifested to us through all phenomena” is absolutely certain; in fact, its non-being is unthinkable. Yet clearly we do not attribute to it either a beginning or an end. We must therefore suppose that his teaching as to the unthinkableness of self-existence applies only to the phenomenal Universe. And of that we are quite ready to acknowledge that it is always in a state of flux, because every group or series of phenomena is evolved out of some previous group or series. But of absolute beginning we have no hint;¹ and after all, what is the use of distracting our brains with the metaphysical connotation of self-existence? For we are not called upon either to affirm or deny it as a philosophical conception. But from a religious point of view, in contemplating the marvellous frame of things that grows upon us in wonder just in proportion as our faculty of wonder increases, we are not justified in marring its majesty by the totally gratuitous blasphemy of its alleged birth out of nothing, which would imply its return to nothing again. It is there; it was there before our wondering mind took its present form, and at least by faith we hold that it will be there after our consciousness has passed—we know not how—into we know not what. The suggestion of a beginning or an end to it is utterly unnecessary, and, in the true sense of the word, impertinent.² The

¹ Why Mr. Spencer should have ever spoken of Pantheism as a “hypothesis of self-creation” passes my understanding.

² All that is meant by existence without a beginning is that beyond every conceivable limit of past time we think it already there.

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CHAP. V. human sentiment that "looks before and after" may indeed experience a luxurious melancholy, not altogether free from vanity, in expanding its cloudland of passing shows so as to include "the great globe itself, yea, all that it inherit." But if the dream passes beyond change of form to annihilation of substance, the shock awakens us, and we know that it is a dream.

Creation
out of
nothing is
unthink-
able.

A contra-
diction in
terms and
in essence.

Yet even if we are told by sufficient authority that religion must hear the judgments of philosophy in order to find safe paths for her feet, we need not fear the appeal. For certainly a creation out of nothing has never found much favour with philosophy. Perhaps, notwithstanding Mr. Mallock, no real philosopher has ever tolerated the possible reality of any event or conception which involved a contradiction in terms and in essence. Thus if we were told that, in some world outside our experience certain objects or creatures are able in the same sense and at the same moment of time to be and not to be, we should not be guilty of any arrogance in denying it. Now to many in all ages, and perhaps to an increasing number at the present time, the notion of creation out of nothing involves precisely such a contradiction. Indeed it is only to those who by some self-deception conceive of omnipotence apart from infinity, that this is not apparent. For, say they, to omnipotence everything is possible that does not involve self-contradiction. And if omnipotence at one moment calls out of nothing a substance which, at the previous moment, had neither being nor existence, such people think there is no self-contradiction obvious. Perhaps not; but it is only avoided by the false assumption that to omnipotence, which by hypothesis of the attribute must be infinite,

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there can be two successive moments. This is impossible, and therefore the case really presented is not that of making to be at one moment that which at the previous moment was not, but of making a substance not to be and, in the same eternal moment of infinite being, also to be. There is therefore self-contradiction.

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On such arguments, however, we need not lay much stress, for far more effective is the growing common-sense conviction of the arbitrariness and superfluity of the doctrine of creation in face of a Universe evidently self-sufficing. But if it be asked where then, in a self-sufficing Universe, is there any place or office for God? the answer is that God and the Universe are identical, provided only that we give an unlimited extensive and intensive sense to the latter term. Thus if the stellar universe should be proved to be finite, notwithstanding our strong conviction of the contrary, then existence extends beyond all stellar systems, and God's Being includes that extension. Or if the stellar universe be regarded as boundless in extension, we are not on that account to assume that it, with all its hosts of finite life, represents the only modes of existence. Mathematicians can work out calculations based on the assumption of a fourth dimension, and perhaps, for aught I know, of a fifth and sixth. But apart from all subtleties about space, which many eminent philosophers take to be subjective, a “form of thought,” a category imposed by the ego upon the non-ego, certainly there is nothing to forbid our supposing that the phenomena of form and colour, and sound and scent engrossing our attention may be only one set out of millions of others, apparent to beings gifted with other perceptions, while to them the phenomena that engross us may be non-existent. Thus,

Self-sufficiency of the Universe because of identity with God.

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CHAP. V. within what *we* call the same space, there may be world within world, thronged with endless phenomena, possibly also with modes of finite consciousness inconceivable to us. When therefore we identify God with the Universe we do not mean only our world.¹ We use the word with an unlimited extension and intension, meaning by it all that is, whether manifest to us or not. For surely there is boundless suggestiveness in Spinoza's idea of God as a Being of infinite attributes, capable of infinite modifications. And though his selection of extension as one of the two attributes known to us seems very unfortunate, because of its suggestion of materialism, yet the suggestiveness of the idea is not cancelled thereby. For we may still think of God as "fulfilling himself in many ways" that are no part of the universe apparent to us. Still they are in and of the real universe, and it is with that universe, infinite in extension and intension, that we identify God.²

God is not any number of parts, but the whole.

It may be necessary, however, to repeat a caution given in a long prior and briefer essay already mentioned, that the identification of God with the Universe excludes his identification with any parts thereof. To illustrate this again by any strict parallel is, in the nature of the case, impossible, because the transition

¹ The use of this word "world" sometimes for our earth, sometimes for the visible universe, sometimes for the real universe of all being, often causes confusion and even fallacy. For instance, in an article by G. Lowes Dickinson, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, on "Optimism and Immortality," in the *Hibbert Journal* for April 1903, the first postulate of optimism is stated to be "that the world is not eternally good, but embodies a real (not merely apparent) process in time towards a good end." Here "the world" can hardly be regarded as an infinite universe, because that must, as a Whole, be perfect, and, as a Whole, can embody no "process," though it does embody an infinity of "processes" constituting together an eternal equilibrium. But if the term "world" means only the earth or the solar system, the argument seems inconclusive, because it deals only with a finite and arbitrarily detached part of the Universe.

² See note at end of chapter.

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in thought from any multiplicity of parts, however magnificent, to the unity of the Whole is transcendental ; that is, it leads out of the knowable into the Unknowable. Yet in some sense it may be a help to remember that our own individual humanity, a living unity, involving on any theory many modes of manifestation, is not identifiable with any one of them, not even with the brain, or with perception, or reflexion, or imagination, but only with the unified and total activities of body, soul, and spirit, or the phenomena usually grouped under those words. But we must here add what was not said before — that were it possible to contemplate any creature, even a mayfly, an electron, or a grain of dust in all its infinite relations, then we must needs see in that creature a manifestation of God, and identify with God the sum of its relations. Mr. P. H. Hugenholtz jun., in his learned and instructive treatise on *Ethische Pantheisme*,¹ tells us how, in the thirteenth century in Paris, “Bernard, a pious priest of the Pantheistic sect” that followed Amalrich van Bena, exclaimed to his executioners at the stake: “But you cannot burn *me*, for I am God !” And bystanders would take this for the sheer madness of fanaticism. Yet if we make allowance for the circumstances, which hardly allowed leisure for philosophical distinctions, we may well suppose that he meant the “me” in all its infinite relations, which, could they be realised, would be seen to make it one with the Universe and with God. Indeed this transcendental identification of the finite with the infinite seems necessarily involved in the Hegelian view of cause and effect, as expounded by Mr. Haldane in his

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The anatomy is not the man.

Yet realisation of the infinity of relations of a finite part would give a manifestation of God.

¹ *Ethische Pantheisme* : Een Studie door P. H. Hugenholtz Jr. Amsterdam, Van Holkema and Warendorf, 1903. An admirably concise sketch of the ancient origins and modern developments of religious Pantheism.

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CHAP. V. *Gifford Lectures*, "The Pathway to Reality." For if the cause is the sum of the conditions, and necessarily identifiable with the effect, then the sum of the conditions, that is the Infinite Universe, or God, is identifiable with every creature.

Implied in recently prevalent ideas of "cause."

For myself, I am well aware that in pursuing such trains of thought we find, as Professor Clifford said of the strictest mathematical calculations pushed beyond a certain point, that "our formulas begin to talk nonsense." But in this case it is not because there is no reality answering thereto, it is only because, though the reality is indisputable, it is—as we acknowledged at the beginning of the argument—"unknowable in the strict sense of knowing."

Abandonment of creation an epoch in religious development.

The abandonment of the idea of a creation often forms an epoch in the religious history of individuals, and its final surrender will make an epoch in the religious history of mankind. For we need have no fear of any return to ancient philosophic superstitions of eternal matter and eternal mind; superstitions which dissolve away like intrusive clouds in a flaming sky before the all-embracing, unifying passion now emerging from all the wrangling of the sects. "Monism" may take as many forms as Spinoza's infinite substance, and we need not commit ourselves to any one of them. But so far as it stands for a devout faith that all things are ultimately one not many—and still less two—we may safely regard it as the irreversible tendency of all the best thought of the world. In no danger, then, of revived Manichæism, or Zoroastrianism in any form, we entirely surrender the dogma of a creative "fiat," by which finite existence was supposed to have been called out of nothing, and we believe that if at any period of the eternal past—*sit venia verbo*—a creature

Return to dualism impossible.

“WHAT MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD”

like man, with perceptions and apperception and categories of thought like his could have contemplated the then Universe, he would have seen “stars and systems rolling past,” and planets revolving round suns, and some orbs pregnant with finite life, and some dead like the moon, some dying and some regenerated through a fiery mist just as now. Then as now the possibilities of existence would not be limited by the senses that observed it ; but worlds within worlds lived and moved and had their being, as infinitely varied modifications of infinite attributes of the Eternal. We have already dealt with the question—What then is the Eternal ? He is All in all, Unknowable in Himself because transcending thought, yet never absent from our thought because implied, nay revealed, in everything. We cannot think Him away ; we cannot think Him as He is. Let us then take St. Augustine’s word, and try if we can think what He is to us.

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The
spiritual
application
of
Pantheism.

Already in a previous chapter¹ I have endeavoured to illustrate the meaning I attach to these words, and in the preceding chapter have suggested that the revelation of Experience is a divine thing, and shows in part what God is to us.² But I desire now, if possible, to meet more nearly the deep human craving that thrills us in the aspirations of saints : “O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat !” “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God !” Such aspirations survive unstified and unshushed amid all the brazen clangour of supposed materialistic triumphs.

¹ Chapter III. pp. 80, 89-96.

² This, if I understand aright, is substantially the view of the late T. H. Green. “God is for ever reason ; and His communication, His revelation is reason ; not however abstract reason, but reason as taking a body from and giving life to the whole system of experience which makes the history of man” (*Witness of God*, vol. iii. p. 239).

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CHAP. V.

The Vision
of William
Blake.

Mock on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau,¹
Mock on, mock on—'tis all in vain !
You throw the sand against the wind,
And the wind blows it back again.

And every sand becomes a gem,
Reflected in the rays divine ;
Blown back, they blind the mocking eye,
But still in Israel's paths they shine.

The atoms of Democritus
And Newton's particles of light
Are sands upon the Red Sea shore,
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.

Yes ; the poet's genius here merges in the rapture and insight of the prophet. For truly the material atoms and molecules hurled at us so confidently, are blown back by the strong wind of God, which, as the breath of a universal life, has been in all ages driving us toward the Canaan of repose and peace in the sense of oneness with God as All in all. And in these days of full recognition of the mystery of matter, the very sands do really become gems resplendent with wonder beyond wonder of hitherto unsuspected infinitesimal worlds. Therefore, assured as we are that these endless perspectives are endless only because they all merge in the one Unknowable Power and Godhead, comprehending and controlling all, we feel as if another Isaiah or Habakkuk had spoken, when the echo of a voice silent nigh a hundred years calls us to see in these illumined sands the foundations of the future Israel. And the

¹ In the use of poetry I have not the minute scrupulosity of "Ethical" friends, to whom I have lectured, and who mar their hymns—I beg pardon, "songs"—by tearing out the names of God or Moses wherever the pre-ethical author happens to have used them. Poetical language deals largely in symbol, putting the concrete for the abstract. And in the above quotation, I feel that though I have heartfelt sympathy for a good deal of Voltaire's mockery, it stands here, in Blake's mind, for an entirely false note of irreverence.

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fulfilment of the prophecy will be realised as soon as the Church, by which I mean the congregation of all faithful men, is content to apprehend of God what can be known through phenomena, or contemplation; and for the rest, have loyalty of soul enough to accept the Unknowable as ineffably good. CHAP. V.

The amazement with which we watch the explorations conducted by science now into the inner complexities of matter is perhaps largely due to the revolution they work in atomic theories that seemed as fixed and firm as the law of gravitation. And it may very well be that the time will soon come that we shall babble of “electrons” and “radio-active emanations” and “kathode rays” as unconcernedly as from the days of our grandfathers we have talked of ultimate atoms. But, because familiarity breeds unconcern, it does not follow that the phenomena become any the less portentous. “Portentous,” I say, because, though we are a long way yet from the attainable limits of science, and immeasurably far from the secret of the Eternal, yet these new visions of an “ether” that burns with radiance and is not consumed are a much more real manifestation of God than the fabled burning bush. In such an assertion there ought to be no danger of misunderstanding after what has been said above. For as even Moses in the venerable story did not consider the fire itself to be Yahweh, but only a portentous manifestation to his eyes of a Presence and Power that was really everywhere, so neither do we regard these new revelations as in themselves more divine than the daily and nightly vision of mountain and plain and sea and sky. But they certainly do stir in us a sense not hitherto experienced, except by some philosophers, of the convergence of all perspectives of knowledge in one

The
spiritual-
isation of
matter.

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CHAP. V. infinite, unknowable Power. The hard kernel has
— vanished from the atom. To the three modes of matter—solid, liquid, and gaseous—is added a fourth, unrecognisable as any of the three. In strange fulfilment of Scripture “the elements melt with fervent heat,” and only fail to realise the dream of alchemists because in their transmutations they recede further from the atomic weight of gold. And “the weight of all this unintelligible world” is resolved into a seeming void traversed by an infinitude of vibrations that cannot be conceived otherwise than as co-ordinated, and therefore as one in energy and self-control. Surely it is impossible to resist a conviction that this modern revelation must, to a wider Israel, constitute a religious epoch not less pregnant with spiritual growth than the vision of Moses to the Israel of old.

Material-
istic per-
version of
recent
theories not
possible.

The possibility that such an approximate dissolution of atomic matter into lines of force or “strains” in a universal medium may turn out to be materialism in a finer dress is too remote to detain us. Because it is barred out not only by what has been said of the folly of explaining the known by the unknown, the world of consciousness by vibrations inseparable in conception from the thought that thinks them, but also by the prevalent, well-grounded, and resistless tendency of modern philosophy to regard the object not as foreign to and alien from the subject, but as its complement *in pari materia*. It seems therefore only reasonable to take these new revelations of science as an unveiling of usually unseen avenues between the commonest phenomena and the Unknowable in which everything merges. Thus, in the light of these discoveries, all objects that delight us, nay, all likewise that affright us, seem nearer to God. For what we thought their coarse materialism

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is refined away into modes of one universal energy which, if not God Himself, may reverently be regarded as a mode of some infinite attribute. Thereby an additional vividness is given to that communion through Nature with God which was the inspiring note of Wordsworth's poetry. True, indeed, the “order” which we have been taught to find in natural phenomena, an order said to gratify subjective reason by the presentation of an objective reason in the arrangements of the world, is not much illumined thereby. But certainly the unity of things is brought into startling prominence, and also, as just suggested, the super-materialism of the energy in which that unity is found.

Considering, however, that religion is more a mode of feeling than of thought, and that in its contemplation “what may be known of God” means often what may be *felt* of God, we turn rather to experiences in which a fuller significance is given by the new knowledge to what has been called “cosmic emotion.” The higher joys of refined sense in view of the beauty of the world are familiar to us in the poets and in that most poetic of prose writers, John Ruskin. But so far as my too limited knowledge of literature avails me, they have not said much about one breaking point of overstrained feeling at which the heart seems to fail with too much delight, and tears rise “as from the depths of some divine despair.” In these last words, Tennyson was singing not of an overwrought joy, but of a sweet sorrow, the sorrow we assiduously cultivate in trying and failing to bring into unity with the present, and to make immortal “the days that are no more.” Here, no doubt, is a wistful glimpse of some infinite and now unattainable life in which the past and present are one. But it is not this we have now in mind. Rather it is

CHAP. V.

Religion a
mode of
feeling.

“Cosmic
emotion.”

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CHAP. V. the strain of finite capacity for joy when some thing of beauty overpasses our capacity for holding it, and we feel as though brought to the verge of a world beyond—a world that we would fain enter and cannot. I

The joy of ideal art.

remember being once politely satirised by a lady orator because I had spoken of the Apollo Belvedere as a vision that forced tears to the eyes. And yet it did, and it does when the beholder realises the almost absolute fulfilment of an ideal, suggested by this world, yet not of it. For majesty of manly form, strength, grace, beauty of moulded limb, godlike soul in the face, resistless force and serene repose in triumph, if ever united at all, are not found in the flesh. And when such an imagination is suggested by the touch of art on stone, it brings us to the portals of another world than this : to portals which open but to close on the possibility of perfection. Surely it is the life of God, of which we obscurely think, the life to which Plato was not so wrong in attributing all ideals of the good and fair.

A mystery of music.

At the risk of being too reminiscent—a pardonable fault in age—I recall words of the late Principal Greenwood of Owens College when I, then a student, stood with him in Richard Cobden's former music-room, beside the piano at which Charles Hallé, then in his artistic prime, discoursed music to which we listened with "unexpressive" emotion. The great player had then the faculty, which I have recognised in still greater perfection in Paderewski, of giving soft, pathetic passages as though the instrument were formed of breathing flutes rather than of vibrating strings. And as the performance ended in one of these, I remember how the Principal turned away, saying, "There is such a thing as pain through excess of bliss." It was so because another world was opened to us, which we knew we

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could not enter. And this is an experience constantly produced in us by the mystery of music. For it *is* a mystery that the trembling of strings or the waves of sound from a thousand voices should move us to the strange extremes they do. Not that it is so inexplicable when the marriage of “perfect music unto perfect words” affects us chiefly by the latter. But the mystery is realised when there is nothing but a number of vibrations of the air at various speeds in various proportions one to another, yet stirring in us emotions utterly and hopelessly incommensurable with the apparent impulse. Think of it! The ride of the Valkyrie is nothing but a combination and succession of aerial vibrations the proportionate rapidities of which mathematicians can exhibit on a diagram; and possibly some symmetry can be observed in the curves such a diagram would show. But such a diagram would not move us in the slightest degree except in the way of cold calculating curiosity. I have read also lately that a scientific lady has shown how the vibrations of music throw loose sand on responsive plates into exquisite patterns. But the patterns, though pretty, touch no more than the topmost surface of æsthetic feeling. What we want to know is how the mere combination and succession of air-shakings in the ride of the Valkyrie should stir in us an awestruck apprehension of some divine power of retribution.

CHAP. V.

The ride
of the
Valkyrie.

Or take the overture to *Tannhäuser*. There again mere “inanimate” vibrations, as most think them, wake in us the sense of carnal beauty, fleshly temptations, remorse, resurrection, triumph. Or to go back to the musical joys of our youth, which happily show no symptoms of mortality yet, why do the aerial vibrations noted on the scores of the first chorus in Handel’s

Overture to
Tannhäuser.

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CHAP. V. *Messiah* stir us, at every successive period of the public struggle for right, to a triumphant faith that "the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together"? No; it is not the words here, venerable though they be. It is the music that rouses the soul; and yet the music is only shaking air and trembling nerve. But it is surely more than that. For it seems a gratuitous depreciation of the spirit of man to suppose it stirred to such rapture by forces finding an absolute equivalent in heat and motion.

Handel's
Messiah.

We do it wrong, being so majestic,
To offer it the show of violence

by mere mechanical effects of air vibrations. We should rather dare to think that as all the shows of beauty resolve themselves on the furthest horizon of science into a rhythmical trembling of Nature upon the threshold of the Unknowable Divine Essence, we feel in such music the touch of God upon our souls. Hence the purity of the passion kindled. Hence the idea of soaring beyond the limits of earth-bound life to the verge of the ideal. Hence the involuntary tears as of one who looks into heaven, and in a moment the door is shut.

The
rhythmic
touch of
God.

Surely we need not hesitate to believe with all our hearts that in such experiences the oneness of the finite with the infinite is realised in a flash of emotion. Or as Tennyson has it—

"The glory
of the sum
of things."

The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords, and go.

And this "sum of things" is God, who at such times reveals to us not "what he is in himself," but "what he is to us," the ground and substance of our being, the

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co-ordination of all finite variable good, the only CHAP. V. begetter of the sympathies and aspirations in us which make for the harmony and happiness of our world. Of “our world,” for after all, though we are one with the infinite, this latter is “unknowable in the strict sense of knowing.” And though the sense of it has a power of inspiration to raise our affections and spiritual passion beyond any pitch apparently justifiable by the fleeting things on which we fix our hearts, yet the sense of the infinite cannot itself have definite content, and to exercise its power it must seize and transfigure the painter’s The infinite in the finite. vision, the poet’s imagination, the musician’s “choir invisible” heard by him alone, the generalisations of science, the enthusiasm of humanity, earthly love, the moral ideal.

Hence when it is insisted, as in an article of the *Hibbert Journal* already noted, that religion must assume a world process—“a process in time towards a good end”—we may respond with hearty assent if the “world” meant is our limited world of man. But if we are required to think of the immeasurable All, which knows neither beginning nor end, as a “process” in any possible sense of the word, we can only answer “*non possumus*.” The Universe is not a “process,” but an infinitude of processes, all balanced in one eternal peace. Yet that need not in the least diminish our interest in the “process” into the midst of which we happen to be born. On the contrary, the acquired consciousness that we are citizens of a republic vaster than we had thought, yet a republic recognising one sovereignty, its own totality, summed up in a life that is the only real unity, should, like the glimpse of the infinite in the joy of music, fire us with additional The infinite not to be judged by the finite through which it works. ardour in all devotion. If, like St. Paul, I am “a The Universe not a process. But its glory gilds all processes.

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CHAP. V. citizen of no mean city," my local patriotism is not lessened, but increased by my Pantheism. For if I thought of the destinies of my city as only part of a process that began in a fiery mist and must end in a frozen orb, there would be something arbitrary and unmeaning in the interposition of such "sound and fury signifying nothing," amid the eternal silence. But when I think that I, here, with my infinitesimal consciousness and activities am doing my part, as stars and systems are doing theirs, while innumerable forms of existence and life and love have been and are filling up the glory of the Whole with their little sparks of God-irradiated force, I feel I need not pass into another world to find peace, like Tennyson's seraphic ghost, "in that serene result of all."

Let me acknowledge that I am anticipating here the moral justification hereafter to follow of Coleridge's confident assertion :—

'tis the sublime in man,
Our noontide majesty, to know ourselves
Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole !
This fraternises man, this constitutes
Our charities and bearings. But 'tis God
Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole ;
This the worst superstition, him except,
Aught to desire, Supreme Reality!¹

Religious
advantages
of
Pantheism.

Therefore without farther anticipation I shall content myself now with summarising the religious advantages that seem to follow from accepting as "what may be known of God," the phenomenal order, proportion, harmony, beauty, endless suggestiveness of finite appear-

¹ Granted that it is not strictly Pantheism to speak of "God diffused through all"; because Pantheism regards God as identical with the All of things. Yet the last phrase, "Supreme Reality," is inconsistent with any Weltanschauung which does not regard God as all that is.

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ances implying the infinite reality. By such we are sometimes, like St. Paul, “caught up into Paradise” to hear things not possible to utter, and to worship the Unknowable who is the substance and unity of all. CHAP. V.

Amongst those advantages I reckon first of all the blessedness of rest from vain search after a place for an “intelligent God” in, or above, or beneath the worlds he is supposed to have invented. For, disguise it how we may, there is on any assumption of both Personality and Omnipresence, a sense of unreality in our attempt to mix a Being who is not the Universe with everything in the Universe. Either that intermingling is an unsearchable mystery, in which case we are just as well off with our acknowledgment of an Unknowable, or else it is supposed to be a rational conception with analogies in our experience. But if the latter is the case, then we must needs strain ourselves to find some parallel to this apparent absence of an omnipresent God while we are told to believe he is here all the time. For instance, we may think, perhaps, of “the eye of the master” which “does more work than both his hands,” which is here, there, and everywhere over all his servants executing his commands. Yes, but that eye is accompanied and interpreted and reinforced by voice and gesture, by censure and check and instant reversals of wrong action. And there is nothing of that in the personal omnipresence on the battle-field where might massacres right, or in the council-chamber where the worse is made to appear the better reason to the unutterable misery of a misgoverned land. Or we think how a gigantic personal force, like that of Cromwell, makes itself felt throughout a kingdom, or even a continent. But in such a case there is not in a substantial sense any intermingling of the great self with

Peace
from vain
searchings.

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CHAP. V. the lesser people or the machinery of control. Only
— his orders and his known will pass along certain lines
well devised to keep everything from moment to moment
under his power. There is therefore no real analogy, and
those who hold—in words—to a personal omnipresence
distinct from the Universe are left as inarticulate as
ourselves in presence of a reality utterly unknowable.
But why then multiply difficulties? Why not be con-
tent with the one mystery into which the generalisations
of science and the religious contemplation of the
Universe alike merge when they expand beyond the
analogies of finite life?

Superiority
to mono-
theism.

Another consolation of Pantheism is the freedom it
confers from any perplexing comparisons between God
and the Universe as between a greater and less; from
criticisms of "design"; from any envious comparisons
between what might have been and what is. We no
longer think of the Eternal, like the Jews at a certain
stage, as the greatest among the gods. We no longer
think of him as the greatest among beings, but as the
one and only Being, in whom all existences merge.
We no longer dream of his activities as awaking from a
primeval stillness and starting a "process" to cease
after millions of millenniums in another stillness. We
no longer think of his activities as limited by what is seen
or may be conjectured after the analogy of what is seen.

God not
the greatest
but the
only Being.

We believe not only in firmament beyond firmament,
but in worlds within worlds, showing phenomena incon-
ceivable to us, and contemplated by intelligences tran-
scendently different from ourselves. Nay, farther, there
is for us no possible reserve of omnipotence resting in
any shrine of the universal temple. Whatever can be,
is; if not here, elsewhere. For, in the exercise of infinite
attributes in their infinite modifications, God leaves

His glory
always
fulfilled to
the utmost.

“WHAT MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD”

nothing unrealised which is realisable. And if it be asked how do we know? our answer is we do not *know*; but every attempt to think of God as other than the unity of all that is, lands us as at once in some arbitrary unnecessary discord of thought. And if once we allow the true Unknowable to be that Whole toward which science and contemplation alike point, then to be consistent we must conceive that Whole as including all that could be as well as all that is. CHAP. V.

But let that be as it may. It is of no immediate consequence; though it may well suggest the final observation necessary here on the consolations of a Pantheistic faith. For certainly it makes religion more truly catholic, and it shows tolerant charity as more obviously rational than does any other idea of God. Thus if the Eternal were the sort of separate Person alleged by theologies and claiming the kind of sovereign prerogatives dear to earthly kings, the evolution of man would present some perplexing problems which on our view do not arise. For we know that, passing over the indefinite prehuman stage of man's development, there were many generations of primitive tribes in all parts of the prehistoric earth, who lived through millenniums with a very rudimentary, if any, sense of what, from the Christian point of view, would be called religion. From that same point of view all that was needed to lift them out of spiritual darkness into light was a “revelation” from a personal Being who was always around and within them. On such an assumption I confess that delay for so many thousand years of such a revelation, and its confinement then to one little tribe, seems to aggravate immensely that “arbitrary and unnecessary discord of thought” which we have found inherent in any notion of an omnipresent Catholicity
of
Pantheism.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. V. "Person" separate or distinct from the Universe. But the recognition of God as the Sum of Being practically dissipates that discord, just as the modern system of piano-tuning dissipates what used to be known as "the wolf," one or two horribly discordant keys, then little used, by spreading through all keys alike, and making practically imperceptible the imperfect tuning inevitable where one note is used both for sharp and flat. I do not carry the analogy so far as to acknowledge any imperfection in the Universe as a Whole. Still the moral difficulty raised by the supposed exclusion—if we take together all generations of mankind—of ninety-nine out of every hundred human beings from the narrow area of revelation, and also the moral difficulties occasioned by the partial barbarism of both Judaism and Christianity are scattered, with many others, through the whole process of evolution when once we recognise that God is not this or that, but All in All.

Thus we need not be more surprised or perplexed by the long ages of low fetishism than we are now by the mere animal formation and growth of the human embryo, or by the absence of any sign in the new-born babe of power to distinguish between self and the world. Such things are necessary accidents of the process going on in our part of the universe by which—in exceptional cases only, so far as we know—consciousness of self, of the world, and at last of the Universe or God, is evolved. And any difficulty that may be presented when we contrast such necessary accidents with what to our partially-developed consciousness appears a better possibility, is simply a shadow of the Unknowable in which all thought is lost. Therefore I regard it as sounder religion, and I hope it is truer philosophy, not to relegate the Unknowable to a limbo outside our

All difficulties naturally merge in one Unknowable.

“WHAT MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD”

CHAP. V.

world, but to own that it is everywhere. For as we have seen, the mystery of the infinite Whole is really implied in each part even though infinitesimal, when we try to trace out its relations, or to say why it is what it is. If then experience shows that in the process leading to the consciousness of God as All in All, what seems a long time to us is passed, whether by races or individuals, in unconsciousness of self, or of the world's order, and much more without any true consciousness of God, this should not trouble us nor tempt us to curse things as they are. Because every one of these half-developed races, and each one of these undeveloped individuals, even if they die before maturity, are even so “parts and proportions of one wondrous Whole” though they do not know it. And all of them help to make up “the glory of the sum of things.” But if any one is dissatisfied with it, we can only say this is an outcome of the essential being of the Universe. And if you ask why it cannot be otherwise, you question the Unknowable.

Besides, in phases of the gradual evolution of the ultimate religion of the Universe, even through fetishism and the lispings of babes, we can find more light and comfort than in the notion of an omnipresent Person, who will not or cannot reveal himself. For the sense of awe awakened in the savage by portentous forms in Nature, or by thunder, earthquake, or eclipse, is at least a sign of grace, in that it recognises something vaster than self and in intimate relation therewith. Of the dark and cruel aspects of fetishism and of more highly developed religions as well, we shall have to speak in another chapter. For the present, it is enough to say that Pantheism enables us to see embryo religion where the theory of an omnipresent Person only suggests a

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CHAP. V. strange neglect of the world by its Maker. Nay, farther, this same Pantheism enables us better than any other view of the Universe to acknowledge all that is good in the rival creeds of our own age. For all alike, Catholic and Protestant, Conformist and Nonconformist, Rationalist and Supernaturalist, acknowledge that the Universe and its secret are beyond our knowledge in the strict sense of knowing. They acknowledge also in varied phraseology that the Universe is one Whole and that we are parts and proportions thereof. The additions they make are only attempts to unite the living parts to the living Whole in faith and loyalty, attempts which must be always only imperfectly successful until we realise that God and we are one.

NOTE ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF GOD WITH THE UNIVERSE

In view of the object of this treatise which is religious rather than philosophical, I have thought it better to relegate to a Note the more detailed explanation of what I understand by the identification of God with the Universe. I hope and believe that nothing advanced is irreconcilable with any established principle of sound philosophy. But as my fundamental position is an acceptance of Spencer's reconciliation between Religion and Science, I have never entertained the hope of any metaphysical or philosophical explanation such as would make the Object of worship "knowable in the strict sense of knowing." Still some misunderstandings may perhaps be avoided by the following observations in amplification of what is said on pp. 133, 134.

It is not merely the *aggregate* of all things that we worship as God, but the unity of substance and of energy in which and by which all things are what they are. A sand heap is an

“WHAT MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD”

CHAP. V.

aggregate, but it has no unity except to apperception which figures it as contained within certain bounding surfaces, and perhaps—where reflection goes beyond that—as kept together by dead weight. But the bird alighting on it has a very different and relatively a more real unity. For the bird is not a mere aggregate. It is rather a sum of living cells each merging its individuality in a greater whole, and all co-ordinated together to achieve a single bird life, in organisation, nutrition, flight, reproduction. That which constitutes the unity escapes all our analysis. Yet though its essence escapes us, no one would deny that there is a unity here which is wholly wanting in the mere aggregate of a sand heap. For it is not our mode of perception or apperception that imposes unity on the bird. Rather the actions of the bird impose the sense of a unity on us. Or if it should be insisted that in both cases alike the idea of an objective unity proceeds from the subject, and is imposed on the object, a difference still remains. For the sand heap receives its unity through our experience of mechanical aggregation as when we clutch a snow-ball or a handful of wet sand ; while to the bird we transfer the sense of unity we have in the co-ordination of our own living energies.

Now as we have more than once had occasion to observe, it is often dangerous and always inconclusive to attempt any analogy between the finite and the infinite. Still, in this case the reasons for rejecting the suggestion that the Universe may be a mere aggregate appear to be irresistible. For first such a hypothesis would involve materialism, which we have already rejected as unthinkable. Because an aggregate—as in the case of the sand heap—is constituted by juxtaposition only ; a conception which if applied to the Universe implies precisely that objectivity of space, and mechanical space-filling by matter which makes materialism inevitable. And secondly, such a view of the Universe would exclude the possibility of world within world occupying what to us is the same space ; unless indeed we surrender the monistic position, and hold that the inner or impalpable worlds are of a different substance from the palpable. Such a surrender would be too much opposed to the resultant tendency of modern thought to need discussion here. Or if it be said that the notion of world within world is a baseless

The hypothesis of an aggregate involves materialism.

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CHAP. V. dream, still the surrender of monism would be involved, because into an aggregate of mechanical matter and motion something additional must necessarily be introduced to account for consciousness.¹ And whatever that may be it destroys monism.

Unity
suggested
by science

On the other hand, though in dealing with what we confess to be unknowable, we walk by faith rather than by sight, there are indications of an infinite Unity which at any rate make our faith reasonable. And the indications point rather to a perfect realisation of the sort of unity imperfectly suggested in the co-ordination of our own living energies. "Imperfectly," I say, because, after all, co-ordination is not unity, but only an indication that there is some unifying power. And Pantheism is not a mere faith in co-ordination by an "intelligent God," but in the absolute identity of a divine life everywhere. Thus the conservation of energy, the uniformity of natural law, so far as observation can carry us, the probable ultimate oneness of all forms of matter, and its approximate resolution into vibrations or "strains"—or whatever they may be called—in a boundless medium, suggesting an infinite spiritual energy, all point in the direction of an eternal unity of being. And this is all that reasonable faith requires. For its position is that confronted as we are on every side with an ultimate mystery of Being, which we cannot ignore, our bearing toward it must be largely influenced by the inspirations of human experience. Not that we are to accept any impossible explanation of that mystery because a majority of our kind have done so, but that our modification of untenable opinions should not be such as to cut us off from any well-spring of spiritual health. Applying with this needful caution those inspirations to our own needs, we note that, generally speaking in every intensest crisis of human progress when the struggle for a larger life has been like a death and rising again, the power of resurrection has lain in a God-consciousness, that is in a recognition that the reformer is possessed by the Spirit of God. Now this is a conviction the substance of which cannot be surrendered without robbing some of the most beneficent revolutions in history of their motive power. And inasmuch as this sense of a divine word within the soul burning the ignoble self and constraining to

sufficiently
to justify
faith.

¹ Cf. p. 60 and note.

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noble action is, as we have seen, quite consistent with a recognition that God in himself is Unknowable, there is no sufficient reason for rejecting it. CHAP. V.
—

We therefore hold it to be a reasonable faith that the Universe is the one God, of whose divine nature we are partakers in various finite forms which to us seem to be various degrees. This faith makes us the more earnestly insist that the Universe is one, not merely in the sense of an aggregate but in *more* than the sense of an organism. “More,” I say; because confessedly all finite analogies fail. But where this is the case our allowance for difference should be made not in the direction of defect but of excess in the unknowable object of inference. So just as Herbert Spencer urges that in thinking of the Unknowable the alternative is not “Person or less than Person,” but rather “Person or more than Person,” we also claim the liberty of believing that the unity which science and reason indicate afar off is an intenser unity than is conceivable, and indeed the only real unity in being. For though we have heard much about the intense and indivisible unity of the finite ego, yet recent observations of the phenomena of subconsciousness have shown cause for modification of that opinion. Besides the well-known morbid cases of dual consciousness would be absolutely impossible if human personality were simply a single entity. But if it be asked what then of that higher Unity in which all these apparently acute divisions of finite things are merged, we can only reply we do not know. We have acknowledged all along that we are dealing with the Unknowable. Yet though we cannot tell what He is in Himself, we can sometimes say surely what He is not. And He cannot be divided in essence. All other Unities may be in the last result illusion, but the Eternal in whom all things “live and move and have their being,” the Eternal who contains, co-ordinates, and controls all that is, must, while acknowledged to be superpersonal, be *one* in a sense of which no organic unity can furnish any sufficient type. The Uni-
verse more
than an
organism.

CHAPTER VI

EVIL

I. *Pain and Death*

The
problem of
evil omni-
present,

POETS, philosophers, and preachers, singing or discouraging in an optimistic mood of the glory of the Universe, no sooner step down into the street than some harsh and strident discord mars the music, mocks the logic, and dims the eye of faith. There the mutilated beggar, the lone widow following the corpse of her only son, the newsboy crying an earthquake with ruin or death to thousands, the demoralised drunkard, the arrested criminal with the obvious brand of Cain upon his face, are sights too common to be escaped, even though "Pippa passes" with her song :—

God's in his heaven :
All's right with the world.

Nay, even the honest prophet who seeks to "justify the ways of God to men" by putting foremost all the good he knows, while at the same time anxious to face things as they are, pursues the thread of his discourse

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

EVIL

Yet, if God and the Universe are one, how can these things be? CHAP. VI.

Now obviously the first thing to be said is that this difficulty is not peculiar to any one view of the Universe (Weltanschauung), whether that of Polytheism, Monotheism, Pantheism, or Atheism—if this last were admitted to be thinkable.¹ Perhaps the difficulty would, in appearance at least, be minimised if we could adopt some form of polytheism which Professor James seems almost to think admissible. For certainly, if we could suppose sublunary affairs to be subject to a precarious balance of power among diverse spiritual dominions, there would, on the face of it, be a sufficient reason for the discords that trouble us. But of course the question would only take another form; because we should immediately ask how a *Universe* could come to be thus partitioned. And, besides, the rhythmic movement of the balance between good and evil,² and the evident connection of that balance with the operation of moral and physical laws, apparently uniform, are entirely inconsistent with a rivalry between independent powers. It would be as reasonable to refer the oscillations of sea and land to a perennial fight between Poseidon and Demeter. Thus, even if we could so far yield to sentimental reactions of the time as to project into the heavens the magnified images of rival emperors, scheming against each other at the cost of their suffering subjects, we should be forced to conceive of some one controlling power above them all, and the problem of evil under one supreme sovereignty would remain the same.

but not
pressing
specially on
Pantheists.

Not
avoided by
Polytheism.

¹ Thinkable enough in the sense in which it was attributed to the early Christians, *i.e.* the denial of a generally recognised God or Gods; but not thinkable in the sense of the denial of eternal being.

² *E.g.* as seen in the regularity of the statistics both of misfortune and crime

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CHAP. VI. Needless to add that the same considerations must be fatal to any conceivable dualism.

The
problem
really more
difficult to
Theism
than to
Pantheism.

We go back, therefore, to monotheism, and assert that the problem of evil under the providence of a personal, omnipotent, and benevolent deity, who is supposed to have made the Universe out of nothing, and to have imposed upon it the laws uniformly operating on both material and spiritual phenomena, is such that it cannot possibly be aggravated by Pantheism. On the contrary, I may hope to show that though the problem itself is hopelessly insoluble, belonging as it does to the unknowable essence of reality, yet in some respects it is less painful to the Pantheist, and certainly does not demand such a desperate "synthesis of contradictories" as when we try to reconcile it with the ordinary creed. Among those who take these things to heart, which of us has not, with strong crying and tears, clamoured at the unlifted veil before the Holy of Holies for some revelation of the "soul of goodness in things evil"? And while the divinity seemed dumb, well-meaning prophets have undertaken to speak for him in the Bible and the Church. They have told us that to those who, by faith or by patient continuance in well-doing, are fitted for it, will be given an ample compensation in another world, they know not where. But what of the multitude which no man can number, the millions of millions since humanity was born, who have not had, in any sense honestly reconcilable with the creeds, either faith or patient continuance in well-doing?

Ordinary
doctrines
of im-
mortality
afford no
solution.

Not
touching
the vast
majority of
mankind.

We know very well the magnanimity with which the Broad Church explains away its formulas and makes Heaven, Hell, atonement, regeneration, salvation, mean so little that the Creeds and Thirty-nine Articles become only a new notation of late paganism. But even so,

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supposing there is any advantage in the new notation, why has it been confined to a fraction of the whole race so minute that it is but as one wave on the surface of the deep and earth-embracing sea? For if we reckon the population and generations needed to account for the gradual and necessarily slow development of the civilisations proved to have flourished in Egypt, Crete, and Accad, so early as 5000 B.C., it is impossible to avoid the arithmetical result that some ninety-nine hundredths of past and present humanity, taken as a whole, have been beyond the reach of the Church doctrines of a divine fatherhood and immortality, however explained.

Already, in previous pages,¹ we have touched on the curious sympathy of some recent apologists with the fears of mediæval piety about the effects of the new astronomy on religion. But the point raised by the recent resurrection of a forgotten human world is entirely different. Not the greatness or littleness of man, but the justice and sympathy of God are brought into question here. Yet how little the vastness of the issue is realised may best be illustrated, not from the narrowness of the few surviving bigots, but from the utterly inadequate statements of it made by broad, high-minded, and imaginative faith. Thus, take for instance Browning's reference to Euripides in one of the finest passages of the noblest canto of *The Ring and the Book*.² It is an interesting, though perhaps a somewhat unreal conception of what a proud Greek intellect might have said, could he have been called from the grave to witness the pomp and triumph of a doctrine rejected by his own Athens as a "babbler's" tale. But though, while Browning wrote, there were ample indications of impending revelations, he shows no sense whatever of

CHAP. VI.

Browning's
Pope and
Euripides.

Inadequacy
of his
conception
of world
history.

¹ Pp. 36, 37.

² "The Pope," ll. 1681-1789.

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CHAP. VI. the enormous change implied in the relative extent of
— humanity and the Church, or of the immeasurable expansion of the arena darkened by the doubts with which he played. Indeed the whole argument is adjusted to the formerly accepted scale of human evolution and to the Sunday School idea of Biblical history. It did seem strange to him that a fringe of heathen ignorance should have been left for three or four thousand years outside the light of revelation. But we know, and he might have known, that the position was far otherwise. For while his cherished revelation “sparkled like a grain of salt sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,” the unnumbered hordes of humanity toiled in what to the churchman seemed outer darkness, as over wastes of “immeasurable sand.” At any rate the theological attempt at a solution of the problem of admitted evil and alleged human misery becomes as negligible as a rushlight on Salisbury Plain amid a moonless and cloudless night. They only recall the language of Job, more tried by his consolers than by his misfortunes: “I have heard many such things, miserable comforters are ye all.” Not that the Christian part of the Revelation of Experience is without value. How precious it may be we shall try to show later on. But it is wholly inadequate as a solution of the problem of man.

