

FOUNDATIONS OF  
CHRISTIAN BELIEF

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FRANCIS L. STRICKLAND

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Foundations of Christian  
belief





# FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Studies in the Philosophy of Religion

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**TO MY WIFE**  
**ANTOINETTE LOUISE**  
**HELPFUL AND INSPIRING COMRADE**





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## PREFACE

THESE pages are addressed to all who have an interest in the deeper problems of present-day religious thinking. The purpose is to draft sound philosophy into the service of religion. Thoughtful men and women who love the Christian faith not infrequently find their horizons of knowledge widening and some of their fundamental religious conceptions undergoing change. When this happens the fogs of perplexity and doubt are apt to drift in. It is hoped that these pages may afford some guidance to thought, so that even though modifications of belief may become necessary, the deeper convictions may not be weakened nor religious faith lose its spiritual content. Religion is not primarily a matter of clear or correct belief; it is an experience of the soul entered into through faith, obedience, and love. But clear thinking on the great fundamental issues is of prime importance. The soul does not generally nurture great convictions while reason is groping. And clear and strong Christian thinking is very necessary if the Christian Church is to make an authoritative appeal to the life of to-day.

We shall attempt to discuss some fundamental matters in the philosophy of religion. The method will not be that of abstract speculation. We shall consider fundamental truths in the philosophical spirit but from the standpoint of religious values. Matters of doctrinal theology and literary criticism which do not belong to a philosophical treatment of religion are

excluded, the purpose being broadly constructive, not critical. Christianity is the most complete expression of the religious consciousness and the summit of the divine revelation. It is the only faith great enough and pure enough and divine enough to meet the needs of the soul.

My debt to my teachers is great. Foremost among these was the late lamented Dr. Borden P. Bowne, of Boston University. I also acknowledge guidance and help from the scholars whose works are cited in notes at the end of several chapters. My thanks are due to my friends Professor Albert C. Knudson, of Boston University School of Theology, and Professor William North Rice, of Wesleyan University, for valuable criticism after they read a portion of the manuscript.

If these pages shall help some to see more clearly that, in spite of the changes wrought in human thinking by modern science and philosophy, "the foundations of God stand fast," they will have found a justification.

FRANCIS L. STRICKLAND.



## INTRODUCTION

### THE AIM AND METHOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

**The Purpose: A Rational Interpretation of the Religious Life.** In the philosophy of religion we seek a systematic and rational interpretation of religious experience. And here we use the term "religious experience" in its broadest sense as including all human thought and action which has to do with religion. It includes all fundamental religious beliefs, and all acts of worship and other practices which exist because of men's belief in a world of supersensuous or spiritual reality. It is the task of philosophy to interpret our conscious experience—to seek those basal principles or truths which give to our conscious experience in all its infinite variety a fundamental unity and harmony. And surely no one will deny that religion is a great and exceedingly important part of human experience. Religion is a fact in the life of every man. He who makes no profession of having had an "experience of religion" in the commonly accepted sense of a personal crisis in religious thought and feeling, nevertheless has on every hand an experience of religion in the philosophical sense. The evidences of religion are all about him, in human customs and institutions, in the beliefs, habits and practices of men. Philosophy of religion, then, in the broad sense, is the attempt

rationally to interpret a great and important part of our experience. Leaving aside now the question of the origin of religion or its ultimate ground of validity, the fact remains that religion exists—and that its manifestations comprise a considerable portion of our life experience. For this reason the justification of philosophy of religion rests upon precisely the same grounds as that of philosophy itself. Indeed, it is implied in what has just been said that philosophy of religion is but the aim and method of philosophy applied to the interpretation of a definite portion of experience.

It will be seen at once that the scope of religion and the complexity of the problems it presents make its treatment by a philosophical method far from simple, for in the systematic study of the religious life we are not dealing with forces which are constant and invariable like those, for instance, dealt with in physics. We are dealing, rather, with phases of life as they manifest themselves in those variables named human belief, emotion and will. In other words, we deal with life on the plane of the *personal*. This makes a philosophy of religion particularly difficult. It also makes it all the more important that we develop a proper method, a method which will recognize constantly that when we deal with religion we are dealing with personal life, and with a great factor in human history which has always stood in the closest relation to the practical concerns of life.

But any attempt to find a rational and systematic interpretation of religion must take account of all the essential elements of the religious life. Far too many attempts at religious philosophy have been

partial and one-sided because there was a failure to recognize that religion involves the whole personality. Thus Kant wrote his "Religion within the Limits of the Purely Rational." His ideal was a rational and ethical religion freed from all elements of emotion and mysticism. It is not strange that under this treatment he makes religion to be little more than a performance of our duties because of the obligation laid upon us by God's will and the moral law which embodies that will. And Kant's error has been followed by many others, with the result that religion has often been set forth as a matter of correct intellectual conceptions under the mistaken apprehension that if men can only be made to see the truth clearly, they will govern their lives by it.

Schopenhauer's treatment of religion was equally onesided and its outcome even worse. He revolted from Kant's doctrine that we can never know things as they really are. He affirmed that in the human will we find a way of passing from a purely relative knowledge of the world to a knowledge which represents objective reality. But noting also how weak and inadequate the human will is, and how it leads men into all sorts of terrible evil, he developed a pessimistic view of the world and wrote a philosophy of religion in which patient resignation appears as the chief human virtue. The best hopes of life, according to Schopenhauer, are those of personal extinction. Thus his one-sided emphasis of the will led him out into a religion akin in spirit to Buddhism and far away from Christian ideals. The over-emphasis of sensibility also in religion has produced all manner of fanaticism and extravagance. "Feeling good" has loomed up so large

as an element in religion that "doing good" has too often found a very subordinate place.

Psychology has taught us to study the mental life under three aspects, namely, thought, feeling, and will. These are the inseparable elements of personality. And any attempt to set forth the meaning of the religious life must reckon with each. From this it will be seen that psychology must be looked to to afford us light upon many of the problems which a philosophic interpretation of religion raises. The facts of religion are of a very different nature from the facts of biology or physics or chemistry. Religious facts are the expression by living men of the thoughts, feelings, and volitions which possess them, while the facts of natural science are occurrences in a fixed mechanical order. These religious acts of men are, furthermore, efforts to satisfy their pressing needs—the need of the physical organism for food, the need for protection from the elements or deliverance from impending evil, relief from the sense of guilt, the strengthening of their hopes. Thus it will be seen that all we can know concerning the nature and workings of the human mind will stand us in good stead when we come to the problems of religion. Without some knowledge of psychology no one can get on in the philosophical study of religion. Here is one reason why the philosophy of religion developed late. It was necessary that men should first gain a knowledge of the human mind and its processes before the vast mass of material secured through investigation of the life, beliefs, customs, and practices of primitive peoples could be interpreted, and the early chapters in the history of religion written.

Then, again, religion claims to be based upon knowledge. We often use the word "faith" and say that faith is the organ of religion. But this faith cannot be regarded simply as the projection of our fond hopes. To think of faith as devoid of that element of certainty which we assume for knowledge is to reduce faith to the level of probability and to set it over in sharp antithesis to knowledge. The purely subjective side of religion would remain, but that would cease to have authority. Let a man be convinced that religious faith is simply the projection of the earnest longings and fond hopes of the soul, and religious faith will cease to hold him. A thoroughgoing agnosticism leaves no place for religion except as beneficent convention or custom. But religion must lay claim to valid knowledge. We shall take up these matters more fully in their place.

An interpretation of the religious life, therefore, demands that we find and set forth some adequate grounds for religious certainty. To do this is one of the great purposes of these studies. If we can do this, we shall see that faith is but a phase of knowledge and the same foundations underlie that portion of experience called religion as underlie the whole of experience.

In these studies we shall first seek to expound briefly that philosophic world-view upon which we must rest our fundamental Christian conceptions. Some criticism of the world-views which leave no place for Christian belief must be offered. From the body of Christian belief we shall endeavor to select those great basal truths which are fundamental to Christianity. And by Christianity we do not mean a

creed nor a theological system, but a great religious faith.

**The Method Both Scientific and Philosophic.** The method used by scholars in the modern study of religion is scientific. This means the careful collection of facts, and then the induction of the principles. This is, in a general way, the method of science, and it has yielded rich results in the hands of investigators in the field of religion. There is need also for the method of philosophy. The modern philosopher builds on the results of the scientific investigator. On the basis of the facts gained he seeks the underlying principles in the hope of explaining the facts in their origin and relation. These results are to be gained through systematic, rational reflection. The modern philosophical method demands logical consistency of course. Reason is supreme, but the experience of generations of philosophizing has shown that abstract speculation is barren. Only as rational reflection concerns itself with the great practical values of life is it able to gain results which make it worth the while. The pathway to the heights of truth does not lie through abstract speculation. We therefore frankly confess that, while we shall follow the philosophic method in our discussion, we shall try not to lose sight of the great moral and religious values in life. Too much has been already written in the realm of religious philosophy from the standpoint of abstract speculation with the result that its value for life has been very slight.

**Justification of the Philosophic Treatment of Religion.** The admissibility of the method of rational reflection applied to the study of religion has been called in

question. There are those who hold that religion is not a proper subject for philosophic treatment at all. The objections fall into two classes: first, from those who deny that we can have any knowledge, properly speaking, of realities which lie beyond the senses. These objectors would assure us that knowledge is confined to the realm of sense-experience and those things which we may know from reasoning from the data furnished in sense-experience. Herbert Spencer is perhaps the most prominent thinker whose position would necessitate this objection. His doctrine has come to be recognized as typical of modern agnosticism. It must suffice here to say in regard to such an objection that it is superficial and fails to recognize the supersensuous element in all knowledge. It is really not so much an objection to philosophy as applied to religion as it is an objection to sound philosophy itself. In Chapter III we shall attempt more fully to dispose of this objection of the agnostic. The second class of objections to the application of the scientific method to religion may be summarized as follows: It is urged that religion, or religious experience, transcends mere knowledge. It implies a supernatural element—a revelation or communication of the thought and will of God to the individual. Hence God has given a special revelation. This we must accept, and anything further is unnecessary. The use of the reason, especially a strict method of research such as is used for the discovery of finite knowledge, is not properly to be applied to the religious life, which always rests upon the simple acceptance of a divine revelation. Of course this objection is not generally offered

against historical nor archæological studies in religion, but it is sometimes urged against all attempts to formulate a philosophy of religion or to seek in psychology any light upon the facts of religious experience.

But granting that there is and always must be a considerable difference between the facts dealt with by natural science and those which come under our observation when we take up the study of religion, we may nevertheless urge that the acceptance of religion as resting upon the foundation of a divine revelation in no way forbids the full use of reason in dealing with the facts of the religious life.

For, upon what ground shall we believe the revelation to be divine? And surely we must believe it divine in order to accept it as authoritative. Only two possibilities are open: first, that of an authority external to ourselves which shall be absolute; or, second, the recognition that there must be grounds in reason for the acceptance of the revelation as divine, and hence authoritative. The Roman Church takes the first position and answers every attempt within her borders to give reason free play with the absolute dictum of authority. The Church has declared certain doctrines to be true, therefore they are to be received by all as authoritative. The Church has set her seal of approval upon certain books, therefore they are to be accepted by her adherents as divine revelation. The second possibility is that even though a divine revelation be accepted as authority, there must be some grounds for such acceptance, and these must lie in reason. The reason must furnish the credentials for accepting the revelation as divine, and



if that is so, it means that the content of the revelation must, on the whole, approve itself to reason. Thus it appears that unless we are ready to accept the voice of external authority as absolute and take our place beside the Romanist, we must leave for reason an important place in dealing with religion—granting fully that religion rests for its foundation, not only upon those truths which have emerged as the result of reasoning, but also upon truths which have come as revelation. There can be, then, no valid objection against the critical method as offered to the study of religion. It is no less reverent to study, with all the help afforded by modern scientific knowledge, God's work in the human spirit than it is to study his work in the human body or in that larger human body we call society.

We do well to remember that the broader study of Christianity itself has come by way of a scientific and philosophic study of primitive religion and then of the non-Christian religions. We now speak freely of the evolution of religion, but in doing so we only state in brief and current phraseology the method in which the religious consciousness and life have developed. And to speak of the evolution of Christianity does not mean that our religion is of "natural" origin, but only that it stands at the summit of a revelation of the Divine which has manifested itself in a gradually developing moral and spiritual consciousness in man. When Christianity is studied systematically beside the great ethnic faiths, the comparisons and the contrasts which emerge show Christianity's immense superiority. Just as evolution applied to humanity means that the hu-

man species stands as the crown of an upward development of organic life through countless ages, so the evolution of Christianity means that our religion is the highest point in an age-long revelation of God, beginning in the dim twilight of the remote past and ending in that hour when God revealed his great love as a sufferer on Calvary with and for men, in order that through this supreme revelation men might be won for obedience to and fellowship with him. This marks the highest possible level of moral and spiritual growth.

**Historical-Critical Treatment of Sources.** It remains to add a word concerning the use of the historical-critical method in the study of religious literatures and other sources. The method is conveniently called historical because through historical research we gain many of the facts of the religious life of mankind. The sources for this historical research are monuments, inscriptions, literary remains, etc., which have come down to us from former ages. To reconstruct the life and thought of a former age is the task of the historical critic. The method is called critical because the principles of literary criticism and interpretation play an important part in a proper interpretation of these various records which we have received from former ages. Other important sources for the study of religion are the studies of uncivilized peoples living to-day in various parts of the world by scholars in anthropology and ethnology, or by travelers, explorers, and missionaries who write from first-hand knowledge. The number of these source books has greatly multiplied until now there is hardly a spot in the whole world whose native tribes have not been studied

by trained observers and the results of the study recorded in original published works which are available to students of ethnology and primitive religion.<sup>1</sup>

We have sought in the preceding paragraphs to outline the philosophic method in the study of religion. We have tried to set it forth as the method not only for the studies attempted in this volume but as the method followed by all modern students of the science and philosophy of religion. The dogmatic method of treating religion with its constant appeal to some external authority is a thing of the past among scholars. In the study of the religious life and of the development of the religious consciousness the method of research must be employed. This forbids that we should generalize except in accordance with facts furnished in experience. Through the method of philosophy we seek the underlying relations and the ultimate causes so far as they may be inferred. This is the only method which nets certain and permanent results. In this way only can we come to the conviction that the truths of religion are in harmony with the truths of science and every other realm of human thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the most valuable and recent of these works are those by Tyler, Frazer F. Ratzel, A. W. Howitt, and Spencer and Gillen.



## CHAPTER I

### CHRISTIANITY AND PHILOSOPHY

IN a very true sense the relation of philosophy to religion is expounded and illustrated in the entire discussion to follow in these studies. The main purpose of this work is to bring some of the results of well-matured philosophy to the service of Christian thinking. It will be of interest and profit, however, at the outset to suggest a few things concerning the relation of historic Christianity to philosophy as both developed from age to age; at the same time indicating some of the conceptions of philosophy which are fitted to serve as a rational norm for Christian teaching and experience.