Take
things as
they are ;

and deal
first with
pain, apart
from sin.

Surrendering then the notion of a duty to pretend that things are what we think they ought to be, while all the time we know that they are not, let us take things as they are, and loyally make the best of them. And first of all let us confine ourselves to those forms of evil which may, provisionally at least, be regarded apart from the yet more perplexing problem of sin. That such a separation can be considered even provision-

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ally permissible, is a consequence and proof of the religious revolution in progress. For septuagenarians can remember very well that, during their childhood, one of the objections urged by their pious teachers against the infant science of geology was its bold, un-biblical assertion that death was much older than the sin of Adam. Indeed, I remember myself how, in my early days, I excited the horror of a denominational but presumably well-educated physician, by mentioning geological proofs of feline atrocities committed long before the tragedy of Eden. But the world moves, and now I suppose it is universally admitted that sin and death's advent are no more connected together than the Deluge and the Rainbow. Because, as St. Paul says, "Sin is not imputed where there is no law," nevertheless death reigned, not only from Adam to Moses, but for millions of years before man emerged in any recognisable shape. Then creatures more fearful than any fabled dragon crashed through the forests or hovered in the air. Then the terrible sabre-toothed tiger prowled and ravaged. Then the cave-bear tore the entrails from his yet living prey. Then enormous pythons wreathed themselves round beautiful victims that struggled and shrieked in their grasp. "Did he who made the lamb make thee?" asks Blake of the tiger he pictures with relentless realism. Alas! what answer did he expect? None at all, I suspect. And if so, he assumed, though probably he knew it not, the right attitude of a loyal soul toward the Unknowable.

Indeed the poet's question befits only a poet's dreams; and the silence which is the only answer awakens us, as with a shock, to reality. The question is proper to a world of "making," of "design," of "special providence." And there is no such world.

CHAP. VI.

Former refusal of piety to believe in pain and death before Adam's sin,

but entirely abandoned now.

Blake's problem of the lamb and tiger

assumes the creation of a "designed" world.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. VI. In the only world we know "in the strict sense of knowing," things are not made; they are evolved. Here tigers and lambs alike are incidental and fleeting results of an infinite series of anabolic and katabolic processes to which we can see no hint of a beginning and read no prophecy of an end. Not that we are shut up to the horrible conception of a lifeless whirl of atoms driven by mechanical destiny. For, as we have seen, "materialism" is simply unthinkable, and though any language we can use of the Eternal is but an infantine babble, we are sure we are nearer the truth when we think of this Universe as the ceaseless interplay of impressions made on us, we know not how, by a Life. Only, in such a contemplation of the Universe as it appears, we are not to delude ourselves by false and inapplicable sentiment generated in the narrow circle of the family or society. The idea of the fatherhood of God may have a certain truth in it, and I trust we may find what that truth is. But it is a gratuitous and a mischievous mingling of metaphor and fact, if we intrude the fatherhood of God into our contemplation of lambs and tigers, cave-bears and "dragons of the prime." Here moral and sentimental issues have no place, any more than in the conflicts of pine and beech and oak.

But there is no such world,

and false anthropomorphic analogies must be renounced.

"Natural Selection"

and survival of the fittest.

Let us look at the old world from another point of view. We have been taught by masters of Evolution that natural law provides for "the survival of the fittest." And by the term "fittest" is meant the creature or the species best adapted to or most at home in the immediate surroundings into which it is born. Now I would put it as a question addressed rather to common sense than to philosophy or science, Could a creature be at home in its immediate surroundings if it

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suffered and were made miserable thereby? Surely not; the thing is inconceivable. Indeed, many of us may remember with remorse how, in the pursuit of knowledge, or in a thoughtless desire to keep animal pets, we have in earliest years proved that no amount of wisely selected food, no care for air and shelter, will keep a captive animal alive very long if it is not contented and happy. And the principle is applicable all through the story of life on the earth. Consequently, with the utmost confidence, we may assert that no species could have proved itself "fittest" or would have thriven and multiplied unless it had been at home in its medium, or, in other words, happy and contented.

CHAP. VI.
Discomfort
in sur-
roundings
causes
unfitness.

Surviving
must have
been pre-
dominantly
happy.

Such general contentment and average happiness was not during the prehuman period, and is not now, destroyed or even seriously disturbed—at least in the animal world—by contingencies of violent death, disease, or pain. To maintain this there is not the least occasion to go to the other extreme and to hold, as some sentimentalists almost suggest, that to be fascinated and then devoured by an evil beast is rather agreeable than otherwise. There is, indeed, perhaps sufficient evidence collected from cases in which the human victim was rescued from death, though wounded and torn, to establish at least the probability that the torture supposed to be inflicted by carnivora has been exaggerated through forgetfulness of the stupefying effect of shock on the nerves. But after all pain is pain, terror is terror, and to all finite life "death is a fearful thing." All I am concerned to urge here is that average contentment and enjoyment is an essential element in the "fitness" enabling individual creatures and their species to survive and flourish in the surroundings that have

This
general
rule not
much
affected
by con-
tingencies
of pain and
death.

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CHAP. VI. fostered their growth. The blasphemies against Nature which picture "the struggle for existence" as constituting a physical hell of everlasting torments, are therefore ridiculously inconsistent with one of the main conditions of the evolution of species.

False im-
pressions of
constant
alarm.

The robin's
mixture of
boldness
and
caution.

Watch the young robin, not yet habituated to human society, as he eyes you askance from a neighbouring bush, while you and your friends consume your tea and toast on your lawn. He has noticed a crumb or two which he would dearly like to pick up. But with innate caution he "lets 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would.'" To encourage him you throw a crumb to some distance. He hops about in agitation, and at length alights within a yard of the coveted morsel. But the turn of a face or the rustle of a newspaper sends him off, apparently in wild terror to his refuge. Yet, after another minute, he is back again with undisturbed nerves, and approaches still nearer. At last with a rush he seizes the crumb, and is off as though a hawk were after him. Now are we to interpret these manœuvres, these flutterings, these suspicious glances, the desperate clutch and the lightning flight, as signs of gnawing anxiety and painful dread? If we do so, it is only because of that absurd habit of anthropomorphism which leads us, not only to seat our own image in the throne of God, but to impose ourselves on beasts and birds and creeping things, nay on trees and flowers. For we picture the animals as gifted with apperception, and as reasoning and calculating, and longing and trembling, and having "fits of nerves," and of the very flowers we think as thirsting and drooping with a sense of neglect.¹ But

¹ I am very far from denying that there must be some elementary consciousness in vegetable life. Indeed, as already intimated, I believe Prof.

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the reality cannot be so ; and we are just as much CHAP. VI. wrong in attributing torments of fear to the robin as we should be in supposing a neglected flower to cherish pique and anger against its fair owner.

This observation may be extended to most of the Other instances. supposed signs of fearful suspicion and nervous anxiety noted in the animal world. Sentimental reflections generated by the assumption that "Nature is one with rapine" are sure to find stimulus for tears in the attitude of the startled hare, in the timid watchfulness of feeding deer with their nostrils ever against the wind, in the quick turning heads of birds alighting to drink, in the jealous precautions of many nest-builders, and the distracted cries of the apparently careless, such as the plover, at the approach of a human foot ; and even in the mimetic artifices of natural selection, which look like a cunning attempt to adopt disguise as a defence against persecution. All such things, it is said, imply a life of perpetual alarms, and of agonised efforts to escape the death threatened at every moment, and inevitable at last. But the almost certain truth is that there is no more pain involved in this general response to signs of danger than in the quickness of our own The twinkling of an eye. eyelids to shield the eye. For in the process of evolution, the action of the nerves and muscles controlling the eyelid has become so swift that "the twinkling of an eye" is proverbial, and even photographers tell their victims to disregard it. But in this case the eye and its nerves are just as much on the outlook for possible danger and injury as the shyest bird in the wood. Yet who is incommoded by this watchfulness, or what

Clifford was right in his suggestion that it is inseparable from what we call "matter." But we can no more picture such elementary consciousness than we can imagine the superpersonal consciousness of God. Both belong to the Unknowable.

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CHAP. VI. conscious alarm does it imply? Just so, we may well believe that amongst the elements making up fitness to survive, there has always been included in the process of natural selection an automatic response to any signs of such dangers as affect the particular species concerned; a response, however, which need not, any more than in the case of the eyelid, involve, unless in exceptional cases, any consciousness whatever of alarm, still less of painful terror. Indeed it must be so. For if the sentimental interpretation of these features of nature were true, scarcely any species could have been at home in its surroundings; and therefore, according to the doctrine of surviving fitness, scarcely any could have lived on.

The
"chevied"
sheep.

A familiar sight in mountain pastures helps to confirm our consolatory faith. For there a lean and scraggy but active sheep will occasionally be chased by a strange dog, and will fly for its life with every sign of consternation. Inferior to its pursuer in fleetness, it makes for rough crags which habit suggests as a place of safety. But the dog has not the least objection to stone or crag, and springs from ledge to ledge even more lightly than the apparently desperate sheep. At last, in seeming distraction, the pursued animal fails in its spring, and rolls down a short, smooth slope of rock on to a cushion of greensward below. A whistle is heard, the dog desists from the chase; and when you look to see the hunted, terrified creature lying in a breathless swoon, you observe it standing with its nose in the grass and munching the herbage placidly as though nothing had happened. There has been no interval for panting recovery, for soothing of shattered nerves, or revival of appetite. But the moment the dog turned away, down went the mouth into the herbage and

No real
torment
of fear.

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the delight of eating was resumed. In such a case, of course, it is undeniable that there must have been some fear and some arduous struggle to escape. But to exaggerate this into the sort of mental pain and exhaustion of nerve which human beings suffer through terror is absurd. Can we conceive of an Alderman attacked at the Lord Mayor's feast by a stray lunatic with a sword,—chased round the tables, tumbling downstairs, and, when rescued, sitting down to his turtle-soup as though nothing had happened? Those more familiar than myself with the soothing effect of social customs on the genial temperament cultivated by high dining may think it possible. But certainly in the case of ordinary human nature, in poet or preacher or craftsman, the agitation, the prostration, and the loathing caused to a more delicate organisation would illustrate the words "how much is a man better than a sheep!"

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The doctrine of the survival of the fittest involves, of course, the extermination of the unfit, and often even of the less fit. On this aspect of Natural Selection Mr. W. H. Mallock makes the following observations, which may fairly be regarded as typical of the criticisms passed on Nature by sentimental pessimism:—

Supposed misery of failures in the struggle for existence.

The men and animals whose exquisite adaptation to their circumstances fills the mind of the theist with such wonder at the divine skill, are merely the siftings of an infinitely greater number whose adaptation to circumstances is so much the reverse of exquisite that they only come into life to suffer the pangs of death from cold, from starvation, or from the hostility of their exquisite brethren.¹

Now although we are not concerned to defend "theism," and have wholly abandoned the argument from design, which is here satirised by Mr. Mallock,

¹ *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 170.

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CHAP. VI. we may yet consistently make some comment on the tendency of these and other criticisms of the kind to a

Reasons for thinking the suffering exaggerated.

needless and groundless exaggeration of the suffering caused in the process of evolution. That there are in the animal world occasional instances of painful death from cold and starvation among creatures insufficiently adapted to the circumstances into which they are born, is perhaps true. But that these cases constitute "an infinitely greater number" than those of the fit survivors can hardly be maintained. For what is the operation of Natural Selection—a phrase always used

One mode of failure in the struggle is diminished birth-rate.

here with reserve?¹ In the first place, it operated on the comparative birth-rate of the fit and the unfit. Thus it is well known that a large number of wild animals will not breed in captivity, a fact for which there seems no reason except that they are not at home in the strange circumstances surrounding them. It is also a familiar fact that some seasons are favourable and others unfavourable to the multiplication of particular species, while other species better adapted to the exceptionally adverse seasons, or more capable of adaptation, find freer scope for propagation. We may well believe, therefore, that in the secular changes of climate, sea, land, and vegetation one of the first effects of selection has been to lessen the birth-rate of the less fit and to increase that of the more fit or more adaptable. Such a cause would in itself go a long way toward the displacement of effete races by the more vigorous. But in such a process there is not necessarily any suffering involved at all.

Again we are misled in our conception of the struggle for existence by the dramatic and often heroic fight

¹ *I.e.* I have never been convinced that it is an *adequate* description of the origin and development of species.

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made by modern medical science and by social sympathy to rescue diseased or deformed or defective babes from the clutch of death. Analogous cases in the animal world during the process of evolution would be disposed of at once with the smallest conceivable pain to a scarcely conscious organism. "The hostility of their exquisite brethren," or of their disappointed parents, is surely no justification for a charge of cruelty, since that hostility eliminates, before the stress of the struggle can be felt, the creatures most unfitted for it. Any other view of this particular case of the suppression of the unfit can only be caused by the incongruous obtrusion of moral and sentimental feelings which have no more concern with or relation to these phenomena than Ruskin's doctrines of æsthetic blessedness to the life of a pig.

But even in cases where there can be no doubt as to the gradual extinction of a comparatively unfit species before another or others more favoured by the totality of the conditions, an endeavour to realise the details of the process would show how fallacious and overdrawn are the pictures of misery conceived by sentimental fancy. We are asked to figure to ourselves individuals of the failing race as racked with hunger through being robbed of food by the conquerors; driven from shelter; terrified by the proximity of new enemies; and if not expressly, yet by implication and by inevitable intrusion of impossible human feelings, we are led on to think of mental miseries as well, of anxiety and apprehension and despair. But let us take a fairly typical concrete instance, and ask ourselves whether such details of the process can be at all congruous with reality. The ancient black rat of this country has not only been deprived of its former monopoly, but has been in most

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Comparatively painless extinction of defective births.

The details of the process are misconceived.

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CHAP. VI. parts of the land nearly exterminated since the advent
Case of of the brown rat, whose place of origin, whether Norway
the black or some Asiatic country, seems to be unsettled. This
and the failure of the older species appears to have been caused
brown rats. partly by the enormously greater productiveness of the
invader, and partly by the greater size, vigour, and
daring of the latter, as well as its remarkable adapt-
ability to new circumstances. Now is it at all a realis-
able conception that this gradual yielding of the black
to the brown was a process of such horror as is usually
depicted by blasphemers of Nature's law? Are we to
think of black rats frightened by news of the invasion,
haunted by forebodings of their fate, living in terrors
unknown during their conflict with man alone, "suffering
pangs of death from cold, from starvation, or from the
hostility of their exquisite brethren"? Surely such a
conception is absurd. On the other hand, what probably
happened was that the big brown rats, which first landed,
speedily came into contact with the blacks, and proved
their superiority as conclusively as white men have
usually done in analogous adventures with black brethren
of their own. The process of being killed, perhaps
eaten, and at any rate driven out of their haunts, must
have been unpleasant, though it was one to which their
species had been well accustomed in face of other foes,
and involved no prolonged suffering. Meanwhile the
chance destruction of a family of brown rats here and
there made no such impression as similar casualties
made on the black species, because the former multi-
plied with such astounding speed. Similar encounters
led the weaker animals to be wary of the haunts of
their new foes, while disturbance and constant change
of habitat perhaps lessened the generative powers of
the less adaptable creature. But it is surely not too

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much to assume that the weaker species, in happy unconsciousness of the inevitable future, lived their little lives still merrily, brought up their families as hopefully as ever, and had no more sense of inevitable death or misery than they had before the invader was added to the forces against them, and so changed the balance of power. CHAP. VI.

This instance of the struggle for existence may be exceptional in some respects, but not in any particular that can affect the point for which I am contending ; which is that the pain and misery suffered by the unfit or less fit species is not such as appreciably to affect the average comfort and enjoyment of animal life. The competition of British rats is recent, and has taken place under circumstances largely affected by human interference with Nature. But there is nothing in this to differentiate such a struggle, so far as it affects the lot of the unfit, from those that take place outside the dominion of man. Indeed we may hold with confidence that Nature has always had some consolations for the vanquished, some assuagements of their inevitable fate, in the development of new instincts of guile and concealment, or temporary adaptation to new modes of life. And we must always guard ourselves against the illogical introduction of human analogies to which we are so prone. Thus we are not to think of a disappearing species as possessing a corporate consciousness like a demoralised Poland, or a Macedonia under the hoof of the Turk. The fate that diminished the failing species was always an individual fate, for the most part the sort of short, sharp death which had put an end to their progenitors, even in the time of their most prosperous predominance. The notion, therefore, of a terrified brood of weaklings, conscious of coming fate, always in

The above case not exceptional,
but typical of the fate of unfit species.
Human analogies to be avoided.
Individual existence very much the same amongst disappearing as amongst increasing species.

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CHAP. VI. terror of their persecutors, "only coming into life to suffer the pangs of death from cold, from starvation, or from the hostility of their exquisite brethren," is a mere figment of sentimental fancy. The average lot of a decadent species seems to be very like the average lot of an increasing species, with no substantial difference in the amount of happiness enjoyed. But the difference is that individual deaths—the common lot of all finite life—are more frequent and less adequately compensated by births, because of diminishing adaptation to surroundings. So that, taking the disappearing species as a whole, its extinction is unconscious, and no more painful than its former periods of exuberance, which, as we have seen, fairly implied a decided preponderance of comfort and joy.

The struggle for life does not affect average individual pleasure in life.

Residual difficulty of disease, pain, and death.

Referred of necessity to the Unknowable.

But then to all such considerations there is the obvious rejoinder that, however much the pain and misery involved in the process of Natural Selection may have been exaggerated, the fact remains that suffering, disease, and death are essential elements in the method by which the animal world, as we know it, has been evolved out of the primeval protozoa. Therefore humanity, being what it is, and glorying in conscious, quivering sympathy as its latest acquirement by evolution, will persist in asking why should it be so? And why could not the present stage of existence have been reached by pleasurable and only pleasurable means? To which we can only reply, We do not know. For here we come again consciously upon the Unknowable which is everywhere and in everything, even when we think not of it. This means that the question why the many are so conditioned, is a question of the One and not of the many; the question why finite life must needs end in death for the most part darkened by pain,

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is a question of the Infinite, not of the Finite. "Things are as they are," and to ask why they are so is no more reasonable than the question once put to me long, long ago by a little girl of eleven or twelve years, and which I think was the most comprehensive question ever put to me in my life. "Sir," she said, "please tell me why was there ever anything at all?"¹ How could I reply except as I did? "My dear, I really don't know; but here the things are, and we must make the best of them." The question why things are as they are, is perhaps not quite so fundamental. But, all the same, it drops a plummet into a bottomless abyss, and we might as well draw it up again at once. Of the sin of presumptuous blasphemy against the Universe as it is, and the duty of loyalty to the latter, we shall have a word to say before this chapter ends.²

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An un-
answerable
question.

Meantime we proceed to face the aggravated and more complicated questions suggested by the pilgrimage of man, still, however, postponing those raised by sin. That the process called inadequately "Natural Selection" has operated on mankind with rigour and severity, there can be no dispute. And some would add that its

Analogous
but more
difficult
problems of
humanity.

¹ The evident implication was that an assumption of an "intelligent God" without a beginning was just as unintelligible as that of a world without a creator. It does not meet the question "Why was there ever anything at all?"

² Opportune here, perhaps, are some observations of a writer to whom I have elsewhere referred with gratitude, Professor R. W. Bickerton of Canterbury College, Christchurch, New Zealand. I do not agree with all he says; certainly not with his assurance that "the object of existence is joy," nor, literally, with his unreserved declaration that "the ruling principle is love"; for I regard the latter as true only in the very highest stages of finite evolution. But the following remarks are apposite: "For a maximum of joy we must have pain. Imagine for a moment that if pain were removed we should be as useless as logs (sic); if, for instance, burning did not produce pain, we would not dare use fire. . . . The pain of burning teaches us how to use fire; without that pain no human being using fire would reach maturity with whole limbs." Most true. Still this does not tell us why some less unpleasant means of tuition could not have been found. *The Romance of the Earth*, pp. 55, 56.

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CHAP. VI. cruelty is more palpable and repulsive here because of the finer feelings and larger capacity for fear and pain with which the strange mercies of God have endowed mankind.

Lucretius thereon,

O miseras hominum mentes, O pectora caeca!
Qualibus in tenebris vitae quantisque periclis
Degitur hoc aevi quodcumque est!

and
Koheleth.

Some century or two before Lucretius sang with this resonant music and strange eagerness the miseries of man, Koheleth of Judæa, with less intellect but more shrewdness, and here and there a keener gleam of moral insight, had satirised the vanity of life. "What hath man of all his labour and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night." "I . . . considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of the oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun." Surely no modern pessimist could desire a more bitter condemnation of the human Cosmos.

How could such a failure pass the test of Natural Selection.

And yet if the case be so bad with man, how could such a failure pass the test of Natural Selection? True, the grim caricature of human conditions portrayed by idealists, satirists, and weeping philosophers, presents comparatively modern man whose arts may be supposed, though erroneously supposed, to have circumvented that law. But then if we take the datelessly remote progenitor of modern man, the houseless, almost speech-

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less, almost weaponless, fruit, root, and grub-eating antepalæolithic "Yahoo" from whom we have sprung, are we to say that *his* lot was preferable to that of the denizens of Koheleth's Jerusalem, of Lucretius's Rome, or of our contemporary pessimists' London? Surely no one except in moments of passionate despair, causing short madness, would dream of saying so. For even the saddest lives oppressed by that blight of despotism, or oligarchy so feelingly described by Koheleth, have generally had their childhood's spring-time of joy, their family affections, their social intercourse, in which sympathy was heightened by common troubles. Nay, they have had their fervent youth, perhaps the thrill of heroic resolve and even the higher joy of brave self-sacrifice for their fellows. Indeed no life can be conceived as wholly and constantly painful. For we have read how the victims of mad Paris during the most hellish months of the great Revolution, used to hold their gay assemblies and dances and theatricals in prison, not knowing at what moment they would be summoned to death. And even those who have suffered the still more exquisite cruelty of tyrants "by the grace of God," and been practically buried alive in dungeons for years, have either succumbed to a merry or apathetic idiocy, or have spiritually ranged out of prison, and in joy of conquest over circumstance have found that

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The victims of disease and civilisation not worse off than primeval savages.

Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.

Therefore, terrible though the sufferings may be which are caused by man to man, when he affects to play the god and force his fellow to think and feel, and speak and act, in accordance with the arrogant orders of brief authority, it would be contrary to common sense to say

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CHAP. VI. that the victims of a morbid civilisation are worse off than the squalid savage.

But primeval savages survived in the struggle for life because they were better gifted than other animals.

Enjoyment of others not to be measured by our own tastes.

Now those very primitive savages whose squalor, whose fits of alternate surfeit and starvation, whose cruel initiations, whose net-work of taboo-tyrannies, and whose demoniac warfare make us wonder how they could endure life at all, were presumably the results of Natural Selection, and prevailed against the ape, the tiger, the lion, and the cave-bear, because, on the whole, they were more fit for the world into which they had been born. And they could not have been more fit unless they were so constituted as to find pleasure in their life, such as it was, and to "be fruitful and multiply" because they enjoyed it. If there is any hesitation to admit this it is because of the inevitable but—in matters of thought—unfortunate instinct which makes us project self, with all its inherited and acquired tastes, into all depths as well as heights. Thus a Parisian gourmet, who should see an Esquimaux gorging tallow candles, would be disgusted and turn sick. A traveller who watches an Indian lad undergoing the tortures of initiation is faint with horror. A passenger through San Francisco, who visits the Chinese quarter and finds that the rooms they rent are divided into two decks or more, and packed with fetid humanity, careless of everything but daily savings and occasional opium, wonders how such a life can be endured. Yet over what an immense range it is true that "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so!" The onlooker thinks bad the sort of life which those who live it think good. And that is all we can say.

No, not quite all. For even when we allow to the full the bitter leaven of pain which has worked in the mass of mankind, we cannot forget that the restless

Heroism.

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fermentation caused thereby has begotten, out of CHAP. VI. seething trouble, the higher life which we inherit now. This fact is, of course, no answer to the question why the pain should have been needed. But it is a fact pregnant with records of heroism, and such transfigurations of agony into ecstatic joy that it casts a holy light on some of the darkest experiences. This consideration cannot receive its full value until we come to deal with the far more difficult question of moral evil. We therefore say no more about it here. Yet it should be kept in mind, as a clearly compensatory aspect of things as they are.

The peculiarly human sorrow of bereavement also, —“the grief that saps the mind for those that here we see no more” —may possibly be found to be something other than the curse of a stolid Fate when we contemplate the moral discipline of life. For which reason we leave that also for the present, and say here only a few concluding words on the temper and attitude which as “parts and proportions of one wondrous Whole” we should cherish toward plainly inevitable ingredients of pain and sorrow in the world. Even apart from sin and its consequences, and apart from blight of the affections, there are exceptional instances of suffering amongst mankind which go nearer to break our hearts than any pain or trouble caused to the animal world by the struggle for existence. For instance, human creatures deformed, distorted, or defective in body and mind are born into a world for which they seem totally unfit, and by the skill of modern medicine and surgery are carefully kept alive. Such cases, indeed, are not always the subjects of misery, for happily they are sometimes incapable of appreciating their defects. But it must have happened to all of us to meet among London

Consideration of distinctively human sorrow involves moral elements.

Therefore postponed.

Question of the right attitude toward facts here acknowledged.

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CHAP. VI. streets, in quiet hours, when shades are beginning to gather, though school children have not broken loose, nor factories closed, some small, grotesque figure, with large head and shrunk limbs, stealing forth from court or alley to take a furtive stroll for a few paces in air at least fresher than that of the chamber left. There is no sign of idiocy in the melancholy, wistful eyes; nor is there any omen of speedy death. For some thirty years this human soul, disguised in a disastrous body, has known growing loneliness, as the family that cherished him have been scattered, and the parents have died. For thirty years still he may have to live a pariah, an object of derision when met by school children, whose only moral instruction in such a case is based on the very improbable fate of the children who mocked Elisha's bald head. Even here there may be alleviations if the sufferer can work at home, if he likes reading, if he has a few appreciative friends. But while allowing this, we must own that the existence of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such cases is a heavy addition to the "weary weight" which even an adorer of Nature mourned. Yet as we naturally feel a startling shock on the occurrence of some great catastrophe causing many sudden deaths, an explosion in a coal-mine or a holocaust in a theatre shakes the faith of many who have been undisturbed by the perennial misery of scattered experiences involving far more suffering. Thus the terrible conflagration of a theatre in Chicago in December 1903, with the loss of more than 600 lives, not only moved the sympathy of the whole world, but raised doubts of Divine Providence in minds which had viewed with equanimity the chronic imperfections of evolution. But after all what such a catastrophe does is only to concentrate into a few moments of time the

Lonely fate
of some
among the
deformed.

Catas-
trophes
involve no
additional
difficulty.

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deaths and attendant sufferings which, in the case of every single victim, must be inevitable at some time or other. Of the comparative pain involved in various modes of death the presence or absence of circumstances terrible to the beholder is no sufficient criterion. In this very case, for instance, it was clear from the attitude of hundreds of the recovered bodies that death must have been instantaneous, and that surviving mourners suffered more than their lost ones. Now if the slain had escaped, and had died in the ordinary course of mortality at various intervals of years and months no one would have seen in their disappearance any difficulty but what is involved in the ordinary problem of death. Why then should that problem be thought to be aggravated because they all die at one time? True the wave of emotion aroused shakes the hearts of millions. But this merely means that in the ordinary course of life and death the survivors would have had only the narrower sympathy of their own kith and kin. It does not seem to be right then to allege catastrophes as an aggravation of the admitted difficulties in the relation of man to God. They are simply special cases of apparent evil which by reason of their form inflict upon us an unusual shock.

Such illustrations of the darker aspects of life, even where no personal ill-desert can be alleged, are not irrelevant if they show that the difficulties involved are not here minimised. And having guarded against that mistake, there is no need to lengthen the black list. Suffice it that we do not forget any of the tragedies daily touching our hearts with despairing sympathy,—wedded lives severed on the very threshold of bliss; beauty mangled and maimed in the flower of its charm; the toiling father smitten with paralysis, and watching

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The myriad sorrows of life.

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CHAP. VI. the pinched faces of wife and children whom he can no longer feed ; genius cowed into suicide just at the end of failure and the beginning of success ;—knowing all such woes, and solemnised by the dark spots they scatter on the splendour of the world, we may yet, nay we *ought* yet to have the courage that is inspired by loyalty to our Infinite Self, and to worship the sum of things as good.

Preliminary suggestions toward an answer.

Happiness not the object of existence,

but function, of which well-being is an incident.

The full answer of religious Pantheism to the Pessimist can hardly be given until the end of the next chapter. But certain suggestions here may prepare the way for a later understanding of our case. And first of all we have frankly to surrender the fond belief that happiness is or ought to be the object of individual existence, or the purpose of evolution. Not that happiness or the need of it is ignored. On the contrary, experience shows that, generally speaking, and making large allowance for exceptions, we may hold that happiness, or comfort, or conscious well-being is a necessary accident of the true end of life. What then is that end ?¹ It is surely the fulfilment of our finite part in the infinite harmony realised by the Whole, that is by the life of God. Thus when the first germs of life, or the protozoa of a later stage, emerged on the earth, it would be absurd to say that the object of their existence was their own enjoyment. No ; the purpose of their evolution was that they might functionate as parts of an infinite flux of evolution and devolution. They were preparing the next move in a particular finite process. But, in doing this, they experienced in

¹ Of course it should be understood that in admitting any semblance of teleology into our "Weltanschauung" we are regarding things from the human point of view. And while we all along admit the impossibility of contemplating things from any other point of view, yet we may hold that, to a sufficiently enlarged contemplation, it would be things as they are that are interesting, and not things as they are going to be.

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an inconceivably infinitesimal degree the sort of comfort or subconscious well-being which is, not by design, but in the fundamental constitution of things, a necessary accident of function. CHAP. VI.

Now if it would be absurd to suppose that protozoa were "created for happiness," as the phrase has been, at what stage in evolution was this purpose of creature life introduced? Not presumably with the first metazoa, which, though they are said to have gained the privilege of death, can hardly be seen to have any other advantage over their predecessors. Did the change in the "purpose" of evolution take place when "a monstrous eft" became "the lord and master of earth," or when dragons had the joy of battle in their slime? No; the persistent anthropomorphism which interprets everything by human analogies, will have it that happiness, as an end, came in with the Garden of Eden, or, as Broad Churchmen would now say, with the successor to the "anthropopithecus erectus." But, if so, it must be frankly admitted that evolution has been a great failure since that epoch. A failure; because, notwithstanding all we have said as to the encouragement of life by a certain average amount of satisfaction, no one can reasonably pretend that the relation of happiness to human life has been that of an obvious and undeniable end. Speaking humanly, it can be confidently affirmed that the purpose of the eye is seeing and of the ear is hearing. But to say that, as things are and have been, personal happiness is, in the same sense, the purpose for which man appeared, would be to admit a terrible failure in the scheme of creation. And, however possible it may be to conceive of that under the management of Mr. Mallock's "intelligent God," it is not possible to conceive of it if God be absolutely All in All. Not that

If happiness is the purpose of life, at what stage in evolution was the innovation made?

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CHAP. VI. men have wholly missed happiness ; but their happiness, or comfort, or whatever we choose to call their satisfaction, has been, wherever realised, a necessary accident of function, and not the end of their being.

There are, however, those who say that if the happiness of the creature is not the end of his existence, it ought to have been so ; and they are bold enough to arraign the whole order of things as it exists because it does not obey their will. But is this reasonable? The late T. H. Green held, broadly, that the individual has no rights against the State. This bald doctrine however he modified by the consideration that the State might miss its true function and then, in the interest of the State itself, the citizen would be justified in putting it right, even by rebellion. But if an individual has no rights against the State, still less can any creature have any right as against the Universe, or God. And here the exception suggested by Green is inconceivable. The life of God must always be the final harmony of innumerable parts. And if we can talk of any function of the Universe at all, that function is indefeasible. Therefore the bald but afterwards modified statement of Green as to the individual and the State is absolutely true of the finite part and the divine Whole. Because the Universe is not in being for the thing, but the thing exists for the Universe. And that, perhaps, is the truth underlying the inaccurate theological statement that "God created all things for his own glory."

The part has no rights as against the Whole.

The principle not invalidated by the supposition of impossible cases.

What ! it will be said ; do you mean to maintain that if the Universe involved a Hell, where helpless beings are tormented for ever and ever under some law involved in the frame of things, we should think of that with complacency ? I might just as well be asked whether if the Universe held a Prometheus with an

opened liver, constantly growing, while an insatiable vulture consumed it, I could acquiesce in such a thing. For the Universe is absolutely self-consistent; and to imagine a fundamental schism in it is to plunge into unreality at once. Now it would be to imagine a gross palpable schism in the very heart of the Universe if we conceived a part of it which had no function in the infinite harmony; as would certainly be the case with an everlasting Hell. A question about such a monstrous fiction has no bearing on reality and need not be met. But while holding most assuredly that, as against the Universe, the finite part has no rights, we may find in this same doctrine of the consistency of the Universe a guarantee against any such apparent wrongs as would justify us in murmuring because no rights of the kind exist.

Whether the lifetime of the earth since its solidification has been a hundred million years or only twenty million, the faculty of brooding over such things was certainly not evolved in this particular orb until within the last twenty millenniums, and has even yet been confined to one in a million of all who have lived and died. The subjective results of such brooding amongst so small a minority furnish a very narrow and inadequate basis for an estimate of the predominance of pain or pleasure. On such a question our conclusion is very much a matter of faith, that is, of loyalty to the Whole of which we are parts. Yet a strong suggestion and impulse to faith is furnished by our experience that our normal discharge of finite function as animals, as thinkers, as citizens, as parents, children, friends, is almost always incidentally accompanied by some feeling of gratification which incites us to further action. With the true relation of this contentment to the moral life we shall

The ultimate appeal is to faith in the Unknowable.

Faith helped by experience.

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CHAP. VI. deal later. That it can be relied on, or ought to be
— relied on as a motive to virtue I do not at all believe. But the fact of a satisfaction in the discharge of function and the obvious truth that, apart from it, the evolution of life on the earth must have ceased, at any rate dissipate the horrible notion of a “whole creation groaning and travailing together in pain until now.”

CHAPTER VII

EVIL (*continued*)

2. *Sin*

WE have seen how the dark problem of suffering has been in part exaggerated and in part merges in the unknowable mystery of which a recognition is as essential to religion as to true science. Let us now consider whether the suggestions made in the last chapter are at all applicable, and if so, within what limits, to the still darker problem of sin. For this purpose let us try first to define what it is that makes moral evil even more perplexing than undeserved pain. And if, at first sight, we seem to be making a somewhat hasty assumption in regarding undeserved suffering as less perplexing than the pain we suppose to be deserved, let it at least be remembered that in the former case there is only one evil—as we think it—while, in the latter case, there are two. Thus if it is difficult to understand how the order of nature can allow innocent suffering, it is surely more difficult still to understand how that order can permit the deeper and worse evil of guilt, by way of justifying pain. It is therefore unreasonable to propose, as so many theologians do, the fact of human guilt as a full explanation of the assumed misery of man. For on any theory of freedom or determinism, and on any theistic

What is the additional element of perplexity in moral evil?

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CHAP. VII. or even scientific view of the world's government, the origin and existence of the guilt is a much more unmanageable problem than its following pain.

Reality of that additional difficulty.

It is so because it does certainly appear to introduce into the unity of things a schism or discord, such as is not necessarily involved in mere pain. For, as we have seen, pain acts as a goad to forbid us from straying through caprice or carelessness ; and so tends to keep us in the true line of evolution. To recur to the instance mentioned by Professor Bickerton, man would never have become a deft user of fire, or indeed would never have survived his first rude attempts to use it, had it not been for the tuition of pain. Putting aside then the vain question why the same guidance could not have been secured without pain, or in other words why the unknowable infinite appears thus and not otherwise in the finite, we see in the function of pain no evidence of discord in the world, but rather of strong concord. It must, however, be frankly conceded at once that the problem of pain is immensely complicated by its many inextricable entanglements with guilt, as for instance in the suffering of diseased children through the sins of their fathers, in the miseries originating in false and arrogant authority, or in the vain jangling of civic strife. What then do we mean by moral evil or guilt ?

Essence of moral evil is disloyalty to God.

According to doctrines widely prevalent for many ages, the essence of moral evil is sin against God, and this I believe to be fundamentally true. But of course I make the acknowledgment on the understanding that the ineffable name be, so far as our capacity allows, rightly understood. The spiritual wisdom of prophets and apostles condemned, as the prolific source of all other sins, idolatry, or the substitution of a false God for the true. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied who

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hasten after another God," says the Psalmist. And St. CHAP. VII. Paul puts prominently among the "manifest works of the flesh," idolatry and witchcraft. Now all gods are false that are inferior to the best a man can think, and therefore idolatry at different stages of spiritual evolution has passed through different phases. Thus the Moloch of the Sidonians, who consumed children in his burning arms, was undoubtedly a worse deity than the ideal Yahweh, of whom the Psalmist sang: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Yahweh pitieth them that fear him." But this same Yahweh, who had no pity for the nations that did not fear him, was, as early Gnostics perceived, a mere idol when compared with the Heavenly Father of whom Jesus said that "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." From our point of view, all gods are idols but the one Unknowable who is identical with the infinite Universe. Yet we can sincerely sympathise with those who, not taking this point of view, have from time to time worshipped as the true God to whom all loyalty of soul and self-surrender was due, the Yahweh of Sinai, the Lord God of Elijah, the Father of Jesus, the ineffable Being of Augustine's adoration. And we can the more readily do this because, through all changes in theology, that is, so long as those changes are in the right direction, the direction of Pantheism, the essence of moral evil in the view of devout souls is sin against or disloyalty to God.

This idea of moral evil essentially the same through all the normal evolution of theology.

This is clearer from the Pantheistic point of view than from any other. For if we are, in Coleridge's excellent phrase, "parts and proportions of one wondrous whole," then the attempt to isolate ourselves, to take anything to ourselves, as the mystics say, to assert our own independence, must ignore our true rela-

Attempted isolation of the Part from the Whole is sin.

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CHAP. VII. tions and bring all evil in its train. Let not this, however, be put aside as *only* mysticism. It is plain, practical truth. For if a man steals or commits murder, is not the essence of his crime self-assertion beyond due bounds? And this arbitrary self-assertion makes him disloyal to society, disloyal to humanity, and, in the last result, disloyal to the Universe, to the God who is All in All. Granted that for the purposes of moral evolution it has been necessary that the true and healthy relations of the finite part to the Infinite Whole should be approximately expressed in commandments and maxims and codes taught by experience, and in that sense "revealed," still our thankfulness for this order of Providence need not at this stage of evolution hide the real truth that not the thunders of the Sinai, but the eternal relations of Whole and Part form the ultimate sanction of the moral law.

Relations
of Part and
Whole the
ultimate
sanction of
the moral
law.

Tested by
finite ap-
plications.

In this faith we are confirmed by the mode in which the principle works out through all narrower applications. For whether we consider the family, the club, the city, the State, or humanity at large, the moral bond is that of the individual's loyalty to the corporate whole in view at the moment; a loyalty, however, always to be interpreted and limited by the sense of what is due from that smaller corporate whole to the larger beyond it. Thus it is a man's duty to provide for those of his own household, and we are told that if he fails to do so he has "denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." But now if a man, having obtained the position of Mayor or Town Clerk in a city, proceeds to show loyalty to his family by thrusting them into offices for which they are not fit, or obtaining for them contracts at higher prices than equally good citizens would demand, he at once makes his family

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disloyal to that local whole the city, which in such things it is bound to serve. Or again, if a man who boasts himself a citizen of no mean city, acquires place and power in the State and then proceeds to use that influence so as to favour his city at the expense of others, he also forgets that the claims of the city merge in the wider claims of the whole State. The aims, even of patriotism, are subject to analogous limits. For humanity is greater than any nation or empire; and those who have sought to benefit their own land by systems of slavery and slave-trade blighting other countries, or by wars of ambition, or by contemptuous and unsympathetic rule over conquered races, have always found, in the long run, that such disloyalty to the greater whole of humanity has brought with it curses that breed and multiply in unexpected fashion, until the whole energy and resources of a misbegotten wealth are strained to extirpate the moral and social diseases caused.

But humanity, great as it is, forms only an infinitesimal part of the divine universe. And it is impossible to arrest at the bounds of humanity our principle of the subordination of the part to the Whole. Owing, however, to the conditions of human knowledge and experience, which exclude us from any apprehension of the Solar system, for instance, as a next higher generalisation, and still more exclude us from any sense of the unity, say of the galaxy to which we belong, commonly identified with the Milky Way, we must needs project our thought from the greatest finite sentient whole we know, to that infinite Whole of which we may use Spencer's words, and say, "it is behind humanity and behind all other things." The necessities of thought and feeling which compel the

CHAP. VII.

But disproportionate devotion to a subordinate whole involves disloyalty to the greater.

The principle is applicable to the Universe or God.

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CHAP. VII. assumption of such an infinite unity, have already been set forth to the best of our ability, and the necessity remains though our ability fail. At the same time, we have not only admitted, but insisted that this unity is that unknowable reality which is the substance of all things, and of which, as Spencer says, our ignorance is positive, rather than negative, inasmuch as we are more sure of it than of anything else, although it cannot be "known in the strict sense of knowing." This is the "God, diffused through all, that doth make all one whole." And it is against this God that sin is committed when self, whether that of the individual or of any finite whole, claims more than its due, and outrages the true relations of the part to the infinite Whole.

Difficulty
as to
"outraged
relations"
in a perfect
Whole.

Here, obviously, a number of questions start to view, of which some, perhaps most, trench on the Unknowable, inasmuch as they raise the absolutely insoluble enigma of the originating, sustaining, and informing relations between the infinite and the finite. But at least we may know why they are unanswerable, and, taking note, may pass on. For instance we have spoken of "outraging the true relations of the finite part to the Whole." Now to assume the possibility of self-willed disloyalty on the part of any creature to the God "in whom we live and move and have our being," that is by whom alone we have the faculty of will, may be said to suggest a schism going right down into the heart of things, and splitting the very oneness of God. To which we reply that, as the words just quoted are enough to prove, this difficulty is not introduced by Pantheism, but is inherent in every form of religion allowing the unreserved and omnipresent sovereignty of the Eternal. Not for us, any more than for St. Paul or St. Augustine, are our moral relations with God to

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be confused with ontological relations. But the point where difficulty—and, we must admit, insoluble difficulty—appears, is the assumption of disturbed moral relations in the system of a perfect Whole. On that, so far as I am concerned, I have nothing to say except that we are dealing with phenomena of which we cannot tell what they ultimately signify in the inmost heart of things. Not that we distinguish between the phenomenon as separately conceivable, and the “thing in itself” as something other. God forbid. For there is no “thing in itself,” and there is only one real substance in the Universe. But I may be quite sure that in selfishness, arbitrary self-will, and mercenary ambition I am thinking and feeling at the surface of my mind and temper quite out of what I know to be the true relations of the finite to the Infinite; and yet I need not, on that account, suppose that God lets his harmony be marred.