**Early Christianity and Philosophy.** The aim of philosophy is primarily to satisfy the reason, enabling us to find a systematic and rational interpretation of experience. Religion, on the other hand, is the whole expression of the human spirit in faith, beliefs, worship and conduct with reference to a world of unseen and eternal existence. Our religious convictions come from the needs of the inner life. We long to know God and persist in our search after him, not because we hope to understand God and find in him a means of comprehending the mysteries of existence, but because we feel our own need of some one greater and more powerful than ourselves. The Divine Being is

primarily an object of our worship, not a problem for our intellect. When men seek only to understand God, the way of thought grows dark. All attempts to comprehend the Divine through rational speculation from Origen to Hegel end in conceptions which are abstract, remote, and unfitted to satisfy the needs of the human spirit. Even in Christian theology when we come away from a consideration of the so-called "metaphysical attributes" of God, we find we have greatly multiplied our perplexities at the expense of assurance and comfort. While, on the other hand, the soul's resolve to trust God and to love him, even in those hours when it seems most nearly impossible to understand him, is an act of faith and brings rest to thought and moral courage.

**Jesus No Philosopher.** The origin of Christianity is Jesus Christ. We recognize fully that our religion as a great spiritual movement in history first grew in the rich soil of Judaism. And yet Christianity was no mere enlargement of Judaism. Jesus had, indeed, been carefully trained in the faith of his fathers. The words of the Old Testament came easily and accurately from his lips. But we do not study his wonderful teachings long before becoming convinced that we have here something far beyond the spirit and precepts of the Jewish religion. Indeed, Jesus swept away Judaism so far as it was a system of external rites and legal devices to gain the divine favor. The keynote of Jesus's teaching is that all the demands of the moral law will be fully met by a joyous love to God as the heavenly Father, and a fraternal regard for others as brothers in the great Divine Family. Jesus's first followers were born and bred in the Jew-

ish faith and it was difficult for them to break the bonds of Jewish thought and feeling. But Christianity could not be confined within the limits of any national faith, and in a few years after the death of its Founder it is being proclaimed as a spiritual message for all mankind.

Jesus wrote nothing. His teachings were far removed in both form and spirit from philosophy or theology. He never reasoned his way to the mighty truths he taught. He simply took for granted the great fact of God and spent his strength in teaching men to put the deepest and richest content into their thought of God and his relation to them. It is marvelous how Jesus disregarded all intellectual subtleties in his teaching and with a freshness and power which we feel undiminished to-day he led men directly to the great truths of life and destiny.

**The Early Christian Writings Not Philosophical.** The earlier writings of the followers of Jesus were of a thoroughly practical and religious nature. They were a record of the words and deeds of the Master. And the early Christian preaching was without doubt a simple and direct appeal to accept Christ as the Son of God, to receive his teaching about God and to follow his simple but lofty plan of living. But as soon as the apostle Paul started to set forth the Christian teaching with an attempt at systematic form he could not escape the necessity of expounding the Christian conceptions with some reference to prevailing methods of thinking. This was especially the case in those writings which were addressed to the churches where the influence of Greek thought was predominant. And while his later epistles still con-

tinue to serve the great practical purpose of the instruction and exhortation of new converts to Christianity, yet there are distinct traces of the influence of philosophy in the New Testament. For example, Paul's teaching about the preexistence of Christ, and Christ as the "ideal man," suggest the influence of Greek idealism. In the fourth Gospel Saint John has (assuming that the Gospel is from the pen of John the apostle) adopted ideas from the Hellenistic philosophy.

**Christian Writings Soon Dominated by Philosophy.** For several generations after the close of the age of the apostles Christian writers were engaged with the task of defending Christianity. This they did for the most part by attempts to expound the meaning of the sacred writings. They also made attempts to systematize Christian teaching and to interpret its meaning. Wishing to commend their doctrines to the educated, it was natural that certain Christian apologists should seek for points of contact between Christian teaching and the fundamental ideas of the great philosophical thinkers.

**Clement of Alexandria.** The first Christian writer of eminence to do this was Clement of Alexandria. By the middle of the second century he had attempted to set forth the basic beliefs of Christianity in systematic and rational form. Clement was a master of Greek philosophy and the significance of his work lay in his attempt to expound the distinctive conceptions of Christianity in such fashion as to harmonize them with some of the basal ideas of Greek idealism. Under the influence of this philosophy, he taught a doctrine of God very different from that of the Jewish



faith. Jewish theology held to the old Semitic conceptions of the divine—a God who having made the world is to be thought of as separate from it. This Jewish conception of God, while it included moral and personal elements, retained many of the features of the old and crude anthropomorphism. Clement, on the other hand, had asked profound questions concerning the relation of God to finite existence and to our human knowledge. The result was a Christian philosophy of the Divine Existence which contained the germ-thoughts developed by Origen and Athanasius into the teaching concerning God's relation to the world which we name in modern philosophic phrase the divine immanence. This came clearly from the influence of the great Greek thinkers, especially the Pythagoreans and Plato. Indeed, Clement frankly calls Greek philosophy the schoolmaster (*παιδαγωγός*) of Christian thought, and expresses it as his belief that God inspired those philosophers of Greece whose teachings are in fundamental accord with the ideas of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

**Origen and Athanasius.** In Clement's disciple Origen the strong influence of Greek idealism is quite as marked, in both his writings and those of Athanasius we find teachings which indicate clearly that these Christian thinkers have asked the great question concerning God's relation to the world and its forces, and have answered it in essentially the fashion that the modern Christian philosopher does—by a doctrine that God is the ever-present thought and life of the world; that its forces and processes constantly express his will. Thus early in the history of Chris-

<sup>1</sup> *Stromata* i, 28-37.

tian thinking we find this comprehensive conception of the finite world as a constant expression of God's creative energy—and all its ongoing forces as a manifestation of his divine will. It is wonderful, as John Fiske points out, "how closely Athanasius approaches the confines of modern scientific thought simply through his fundamental conception of God as the indwelling life of the universe."<sup>2</sup>

**Augustine.** But the master mind of Western or Latin Christianity was not Origen nor Athanasius, but Augustine. Following the Greek theologians and the philosophy of Neoplatonism, Augustine learned to think of God as Spirit. But refusing to accept the Greek doctrine that the true nature of God can never be known, he maintained that in Jesus Christ we do know the real nature of God. But now begin to appear the distinctive elements of Augustine's theology. He had a very profound sense of the reality of sin. The material world is utterly evil and human nature weak and depraved. Men are infected with moral evil from their very birth. This was the doctrine of "Adamic sin," or "depravity," of later theology. The God of infinite holiness was thought of as having little to do with the depraved world. Thus grew up the idea of "the bad world" as separated from the good God, the temporal and material from the spiritual and eternal. This dualism ran through all Augustine's thinking. As the world was thought of as an existence separate from God, but God as sovereign over the world, everything which takes place in the world was conceived as planned by God before the world came into being. Here the foundations

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<sup>2</sup> The Idea of God, p. 86.

were laid for the doctrine of predestination. The point to be especially noted in this development is the conception of the relation of the infinite to the finite. God as spirit is thought of as removed from a material world which he indeed created, but which is so evil and depraved that it cannot manifest his holiness and perfection. The view here is that called transcendence in modern phrase.

This is, indeed, a most fragmentary and imperfect summary of the thought of the great Roman Christian, but it indicates the principal features of the Christian doctrine of God which prevailed in Latin Christianity for a thousand years. In fact, the conceptions of Augustine have not ceased to have their effect upon Christian thought even to the present day. The dominant influence of Aristotle's logic in the mediæval ages, and the consequent exaltation of formal reasoning and the growth of ecclesiastical authority, tended to cast the Augustinian theology in the hard and fast molds of dogmatism. These were not broken until the vast scientific achievements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gradually compelled an entire reconstruction of Christian thinking.

As Augustine created a theology the keynote of which was divine authority, so Gregory the Great created a system of ecclesiastical machinery in which that theology could be used to advantage. And from the sixth century on the task of the Church was to retain and discipline a rude people. With the final dissolution of the empire the only bond of union left to bind the various peoples of Europe together was the Church. Probably the best method of moral and religious training was that which prevailed. Men

were taught that the Church was the sole mediator between themselves and God, and only through her authoritative teachings and rites was salvation possible. With such a view it is not to be wondered at that religious thinking remained stationary and upon the low levels of mere external authority and implicit trust in the teachings and rites of the Church.

**Scholasticism.** But in the eleventh century began Scholasticism, that twilight which preceded the dawn of modern philosophy. The aim of Scholasticism was to defend the fixed doctrines of the Church with reason. By reason is meant rather formal reasoning. Aristotle's works on logic had been extant in Latin translation during the Middle Ages, and the authority of Aristotle in regard to the form of reasoning was quite as complete and final as the authority of the Church with regard to content. Anselm (1050-1124) is the first thinker of prominence. His method is well expressed in his motto, "*Credo ut intelligam.*" He assumed the absolute truth of the doctrines of the Church and simply set forth to see what could be done to buttress them with the results of rational reflection. In contrast with Anselm came Abelard, who turned Anselm's motto about and made it read, "*Intelligo ut credam.*" This was a refreshing protest against religious faith founded simply upon tradition and external authority. Abelard insisted that a vital faith must come not from the passive acceptance of truth on authority but from the best that the intellect can do to comprehend Divine truth. This seemed highly rationalistic and dangerous to Bernard of Clairvaux, the mystic, who succeeded in having Abelard condemned.

In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) elaborated a system of theology and church polity upon which the Roman Catholic Church relies to this day. His aim was, first, to mediate or rather combine the rationalism of Abelard and the pietism of Bernard; and, second, to attempt to establish upon a basis of reason the claims of the Church to absolute authority. We must note only two significant matters in Thomas's teaching. First, he made a very sharp distinction between faith and reason. Some truths may be learned through the processes of reason, while other truths are not at all capable of being known in this fashion, but must be accepted on faith. And "on faith" in the system of Thomas Aquinas meant upon the authority of the Church. When we find that all the distinctively religious truths are declared to be those a knowledge of which reason has no power to give, it can be seen how thoroughgoing was the attempt to establish the authority of the Church over the minds of men. Second, Aquinas taught that while Augustine was right in affirming that all that takes place in the world is strictly according to the divine will, nevertheless God's will is realized through human wills, and therefore God has created us morally free.

**Dante.** In the powerful message of Dante, the poet-theologian, we find foregleams of the new ages that were yet to come. His spirit was that of the Renaissance, but his thought forms were those of the fixed theology of Augustine which had served the Church for so many ages as a basis of doctrine. Dante's love for political freedom and his longing for society's social rebirth seem strangely incongruous with the

grim theology which beset his thinking. The dualism of a good God and a wicked world, the sharp antithesis of reason and faith, the full acknowledgment of the absolute authority of the Church in matters of belief are all present in his conception of Christianity. And yet we find in Dante a greater emphasis upon human responsibility than in his theological master, Aquinas, and also the poet's revolt from the doctrine of a human nature ruined through Adamic corruption.

**Luther.** Martin Luther's tremendous affirmation of the supremacy of the individual conscience, and his preaching of salvation through the faith of the believer alone, tore up the Scholastic theology by the roots. Through the Reformation came the demand for a thorough reexamination and reconstruction of the rational grounds of religious faith. Luther was not equal to this great task, nor, indeed, could any one man be. The need was really for a reconstruction of the very foundations of knowledge. If religious faith is to be taken as truth, that is, as an essentially valid interpretation of reality, then properly to accredit faith would involve an establishing of the validity of knowledge in general. This great task was not the work of one mind, but was slowly accomplished through the efforts of the master minds of modern philosophy.

**Modern Philosophy and Christianity—Descartes.** Descartes is by common consent the father of modern philosophy, for with him philosophy took a new start. He began by discarding the large stock of old ideas with which the schoolmen had done business. He would admit only those which could be fully accred-

ited by the strict processes of reason. Following out this rigorous method, he refused to accept as knowledge or belief anything which it is at all possible to doubt. The result was that he begins with the indisputable fact of his own conscious existence, because he finds himself thinking. He then proceeded to build up in thought what he could justify by the strictest processes of rational reflection. The significant fact for our present purpose is that Descartes endeavored to prove the existence of an absolute "substance" which must correspond, he thought, to the persistent conception of a universal existence which we find in our consciousness. This absolute or universal "substance" he called God. The philosophy of Descartes taught that absolute existence is in God and finite existence is in mind and matter. These two last stand over against each other in irreconcilable dualism.

**Spinoza.** It was natural that Descartes's disciple Spinoza should have proceeded to merge the two independent existences—mind and matter—in a fundamental unity. This he did by making these two finite "substances" aspects of the universal substance—God. This word "substance" stands both in the writings of Descartes and Spinoza for existence. Spinoza says: "By substance I mean that which is in itself, and conceived by itself; that is, that whose concept does not need for its formation the concept of any other thing."<sup>3</sup> This doctrine is a thoroughgoing pantheism conceived with the emphasis upon the "matter" side, and hence materialistic. Nor did Spinoza halt at its implications. He consistently

<sup>3</sup> Ethics, Prop. xiv, book i.

advocated the most complete mechanical determinism. All the acts of men are necessitated by the Divine Existence, and mechanical causation rules all with invariable sequences. Freedom is a fiction. Good and evil are different from the finite point of view, largely as they produce consequences desirable or painful to us. This doctrine cancels moral distinctions and destroys all ground of moral accountability. It needs only to be added that Spinoza conceived mind as a function of bodily existence, and taught that at physical death the psychical part of man ceases to exist. Philosophy can hardly be conceived as more utterly at variance with Christianity than in this materialistic pantheism of Spinoza.

**Hegel.** We turn now to Hegel, because he is the greatest expounder of idealistic or spiritual pantheism. To understand Hegel is difficult. And it is surely a comment on the vague and abstract character of his speculations that his own disciples have not agreed on the point whether Hegel's thought is really a foundation for Christian teaching, or whether, on the whole, the Hegelian philosophy is antagonistic to the fundamental conceptions of Christianity. The late Professor Green, of Oxford, held the first of these opinions, while writers like Strauss (in *Der Alte und der Neue Glaube*) have used the absolute philosophy to subvert Christian teaching. It would be presumptuous to suppose that the gist of Hegel's thought as it bears upon religion could be given in a paragraph. We shall have occasion to refer again to the idea of the Absolute in discussing "Divine Personality" (Chapter VI). It must suffice here to suggest that Hegel's philosophy was a most compre-



hensive attempt to find the one ground of all existence in a basic principle—"the Absolute." This Absolute is, to use the words of Hegel's most noted English expounder, "one spiritual self-consciousness, of which all that is real is the activity and expression; that we are related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as part-takers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes and distinguishes itself from the world; that this participation is a source of morality and religion."<sup>4</sup>

Hegel's philosophy was subtle and far removed from all materialistic conceptions. For him all reality is rational, and is to be known not as some existence outside of our experience but is revealed and known in experience. And the Absolute Reality is God. Hegel never thought of attempting to prove the existence of God any more than he would attempt to prove his own conscious experience. This teaching that reality is revealed in experience, and God is made known in life itself, is profoundly significant truth. But Hegel went further than this in the unifying of all reality. In proportion as our experience is real it is a part of the Absolute. Thus the Hegelian synthesis knows no distinction of finite and infinite. Indeed, in the Absolute the very distinction of subject and object, so basal to all our finite knowledge, disappears.