CHAP. VII.

We are dealing with phenomena whose ultimate significance is unknowable.

Surely there is a philosophic truth in the prophetic words: “Even the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain.” In other words, the disorder in the relations of the conscious mind to the sovereignty of God is phenomenally obvious, but the objective results connected with this disorder of the mind or will are as much elements in the divine order as are death and pain when connected with sin. In this light the wrongs and miseries wrought by human wickedness come legitimately under the forms of evil treated in the last chapter, and no more mar the ultimate harmony of the Universe than death and pain as wrought by the earthquake and the storm. To a certain extent and within limits we can even here recognise the “soul of goodness in things evil.” For if it is good that men should suffer pain from fire for the salvation of their bodies, much more

Yet we may see in part how, even here, all things work together for good.

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CHAP. VII. is it good that they should suffer from the doings of the wicked, in order that the indignation and reaction caused thereby may save the future of mankind. Thus if the pride and luxury and oppression of the privileged classes under the later French monarchy had not caused intolerable suffering to the many, there would have been no revolution. At which some may cry "absit omen"! But even the sanguinary chaos, into which that movement for a while degenerated, was caused less by the guilt of a previously neglected people than by that of their rulers who had cared not for their souls. And even popular panic and consequent massacres were a warning to the generations following, and helped to secure the ordered peace of the latest, and we trust perpetual, Republic of France.

Case of modern France.

Confusion of the innocent with the guilty. How far real.

Responsibility of each for all.

But the subject merges in the Unknowable.

Yet it may very well be asked what kind of moral order is this which indifferently overwhelms the innocent as well as the guilty when the fountains of the great deeps of passion are broken up by violent wrong? To which it may be answered that it is not accurate nor safe to assume the total innocence of any but children in a community that has become diseased as much by the ignoble patience of the many as by the selfishness of the few. Our own Civil War and the still more tragic conflict amongst our brethren in America might both have been avoided if the sins that produced them had been resisted soon enough. And delay in standing for the right was, in each case, a fault involving in some degree every citizen of either land. Still, after all that can be said in minimisation of the mystery, it must be confessed that we are even less able, in regard to moral evil than in regard to the other forms of evil previously considered, to say why the purposes recognised as good could not have been achieved at a less

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cost. That is, we cannot follow up to infinity the relations which necessitate things being as they are. For those relations transcend human thought, or, in other words, are of the essence of the Unknowable. CHAP. VII.

The only remaining subject on which we need to say anything before passing to our proper religious attitude toward this dark side of life, is the apparent finite source of the world's worst miseries, the human will. But since this is not, except in a very secondary and subordinate sense, a metaphysical or philosophical essay, I do not feel called upon to discuss at any length what I confess to be at once obvious and inexplicable. Obvious ; for no refinement of subtlety in metaphysical dissections and distinctions can bewilder me into thinking that I exercise no choice when I hesitate about going on with this work and then resolve to do so ; or when I yield to or reject the temptation to snatch an interval of exercise in the fresh air when the sun breaks through streaming clouds and drives away the rain. But let me not be misinterpreted. For I am equally certain that this phenomenon of choice is perfectly inexplicable to me ; and that in any endeavour to follow up its origins through subconsciousness—often largely concerned in it—to the still deeper relations with the world by which the subconscious self has been formed, or is being influenced now through inarticulate memories and impressions, I am entirely lost, and plunged into the abyss of the Unknowable once more. To my thinking it is futile to vex ourselves with calculations of motives as though they were physical forces, or with ingenious analogies of action at right angles on lines of force, by which it appears that direction can be changed without the exertion of any force at all ;¹ just as futile as to weary ourselves with

The will.

Choice an obvious phenomenon,

but perplexing in its relation to the subconscious self, and influences forming the latter.

Speculation futile.

¹ An illustration used by Sir Oliver Lodge.

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CHAP. VII. the puzzles of space. The phenomena are clear enough. But to trace out these relations with the infinite Whole by which they are what they are is simply beyond our power.

Yet no synthesis of contradictions.

The "straight stick bent in a pool."

Expansion and contraction of matter under apparently the same influences.

No contradiction where all relations are not understood.

Indefiniteness of "self."

Yet I cannot allow that this position is fairly identical with the "practical synthesis of contradictories." For real contradictions exist only between phenomena understood in all their relations, or at least in all relations affecting the case in point. For instance, the "straight stick bent in a pool" presents an apparent contradiction in the mind of the infant who finds it straight when held in the air and crooked when held in the water. But as soon as the child learns the relations of the stick in the two different media to the laws of light, he finds that the contradiction was only apparent, not real. Again, the fact that some sorts of matter expand and others contract when passing under the influence of cold from a liquid to a solid state is never regarded as involving any self-contradiction in the laws of Nature, although, so far as I am aware, no one has yet explained it. What is said is, that we do not yet understand all the relations of forces affecting the case in point. Now with regard to our perplexities about "free will"—as if there could be any unfree "will"—there is good reason for thinking that not only immediate relations are concerned in the problem, but the whole infinite nexus of relations which make the Universe eternally what it is.

The tendency of recent metaphysics is to reject the ancient view of the finite self as an intense unity marked out by crystalline sharpness of distinction from the not-self. For not only is the ego, the personal subject, held to be much more complicated than was supposed, including, as it is now held to do, various strata of sub-

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consciousness through which currents of influence, that CHAP. VII.
may never rise to the surface, are constantly playing ;
but the powers of sympathy and of cosmic interference Its cosmic relations.
with moods, to say nothing of telepathy, compel us to
regard self as a kind of nuclear planet with an indefinite
atmosphere, rather than as a hard boulder severed from
a parent rock. Is it not then possible that the act of
free choice, though phenomenally obvious, may in its Choice is a clear phenom- non involv- ing moral obligations.
ultimate relations be other than what it seems? It is
real, it involves responsibility, it deserves praise or
blame. But for all that, we are so enmeshed and in-
volved in untraceable relations to our true and infinite
self, that it is impossible to say how far we are only
taking our part in the action of the universal will. At
any rate the phenomenon of finite will is not so under- But its ultimate significance is lost in the Un- knowable.
stood in all its relations, not even in those more imme-
diately affecting it within our own personality, as to
justify us in regarding it as contradictory in any real
sense to wider relations far more beyond our compre-
hension than the precise effect of motives, or their
obscure action on the subconscious self. Such wider
relations are those with which St. Augustine dealt in one
form ; and more recently science has treated them in
another form, having regard only to the unvarying
action of natural law. In both cases, however, the real
subject of difficulty is the infinite network of relations And there are no real contradic- tions to synthesis.
between each part and every other in the eternal All.
And of these no such definite conception is or can be
given as would justify us in asserting any real con-
tradiction between the *phenomenon* of will—for it is
nothing more—and either the sovereignty or the justice
of God.

What then is the right attitude of religion toward these problems? In the first place, it is a duty to

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CHAP. VII. refrain from exaggeration engendered by morbid temper or feeling ; for "that way madness lies." We have already seen how distorted and unreal is the nightmare of "the struggle for existence" as compared with the actual facts. And though we should deprecate strongly any attempt to minimise the miseries caused by the far more real evil of sin, yet it is only right to bear in mind how very small a part of even the earth's records are occupied by sin. For the consciousness of freedom and the moral faculty connected therewith are entirely confined to man.¹ But man is the most recent creature on the earth, and inasmuch as even his brain could not evolve a moral consciousness all at once, we must assume that millenniums passed before he fully acquired it. Indeed human society in its first elementary conditions, as represented by the few tribes that have survived almost unchanged from remote prehistoric times, shows scarcely any moral faculty at all, unless in the form of loyalty to the tribe and faithfulness to its customs and system of taboo. Parental affection in them is more of a highly developed animal instinct than an intelligent or reflective devotion. And though in their fetishism or animism the beginnings of religion may be traced, it can hardly be supposed as yet to suggest any moral ideal. The result is that the problems raised by moral evil are confined—at least so far as our knowledge extends—to a comparatively small part even of the lifetime of mankind, to not more perhaps than ten thousand to twenty thousand years out of the whole lifetime of the race. And during even the greater part of this limited time those problems must have affected only a

What is the right attitude of religion toward these problems?

Recognise their narrow limits.

Even on earth they concern only a small part of the course of evolution.

¹ The supposed signs of conscience in dogs and other higher animals are interesting and amusing but most likely quite delusive, being occasioned by a momentary conflict of impulses, not subject to deliberation in any proper sense of the term.

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minority of the population. For the proportion of savages, human in form but barely human in culture and consciousness, must have long predominated over the numbers amongst whom civilisation was slowly beginning. But the suffering necessarily involved in the development of man during that practically pre-moral period belongs to the category of apparent evils already discussed in the previous chapter.

CHAP. VII.
The sufferings of earliest mankind belong properly to the subject of Chapter VI.

Still it may be urged with much force that however small may be the fraction of existence cursed by moral evil, the apparent discord with any infinite harmony is much more startling than in the case of suffering alone. So that what such a difficulty lacks in extension it gains in intension. For the sufferings caused to the world by selfishness, lying, treachery, and impure passion are, because of their very foulness, more repulsive, and, because of their motives, more cruel than suffering caused by disease or storm or undeserved loss. Farther, the additional intensity that aggravates our feeling of moral wrong almost forces us to raise a question difficult to ask without causing misapprehension. And it is this: Do not the moral disorders of the world and their horrible consequences inevitably cast a shadow on the glory of God? We have above cited the prophetic word that even the wrath of man shall praise God, —or, if it would not do so, is restrained. And we have ventured to interpret that doctrine as implying that even when in our wilfulness we think we are having our own way, "it is impossible to say how far we are only taking our own part in the action of the universal will."¹ This, it may be objected, is to make God the author of evil. But is there not here a confusion of

Reason why moral evil though so narrow in extent is so dread a difficulty.

How can God permit sin?

Does it make God the author of evil?

¹ P. 195. It is impossible to avoid the word "will." But the context shows that it is not to be taken with its finite connotations of deliberation and supposed possible alternatives.

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CHAP. VII. thought arising from the inveterate anthropomorphism
of language ?

The ques-
tion shows
confusion
of thought.

We have seen how misguided sentiment regards the so-called struggle for existence and especially the apparent cruelty of carnivora in the light of an outrage on altruism, and even as a moral wrong. Revolted by such spectacles, even so generally rational a writer as John Stuart Mill condemned with vigorous rhetoric the notion of founding morals on the order of Nature.¹ Now morality cannot exist unless in connection with certain conditions, amongst which is the presence of some being who is conscious of a law limiting self-gratification, or more generally individual action. But when the stage of carnivora was reached in the course of the animal evolution, although a considerable degree of organised and conscious faculty appeared in the tiger and its congeners, yet certainly there was no consciousness of a law limiting self-gratification. No moral question, therefore, can be raised as between the tiger and his prey. And if it be asked why "Natura Naturans," or the Power of evolution, produced such a creature, again we must insist that no moral question is involved.

Morality
non-
existent
outside
certain
finite
relations
within
which we
cannot
bring the
Eternal.

The only
law neces-
sarily
observed
by God is
self-con-
sistency.

Moral law
limited to
human
phenomena.

For the only idea of a spontaneously and yet necessarily observed law which we can associate with the action of the Eternal is that of self-consistency. And though this, as we have already seen in part, may involve a provision for average finite well-being through the discharge of finite function, yet there is no other law to guide, still less to limit, divine action. The domain of moral law is limited in the world of phenomena, so far as we know

¹ Probably the late Stanley Jevons was not alone in considering Mill's logic shaky. I should not venture on such a field. But without presumption I may hope I have already shown in Chapter IV. that if we substitute what I may term the dynamics for the statics of Nature, *i.e.* Nature's obvious teleology, or the tendencies of evolution for the mere facts of any particular stage, Nature is seen to be a moral revelation.

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it, to humanity, and to the indefinite extensions of CHAP. VII. humanity toward the infinite. By which "indefinite extensions" we understand all the consciousness and subconsciousness which responds to Coleridge's note, "parts and proportions of one wondrous whole."

We are now perhaps better able to appreciate the delusively anthropomorphic connotation of the objection that in admitting even sinful will to be part of the universal will, we are making God the author of sin. For what in ordinary human speech is meant by the "author of sin" is an instigator, who, with motives and passions like those of the sinner, suggests to him the crime and helps him to commit it. But how can this in any wise be imputed to the God who is the Living Universe? For the truth is that in these high regions many of our moral phrases are inapplicable, or if we insist on using them, they "talk nonsense." Thus sin is essentially predicable only of a creature, a finite part of the Whole, and only when that part exceeds or falls short of its due relation to the Whole. But the Eternal All owes no allegiance; and the idea of his falling short of or exceeding his due is unthinkable. Finite moral qualities Divine morality a convention of human language. therefore cannot, except by a sort of conventional accommodation not open to logical inferences, be attributed to God. All we can say with any sense of reality is that by his eternal and necessary self-consistency, "the Power not ourselves" makes for righteousness because this quality marks the route toward the goal of man's evolution. For the same reason it is true and accurate Yet it is true that "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil," to say that "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Because "that which God is to us," within our creature limits, is an impulse and inspiration of a higher life and a repression and condemnation of any aberration from the true line of advance. Yet to infer

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CHAP. VII. from this that in his absolute and all-comprehensive rule God cannot, without inconsistency, prepare and sanction the field and conditions of moral conflict out of which the highest good known to us emerges, would be to exceed the limits of finite judgment, and to predicate a manifest fiction concerning the Unknowable. "Manifest fiction," because, whether we like it or not, the moral conflict is here; and on any theory of omnipotence it could not have been here without the will of God.

though God
sanctions
moral
conflict.

Limits of
language.

Throughout all this reasoning on a subject merging in the two irrational problems "why was there ever anything at all" and why Eternal Being is as it is, we have necessarily used language which will not bear any strict construction. For both words and ideas have been evolved by experience of finite relations, and when applied outside those relations they are found not to fit. Yet they are not used in vain if they show that the very same difficulty, which attends their use in endeavouring to indicate where we pass from the knowable and lose ourselves in the Unknowable, must also invalidate any pessimistic reflection on the divine rule. For, to make use once more of St. Augustine's distinction, "God in Himself" is outside morality; and "what God is to us" is an inspiration and a help to make the best of things as they are, though why they are so is an unattainable secret involved in God as He is.

Matthew
Arnold on
rights.

And now, having given some reason for holding that a criticism of eternal rule passes the limits of human thought, we return to our proper position as humble worshippers in the universal temple. And let us try to realise what should be our spiritual attitude and temper therein. I believe it was the late Matthew Arnold who, after discoursing of the querulous contentions raised by religious and political sects about rights, dismissed

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them all with these remarkable words: "But man as man, man as Jesus put him, finds no rights reserved for him; nothing but an infinite dying; and in that dying is life."¹ Now paradoxes may be divided into two classes, the perverse and the inevitable. And the perverse are those which have for their motive either wit, or vanity, or eccentricity, or extravagance. To which last motive I fear many of Ruskin's brilliant paradoxes must be referred. But the inevitable are those which are forced upon human insight just where it reaches the limits of language as applied to the subject of contemplation. This paradox of Matthew Arnold's appears to be one of the inevitable class. For it is impossible otherwise than in some such form to give approximate expression to the relations of the infinitesimal creature to the Infinite.

Two classes of paradox.

Arnold's not perverse but inevitable.

At the same time it must be confessed that the form scarcely fits the mood of ordinary piety. For there always seems to be some reserve in Christian resignation. Thus the calculating saint is very willing to give up any amount of present gain or pleasure on the assurance that he will be repaid with interest in the world to come. Yet we must not press this criticism unreasonably. For it is impossible to withhold sympathy from the harassed apostle who encourages his partners in affliction by the consideration that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." But we cannot repress a feeling that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews goes a little too far, and indeed borders on irreverence, when he says of the pattern of all sacrifice that "for the joy set before him he endured the cross." If, indeed, it could be

Limits to Christian resignation.

Other worldliness

even in the New Testament.

¹ I cannot find the reference, even by the help of friends familiar with Arnold's writings. But I feel confident my memory does not deceive me. And at any rate the words are true.

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CHAP. VII. fairly said that the joy in the mind of the writer was the joy of redeeming man, the criticism would be unjust. But the following context shows that it is not so. For the "joy set before him" was a seat "at the right hand of the throne of God." And when the same writer describes the heroism of Moses,¹ the noble phrase, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," is utterly clouded and obscured by the bathos of the next words, "for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." How much sublimer was the consolation given by Latimer to his fellow-sufferer Ridley: "Be of good cheer, brother, for we shall this day light a candle in England that the powers of darkness cannot put out!" That, and that alone, is true sacrifice: the unreserved resignation of the individual to be merged in something greater than self.

Compare Latimer's consolation.

Light from beyond the historic horizon.

The sympathetic reader of the Synoptic Gospels, who has got so far in his studies as to recognise that we have in them only the refraction, through a dense mental and spiritual atmosphere, of a light that otherwise "never was on land or sea," can hardly help noting indications here and there that "other worldliness" was a much less conspicuous element in the teaching of Jesus than it was in the Epistles of St. Paul. Not that the Master had any doubt as to the Pharisaic doctrine of immortality. For though a man of eternity, he was also a man of his age, and to some subtle inspirations of his time he was pre-eminently responsive. But though he clearly animated and warned his hearers by the promise and doom of a world to come,² it is remarkable how many

¹ Hebrews xi. 25, 26.

² This must not be understood as endorsing the teleological discourses at the end of Matthew, etc. I cannot conceive them as uttered by the same lips that spoke the parable of the seed which a man sows, and which "groweth up he knoweth not how," and of the leaven. In those we have organic growth; in the teleology, grotesque violence.

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sayings are left, even after ecclesiastical treatment, which appeal only to the divine sentiment of surrender to an ideal. Such words as these I regard as index sayings, surviving fragments of the original crystalline simplicity of the Master's teaching, and suggesting their original texture somewhat as pebbles in a conglomerate rock indicate a source distinct from the accretions around them.

Surely what displeased Jesus in the conventional Pharisaism of his day was the absence of any total and unreserved surrender to eternal right.¹ Overt evil deeds were condemned; but the germs in the heart might, unchecked, sap the loyalty of the soul. And Jesus would not tolerate this. Not murder only and adultery and false swearing were evil in his eyes, but also the first movements towards them in self-willed anger and impurity and insincerity. He would have the whole inner man swept clear of evil by a holy passion of absolutely unreserved devotion to the will of God. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." And why? He did not say. It seems to me that he did not think any reason at all was needed. "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." How infinitely suggestive are those few words of the soul that spoke them! No private ends to serve; no sectarian shibboleths to defend; no exclusive rights to claim; no ambitious self to force upon the world; nothing but a loving receptivity for the glory of God as manifested in

CHAP. VII.

Index sayings.

Christ's demand for unreserved surrender,

refused by Pharisaic righteousness.

The blessedness of perfection lies not in any reward.

The bliss of simplicity.

¹ It is possible that the use of this phrase may by some be regarded as inconsistent with the preceding context. But really it is not so. Because, though moral relations are, so far as we know, quite recent in time and very limited in extent, yet they are rooted and grounded in the Unknowable All, and are therefore eternal in the sense that wherever throughout infinity and eternity the same relations appear, there also right and wrong are essentially the same in significance. This is guaranteed by the self-consistency of God.

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CHAP. VII. things as they are. And if in this claritude of the finite soul there is a wistfulness rising from "the depths of some divine despair" at the incommensurable greatness of the object of worship, it is but the sense of "an infinite dying, and in that dying is life." True it is we read that Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things"—all needful for life—"shall be added unto you." But the spirit of the words and of the context is wholly incongruous with the suggestion of a reward sought and won. No; what follows on finding the kingdom of God and his righteousness is the blessing incidental to function, or the discharge of duty. Surely also the one traditional saying with which St. Paul, so strangely reticent about what we should most wish to know, enriches our memorabilia of the Lord, is suggestive of the same fundamental note of all Christian inspiration, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Why,—unless because "what God is to us" is an infinite attraction to give and give and give, till nothing is left of self, "nothing but an infinite dying," which is our true life?

The blessedness of giving involves "an infinite dying."

Understood by Tauler and his followers.

The disciples of Tauler seem to have understood this doctrine, as we see in the "Theologia Germanica." The truth that the infinitesimal creature can have no claim or "right" as against the Infinite of which he is a part is distinctly declared. "He doth not in any wise stand up for his own right, but from the humility of his heart he saith: 'It is just and reasonable that God and all creatures should be against me, and have a right over me and to me, and that I should not be against any one nor have a right to anything.'"¹ There is also a good passage on Christ's self.²

¹ Miss Winkworth's Translation, p. 80.

² P. 87.

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Behold now cometh an Adam or an Evil Spirit, wishing to justify himself and make excuse, and saith: "Thou wilt almost have it that Christ was bereft of self and the like, yet he spake often of himself, and glorified himself in this or that." Answer: When a man in whom the truth worketh hath and ought to have a will toward anything, his will and endeavour and works are for no end but that the truth may be seen and manifested; and this will was in Christ, and to this end, words and works are needful. And what Christ did because it was the most profitable and best means thereunto, he no more took unto himself than anything else that happened. Dost thou say now: "Then there was a wherefore in Christ?" I answer, if thou wert to ask the sun "why shinest thou?" he would say: "I must shine and cannot do otherwise, for it is my nature and property, but this my property and the light I give is not of myself, and I do not call it mine."

Perhaps the problem of evil is sometimes exaggerated by forgetfulness of this truth, otherwise expressed by St. Paul in the words: "For none of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." Let us take a very humble illustration. The mice which my gardener is diligently seeking to destroy would, if they could, from their point of view protest that Nature is cruel and immoral, inasmuch as she brings forth a two-legged monster to catch them in traps before their course is run, and to massacre with horrid glee successive generations of their innocent brood. We, on the other hand, are obliged to acknowledge that mice would not exist unless there were some adequate reason for their existence, being, as they are, evident part of an ordered Whole. But does this last consideration give them any "right" to continued existence and the pursuit of happiness? Certainly not. The notion of any such right could only be engendered by false analogy from socialistic commonplaces, according to which every

Schemes of
mice and
men.

The notion
of any
creature
"right" as
against the

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CHAP. VII. individual born into a community has an equal right with all his fellows to continuance and well-being therein. Yet even here the individual has no right or claim on society, except so long as that individual helps directly or indirectly its evolution or conservation. Nor is this principle contradicted by the appeal of the infirm and helpless to our compassion. Because they serve the community by promoting the altruistic virtues on which its well-being largely depends. But the moment that the liberty or even life of the individual becomes obviously opposed to or discordant with the welfare of the whole, his rights cease and determine. On this principle the drones in a hive have no right whatever as against the hive; and only false sentiment, generated by false analogy, pities their fate. Still less can any infinitesimal part of the Infinite Universe have any right or claim as against the sacred Whole. For no part has anything which is not given, or rather lent; and what any part has is lent not to serve its happiness, except incidentally, but to enable it to discharge some function necessary to the universal harmony.

Fate of
Siberian
elephants.

The primitive elephants that perished in the glaciation of Siberia were, in their way, noble creatures, and if they could have reasoned, would presumably have condemned, as guilty of wanton malice, the powers of Nature that blighted their pleasurable lives and covered their woods and pastures with perennial ice. But in this case also the imaginative sympathy which would endorse their supposed protest could only be justified by false analogies taken from the cruel treatment of certain classes in a community by others having only equal moral rights: for instance, the massacres of Armenians by Kurds, or of Jews by orthodox Russians. Such analogies have no logical application to the case of the exterminated

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elephants. For these were not evolved for their own happiness, though enjoyment might be a necessary incident of the evolutionary process that produced them; and we are naturally and properly glad that it was so. But theirs was only a temporary function in a larger evolution, and any idea of right conferred is utterly incommensurable with the relations of the infinitesimal part to the Infinite Whole. Should any one, misled by analogies of the family, the club, or the republic take a different view, then it is impossible to understand with what conscience he can destroy or extirpate mice or other vermin in his garden.

CHAP. VII.
Temporary function gives no permanent rights.

But can we stop here? It is commonly assumed that at the advent of man a clear line must be drawn, and that on the hither side of that line, the good of the individual, even the happiness of the individual or of the race must needs be, not the incidental accompaniment, but the permanent object, the final cause of evolution. Now, as we have already seen, no "line" can be drawn at the "advent of humanity," because even if all the records of evolution were fully open to us without break or gap, we could not tell to a millennium or more just when that advent happened. For like every other change in nature, it was a process of infinitesimal degrees. It would therefore be not only difficult but impossible to fix any epoch at which the unreserved subordination of creature interests ceased, and human happiness began to be the final cause of evolution. The reasonable inference is that such a revolutionary change never took place at all, and that, of evolution as a phase of eternal order, we can truly say, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." Passing by that point, however, we may assume a general agreement that the

Humanity no exception to this rule.

The appearance of man was not a definite event,

and brought no change in the laws of evolution.

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CHAP. VII. Tasmanian aborigines were human. Was their happiness then the purpose of God or nature, in such a sense that they had a moral claim on Providence to continue indefinitely their wasteful occupation of a land fitted to be an arena for far higher functions than theirs?

Distinction between divine rule and the violence of conquerors. Before answering the question, we must carefully distinguish it from the case they might, as members of the human race, allege against their conquerors. For the human race is a totality of a sort, having a certain solidarity of interests. And though the interest of humanity as a whole might well require the supersession of the wasteful use of land in order that a higher civilisation might come in, yet the same interest of the whole race requires likewise the observance of justice and sympathy toward all its members and especially toward the weak. Therefore against civilised races and their rulers the Tasmanians had certainly a claim for consideration, which was, we fear, too often cruelly ignored.

Blame of human cruelty does not justify a pessimistic view of the Universe.

But that does not in the least imply any injustice or cruelty in the laws of the Universe which permitted their extirpation. For as toward the Infinite they could have no claim since they were not evolved for their own happiness; though once again that might be and was, as a matter of course, incidentally involved. But this incidental result could not create any claim to permanence. For the government of God is happily free from that curse of progressive communities, the vested interests of the well-to-do. Not that we could expect the Tasmanian, as a natural man, to have acquiesced readily in his fate, any more than the elephants or the mice previously considered. But we are hastening on to the consideration of St. Paul's spiritual man, who sees all things in the light of God. And in the contemplations of the spiritual man, his own woes and the woes of

No vested interests in the kingdom of God.

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others are not the dominant aspects of the world. For he has learned from the spirit of Jesus an unreserved self-subordination to the glory of God. And the passing pangs inflicted on him by apparent evil, whether in the form of pain or sin, are only a spur to the heroism which realises the noblest of all functions, the conscious fulfilment of a necessary part in the harmony that we call God.

CHAP. VII.
The world
transfigured
to the
spiritual
man.

For, an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

Harmony
of the
foregoing
with the
spirit of all
higher
religions.

I HOPE it has occurred already to some readers of these words that the three fundamental positions assumed in the preceding pages are in perfect accord with the spiritual life inspired by all religions worthy of the name, and especially with that of the contemplative spiritual man as incidentally described by St. Paul.¹ Those fundamental positions are, it will be remembered, that God is All in All, and identical with the Universe; that, as such, he is Unknowable "in the strict sense of knowing"; and that though we cannot know him as he is in himself, and wholly, yet we can apprehend what he is to us. For as he is manifested to seed and bud in the breath of spring, so is he to us in inspirations that impel us toward a higher life. Now whatever word of any prophet brings such inspirations home to us is a "gospel," an "evangel," "glad tidings of great joy." Such a gospel has taken many forms, as in Mosaism, in Confucius, in Buddha, in Mohammed, in the Persian "Bâb" of last century. But in our traditions and associations it is most readily identified with "the word which God sent unto Israel preaching peace by Jesus Christ." In that word as handed down to us many elements mix, of time and of eternity, of the finite and the infinite, of the

The
gospel in
many
forms,

pre-emi-
nently in
Jesus

¹ *E.g.* Romans v. 1-5, and viii. 1-11.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

flesh and of the spirit. But if our test of the gospel be the power to subordinate self, to inspire sacrifice, to kindle love, to exorcise passion and to replace it by the "peace of God which passeth all understanding,"—then surely the purest ore in which the everlasting gospel is embedded is to be found in the Bible, and especially in the words of the Lord Jesus.

Ch. VIII.

and the Bible.

There is in these latter days an interesting school of thinkers, writers, and lecturers, who adopt the title "ethical" as distinctive of their movement, and who are worthy of respectful consideration, both on account of the men of mark whom they number amongst them, and also for the purity of moral aim which characterises them all alike. That this movement is destined to exert a considerable and beneficent influence on moral evolution is in my view certain. But before I could acquiesce in the claim made by the leaders of this movement to have their societies recognised as the Church of the future, I should wish to see more evidence than is at present apparent of their organic and articulate continuity with the Church of the past. Indeed their literature is not without indications that a similar desire for spiritual continuity is felt amongst members of the Ethical Societies themselves. For it is a fact full of interest that the possibility of honest adhesion to the "Liberal Church Union" has been discussed among them, though for the present apparently with only negative results; while the craving for some ritual, expressive of religious emotion, has been distinctly indicated in letters to their press. Moreover, I observe that Dr. Stanton Coit, to whose services the movement on this side of the Atlantic owes very much, has made a strong stand for retaining the venerable name given by the New Testament to God's inspiring influence—"the

The "ethical" movement.

Its need for continuity with the gospel.

Signs of a desire for that continuity.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CH. VIII. Holy Ghost.”¹ Of course he would entirely dissociate it from any theological doctrine, and his idea is to apply it to the fervent brotherly spirit which fuses faults of severance in a community and welds it into one commonwealth.

Opposition to this desire by an exaggerated spirit of negation.

On the other hand, however, there are strong protests made against what are considered compromises with superstition; and some would even emphasise beyond any apparent intellectual or moral necessity, their total negation of any evolutionary connection between the Gospel and the Ethical movement. By such fervent apostles of denial we are reminded that in the Gospel there is not anything new; which we readily admit, because it could not be an “everlasting gospel” if there were. We are told that it is compounded of heathen orgies, Jewish miracle plays, and Rabbinical sayings enriched with classical ethics. Nay more, we are informed that possibly, or even probably, the crucified Jesus was but the accidental form taken by a concentrated cloud of myth, and that the Apostle Paul, or the writer of certain epistles given to the first or second century under his name, confused a Jesus of Pandira, put to death some century and a half before the date of these writings, with the Jesus mentioned by Tacitus and Suetonius, as condemned and executed in the reign of Tiberius. Now all these theories or assertions are matters for historical discussion, and will be judicially decided according to historical evidence in utter disregard of ecclesiastical creeds and anathemas on the one hand, or of “secularist” invective on the other.

The issue does not affect the gospel.

But if we are at all right in the course of thought we have hitherto pursued, the everlasting gospel is indifferent to the issue. For no historical criticism, how-

¹ See *Ethics* during July and August 1903.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

ever destructive, can deprive us of the Jesus of Christian tradition. "Death has no more dominion over him." CH. VIII.

He is enshrined in a temple not made with hands, and outlasting all creeds. He is more than immortal, he is eternal; because he incarnates ideas, affections, and inspirations preordained in the universal frame of things, in the bosom of the living God, as the goal of moral evolution. Not that the letter of the New Testament, or of any portion of it, contains a definite ideal in the sense of a limit to growth in goodness. But nowhere, at least to us, in any surviving literature, or still shining vision, is the living germ of the moral ideal presented with such quickening, inspiring influence upon the heart of man, woman, or child. In a passage to which we shall presently return, as affording a key to what may yet seem mere paradox, St. Paul, or some disciple assuming his name, deprecates all notion of finality in any preceding revelation. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."¹ Now how could any livelier or more telling description of the chase of an ideal be given, or one more directly appealing to the "man in the street," who after all most needs salvation?

But now it is said by our apostles of denial that the alleged facts out of which this ideal of a pure and perfect life was generated were not facts at all. Well, if it be

¹ Phil. iii. 12-14. The interpolation by our translators of "this" and "I do" perhaps helps. Possibly "at least" or "at any rate" would be nearer.

The gospel gives a glimpse of an ideal but no finality.

The ideal not disintegrated by historical criticism

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CH. VIII. so, how does that affect the ideal itself? Surely, if the latter be worthy and noble, it remains so, even though its source may have been illusion or mistake. Indeed the assumption of a few "secularists"—though by no means of all—that if the traditions out of which the Christian ideal was generated turn out to be historically false, that ideal withers away, is as absurd as the former assumption of their most orthodox opponents, that if man could be shown to be descended from an ape, he is no longer man. For "things are what they are," and not what they sprang from. But let me not be mistaken. For I would not have my meaning supposed to be that if neither the Virgin Birth, nor the song of the "herald angels," nor the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove, nor the preternatural miracles, nor the crucifixion, nor the ascension, ever occurred, still the dogmas of incarnation and atonement could survive. This kind of "*Aberglaube*," to adopt Matthew Arnold's imported word, necessarily perishes with the false foundations on which it builds. But the spiritual aspirations and moral ideal generated by those traditions, need not in any wise share this fate unless they are involved in it by an unfortunate and misguided fanaticism of denial.

and not to
be con-
founded
with
dogma.

Illustration
by the
resurrection
and
spiritual
analogies.

For the sake of greater clearness let me at once illustrate what I mean by recurring to a half-quoted passage from Pauline writings, that is, writings which whether directly dictated by him, or not, are certainly full of his spirit and teaching. This passage is the more serviceable from my point of view because it has reference to a tradition as to which I am practically in accord with the most destructive historical criticism. For while my studies of the literature of the first century after Christ do not suggest the soundness of theories which would banish Jesus of Nazareth from the personal powers of

that age, I quite recognise for myself that the story of his physical resurrection has been believed on far less evidence than in this age would be required for the establishment of identity where the value of five pounds might be in question. As to the belief of certain disciples that they had "seen the Lord," that is altogether another question. St. Paul was one of these, and though we cannot be sure that we have his own account of the vision¹ by which "it pleased God to reveal his Son in (or to)" that apostle, yet common-sense dictates the belief that it was the result of a morbid nervous attack, possibly a sunstroke. And St. Paul is quite sure that he had seen the risen Jesus just as truly as Peter had, or James, or the eleven, or the "five hundred brethren at once." I am not going to discuss the inference. He who can believe in the reality of an utterly improbable event related in five² different stories, four being written a generation after the alleged occurrence, and all palpably contradicting one another—let him believe it. Argument on such an issue is wearisome and fruitless, and my business is rather with those who, like myself, regard the physical resurrection as entirely unreal. Nor does it seem necessary to discuss further the nature of the subjective impressions which appear to have been made on many other disciples equally confident with St. Paul that they had "seen the Lord." Because from the point of view here taken it does not matter at all what conclusions may be adopted thereon.

CH. VIII.
The
resurrection
in itself un-
historical.

Still, while holding thus loosely to any theory of those visions, I may be allowed to pursue my argument

¹ The speeches in "Acts" may or may not be true reminiscences.

² If we include Acts i. 2-11 there are six accounts. But this passage only corrects the author's previous story in the Third Gospel of an ascension on the same day as the resurrection, and so far as it deals with information additional to what is contained in the earlier narrative it contradicts both that and all the other accounts.

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CH. VIII. in my own way, as one who is fully convinced that St. Paul was a real man, from whose hand we possess at least three epistles,¹ most probably five, and possibly more. I will, however, take care to urge only pleas that may be found practically adaptable to the alternative view, that by some strange freak of sectarian caprice the early Gentile church suppressed all writings of its chief apostle or at least willingly let them die, though always eager to adopt forged imitations. Consider then this man, Saul of Tarsus, or Paul, in early life a fanatic Jew of the high Rabbinical school, and animated only by one aim in life, the attainment of the ideal of his nation, perfect obedience to the Law, both in its ritualistic and moral requirements. Allowing him to have been thoroughly sincere, and to have set the attainment of his ideal above any consideration of personal advancement, it is easy to conceive that the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans gives a very realistic description of his spiritual troubles.

Yet it is a telling symbol, and may remain so.

Its place in the story of St. Paul.

His despair under the Law.

The spirit might be willing, but the flesh was weak. Ardent and self-willed, yet affectionate and longing for sympathy, somewhat arrogant intellectually, through a false confidence in his Rabbinical logic, yet troubled with a morbid nervous constitution, the prey of phantasies and sudden changes of mood,—his was just the character to feel most bitterly a common misery: “The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do.” It would be only natural that one of the wild impulses generated by such moral unrest would be a vindictive desire to overwhelm with his indignation any

His endeavour to assert his righteousness by persecution.

¹ The three are 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Galatians. The less certain, though I believe the preponderance of evidence to be strongly in favour of their genuineness, are Romans and 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. Philippians and Philemon seem to me to look authentic. As to the rest, I do not feel able to express an opinion except that in any case they were modelled on the Pauline version of the faith.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

open rebels against the Law. Now whether the followers of the crucified Nazarene could at that very early period be fairly regarded as rebels against the Law, is a question which we need not decide. For fanaticism such as dominated Saul of Tarsus is not careful about any nice discrimination on such points. But when a young Hellenistic Jew, infected by the new heresy, was plausibly accused of "speaking blasphemous words against Moses," in the sense of declaring the Law to be a temporary dispensation doomed to supersession by a purer and freer spiritual life, the fanatic Saul gloried in the God-sent opportunity of supporting the "witnesses," and of identifying himself with them by guarding their clothes while they executed the judgment of a sanctimonious mob.

Yet what is this bright paradox that astounds both his hearing and his sight? The peace in righteousness which he had sought in vain by slavish observance of the Law, sounds in every word, and shines in every attitude of this heretic who declares that faith in Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, but risen and enthroned with God, can do what the Law could not do; what Saul knows it cannot do for him: it can make him at one with God, and assure a holy peace. The dying speech in which Stephen argued that all ancient dispensations had a forward aspect, an outlook toward a freer and more spiritual life, has much verisimilitude in the sense of looking like the sort of argument natural to a Hellenistic Jew of spiritual genius, who had begun to see that a Mosaic sect could not possibly embrace the world. And there is nothing improbable in the idea that though Saul consented to and approved the cruel deed which followed, yet he was haunted by the strange heroism of the martyr, and heard ringing

CH. VIII.

Baffled
by the
martyrdom
of Stephen.

Saul
haunted in
memory
both by the
heroism
and the
argument.

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CH. VIII. in his memory the startling proofs advanced by Stephen that the divine dispensations to the fathers had always looked forward to more spiritual developments, and had always been misinterpreted by blind conservatism.

Nature
of the
argument.

For of such arguments we are not to judge by modern processes of scientific proof. The suggestion that the Tabernacle and Temple ritual was only an earthly reflection of a heavenly archetype,¹ and that the greatest prophets had rebuked as a superstition the notion that the Most High could dwell in temples made with hands, was well calculated to stir the speculative temper which in this young Rabbi persisted beneath his legal lore. And the citations which he could not deny, of instances in which Israel had blindly rejected God's prophets of a coming age, such as Joseph, and Moses himself, and Isaiah in his visions of a more spiritual religion, might very well shake Saul's arrogant self-confidence when they came from the lips of one in whose face ecstatic serenity shone, as if "it had been the face of an angel." The sudden change of the cumulative argument into a flood of emotion that swept the speaker beyond all forensic bounds, and the agony of passion which contrasted the "might have been" with the base and cruel murder of "the Just One" who would have raised the new spiritual temple on the prepared foundations of Moses and the Prophets, might not and did not bring conviction at once. But it may well have pierced to the core of Saul's emotional, speculative nature, and he was probably never the same man again. The story thrice repeated in the Book of Acts, about the shock which completed his conversion when he was approaching Damascus on a mission of

Saul's self-
confidence
shaken.

Probable
commence-
ment of his
conversion.

¹ Acts vii. 44.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

persecution, is substantially confirmed by his own words in his Epistle to the Galatians.¹ The mid-day sun of that region, if the season was late spring or early summer, together with an obviously morbid constitution, would amply account for the sense of a sudden blinding blaze, a fall to the earth, darkness, and then visionary sights and sounds that took forms made almost inevitable by the mental trouble continually growing intenser since the death of Stephen. "*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*" How did these words get into the traditional narrative? Surely there was nothing in his fanatic violence up to that moment to suggest to any observer an uneasy conscience. But if, in his subconscious self, there was, as we may very well believe, the uneasiness suggested, these are precisely the words which might well accompany the heavenly vision.² The inward convulsion brought out to the light of conscience the awakening but still "subliminal" self, unknowingly but strenuously suppressed hitherto; and Saul now came to feel that in his passion he had been fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh.

Ch. VIII.
The Vision.

Revelation
of the
subliminal
self.

The
Suffering
Servant of
Yahweh.

¹ Galatians i. 13-17. The passage certainly implies (1) a mission of persecution (v. 13); (2) a sudden shock; (3) the neighbourhood of Damascus (v. 17b). With the details of the vision Paul's converts were already familiar, and he only emphasises here, what in his view proved his spiritual independence of the original apostles. A sense of probability and congruity certainly suggests that in dictating these words he had in memory an experience substantially identical with what is described in the Acts, though the varying details there, especially about the effects on the bystanders, show developments of tradition.

² Indeed, though the question is not at all of vital importance to any really spiritual view of the Gospel, it is a point of some interest to note that to any late recorder or redactor of the story in the Acts, dealing with church memoranda or traditions apart from St. Paul's own account, it would scarcely occur to speak of Saul in his full career of violence as "kicking against the pricks." For the only goad that could be suggested to observers or recorders was the œstrum of fanatic zeal. The expression in the surviving text certainly looks like self-revelation.

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CH. VIII.

Who indeed can yet believe our revelation ?
And the arm of Jahweh—to whom has it disclosed itself ?

He grew up as a sapling before us,
And as a sprout from a root in a dry ground.
He had no form nor majesty,
And no beauty that we should delight in him.
Despised was he and forsaken of men,
A man of many pains and familiar with sickness,
Yea, like one from whom men hide the face,
Despised, and we esteemed him not.

But our sicknesses alone he bore,
And our pains—he carried them,
Whilst we esteemed him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

But alone he was humiliated because of our rebellions,
Alone he was crushed because of our iniquities ;
A chastisement, all for our peace, was upon him,
And to us came healing through his stripes.

All we like sheep had gone astray,
We had turned everyone to his own way,
While Jahweh made to light upon him
The guilt of us all.¹

Evolution
of salvation
by faith.

Of the stages by which this flash of revelation evolved the whole theory of salvation through faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, as expounded in the epistles of the converted Paul, or of the Pauline school, it is not necessary to speak. In all probability early lessons in rabbinical interpretation together with the speculations of a distressed and wistful soul, suddenly converged in unexpected light on the faith of Abraham, on the temporary nature of Mosaism as a mere reflex of a heavenly archetype, on the suffering Messiah and his triumph

¹ Isaiah liii. 1-6, as given in the Polychrome Bible by the Rev. Canon Cheyne, D.D. The precise position of this passage amongst the writings of the two Isaiahs and their redactors and successors is really not worth discussing here. The spelling "Jahweh" is Dr. Cheyne's.

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over death, by which he became the power of God unto salvation. Be it remembered that we are not dealing with a reasoned system of theology, articulated by logical processes and bound by sinews of proof. We have rather to do with imagination, sentiment, and emotion, quickened by an apparently miraculous transformation of an ancient creed, and arranged in a semblance of ordered thought by an unexpected use of Rabbinical conventions of interpretation.