Now, it must be admitted that while there are great truths in the Hegelian philosophy, and a fascination in its magnificent comprehensiveness, its main teachings certainly do not furnish an adequate or satisfy-

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hill Green, Works, vol. iii, p. 146.

ing interpretation of our human experience. The philosophy itself is an all-embracing system of thought. In the clear, cold light of reason all mystery and apparent irrationality are supposed to have been dissipated like clouds before a noontide sun. Its conceptions are highly abstract. But life presents us great, dark facts of which the Absolute philosophy takes little notice and certainly offers no interpretation or relief. These facts are such as sin and suffering—the apparent fearful injustices of life, its one-sidedness. So calm and serene is the indifference of this great logical idealism to the aspects of life which so often stare us in the face that it is small wonder that the philosophy of the Absolute was soon opposed by such thinkers as Schopenhauer, who proclaimed as his metaphysical creed not the rationality of the universe, but the absolute irrationality of all things. And however little we may agree with Schopenhauer's philosophy of pessimism, we must at least admit that it faces the facts of experience in a way Hegel never did.

Then, too, the implications of spiritual pantheism are but little better than those of Spinoza. If all of experience must be thought of as embraced within the Absolute, no place is left for free activity of the human person and we are shut up to a determinism which is complete. This makes the Absolute the ground not only of truth but of error. God is therefore the source not only of truth and beauty but of error and ugliness. In the Divine alone we find the source and ground not only of religious faith but of all the fierce fanaticisms and imbecilities and sad and dreadful deeds with which the pages of history are

darkened. The Hegelian answer is to deny to moral evil any abiding reality and declare it to be imperfectly developed good! No wonder that Professor T. H. Green remarks, speaking of the philosophy of the Absolute, "It still remains to be presented in a form which will command some general acceptance among serious and scientific men" (Works, iii, p. 146).

But not only are all ordinary distinctions between moral evil and good invalidated, and freedom (and, therefore, the grounds of moral responsibility) canceled by absolute idealism, but the conception of God which it offers is so abstract and impersonal that religious worship finds no rational basis. Worship means fellowship of some kind, and fellowship implies personal relationships. Prayer will not long be offered to an immanent principle. We shall need to refer to this again in the chapter on "Divine Personality." We sum up the matter here by pointing out that the spiritual pantheism of Hegel really furnishes as little basis for Christian teaching and experience as does the more crudely conceived pantheism of Spinoza.

We have noted the philosophy of Hegel because it is supposed to be idealism in its fullest flower, and as such might be expected to furnish some philosophic basis for Christian teaching. That it does not do this has been pointed out. There is, however, one more great thinker whose philosophical teaching took a direction which became very significant for Christian thought. I refer to Lotze.

**Lotze.** Lotze asked the far-reaching question concerning the *meaning* of the activity of the Infinite.

Can we rationally relate the Divine to human well being? The answer is affirmative. This added the teleological element. Moral good is the end or aim of the divine activity. Lotze held that the guiding principles for metaphysical reasoning must be looked for in ethics. Moral values are the important considerations. And moral good is not realized mechanically. The processes of nature are the regular manner in which the Infinite God works to bring about beneficent ends. This view lays the foundations for a philosophy which centers about the conception of personality. The ends which the Infinite activity realizes through nature's ongoing processes are, to speak in religious terms, the beneficent purposes of God.

**Eucken, Ward, and Bowne.** Lotze's influence has been wide. Several eminent thinkers have built upon the fundamental idea of immanent purpose and have elaborated a spiritual idealism with the emphasis upon personality as the basic reality. Among these might be mentioned Eucken in Germany, Ward in England, and Bowne in America. These have developed—each in his own way—philosophy in which personal spirit is the fundamental reality. All agree in rejecting rational speculation. The ground of all reality in Bowne's philosophy is the personal God. He defends the conception of personality in the Infinite, as Lotze does, by showing that the activity of the nonself, so necessary to produce full self-consciousness, is a characteristic limitation of our finite minds which should not be predicated by the Infinite Intelligence. Not only does personality appear as the ultimate manifestation of reality, but the prag-

matic principle of practical values for the moral life, also emphasized by Lotze, appears as a sufficient ground for rational belief, in the absence of conclusive logical demonstration. It can be seen that philosophy of this type is vitally important for a Christian philosophy of religion, since it lends support to the Christian conception of the universe.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PHILOSOPHIC WORLD-VIEWS

**Philosophy and Life.** In philosophy we seek a rational interpretation of the whole of experience. Experience means the total effect produced in us—in our thought, feeling, and will—by the world of persons and things by which we are surrounded. Philosophy, then, helps us to gain an adequate interpretation of life. This search for the rational principles underlying experience which is the task of philosophy comes late in the history of human thought. As Aristotle first pointed out, reflective thought began only after men had reached that point where they did not have to give constant attention to the satisfaction of their physical needs. It was therefore after the earlier and more primitive stages of human progress had been passed that philosophy became possible.

With the opportunity for reflective thought came the capacity for it. A considerable degree of mental development had to precede the appearance of philosophy, and it was only after men had acquired mental power through the use of the mind for the solution of problems in connection with the early development of the arts that they became able to sustain the more complicated thought processes needed for philosophical inquiry. The materials were all well at hand when the reflective spirit appeared. Then the prob-

lem began to loom up—how to find beneath all the manifold complexities of life those few principles which would enable thought to rest in the assurance of an underlying unity and harmony.

Thus it appears that from the first philosophy has had to do with life, and life always precedes philosophy. Philosophy must lead to practical values in life or it is not worth the mental effort needed to sustain it. Of course this does not mean that any interpretations of experience may be regarded as valid because they may be made to serve practical purposes. No test of values can neglect rationality, which is itself one of the greatest values. Rational harmony or consistency is an indispensable requirement in all our philosophizing. But critical thinking is not an end in itself, but always the means to an end, and this end must be such an interpretation of life as will reveal something of its dignity and moral worth.

**Religion a Great Fact in Life.** Applying this truth to religion, we suggest that it is not the function of philosophy of religion to start in by attempting to vindicate the reality of religion. Religion is one of the great outstanding facts of life. Nothing that philosophy can urge will make religion any more sure as a part of our experience. And as life always precedes philosophy, so religion precedes philosophy of religion. It is a great fact of life which needs no philosophy to vindicate it. We are religious long before we begin to apply the methods of rational reflection to the religious life. We learned to walk long before we knew anything of the complicated play of nerves and muscles. After we analyze the simple

act of walking from the viewpoint of physiology and anatomy, we may wonder for a moment how we ever got under way at all. Long before we knew anything of the processes of thought we were thinking, and we were able to make respectable inductions before we ever learned of logic. It is even so with rational reflection about religion. Philosophy is not needed to justify religion. Its function is, rather, to furnish such interpretation of the religious life as will add to our realization of its necessity and everlasting worth.

It is not our purpose, then, in these studies to offer a speculative discussion of the development of religion. We propose to be guided continually by the consideration of practical values and needs in life. Speculative—that is, abstractly logical—discussions of religion are not worth the while. Our purpose shall be the more practical one of drafting philosophy into service as we seek some adequate interpretation of the facts of the religious life. And yet we must not use this professed wish to present a treatment from the standpoint of practical values as an excuse for slighting those broad philosophical principles which ought to guide in any adequate thinking on the great themes of religion. The warning that a discussion is going to be practical has not infrequently served as a poor excuse for superficiality. There are those, of course, who urge that the less religion has to do with philosophy the better for religion. It must be admitted that the introduction of metaphysics into the discussion of fundamental religious ideas has often led off into barren and arid speculative wastes. But it must be remembered that it is not the use of



metaphysics but the use of *bad* metaphysics which has produced this dreary result.

Any attempt at a serious treatment of religious thought cannot avoid a dependence upon philosophy. It is fallacious to separate in our thinking religious experience from the rest of experience. The same rational principles underlie both, the same laws of thought and feeling govern both. The same knowledge of the mind's workings is needed to interpret both. The idea that there can be a purely Christian philosophy based upon truths specially revealed is a healthy protest to speculative treatment of religion, and the protest is not out of order. But the attempt to establish a distinctively Christian philosophy because Christianity, being a revealed religion, contains all the truth which it is necessary to know and also because Christianity is supposed to have its own set of fundamental principles, is one of the surest ways of belittling Christianity and subjecting it unjustly to the suspicion that it cannot endure the same tests of validity which apply in other realms of thought. There is no more reason for a special Christian philosophy than for a special Christian sociology and economics. The claim that Christianity has its own categories or fundamental principles of thought and feeling is false, and based upon a misunderstanding of certain Scripture passages. The immanent laws of the reason are revealed in the world about us. We understand the universe because it is the product of divine thought which is kindred to our thinking. God's revelation must not be regarded as always some special or extraordinary way in which he has communicated his truth. These extraordinary methods

of making himself known are not impossible and we may well believe that now and again they have taken place. But the great body of the Revelation lies, after all, in the perception of the Divine thought and purpose in the regular ongoing forces of life. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord," does not mean that the Divine thought is absolutely different in nature from human thinking. These words express a quantitative rather than a qualitative difference between the finite and the infinite.

**Religion and the Philosophic World-Views.** A philosophy involves a rational way of looking at things as a whole—a certain world-view, or *Weltanschauung*, as the Germans say. The world of things and persons presents a vast complexity, but reflective thought seeks an underlying harmony. Philosophy seeks a basal unity—some unitary ground of reality. The fundamental assumption underlying both philosophy and science is that the universe is rational—that it is capable of being understood by us and interpreted in accordance with the principles of our thinking. Philosophy always strives for simplicity—to reduce the plurality and complexity of things as they appear to us to a few fundamental principles. This permits our thought to rest in the conviction of an underlying unity and harmony. The important question is, How is this to be done—how is experience to be interpreted so as to afford the largest measure of rational insight into its meaning and value? And upon what fundamental conceptions shall the interpretation be based? The answers to these questions result in the great world-views.

Now, a world-view of some sort is not only an affair of philosophy but inevitably underlies religious thinking as well. This does not mean that religious believers consciously adopt a philosophy. Very few indeed ever do this. It simply means that when the implications of our fundamental religious beliefs are thought out in a philosophical way, it is found that they imply a certain way of looking at the world. Indeed, philosophy of some kind underlies all religion, for some conception of the Divine is the foundation of religion, and this necessarily means a view of ultimate reality and some thought of the way this ultimate reality is related to or manifests itself in human life.

No matter, therefore, how much we may try to strip religious thought of all philosophic ideas, no matter how vehemently it may be urged that religion has no dependence upon philosophy, religion does and always will rest upon some kind of a fundamental world-view. The all important question for us is not whether we can consider religion apart from philosophical ideas, for we cannot, but what kind of philosophical ideas are to underlie our religious thought. There are several world-views. Some of them are of such a character that they leave no place for religion. It is by no means infrequent for Christian writers of liberal tendencies to show hospitality to philosophic doctrines, the implications of which are destructive to the very foundations of Christianity. It is very necessary, therefore, before we proceed in our studies to attempt a consideration of these great world-views sufficient to enable us to come to some decision as to their validity. It will be entirely in order, in the

interests of our conviction of truth, to make known our intellectual hostility to certain world-views; and to declare our allegiance to that way of looking at the universe which makes a place for the fundamental teachings of Christian faith. If we remain true to the philosophic spirit, our arguments will not be merely the traditional apologetics, that is, formal defenses of Christianity as such. We shall need to inquire how these world-views justify themselves from the standpoint of truth. And truth, let us repeat, is to be tested and verified, not only by rational reflection, but by a broad consideration of the deepest and most abiding interests of our personal, moral life. The metaphysical and practical arguments must go hand in hand. We take up first that world-view called materialism, or materialistic monism.

### 1. MATERIALISM

There are three great questions which lie at the basis of all systematic reasoning about the universe. They are (1) the question, How do we gain knowledge, and how may we have assurance that our Knowledge when gained is valid for reality? (2) The question concerning the nature of ultimate Reality. (3) The question as to the fundamental standard or norm by which human conduct should be governed. These are the great matters of philosophy and the divisions of philosophic study which corresponds to them are (1) Theory of Knowledge (often called Epistemology), (2) Metaphysics, and (3) Ethics. It will be noted that questions one and two overlap, for no theory of knowledge can be completed without carrying the discussion over into metaphysics. When,

therefore, we ask about the world-view known as materialism, let us formulate our inquiry in accordance with the above questions. In this way we can gain a fuller conception of the meaning of materialism as a way of looking at the universe.

To the question, then, What is the nature of ultimate reality? the materialist answers, "It is matter." But what is matter? Matter, we are told, is the eternal substance, the fundamental ground of all being. Its qualities are extension in space, and it is always in motion. Indeed, matter is the extended and substantial medium through which the energy of the universe is being constantly manifested. From the materialistic point of view matter, therefore, must be thought of as the ground of all the processes of life, not only physical functions but states of consciousness as well; all find their explanation in matter and motion. Here we have not only the heart of materialism, but its crux as well. Materialists hold that feeling, thought, emotion, will—indeed, our entire conscious life—are merely a resultant or a concomitant of those material processes in nerves and brain which are at bottom to be explained in terms of molecular motion. It will be seen at once that this really makes psychology nothing but an aspect of physiology. This doctrine, while it has been interwoven with much of the progress in modern science, is by no means new. But, of course, its modern form is different from the crude ancient teaching. It is the openly avowed or tacitly assumed basis of much current scientific discussion. Now, it is really not the business of science to expound speculative theories of the universe, but, rather, to make us acquainted with things as they

exist. Many scientific men of the last generation have insisted upon doing both. And not a few of them have proclaimed a mechanical conception of life which lent great aid to the materialistic view. This is only natural. Reality as it appears to us in experience is in a dualistic form. There is a material side of life—our bodies, and the world of things about us; and there is a spiritual side of life—our minds with their feelings, thoughts, and volitions. These two sides or aspects of existence are in absolute and constant parallelism, and a student who approaches reality from the objective side naturally attempts to account for thoughts in terms of things, while, on the other hand, the student who approaches reality from the subjective or mind side seeks to account for things by way of thought. But while materialism seemed to dominate scientific thought for a time, there is now a very decided reaction among scientific men toward an essentially spiritual view of human life.

At first sight it might seem to be a formidable undertaking to combat such a theory. And, indeed, it would be were it not for the fact that materialism contains within itself the elements of its own destruction as a philosophy. The truth is materialism cannot stand rational criticism. Kant thoroughly undermined it, and since his day it has been riddled so repeatedly that materialistic theories now have no standing as respectable philosophy. As a matter of fact, such is the status of materialism to-day that it can be the world-view only of those whose philosophical reasoning is confused and illogical.

But materialism is not a mere vagary. It is a philosophical world-view, since it professes to explain cer-

tain very cogent facts of experience. Among these is the fact that mental processes occur only coincident with physical processes. There is a close and intimate parallelism between mind and body. On the one hand we have an order of mental events, and on the other hand an order of movements in the nervous organism. The brain in its size and weight bears constant ratio to intelligence. Physical fatigue diminishes the power of attention; intoxicants and narcotics produce direct physical effects which are always accompanied also by certain mental states. An injury to the central organ of the nervous system, the brain, results in corresponding disaster to the mental powers. That there is some kind of close connection or interaction between body and mind is indisputable. All attempts to prove that the one order of events is the cause of the other have thus far failed. These are the facts. Materialism is an attempt to explain these facts. And materialism, like all other philosophic doctrines, must be judged from two points of view: first, How adequately does it explain the facts? and, second, What are the logical consequences of its underlying conceptions to the great moral interests of our life? In both of these respects we shall find materialism hopelessly inadequate.