And now we may turn again to that passage in the Epistle to the Philippians,¹ which I believe to have been written by the Apostle of the Gentiles, and which at any rate is instinct with his spirit. The writer had found the luminous peace of Stephen by faith in the suffering Messiah. He had abandoned the rags of self-righteousness laboriously gathered and stitched in obedience to ritual precepts; and entering into the counsels of God, yielding to the powers of the world to come, hailing the dawn of a more generous and world-wide religion, he had been "clothed upon" with the righteousness which is of God by faith. He had realised in his baptism a burial of his old self, and in the endowment of the Holy Ghost he had risen again to newness of life. And yet the miracle was not complete: he was not perfect; he had not attained to the full significance of that resurrection. But as the just fledged eagle, according to the prophetic image,² when in the order of God's working the nest is stirred, launches itself on unsteady wings into a boundless untried world, and has much to learn before it can face the sun, so in this wider world of faith, the new apostle often felt his weakness. And when he did so his fainting strength was revived by the power of Christ's resurrection.

The
Apostle's
fascination
by the
power of
resurrec-
tion.

¹ Philippians iii. 7-11.

² Deuteronomy xxxii. 11.

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The moral
and
religious
symbolism
of the
resurrection
in St. Paul's
view of it.

What his real idea was of that event we cannot clearly learn from a passage which classes his strange vision with appearances to other apostles. But it is plain that the alternative of physical or visionary appearances of Jesus did not trouble him any more than the actual details of the story of Christ's life interested the author of the Fourth Gospel.¹ The only point of real import to St. Paul was that "like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, he also might walk in newness of life." His conversion had been no mere change of theological opinion, nor yet a passage from superstition into the "dry light" of intellectual truth. For he was no philosopher, and did not in the least appreciate "dry light." He was far too much compacted of feeling and affection and conscience for that. The whole passion of his soul was bent upon the "righteousness of God," a goodness having its origin in God, reconciling to and uniting with God. And to him the effort to find this goodness by obedience to divine precepts had been a strained and forced mechanical labour, at the best never weaving a character that sat easily and with perfect freedom upon the soul. But now in unreserved surrender to the spirit of Jesus, whom, in a sense somewhat obscure to us now, he felt to have been crucified for him, his old self seemed to have entirely fallen away: it had been "made conformable" to that death on the cross. He had lost his self-centred, pharisaic craving to be something better than his brethren, together with his conceit about scruples as to meats and drinks, and sabbaths and ceremonies. And as Jesus had for him risen from the grave, a new and glorious being with immortal

Loss of self
and new-
ness of life.

¹ On this subject I think M. Jean Reville in his *Quatrième Evangile* has established his case.

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powers of redemption, so the humbled fanatic felt in place of the old arrogant self, a larger, more loving, diviner life flowing into him, in which he realised a sense of goodness not his own, not separating him from his kind, but involving him through Christ in God's eternal being, and so uniting him in love to all created life. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."¹

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In this, as in all, even the highest experiences of man, glimpses of eternal truth were confounded with passing shows. For surely immortal—at least as immortal as mankind—is the truth that the righteousness which unites and does not separate, the righteousness that is free, unforced, natural as the actions of health, is not "after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." It is also no less changelessly true that impure desire, greed, self-will, falsehood, and all the other forms of moral evil, which, whatever be the mystery of their origin and continuance, do actually exist, are found, in the last result, to consist in a disproportionate regard for self, or in disloyalty to God, and often to the subsidiary

Eternal truths confounded with passing shows.

The truths.

¹ Philippians iii. 7-11.

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CH. VIII. wholes of which we are subordinate parts. Again, it is a very general, though not perhaps a universal testimony of experience, that no sufficient remedy for this disloyalty is to be found in literal precepts, however pure, or in the asceticism which drives the evil inward, but does not quench its source. What is wanted is the overwhelming of self by the larger life of Man, by the Universe, by God. And in all very striking experiences of such a change, the process suggests death and resurrection.

The passing shows.

Reasons for their permanent influence.

Coincidence of various spiritual movements.

Sickness of Messianic hope.

Mystic interpretations of Scripture.

So far the gospel of St. Paul is true, unchallengeable, and must live and work wherever in all the Universe, past, present, or to come, creatures exist with moral natures like that of man. But the unhistorical framework on which the rumours and mood of his time, as well as his own startling vision, made it inevitable that he should stretch his spiritual theory, was amongst the passing shows by which men, like children, have been taught. And if it seem strange that the unreal imagination of a physical miracle should be the occasion of such a stupendous spiritual movement as that of Christianity, let us think for a moment of the number of diverse forces which by an unparalleled coincidence were made to converge on the epoch at which that movement began. Here we have in Judæa, and amongst the widely scattered Hellenistic Jews, the long-deferred hopes of a Messiah beginning to compel some of the more spiritually minded to ask themselves whether they had not misread the Scriptures. How many were there who, like the Ethiopian proselyte reading Isaiah in his chariot, were ready for almost any plausible interpretation of the description of God's Suffering Servant? And then we have the growth of the Jewish Haggadah, or system of mystic exposition, ready, for

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instance, to make Hagar, Abraham's concubine, mean both Mount Sinai, and the Law, and the Jerusalem of the first century, or to treat as a type of Christ the water-giving rock which a curious tradition represented as following the wandering Israelites.¹ CH. VIII.

Nor can we suppose that the Essenes were without influence in preparing the way for Christianity, though the theory that they were actually a sort of pre-Apostolic church is contradicted not only by the absence of the personal source of all Christian inspiration, but by the cœnobite habits and superstitions of the Essenes, who in marked contrast to the primitive Christians were fanatical Sabbatarians. It is also clear that at this very period not only did an expectation pervade many parts of the Roman Empire that out of the East should spring the future masters of the world, but the craving, sometimes natural, sometimes morbid, of many speculative souls wearied of religious pretence, drove them to adventurous and sometimes dangerous intercourse with oriental sects, and especially with the Jews. When, therefore, at this very time there appeared a transcendent and mysterious personality, destined to a tragic fate, yet of a fascinating power, such as made the idea of his death seem to those who had known him impossible, and his return as the future judge of his murderers, and of the world, inevitable, we surely have the spark needed to combine all these spiritual elements already straining at the bonds that held them apart, and to wrap the world in a flame of religious revival.

Influence of the Essenes.

Expectation of some power rising in the East.

The union of these elements effected by a surpassingly great person for whom death was impossible.

But the Gospel which took occasion from the mythic portents of the time, was not new and it can never be old. The doctrine that goodness is not a petty legalism, but a life that dies to self and rises again in the glorified

The Gospel not new,

¹ Gal. iv. 22-25 ; 1 Cor. x. 4.

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CH. VIII. form of an unreserved devotion to some infinite reality in which self is lost, was not first preached by Jesus or the Apostles. But no one had preached it so effectively before, because these men lived it. I do not suggest that no one had lived it before in any degree. But circumstances had never existed in which the doctrine could be lived at once so perfectly and also in a guise that appealed so directly to the affections and aspirations of the many. At any rate the form in which the gospel was embodied by Jesus and his first followers was, for reasons already given, specially adapted to their particular period, and this period was a crisis in religious evolution. And here I may make, I hope, a respectful comment on the very common assumption in what are called "rationalist" publications, that if the Lord's Prayer can be traced to some shadowy analogy in previous Jewish tradition, or if the Beatitudes are found to have been roughly anticipated by eminent Rabbis or philosophers, such resemblances show Christianity to be a fused conglomerate of more ancient strata. Ah! but the fire? What kindled that, and gave to old dead truths a creative force? And if supernaturalists on the other hand echo my question, presuming on the impossibility of an answer from my point of view—"What kindled the fire?"—I answer,—the life of God. Surely the power of that "endless life" is not limited to portent and miracle. Is it not ridiculous to assert that the actual and palpable reawakening of life in dead souls was unreal unless it was preceded by the reanimation of material dust, and the liquefaction of coagulated blood in a dead body?

and the rationalists who establish this testify to its immortality.

But no miracle can equal the awakening of a dead soul.

It may perhaps be replied, 'We do not say that; we only urge that you cannot explain the spiritual movement unless you admit the miracle.' But why should

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we explain it? Suppose it is a phase of the Unknow-
able! Before any fact can require explanation it must
be proved to be a fact, and explanation means bringing
it within some category or categories of previous experi-
ence. But how can it be an explanation to refer a
proved fact to unproved experience? For we say that
the spiritual life of the primitive Church, the death to
self, the resurrection to a life of loyalty and love, the
joy and peace, the enthusiasm of humanity, the serenity
which no tortures could disturb,—that is proved, it is a
fact, which no deluge of revolutionary theories can
reach. But the event by which you want to explain it
is not proved. On the contrary, if fair and reasonable
criticism can disprove anything, it is disproved beyond
all possibility of rehabilitation. Once more, then, why
not be satisfied to accept things as they are? The
physical resurrection is a fable, a myth, a vision, any-
thing you will, other than a real event. But the
everlasting gospel of which the revival was quickened
by the tale, lives, grows, and can only die with the
moral creation.

But I do not shirk the duty of explaining, so far as
is possible without trespassing on the unknowable, in
what sense I replied to supernaturalists that the fire of
Apostolic zeal was kindled by God. It was kindled by
God in the same sense in which the snowdrop bulb, of
which we spoke in Chapter IV., was awakened by God,
in the same sense in which the breath of spring is
stirred by God, in the same sense in which every crisis
—as it may appear to us—in evolution or devolution
is, when manifested to any finite consciousness, a theo-
phany. As we supposed the bulb to “apprehend what
God is to it,” so St. Paul and his brethren really did
apprehend what God was to them. Not perfectly, not

CH. VIII.
—
Parenthesis
on the
supposed
need of a
physical
resurrection
to account
for the
spiritual
movement.

In what
sense it was
God who
kindled the
fire.

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CH. VIII. infallibly, but with sufficient claritude of God-consciousness to ensure an onward movement of the world.

Difficulty raised by the contrast between such crises and the imperceptible progress of ordinary evolution.

But (1) the previous preparation has been long.

(2) The subliminal consciousness is affected before the fact is recognised.

And if it be asked now, why the revelation of what God is to us should come to human consciousness in sudden flashes and often in moral convulsion, storm and earthquake, we need not be much concerned if we cannot fully answer the question. For we are treating more of things as they are, than of the reasons for them. But we may remark first, that these revelations are in reality not so sudden as they look ; for they have always been long in preparation. The expulsion of the pansy seed is to our apprehension sudden ; but the ripening of the seed and the force liberating its ripeness have been imperceptibly evolved throughout the days since spring began. And so was it with the launching of the Gospel from Judæa. Besides, the fruitful doctrine of the subconscious self so luminously applied by Professor James to religious experience, may be applied to whole peoples as well as to persons. For famous changes in public sentiment and action have often taken place before the thunders of a popular press against them have ceased to roar. Witness the abolition of slavery in America by Presidential decree scarcely two years after the apparently unanimous agreement of both North and South that whatever happened sudden abolition was outside practical politics. True, it was a "war measure." But Abraham Lincoln was too practical a statesman to have adopted it had he not known that its necessity had long been a subconscious conviction of the Republic as a whole, and that the war had brought it into the light of the nation's self-knowledge. And so we may fairly hold that in the first century the subconscious mind of both Jew and Gentile had become a prepared soil, which, when

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the sower went forth to sow, produced a hundred-
fold. CH. VIII.

It will be understood that in my view the principle of interpretation applied above to the belief in a resurrection and to the religious revival associated with it is also capable of application to the whole story of Jesus from his mythical nativity to Calvary. That principle is attributed to Jesus himself by the author of the Fourth Gospel, who represents him as saying: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing,"¹ and this, in reference to the very doctrine from which the mystery of transubstantiation was afterwards derived. But the truth of the principle does not depend upon the correctness of its reference to the lips of Jesus. And in this age it has certainly become the test "*stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ.*" For the churches that can abide this test will live and will merge in the Catholic Church of all humanity. But the sects that cannot stand this test will die, even though they may take centuries yet to accomplish their decease. But the more detailed application of this principle is reserved to the next chapter, in which we shall defend the retention of the Christian name. Meantime, some concluding observations are necessary to prevent any misunderstanding of our exposition of the Everlasting Gospel.

For I trust it has been recognised by readers so far, that here no exclusive claims are made for the religion of Jesus either in its Galilean simplicity, or as transmitted and refracted through the Rabbinical prism of the Pauline school. Most assuredly the doctrine that we must die to self in order to rise to a more glorious life was taught by many schools of philosophy and religion, long before Christianity arose. Nor can we

The principle that "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, etc.," is of wider application.

The Everlasting Gospel is of no private (or sectarian) interpretation.

¹ John vi. 63.

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CH. VIII. for a moment pretend to maintain that this Everlasting Gospel has always been associated with Pantheism.

It has been more or less imperfectly taught by Buddhism.

Still it may well be held that the doctrine logically involved Pantheism. For what less than the Infinite Whole can justify the *unreserved* surrender of the individual? Now, Buddhism, as I learn from European teachers,¹ taught, in its original purity, no idea of God.

Was it atheistic?

In fact there is, as already acknowledged, some force in the contention of those who maintain that it is that strange anomaly, a purely atheistic religion. But the opposition of selfhood to blessedness, and the surrender of self to the larger whole, manifest in humanity, or even in animated nature, seem very suggestive of Pantheism. Be that as it may, the doctrine of Buddhism that self-centred life is a curse, and that the way of redemption is an "infinite dying," is true to the Everlasting Gospel.

Possibly suggestive of Pantheism.

Mohammedanism more strictly unitarian.

On behalf of Mohammedanism I am afraid that only inferior claims can be made. For though I suppose it has had and has its mystical schools and sects, among which Bâbism is portentous, yet taking it as a whole it has pre-eminently deserved the epithet "unitarian" by the hard, definite, and incommunicable personality with which it has stamped its idea of God. Still, if it emptied the universe of God, at any rate it made the divine sovereignty absolute and all-embracing, so that no created self had any right at all against the Eternal. And this demand for unreserved surrender of self, though more forbidding, under this guise of a spiritual despotism, than when made by the divine Infinite upon the finite part, has, I suppose, inspired saintships of various degrees, whose holy self-sacrifice is at least suggestive of the true gospel.

¹ Especially from Professor Rhys Davids.

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It does not come within either the province of this work or the capacity of the writer to attempt any wider survey of the illustrations afforded by all great historical religions and spiritual philosophies, of the tendency initiated by all divine inspirations toward the same gospel of death to self and resurrection to an infinite life, which was preached by St. Paul. Such illustrations are always obvious wherever religion has expanded towards a spiritual Pantheism.¹ Both Egyptian priests and Indian philosophers, poets, and saints reached in their contemplations an Infinite, all-comprehending life, in and through which both gods and men had their being. The ancient Greek philosophy in its search after one principle or element involving "the promise and potency" of all finite existence was obviously pantheistic, though only in a philosophical sense, that is, it was monistic. The endeavour to extract a distinct enunciation of Pantheism from the strenuous moralists, who, having a poetic inspiration, made the tragic stage of Athens a pulpit of righteousness, is not successful. But this at least is certain, that in their sense of a supreme justice to which all self-will must bend, there was an element of the Everlasting Gospel. The same thing may be said of the prose moralists and philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Epictetus, Plotinus. It is much easier to find in their works passages necessarily implying or even, at least in the case of Plotinus, distinctly teaching Pantheism. But what most concerns

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No need for further references, because they are abundant in works devoted to the subject.

In the great classical literature Pantheism is implied rather than stated.

But the moralists in their doctrine of self-abnegation suggest the gospel.

¹ I may be permitted to refer again to the previously mentioned work of Mr. P. H. Hugenholtz, jun., on *Ethische Pantheisme*. I earnestly hope it will appear in an English translation. His recital of the most suggestive phenomena in Indian and classical literature is based on the works of renowned scholars, and is a most valuable summary. Hunt's "Essay on Pantheism" is excellent and thorough, but he is not so much attracted by the religious or devotional aspect of the subject as Mr. Hugenholtz is.

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CH. VIII. — us is the ever-growing tendency to recognise the essence of religion as consisting in the unreserved surrender of self, not to the State nor to Humanity, but “to that which is behind humanity, and behind all other things.” And this tendency is more marked, even amongst Pagans, as we enter the Christian era.

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTIANITY

IN the preceding chapter we have treated of the Everlasting Gospel as the true doctrine of the moral and religious relations of the finite consciousness to God,—that is, of the part to the Whole. In illustration of this doctrine, we dwelt specially on St. Paul's spiritual application of his idea of the death and resurrection of Jesus. And we did so because his whole interest seems to be engrossed in the spiritual truth symbolised by the imagined objective event. He gives us, therefore, a specially suggestive instance of the possibility that in all cases where a tradition, or a myth, or an illustration furnishes "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," it may be feasible to surrender the objectivity or historicity of the former, without in anywise sacrificing the latter. But if so, we may find that the Religion of the Universe, generated through a genuine divine inspiration in Humanity's growing consciousness of the moral and spiritual relationship of the personal and corporate self to God, or the Unknowable Whole, is practically identical with the essence of every great historic religion.) A philosophic Moham-
medan or a scholarly Buddhist who finds that the deepest and most generalised truths of his creed merge in a religion of the Universe does not, on that account,

Summary
of preceding
chapter.

The out-
ward and
visible sign
separable
from the
inward and
spiritual
grace.

The
Religion
of the
Universe
identifiable
with the
essence of
every great
historic
religion,

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CHAP. IX. feel driven to renounce the communion of his traditional
and specially with Christianity. co-religionists. He may indeed have to suffer persecution or even excommunication. For occasions may arise in which no catholicity of spirit or largeness of sympathy would justify him in suppressing his convictions. But the persecution or excommunication will not be of his seeking, and he may well feel wronged in being denied a time-honoured title which tradition, habit, and feeling have made for him the vehicle of a universal religion. In the present chapter I shall maintain such reflections to be so pre-eminently true of Christianity that there is no intellectual or moral need for our abandoning the name of Christian.

Our right to call ourselves "Christian" disputed from opposite sides. Unfair use of the name "Free-thinker," does not necessarily invalidate criticism from that side.

But the moral right of any one holding the opinions here advocated to claim to be a Christian has been questioned not only by a distinguished German writer, but by many who would fain monopolise the description "freethinkers." For myself, I have always felt that the quality of freedom in thought is shown not necessarily by the conclusions adopted, but by the mode of thinking. Thus I can quite conceive of a Methodist being changed into a Ritualistic Anglican, or a Roman Catholic, by thought of much greater freedom than that which has plunged his brother into materialism. For the former may at any rate have realised an individual responsibility for allegiance to the divine impulse of spiritual evolution as apparently suggested by certain eddies of the main stream, while the other may have been enslaved by mere catchwords about atoms and vibrations, of the ultimate significance of which he has not the remotest conception. But let that pass. The false claim to the monopoly of a particular title does not at all necessarily invalidate the criticisms of those who make it.

Now, by so-called "freethinkers" as well as by

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orthodox theologians, we are accused of a strained and unnatural use of words when we persist in claiming to be Christians. And not in our own justification only, but in the interest of the continuity of religious life it seems necessary to say a few words in apology for a claim which I, for one, seriously maintain.

CHAP. IX.
and a
defence is
needed.

The philological derivation of the word "Christian" is for us of little import, because there can be no doubt that in its first inception it described specifically a follower of Jesus of Nazareth. But it is not at all impossible that the epithet may, as we are told in the Book of Acts, have been first invented at Antioch, where it is said that the population had a pretty gift of assigning nicknames. Against this there is not much force in the fact that the name was so very rarely used by ecclesiastical writers until near the middle of the second century. For it is evident that the epithet was given by good-humoured contempt, as in the case of Quakers and Methodists and "Ranters." The first and third of these names were certainly not readily accepted by the "Friends" and the "Primitive Methodists."¹ Nor need we be surprised that the members of the early Church preferred for many years to speak of each other as the "disciples," or "the brethren," or "the saints." For the last name, be it remembered, had in those days no connotation of miraculous power, and still less of what we call sanctimony. It rather meant "consecrated," "set apart" from evil, and devoted to the service of God and man. But whatever may have been the origin

Origin of
the title
"Christ-
ian."

Probably
an oppro-
brious
nickname,

therefore
not used by
the Church
at first.

¹ The form "Christians" is not at all conclusive as to the origin of the name amongst a people whose mother-tongue was Latin. See the article *sub voce* in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. And the frequent confusion between "Christos," which hardly suggested anything to the Greek, and "chrestos," which meant to him "good," or as we might say "goody," justifies the conjecture that the name was first given in the sense of the "goody-goody folk."

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CHAP. IX. of the name "Christian," there can be no doubt that it was used to describe a new sect of Jews, who departed so far from orthodox tradition as to admit a suffering Messiah, and also to include the Gentile world in their catholic mission.

The sense in which the name was first applied.

Why denied to us?

Now we are told that we have no right to the use of this name. And why? Because we reject unhistorical portents, the tradition of which has been accidentally associated with those two phases of Christianity as understood when it was first distinguished from ordinary Judaism. Yet we believe in the suffering Messiah, and in the catholic religion which he inspired. But we do not believe in the unnatural portents and impossible events by which the appearance of the suffering Messiah is supposed to have been accompanied. Which then is the more important and essential—the moral and religious truth, or the framework of miracle? Really one is reminded of a country maid who, for the first time in her life being taken in attendance on her mistress to the Royal Academy Exhibition, exclaimed, "O ma'am, what frames! Who could have believed in all these beautiful frames!" For as the picture to the frame, so is the gospel to its aureole of miracle. But the carnal eye will ever prefer the frame to the picture. Now we think we keep the picture, though we have discarded the glittering frame. And in order to justify our position, we must briefly set forth first what appears to our common-sense to have been the nucleus out of which Christian myths expanded, and next, both the spiritual truths embodied, and their illumination by imaginings that aroused the world.

As the frame to the picture, so is miracle to truth.

Christian origins.

We regret in vain, and perhaps not wisely, the mists that hang over Christian origins. But at least we know with reasonable certainty that in the early part of the

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first century of our era popular interest was suddenly aroused by a young carpenter in the obscure Galilean town of Nazareth, a man belonging to the social condition which would answer to the lower middle class of our time.¹ This man, stirred by influences of heredity and of transformed tradition, heightened by a sense of the infinite proper to his own time but specially developed in him, was also gifted with extraordinary spiritual power, insight into human needs, sympathy, and what, in a phrase that confesses ignorance, we call personal magnetism. And, being such as he was, he could not but feel called to comfort and inspire his brethren with religion in its simplest form. The supreme sovereignty of Rome assured to the Galileans a certain amount of "law and order," but the hand of Rome was heavy when invoked, and the spiritual rule of Jerusalem, to which tradition committed the true Israelites among them, rather aggravated than lessened the burdens of an alien dominion. There is perhaps no reason for thinking that their lot was exceptionally hard. But, as children of Abraham, even the meanest of them had half-spiritual, half-apocalyptic dreams, such as were unknown to the plebeians of heathen lands. And the common troubles of humanity—poverty, anxiety, bereavement, and strife—were embittered to them by the constant failure of the Messianic hopes which had brightened the faces of the prophets. Meantime their souls were starving on the wretched husks of false Biblical science doled out to them Sabbath by Sabbath from the Synagogue desk. And this Jesus the carpenter loved them and pitied them and could not refrain from speaking.

CHAP. IX.
The Person
of the
Founder.

Condition
of the
people in
Galilee.

¹ Surely a skilled carpenter in a small place like Nazareth, whose father was a man of repute in his calling and not a mere journeyman, would socially occupy a superior position to that of the labourer in our day.

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The
revelation
of Jesus;
the present
God.

The Father.

Truth self-
evident.

The revelation that came to him was that God did not belong to the past, but to the present; that if men would open their eyes and hearts they would see signs of his presence everywhere. The new prophet had eyes and a soul for the lilies of the field, for the birds of the air, for the mysteries of germination, for the daily miracle of living growth. The Yahweh, whose name superstition tabooed in the Synagogue through slavish dread, was transfigured for him into the Father of all men, watching over all things, caring for all things, and nearer to him in his own soul than in the Temple or the Scriptures. What the influence on him of other teachers, such as John the Baptist, may have been, we have no sufficient evidence to show. But, using our common sense on the traditions which his afterwards transcendent fame inevitably gilded with mythical glories, we may regard it as fairly certain that when he first opened his mouth as a teacher, the people whom he loved and pitied were both charmed and astounded. They were charmed, because what he said was so simple, and, though it never occurred to them before, was so obviously true. They were astounded, because he seemed to think that truth needed neither priest, nor Bible, nor miracle¹ at its back.

¹ See Matt. v. 21, etc. "To them of old time" is obviously the right translation, and the utterances disparaged were part of the Pentateuch, to the Jew the most sacred of the Scriptures. The notion that in adding "but I say unto you," Jesus claimed divine dignity or any other authority than that of truth, is grotesquely incongruous with the circumstances under which he spoke. Every lively orator in Hyde Park on Sundays uses practically the same phrase—"I tell you this,"—"I tell you that," without the slightest intention of assuming anything but an honest conviction. As to miracle, while thinking it more than probable that, like many other "magnetic" persons, Jesus had gifts of healing, and that these were thought miraculous at the time, we may reasonably regard Mark viii. 12 ("And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation") as the oldest and truest account we have of his attitude toward those who wanted obvious truth to be proved by miracle.

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Of the details of his doctrine this is not the place to speak,¹ because our purpose here is limited to showing how the moral ideal suggested by Jesus is related to the Religion of the Universe. But his teaching was unconventional, direct, illuminated by parable, clothed with the authority of all humanity's subconscious experience, and sure of a response in simple hearts. Nor can we discuss here how his luminous simplicity became afterwards clouded even in the first century with Jewish apocalypses and teleological visions. It is enough to note that from his lips the expected "kingdom of God" received an exquisite interpretation which made it synonymous with the republic of redeemed Man.² Not that anything said by Jesus can properly be regarded as "legislation." Surely this idea, though sanctioned by the high authority of the late Prof. Seely in *Ecce Homo*, is inconsistent with that sense of a germinating life which is the chief impression we get from the Gospels. For Jesus did not legislate any more than the sun does. He simply lived and shone, and his words were rays of his life and light. Doubtless it may with truth be said that as the sun apparently generates all force in the earth, its rays may be ultimately trans-

CHAP. IX.
The moral ideal of Jesus rather than his detailed teaching is in question here.

Jesus did not "legislate," but lived and shone.

¹ But I may be allowed to refer to a long previous little volume on this subject, viz. *The Religion of Jesus* (London: James Clarke and Co.). As regards the details of Christ's recorded teaching I do not think that I should wish to alter much that I then said.

² I base this interpretation on those passages in the Synoptic Gospels which look like index sayings pointing back to the original doctrine of the Master before it was overlaid by adapted Jewish theology. See Mark i. 15; Matt. iv. 17, followed by the collected logia called the Sermon on the Mount; Matt. xi. 28-30; the parables of the kingdom in Matt. xiii. and in Mark iv. 26-32. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, etc." These words are infinitely suggestive. They picture a peaceful course of moral evolution, not a supernatural crisis. And, taken in connection with the constant lessons on brotherhood, self-sacrifice, and mutual service, they seem to me to justify what is said in the text above.

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CHAP. IX. muted not only into vegetable and animal life, but into political debate and Acts of Parliament. In such a sense, but in no other, can Jesus be said to have "legislated" for the republic of man, or the kingdom of God.

The
Messiah-
ship.

Then a time came, alas ! too soon, when the music of his words, together with a gracious and, I doubt not, a beautiful presence, and powers of sympathy which made his very touch healing, attracted around him not only devout disciples, but a popular following. Thus he appears to have been forced into a position never sought by him, but to which, when it appeared inevitable, he gave a spiritual interpretation inconsistent both with the ambitions of the hierarchy and with the passions of the mob. Whether he himself set the example of applying to the expected Messiah the pathetic descriptions given by prophets of God's Suffering Servant, is a question on which materials for a confident judgment are wanting.¹ But it is a plausible opinion, and perfectly congruous with the glimpses we get of the earliest events following his death. It also helps to make more conceivable the strange spiritual experience of St. Paul.

Immediate
causes of
the Cruci-
fixion.

Be that as it may, a time came at Jerusalem, during a Passover, when the alarm of the Sanhedrin was aroused by the enthusiasm of the crowds who gathered around the Galilean prophet. Perhaps also there was another reason for their wrath : because, according to the unanimous testimony of the Synoptic Gospels, which there is here no reason to doubt, Jesus delivered in the very courts of the Temple a scathing invective against the Scribes and Pharisees—or, as we should say, the theologians and professing saints of the time. Nor do I see why we should not take Matt. xxiii., transferred

Invective
against the
Scribes and
Pharisees.

¹ Mark ix. 12 may well represent a genuine tradition.

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probably from the Logia, which, according to Papias, CHAP. IX. were the nucleus of an early Gospel, as substantially a true report of the charges that he made.¹ For certainly daring utterances of the kind, and in such a place, had not been very common since the gold of the Temple had become more sacred than the Temple itself. And words uttered by the Master in such circumstances just before the terrible crisis out of which the Church arose, would make a deep impression on memories accustomed to independence of written memoranda.

The verisimilitude of that invective is a matter of interesting study. For, at first sight, it appears discordant with the "Beatitudes," and with the injunction not to resist evil.² But it must be remembered that the latter is applicable only to personal injuries. For however we may interpret the instruction to turn the other cheek to the smiter, it certainly does not refer to the cheek of friend, dependent, or child. And be it observed that the indignation of Jesus against the Scribes and Pharisees had nothing whatever to do with their depreciation of himself. This we are justified in saying by the tone pervading that most interesting and suggestive chapter, Matt. xi., in which Jesus deals with the doubts

The verisimilitude.

No anger on his own account.

Matt. xi. compared.

¹ The possible anachronism in the mention of Zacharias, son of Barachias, might find a simple explanation if we knew how the Logia were passed from mouth to mouth and from pen to pen. But indeed it is not clear that there is any anachronism at all. The change of the name of the martyr's father from Jehoiada to Barachiah or Berechiah would be an error natural enough to a scribe making copies ten or twenty years after the fall of Jerusalem. (See *Ency. Bib.*)

² Perhaps Mr. J. M. Robertson had this invective specially in view when he wrote: "There is clearly nothing to be gained for ethics by the common practice of representing the Jesus of the Gospels as incapable of the pleasures of malevolence, when, as there pictured, he had them rather frequently" (*Essays on Ethics*). I believe Mr. Robertson considers that Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny were mistaken in supposing that Christianity had a personal founder at all. Otherwise we might say that one who "went about doing good," and was crucified for doing it, has, in common fairness, to say nothing of generosity, a right to have the best construction put upon ambiguous passages in the reports of what he did or said.

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CHAP. IX. of John the Baptist, and the contemptuous disregard of the new gospel among the ruling classes of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. For the doubts of John he showed the most sympathetic consideration. He gently satirised the inconsistency of the good, religious people who condemned the one prophet as a sour ascetic, and the other as a frequenter of festivities and an associate of poor, sinful men. Not that he concealed his grave sense of the responsibility incurred by those respectable people who would not have God's message unless it were edited by themselves ; but there is no anger, much less bitterness, in his denouncement of their woe. And his spirit is in perfect peace as he sees, in the strange fortune of his gospel, the purpose of the Father who regards not the conceit of the wise and prudent, but in whose sight the poor and needy are precious. "Go your own way, if so you must, ye synagogue rulers, learned scribes and holy Pharisees of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum ! If these things are hid from the wise and prudent"—the dignified and powerful—"even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But do not you leave me, you sick and suffering ones, you sorrowful and poor : "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Difference
of tone in
Matt. xxiii.

Now the tone of the invective in the courts of the Temple is undeniably different from the tone of these wistful regrets and consolations. For not only does that invective show, almost down to the pathetic cadence of relenting love at the end, an unrestrained passion of indignation ; but its unsparing epithets burn with a fierceness of anger at variance with the serenity characteristic of the traditional Jesus.¹ Indeed that strange

¹ Even the Fourth Gospel, which, with M. Jean Reville, I believe the

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and paradoxical phrase in the Apocalypse, "*the wrath of the lamb*," seems to find here a living illustration.

But is there not a cause? We need not bind ourselves to Christian tradition of the Pharisees as conscious liars and deliberate hypocrites. Indeed, the latter word, whatever Aramæan term it may represent from the lips of Jesus, had scarcely, when the earliest gospels were written, acquired all the connotation it possesses now. And so far as we can gather from scholars competent to judge,¹ the group of Jews who bore the name of Pharisee were much more like the religious middle-class of our own land in the last century than like the Tartuffes and Pecksniffs of fiction. This resemblance is curious and can be traced in some detail. Thus for the Pharisees the written Scriptures, including the Prophets and the Hagiographa, were the supreme and exhaustive revelation of God until the new age should be brought in by the Messiah. So did our pious forefathers repeat with unction words originally uttered with a different purpose, "The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants," while at the same time they looked forward to a second coming of Christ, at whose bright appearing faith should be merged in sight. Farther, the Pharisees held that the Scriptures were thus precious only when interpreted on a traditional system handed down from teacher to teacher since the great

CHAP. IX.
"The
wrath of
the lamb."
Real
character
of the
Pharisees

like the
evangelical
religionists
of last
century.

Biblicism
and
Messianic
expecta-
tions.

Tradition.

author deliberately intended to be an ideal, not a real narrative—but on that very account truer, in that author's view, than a mere history—keeps the same note. The often noted contrast between the fervent St. Paul and his master before the Sanhedrim marks the tradition well. "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," shouts the Apostle, when the High Priest tells an officer to smite him on the mouth. "If I have spoken evil," says Jesus, under the same insult, "bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?"

¹ See, for instance, an excellent article, s.v., in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Gesenius in his *Thesaurus* denies that the word פָּרִישֵׁי, often translated "hypocrite" in the A.V., had that meaning in classical Hebrew. But he allows that the Rabbis imported such a meaning into it.

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CHAP. IX. reform and re-establishment of Judaism by Ezra, Nehemiah, and their successors. Their devotion to this interpretation hardened into such an infatuated superstition that, like Roman mortar, it became stronger than the structure it was intended to preserve. And if, under the strain of shifting moral equilibrium, the preservation of both became impossible, it was not the interpretation that had to yield, but the sacred text, so that Jesus said "full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition."

Its forced,
unnatural
interpreta-
tions of
Scripture.

Very much in the same way triumphant "evangelicalism" among ourselves held that the Bible, in order to exert its saving power, must be interpreted according to methods inherited from the Protestant Reformation. And although on some points there was a certain freedom of choice grudgingly allowed, as between the schools of Wittenburg, of Geneva, and of Holland, yet the main body of tradition which distorted a natural growth of Jewish literature into a miraculous prefiguring of the "plan of salvation," and the simple story of Jesus into a theophany concocted on the lines of a new Rabbinitism, was treated as actually more sacred than the Bible's own testimony concerning itself. For instance, in the Old Testament, the two obviously distinct and mutually contradictory accounts of creation were forced into an impossible union in the interest of the historicity of man's creation and fall, while the almost complete absence, in any later part of the Old Testament, of any reference to the Fall of Man was ignored. Jewish sacrifices also were persistently treated as types of Christ, notwithstanding the plain fact that in this practice of sacrifice the Jews only followed the universal custom of the human race. And to preserve the idea of a monotheistic revelation to Abraham—an essential part of the

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“plan of salvation”—a mere travesty of the evolution of Jewish religion was substituted for the gradual effacement of Polytheism and the slow attainment of supremacy by the Yahwistic priestly cult, as plainly suggested in the fundamental documents of the Biblical story.¹ CHAP. IX.

It would entail a disproportionate treatment of this point were we to do more than simply indicate other resemblances between the spiritual phenomena of Pharisaism and those of Evangelicalism in the time of its predominance. Thus Sabbatarianism, “other-worldliness,” zeal for missions, diligence in collection of money for religious objects, devotion to the “ordinances,” and especially to prayer, were characteristic of both. And the suggested parallel will be the better understood if I acknowledge at once that the repulsive picture presented in that passionate invective, as it has come down to us, is probably exaggerated and distorted. Yet it may be on this account the more interesting and instructive. For it is not a mere paradox to say that exaggeration is sometimes needed to bring truth into relief. Thus there are few public men who do not owe to kindly caricatures a revelation of something in their physiognomy never noticed by themselves on “beholding their natural face in a glass.” The unobserved shade of expression is undeniable when portrayed. But it would never have been visible to the owner thereof without the exaggeration of the keen-eyed artist. Now invective is not, or ought not to be caricature; but at any rate it requires concentration of attention on some qualities to the exclusion of others. And in this case the qualities selected for denunciation were precisely

Other
points of re-
semblance.

Considera-
tions in
mitigation
of the
invective.

¹ For one of the best and most complete statements of the argument on this subject, see *The Hexateuch*, by J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby.

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CHAP. IX. those which, while stimulated and pampered by self-conscious virtue, inflict a creeping paralysis on faith.

Whatever allowance we may make for the corruptions introduced into the gospel text by second century scribes, removed by more than two generations from the times of Jesus, yet if the discourse against the Pharisees is historical in substance, as I venture to think it, there must have been in their very piety something specially repugnant to the spirit of Jesus. And what that was is apparent enough if we have rightly interpreted the Everlasting Gospel. For the essence of this is the unreserved subordination of the creature to God, as of the part to the whole. Not that Jesus taught Pantheism.¹ But this does not in the least matter. For Pantheism is only the ultimate intellectual basis of religion, not religion itself. And hundreds of devout mystics, nay even practical Methodists, have preached an experimental religion such as can only be justified by Pantheism, though to them the word would have been "anathema." That is to say, they taught the utter nothingness of the creature, and made absolute, unreserved surrender of self to God the essence of religion and the germ of all morality. Now this was not the religion of the Pharisees, nor has it been the religion of their successors in recent times. And the difference was that the object of their devotion was not God himself, in his ineffable greatness, not, as we should say, the eternal All as partly manifested to human contemplation in innumerable phenomena,—every one of them a little revelation,—but rather the object of their devotion was a way of thinking about God, a blurred theophany of a bygone age, a sacred volume, a tradition trans-

Real vice of
Pharisaic
virtue ;

an im-
perfect
surrender
of self.

The object
of devotion
not God,
but a way of
thinking
about God.

¹ There are hints of it in the Fourth Gospel. See x. 34, 35; xvii. 21. But we cannot build on these.

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mitted to them as their peculiar treasure because they were the elect of God. CHAP. IX.

In fact, as has often been said, they possessed religion ; religion did not possess them. The Scriptures were their *peculium*, their miserly hoard of spiritual treasure, in which humanity at large could not share except on condition of forswearing its own phases of revelation and receiving as divine "the weak and beggarly elements" of Mosaism. People whose religion is thus dominated by superstition unconsciously fall into the habit of thinking that they are honouring God by their compliments. And the Pharisee who stood in the court of the Temple and prayed, saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men," was spiritual ancestor to thousands of modern churchgoers of all denominations, who mouth the responses or ejaculate amens, rolling the syllables as a sweet morsel under their palate as though their utterance of the sounds were a gratification to the Almighty, and a security for their own salvation. Neither the ancient prototype nor his modern reproductions have had enough of that self-annihilating reverence which recognises the greatness of God as transcending all knowledge or imagination and therefore incapable of comprehension within formulas. Thus they were not in the least overwhelmed by his majesty, but rather prided themselves that they knew him so well. To such religion as this, singleness of eye is impossible, owing to the predominance of self in all its sanctimonious luxury. The blessedness of the pure in heart was not theirs, and therefore not the beatific vision. For true it is that, though God be unknowable "in the strict sense of knowing," yet to the pure in heart, the sincere, the single-eyed, a moral order is revealed even amid the confusions of life ; and a growing purpose is dimly

Possessors of religion, not possessed by it.

No true reverence.

Predominance of self

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CHAP. IX. realised even where reaction seems triumphant. So that though God himself be unknowable, his presence and working are assured. Such religion, though its genuineness in the sense of devotion to a narrow rule of faith is undeniable, is always a prey to prejudice and bigotry and spiritual cowardice. It is so anxious—in rabbinical phrase—to “erect a fence about the law,” that it makes the spiritual treasure inaccessible from without, and stifles its votaries within by the closeness of the sectarian air. Evolution of knowledge, the widening of the universe, the antedating of human origins, the universal diffusion of inspiration and its fallibility, even in its highest forms, all alike are feared because of their inconsistency with exclusive devotion to the one conventional cult.

causes
subjection
to prejudice
and
spiritual
cowardice.

The moral
of such
considera-
tions.

Jesus
looked for
a spiritual
kingdom
on earth.

This excursus on the Pharisaic spirit is not out of place if it enables us to understand the strong antagonistic feeling it evoked in Jesus, and if it warns us against certain dangers of our own times. For we gather from the parables of Jesus and from his attitude toward legal fanaticism that he recognised as a pressing need of man in that age a more spiritual religion than that of the Mosaic law, a religion drawing its inspiration not from books, but from the direct divine communion.¹ True, the Gospel memorabilia do not enable us to form any clear and certain judgment concerning his ultimate spiritual outlook. The warning that “not one jot or tittle should pass from the law” has very much the appearance of a Judæo-Christian gloss on the Logia. But at any rate we are sure that he looked for a kingdom of God on earth, which kingdom should be, in the words of his greatest apostle, whom he never knew, “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

¹ Compare Matt. v. 8, 48; vi. 22; Luke xii. 57.

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This kingdom was not to come "by might, nor by power," but by the spirit of the Lord. Nor was it to be established by portent or miracle, but by a spiritual process as natural as the working of leaven or the springing of sown corn. Farther, whatever its relation to the Law of Moses, it was not to make a fetish of the Ark of the Covenant, or of the written record in the Scriptures. For the ordinances of that law were for man, not man for the ordinances; whereas in the new covenant the creature existed for God, and not God for the creature.

Now to the germination of such a perfect law of liberty in the commonwealth of man, the breath of Pharisaism and legalism was fatal. For Pharisaism, at least in its popular and exoteric forms, had no idea of an infinite Unknowable of which all momentary inspirations were only infinitesimal glimpses. On the contrary, it was the proud boast of the school that the oracles of God had been entrusted to the keeping of Moses and his successors; and the Scribes were as much the keepers and masters of this treasure as a king's chancellor was controller of the revenues of his kingdom. But to a people enslaved under such a bondage, the perfect law of liberty was impossible. And therefore Jesus saw in Pharisaism the enemy with whom conflict was an issue of life or death. Farther, it is surely worthy of remark that on the only occasion on which, according to the Gospel tradition, Jesus came into controversy with the Sadducees,¹ his tone toward them has all the suavity and, so to speak, detachment of a lawyer discussing the

CHAP. IX.
"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."

Contrariety of the Pharisaic spirit to the Gospel.

Pride in the written word as a sectarian possession.

Inconsistent with the freedom of the spirit.

Difference of attitude toward the Sadducees.

¹ Matt. xxii. 23, etc. In Matt. xvi. 1, 6, 11, and 12 the Sadducees are associated with the Pharisees, but in such a way as to suggest that it was the political aspect of the Messiahship which was in question rather than spiritual religion. At any rate the Sadducees are not there separated from the mass of Jewish politicians.

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CHAP. IX. interpretation of a document. And there is no trace in the Gospels of any such intolerance on his part toward them as is now shown by the most virtuous successors of the Pharisees toward those who say "there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit." Yet we know, as surely as we can know anything about Jesus, that his beliefs were much more akin to those of the Pharisees. Why then did he deal with the Sadducees so much more gently than with their rivals?

The Sadducees were like a fallow field.

The Pharisees were like a field choked with thorns.

The answer must surely be that the Sadducees in adhering to the Pentateuch and denying any authority to traditional interpretation were spiritually in the position of ancient Israel before the prophets began that course of higher evolution, of which the teaching of Jesus was the final outcome.¹ They were therefore like a field that had lain fallow, and might be receptive of the good seed. But the Pharisees, while professing to honour the prophets as speaking for God, had so perverted the divine word in the interests of sectarian tradition, that the soil of their minds was wholly pre-occupied with thorns, which choked that seed before it could spring. The Law was to the Sadducees an object of reverence which commanded their obedience, while to the Pharisees it was a sort of property and privilege, which exalted them among the nations of the world. And in this way we may account for the apparent fact that the Sadducees were more tolerant than the Pharisees of Gentile ideas and heathen cults. For the former do not seem to have been speculative. They had, perhaps, no "Weltanschauung" such as the Pharisees certainly

¹ The attitude of the Sadducees to the Prophets and Hagiographa is not very clear. Mr. A. E. Cowley in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* compares it to the feeling of Protestants toward the Apocrypha. It is difficult to reconcile the statement in Acts and the words of Josephus with their frank reception of the later Old Testament as the word of God.

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had ; and they may very well have thought that while it was their duty to follow Moses, the Persians were right in following Zoroaster, and the Greeks and Romans their own traditions. CHAP. IX.

The attitude of Jesus toward the two schools of thought dividing the Israel of his day seems indicative of a spiritual insight in the peasant prophet such as is never attained unless by supreme religious genius, which is only another phrase for divine inspiration. Of that insight the veracity is illustrated in every age. For it is always the effete good that is the hindrance to the better, and the concreted better that excludes the ideal best. Thus at the era of the Protestant Reformation, the common sense of Erasmus, which lacked outlook, expansiveness, adaptability to a new age, was attractive enough in itself ; but to the progress of the Reformation it was a more effective foe than any Pope or Council. And again, Luther's definite substitution of Bible for Church authority, and of theological faith for ecclesiasticism, though better than belief in the power of money over Purgatory, soon acquired a stereotyped sectarian hardness, impermeable to the religious idealism—

Spiritual insight shown by the attitude of Jesus toward the two schools of thought.

Its justification in later days.

Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form.

So in our own time and that of our fathers it would be difficult to overestimate or overstate the mischief wrought by the sort of religion that plumes itself on privilege, and feeds its spiritual pride on possession of the oracles of God. Geology, sound history, anthropology, scientific study of the Bible,—all have been opposed and anathematised by good men, who could not conceive that truth might be greater than they knew. And in particular, while our people have been

Modern Pharisees

and the results of their "Weltanschauung."

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CHAP. IX. perishing for lack of knowledge, and while for want of practically scientific culture we have been losing our foremost place in commerce, the only question that has roused popular passion about education has been the amount of sectarian theology to be taught in the schools, and in particular, the retention of the Bible as the Word of God. It would be unjust to stigmatise as hypocritical this traditional passion for formulas. But it has been quite as inimical to popular progress as, in the days of Jesus, Pharisaic goodness was opposed to the advent of God's kingdom. And they who most fully realise the disastrous effect of "the religious difficulty" upon the moral as well as the material interests of the nation, feel least tempted to criticise the tremendous vigour with which Jesus denounced the Scribes and Pharisees of his own day.

Fatal effects of the invective.

But it was fatal to himself—at least to his earthly life. For it is likely enough that the unsparing invective stirred popular enthusiasm, and roused anticipations of a revolution far, indeed, from his pacific thoughts. The excitement of the mob at his entry from the Mount of Olives had already caused uneasiness amongst the Sanhedrim, who wished, as it were, to keep the Messiahship in their own gift, or at any rate subject to their endorsement. And the exaltation by the mob of a visionary peasant to that ideal rank, would infallibly precipitate political disturbances dangerous to or even destructive of their hopes. Our purpose does not require an investigation of the dread tragedy that followed. It is enough to know that this impersonation of the everlasting gospel of self-mergence in the Eternal was put to a cruel death, and to the last moment bore himself not only with gentleness, patience, and resignation, but with a triumphant confidence, which led even an

The Crucifixion.

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opponent of Christianity to say, "If the death of Socrates was that of a philosopher, surely that of Jesus was the death of a god!" CHAP. IX.

There was, indeed, one terrible moment when, according to the Synoptic testimony, he quoted in his agony the wail of the Psalmist, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And it is impossible to be sure that the cry was not indicative of some dread eclipse of hope. Being, as he was, a man of his time as well as a man of eternity, he might very well in the latter days, when Messiahship was almost forced upon him, have thought that perchance the machinations of the wicked would suddenly be disconcerted by some miraculous intervention. Indeed, the waning of this thought is perhaps suggested by the repeated prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where, with strong crying and tears, he strives against and overcomes the instinct of the natural man, and throws himself, a living sacrifice, into the arms of the Eternal. But the only prayer that could be granted was the aspiration for a complete absorption of all personal desire in the divine purpose—"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And, so far as the earliest traditions of the Church inform us, this spirit of absolute surrender to the Eternal was retained unwaveringly to the end. For it is only a hard, unnatural, and forced interpretation of his sense of oneness with God that can find in his quotation of the Psalmist's cry any insoluble mystery of schism between the Father and the Son. Because, even if it be granted that the deadly issue disappointed some vague hope of supernatural deliverance, and extorted from his agonised frame an appeal of uncomplaining wonder, yet the whole story of the Last Supper, and of Gethsemane, and of his bearing before his murderers

The meaning of the cry, "My God, my God!"

The Complete Sacrifice.

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CHAP. IX. assures us that the disappointment, if such it may have been, was sanctified in his soul by unruffled acquiescence in the unknowable counsel of God, and thus completed that sacrifice of the personal self to the All in All, which made the life and death of Jesus beyond all other men an incarnation of the Everlasting Gospel.

Survival of the Gospel amid changes in terminology.

But it may be said with much truth that Jesus never, so far as we know, spoke about the All in All or about the Eternal.¹ All his discourse was about the Heavenly Father; and when, as we are told in one of the most touching passages of pseudo-apostolic writings, that "being reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously," it was not to the Unknowable that he resigned his soul, but to the Father of his spirit. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." "Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." And yet these very words suggest one passing through unfathomable darkness in reliance on a Being too great and mysterious to be judged as an earthly guide, and whose "ways are past finding out."

What is meant by the Fatherhood of God.

Now it is undeniably true that by the use of the title "Father," the New Testament writers appear to assume a sort of knowledge of the Infinite which is expressly declared to be impossible both in other parts of the Bible itself and by the greater saints. The assumption, however, is practically withdrawn or cancelled by the admission that "we walk by faith, not by sight"; or, in other words, faith is made to serve for knowledge. But what is it which to the devout is assured by faith? Surely not that his interpretation of human destiny is

¹ The words in John viii. 58 have clearly a reference to the absolute name "*I AM*." But the number who think that Jesus really said those words is rapidly diminishing.

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infallibly correct, or even his conception of his own highest good ; but only that the government of the Universe is wiser and better than he can understand. CHAP. IX.

For, as already suggested in an earlier chapter, the most absolute faith necessarily takes the form of Job's utter abandonment of himself to God—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."¹ Example of Job.

Now they who attain to this faith, the true attitude of the finite to the Infinite, of the part to the Whole, retain in their possession all of the divine Fatherhood which is substantial and real. For in all parts of the Universe, where the moral stage of evolution is in being, the energy of evolution is the "Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness."

And every one who is on the side of righteousness is as much assured of ultimate victory as a child borne through the tide of battle on the strong arm of a father superior to every foe. A real but only partial analogy.

But we wrong our faith and weaken it by an unnatural strain when we draw the parallel too close, and insist on the precise personal and finite relations connoted to us by the familiar terms of family relationship. The theological fatherhood which at this present time² leaves Macedonian women and children to be outraged and stabbed and mutilated by the Turkish Sultan's savages, while the bodies of their husbands and fathers in thousands taint the air, or while others more miserable crawl with broken bones and raging fever to

The analogy not to be forced on pain of insincerity.

¹ Job xiii. 15. The succeeding words, "but I will maintain mine own way before him," do not limit this surrender. They appear to mean: "Whatever may be the mystery of God's dealing with me, to which I unreservedly submit myself, yet I have done my best." The tone is somewhat arrogant ; but compare the end of the story : "I have uttered that I understood not ; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . . I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee : wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And as to the phrase, "Now mine eye seeth thee," compare "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The heart is pure that is emptied of self and rid of the arrogance of "maintaining our own way before him."

² September 1903.

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CHAP. IX. the shelter of the woods, is not the same, however we may pretend it to ourselves, as the human fatherhood which the cry of a child's slightest pain or even foolish terror rouses to comfort and defend. But it is far wiser, say our preachers. Yes, from the point of view of evolution, in the interests, if we may so speak, of the whole universe, it is certainly wiser. And therefore it is different. The analogy of the finite fatherhood breaks down, save so far as we have tried to indicate above.

Divine
sonship.

Thus any hero of an oppressed race or any martyr-prophet of truth may well realise that his impulse to action or speech is not begotten within himself, but is the energy of God. And though no worldly wisdom frames the plan of his mission, and though the odds against him are overwhelming, he may have confidence that he cannot fight or suffer in vain because the "Lord of Hosts is with him." For the Lord of Hosts is the infinite Life, rich with all the energies that ever were, or are, or will be, and bringing forth in their succession all the strength and the beauty, and the consciousness and the goodness of the world as known to us. The hero or the martyr therefore, who feels the inspiration of that life, may well think of himself as a son sent on a mission by his father; and so long as he does not presume to set up any personal rights of his own because he is thus honoured, he is a genuine son of God. This glorious consciousness gives him indeed no assurance of reward or inheritance, as men count such things. Yet so far as he has a real work to do in moral evolution, he knows that he is never alone, "for the Father is with him." And as he never would have attained to this conscious sonship had he not realised that man's divinest life is "an infinite dying," this is his heaven.

Summary. I have now endeavoured to explain in what sense I

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CHAP. IX.

regard the mission of Jesus as a beautiful and commanding embodiment of the everlasting gospel. That gospel is the truth that peace and power and bliss are found not in self-assertion, but in a loyal willingness to merge self in "the glory of the sum of things." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And this truth is set forth as in an acted parable in the life and death of Jesus as told in the Gospels. Uncertainty as to the literal historic truth of parts or even of the whole of the narrative cannot diminish aught from the preciousness of the ideal. Therefore, whatever interest may appertain to discussions about the genealogy of Jesus, or the chronology of his ministry, or the extent of his exceptional gifts, it is not necessarily a religious interest, but belongs to history or biography. For myself, I am convinced that the outline I have given above of the ministry of Jesus to his generation is exceedingly probable, and almost certain. But I do not lay stress on that at all. For I give large interpretation to the principle expressed in the previously quoted words : "It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing." Therefore to me the laborious and ingenious arguments of those who seem to think that the Everlasting Gospel can depend on the congruity of mouldering documents, are much as if any one should discredit the power of young love because Romeo and Juliet belong to an ancient tale of uncertain source. Say what they may, the ideal is there : it lives and breathes and works. And because I know no truer or more inspiring ideal of human life, I persist in calling myself a Christian.

The
name of
Christian.

But this name ought not to include any acquiescence whatever in ideas, or myths or doctrines that emerged

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CHAP. IX. only after Jesus had expired upon the cross. Of the resurrection we have treated already, and shall not return to it. For the disciples who had the vision, and for those who believed their report, it signified the deathlessness of the Gospel, and we can believe in that without miracle. But there was one aspect of the Gospel which received enormous development through the death of Jesus, the persecution of his followers, and the consequent scattering of the good seed through the world. That aspect was the brotherhood of man. Love to God, according to Jesus, was the subject of the first and greatest commandment. Most justly, if our view of the Universe be right and if by the above phrase we understand loyalty to the Eternal. But the second was like unto it : "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "On these two commandments," said Jesus, "hang all the Law and the Prophets." From "the first and greatest commandment" is generated in the New Testament that perfect law of liberty, identical with the gospel of self-surrender to God ; and from the second is evolved that brotherhood of man, which, by its quickening of sympathy and of mutual inspiration, is to the Christian dispensation what prophetism was to that of Moses. Of necessity this brotherhood of man existed at first in germ only as the fellowship of all "who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and who were conscious of being collectively "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." But the sectarianism which is too rife in this twentieth century of the Christian era had little scope in the first expansive outburst of the new life in Christ. For it is manifest that the chief note of St. Paul's teaching was not exclusion but inclusion. It was, in Professor Seely's admirable phrase, an "enthusiasm of humanity."

Apostolic additions not binding on the Christian.

The Law and the Prophets as transmuted by Christianity.

The Church and the "enthusiasm of humanity."

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True, the churches incurred Roman suspicion as secret societies, and very early in their history unbaptized attendants in Christian assemblies were warned off from participation in the more sacred cult that included the mystic act of communion. But such temporary exclusiveness was an inevitable accident of the attempt to build up a holy society out of the social elements of the day, and that it was regarded by the Apostle of the Gentiles himself as only temporary, may be fairly inferred from his own practice and his own words, or those of the school he founded.

CHAP. IX.

The semblance of exclusiveness temporary only.

Consider, for instance, the teaching and, as we may presume, the practice of St. Paul in regard to meats from heathen sacrifices which were sold in the shambles, or placed on the tables at a feast. To him an idol was "nothing in the world," though to its worshippers it represented a "dæmon," which his Jewish training led him to identify with an evil spirit. The confusion of thought need not trouble us. For the main point is that the question of eating or not eating was to be determined not by any superstition about the idol, but by a consideration of the moral and religious influence likely to be exerted by the act. "Let no man seek his own interest, but another's.¹ Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake." Surely the words suggest a much less morbid kind of conscience than has often been associated with religion in later days. And not only the same healthy common sense, but a broad humanity and a loyal sociability is shown in the next words. For Christians invited to dinner by a heathen friend are told not to trouble themselves about the possibility that there may be

The social catholicity of St. Paul

shown by his ruling about meats offered to idols.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 24, etc. The supplied word "wealth" in our English version suggests that the word was formerly much more closely associated with "weal" than it is now.

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CHAP. IX. sacrificial meats handed round, but to follow their own social inclinations, and if disposed to accept, to ask no questions. Still, if the host or any attendant or fellow-guest should call attention to the consecrated character of any dish, the Christian is directed not to eat of it. And why? "For his sake that showed it." Presumably because the latter must needs construe the act as homage offered to the idol, and so receive a wrong impression of the Gospel.

The
Catholic
morality
of the
Apostolic
age.

The illustration is significant of broad sympathies on the part of the Apostle, and of a desire to minimise as much as he could consistently with sound morality the aloofness of Christians from their fellow-men. But nonconformity to "the world"—the moral order of the day—was altogether another question; and the teaching of Apostolic Christianity on this point is so lofty, so fervid, so pregnant with devotion to ideal goodness for its own sake, that it adds greatly to our unwillingness to forego a name associated with such blessed inspirations. Once more it may be needful to repeat that the authenticity of the writings embodying this teaching is from our point of view a matter of indifference. For the teaching is there, however it originated. And the point on which I insist is, that during the latter half of the first Christian century and the earlier half of the second, there was handed about in fragmentary documents and passed from one Christian congregation to another a literature containing the noblest ideal ever presented to mankind, of a world-wide commonwealth, founded on love and truth and right.

Idea of
human
salvation.

It was founded on love. For the germ of the idea and the motive for its propagation was the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of man. And that salvation

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is miserably misinterpreted if it is supposed to comprise only deliverance from Hell. That such safety from supernatural punishment for sin was included is of course undeniable. Indeed it was a necessary accident of Pharisaic influence on pious Jews just before and after the Christian era. But how ridiculously such a notion falls short of the vision of world-wide blessedness which brightened the first age of Christianity is apparent in almost every book excepting only the semi-Jewish Apocalypse. Thus the key to St. Paul's conception of human salvation is to be found in the emergence of a new Manhood out of the old, by the universal prevalence of the faith of Christ. And this faith was begotten by self-sacrificing love.

CHAP. IX.

Revelation
of the new
humanity.

The germ of this idea of the new humanity is found in the substitution of righteousness by faith for righteousness by the law. This being assumed, the distinction between Jew and Gentile disappeared ; for faith was just as much open to the latter as to the former. Such an abolition of the "middle wall of partition" is clearly a factor in St. Paul's conception of the Gospel according to the epistles most generally attributed to him, as, for instance, First Corinthians and Galatians. But the idea of a new Humanity was carried much farther than this, either by the Apostle of the Gentiles himself or by the school he founded. It was so expounded as to out-range and obliterate distinctions of race and caste such as were almost indelibly ingrained in the congenital prejudices of the age. And the daring speculation culminated in a vision of the Manhood of the future "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created" it ; "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free : but Christ is all, and

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CHAP. IX. in all.”¹ It needs but a slight acquaintance with the strong, deep, inveterate contempt of the Greek or Roman freeman for the bondman or slave, to enable us to realise how deep was the “enthusiasm of humanity” which swept away such a fundamental distinction, and proclaimed equality for all whom faith and love made capable of taking the image of Christ.

Equality
not of
rights but
of duties.

Hence the
high moral
ideals of the
Epistles.

E.g. Rom.
xii.

But the equality declared was not the pragmatic scheme of a political demagogue proclaiming equal “rights.” It was rather a prophetic call to equal duties. For whatever we may think of the sophisms and false logic and theological figments, most sincerely expounded, which make up a large part of the epistles in the New Testament, the moral exhortations so strangely inspired by them are strenuous, pure, and sublime. Take for instance, and only as an instance, that twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, following immediately upon three chapters consisting largely of neo-rabbinical distortions of the ancient Scriptures. In that twelfth chapter the marvellous compression of instruction, suggestion, and inspiration, the free, living flow of precious lessons almost tumbling over one another like the rushing waves of a strong fountain, makes us wonder what the soul was like that could dictate such an utterance, almost as easily as we might dictate an order for a supply of household goods. For the overrunning moral fulness of the man must have been even greater than his freedom of utterance; and this last is evident to all who have sympathy to perceive. One feels sure that the apostolic man kept his amanuensis hard at it. The words rushed from his lips. We even fancy him troubled that the penman could not write faster. He cannot have hesitated

¹ Col. iii. 11.

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about a word or a sequence of thought—where, indeed, CHAP. IX. sequence is never sought. His heart and soul were bursting with the treasures of the high life he had found in Christ.

Starting from the fundamental note of the Ever-lasting Gospel, life through death to self, he shows by a warning against any casuistic compromise with the moral disorder of the time how far removed from base expediency is his catholic humanity ; and he calls for a transformation from within which shall enable the Christian to realise God's will as the perfect law of liberty. Such exaltation will exclude conceit, while retaining self-respect ; and self-surrender to God inspires the enthusiasm of humanity by making us to realise that we are all one in him through Christ. But this divine socialism is not inconsistent with individual gifts which each is to recognise, not as a possession, but a trust. And then how naturally is this sacred store of the spiritual energy of faith distributed into its various luminous forms of service, teaching, administration, comfort, benevolence, sociability, courtesy, zeal, endurance, magnanimity ! What better ideal of courtesy was ever given than this : "In honour preferring one another" ? What more pregnant description of "the strenuous life" can be conceived than this : "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer" ?¹ Or what better watchword can there be for daily life than this : "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" ?

Or take again that exquisite gem of moral exposition, 1 Cor. xiii. St. Paul's brief description of brotherly love as more

¹ That is, as I take it, persistent in moral aspirations, sustained by divine communion. But see Chapter XII.

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CHAP. IX. — precious than any knowledge, or any faith, or any wonder-working gifts. It is all so simple, so obvious, and yet so impossible of utterance except by a soul aglow with a passion for the merging of all selfish desire in the glory of the new Humanity. Nor is this lofty strain of ethics confined to the epistles bearing the name of Paul. For with the insignificant exception of the heathenish document called after Jude, all the rest have passages of the beauty generated by singleness and force of moral purpose. Thus take the First Epistle attributed, no doubt falsely, to St. Peter. How strenuous, how gentle, how patient, and how triumphant is the plea contained in chapter ii. for a life as much above that of Paganism as the Christian faith is above its superstitions! The false slanders of a wondering world are not to cause impatience or vanity, but rather a zeal for such conduct as shall compel the conversion of persecutors; though there is perhaps a passing touch of contempt in the words "for so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye may muzzle the ignorance of foolish men." How noble is the paradox: "As free, and not using your liberty as a pretext for evil, but as the bondsmen of God." And how much finer than any incitement to futile rebellion is the counsel to slaves to show their new life by a character superior to that of their tyrants. "For this is grace, if a man for conscience toward God endure griefs, suffering wrongfully." And this self-mastery is raised transcendently above all mere stoicism, by reference to its source and inspiration in the embodiment by Jesus of the everlasting gospel of death to self and life in God. "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also died for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his footsteps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, when

Epistles of
unknown
origin.

1 Peter ii.
11-25.

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he was reviled, reviled not again, (and,) suffering, threatened not, but resigned himself to him that judgeth righteously.”¹ CHAP. IX.

Holding then to the ideal of a diviner life through death to self as pictured in the gospels, and to the “morality touched by emotion” which was engendered thereby and preached to the earliest Christian age, I will not forego that blessed name which connotes both the ideal and the life. Granted that I differ from all denominations alike in casting aside as worthless in this present age the Jewish traditions and the amalgam of Alexandrianism and Rabbinism of which theological creeds consist, have I not a right to call in aid the prophetic protest, “What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord”? In the essential qualities of human nature the twentieth century is as the first. But in conceptions of heaven and earth and hell, of nature and its processes, of origins and teleology, and, above all, of the laws of evidence, it is utterly different and enormously superior. What does it profit me then to be compelled to add to the constraining love of Christ in his unlimited sacrifice, the intolerable burden of an Athanasian creed? Nor do any of its dilutions make the thing more possible of real belief. How can it add to the beauty of that human life and death to say the thundering God of Sinai

Conclusion.

The right to the name of Christian

not invalidated by abandonment of first century ideas of creation and God.

¹ 1 Peter ii. 21. Tischendorf's text is here followed. It may perhaps even yet be necessary to say a word on the old objection that a spurious and, as we should say in these days, a forged letter is a suspicious source of moral inspiration. All we can reply is, that such was not the feeling at the date of the writing in question. It was neither arrogance nor fraud which led earnest Christian teachers to issue letters in the names of Apostles, but rather humility. Their own names were of no value, and they would not presume to set up as teachers. But they were very sure about the mind and intention of the Apostles, and they saw no wrong in reviving their teaching in this way. It is a very different thing where a new doctrine contrary to the analogy of faith is put forth under the false sanction of an honoured name. But the epistle quoted above gives only what we may call the commonplaces of teaching associated in that age with the memory of the Apostles.

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CHAP. IX. became incarnate in the Galilean peasant? As a matter of fact it does not add to it, but detracts from it at every crisis of the story, by suggesting that the endurance, and the sacrifice, and the faith held through darkness were all unreal, because, after all, the deity thus veiled must have known that all was well.

Pauline
morality
without
Pauline
theology.

Or again, why should my loyalty to St. Paul's moral teaching be made dependent on my subordination of common sense to his strange transmutations of Pharisaic traditions into a new theosophy? The morality is there; it lives and breathes not indeed by itself, but by the divine inspiration that works through all Humanity and not through the Jews alone. That through the ideal pictured in Jesus, through the incarnation of the Everlasting Gospel in a beautiful and touching form, the inspiration of a higher life got a hold of Humanity to which we have hardly a parallel elsewhere,—is true, and gladly acknowledged. But this fact cannot create evidence for non-natural events where none exists. And, knowing how much imagination, sympathy, and sacred illusion have done for the higher sentiment of man, we need not take offence because it is increasingly held that Christians of old had experience of such sacred magic. Let us keep the reality while we let the illusions go, or contemplate them as lovely clouds on the horizon of the past. It is obvious that the lustrous visions of a perfect life which shine out of the pages of the New Testament do a service to humanity such as nothing else in literature ever did, or does, or can do. To preserve to the world the inspiring power of these utterances, amid the inevitable disappearance of the supernatural framework of Christianity is the problem of the age. But we need not fear. For that inspiring power is deathless.

The
problem of
the age.

CHAPTER X

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION

THE term "experimental religion" is defined in the New English Dictionary as "practical experience of the influence of religion on the powers and operations of the soul."¹ This definition accords very well with the recollections of those who were trained up in the courts of the Temple or the Synagogue during the middle of the last century. For by experimental religion the Evangelical worthies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used to mean, almost exclusively, doctrine applied to the inner life of each believer. For instance, the theory of the atonement was that the sacrifice of Jesus enabled God to be "just and the justifier"² of the ungodly who repent and believe. But the application

Meaning
of the term

according
to the
Evangelical
Fathers.

¹ No instances are given of this particular phrase. But Bishop Hall is quoted as speaking of one who "excelled in experimental divinity and knew well how to stay a weak conscience, how to raise a fallen."

² How often was the little word "yet" unconsciously interpolated by preachers and exhorters in quoting these words of St. Paul. In fact it was so customary to say "just and *yet* the justifier" that I believe the general impression to have been that this was the sacred text. This is only one amongst many instances of the reaction of factitious and fictitious theological systems on the Bible itself. For the little word thus interpolated suggested that there was a difficulty on the part of God which the Most High had to overcome. Now whoever may have been responsible for this idea it was certainly not St. Paul. For him the difficulty was wholly on the side of the sinner (cf. Rom. vii.), and this difficulty was overcome by the substitution of faith for impossible legal perfection. Again the faith was an acceptance of Jesus as divine Son, conqueror of sin and death, and reconciler of men to God.

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CHAP. X. of that theory to the individual often involved a long experience of conviction, doubt, despair, illumination, appropriation by faith of the great sacrifice, and then joy and hope in believing, sometimes ecstatic, sometimes clouded, sometimes shot through with remorse for apparently unpardonable lapses into sin, and again rekindled into steady light by the assurance that "whom God foreknew them also he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son ; and whom he predestinated them he also called ; and whom he called them he also justified ; and whom he justified them he also glorified." Such exercises of the soul used to be specially recognised as experimental religion, and the whole Protestant evangelical creed offered ample scope for such "experience of the influence of religion on the powers and operations of the soul" in contact with the world, in communion with the Church, in failure and in success, in poverty and in wealth, in sickness and in sorrow, in prospect of death and of the day of judgment.

It used to be said by candid friends of the evangelical version of Christianity that this kind of "experimental religion" was concerned too much with "frames and feelings," and too little with practical morality. The criticism was justified by many of the hymns popular in those times ; for instance by the lines :—

My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.

But there can be no reason why "the practical experience of the influence of religion on the powers and operations of the soul" should not include our relations to the

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outer world, and the response of the will to the appeals of good and evil therein. The "salvationist idea," if so we may term it, of the spiritual life emphasised too much the comfort and peace or ecstasy of the soul, to the exclusion of the believer's activity as one note in the infinite harmony. Certainly no such mistake is to be found in the teaching of John Wesley, nor, we may add, in that of General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. But leaders cannot always answer for their followers. And perhaps one reason for the incredulity of evangelical religionists as to the possibility of "experimental religion" among Pantheists, is the concentration of all thought among the former on subjective states. CHAP. X.

But if I refer specially to experimental religion as understood by the Evangelical Fathers, it is not because I regard the spiritual experience of the historic "Catholic" church as inferior. God forbid! The reference is intended only to recall, for the sake of the next step in our argument, the traditions of English and Scottish and American religious life, by which the opinions of the passing generation of our fellow-countrymen and racial kinsmen are so largely moulded. But the quotations already made in the course of this work are enough to suggest that, in the view of the writer, the records of spiritual experience amongst Protestant Evangelical Christians stand to similar records of the greatest Catholic Fathers very much as late Greek, and low Latin literature stands to the classics of antiquity. The dialect of Protestantism is more familiar, and no religion can meet the needs of the age unless in its experimental form such religion is capable of expression in that dialect. So that we largely fail, unless we give a real significance to the experiences related in Wesleyan Class Meetings, and the confessions and aspirations of

Not a peculiarity of Protestantism.

The Religion of the Universe must interpret the deepest experiences of both Protestant and Catholic.

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CHAP. X. Independent or Baptist prayer-meetings, and the ejaculations of the Salvation Army. But we should fail entirely if our "Religion of the Universe" responded not to the far deeper soul utterances, not of men, but of Man, as heard in the organ voice of Augustine, in the heavenly harping of the *Imitatio Christi*, or in the weird æolian cadences and chords of Tauler, and the "Friends of God."

Meaning of experimental religion from point of view of the present work.

A God-consciousness essential.

Moral experience not enough.

An aspect of the antithesis of law and faith.

Now by experimental religion, as viewed from our standpoint here, I mean the religion of individual experience, perhaps first awakened by Bible reading and public worship and private prayer, but in any case farther evolved by the contemplations, the aspirations, and the discipline of a life to which God is ever the one reality. For though all men have joys and sorrows, temptations, falls and triumphs, yet it does not follow that all have experimental religion. Because to that the consciousness of God is essential. Thus a stoical materialist—if such a living paradox is possible—or a refined Epicurean may have interesting and intense moral conflicts in the endeavour to keep the wandering of desire within the limits dictated by the system adopted. And far be it from us to undervalue such moral experience. But it is not experimental religion; and it is not so clearly as the latter within the normal course of the evolution of the highest manhood. For the highest humanity must surely attain the power of co-ordinating the sense of relationship to the Universe with the cravings of individual desire, as naturally as it co-ordinates the action of the limbs with the law of gravitation. And this is not done merely by setting up limits not to be exceeded by desire. For that is the ineffectual process which broke down so miserably in the experience of St. Paul as described in Romans vii.

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But such a co-ordination is effected only when the Religion of the Universe is mirrored in the finite soul as heaven and earth are mirrored in the eyes, so as to set up in the mind the sense of belonging to an ordered Whole. While, however, the eyes inform the mind, the soul may not respond in contented loyalty. But where that loyalty of soul, which answers to faith, is realised, the finite creature is content and glad to be wholly and always in the service of the Infinite Life. And the essence of the Religion of the Universe is that no part exists for itself but for the divine Whole. This becomes experimental religion when the individual so realises the truth as to act it out in all the relations of life. Thus we may truly say with St. Paul that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," faith does accomplish; and for the Christian it is faith in the ideal Son of God as explained in the last chapter. For once we enter into the spirit of Christ's sacrifice, we realise "the perfect law of liberty." So that there is reason as well as emotion in the popular hymn :—

O Jesus, king most wonderful,
Thou conqueror renowned,
Thou sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!
When once thou visitest the heart,
Then truth begins to shine;
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine.

It is so. For though spoken in rhapsody the lines are the language of experience. And it is simply and literally true that when Christ's attitude of unreserved sacrifice takes possession of and remoulds the heart, the truth as to moral proportion becomes apparent as it

CHAP. X.

The virtue of faith in the ideal Christ is a matter of experience.

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CHAP. X. was not before. And "earthly vanities," in the sense of conceit of self and disproportionate value set on gratification, disappear. And the "love divine" which makes it our heaven to play our part, and only our part in the harmony of the whole, burns out all baser affections.

Incredulity
as to
Pantheistic
experimental
religion

But before going farther it seems desirable to notice the contemptuous incredulity with which the very notion of Pantheistic experimental religion is often greeted. For even those whose first article of belief is the being of a God "dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen or can see"—words which certainly appear intended to raise the Deity above human comprehension—insist that we can have no experimental religion because we acknowledge God to be the Unknowable. Indeed, so far is this intolerance carried, that any claim on our part to have a faith which can inspire and support us in the moral conflicts of life, is thought to need no other treatment than that of jeers and sneers. Nearly twenty years ago a very interesting exponent of practical Roman Catholicism, Mr. Wilfrid Ward, in apparent distrust of his own powers of satire, had recourse to Mr. Frederic Harrison to provide him with missiles of sufficiently bitter irony. Now Mr. Harrison is consistent. For he will not have a God he cannot understand, and therefore contents himself with Humanity. And though the position is not tenable, it is at least planned on intelligible lines. Not so, however, with Mr. Wilfrid Ward's use of borrowed weapons. He found great satisfaction in quoting Mr. Harrison's words on the Unknowable.

Wilfrid
Ward and
Frederic
Harrison.

The precise and yet inexhaustible language of mathematics enables us to express in a common algebraical formula the exact combination of the unknown, raised to its highest power of infinity. That formula is (x^n) Where two or three

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are gathered together to worship the Unknowable . . . they may be heard to express their unwearied belief in xⁿ even if no weak brother with ritualistic tendencies be heard to cry, "O xⁿ, love us, help us, make us one with thee!"

CHAP. X.
—

Now the most excellent fooling often has its weak points, and one of the commonest of these is a misapprehension of the position or opinion satirised. And surely that is the case here. For the Unknowable of the devout Pantheist is not an "unknown raised to its highest power of infinity," but the unity of many knowns and innumerable unknowns, identical in their sum with the totality of being. And although even among the knowns not one can be comprehended through and through, seeing that every one of them has an aspect towards infinity, and cannot even in thought be wrenched asunder therefrom, yet they can all become familiar to experience, and be relied upon to renew the same experience in similar relations. For example, the various kinds of vibration, or wave motion, said to constitute electricity and also light, and the newly discovered forms of radiant energy, are in a clear sense "knowns," *i.e.* known phenomenally. Yet certainly they are not known through and through. But they are familiar in different degrees to scientific experience, and can always be relied on to renew the same experience in similar relations. Now it is in the latter sense only that they are known; while their relation to the ultimate energy of the universe, of which, by the way, they are not "effects" but phases, remains, and to finite creatures must for ever remain, unknowable. Similarly we may agree with the late Matthew Arnold that the "Power not ourselves"¹ which makes for

Misapprehension.

Nothing known in its entirety.

As witness the clearness and the mystery of light.

Many other forces, both physical and moral, are known in part but not in their unity.

¹ It must needs include ourselves, but is distinguishable from every finite self as the stream is from wavelets and eddies.

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CHAP. X. righteousness is known by experience; and what Shakespeare called "the divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will," is known by experience; and the energy of evolution is known by experience. But where or how all these millions of energies, perceived or unperceived, meet and make the oneness of all that is, we do not know, and never can know, unless death merges us in God.

Pantheism here in accord with the devoutest experimental religion.

Why then should our admission of the unknowableness of God be made a reproach to us, seeing that it is a commonplace of all devoutest religionists? Do orthodox Roman Catholics pretend to comprehend their God? If so, they contradict, as we have shown, not only their scriptures, but their greatest saints. Is it rejoined that they claim only to know their God in part, and not infinitely? This is precisely our own position; only perhaps "that which may be known of God" is not exactly the same to us as to them. So far as that goes, it is a question of fact and of evidence. Thus if they say they know concerning their God that he became at one time miraculously incorporate with a human germ, and was born as a human babe by parthenogenesis, this is a question of historical evidence, concerning which "securus judicabit orbis terrarum"; and the judgment is not yet, though it is nigh at hand. But if, on the other hand, they say that in the course of human evolution the life of God can be seen and felt on earth, moving on toward the realisation of an individual and social ideal, we agree that history and experience are with them. And this apprehension of "what God is to us" will in the days to come be found quite as fruitful in experimental religion among Pantheists as a similar apprehension has been among Catholics and Protestants.

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Nay it has been found so by the few souls sufficiently CHAP. X.
great to stand above their temporal surroundings and Examples
to live in eternity rather than in time. Surely no one from the
who knows how the moral heroism of Spinoza rivalled past.
his intellectual daring, will deny to him experimental Spinoza.
religion, if we adhere to the definition of it as a "practical
experience of the influence of religion on the powers
and operations of the soul." For when cursed by the
Synagogue, and slandered by the Church, and reduced
from comparative opulence to poverty, and tempted to
the acquisition of renewed wealth by means which no
earthly law, but only his ideal of life condemned, he
"endured as seeing him who is invisible." Nor would
it be reasonable or fair to deny to Giordano Bruno, Giordano
offered up as a burnt-sacrifice to the demons of super- Bruno.
stition at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a
power of experimental religion such as few repeaters of
the responses in luxurious churches can conceive. For
surely the religious influence that compels a man to
choose a fiery death rather than a lying recantation is
something much more practical and real than that which
sways only the flow and ebb of spiritual bliss. Of
course in this heroism he was only a comrade in "the
noble army of martyrs," most of whom sealed with
their blood a very different creed. All alike are worthy
of the reverence and love of a race redeemed from
mental slavery by the sufferings of such men. And the
only lesson we seek to draw here from the heroism of
heretic martyrs such as Giordano Bruno is that experi-
mental religion is quite possible to those who worship
One who is greater than they can conceive. That
Bruno was, in a certain sense, a Pantheist, there can
hardly be any doubt. Whether he was a Monist in our
sense of the word may be doubted from his description

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CHAP. X. of the world-soul as a hidden artist who from within gives all matter form and shape. But at any rate his idea of the divine life inspiring the world was incomprehensible to Churchmen, and therefore they put him to death. Yet for him it was an inspiration strong enough to make death by torture preferable to falsehood.

Temporary effects of a wider cult on fervour,

It has often happened when in the course of religious evolution a wider and less specialised form of devotion has displaced a more materialistic cult, that the fervour of experimental religion has seemed for a time to be chilled. Thus it is said of Luther and his wife that after the first excitement of the Reformation had subsided they had to lament to each other the decay of the impassioned devotion once stimulated by Catholic forms and emblems. Nor was their experience isolated. On the contrary, it was in accordance with all historic analogy. The incredulity of the Pagans as to the possibility of any real devotion where the shrine contained no image, and their disbelief in the religion of people who by their contempt for all the gods of the nations seemed to prove themselves "atheists," was not wholly unjustified. For the martyrs were, after all, a minority, and the worldly expediency and indifference of many converts attracted by intellectual novelty was often a reproach to the early Church. Not only of Jews who failed to live up to their spiritual monotheism, but of many Christians who "used their liberty as a cloak" at least for indifference, the bitter words of St. Paul might be used, "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."

experienced specially by those who are moved mainly to denial.

It is not surprising, therefore, if many of those who are led mainly by negative reasons, that is, by the impossibility of believing contra-natural events or dogmas, to seek more rational forms of religion, should

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lose the warmth of earlier religious affections. But this is not a necessary, nor will it be generally a permanent effect of the change. And as regards pantheism in particular, I think the examples already given, together with some general considerations now to be advanced, give good ground for expecting a better issue.

In what respect has the devout Pantheist a poorer spiritual inheritance than the Catholic or Anglican or Methodist? Of the traditions of the first he surrenders nothing but their physical coarseness of texture. For the spiritual ideas half-revealed and half-concealed in Old Testament myths, Israelitish legends, Jewish history, prophetic imagery, the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God, the saintly heroism of primitive Christianity and the struggle of eternal truth with temporal expediency since then, are as truly his possession as that of the holiest Pope, though from the Pantheist it demands no racking of reason, no dislocation of common sense. And if the Anglican gives thanks to God that a purely national development of Christianity has resulted in a serene *via media* removed equally from sacerdotal superstition and soulless materialism, the Pantheist, if an Englishman, claims all the apostles and directors of that development as his spiritual progenitors, and believes that the *via media* must ultimately merge, nay, is already merging, in the central line of truth that is equally far from supernaturalism on the one hand and materialism on the other. And as to Methodism,—a term which for our purpose may include all extra-ecclesiastical evangelism,—its spiritual power has lain in an appeal to the emotions generated by conscience and appeased by the love of God in Christ. But if the love of God, that is, the love of God to the creature, be properly understood, and if the real meaning of Christ's

CHAP. X.

The Pantheist retains all the spiritual inheritance of Catholic, Anglican, or Methodist.

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CHAP. X. sacrifice has been rightly set forth in a previous chapter, there is no reason why Methodist fervour, apart from its superstition and extravagances, should not, in those special human and divine relations which have kindled it, be possible also to pantheistic prophets.

If it be said that the Pantheist cannot give a literal interpretation to the spiritual aspirations and emotions which he claims to partake, this would not really differentiate his position from that of his more orthodox brethren. For they cannot do so either. Indeed nothing is more obvious in the phenomena of experimental religion than the constant, though often unconscious, use of language in a parabolic, metaphorical, often far-fetched sense, which is real indeed, but not in the least literally correspondent with the actual words used. For instance, take these stanzas from the old Wesleyan Hymn-Book, which I fear is somewhat discarded now :—

Sensuous expressions of religious experience.

Example from Wesley's Hymns.

Astonished at thy frowning brow,
Earth, hell, and heaven's strong pillars bow ;
Terrible majesty is thine !
Who then can that vast love express,
Which bows thee down to me, who less
Than nothing am, till thou art mine ?

High throned on Heaven's eternal hill,
In number, weight and measure still
Thou sweetly orderest all that is ;
And yet thou deign'st to come to me
And guide my steps, that I with thee
Enthroned may reign in endless bliss.

Not intended for literal interpretation.

Now we may be quite sure that no good, sensible Wesleyan, singing or reading this hymn, ever thought of the Almighty as seated on a hill and frowning so terribly that earth, hell, and heaven totter as in a uni-

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versal upheaval. Nor did he think of this tremendous Being as bending down from that hill and approaching his face to the worshipper. Nor did he think of that Being as holding a pair of scales like Homer's Zeus, and thereby arranging the economy of the universe "in number, weight and measure." Of course not. What then did he think of? Surely he thought of some Being too great for his conception or language, but to whose power he owed existence, growth, guidance, and inspiration. CHAP. X.

But then how did he differ from the Pantheist? Of course it may be said that the pious Methodist pictured at least a personal being who stood to him in the relation of a father to a child. Be it so. But it *was* a "picturing," a humanised conception of something beyond conception. For let it be granted that the pious soul on certain occasions feels that he has been impelled by "a Power not himself" to do or to suffer what was needful to the achievement of a higher end than his own pleasure or ambition, yet he is quite unable to refer that impulse to any of the ordinary channels of moral or spiritual influence. There was no audible voice telling him to take the course he did.¹ He "saw no manner of similitude." If he were cross-questioned by the most skilful master of that art, it would be impossible for him to explain how it was that the inspiration stirred him,—just as impossible as for the primrose bulb if it had speech to explain how the breath of spring moved it. But though the experience, except as an impulse in the soul, cannot be described or accounted for, there it is, and it is practically effective. And this is just the translation into practical experience of

The sense of inspiration sees "no manner of similitude."

¹ Of course in cases of great spiritual exaltation audible voices may occur. But I suppose nobody doubts now that these are caused by an abnormal excitement of the nervous system.

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CHAP. X. Augustine's words on behalf of the Eternal : "If thou canst not know what *I am* to myself, apprehend what I am to thee."

The position of the Pantheist practically the same.