**Criticism of Materialism.** Materialism affirms the priority of matter over mind. Mind is fundamentally only a higher aspect or manifestation of matter. The first attack on materialism may well be to show the absolute untenability of this doctrine. Material things, far from having the independent existence which the materialist thinks they have, have only a relative existence, and, indeed, cannot be affirmed to

exist at all except as they are the objects of the knowledge of a conscious knowing subject. The materialistic conception of "matter" becomes incomprehensible as soon as we subject it to criticism. Let us look into this.

**Matter Incomprehensible Apart from Mind.** Uncritical common sense has no doubt about the existence of matter. It is right there before us, and we have the evidence of our senses to prove that it is there. Here is an orange. That surely is matter. We have a sensation of color. The physicist tells us that ether vibrations have impinged upon the retina of the eye. Molecular motion of some sort is set up in the nervous tissue of retina, optic nerve, and brain. The result is a sensation of color, and because we have had exactly equivalent sensations so often before we immediately interpret the sensation with the creation of an idea. In this way we think of or perceive the object as an orange. In similar fashion we receive impressions through the other senses. We should notice that the sensations of orange color, orange taste, orange smell and softness are very different indeed from the existences in the external world. Those existences are motion of various sorts. The ether vibrations are inconceivably rapid and upon their rapidity depends the interpretation the mind will make, whether orange color or blue or red. It is evident that there could be no color or taste or smell or hardness or form in the absence of a nervous system to receive the forms of motion and transform them into other forms of motion. Nor could color, taste, smell, or hardness have any existence in the absence of a mind to interpret these impressions coming through the nervous system



and to create the corresponding ideas. Let us now think of the orange standing before us. And let us imagine that one by one the sense qualities disappear. There is now no sensation of color, we have no sensation of touch, nor is there any odor nor taste, sound, or perception of heat. Shall we say that the motion which caused the stimulation of our nerves has ceased? At any rate, there arise no sensations in the mind. Now, in the absence of sensations and, therefore, ideas, is there anything there? Is a "thing" the name we give to a group of perceived sense-qualities? Does "matter" remain even when no sensations arise and no ideas are born? If we say matter does remain as a kind of "core of reality" or "substratum of being" back of sense qualities, how can we know anything at all about it? Is not the materialist in affirming the independent existence of matter calling upon us to believe something of which we can know nothing? The truth is that the existence of material things apart from the sensations and ideas through which we know them is groundless. Materialism, therefore, in affirming the independent existence of matter builds upon a conception which proves on critical examination to be incomprehensible.

But now a scientist objects. He says that the above argument disposes of matter only when regarded as a kind of stuff. But this is the older atomistic materialism in which modern science does not now believe. Matter, he tells us, is the permanent and sensible manifestation of motion. The kinetic doctrine of matter does not teach that the atoms are little lumps of material substance, but that they are infinitesimal centers of energy. We answer that, if the modern

scientist teaches that matter is the ultimate reality, but that it is to be understood not as body or substance but as *activity*, he is teaching very good doctrine. If he will consent to drop the word "matter" altogether and speak of basal energy or activity, we invite him in to go on with us in the criticism of materialism. And we do so with the hope that he may soon learn to think of the fundamental activity as intelligent. But we remind him that this conception of matter as activity contains implications which undermine and destroy materialism as a world-view. It will not be difficult to show that it is far more rational to regard this activity of which "matter" is the eternal manifestation as conscious activity. For shall we say that our own conscious activity with all our thoughts, feelings, and volitions rests upon an unconscious activity as its ground? If we do, we leave consciousness unaccounted for, as we shall see, and materialism, even in its most modern form, breaks down as a philosophy. But if we think of our own conscious life as grounded in a fundamental intelligent activity, then there is indeed a way of accounting for our own conscious life; but in doing so we leave materialism behind and adopt a world-view which is essentially idealistic and spiritual. We conclude, then, that in building upon the conception of matter as an ultimate reality independent of mind, materialism has built upon a foundation which crumbles as soon as critical tests are applied.

This argument derived from our own mental processes in knowing, though perfectly sound, is so foreign to the ways of uncritical common sense that persons who are not acquainted with philosophy generally

are puzzled by it, not knowing how to answer and yet not thoroughly convinced. Material things do indeed seem to exist in very hard-and-fast reality as they stand before us. But let us not forget that standing before *us* is a very important part of the only reality we know anything about. Of course this does not mean that our minds are the ground of the reality of things, but only that our minds are the ground of all the reality of things we can know. Things may no doubt exist independent of our finite minds. But whether the material universe has any existence apart from an Infinite Mind is a greater question. For our present purpose we must urge that apart from mind that perceives and knows it is impossible for us to affirm a reality which means anything at all for our rational thought.

**Materialism and the Origin of Life.** But let us turn now to another weakness of materialism as a philosophy. It finds no way to account for or to explain the beginning of life. Let us consider this first from the standpoint of the origin of organic life—leaving for the present the conscious aspects of life. We repeat that it is not the task of science to formulate a theory of the universe. The scientist is therefore under no obligation to offer any explanation of the origin of life. Biology very properly starts with the facts of experience—with life in its most primitive forms. With this as a beginning the biologist traces the manifestation of life through all the myriad organisms from the lowest protozoan to the human species. But as soon as the scientist makes professions as a materialist or, as he prefers to be called, a “monist,” he has entered the lists as a philosopher. It now

becomes necessary that his doctrine shall stand the test of all good philosophy, namely, that it furnish an interpretation of the facts of experience in their broader relation to the unity and harmony of truth. And how does it fare with materialism when this test is applied? Surely a philosophic doctrine must have something worth saying in regard to so great a matter as the origin and ground of life.

With all the hopes and confident predictions which have been made that life will be produced from the inorganic and the lifeless, no authenticated instance has yet taken place. Now the scientist can well afford to leave the matter of the spontaneous generation of life an open question. Indeed, it is unscientific to dogmatize here. But the advocate of materialistic monism cannot afford to do this. His philosophy demands that some explanation of the origin of life should be forthcoming and some ultimate ground of life be affirmed. The time-honored formula of atomistic materialism, that life must have finally originated from the fortuitous concurrence of such combinations of atoms as were able to propagate themselves, sounds rather antiquated. But for substance of doctrine the monist has nothing better to offer. He says something like this: "Life may be conceived as generated from a special union of inorganic corpuscles, which union may take place under favorable environment."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this sort of spontaneous generation "may be conceived" and such union "may take place." Certain it is, however, that no such occurrence ever has happened in the range of human experience. Many years ago Dr. Bastian was sure

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Pearson, *Grammar of Science*, p. 348.

that biogenesis was an assured fact. But later experimenters who took more care in sterilizing culture-media showed that life had not been generated from non-life. Years later Mr. Burke produced his "radiobes," which look and act like bacteria. But though widely reported to have done so, he did not claim that he had produced spontaneous generation of life.<sup>2</sup> And we search in vain for any light from materialistic monism upon the problem of life's origins. Du Bois-Reymond, in his famous "seven world-enigmas" address, delivered in Berlin in 1880, placed the origin of life as an unsolved problem. And though confessing its immense difficulty, he expressed the belief that its solution would be accomplished. But thus far his fond hopes have not been realized. Haeckel, in his *Riddle of the Universe*, has a very short section entitled "Monistic Biogeny," in which he praises Lamarck and Darwin for their epoch-making work in transforming modern biology to its very foundations, but he says not a word upon the origin of life. The reason is the very good one that there is nothing to say from the point of view of materialistic monism. Nearly a half century ago Professor Tyndall thought that matter "contained the promise and potency of all life." But thus far the promise has not been fulfilled and the potency appears to be as far from actuality as ever. It would not be at all serious for the Christian view of the world if the appearance of life from non-living antecedents should some day be demonstrated. The mere fact of being able to establish that sequence would by no means prove that we had found in matter a rational ground sufficient to account for all organic

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<sup>2</sup> J. Butler Burke, *The Origin of Life*, p. 99f.

life. It would simply mean that we had discovered one more chapter in the story of infinite intelligence and its unfolding purposes as they are made manifest in the processes of nature. But the inability to urge anything better as the ground of all life than matter, even though it be understood as the mechanical manifestation of energy, is a cardinal weakness of materialism and seriously discredits it as a world-view.