Now wherein is the Pantheist in an inferior position? So far from denying the immanence of the Deity, he goes farther : he says there is nothing else ; and that all the impulses to evolution, whether so-called physical, intellectual, moral, social, or spiritual, are the energy of God. True, he does not pretend to understand how the unity of the Infinite consists with the variety of the Finite. Nor can he picture to himself, except by images consecrated to more orthodox use, how the divine Whole influences the finite part to fulfil its proper function. But just as in the case of his more orthodox brother, the impulse is there, and it is practically effective.

The difficulty of adverse moral influences.

"No," cry a thousand voices ; "it is *not* practically effective in this case. For if there are inspirations, there are also temptations and delusions, and if one soul hears the divine voice, a dozen or a score of others are misled by—what? If you have no Devil, what is the evil influence that destroys so many, and how do you account for it?" Our answer is, We don't account for it. You raise here a problem that merges in the unknowable, as we have already urged in Chapter VIII. But it is not a little curious that the Catholic and his sectarian brethren should suppose that the difficulty concerns them not. Surely they all regard their God as omnipotent and omnipresent, and Lord of all power and might in the sense that he is the source of all energy. "There is no power but of God," says St. Paul, and no Catholic will disown that authority. Very well ; so far as the practical, the moral, the religious issue is concerned how can the difficulty of the Catholic

Here also the Pantheist is no worse off.

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CHAP. X.

Christian be less than that of the Pantheist? True, the former may deceive himself—we speak it with all sympathy and respect—by interposing a number of so-called “secondary causes,” such as finite free will, evil spirits, the lusts of the flesh, and so on. But really the deception is very transparent. For through it glares the searching truth “there is no power but of God.” And no artifices of permission or of divine “economies,” by which God stands apart to let the miserable creature have his own way, can substantially differentiate the moral difficulties of orthodox theology from those of the Pantheist, who frankly acknowledges that the Eternal worketh all things in all.¹ But let us not be misunderstood. For I am not claiming that the position of the Pantheist is easier in regard to the moral problem raised than is that of the orthodox believer. If he has any advantage, it is in the absence of any constraint to make unreal pretences. Otherwise it is sufficient to urge that the Pantheist is at no disadvantage. For if he is obliged to confess that he cannot understand the matter at all, so likewise is every candid Catholic or Evangelical Christian.

But as we are dealing with experimental religion, it may well be asked how, from our point of view, are we to distinguish between impulses which make for righteousness and those which make for evil? Or, in other words, how distinguish between divine inspirations and, say, the lusts of the flesh? For if there is no power but of God, do they not both alike work out his will, and as St. Paul’s imaginary interlocutor asks,

How are we to distinguish inspirations from temptations?

¹ Of course I do not claim this Pauline phrase as carrying in its original context the meaning implied here. But if it were worth while it would be easy to show that in the Pauline writings the fact that “there is no power but of God” is frankly and fully acknowledged with all its legitimate consequences. See Rom. ix.-xi. ; especially ix. 20, etc.

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CHAP. X. "Why doth he yet find fault?" To which our reply is, if we may humbly say so, not quite that of the Apostle. In previous chapters we have followed many great teachers and devout schools of religion in holding that what we feel as morally good, looks in the direction of evolution or integration, while what we feel as morally evil, looks in the direction of disintegration. Both these processes are always going on, always have been, and always will be going on in the Universe. Why it should be so is a problem of the Many in the One, and that is unfathomable. But it can scarcely be denied that humanity in which, so far as we know, the relational conditions essential to morality alone exist,¹ is concerned with evolution rather than devolution, with integration rather than disintegration. And when we say "concerned," we mean that its highest interests, such as mutual loyalty, brotherly love, purity, honour, development of capacity and mastery over nature, are dependent on evolution and integration rather than on their antitheses. Surely it follows that while both opposite sets of forces and processes are generally the results of the divine energy, the business and the duty of humanity are bound up with the positive processes of evolution toward a higher state.

All inspirations tending to evolution are good.

Now, long and wide experience shows that, within certain limits already suggested, loyalty to some greater whole of which the individual forms an integral part, and, where necessary, self-sacrifice to that greater whole, is the most important spiritual energy concerned in social and moral evolution. We may therefore hold that there is a real and substantial sense in which, though all power is of God, humanity, exposed to various impulses, selects what is for it the true divine

¹ See *ante*, Chapter VIII.

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inspiration when it yields to the impulse that makes for evolution rather than for disintegration. Not that we are making any attempt such as we have disavowed to solve a moral difficulty pressing on all true religions¹ alike. But we do claim to answer sufficiently for practical purposes the question how we are to distinguish between impulses that make for righteousness and those that make for evil. For there is none so simple but may know when he is moved by greed for a disproportionate share of wealth or for pleasure at the expense of his fellows, or when, on the other hand, he is impelled to make some sacrifice of himself that he may improve the lot of his fellows. In the former case the social or commercial pressure is undoubtedly generated by forces within the universe, and therefore in the last result is of divine maintenance. But for him they are the Devil. In the latter case the self-denial may be unwelcome, and the probable ingratitude of his fellows a bitter ingredient. But he knows the impulse is from Him who calls light out of darkness.

The result then of our review of the position of the Pantheist in regard to experimental religion is that substantially, and so far as spiritual experience during this finite individual life² is concerned, his position need not differ very much from that of the Catholic or Methodist. There is in both cases an acknowledgment of the same fundamental and primal law of the spiritual life, that of entire and unreserved surrender of self to God. And if it be said that a vital difference lies in the fact that the Catholic "knows in whom he has believed" whereas the Pantheist does not, it may be

General result of preceding considerations.

The fundamental law of life the same to both.

¹ All religions breathing an inspiration of a purer and better life than that of the self-centred man.

² How far different ideas of immortality may affect the question, will be considered presently.

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CHAP. X. very reasonably retorted that this is much more an issue of words and of subjective impressions than of objective realities. For to the Pantheist nothing can be so sure as the being of God, and so far as this sureness goes he does "know in whom he has believed." Or if it is necessary for him in the struggle with care, sorrow, and evil to picture this infinite Being as "nourisher, father, teacher, counsellor, physician, reason, light, honour, glory, strength, life," he can do so as readily as the early Christian who wrote these words.¹ For though the Eternal be unknowable in his infinity, as He is in Himself, yet certainly to us, finite parts of him, he is all these. Nor is the Catholic or Methodist any more privileged than is the Pantheist to see, except in a mirror darkly (*δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι*), how the Eternal, unknowable in himself, can be all these to the creature.

The
mystery
the same
to both.

Concrete
example.

Here a brief concrete example is worth pages of disquisition. In the earliest quarter of the last century a pious Methodist tradesman, whom I am old enough to remember in his latest days of comparative prosperity, was reduced to bankruptcy through no fault of his own. With true Christian courage he resumed the leather apron abandoned for years, and amid many tokens of neighbourly respect and sympathy he trudged, thus attired, through the streets to and from his daily work. But the law against even the most honest debtors was cruel in those days, and during two successive imprisonments at a long distance from home he lost by death first his wife, and then his eldest son, a boy of rare promise, and regarded amongst his little circle as a genius. After this second blow the afflicted man, on being released from gaol and arriving at home, gathered

¹ *Epistle to Diognetus* as previously quoted. See *ante*, in Introduction.

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his motherless children with a few friends around him, and asked them to join in singing Cowper's well-known hymn :—

CHAP. X.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform ;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain ;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

Now may we not in all earnestness ask wherein the faithful submission of the devout Pantheist to the divine will differs from that of this pious Methodist? If it be said that the latter was probably comforted by expecting to meet his lost wife and son again in a better world, this element of his belief deserves consideration apart. But, on the occasion referred to, such a hope was not the sole, it was not even the predominant, feature in that stress of experimental religion. Rather the characteristic feature was the sense of an unfathomable mystery of good, veiled in darkness and sorrow, through which the child of God must "trust" because he cannot "trace." Or if it be said that the prophecy, "His purposes will ripen fast," and the assurance that though "the bud may have a bitter taste, yet sweet will be the flower," was confirmed to the Methodist by eighteen hundred years of the Church's experience; we reply so it is to the Pantheist. For the spiritual truths and hopes embodied in Church history, including Christian origins, are not of any private or sectarian interpretation, but appeal to all humanity that possesses any consciousness of God, and any sense of the glory of human evolution. To enlarge on this would only be

Nothing essential in the Methodist experience which the Pantheist may not share.

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CHAP. X. to repeat what has been urged before.¹ But it is so difficult to get Christians to adopt to the full the words they attribute to their Master, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing," that it is hard to resist here a tendency to iteration. No preciseness of belief in Creation, Fall, and Plan of Salvation, no appropriation by faith of Christ's atonement, enabled the Methodist to see more clearly than the Pantheist does *how* all things are working together for good to them that love God, though both may believe the fact.

The Pantheist has a wider universe, but his faith is not the less.

Nor need the Pantheist's faith in the Providence that directs human evolution, both individual and racial, be bewildered by the wider view he takes of the Universe, or by his steadfast rejection of the sentimental limitations which anthropomorphic tendencies would impose on God. For he who believes in an infinite and eternal Universe, including innumerable worlds, not all of them existing under the forms of space and time, cannot possibly conceive of a "totality of things trying to improve itself, striving to evolve something higher, holier, and happier out of an inchoate mass."² He does not share the "longing for a beginning," ascribed to the human mind by the distinguished author of these words. He does not believe that, in the records of the earth, or of man, and in the visions of prophets for the realisation of which he devoutly looks, he is contemplating the evolution of a *Universe* but only of a *world*. Yet not the less divine for him is the power of evolution working on the limited scale of that world. Nay more, in every concurrence and succession of phe-

¹ Chapters VIII. and IX.

² The words are those of Principal Sir Oliver Lodge in an article on Science and Faith in the *Hibbert Journal* for January 1903. But I am far from thinking that they necessarily imply the rejection of a diviner idea of the universe. I simply quote them, as expressing what the real Pantheist cannot possibly accept.

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CHAP. X.

nomena within that world, to the very minutest wonders of the microscope, he sees God at work. But most he realises the divine presence and power when he can mark the successive steps of moral integration, by which the once wild hordes of half-human creatures have been transformed into loyal members of ordered societies—a progress giving fair promise of the final issue, the Republic of Man as the Kingdom of God. What is to come after that, he does not ask, any more than he concerns himself with imaginary beginnings or endings. All I urge is, that he is not on that account the less interested in, or the less loyal to, the divine law of progress manifested in the narrow world where his lot is cast. Here the difference between good and evil is fateful; here the struggle between good and evil involves the future of the race he loves; and here every event, every experience, every relation to the world and society gives him opportunities of rising himself and helping others to rise toward the higher life of the divine kingdom. Thus for him the discipline of experimental religion is everywhere.

CHAPTER XI

ETERNAL LIFE

Emotion and sentiment must undergo a transformation parallel to that of the creeds.

ACCORDING to Mr. Spencer's formula of evolution, "the retained motion" at each stage of the process of integration undergoes a transformation parallel to that of the "matter" concerned. Now, without committing ourselves to any admission that the formula fully expresses the nature of the progress of religion from Fetishism or Animism to spiritual Pantheism, we may acknowledge that the final clause concerning the motion retained during successive stages of integration, is true also of the emotions and sentiments of religion dating from its incoherent stages. For in addition to the doctrinal changes discussed in the preceding pages, there are dearly prized sentiments, some of them involving opinion, which sentiments are undergoing or are bound to undergo a transformation parallel to the passage of the ideas of religion from the bondage of the letter to the domain of spiritual freedom.

To some extent we have already in the last three chapters suggested the nature of such transformations. But certain emotions and aspirations, with implications of doctrine, loom so large in the history of mankind that they must necessarily be considered apart. And amongst these, perhaps pre-eminent are the presage of immortality and the instinct of prayer. To a con-

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sideration of the former the present chapter will be devoted ; while prayer and worship will be treated in connection with the Church as the earthly temple of the Religion of the Universe. This arrangement is not intended to depreciate the significance of private prayer. But it is both convenient and natural. For it is questionable whether man would ever have prayed in private, had he not first prayed in public.

In the course of this work there have been hitherto only occasional and indirect references to the traditional doctrine of immortality, or to the human cravings said to afford a presumption in its favour. Nor has this reticence been accidental or inconsiderate. On the contrary, it has been deliberate. For, in my view, the realisation of a higher life here and now is a much more essential element of the Gospel than the expectation of an interminable *personal* career in some future or unseen world. Such a view of Christianity ought not to startle any one familiar with the teaching of some distinguished clergymen of the "Broad Church" school, or with the anticipations thereof to be found here and there among the Anglican "Platonists" of a former age. Thus sings Henry More in his "Platonic Song of the Soul."

CHAP. XI.

Reason for
previous
reticence.

Eternal
Life not
synony-
mous with
personal
immor-
tality.

Collect thy soul unto one sphere
Of light, and 'bove the earth it rear ;
Those wildly scattered thoughts, that erst
Lay loosely in the world dispersed,
Call in :—thy spirit thus knit in one
Fair lucid orb, those fears¹ be gone
Like vain impostures of the night
That fly before the morning bright.

Henry
More's
"Song of
the Soul."

¹ The reference is to previous deprecation of self-centred fears :—

What's plague and prison? Loss of friends?
War, dearth, and death that all things ends?

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CHAP. XI.

Then with pure eyes thou shalt behold
How the first goodness doth unfold
All things in loving, tender arms ;
That deeméd mischiefs are no harms,
But sovereign salves and skilful cures
Of greater woes the world endures ;
That man's stout soul may win a state
Far raised above the reach of fate.
Then wilt thou say, God rules the world
Though mountain over mountain hurled
Be pitched amid the foaming main
Which busy winds to wrath constrain.

He that beholds all from on high
Knows better what to do than I.
I'm not mine own : should I repine
If he dispose of what's not mine ?
Purge but thy soul of blind self-will,
Thou straight shalt see God doth no ill.

The poet then pictures himself exposed to all apparently adverse powers of Nature, scorched by the Libyan sun or frozen by "Hyperborean Jove," and declares that whatever fortune befalls the body, the inner life is superior to it.

And while this flesh her breath expires,
My spirit shall suck celestial fires
By deep-fetched sighs and pure devotion.
Thus waxen hot with holy motion
At once I'll break forth in a flame :
Above this world and worthless fame
I'll take my flight, careless that men
Know not how, where I die, or when.

*Yea, though the soul should mortal prove,
So be, Goa's life but in me move
To my last breath—I'm satisfied
A lonesome mortal god to have died.*

The sudden, unexpected veering of thought in these

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last four lines, as though faith turned to bay against inevitable personal death and ecstatically merged self in a boundless life, exactly illustrates the doubt raised above whether eternal life is identical with interminable personal existence. Henry More seems to think that at least it is not necessarily so. For what I take him to mean by "a lonesome mortal god," is a creature in whom the eternal life of God is, for a time, secluded by the phenomena of finite consciousness from the infinite reality. Therefore whatever he has of divine life is "lonesome," like Tennyson's sea-pool left by the ebb-tide and hearing all night long the calling of the ocean till the break of day, when the returning tide merges it in the abyss of waters. And if the poet is "satisfied," it is because he has faith to trust that this reunion with God is better than the unending personality of which he had dreamed. Such an interpretation seems best to accord with the poet's passionate insistence on such a partaking of the divine nature as makes us, if not immovable by the accidents of time, at least equable under their stress. "So be, God's life within me move"—that is the condition of blessedness. But then if the "soul" or the phenomena of finite consciousness should be dissolved, God is all.

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"A lonesome mortal god."

In the same spirit Frederick Denison Maurice used to maintain that the apostolic exhortation, "Lay hold on eternal life," means lay hold on it here and now. In his view, the epithet "eternal" was not concerned with duration but with infinity. Therefore, according to him, we lay hold on eternal life when we so surrender ourselves to the "One that inhabiteth eternity," that we cease "to look before or after," or "to pine for what is not," but rather contemplate past, present, and future as one in the divine consciousness, and thus

F. D. Maurice.

His idea of eternal life.

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CHAP. XI. reach some vision of "the glory of the sum of things."

Not to be
confounded
with Fakir
fanaticism.

Now, of course, if any one perversely interprets such teaching as suggestive of the Indian Fakir, whose body and soul are atrophied by an unnatural and impossible attempt to exclude from his contemplation all finite objects, he does well—until he learns better—to reject it. But this interpretation of eternal life as present rather than prospective is perfectly consistent with the keenest interest in all finite objects, which, after all, are rays in "the glory of the sum of things." I am reminded of one of the late Mr. Maurice's friends and followers—the distinguished publisher, Mr. Alexander Macmillan, a man of keen insight and energy in business, while at the same time showing not only spiritual aspirations, but a strong grasp of spiritual realities. When, many years ago, I was talking with him concerning the subjects to be included in a volume of essays which he was good enough to publish, I remember I suggested that immortality should be included.

A saying of
the late
Alexander
Macmillan.

To which he replied: "I haven't the slightest interest in the subject." And then seeing me—with the opinions I then held—to be somewhat startled, he went on: "No; if I live the eternal life now I do not trouble myself about what that may possibly mean under conditions other than those of this world. Eternal Life is not a matter of the future, or of duration, but of feeling the life of God in us now."¹

No one can ever foresee the effect of a pregnant word dropped in conversation. Not only did I at once acquiesce in the excision of the subject, but it never had the same importance for me afterwards. I had of

¹ Of course at this distance of time I do not pretend to report literally, except the repudiation of interest and the first words of the explanation. For the impression made by these was too vivid to be forgotten. As to the rest, I can only be confident of the substance and significance.

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course been a reader and, very occasionally, a hearer of F. D. Maurice. But the full significance of his teaching on this subject had not "found" me before. Not that I supposed him or his disciples to have rejected "the resurrection of the body" as taught by their church, or the perpetuity of personal existence implied therein. But the effect of his teaching certainly was to lessen the importance of these beliefs as compared with the idea of eternal life conceived by him. And while I do not wish to exaggerate the influence of any individual teacher in an age so pregnant with the forces of spiritual revolution as the last century was, it may at any rate be fairly said that Maurice represented a tendency of which the inevitable result is the emancipation of the spirit of religion from the letter, even in regard to the doctrine of immortal life.¹

CHAP. XI.

Some results of Maurice's principle.

Throughout these pages it has been assumed that no part of the divine Whole is, in essence, perishable, but is only liable to change of form and relations. What, therefore, has been called the soul, but is really the bundle of phenomena known to ourselves as the conscious ego, and to others—we presume—known as a bundle of visible, audible, and tangible phenomena subtly sympathetic with their own ego, can no more be annihilated than God himself. But this certainty does not give us any guarantee whatever that the sense of personal identity will or can survive the transmutation of this group of phenomena into other forms and their redistribution into other relations.

The divine is imperishable, both in part and in whole.

But continuous identity not assured to the part.

Apart from supernatural revelation, which, as we have seen, is a mere question of historical evidence, and

¹ Compare Harnack's description of the Christian religion as "eternal life in the midst of time by the strength and under the eye of God." The extra belief of Harnack in personal immortality does not in the least diminish the suggestiveness of these words.

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CHAP. XI. as such found to be indefensible, the expectation of personal survival after death has, from the days of Plato downwards, rested largely on the supposed indefeasible unity of self-consciousness. For anything from the essence of which the abstraction of unity is inconceivable must be incapable of dissolution. Our position, however, is that in such a sense there is no unity except that of God, while all other unities are only apparent. For they consist either in a static group of phenomena, marked out from surroundings by internal correlation, as in the case of a diamond, which a spirt of acid will dissolve, or in a continuous succession of similar, though not always identical, phenomena, as in the case of a running river or the stormy sea, where the unity is clearly in our thought, and not in the object itself. An organic body combines in itself both kinds of phenomenal unity. For the body of a gazelle or an eagle is obviously—at least to the eye at the moment of looking—a static group of phenomena, marked out from surroundings by correlations of bounding lines and curves as well as of head and limbs. But at the same time each body is a continuous succession of similar though not always identical phenomena, from the first conjunction of germ and sperm, through all the processes of cell growth and change that have succeeded.

Phenomenal unity of the ego.

Now it does not much concern us here whether the phenomenal unity of our personal being belongs to both these types of apparent oneness, or only to the latter. For in either case there is good reason—one might even say eventually irresistible reason—for regarding the unity of self as illusive even now, and certainly incapable of unlimited permanence.¹ In fact, though

¹ The following words from *The Analysis of the Sensations*, by Dr. Ernst Mach, are quoted, not of course as authoritative, though they were written

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Materialists are fundamentally wrong in their assumption that what they call "matter" is the ultimate reality to which everything can be reduced, yet surely they are right in pointing out that the unity of the ego is non-existent until the evolution of the young body has reached a certain degree of integration, and that the consciousness then grows in distinctness just in proportion to the attainment by the body of a more perfect integration, especially of the brain and nervous system. They are right also in urging that if the mind often continues to grow in strength, clearness, and power of co-ordination long after the full stature of the body is attained, the brain and nervous system also are peculiarly susceptible, as long as normal health is retained, to minute internal changes by which habitual tracks, as it were, are formed in the nerves, and links of connection become closer and quicker between brain-cells. On the other hand, when once the brain and nervous system begin to decay and fall away from their highest point of integration, the mental powers are enfeebled, con-

Parallel growth and decay of body and mind.

by an acute observer and profound thinker, but only as reasonable and well-grounded:—"The ego is not a definite, unalterable, sharply bounded unity. None of these attributes are important; for all vary within the sphere of individual life; in fact their alteration is even sought after by the individual. *Continuity* alone is important. . . . But this continuity is only a means of predisposing and conserving what is contained in the ego. This content, and not the ego, is the principal thing. This content, however, is not confined to the individual. With the exception of some insignificant and valueless personal memories, it remains preserved in *others* even after the death of the individual. The *ego* is unsavable. It is partly the knowledge of this fact, partly the fear of it, that has given rise to many extravagances of optimism and pessimism, and to numerous religious and philosophical absurdities. In the long run we shall not be able to close our eyes to this simple truth, which is the immediate outcome of psychological analysis. . . . We shall then be willing to renounce *individual* immortality, and not place more value upon the subsidiary elements than upon the principal ones. In this way we shall arrive at a freer and more enlightened view of life, which will preclude the disregard of other egos and the overestimation of our own."—*Op. cit.* English translation; note 1, p. 20.

The italics are those of the translation. One could wish that Prof. Mach had given us more distinctly his idea of an immortality that is *not* individual.

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CHAP. XI. sciousness becomes distracted, and, if decay goes far enough during life, the man is said to be "no longer himself." To use such a uniform parallelism of growth and decay as a proof that unknown vibrations in an elusive substance account for human life and thought, is, as we have previously urged, inadmissible. But it is a very different thing to hold that if the body is the appearance of the Unknowable, within finite and temporary limitations, so also is the co-ordinated consciousness. And in that case we are not justified in assigning anything more than a temporary and indeed elusive unity to the one set of phenomena or the other, as they seem to be different aspects of a reality beyond our grasp.

Not an argument for materialism but for Pantheism.

The soul theory effete.

As to the possibility that the "soul" as a finite creature may be something other than the succession of similar phenomena, that is, may be an entity inserted at some indeterminable moment in the evolution of the embryo, and breathed out into space at the moment of death, it is surely not worth while to enter on the question. For it does not turn upon such considerations as satisfy men in business or science or law, while at the same time its subject is an issue of fact which ought certainly to be determined by the same processes of observation and reasoning as satisfy us in other matters of fact. Those who still cling to this ancient animistic hypothesis, generally appear to do so, if we understand them aright, because on illusory moral grounds they think it *ought* to be true, and not because they have any real evidence for it, as evidence is understood in a scientific age. Our renunciation of argument on an impossible hypothesis need not in the least make us insensible to the force of this quasi-moral plea, the pathetic force of which we have all felt in our time. But it will be best to deal with it further on.

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Returning then to the parallel evolution of mental and bodily phenomena in the course of the individual life, we may ask what reason is there for asserting the permanent unity and identity of the mental series rather than of the bodily, even during this mortal existence? The body is said to change every particle composing it at least once in seven years, and I suppose in infancy much oftener. How then can the body of the man of forty be the same as it was at birth? Evidently there is only an ideal identity, that which consists in a constant succession of similar phenomena. The series of phenomena may be practically similar, for all processes of cell growth and transformation, I believe, are very much alike from moment to moment, though two mutually distant stages of individual evolution may present as great a contrast as the woodland fountain-source of a river and its estuary. Yet to the mind it is all one river; and ideally the body of the man is one from birth to death. How then can the consciousness—or what we call our “ego”—be one in any other sense? For, as we have seen, its evolution and decay are so closely parallel with those of the body, and indeed so inextricably involved therein, that we are compelled to regard both series of phenomena as different aspects of the same process. And if it is impossible to regard the body of the man of forty as other than ideally one with that of the new-born babe identified with him by the name given long ago in baptism, what other identity can be asserted of his mind?

In fact, if the ego connotes self-consciousness, it is impossible to identify the ego of the man of forty with that of the new-born babe, because in the latter self-consciousness did not exist. And though glimmerings of consciousness soon began to appear, those early

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No reason for differentiating the unity of mental evolution from that of bodily growth.

Oneness of the adult and child-consciousness ideal only.

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CHAP. XI. gleams are not remembered by the man. Perhaps many of us can recall impressions made upon us and exceptional events that happened when we were from two to three years old. But the more correctly we recall them, the more difficult it is to believe in our identity with the wondering, wayward, sugar-loving and bogey-fearing little creature of that time. For our loves and our hates, our pleasures and our pains, our hopes and our fears are all different, and we feel that we might almost as well be identified with our own grandchild as with that departed babe.

Then recurs the often urged argument that if an ideal unity means, as we have admitted, a unity imposed by the thinking subject upon the observed phenomena, then, in the case of the phenomena of self-consciousness, there can be no thinking subject to perform this function, except the mind itself. But if so, we are told that it follows of necessity that in the mind as subject we have reached an ultimate unity. Yet is there not a flaw here? Are we quite sure that there can be no possible thinking subject to impose this unity upon the stream of self-consciousness except the mind itself? Why not the eternal thought? Why not God? Of course the phrase "eternal thought" involves an anthropomorphism. All language is, of necessity, anthropomorphic, and in speaking of God we must apply the correction as best we may. We can never eliminate all error, for the reason admitted all along, that God as All in All is unknowable in the strict sense of knowing. Yet it is not too bold a thing to apply, even here, Augustine's exhortation to apprehend what God is to us. And therefore, believing that there is no real unity other than that of God, we dare to think that it is not the mind but the Eternal Thought

The real
unity

is the
manifestation
of the
everlasting
within us.

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that imposes unity on the flickering phenomena of finite consciousness. Whether Coleridge would have sanctioned such an application of words already quoted, we cannot presume to say. But if

'tis God

Diffused through all that doth make all one whole,

surely it is not an unfair use of that great truth to say that our sense of unity and continuity in consciousness is the manifestation of the Everlasting within us. It is not we that think ourselves into unity and continuity of consciousness; it is God. It is a constant act of creation.

If such a doctrine were supposed to exalt us too highly, our pride is soon corrected. For like all forms impressed upon phenomena in the finite world within our cognisance, that sense of unity and continuity is temporary, being subject to evolution and devolution, beginning and end. Nor need this observation refer exclusively to the bounds of birth and death. The late Mr. F. W. H. Myers, in a very interesting though somewhat inconsequent treatise,¹ has given, both from his own knowledge and on high medical authority, a number of cases in which, while reason remained apparently intact, the sense of identity was not at all continuous. To the details of that evidence it is not necessary to refer, nor to the ingenious and probable theory of a "subliminal consciousness," of which some of the tricks must surely have been experienced by us all. Suffice it that the phenomena seem quite inconsistent with that conception of the ego as a "definite, compact, sharply defined unity" which is condemned on other grounds by Professor Ernst Mach. On the other hand, the

Divided
personality
and dis-
continuous
identity.

¹ *Human Personality and its Survival after Death*. Two vols. By Frederic W. H. Myers. London: Longmans, 1903.

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CHAP. XI. auguries of a personal immortality, which are somewhat strangely inferred from the morbid phenomena Mr. Myers has observed, will hardly make the expected impression on any who are not already convinced on other grounds.

Dreams. Again, the phantasies of dreams, which so far have eluded all scientific explanation, appear at any rate to be totally inconsistent with the usual notion of the star-like unity of personal consciousness, and indeed with its unbroken continuity. For, not to speak of the ridiculous things we do in dreams without any sense of incongruity, it is continually occurring to all of us to meet in a dream some character whom, in our sleep, we are assumed to have known for years or always, but whom, on awakening, we know to have been a wholly imaginary person. Occasionally such a supposed familiar person will argue with us and give most effective expression to objections of which we are not aware of having ever thought before, though they must come from some *part* of our ego. But if parts of us can contend so strenuously, even in dreams, surely the indissoluble unity attributed by so many to personality cannot be maintained.

Struggling
inclinations
and divided
will.

Nor can we forget the inconsistency of moral conflict as described by St. Paul with the sort of unity which we venture to dispute: "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." And this repudiation of personal unity is repeated with something like passionate emphasis a few lines farther on. Not that we have any right to insist on a too literal interpretation of language purposely exaggerated to drive a point home. But the issue is not dependent on St. Paul's rhetoric. For the mystery of inward conflict

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has racked millions of repentant sinners, and has clouded, with a darkness that may be felt, the moral struggles of mankind. Pressed to a logical issue, perhaps the notion of inward schism so violently stated by the apostle, would weaken the sense of moral responsibility, a danger he avoids by pointing to the miraculous grace of God. But no moral danger is ever avoided by shirking the truth. And we should regard it as a falsehood to maintain that the inward schism, described by so many teachers, can fairly be regarded as consistent with the intense compact and definite unity claimed for the personal self by so many in the age gone by.

But if that unity is seen to be like so many delusive unities of composite phenomena, merely an aggregation or a succession, or both, the presumption in favour of an endless personal career for man after death is, to say the least, enormously weakened. Indeed the admission makes almost inevitable an acquiescence in the opinion that what we call bodily and mental phenomena, which have been inseparable in their evolution, are also inseparable in their dissolution. The avoidance of this conclusion is always more or less an effort of will; a determination that whatever the evidence may be, we will give a verdict contrary thereto.

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No permanence for a merely phenomenal unity.

Know I not Death? the outward signs?

“The Two Voices.”

The simple senses crown'd his head:

“Omega! thou art Lord,” they said,

“We find no motion in the dead.”

Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,

Should that plain fact, as taught by these,

Not make him sure that he shall cease?

But the poet will not have it so, and proceeds to sing of

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that other influence,

That heat of inward evidence,

By which he doubts against the sense.

The
"Inward
evidence"
is not con-
cerned with
personal
immortality
but with
eternal
Life.

It will be found, however, that all this "inward evidence," so luminously compressed into exquisite form, is really equivalent to the consciousness, not of personal immortality, but of eternal life, as interpreted by the teachers mentioned above. For the sense of an unfathomed mystery, the yearning for a perfection nowhere found in finite things, the sense of kinship to the Infinite, the muffled call to a faith that all things work together for good, the inconceivableness of a beginning or an end, are surely inspirations too divine to be dependent on so petty a consideration as the assurance to man's little ego of a never-ending personal career. They are incommensurable with any self-centred interests. They spring out of an inarticulate feeling that his own reality is in God, and that God is the secret of the unity imposed upon the multiplex and continuous stream of phenomenal consciousness. The bubble vanishes from the stream, but the stream remains. The stream dries up, ascending through the air, but the clouds remain. The clouds disappear, descending on the sea, but though apparently lost in the ocean they are there. And this is but an infinitesimal glimpse of the innumerable rhythmic pulsations of the many in the One which constitute the universe, whose "parts and proportions" are never identical for two consecutive seconds, but which is for ever the same in its totality. How natural and pathetic is the cry of the Psalmist, impersonating Israel, but how far short of a presumptuous claim to an endless personal career!

O my God take me not away in the midst of my days!

Thy years endure through all generations;

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Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of thy hands.
They vanish but thou endurest ;
They all fade away like a garment ;
Like a vesture thou changest them and they change.
But thou remainest the same ;
Thy years have no end.
The sons of thy servants shall abide,
And their descendants be established before thee.¹

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Surely in this modest claim on God's eternity for an assurance of a limited continuity in an order of things recognised as fleeting, there is more reverence and true religion than in any insistence on the endless continuity of one's own person. Nevertheless the words attributed to St. Paul, "In him we live and move and have our being," ought to imply, though the implication has not always been rightly interpreted, a larger assurance of eternal life, not in ourselves but in God.

It may, however, be objected that the value of this larger assurance is indefinitely diminished by the fact that it refers to no peculiar prerogative of man. For obviously beasts and birds and fishes also "live and move and have their being" in God. Yes ; but they are not conscious of it ; nor are the half-developed or the degraded or the wicked among mankind. What is peculiar to man, so far as we know, is the possibility of a speculative outlook and inlook upon his surroundings and himself, a speculation which stops not short of referring self to an abiding and all-embracing Being which is more than the finite self and more than all visible surroundings. Hence has been generated in many minds, and will, if the world lasts long enough, be generated in all, the sense of an infinite self, which cannot be selfish because it is All in All. To have

Objection that in this sense eternal life is shared by every creature.

Answer : the difference is in consciousness.

¹ Psalm cii. 24-27, Wellhausen's translation in the Polychrome Bible.

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CHAP. XI. this consciousness, clear, contented, and final, with no thought of a beyond, is to lay hold on eternal life. And such a consciousness is absolutely incompatible with impurity, falsehood, or disloyalty to eternal law. For though the imaginative intellect can in vague outline picture a God-centred and God-permeated world, it cannot, where the conscience is perturbed and the passions rage, realise that serene merging of the finite self in the infinite self which brings "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." He who has once entered this heaven on earth asks no future. For time is no form of eternity. But though here we are lost in the Unknowable, there is no contradiction in thought and no impiety if we dare to suppose that at death the real self, imposing the stamp of unity upon the groups and successions of phenomena in consciousness, dissolves the limits of the apparent or individual self, and we become one with God. This is the final meaning of the words, "The spirit shall return to God who gave it."

Pantheistic interpretation of "The spirit shall return to God who gave it."

There is here no arbitrary assumption of an entity, or a soul, which, having been entangled in the flesh, is set free by death to return to God. For all that is meant is that when what we call the material body ceases to be an organic unity, its elements, being merged in the inorganic world, have no longer any phenomenal unity imposed upon them by the God within, and resume the same relations to the Eternal which they had before they were so strangely combined.

The funeral pyre.

There was something befitting the majesty of death in the old funeral rites by fire. Make all deduction for the childish, or, if you will, barbaric instincts that thought to honour the dead by lavish outlay on precious woods and unguents, or by the consumption of costly armour and utensils, and the sacrifice of cattle, horses,

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and even slaves. Still the black pile, supporting its recumbent warrior, stood out against the blue void of space as the finite life of which it solemnised the end stood out against infinity. Then, as the torch sent up in fragrant flame whatever remained of man, to float upon the winds, to mingle with the waters, to descend into the soil, or to wander from the upper atmosphere into space, the worshippers had, even if they knew it not, a true symbol of the merging of the finite life in the Infinite. For nothing that had been man could be lost. The relation of the dissociated elements of the body to God was just as real as before, though different. And if we are right that the real unifying subject in the finite conscious life is God, is it not possible that dissolution is expansion rather than destruction, and is also re-entry to the supra-personal life of all things? ¹

The dismal horrors of modern burial seem almost expressly devised for the purpose of blocking out this divine side of death. For, say what we may, the reputed eloquence of intoned words, about what few now believe, ²

¹ Sir Thomas Brown, in his *Hydriotaphia*, seems to have had the idea of such a divine dissolution floating before him. But in an age when even a physician must needs accept Methuselah's millennium as a literal fact, it was impossible for any one but a martyr frankly to embrace that idea. Yet surely there is in the passage succeeding his allusion to metempsychosis a tone of sympathy with the alternative described: "Others, rather than be lost in the uncomfortable night of nothing, were content to recede into the common being, and make one particle of the public soul of all things, which was no more than to return into their unknown and divine original again." We may also fairly infer, from a previous sentence, much discontent with prevalent ideas: "A dialogue between two infants in the womb concerning the state of this world might handsomely illustrate our ignorance of the next, whereof methinks we yet discourse in Plato's den, and are but embryon philosophers." Pp. 178 and 168 in the Temple Classics edition.

² E.g. "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). How many educated clergymen really believe these words as they read the Service? In a country churchyard their feet may be on the mingled remains of uncounted generations. For burial laws were not strict in old times. The sacredness of the

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CHAP. XI. cannot charm away the hideous arrangements for securing either mummification or conversion into earth. For what leaden-sealed coffins seem to aim at is the permanence of the corpse. And much kinder to their dead, whether they know it or not, are the simple folk who so bury their lost ones that their bodies soon mingle with the soil. But in any case it may be asked of us how we can apply to the ordinary circumstances of earth-burial the symbolism we have found in the funeral pyre. The answer is not difficult. But it requires us to rid ourselves of certain subjective prepossessions, such as our horror of the process of putrefaction. So far as social welfare is concerned, this horror has been an advantage, because it prompted a desire to get rid of dead bodies speedily. Yet apart from these social considerations, the slower reduction of a body into its original elements by the process of putrefaction ought not to excite any more repulsion than the swifter reduction by fire. But if so, the gradual mingling of a body with the earth may be regarded equally with its fiery dispersion as an outward manifestation of the merging of the finite in the infinite. And if we may presume that all phenomena objective to us have what we may call a divine subjective side, this process, hateful as it seems to us, may show the re-entry of the dissolved finite subject into the supra-personal life of all things.

But the contrast is superficial only.

The significance is the same.

place may even go back to prehistoric times, when some shrine afterwards adopted by the Church attracted burials from far and near. Does the officiant really think that an archangel's trumpet will ever call up "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," with all their contemporary vestments and ornaments, the denizens of that pregnant soil? No; "it is poetry." But poetry is nothing unless it clothes a truth. And what is the truth that answers here to the trumpet, and the change in the twinkling of an eye, and the upstarting dead? It is with no irreverence, and from no lack of sympathy for mourners who stand where I have so often stood myself, that this note is written. But shall we assuage our sorrows with well-meant lies?—lies to us, I mean. For to St. Paul they were the most literal truth.

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It is not that we suppose something different from the body to be detached at death and to ascend to heaven. But the life recently defined by brain and nerves, though it loses definition by their reduction to their chemical elements, is not annihilated, but merges in the divine subjective side of earth and air and sky.

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Before leaving this subject, however, let us consider the case of those in whom emotion is an impulse not only to action, but to belief, and who are capable of thinking a particular conclusion to be established simply because their passionate desire demands it. Already, in an allusion to Tennyson's "Two Voices," I have suggested that the real nature of the sacred yearning may be mistaken. But no one can have survived the ordinary term of mortal life without bearing the scars with which death has marred some of the tenderest relationships of man. And it would ill become such a one to treat lightly the emotional pleas made on behalf of personal immortality, either on the ground of moral justice or of unhealed sorrow.

Counter
pleas of
sentiment.

The idea of fairness or equity is genuinely human, and emerges wherever social life has advanced far enough to awaken altruism. Even in a savage tribe the wrongs of members who do not get their proportionate share in the division of spoils are sure to find sympathisers. And, as society advances, this sentiment of equity begets passionate protests against the startling extremes of poverty and wealth, of toil and ease, which hitherto have accompanied, even in democratic republics, the increasing complications of civilisation. Then, in despair of any adjustment in this world, benevolent and pious men have turned to the parable of Lazarus and Dives. And though, to do them justice, they do not in modern times dwell with any pleasure on the pictured torments

Plea of
justice.

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CHAP. XI. of Dives, they do feel as though the repose of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom were at least symbolic of a large system of compensation in another world. Look, they say, at the sufferings of the innocent, at the failures of the industrious, at the strength of wrong and falsehood here. It cannot be that this is the end. There must be another world where all is made right.

Reference
to Chapters
VI. and
VIII.

Illegitimate
transference
of a finite
problem to
the infinite.

No indi-
vidual right
against the
infinite.

Having already, in former chapters, said all that I find it possible to say on the problem of evil, I shall not return to it, but only point out the inapplicability and insufficiency of this supposed solution. For, in the first place, it shifts a problem of the finite on to an infinite arena, where it has no place at all. Thus the sentiment just described and the relations which generate it are, as we have said above, genuinely human, and have no more to do with præter-human relations than the notion of upward or downward has to do with infinite space. Certainly every man, while he or his society endures, has a moral or social claim, sanctioned by divine order,¹ to equitable consideration by his fellows of his needs and deserts. But we long ago came to the conclusion that as against the Infinite, the Universe, God, the notion of individual right is untenable. Unless indeed, with a certain confusion of thought, we consider as creating a right, our need of divine support to fulfil the part assigned us in the Universe. But that is necessarily given, or we should not exist at all. Beyond that, it is an utter incongruity to suppose that anything we

¹ Divine order maintains in us at the surface of the earth the sense of upward and downward, as an inevitable concomitant of gravitation. But if we suppose ourselves transferred far away from the earth to some point equi-distant from a number of centres of gravitation, the relationship must cease, and the sense of upward or downward would be impossible. So the divine order may very well maintain human relationships and their moral concomitants here on earth, yet it does not follow that the concomitants must be maintained everywhere, even where the relationships are impossible.

ETERNAL LIFE

dislike in the part assigned us can give any claim to compensation. CHAP. XI.

But farther, even if the supposed moral claim had more congruity than we can allow, the dream of meeting it by giving to each sufferer an endless personal career is, like many other dreams, obviously inconsistent with eternal order, and therefore impossible. For we are creatures of evolution attained by such imperceptible steps that at no period in the world's history could an observer have said of the parents "they are pithecoïd," and of the offspring "it is human." At what stage then in this progress, perceptible only on a comparison of generations separated by millenniums, did this stupendous crisis occur which gave to individuals an "immortal soul"?¹ There are those, indeed, amongst earnest religionists who say that such a crisis never came, but that all immortality is "conditional," and specially conferred by God. The suggestion, however, of a constant repetition of disorderly miracle in an ordered universe need not detain us. For the problem is how individual immortality can conceivably have been a climax of evolution. And on this the suggestion gives no help.

But even if the realisation of the amiable desire for compensation in another world to all failures in this were conceivable, a little thought must show that the crude expedient of personal immortality is entirely incongruous with the supposed evil to be remedied. Because, if any one will count up the cases he has

Inherent
impossi-
bility of the
conception.

And even
if possible
it would be
inappli-
cable.

¹ I cannot forget that the great Darwin when dealing with this question in a note to the first edition of his *Descent of Man* did me the honour to quote a fond effort of mine, in the earlier life of those days, to find a reply. It was merely a suggestion, in *New Theories and the Old Faith*, that the same difficulty attends the evolution of the individual. For no one supposes the fertilised ovum to be immortal. But the child is thought to become so before he is born. Truly Butlerian! But since then I have long felt that to point to analogous difficulties is to widen a problem, not to solve it.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. XI.

In many cases the immortality desiderated would practically amount to a change of person.

The hopeless criminal and despair of philanthropy.

His career.

Not a case for immortality.

Yet the divine substance in him survives.

known of an apparently unfair lot in this life, he will find that in a great many of them no immortality which did not entirely change the personality would be even desirable. And surely an entire change of personality would be the substitution of another person. Take that young criminal brought into the dock after sundry previous convictions, and arraigned for a sensual misdemeanour, suggesting that in him the brute is stronger than the man. Stunted, ill-formed, coarse in feature, staring on the court with the lack-lustre eye of indifference, he pleads guilty, because the winter is coming on, and he prefers prison to the roads. His plea is taken because he has never done anything to justify his being regarded as an idiot ; and if he is not to be considered amenable to the law, the feeling of judge and jury is that the thousands like him would be a greater danger to society than they are. Yet no one who looks at him impartially can honestly say that this criminal has had a "fair" chance in life. Born in sin, the neglected burden of vagabonds, knocked about from workhouse to lodging-house, from lodging-house to travelling-van, from van to thieves' kitchen, he has cadged as he could for a livelihood and pleasure, and this is the stage at which he has now arrived. But what good would immortality do him? Sorry as we are for him, we feel that he ought to have an end. No future life could be an advantage to the thing he is. And any change which would make such a life a blessing would not be the continuance of him, but the substitution of another person.

Yet let none of us despise him. For it is as true of him as of the saint, though not true in the same way, that the secret of his glimmering consciousness is the Unknowable. And well for him will it be when the

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repulsive finite phenomena that baffle us in his person are dissolved, and he is merged in God. It is needless to pursue this question at farther length. But if all the moral failures and broken lives and sacrifices to social injustice since society began could be numbered up, it would be found that to only a very small and exceptional minority could an endless personal career be supposed to be a blessing, unless indeed another person should be substituted. And on account of such exceptional cases to set up a theory incongruous with all known fact, and begotten only of our own self-willed judgment of what ought to be, would be inconsistent both with reverence and faith.

CHAP. XI.

The plea of unhealed sorrow would really raise again the claim for compensation with which we have dealt. But as it is usually suggested by exceptional cases of bereavement, and, as in the bitter shock that disorders all our bearings, it makes an appeal which frenzied affection forces on unresponsive reason, it will not be mere iteration if we treat that plea apart. In many, nay, perhaps in most instances of parting by death, that plea has really little force. For, however violent the first outburst of grief may be, time, custom, and occupation soon bring a measure of relief, which is increased as new ties take the place of old, until hardly a scar remains in the tissue of the affections. But it is only necessary to mention one of the great poems of last century—*In Memoriam*—to bring to mind an entirely different type of sorrow, by which some great and very many reflective minds have been so confronted with the issues of life and death as to find no alternative, at least for a time,¹ between an expectation of a personal reunion and

The plea of unhealed sorrow.

Really raised only by exceptional cases of bereavement.

¹ "For a time." Let any one compare the different forms taken by the poet's expectation even within the limits of *In Memoriam*,—sometimes

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CHAP. XI. blank despair. There are cases of union between wife and husband, between parent and child, apart from the tie of blood, and there are soul friendships in which the reciprocation not only of affection, but of unspoken sympathy and speechless influence, and mutually compensatory interflow of interest and emotion and thought is such, that when one is taken and the other left, no whole personality seems to remain behind, but only a lamed and maimed and mazed fragment of a life that was formerly one only because it was twain. Most touching of all, perhaps, rises before me the picture of fathers I have known who were blessed for a while with the companionship of a gifted daughter who was to the father as the projection of his own soul beautified, purified, idealised. The only parting ever feared was that of a possible marriage day. But, alas! the bridegroom was death; and the silence in the house was as if annihilation had come while consciousness still survived.

The wreck
of a double
life.

There is no wonder if in such a case the first movement that stirs the deadly stillness of the bereaved soul is the breathing of the words, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." It must be so.

It must
be so.

Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is.

intensely realistic, sometimes mystic and shadowy, sometimes frankly pantheistic,—and he will feel no surprise that under "sunset and evening star" the great soul has merged all personal expectations in the sense of a tide of life

Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Taken in connection with the context, and especially with the passing beyond "our bourne of Time and Place," the hope "to see my Pilot face to face" is capable of more than one interpretation.

ETERNAL LIFE

CHAP. XI.

The scheme of creation, the evolution of human affections, the promise implied in the half-tasted joys of this scarce ripened love of God's making, must all be a hideous mockery and lie unless somewhere, sometime, there will be a reunion and fuller fruition. Ah, sorrowing father, what would you regard as fruition? Suppose it possible that after you have served your generation for thirty years longer and formed new ties, though none so sweet as the broken one, you should be called away to a world where you can knit once more the bonds of love and friendship with your daughter just as they were when broken. Let us pass over the certainty that changes in yourself and your world, and, on any theory, changes in her, would make any exact renewal of the past impracticable even to miracle,—what would satisfy you? Would ten years of this renewed companionship be enough, or a hundred, or a thousand? Do you not feel that any world fulfilling the conditions necessary to a reknitting of those earthly ties that were so dear must be like this, a world of change, of multiplex responsibilities and cares—in a word, of growth and decay? And if so, it is impossible you could keep your treasure to yourself in any world that could make that treasure again what it was.

Illusions of sorrow.

What would satisfy it?

We delude ourselves with dreams of a world in which our joys should grow as here, and we forget that any finite growth involves following decay. We picture a world where there is no trouble or temptation or danger, and imagine the renewal in it of relations the very preciousness of which has arisen out of danger, temptation, and trouble here. For whether it be love of parent or of husband or of wife, it is precisely help in labour, sympathy in stress of adversity, watchfulness against danger, interest in the change of the beloved object

Inconsistencies of our yearning grief.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. XI. from glory to glory under the discipline of life, and joy in moral victory, that afford the noblest elements to enrich our love. No ; you could not have the same thing in a strange new world of wholly different conditions. Is it not then the part of faith and hope, as well as of resignation, to accept the Universe as it is, not as we think it ought to be? The 'part of faith and hope,' I say. For our test of faith is that of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." And hope of the future, if not for ourselves, then for mankind, grows out of gratitude for the past, not out of sullen despair about its loss. If "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever," surely much more should love survive the death of the loved one. And by cherishing thankfulness for what has been ours, but now is God's, we become softened and mellowed for kindly service to our kind, so that others may come to bless our departed one with an echo of our love.

A better
faith and
hope.

We do not
wholly die,
but meet
when we
merge in
God.

I repeat, what was ours is now God's. It always was God's even when here. For the lost one was but a spark in the infinite glory. And we who now, with the consciousness of God in us, know that our being cannot wholly die, may be content to know that the creature we loved is, though dissolved in God, as really as ever an infinitesimal part of this "wondrous whole." David was certainly not instructed in the modern notion of personal immortality. Yet he could say of the child he mourned, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

CHAPTER XII

WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH

REFERENCE was made in Chapter II. to a speculation of the late Professor Huxley on the future use of our Cathedrals. After speaking with deep feeling of their glorious beauty, he added wistfully that perhaps a time would come when they might receive a higher consecration as temples of "worship, for the most part, of the silent sort, of the Unknown and Unknowable." But why silent? Intervals of silence in solemn ritual are often impressive. Yet, however real the devotion, they impose a strain that cannot be long endured, at least by common men, and it is to be feared that worship, "for the most part, of the silent sort" would exhale in vacuity. Still, these words of one who was more of a religious reformer than he himself knew, are worth remembering as we turn to consider the problem of a church and worship adapted to the Religion of the Universe. And we deal with worship first. For that, though by no means the only function of the Church,¹ is the root and reason of all others.

Professor
Huxley
on the
worship of
silence.

Is it possible that any who have read the preceding

¹ It is unnecessary for me to attempt any definition of the word "Church." I have in view that which now exists in course of evolution, and I treat of its future. If I am asked what its creed and rules are to be, I should say, "Trust in the Lord and do good." To the Church of the future "the Lord" will be the Eternal.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. XII. pages can suppose the Religion of the Universe, as here set forth, to be incompatible with prayer or praise or any spiritual fellowship? I hope not; for surely what has been said of the divine life of saints suggests not an abolition, but a farther evolution of the Church and its services, in accordance with those wider apprehensions of our relation to the Infinite which are now being awakened among men. But indifference, dumbfounded acquiescence in the wonder of life, without aspiration, without self-surrender, without the straining of love out and out toward the all-embracing God,—surely that cannot be.

Not an abolition of the Church, but farther evolution is our need.

Relapse into dumb unconsciousness of God is impossible.

For what are men better than sheep or goats
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

And if any one, forgetting the just license of poetry, should object that here prayer is based on knowledge of God, whom we declare to be unknowable, the answer is apparent in the whole course of our argument, especially in that of Chapters IV. and V. For there is an apprehension by the affections as well as by the intellect. And within the former category may surely be included the loyalty we owe to that “wondrous whole” of which we are parts and proportions.

Loyalty to the whole, of which we are parts, is an affection demanding expression.

Indeed the consciousness of that relationship can scarcely arise within us without awakening a sense of communion suggestive of adoration and aspiration. Shut in though we are by indefinite and intangible limits, the contemplative soul looks onward and upward and around on an ever-expanding outer world, which is yet within; for it could have no existence

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for us if it were not presented within. The tender sky, the ethereal mountains melting in diffusive sunlight and delicate mist, the immense ocean, with its wistful distances, are in me, and not outside only. And as they are in me, I am in them, and of their very essence. But always there is a sense of failure to grasp the Whole, to follow the infinite circumference round, till it should meet my consciousness again, and make the infinitesimal many into the infinite One.

CHAP. XII.

The longing to grasp the Whole, and the failure.

Yet this very sense of failure is inseparable from a yearning and an aspiration to be at least so far as possible in harmony with God, who is All in All. And the expression of that aspiration is prayer; which involves two elements, one of absolute self-surrendering loyalty to the Infinite Self, and a second, of active desire to fulfil the duties of that loyalty more and more. The former element generates worship or adoration, and the latter, aspiration. It is therefore entirely erroneous to suppose that the inevitable submergence of all partial religions in Pantheism must necessarily abolish the rites of worship, or the functions of the Church. Those functions must indeed undergo a transformation, compared with which the Lutheran Reformation was merely superficial. But the new reformation will probably differ from the former in achieving its work by degrees almost as imperceptible as those of physical evolution. Indeed of this we have some assurance in the fact that this latter-day reformation has already made considerable progress in some parts of the domain of theology, where its action is scarcely suspected. I do not, of course, allude here to great subjects of strife, like the descent of man, or the truth of Bible history, though even here there is a vast, though insensible change in the attitude of the

Genesis of prayer.

Pantheism not inconsistent therewith,

but demands a new Reformation which is already at work.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

CHAP. XII. Church. But if any one in his eighth decade will compare even ecclesiastical feeling now, with the feeling prevalent in his first or second decade, he will recognise that there is an enormous difference. For though on subjects such as everlasting punishment, the damnation of unbelievers in the Trinity and Incarnation, the formularies and phraseology remain the same, and such religious functions as prayers for a change of weather, or arrest of pestilence, are formally discharged, the whole tone of everyday conversation among churchgoers shows that such things are not taken as seriously as they used to be, and that the customs connected with them persist as rotten trees in a neglected plantation do, because it is less trouble to let them alone than to disturb them. Perhaps also the change has come about so gradually that uncontroversial people of middle age actually suppose themselves to be holding the same creeds as their grandfathers. But they read with interest and assent, in the popular magazines, articles which would certainly have caused those grandfathers to quote with emphasis the final clause of the Athanasian Créed.

Gradual
landslide of
opinion.

Future
evolution
on the
same lines.

The farther movements to which we may look forward will be of the same type. Debate and controversy will settle nothing, though it will unsettle much. But all the while, behind the smoke of battle and in haunts of silent thought, unshaken by the noise of the fray, the new Christianity realises that the links of ancient creeds are rusting, and the panoply of dogma falling away; till, at last, in some happy epoch of regeneration, a more spiritual church will awake to the consciousness that the only robe left her is the Religion of the Universe. But she will, we trust, be not the less vocal, and may become even more practical.

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Her appeals to the moral instincts of common manhood CHAP. XII.
will be no longer blunted and dulled by the forced and
arbitrary forms imposed upon her by an effete theology.
Yet we may well believe that she will always avail
herself, as mystic societies have always availed them-
selves, of the aids of art. Symbolic ritual, with its
appeals to refined sense, will help to quicken in dull
souls the apprehension of eternal life, and the music of
the many in plain and earnest song, will gather the
feelings of the congregation in one wave of emotion.

For any indication of what that worship is likely to
be we must go to the poets, rather than to the philoso-
phers. Perhaps Wordsworth affords the most help. Words-
worth's
emotional
Pantheism.
For certainly he was pantheistic on the emotional side
of his nature, though tied to traditional creeds by that
sense of a lofty expediency which the hitherto inextric-
able interfusion of moral and social loyalty with biblical
and ecclesiastical dogma has imposed upon so many
of the best and noblest men. Few poems of his are
better known than the verses on Tintern Abbey; and
of these verses none are more frequently quoted than
the most distinctly pantheistic passages. Yet as the
words glide over the lips of reciters, the meaning
evaporates, and they suppose the poet to be chanting
of an omnipresent Person. But it is not with his His
indications
of the
tone of
Pantheistic
worship.
philosophy or his theology that we have to do, so
much as with his indications, whether intentional or
not, of the tone of pantheistic worship. Surely we
have such an indication in his description of

that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened;—that serene and blessed mood

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In which the affections gently lead us on—
Until the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul ;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

It is an ideal difficult of attainment, and, though for different reasons, almost as remote as the raptures of the saints. Yet one can imagine how great a refreshment it might be to anxious toiling men, in that blessed oasis of weekly life, the Sunday's rest, to be wooed into some semblance of such a frame of mind, and to start again renewed. This should be the office of the Church, and the end of its worship. So too, though "hearing oftentimes the still, sad music of humanity," it should be the spiritual gift, the charisma of the Church to unveil that "presence" of which the poet chants :—

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime,
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Glimpses of
the infinite
even
through
supersti-
tion.

Or, if this strain of worship is too high to be expected in any approximate time, the poet suggests that through all ages, and in the simplest forms of devotion, there have been glimpses beyond the idol—the *eidolon*—the superstitious form, into the infinite. Thus it was with the grateful mother sacrificing her locks to Cephisus for her son's return :—

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“Take, running river, take these locks of mine,”
Thus would the votary say—“this severed hair,
My vow fulfilling, do I here present,
Thankful for my beloved child’s return.
Thy banks, Cephisus, he again hath trod,
Thy murmurs heard : and drunk the crystal lymph
With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,
And moisten all day long these flowery fields.”
And doubtless sometimes, when the hair was shed
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose,
Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired,
That hath been, is, and where it was and is
There shall endure,—existence unexposed
To the blind walk of mortal accident ;
From diminution safe, and weakening age ;
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays ;
And countless generations of mankind
Depart, and leave no vestige where they trod.

And if poetic imagination here attributed too great a range to the possible inspirations of humble and ignorant affection, surely in this age of the world, when our very infants lisp of stars and systems, and every kindergarten child gropes with his eager fingers after the soul of a flower, Sunday congregations ought to be capable of some insight into the immensity and unity of Being, some glad sense of unreserved subordination to the divine Whole of which they are part. So may they learn that

Possibilities
much
greater in
this age.

We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love ;
And even as these are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being we ascend.

Though I have gone to a modern poet for familiar illustrations of the tone which will pervade the worship of the future, it would be an utter misapprehension of my meaning to suppose that I imagine the life of the

Place of
the Bible.

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CHAP. XII. Church can start afresh, ignore its past, or forget the lessons of infancy, which, as in personal experience, have wrought themselves into the very fibre of her being. No; but though a grown man remembers and feels in his heart the sacred, childish rhymes he learned at his mother's knee, he reads them larger now; or rather, they are but a pin-hole through which a once unimagined glory streams. So is it with many of those old Bible stories, which even clerical conferences now, greatly daring, recognise as in the category of fairy tales. For I doubt not that any one who should cast every relic of forced belief away, and treat the story of the Fall, and of Jonah's whale, and even of Balaam's ass just as he treats classical myths, would find in them a moral suggestiveness such as the most entirely disillusioned congregation might value.

Worth of
its legends.

But these form the least valuable contributions of the Bible to the Church life and Church worship of the future. For it was a noble characteristic of the religion of Israel that, with the exception of such occasional laudation of old times as was permitted to old men, its face was ever toward the future. The age of the curse was in the beginning; the age of redemption was on the remote horizon. And as the prophetic soul of the nation was always seeing visions of a diviner future, it is not surprising that some of their daring guesses at truth turn out now to be anticipations of a wider religion than could be formulated in their day. For assuredly many of the Psalms and prophetic utterances, though they start from the level of Jewish henotheism, at which the local religion taught them to rejoice in having a better god than any of the deities of rival nations, do conspicuously soar beyond that level. Thus in the vision attained by their highest

Higher
worth of its
Psalmists
and
Prophets.

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flights the national Yahweh expands into the infinite and eternal, and is recognised as the only Being.

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God as the
Absolute
and only
Being.

Lift up your eyes to heaven, and look on the earth beneath ;
For the heavens will be fretted to dust as by the moth, and the earth like a garment,
The world will fall to pieces, and the dwellers therein will die like gnats ;
But my deliverance will be for ever, and my righteousness will not come to an end.¹

Or again :—

Thus says Jahweh : Heaven is my throne and earth my footstool.
What house would ye build for me, and what place as my habitation ?
For all this has my hand made, and mine is all this, says Jahweh.²

The same contrast of eternity with time, of God's everlasting Now with the tremulous fleeting lives of men, is the burden of the 90th Psalm, falsely attributed to Moses—worthy of him indeed, but not at all like what he would have written.³

O Lord, Thou art our Refuge in all generations.
Before mountains were born,
Before earth and world were brought forth,
From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.
Thou turnest man again to dust,
And sayest : Return, ye children of men !
A thousand years are in thy sight but as yesterday when it is past,

¹ Isaiah li. 6. Dr. Cheyne's translation in the Polychrome Bible. The passage is regarded by the translator as late and belonging to neither of the Isaiahs. Its meaning is obscure even in the new translation. But it unmistakably contrasts the eternity of God with the temporary life of all finite things.

² Isaiah lxvi. 1. Polychrome Bible. This passage also is regarded by the translator as more recent than either of the Isaiahs. No wonder. Such sentiments belong to a late stage of theistic development.

³ E.g. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten, etc." But Moses is said to have entered on his greatest work at eighty, and to have continued in it to a hundred and twenty.

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CHAP. XII.

And as an hour in the night.

The generation of men is ever shifting.

They are like the herb which springs anew,
Which shoots up in the morning and thrives,
And in the evening it fades and withers.

Teach us therefore to number our days,
That we may enter the gateways of wisdom.

No banishment of the Bible.

Such illustrations are enough to show that the Bible, as the record of a long religious evolution, contains anticipations of that perhaps final stage on which we are entering now, and that its use in the Church need not be, and, as I think, is not likely to be undervalued by devout Pantheists. But of course it is obvious that nine-tenths at least of Old and New Testament literature, even where its moral tone is purest and noblest, implies theological beliefs which on any candid interpretation are inconsistent with the Religion of the Universe.

Contemplative science may keep the child's heart in prayer.

Yet as a Spinoza may join in the prayer of a little child, and through the "Our Father" see and adore the Infinite, which the child knows not, so may modern science in its moods of contemplation utter its wider worship through the psalms and prayers and aspirations of a simpler time, when the Unknowable was pictured as a human father.

Psalm ciii.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is deepest within me bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul !
Forget not all his benefits.

Man's life is like grass,
Like a flower of the field he flourishes ;
For the wind passeth over it—it is gone,
And the place thereof knows it no more.
But the goodness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
over those that fear him,

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And his righteousness to children's children
Toward those who keep his covenant,
And remember to obey his commandments.

CHAP. XII.

Here we may pause to observe that if the Church of the future may have to appeal to its historic conscience in using such language, the Church of the past and present has made and still makes free use of accommodations which habit hides. For, on the one hand, the devout read into these "comfortable words" a promise of personal immortality, which they certainly do not contain. And, on the other hand, worshippers exclude from the words any reference to the Sinaitic "Covenant," or the Levitical "commandments," which they as certainly do contain. The Church of the future, then, will only be following sanctified precedent if it excludes any exact apportionment of personal rewards, or any complete immunity for the faithful, and keeps hold of the central idea corroborated by all experience, that the power ruling the universe is a "power that makes for righteousness," and that this brief phenomenal life is most noble in those who lay hold on eternal life in the sense of realising an ever-during order of which their own essence *seems* to be at the centre. Soon what they have seemed will no longer seem to be, but will not exhale in nothingness. Yet as one generation passes away, and another generation comes, God's order still continues, and makes for the blessedness of those who abide therein. And if the Church learns to substitute a divine evolutionary instinct within for the literal driving of a personal shepherd, she will find hardly a better expression of her faith that all things work together for good, than this song of some sweet singer of Israel :—

Place of
the historic
conscience.

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CHAP. XII.

Psalm xxiii.

The Eternal is my shepherd ;
Therefore I can lack nothing.
On pastures growing green he lets me lie down,
To waters of repose he leads me.
He refreshes my soul,
And in paths of righteousness he leadeth me for his name's sake.¹
Yea, though I walk through a valley of deep darkness
I fear no harm ;
Thou art with me.

Objections

and replies.

An issue
joined.

But after all it may be asked, why should we continue the worship of the church? And such critics would add that the simple people who think God enjoys their praise, have not risen very far above the level of those who attributed to their gods a pleasure in the reek of incense and of blood. Then as to prayer, what is the value of it to those who acknowledge the reign of fixed law? This last question, however, might perhaps be answered by another: what if prayer is a part of fixed law? What if it is a link in the process of spiritual evolution? The rejoinder might be that if this be so, then prayer must be relegated to the series of illusions by which the childhood of humanity has been excited to seek truth; but after the illusion is discerned, it is of no more use. Here then I join issue. Certainly it was an illusion to suppose that on the request of man God would change his purposes, or even alter the mode of their attainment. But this mode of viewing the issue assumes the outwardness of God to man, and of man to God. It looks on the Eternal as the planner and driver of the machinery of Nature, and treats as an impertinence the

¹ This phrase Dr. Wellhausen interprets thus:—"Because he is called the God of Israel, and cannot leave Israel in straits without exposing himself to the jeers of the heathen." The Church, however, finds no difficulty now in ignoring the literal meaning, and the Church of the future, letting "name" stand for "nature," will readily attach to the words a higher significance.

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desire of any meddling mortal to interfere. But that is not the Religion of the Universe. However weak and stammering individual efforts to set that forth may be,

CHAP. XII.
Panteism
transforms
prayer.

God makes himself an awful rose of dawn,

and the light is spreading, gathering up the party-coloured mists of sectarian religion, and revealing the truth that God is not just the greatest among beings, but the only Being, that he is not merely outward to us, but within, and that all the sheen and shadow on which we gaze is with ourselves in God.

Now then the very appearance of division, of parts and differences in that transcendent unity, draws out our desires to repel all schism, all self-centred conceit, and to find peace in realising the harmonising, all-embracing life. But this itself is worship; this itself is prayer. It is not that we seek to change the order of the universe, but to merge our consciousness in that order and be at rest. Nor is this the language of otiose mysticism. It rather represents the loyal resignation of a reasonable man who cannot have his own way, and reconciles himself to the fact by the reflection that considering his relation to the Universe, his self-assertion has been ridiculously disproportionate. This is the moral significance of the poetic pantheism of Wordsworth. And this, too, is the lesson conveyed by prophetic contrasts of the Everlasting with the passing shows of life.

From this point of view, prayer is not a presumptuous desire that the order of the world may be changed for our convenience, but an aspiration to become harmonious therewith.¹ And public worship is valuable

Rational
prayer.

¹ After what has been said in Chapters VI. and VII. concerning evil it ought not to be necessary for me to guard against misinterpretation here.

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CHAP. XII. just in so far as it avails itself of social feeling and collective devotion to promote in each individual this attitude of prayer. Perhaps, however, the same instinct which urges us to make vocal in worship our sense of oneness with the Universe, also draws from us at times a cry for help to overcome our lower self. And this is not unreasonable or meaningless. For we have surrendered the untenable notion of a hard and compact unity of personal life shutting us out as by an impermeable wall from the infinite life to which we belong. Even physical science has told us many wonderful things of late concerning hitherto unnoted ethereal influences that pervade space and bind world to world, so that the telegraph needle in a village post-master's back-office responds to fiery hurricanes far away in the sun.

Surely not less real, though subtler still, are the currents of the universal life that play around and within or behind our finite consciousness. There is not a thought we think or an aspiration we form which is not dependent for its shape on the constitution of the whole universe. Living then in communion and not in isolation, as we once supposed, we may find a rational meaning for the instinct of prayer in that newly appreciated fact. For that Being also whom we name God is not a greatest person separate from the Universe, but the Universe itself. Thus when we pray for help, we are reacting to the influences playing on us from all that is ; and if in such things the experience of humanity may be trusted at all, this very re-

Analogy of
cosmic
interaction.

For the order of the *world* is not, except in appearance, static. It is a process, an evolution or a devolution as the case may be. Even in the worst times of calamity and amid the prevalence of wrong, the order of the world is still a process making for better things. And it is to that process we should reconcile ourselves.

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action has often quickened communion with infinite power, and men have been strengthened though they knew not how. So then if a man of science, by careful arrangement of his wires and machinery, may gather from the vast ether vibrations that he can fling across the Atlantic, thus forming a bridge for thought and words, the experience is not incredible which tells us that men who gathered inspiration from prayer, have reached their ideals as though by supernatural power. So true in substance remains the simple faith that "the people which do know their God shall be strong and do exploits." CHAP. XII.

Any discussion of Worship and the Church would seem to most Christians very inadequate if it should omit all reference to sacraments. And the brevity and slightness of the only observations on that subject possible here must not be taken as any indication of an unsympathetic attitude toward those who value sacraments as means of grace. For the importance of symbolic ritual has already been acknowledged, and in such a ritual sacraments may perhaps be always regarded as specially significant and helpful to the spiritual life. Yet as the most pressing need of the age is a frank and open recognition that the Religion of the Universe is superseding all sectarian interpretations of the world through portent and miracle, I have preferred confining myself almost exclusively to an exposition of that theme. Still I may suggest how, together with adoration and prayer, sacraments may still find a place in the Church of the coming age. Sacraments.
Reason for only slight discussion.

Now by a Sacrament¹ I mean, as the Church Catechism says, "an outward and visible sign of an" Meaning of "Sacrament."

¹ Of course I recognise that there has always been a supernatural element in the significance of the word, both in its classical meanings and after its ecclesiastical adoption. But I am not concerned with that.

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CHAP. XII. inward and spiritual grace." But I am obliged to stop there, because I do not think we are historically justified in adding that even the two sacraments to which the Anglican Church limits herself—quite unnecessarily in my view¹—were "given unto us by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." I regard the latter point, however, as immaterial, and shall not add any defence of my scepticism to that which is implied in previous recognition of the results of historical criticism. But whether the rite was actually commanded by Jesus himself or was by mere influence of precedent taken over by the earliest Christians from other Jewish sects, the admission of the new-born child into the spiritual congregation by baptism is a singularly apt method of symbolic ritual. For whether sprinkling or immersion² be the practice, it is an appropriate sign of the purity of the life to which the child is called by the Church. But when once the notion of regeneration, or cleansing from "original sin," or "adoption" into a divine relationship not previously held, is allowed, then sacerdotal ritual enters and the mischief of superstition begins. So long, however, as that evil is excluded, there is none of all

¹ For perhaps Confirmation comes strictly within the catechetical definition of a sacrament, at least if there be in that service a communication of any special impulse to a fully developed religious life. And marriage, from the Church point of view, ought certainly to be a sacrament, since it is the outward and visible sign of the fusing of two lives in one. It has always interested me extremely to know that this is the one sacrament in which the Catholic Church, except in the Anglican branch, makes the contracting parties to be the ministrants and the Priest only a competent witness. Perhaps when civil marriage is made compulsory as a preliminary to the religious ceremony, even Nonconformists may be content to acknowledge that it is not the function of the Minister to tie the knot, but only to bless a contract.

² I do not know whether the Priest now ever follows the direction of the Prayer Book that, after "taking the child into his hands," "he shall dip it in the water discreetly and warily." But it was certainly intended to be the usual practice.

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the historic rites of initiation to the higher life of humanity which can compare in appropriateness, simplicity, and beauty to Christian baptism. CHAP. XII.

If it be asked what is the inward and spiritual grace which on such a view as this is signified by the outward and visible sign, I am afraid the answer may appear scarcely congruous with the condition of any church or denomination as it now is. But with the Church of the world to come—by which I do not mean anything supramundane—I hope it may be congruous enough. For the “grace” is the help which the unfolding soul should get from the pure moral atmosphere of the Church, and from gradual absorption through intercourse with parents, teachers, and elders of the revelation embodying the best results of human experience. Perhaps the time may come, and I hope may not be so far away as it seems, when instead of being told of ten commandments written by Yahweh’s finger upon stone and delivered to a frightened host amid thunder and lightning, children will learn how they are members of a mighty family of brethren whose succession extends through almost countless ages, and whose loves and sufferings and struggles and triumphs have gradually, under the same guidance that opens the flowers and ripens the fruit, attained to the imperfect moral order in which we live, and to the prophetic apprehension of a possible better. For sympathetic parents and skilled teachers know well enough how to represent the human brotherhood and its inspired experience by picture and parable. Or if they do not, they may learn from the words of Jesus. And if they would only refrain from torturing those words into the revelation of an impossible theology, they may get from the parables of the kingdom, if not the whole doctrine, at least the inward

What is the inward and spiritual grace?

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CHAP. XII. impulse of moral evolution. To the generation of children who shall come into such an inheritance, baptism will signify a much more real grace than it generally does now.

In speaking of the other sacrament, known as Holy Communion, it is impossible to ignore the fact made apparent by the researches of Dr. J. G. Frazer and others, that whatever may have been the first occasion of its observance as a Christian rite, it belongs in its essential nature to a widely spread class of ceremonies in which the participants believed themselves to acquire some magical strength or virtue through partaking of the flesh and blood of a sacred animal, sometimes identified with the god they worshipped.¹ The momentary repugnance excited by the association of a solemn rite with reminiscences of prehistoric barbarism ought to be allayed at once by considerations already adduced as to the seeming incommensurable differences between apparent beginnings and apparent endings in evolution. Manhood or womanhood is not the less dignified or beautiful because it began as a structureless cell and passed through forms analogous to those of worms, reptiles, and apes. The ultimate apprehension of God as All in All will not be the less impressive and inspiring because countless ages back its germ was the fear of a fetish or a ghost, a germ which was evolved through many repulsive forms before it reached Henotheism, Monotheism, and Pantheism. Therefore we need have neither scruple nor fear in considering the evolution of the Christian Communion from barbaric rites as a con-

¹ *The Golden Bough*, ii. pp. 436, 437; also for the use of bread to represent the flesh of a god, ii. 337, etc. Of course these are only illustrations. Other instances directly showing or indirectly implying the same thing are given in lavish profusion. See also the *Hibbert Journal*, January 1904, for a suggestive article on "Sacrificial Communion in Greek Religion," by Dr. L. R. Farnell, of Exeter College, Oxford.

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tinuous and, in a sense, a complete process, of which the earlier steps, as in other cases, illustrate the later. CHAP. XII.

If we are right so far, then the significance of this special form of communion by eating and drinking has always been the conveyance of the substance of the god to his worshippers, so that not only were certain graces of strength and courage or wisdom given to each, but as after the sacrament they all had a part of the god in them, they were one in him. Such crude and materialistic notions have of course been refined away in the Christian Church, even where the perpetually recurrent miracle of transubstantiation is believed. But what remains, and what may very well in a yet more natural religion still remain for ages in the Church of the world to come, is the imbibition through special concentration of spiritual thought, and through stimulative fraternal sympathy, of grace and truth from the all-permeating divine life. And what farther remains and may well remain is the fresh excitement from time to time of a sense of oneness not only with our brethren but with the universe in God.

I do not ignore, nor do I wish to undervalue, the fact that in the communion of the Christian Church the sacred figure of Christ dominates the scene, and the immediate aspiration of communicants is to receive of his spiritual substance. But as time goes on, and the apprehension of God as the oneness of all things is deepened, the prophecy of St. Paul that "the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him," may receive a fulfilment of which the apostle did not dream. Not that the Christ can ever lose the fascination exercised over men by supreme moral greatness and unreserved self-sacrifice. But the mystic words attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel about a nearer and

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CHAP. XII. more direct access to the Father than through any mediation¹ may be fulfilled in an immediate sense of the universal life.

One may imagine such an act of Communion consummating a beautiful symbolic ritual in a cathedral, where soaring height and misty perspectives are flooded with a restful harmony of sound and form and colour, combining the most ethereal achievements of art. The stones are hoary with petrified history, suggesting the dateless evolution of human experience. The maze of interlacing structure into which those stones have been woven by some lost magic—pillars running up like flower-stalks, thread-like mouldings spanning dizzy heights, and massive vaults looking like a gossamer web—gives nevertheless a feeling of strongly established balance which defies time and change. The multiplicity of strains converging in a grand equilibrium of order and beauty is symbolic of the manifestation of the One through the Many in the world. And the morning light which, through the rich windows, tells of infinite realms of space, leads thought and feeling out to the boundless universe animated everywhere by the one Presence symbolically conceived in the act of worship. The forms indeed and the memories awakened by consecrated words will always make such a communion to be, as the late stages of evolution always are, reminiscent of the whole preceding progress. But the real act of communion will in time be felt to be a recognition of our place as “parts and proportions of one wondrous Whole,” a strengthening realisation of our oneness with God.

The time
not yet ripe.

Of precise plans for the reformation of the Church and the rehabilitation of worship it is better to be

¹ John xvii. 21-23 ; xiv. 20.

WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH

reticent. Such problems work themselves out as the need presses, and at least by average men, who after all rule the world, this particular problem appears not to be felt as pressing now. But the conductors of public worship and the teachers of the young are, if special education is really effective, something more than average men. And beside those who hold official positions, there are many volunteers in works of religion and philanthropy whose zeal is actuated by a larger outlook on the future, and a better understanding of the past than can be possessed by the average man. Now, amongst many such, perhaps a majority of them, there is an uneasy feeling of an incongruity between the forms of worship and the realities of life. The notion of a series of revelations by miracle in former times does not at all fit in with the actual facts of those very times as exposed to view by excavation and research. Nay, as we saw in the beginning of this book, the serenity of literature has been disturbed by this discord, and influential writers have prescribed to disquieted souls a sort of soothing draught, composed partly of paradox and partly of respect for the authority of custom. But beside the leaders and teachers above mentioned, there is, outside any church communion, a considerably larger class of people whose attitude toward Christianity was formerly one of indifference, but is now changing to one of ill-founded dislike.

CHAP. XII.
But the need is growing. It is felt by many clergy and teachers.

It is impoverishing the life of a multitude.

“Ill-founded,” I say, for there is nothing in Christianity itself to deserve it. But to the people concerned it seems very well founded indeed, because of the quibbles and insincerities too often resorted to in defence of the faith, and still more because of the notorious differences between official utterances on religion and opinions expressed in conversation, or even in print, by

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CHAP. XII. clergymen and teachers. The people, repelled by this condition of things, are now buying cheap issues of great rationalist books, not by the thousand but by the million. And if they suppose Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* to be a solution of it, or Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* to have exorcised God from evolution and history, it is not their fault, nor the fault of the illustrious authors named, but that of the teachers who have not dared to tell these people the truth. How can the boy who was crammed at his Elementary School from day to day with literal interpretations of the Bible, and told that belief of miracle is a duty,—how can he, I ask, when his intelligence takes an independent turn at twenty-five, do other than welcome the promise of palpable fact instead of pious pretence, and of bold freedom of inquiry instead of a fettered faith? The facts are not so palpable as his lecturer assures him. The inquiry is not "free" enough to pass the bounds of matter and come out on the other side. But what wonder if the change from the stuffy atmosphere of ecclesiasticism to the open universe, with its mighty order, seems to him the emancipation of his soul?

Supposed
emancipa-
tion by
science.

A crucial
question:
Will the
"age of
faith" come
back?

Now here a crucial question arises. Do the Bishops and clergy and teachers and helpers in their hearts think it possible to restore the old state of things, when the Church was practically unanimous, and all the people save one in a million meekly believed as they were taught? I will not here include in my inquiry the New Testament doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, or the Resurrection; for in such matters the possibilities of rehabilitation by explaining away are indefinite, or at any rate far from exhausted yet. But I would plead that all in any position of

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religious authority should answer to their own consciences CHAP. XII.
whether they really expect that the Old Testament will If not, why
ever again be universally or even generally regarded as deceive
“the word of God,” immune from challenge as to any ourselves
of its historical statements, or its announcements of and others?
revelation? Whether they approve of its diligent
reading, chapter by chapter, by school children, I will
not ask ; for it would be an insult. But apart from
that, which considering the fetishistic bibliolatry of
some old-fashioned schoolmasters is a more practical
question than I at present care to urge, if any of the
Bishops and clergy do not themselves believe large parts
of Old Testament history so-called, why do they allow Frauds
schoolmasters and mistresses to teach it as God’s truth against the
to children ? souls of
children.

Maxima debetur puero reverentia.

But what respect have they for childhood, who impose upon its innocence an awestruck belief in what they themselves regard as Hebrew or Assyrian fables?

Not so urgent, perhaps, but vitally important, is the question of relieving both clergy and people from the intolerable strain of seeming to pretend to believe what they do not. And this may be done in two ways · first by the disestablishment of recited creeds ; and next by allowing liberty of explanation and interpretation. As to the former ; the earliest creed, if we may accept the New Testament tradition, was a simple profession of belief in Jesus as the Messiah, or the Son of God. This was not an act of worship, but of allegiance to the Church of Christ. Afterwards, as metaphysics or theosophy took the place of faith, the recital of a creed began to be regarded as satisfactory to the Almighty. And down to the present day, worshippers deem it

Need for alteration or interpretation of church services and forms.

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CHAP. XII. necessary to inform their God of their belief that Jesus was "born of the Virgin Mary," and "descended into hell"; and the tone in which they do it shows that they consider they are paying their divinity a great compliment by sacrificing their understandings on his altar. But is it necessary? Is it really an act of worship? Is it not rather an expression of opinion? If such a recitation were discontinued as impertinent, it would at any rate remove one hindrance to the reconsecration of public worship by "truth in the inward parts."

Abolition
of creeds.

Interpreta-
tion of
antiquated
forms.

Liberty of
prophesy-
ing.

But more than that ought to be possible in this twentieth century. All clergymen ought to be fully at liberty to explain to their congregations the difference between the spirit and the letter, and to teach that while the conservatism of habit retains the Bible readings and prayers of the sixteenth century, it is not necessary to force the reverence of the twentieth century to a literal acquiescence in every phrase. A few illustrations would put the intelligence of the people on the alert to discern what conscientious response their own souls make to the aspirations of a bygone age. And thereby, if the services lost something in smoothness of indifferent assent, they would gain a great deal in reality and edification. Above all, in dealing with the Bible, no clergyman ought to be in any fear of giving all the results of recent discoveries, showing how the religion of the Hebrews was only one strand in the mystic bond by which humanity has been brought into communion with the Eternal. Certainly the spirit breathing through Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying* cannot in the present age be content with less. But the same incapacity for transposing the spirit of a writer into other times and circumstances,

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which robs modern Christianity of half the value of St. Paul's epistles, also prevents contemporary churchmen, in reading the saintly rhetoric of Jeremy Taylor, from going beyond the literal fact that the eloquent bishop held sincerely the whole supernatural system on which they dote. How he would have spoken had he and the liberal school in his day acknowledged to themselves that vast and irreparable breaches had been made in that system, not by "infidelity," but by honest and devout inquiry, they do not even try to imagine.

But we do not lack outspoken prophets of the Church in our time, and their words take away all excuse for the moral cowardice which thinks to save truth by an alliance with hypocrisy. In confirmation of this remark I need not do more than refer to the distinguished clergymen associated with the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, or to the works of Professor Percy Gardner, a layman distinguished not less by his devotion to the Church than by his erudition, or even to the liberal views enumerated in *Lux Mundi* and *Contentio Veritatis*. I must add, however, that of this remarkable change there is no indication whatever in our church services. On the contrary, the religious attitude and intellectual tone assumed from beginning to end are precisely those of the sixteenth century. Creeds are persistently used which can have no possible justification except in an infallible Bible, and one of them, at least, not even in that; while from that Bible, stories of Hebrew folk-lore are read with a solemn pomp that seems to proclaim the very word of God. And when texts are read out from the pulpit and doctrines deduced therefrom, there is not one church in a hundred where we are allowed to hear any suggestion that the Bible is to the scholars of this generation anything different

CHAP. XII.

Some voices from the Church of to-day.

Absence from the services of any evidence of that change.

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CHAP. XII. from what we know it was to our own pious but un-
learned grandfathers.

Possible
retort that
the clergy
believe in a
revelation
in their
own sense.

A retort may come by way of question: 'What would you have?' You know well that even the most liberal clergy are profoundly convinced of the truth of revelation in their own sense of the word; and the aberrations of those who have surrendered supernatural revelation altogether are a sufficient warning to these good men not to set their simple hearers in slippery places.' Well, what I would have is just this; that those good men who hold to the truth of revelation in their own sense of the word, should tell us what their own sense is, and not leave us to suppose that it is still the sense implied, though not stated, in the Thirty-Nine Articles, or the sense assumed in every word of the Prayer Book. This latter sense is, that the Bible is God's word written, and that it is all true from beginning to end. That is the sense assumed by the hearers unless they are taught differently. Now whether it be right in the sight of God that the people for want of better instruction should be left to believe what their teachers themselves now hold to be untrue, is surely no question of casuistry, but of common honesty.

Answer :
let them
tell their
congrega-
tions what
that sense
is.

The funda-
mental
importance
of truth to
morals.

In the beginning of Christianity the Church was called "the pillar and ground of the truth." And though the metaphor is in a sense misleading, because the truth can have no pillar and ground but God himself,—which is indeed perhaps acknowledged by the author of that phrase, when he uses the solemn title "the Church of the Living God,"—yet the fundamental importance of truth to morality and religion is not here only, but all through the best parts of the Bible, abundantly declared. Now truth as a moral virtue is simply

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loyalty to the Universe as it is,—not acquiescence in all parts of it as they temporarily appear, but loyalty to the Universal order. And if we pretend that any part of the Whole is not what it is, our motive being that we do not like it to be so, then we cease to be loyal to the Universe as it is, and therefore cease to be loyal to God. It is on this fundamental quality of truth that all other virtues depend. For even love ceases to be pure and becomes a corrupt passion when it deals in lies. And justice is an accurate recognition of the true facts of moral relations. Yet there is much suggestiveness in that phrase of the Psalmist “mercy and truth are met together”; for mercy is engendered by a true estimate of the temptations and weaknesses of offenders, and by an accurate appreciation of their latent capacities for good. With all our progress in knowledge, we should find it hard to improve upon the moral standard of the Psalmist who sang :—

O Lord, in thy tent who dares to sojourn ?
On thy holy mountain, who dares to dwell ?
He who lives blamelessly and practises righteousness,
And speaks from his heart what is true ;
Who utters no slander with his tongue,
Does no wrong to another,
And his neighbour does not calumniate ;
Pompous arrogance he despises ;
The God-fearing man he respects ;
He pledges his word to his neighbour and keeps it,
And cannot be bribed to injure the innocent.¹

Psalm xv.

How conspicuous here is the place of truth ! In fact, if in the structure of conduct we slacken the obligation

¹ Psalm xv. Wellhausen's translation in Polychrome Bible. The omitted condemnation of interest on money-loans is the one point here in which better knowledge has altered the moral standard. But whether the alteration has been an unmixed good may be doubtful.

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CHAP. XII. of loyalty to fact, we loosen the keystone which keeps
the whole arch in balance, and at a touch ruin comes.
Suggestion of history that corruption saps morals in proportion as unreality invades religion. And if so, it is ridiculous to suppose that the pretences and insincerities now affecting churches and schools wherever religion is touched, can possibly be harmless to the nation's morals.

Making all allowance for the poetic truth that

the past will always win
A glory from its being far ;
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not, when we moved therein,

there still remains good reason for thinking that in all historic communities primitive manners, if rough, had a simple genuineness very much lacking in the later and more complicated stages of development. And, using "the method of concomitant variations," we may find that the invasion of religion by insincerities and pretences has very much to do with the change. Thus we can well believe that early republican Rome, when the rude rites of its native religion were observed without question, had a sturdier virtue of a simple kind than was possible to the later Rome in which the Augurs had much ado to refrain from a knowing smile when they met in solemn shows. Or, if we note in our own history the successive periods of simple faith, ecclesiastical grandeur, uprising of the yeoman conscience in the Lollards, suppression of religion by politics under the Tudors, protest of the Puritans, the succeeding supremacy of conventional pretence, the rise of Methodism, and the adoption of Evangelicalism with other-worldliness by the pious rich, we shall find that the curve of morals and of sincerity in religion are very fairly parallel.

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“Certainly !” cry ecclesiastics and religious leaders ; CHAP. XII.
“and that is precisely our reason for insisting that the one thing to do for the present as well as for the future salvation of the people is to maintain the agencies of religion, to circulate the Bible, to build churches, to maintain curates, and to multiply services.” Alas ! that has been done with an energy and liberality to which no records of church history afford any parallel. And yet, if we are to judge by results, there is no salvation attained, at least on a scale commensurate with the means used. Moreover, in the very professions, practices, and displays secured by the outward popularity of religion, there are unfortunately innumerable traces of the microbe of cant, which engenders hideous corruptions of our imperial conduct, our charities, and our national education.

The cry
for more
catechism
and
preaching.

By imperial conduct I mean not only that of the average individual, but that imperial administration which is directed by predominant opinion, and upheld by the whole resources of the State. With party politics I have nothing to do here ; and, indeed, in their attitude toward those aspects of “the white man’s burden” to which I shall refer, all parties are pretty much alike. For they all put the pomp and profit above the moral responsibilities of Empire. Thus, if there be anywhere near our borders a plot of earth that is rich in gold and diamonds, while circumstances indicate as its inevitable destiny incorporation within our territory, the grave question, whether that incorporation shall be secured peacefully by patient waiting and skilful diplomacy, or whether it should be hastened by the bloody violence of war, is never judged in the dry light of morals. The predominant consideration is the immediate gain to be secured ; and so much passion is

Imperial
action.

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CHAP. XII. kindled by the issue, that miscalculation on this point is almost certain. Can any one with consciousness of truth in the inward parts really think for one moment that the highest good of the black races in South Africa has had in our policy a place at all proportionate to their fair claims as the people of the land? Or, if we turn to India, that tremendous problem of an imperial race, have we there tried to realise the Pauline ideal of the new humanity, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all"? If any Englishman in India thinks so, let him try to put it into practice, and social penalties will soon convince him of his mistake.

Charities. Concerning charities, it is needless to say more than to refer to the constantly recurrent revelations of fraud which reckons only too successfully on the fascination of pious pretence. It is the invariable tendency of uninquiring sentiment to take "shibboleths" as a safe pass-word. And good people who have come under the sway of forms of conjuration such as "only believe and you shall be saved," or "the cross alone," or "the all-sufficiency of the Bible," respond to the glib repetition of such spells by swindlers with a pliant submission utterly unlike their inquiring shrewdness in business.

National education. Nor is it necessary to repeat the catalogue of injuries done to national education by religious self-delusion. Yet the subject is of such overwhelming importance that one final word must be added. And it is this, that if the results of education since 1870 be estimated, it will be found that there has been much more intellectual than moral gain. For, undoubtedly, growing citizens have learned to read betting news with a quickness unknown to their grandfathers, and they can

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calculate odds with rude arithmetical skill. Their world of amusement is much wider than it used to be, and, as the toilers issue from their workshops in the evening, they get for a halfpenny the results of football or cricket matches from John o' Groats to Land's End, or even in Australia. It may be thankfully acknowledged also that they have a salutary respect for the police, and a knowledge of the power of the law. But if Catechism and Bible drill has been a success, why do we hear such wails over the "non-worshipping masses"? Why are new and more stringent laws needed against filthy habits? Why is the language of altercation among ex-schoolboys, and for that matter, ex-school-girls, so vile? Surely it must be clear to any candid judgment that the intellectual progress under the Denominational system supplemented by School-Boards has far outrun moral culture. Nor is the case mended by appeals to the alleged failure of what is called a "secular" system in the United States, and some of our greatest colonies. For it is forgotten that these states and colonies have more churches in proportion to the population than we have, that Sunday schools, especially in America, have attained a development unknown in the older land, while the attitude of religious communities in all the younger Anglo-Saxon states is, on the whole, more conservative of traditional beliefs than it is at home. Surely if the religious teaching of our grandfathers were as effective in moral culture as our bishops suppose it to have been, the new countries ought to maintain a higher level of public conduct than ourselves.

No; the real reason for moral failures in education is that we have ceased to believe in the old creeds, and have not the moral courage to acknowledge it to our-

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Intellectual
has outrun
moral
culture.

The alleged
failure of
"secular"
education.

The real
evil is
religious
insincerity.

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CHAP. XII. selves. Or if we acknowledge it to ourselves, our case is still worse, for we maintain a lying pretence before others. Teachers are compelled to recite formally, as though they believed them, Bible stories and professions of faith which both intellect and conscience reject. Parents put off the inquiry of precocious children, whether incredible portents "really happened," with the foolish solace that in ten years' time they can judge for themselves. Preachers delude themselves and their hearers with ingenious sophistries, such as in the market would incur a charge of obtaining money under false pretences. And yet, amid this mephitic atmosphere of falsehood, we expect that loyalty of soul, and truth in the inward parts, and simplicity of character shall flourish!

A cleansing
of the
Temple
needed.

Surely the time has come when lies and hypocrisy should be swept out from the Temple of the Lord. For these choke prayer and make worship almost a blasphemy. If "better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife," certainly spiritual nourishment on plain ethics, such as spring out of that garden of the Lord, the ordered universe, is better than pretended communion with the venerable church within whose doors theological wrangling is only appeased by metaphysical subtleties.

The certain
issue.

But we shall not need long to be content with such eremitic fare. For of the church as well as the earth it may be said in the teeth of self-confident conservatism "e pur si muove." And the movement can have no finality except in the realisation of God as the only Being, and of the Universe as his revelation in consciousness.

Review
of the
argument.

The argument of this book is a humble and, at least in intention, a devout effort toward the achievement of such an issue. Thus I have endeavoured to

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justify the assertion made in the Introduction that both religious emotion and the certain reality of its Object survive the disintegration of ancient creeds. Acknowledging that God transcends human thought, I have yet urged that he does not escape human thought, but is immanent therein. And in the interpretation of "what may be known of God," I have regarded experience as the only revelation, and the world-order as greater than miracle. In particular, I have offered suggestions toward developing in a practical form the late Herbert Spencer's brief and general statement of the only possible reconciliation of religion and science. And that reconciliation I have understood to consist in a common recognition by men of devotion and by men of knowledge that Religion and Science are each stimulated and brought to self-consciousness by finite phases of a Universe, unknowable in its totality, which surrounds, interpenetrates, and overwhelms both alike. At the same time I have accepted and tried to apply practically Spencer's prophecy that "very likely there will ever remain a need to give shape to that indefinite sense of an Ultimate Existence which forms the basis of our intelligence."¹ I have dwelt also upon his evidently heartfelt warning, that in satisfying this need it is an erroneous assumption "that the choice is between personality and something lower than personality ; whereas the choice is between personality and something that may be higher." Incidentally I have ventured to regret the philosopher's apparent endorsement of the necessity for a "First Cause" in a Universe where cause and effect in their largest generalisation are obviously identical. But I have followed him gladly in maintaining that what he terms the Unknowable,

¹ *First Principles*, pp. 96, 97. 6th ed.

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CHAP. XII. but which I would rather call the Eternal, is not negative but the one supreme fact.

v
The name
of God
retained

as an object
of relative
knowledge.

Therefore while entirely acquiescing in the acknowledgment that the Eternal Being is in his Totality unknowable, I have given reasons for retaining the holy name of God. For though its history, like that of the creature who "calls on the name of the Lord," goes back to embryo conditions, which at our present stage of evolution seem grossly incongruous, yet the name has been transmuted by the long process of experience and thought into a symbolic expression of ineffable life, power, goodness, and love; so that to contemplative souls it has become as Dante's spaceless point of unapproachable light, representing the oneness of all that is. I have farther suggested that while holding to Spencer's "Reconciliation," we may consistently learn from St. Augustine, who held that the unknowableness of God as the Infinite and Eternal does not exclude the possibility of our apprehending what he is to us. Indeed to say that because we cannot comprehend in its totality all that is, therefore we can in no sense know anything, is as great a mistake in religion as it would be in science. True it is that in neither can we know any experience or any object in the infinite sense of knowing. That is, we cannot know it through and through, and all round, in all its relations, because those relations are endless. But if we are content in science to regard as relative knowledge of Nature, a partial but classified and ordered conception of physical appearances and successions, we may also be content to regard as a relative knowledge of God a partial but ordered conception of experiential spiritual phenomena in the soul of humanity. At the same time we must always be on our guard against splitting the unity of God and

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Nature. And we must also beware of the erroneous assumption that sentiment or emotion can prove the reality of alleged historical events. CHAP. XII.

On these lines I have tried to show that everything in the great religions of the world which is genuinely spiritual and devotional, as distinguished from what is claimed as historic or quasi-scientific, is practically untouched by the disintegrating processes of modern criticism and research. Because, after all, religion in its essence is not an opinion or set of opinions about finite facts, but rather an attitude of soul toward the ultimate reality in which all finite facts have their proportionate place. And calling that ultimate reality God, we plead that religion consists in the surrender of self to God, and in loyal contentment to take one's assigned part, whatever it be, in the infinite harmony of the living Universe. For though it be true that we have to take that part whether we will or no, yet the temper in which we take it makes a great difference to the moral significance of the function discharged, and to personal religion and to peace of mind, and to charity towards our kind.¹ This temper of soul, which "endures as seeing him who is invisible," is absolutely independent of ecclesiastical creeds.

Not that we should undervalue the service rendered

¹ *E.g.* what could be apparently more hopeless and incapable of dignity than the position of a slave at the Christian era? The first preachers of "the Way" have been contemned by modern revolutionists because they did not suggest rebellion against an inevitable lot. But probably, in view of the circumstances of the time, they did better in counselling brethren in bonds to transmute their earthly service into a heavenly allegiance. "Slaves, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (Col. iii. 22-25.) The context amply guards the apparently too sweeping exhortation "obey in all things."

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CHAP. XII. to this essential life of religion by the recorded experience of mankind, by prophetic utterance, by poetic dreams, or even priestly rites. Nor should we disregard parables, or ecstatic visions, or consider even imagined portents to be always worthless. But the important thing about such helps to religion is not the alleged miraculous endorsement of some, or the objective reality of any events associated with them in the traditions of the church. The essential matter for consideration is their spiritual suggestiveness; and if this be retained the alleged objective occasion of it matters nothing. At the same time the recognition of this truth does not cancel the value of historical religions as such. For the whole religious evolution of man has been energised by the divine spirit through the finite experience of the creature. And in this experience illusions, myths, and imagined portents have had a real place. Finally, I have pleaded that for us of the Western world, Christianity is far the most important of historical religions, while the experiences of its saints come nearest to us and are most susceptible of realisation in our own inner life. Yet it can only be as a phase of the Religion of the Universe, and not as the universal religion itself, that Christianity can continue to reign even in the West. It only remains to show how the Religion of the Universe is absolutely catholic in its appeal to all forms of cosmic emotion that impress, stimulate, and exalt the soul of man.

True value
of historic
religions.

EPILOGUE

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“Trust in the Lord, and do good.”—PSALM XXXVII. 3.

“AND is this all?” I can hear some readers ask. The larger faith not to be feared.
“Are we expected to surrender our rich and strongly articulate creeds for the mere recognition of the oneness of eternal Being, and the universe as His revelation?” To which the first but not the only answer is, you cannot help yourselves. Or at least, if the word ‘yourselves’ may be taken as including your other selves, the coming generations whom you love to regard as a continuation of yourselves, the surrender is inevitable. It is inevitable. Indeed the position I ask you to accept is implicit in that to which you cling. For these portents, and miraculous theophanies, and divine voices of which you fondly cherish the memory, are, according to your own professions, only part of revelation. Because you certainly accept the apostolic words already sympathetically quoted, that God has manifested himself in creation. Nor can you deny that the special phenomena of human experience to which you apply pre-eminently, and sometimes exclusively, the term “revelation,” are, whether we regard their extension in space or their duration in time, or their bulk in the experience of humanity as a whole, almost infinitesimal

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EPILOGUE. compared with the other manifestations of God. Now, either you must bring these infinitesimal manifestations by exceptional miracle into accord with the timeless and immeasurable revelation through things as they are, or you will have to live always, like the Psalmist, "with a sword in your bones," while doubt taunts you with the question, "where is your God?"

This internal schism has long been hard to bear, and your future selves will find it intolerable. But, since Nature is imperturbable, your only way of peace is to bring the exceptional and infinitesimal experiences on which we have hitherto based our religion, into accord with the infinite manifestations of God. And if we do so, we find those exceptional experiences readily enough adjust themselves to actual facts of nature and of man. That is to say, we come to see why they have taken, in the course of tradition, the unhistorical forms that clothe them; while at the same time, the very vividness of feeling, or loftiness of sacred passion which has transfigured tradition, throws light on the constitution of man, and thus helps to reveal the Religion of the Universe. For instance, as I read the story of Pentecost in the Book of Acts, I do not in the least believe in the "rushing mighty wind," nor in "the cloven tongues as of fire," nor in the miraculous linguistic endowment of the day. Yet, taking Christian origins as a whole, I can well understand how the unparalleled outburst of spiritual life and brotherhood, which then moved so many men, assumed those forms in the facile imagination of astonished faith. And though it is impossible to treat the miraculous framework as real, the human experience of divine inspiration was a fact. The energy of evolution is, in spiritual history, felt to be an impulse resistless as "a rushing mighty wind."

On pain of internal schism.

The way of peace is to reduce the exceptional to the universal,

by spiritual interpretation of both.

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I do not believe that a special wind shook the upper chamber in Jerusalem. But I do "believe in the Holy Ghost." EPILOGUE.

In other words, I urge that the only way of final peace in religion is, in cases where an "inward and spiritual grace" is connected with "an outward and visible sign," to subordinate the latter entirely to the former, and if it should happen that the sign is an exceptional and ill-attested portent, then the method involves the relegation of such portent to the endless possibilities of illusion, imagination, distorted tradition and myth, while at the same time we cling to the spiritual grace accidentally associated therewith. In so doing we surely follow the apostolic exhortation, "Prove all things : hold fast that which is good." And if we are asked how we know that the spiritual grace is good, our answer is : we know by experience, just as we know that open mountain air quickens, while that of a close room stifles. Moreover, in such a method there is nothing irrational. For it proceeds upon a recognition, proved to be inevitable, that investigations of all phenomena, whether so-called material, or so-called spiritual, always lead us to an infinite Unknowable in which these phenomena seem to emerge. The thought is thus suggested of an eternal and infinite One, in whom we ourselves as well as all phenomena observed by us have existence as parts of a Whole. In our action as parts of that Whole we are guided by experience. But experience of spiritual grace is just as real as our experience of so-called material sensations, which, after all, are only a mode of consciousness ; and this mode of consciousness evades us in the Unknowable, whenever we try to know it all round, or through and through. In fact, what is called practical common-

The
grace not
necessarily
dependent
on the sign.

The
method not
irrational.
It is a frank
recognition
of our
position
in the
Universe.

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EPILOGUE. sense can suggest no reason why the latter kind of experience should be regarded as more "real" than the former.

The impregnable basis of religion

I therefore take leave to think and to urge on others that religion has, and always has had, an impregnable basis in the certainty of an Infinite Unity acting in infinitely varied modes. The Unity is God, the modes are creatures, amongst whom we have our place. And if we were humble enough to be content with only one known attribute of the Eternal *in his infinity*—I mean self-consistency—we should perhaps be much less disposed than we are at present to murmur at what we cannot understand in the narrower confines of finite relations, by the bearing of which upon us we learn what the Unknowable *is to us*. For we should set "the Lord always before us," as the source of those inspirations of experience which, so far as they are loyally accepted, evolve both the individual and the race toward an ideal condition. And even if that ideal condition be never reached, its pursuit is as "the joy of the Lord."

is experience of finite relations implying an infinite Unknowable.

It is on this narrower area of finite relations that religion has its practical work, and that practical work is summed up in the words quoted from the Hebrew Psalmist, "Trust in the Lord, and do good." For the "common-sense of most" finds in human history an enthralling interest, and the manly feeling of most is neither dismayed nor revolted by the deep shadows that alternate with its dazzling lights. That interest takes a religious form just in proportion as the finite relations realised in human history or in social or personal experience are felt to imply and to rest in an infinite unknowable Unity. This All in All we worship as the Hebrew prophets and psalmists wor-

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shipped the Lord. In this Lord we put our trust ; for his eternal attribute of self-consistency is an assurance to us that in following the line of moral evolution, we may consciously fulfil our part in loyalty to the Divine Whole. Not that our happiness is the purpose of evolution. Experience proves that it is not, and common-sense dictates that it cannot be. Nevertheless, good-will in the discharge of function brings incidentally its own satisfaction ; and in proportion as we can merge self in a greater and yet a greater whole, we rise toward bliss. And herein lies the whole theory and practice of religion.

Nor is this, except in its mode of expression, a merely esoteric doctrine hidden from the simple. On the contrary, it is precisely the ultimate energising nucleus in every practically inspiring religion, from that of the saintly Buddhist to that of the Salvation Army. For within the votaries of every real faith such fragmentary manifestations of eternal power as have entered into their experience, prompt a trust in the continuity and the self-consistency of the ultimate life or energy that holds the world together. "The husbandman," says the apostle, "waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Why does he so confidently wait? Because no variations of season, and no disappointments and losses caused thereby, can shake his inarticulate faith in a certain self-consistency and uniformity of action in the mysterious Power as much concealed as revealed by Nature. Just so it should be and it may be in the simplest men of good-will, in waiting for the moral results that represent the highest aims they have in life.

EPILOGUE.

Not an esoteric doctrine, but the real strength of faith in the simplest souls.

The divine Wisdom, impersonated by Hebrew

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imagination, the Wisdom who “rejoiced in the habitable parts of God’s earth, and whose delights were with the sons of men,” taught in the dialect of the time the very lesson we are urging now. And it is only a translation from dialect to dialect that is offered by Christianity in its simplest form now. You have learned little or nothing of religion if your ideal of salvation is less than the building of a noble character, fruitful in good works. You have learned comparatively little of the significance of human life if you have not come to understand that there is a blessedness not to be identified with happiness, and far less with pleasure. Now, how are these supreme ends to be attained? Surely by observation of the usual action of the laws of God, and loyal trust that these laws will act similarly in times to come. You have had experience ; you have been trained to observe that an evil passion, rebuked and silenced, is weaker at the next moment of temptation ; you have learned that perseverance in resistance continually lessens the power of the assault. Then trust that it will permanently be so, —though there may be temporary failures. For sometimes after you have nearly subdued an evil habit, an unusual concurrence of bad influences will bring back upon you the passionate desire with a strength that you had hoped would never be felt again. Yet do not in such a moment lose heart. Trust still in the uniform action of God’s laws, which, so far as human testimony goes, do work so as gradually to emancipate from the bondage of corruption those who steadfastly strive against it.

The secret of blessedness.

So, likewise, observation and experience lead us to trust that blessedness is to be found—if at all—not in the abundance of the things that we possess, nor in the exquisite delight of any natural senses, however refined,

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nor in popularity, admiration, or fame, but simply in being good,—and this, without ostentation, without spiritual pride, without a sense of merit, but only through loyalty to God. Trust then the working of the laws of the Eternal in regard to such aims in life, and never will you be betrayed. EPICLOGUE.

But do not failures come? Does not unmerited sorrow cut us like a sudden and untimely blast of snow in summer? Do not wrongs and misunderstandings and slanders smite us? True, but the *apparent* triumph of evil over a limited space and time ought never to distract us from the general tenor of human experience. It is, or ought to be, enough for the faithful soul, that on the whole, and in the long run, all generations of men have found all things work together toward some good. And character, with its inherent blessedness, is unassailable by outward failure, can never be withered by sorrow, nor can it be destroyed by any outward wrong that men can do to us. For indeed it is laid up in that treasure-house “where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” Trials of faith.

There is such a thing as loyalty to the Universe of which we form a part. The public spirit of a citizen is good, and patriotism on a larger scale may be a still nobler characteristic. Yet loyalty to the everlasting life that sways the Universe is grander far. I have no sympathy with those who, on the basis of observations extending only through a few years, and concerning only superficial phenomena, venture to criticise the ill-working of the Universe, and seem to think that if they had been consulted they could have built it better. Surely an inward revulsion prompts us to protest against presumption and impiety of this kind. For as we are Loyalty to the Universe.

Rash critics.

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EPILOGUE. parts of this infinite frame of things, we feel bound in soul and conscience to believe that, on the whole, things are working together for good. Not that we should tolerate any injunction to believe a palpable lie. But in regard to this riddle of the Universe, our range of observation is so very limited, and even within that range we so often find certain conclusions from one area of induction cancelled by the chance refraction of light from beyond the ordinary horizon, that we are justified in attaching more moral value to the implied harmonies of an obviously everlasting Whole than to the superficial discords that strike us on a temporary observation of parts. In other words, our relation to the Universe of which we are parts impels us to trust that though fractions may seem repulsive, the Whole in which they are merged is beautiful and good.

The Universe is not of any private interpretation.

The essence of all genuine religions.

The Catholic peasant girl.

Now this kind of trust in the Whole, in the "Lord," in the Eternal, is the ultimate faith at the heart of every genuine religion and of all forms of goodness. Watch the Catholic peasant girl as she eagerly bears her offering of candles to the tawdry shrine of the Virgin in her village church. Her heart is full of some deep trouble, the first piercing woe that her young life has known. She needs, as she thinks, some miraculous interference for her sake with the order of the world. She needs some saint to shield her from a great loss threatened, or from a curse about to fall. Yet what she more truly needs is discernment to distinguish between the right and the wrong; and moral strength to take the right course. But in her blindness and her ignorance she takes her way to this shrine, and after her offering, she bows herself in prayer, and beseeches the intercession of the Virgin, that she may be delivered from her fears. Through all her life she has been surrounded and per-

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vaded by a Power she cannot understand. She is dimly aware of infinite possibilities, of some superhuman influence that may interfere for her good. And oftentimes, through means and ways that she little expected, the blessing for which she had prayed comes to her, not in the form she desired, but in a better and more permanent form. Coarse and low in our view her religion may be. But still, so far forth as it is a trust in the unseen Power that frames all things, it *is* a religion. And sometimes the outpouring of her heart does quicken the better nature within her, does help her to discern the right from the wrong, and does strengthen her to choose the right. Now if she were satisfied with these yearnings toward a Power beyond her comprehension ; if she were satisfied to believe, like the saintly singer of "Lead, kindly light," that, through ways of suffering, if only she held true, this Power would bring her to the dawn of hope, then her religion would be pure and simple whatever its sectarian name. It is only so far as she thinks she understands the Power she is asking to bless her, only so far as she presumes to dictate the mode in which the blessing is to come, that she is wrong and superstitious.

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Or think again of the cultured Anglican, worshipping amidst the historic monuments and art-glories of his church. The memories of many centuries are behind him ; and the tide of a great nation's religious life flows down to him. The forms into which his devotions are cast have some of them had their origins in remote Christian antiquity or in the still more ancient songs of Israel ; and even the innovations made by the Tudors and Stuarts have lost their rawness and acquired some richness of tone through the storm and stress that have tried humanity both in Church and State. Perhaps the

The
cultured
Anglican.

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EPILOGUE. worshipper's own ancestors have "rolled the psalm to wintry skies" on the sacred spot where now he kneels. And he loves to recall those memories of the past, and to imagine that his prayers go up as incense upon the altar of God, mingling with the aspirations of those souls now redeemed and glorified in heaven. There is perhaps among the less thoughtful of the congregation not a little danger of contracting the object of devotion into the poor conception of England's God. But does this cultured and spiritual worshipper, though confidently repeating ancient forms of devotion, presume to suppose that he has an adequate conception of the object of his worship? No; what bows his soul in reverence is the sense of a Power controlling not only his destiny, but all things that are, and compelling them into some, as yet, inconceivable oneness with all the achievements of the past, and all the divine promise of the future.

The
Methodist
collier.

Or take again the Methodist collier in his village prayer-meeting. What heartiness, what vehemence, what enthusiasm! How does he thunder at the gates of Heaven, insisting that his requests shall be granted, and believing in his heart that God has said "concerning the works of my hands, command ye me"! Then he melts into a more plaintive tone, as he thinks of his prodigal boy far away upon the sea, or in the ranks of the army face to face with death! But familiarly though this good simple soul thus expostulates with the Eternal, were you to ask him, has he by searching found out God? his knowledge of the Bible would instantly bring to his lips the context: "It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." He, like his superiors in

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EPILOGUE.

culture, knows that when he "trusts in the Lord," he trusts in a Being transcendently greater than he can conceive, and in humble dependence on what, through experience, may be known of the Unknowable, he strives to do good.

In all such cases there is more of what the late Professor Clifford called "cosmic emotion" than would appear at first sight. For though the immediate cause of religious feeling be, in the case of the Catholic peasant, an inherited association of magic powers with material images, in the case of the Anglican the glories of art, the memories of history, and the pride of ancestry, or in the case of the Methodist, worship of the Bible and experience of the living word therein, yet the experiences of all alike find their real origins in the wonder of primeval barbarous ancestors at the mystery of the world. Whether we give our adhesion to Fetishism or to Animism as the earliest germ of religion, or whether we regard them as both contemporaneously evolved from the first stirrings of faintly awakened wonder at the mysteries of world-movement and sleep and death, in any case, the evolution of the various forms of religion from such simple beginnings has been traced with approximate completeness. Thus we may say that the emotions of a Gladstone on entering St. Peter's in Rome represented a late stage of the awe with which a palæolithic ancestor trembled before a mighty tree, an isolated rock-pillar, or a weird black stone. There is nothing in such a reminiscence derogatory to the higher developed feeling, any more than there is anything derogatory to man in the recognition of his simian ancestry. And it is only mentioned here to justify our identification of religious reverence and awe with developed forms of cosmic emotion. It is the wonder

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EPILOGUE. of the great world, and not the sectarian spell, which subdues the true saint.

The
Agnostic.

Perhaps this may be the better realised if we turn to a very different man, the philosopher who has thought out, or followed others who have thought out, a system of the experiential world. He finds no place therein for a personal God. Neither do we. But he, finding no place for a God such as he was taught to speak about and dream about in his childhood, says either that there is no God at all, or at least that the being of God does not concern us. Yet the same philosopher will discourse to you concerning the uniform laws observed as operating in the experiential world. He will speak impressively of the effects produced by moral influences on the welfare of nations. He will insist that to expect national good from social license, extravagance, or wanton luxury is just as wild as to look for sound bodily health as the result of alcoholic excess. Indeed in any position of official responsibility he would stake reputation and place and power on the certainty that "righteousness exalteth a nation," while impurity, duplicity, and dishonesty in public affairs must bring confusion and misery into the commonwealth. Now it is not a mere verbal quibble to say that such a man has more "trust in the Lord" than he supposes. For, put it how you will, a man who will rest his hopes of the future on the continued prevalence of a certain order revealed to him by experience, must necessarily hold that the order is strong enough to continue; and if it is strong, it has energy; and if it has energy, it must be because it belongs to and is one with the nameless Power that holds all things together, not in the experiential world alone, but in the Universe. Even wise men, in despair of giving any form in consciousness

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to that Unknowable Being, have deceived themselves into fancying that they dispense entirely with the formless thought. And yet it remains true that the more nearly they realise oneness and continuity in their experiential universe, the more certainly God is enthroned in their minds. The more confidently they rest in the sure working of moral as well as physical laws, the more do they manifest that which for us is "trust in the Lord." So that under any form of religion, or in the absence of everything usually called theology, the exhortation of the Psalmist may be practised, and his creed be held : "Trust in the Lord, and do good" !

Do you ask what is good ? I can only answer : it is the best you know. Of course such an answer is provisional only. But they who act upon it sincerely, find it always the "wicket gate" to the divine pilgrimage. It has not lain in the scheme of the Universe, nor is it possible to the Religion of the Universe to reveal to us at once and fully the perfect ideal, or the complete law of human life. It has been left to grow upon us in a course of evolution through a succession of ages. Thus it comes to pass that we see in every age, "as in a mirror darkly," some ideal better than anything yet attained. Strive toward that. Do at least the best you know. Struggle against what you are sure is your lower and baser nature. And do this in confidence that the Eternal will make all things work together toward a successful issue of this strife of yours. Speak the truth, even when falsehood might promise security or gain, and by truth imitate the self-consistency of the Eternal. Do the right, even against any apparent interest, whether your own or that of others ; assured that it can never be your real interest or that of humanity to defy the laws of God. Such practical religion is not dependent

EPILOGUE.

What is
"good"?

A subject
of moral
evolution.

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EPILOGUE. on any creed, or any church, or any book. It is indeed
Solvitur equally independent of metaphysics or philosophy.
ambulando. And yet, human nature being what it is, a finite
creature with monitions of eternity, a fragmentary
creature with an instinct of some "wondrous whole,"
we are heartened and inspired and energised in our effort
to play aright our little part when some divine loyalty
prompts us to "trust in the Lord, and do good."

The real
interest of
the story
of Christ.

From my point of view the true value of the tradi-
tion of Jesus lies in its immortal freshness as a guide
and help and spur in this moral pilgrimage of man.
And this value remains, however much we allow for
the inveterate tendency of tradition to idealise its
heroes. For just as I believe that the suggested
triumph of a divine life over corruption and death
retains its stimulating power, though no resurrection
of a dead body ever took place, so to me the other
impossible miracles serve to clear rather than to confuse
the lesson taught by the ministry described in the three
partly historical gospels. Thus they seem to picture in
illuminated lines the overflowing activities of a mysteri-
ously¹ endowed life, unconsciously acting out the truth
that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."
"The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the
lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the poor
listen to glad tidings."

Two gospel
elements of
perversion
and ideal-
isation.

But it should be noted that, though the evolution of
tradition has been somewhat complex, its transmutations
apparently fall into two divisions—those of pure idealis-
ation, and those of a theosophic tendency. The latter,
with which we are not at present immediately concerned,
include such features as the Advent, the preternatural

¹ If the adverb is thought to border on theology, I would ask, was there no mystery about the endowments of Shakespeare?

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circumstances of the Temptation, the Transfiguration, EPILOGUE.
the discourses of the Fourth Gospel, the teleological
chapters of the Synoptics, the Resurrection and Ascension. I am not for a moment suggesting that these features of the tradition have no value. In fact, with regard to one of them, the Resurrection, I have just been urging the contrary. Yet there is a manifest difference between such refractions and distortions, so to speak, of actual events, or principles, or sayings, and on the other hand the imaginative idealisation of a How idealised.
character by the exclusion from memory of everything but that character's distinctive and informing spirit. Now it is this sort of idealisation which is evident in the best parts of the Synoptic Gospels.

For if a contemporary note-taker among the What we might have had from a contemporary note-taker.
followers of Jesus had preserved for us a prosaically exact account of any considerable portion of his career as a child, a youth, and a man, it is impossible to suppose that there would not have been in such a record more evidence of personal preferences and individual motives, more, in fact, of the finite self than appears in our Gospels. We should have learned, what some of the more grotesque apocryphal gospels pretend to tell us, the amusements of the child Jesus, the first symptoms of his having an aim in life ; or we should have heard of his special tastes in Old Testament literature. We should have been told of what he liked or disliked in household ways, even his preference for some kinds of food rather than others, his interest in the numerous festivals of his nation, his relaxations when he worked as a carpenter, and his apparent personal ambitions before he left everything to proclaim the kingdom of God. But we hear little or nothing of all this in our gospels. The being that

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EPILOGUE. shines upon us there seems to have no self at all. So far is he from having any of the ordinary human motives, such as hope of power, or wealth or popularity or fame, that he does not appear even to manifest the self-will and self-assertion¹ characteristic of illustrious religious reformers such as St. Francis Xavier, Calvin, and Wesley. He has no theories, he has no plans, he has no policy. He simply allows the truth that suffuses his whole being to shine forth, and with consequences he has no concern. Now this is hardly human nature, and we cannot take it literally. Indeed, supposing for a moment the position of theism to be possible, it would be almost as easy to believe in an incarnation of the God supposed to rule the world from outside, as in this de-incarnation of self. There is therefore nothing presumptuous in the assumption that we have here the idealisation of a personality which lent itself easily to such a process. In an early essay, George MacDonald acutely observed that the effect of polish is, not to disguise, but to make more apparent and obvious, the grain of the material polished. And the same may be said of any truthful idealisation of character. It does not misrepresent that character, but rather exhibits the essential quality thereof. And as the essential quality of the man Jesus seems to have been a loving subordination of self to God and mankind, the idealised Jesus is depicted as having no self at all.

Absence of self in the idealised Jesus.

Idealisation not falsification.

It was necessary to explain my position on this point before going on to justify what has been said of the value of the tradition of Jesus as a guide and help and spur in the moral pilgrimage of man. For

¹ The contrary view upheld by some orthodox controversialists does not seem fairly to result from the texts quoted. See *ante*.

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the idealised Jesus is just the impersonated symbol of the highest life possible to us. If you think otherwise, I make bold to say it is because by an inveterate confusion you blur the simplicity of the Gospel by the elaborate creeds and ecclesiastical forms which are of much later date. But if you could keep your eye fixed on that ideal life, and see its background as it really was, you would find that the relations between that life and the times in which it was lived were very much the same as the relations between what is best in you and the times in which you live now. For why did the priest and the Pharisee hate this man? Why was he looked upon as a disturber of the people and a designer of sedition? Surely it was because his rejection of the carnal Messiahship, and his substitution of a very simple religion and morality, was inconsistent with the interests of the priestly class and of the ruling powers.

Think of the elaborate and unnatural system of outward religion which had grown up in Judæa, perhaps from very natural beginnings, in the childhood of the race. Think of barbarous atonements in blood offered for moral or ceremonial lapses. Think how ecclesiastical authority cherished traditions of divine commands to do evil. Remember what a fetish the contemporaries of Jesus made of the seventh day in the week, forbidding even the practice of the art of healing on that day, and how they taught that if a man consecrated even in purpose the produce of a field to the service of the Temple, and had no other available means, he should be free from any obligation to maintain his aged parents. Think of what immense and fatal importance mere words of Scripture and ritual observances and legal propriety were made; how, in

—
EPILOGUE.
Application
of the
idealised
truth.

The
background
of superstition
behind
the Christ.

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EPILOGUE. fact, the vision of Sinai's God, and rest in Abraham's bosom were reserved for those who made fewest trips in the niceties of time-honoured prescriptions ;—and then you may realise, perhaps, why the people were “astonished at the teaching” of Jesus.

The contrast of the simplicity of Jesus.

“Seek ye the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” There is no suggestion of Moses here. “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.” Remember how little he made of their conventional rites and ceremonies.¹ Estimate at its full significance the energy akin to passion with which he spurned their superstition about the Sabbath. Recall that dramatic scene in the Synagogue at Capernaum, where, being asked to exercise his healing power on that day, he made an appeal to the common-sense and human sympathy of objectors, and, receiving no response but sullen silence, “looked round about upon them in anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” But he did the healing all the same, though he knew that conspirators were sneaking out to “take counsel how they might destroy him.” In a word, he treated loyalty to the Supreme Power, whom he called the Father, as over-riding all mere maxims of expediency generated by traditions of the partial manifestations of that Power. Such loyalty would impel men to show their love of the Father by their love of each other. Thus all rules of life were for him summed up in the words of the Psalmist, “Trust in the Lord, and do good.”

The trust of Jesus.

And how grand was his own trust—a trust immov-

¹ That he did not enjoin abstinence from them is perfectly true. Neither did Spinoza suggest to his landlady to stay away from church. But the difference of importance attached to outward shows as compared with spiritual realities was palpable enough.

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able, impregnable, immeasurable! I know not any human reminiscence of which the loss would more impoverish the world than the vision of this crucified one, who trusted though God slew him. The sublime audacity of Prometheus, the serene humour of Socrates, the confident aloofness of the Buddha from personal desire or care, culminating in Nirvāna, have none of them the universal human charm that clings to the utter sacrifice of Jesus for the race he loved. And that sacrifice was consummated through utter trust in the Power who, though to us unknowable as he is in himself, may be apprehended in certain relations to us, as he was by Jesus. He trusted himself in the hands of God into a conflict of one against a world. He trusted himself in the hands of God into an apparently barren and miserable failure. He trusted himself in the hands of God into a cruel death and a dishonoured grave.

And was that trust betrayed? There are those who tell us we leave nothing but that frightful issue when we surrender to historic criticism the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and to the science of Man an immortal career for him in heaven. ^{Was it betrayed?} But in the chapters to which these words are an epilogue, I have urged that the relation of the finite self to the All in All does not admit any claim of rights, or any promise of imperishable personality. Yet do we on that account impoverish the glory of life? Every one has been accused of doing this who has exhorted men to put less of self and more of altruism into their conduct. The cry of the silver shrine-makers at Ephesus is illustrative, not merely of the greed that can ally itself with religion, but also of the more refined, or, at least, less gross self-interests which oppose its expansion. Thus a heretic who should have proposed to Tertullian

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— EPILOGUE. the joy of universal salvation in place of his imagined ecstasy in prospect of a burning world, with sinners writhing in the flames, would have received small gratitude. And certainly any one who would suggest to a Mohammedan the exchange of a sensual paradise for the Apocalyptic vision of everlasting psalmody would be in danger of his life. Yet it is coming to be generally acknowledged that the honour due to self-sacrifice can hardly be a glorification of self.

The reward of self-sacrifice cannot be selfish,

but rather the absorption of self in a greater issue.

But though that is acknowledged, the ultimate bearing of the principle is scarcely recognised. For if the honour cannot be the glorification of self, what can it be but the loss of self in something greater? Let this be admitted, and then the awful suggestion that the trust of Jesus in God was betrayed is seen to be false as hell. For all and more than he could possibly expect was achieved by his sacrifice. Shall soldiers dying in the moment of victory count that victory as compensation enough, though they can hardly expect to carry their gory honours into heaven; and shall mathematicians and chemists serenely triumph if their results are achieved before violence robs them of their lives; and yet must a Christ be thought betrayed by God because he is not allowed to see in his finite personality the triumph of his church? Even Moses was expected to acquiesce in the divine decree that he should not tread the promised land to which he had led God's people. And should less be expected of a Christ? There was no betrayal; though the weakness of mortal flesh might for a moment apprehend it. It is likely enough that he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—though this implied no shrinking from Job's faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Certainly that dread cry is part of the vision left us.

The example of Moses should teach this.

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But God had not forsaken him. He was drawing him EPILOGUE.
into Himself. And though not in his finite self, yet in
reunion with the Eternal, he might see of the travail of
his soul, and be satisfied.

I do not believe that nineteen centuries have ex- Results of
hausted—I do not believe they have half unfolded—the Christ's
results of Christ's work for mankind. If any one thinks sacrifice.
otherwise, it is perhaps because he does not allow full
latitude to the principle, "It is the spirit that quickeneth;
the flesh profiteth nothing." For the false develop-
ments incidental to the imperfections of the medium in
which the germ has been evolved have been allowed to
obscure the original simplicity of the gospel of the
nothingness of self and the indefeasible claims of the
Infinite on the finite. But the quenchless fire of the
inspiration breathed by Jesus into humanity is shown
by the fact that the spiritual pride and cowardice, the
superstitions and self-will and idolatry too prevalent
among later generations of his nominal followers, have
never put it out. Truly the corruption of the best is
ever most hateful and repellent. If then the worst Corruptio
and most hateful corruptions have not been able to optimi
quench Christ's spirit in the world, how almighty it pessima.
must be!

And now, at this day, we of all schools, whether But
orthodox or heterodox so-called, whether believers or recovery
unbelievers in supernatural revelation, all who seek the a sign of
revival of religion, the exaltation of morality, the re- its immor-
demption of man, draw, most of us, our direct impulse, tality.
and all of us, directly or indirectly our ideals, from the
speaking vision of the Christ. Such a claim is justified,
not merely by the spiritual power still remaining in the
Church, but almost as much by the tributes paid and Tributes of
the uses of Gospel teaching made in the writings of the rationalists.

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EPILOGUE. most distinguished among rationalists. From such acknowledgments I of course draw no inference of any hesitation on their part as to the rationalist view of the world. Jesus has been for them, as he is for Pantheists, a man amongst men, and his only mystery, apart from that which attaches to the Unknowable in all of us, is the mystery which baffles analysis in supreme genius. But while insisting with legitimate freedom on criticisms of the ministry of Christ about which, among the freest thinkers, opinions may differ, such writers have felt that somehow Jesus still holds and ought to hold the heart of humanity under his beneficent sway. Excluding the partial, imperfect, and temporary ideas of nature, spirits, hell and heaven, which the Galilean held with singular lightness for a man of his time, they have acquiesced in and even echoed his invitation to the weary and heavy-laden, to take his yoke upon them, and learn of him. And that means to live up to his gospel of the nothingness of self, and of unreserved sacrifice to the Eternal All in All.

The
conclusion
of the
whole
matter.

The Universe shone in its magnificence without beginning before you became what you seem to be, and it will exist in its glory for ever after your departure into the unseen. Its energy, its life—for it does live—is in itself and not from without. You recognise its harmony amid discords; you own that almost daily the prophets of science are approximating to a very palpable conviction of its oneness. In that oneness you have your place; you emit your spark; you contribute your infinitesimal proportion. Willingly or not willingly you do it. But the highest life is in doing it willingly, with a sense of unreserved surrender to a perfection you cannot master. And that is best attained when, realising the ordered Universe as

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God, and the laws of evolution as his laws, you pursue, according to those laws, the highest good revealed to you, and wait for further light. But this is really what the Psalmist meant when he said, "Trust in the Lord, and do good." EPILOGUE.
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