**Materialism and the Origin of Consciousness.** Materialism must consistently deny to the soul an independent existence. Our conscious life, with its thought and feeling, is made to depend upon the movements of matter. Some sort of molecular motion in the substance of the nerves and brain is taken to be the ground of thought. Materialism starts with the fact of the parallelism between the mind and the body. There is an order of mental events—thoughts, feelings, volitions. There is also an order of physical movement. Impressions received through the senses induce molecular motion in the structure of the nerves and brain. Coincident with these there is an order of mental events, sensations, ideas, feelings. It is the task of materialism to justify its assumption and show how the mental events are produced by the motion of matter. The tenet of materialism, therefore, is that our conscious states are functions or results of our nervous processes.

It is certain that the task of showing causal connection between events and the order of psychical movement has never been accomplished. Du Bois-Reymond says it never will be.<sup>3</sup> Other materialistic monists are more hopeful. In considering this ques-

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<sup>3</sup> In his famous address, "Die Grenzen des Naturekennens."

tion the first thing we must do is to file a serious objection to the habit some materialists have of assuming an identity between these two orders of events. Often the assertion has been made that thought in its ultimate nature *is* a form of molecular motion.<sup>4</sup> This amounts to saying that mind *is* matter in motion. We are simply done with all valid reasoning if a great crucial question can be begged in this offhand way. All the logical principles of our thought as we try to build up knowledge are neglected and outraged if a reasoner is to be permitted thus to disregard the law of identity and difference, and to affirm with no evidence that mind is at bottom matter. As well might we allow the assertion that apes are at bottom men. Only the crudest materialistic thinking continues to reiterate this groundless assumption. We must also object to the similar fallacy which consists in the mingling of the two concepts of spirit and matter so that any real distinction between them is obliterated. Clifford was a pioneer offender in this regard with his "mind stuff" whimsy, and Bain and others have followed him. Indeed, the "higher materialism," so called, lives and does business simply because of this illegitimate disregarding of the law of identity. Let us say at once if we are to think of matter as possessing consciousness and certain powers which we have always been in the habit of attributing to mind, let us say *mind*, and cease to say matter, not attempting to say both at once. "Two-faced substance," "conscious substance," and all such question-begging phrases are purely verbal and are entitled to no respect. Such

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<sup>4</sup> Büchner, in *Kraft und Stoff*—English translation, *Matter and Motion*—repeatedly makes this crude and uncritical assumption, and has been followed in it by some of the popular materialistic writers among the Socialists.

cross-breeding of concepts is illogical to the last degree. If it produces any result at all, the resulting concept is a monstrosity, like the centaur or mermaid—a fanciful notion arising from a mere mechanical juxtaposition of two distinct ideas and to which there is absolutely nothing in experience to correspond.

The common assumption of materialism that mental events are effects of which molecular movement in nerve and brain is the cause, is incapable of proof. And the negative of this is of course equally incapable of being demonstrated. When one movement A is affirmed as the cause of another movement B, we must conclude either that motion is actually imparted from A to B (in which case the motion of A is diminished by the amount of that imparted to B) or else that there is interaction of some sort between A and B, whereby B moves as the effect of A. Now, the well-established principle of the conservation of energy would forbid the thought of any transferring of motion from the physical order to the psychical. For in that event we would have physical energy being transformed into thought. But thought has no physical existence; therefore such transferring of energy from the physical to the mental would mean, from the materialistic point of view, the destruction of energy, which, of course, cannot be thought of. We are shut up, then, to the affirmation of some form of interaction between the order of mental activity and the order of physical movement.

To follow the argument here with anything like completeness would carry us too far into metaphysics for our present purpose. We must be content to indi-



cate the direction in which the truth lies. It would not be difficult to show that the problem of interaction on the plane of the material and mechanical is hopelessly insoluble. The excited nerve has never yet been shown to be the cause of thought, nor will it ever be. Du Bois-Reymond and others who declare the problem insoluble only confess what the student of metaphysics knows is the fact. Indeed, this problem has been entirely given up by all thinkers who understand themselves. In philosophy the doctrine of occasionalism sprang from the extreme difficulty of comprehending interaction between mind and body. The modern version of this metaphysical doctrine is the so-called theory of psycho-physical parallelism. This view gives up all attempt to establish causal relations between the soul and the body. The excitation of nerve and brain, presumably through molecular motion, is not to be affirmed as the cause of thought, but upon excitation of the physical organism thought arises. Volition does not actually cause physical movements, but upon the arising of the volition as a mental event certain corresponding physical movements take place. This is the beginning of the end of materialism.

Let us bear in mind that materialism cannot allow the conversion of motion into consciousness, for this would mean the destruction of energy which the doctrine of its conservation cannot permit. There must, therefore, be no break in the chain of physical sequence so far as the transformations of energy are concerned. What, now, is the ground of the constant and wonderful parallelism between the order of mental events and the corresponding order of phys-

ical movement? Does the ultimate nature or power of matter in motion explain? If it does, thought cannot be excluded from a place in the order of physical movement.<sup>5</sup> In metaphysics the doctrine of occasionalism prepared the way for Leibnitz's doctrine of a preestablished harmony, and hence on to the affirmation of mind as the underlying and harmonizing unit. And this, of course, led on to idealism. In the fundamental thinking necessary to justify or invalidate materialism as a world-view the doctrine of psychophysical parallelism is found to contain the same implications. In truth, it is the modern statement of the older metaphysical doctrine. Now, interaction between independent existences is impossible, but the fact of parallelism demands some ground of connection. All efforts to find this in causation from one to the other fail. We are compelled, therefore, either to abandon the problem entirely after the fashion of positivism or to affirm a fundamental mind in the unity of whose intelligence the parallelism finds explanation, as a part of a great unitary system of things.

**Materialism and Moral Values.** We now consider materialism with reference to the third great question of philosophy, namely, that of ethical values. The doctrine which affirms the physical and material as the ground of the mental discloses its poverty and nakedness most plainly when we approach the question of the great moral interests of life. Matter in motion as the ground of existence means a mechanical determination of all activity. And, therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> M. Bergson presses a similar application of the conservation of energy in his attack on determinism, *Time and Free Will*, p. 144f.

the consistent materialistic monist either openly scouts freedom as an outgrown theological superstition after the manner of Haeckel, or, as is generally the case, denies it indirectly and diplomatically under plausible phraseology. He does it in this fashion because an open and blunt denial of freedom is too great an affront to the moral consciousness of men.

A thoroughgoing determinism cancels ethics. Any doctrine which by direct teaching or implication would have us believe that our mental life is the resultant of mechanical movements in nerves and brain, leaves no place whatever for human responsibility. Why should men be held to any account for their judgments or their beliefs if all depends upon physical activity, and physical activity is a closed mechanical system? How can men be held as guilty or innocent, virtuous or depraved, if the motions which control conduct are but the consequences of antecedents fixed and determined according to unvarying law? We shall need to revert to this important point in discussing the meaning of personality later on. A brief reference must therefore suffice here.

The moral law is not something which is imposed upon men from outside. It is, rather, written deeply into the very texture of human life and experience. It is an evolution in which human conduct itself has played a most important part. Through the age-long experience of the race men have gradually learned to control and shape their conduct so as to diminish the discomfort, pain and other evils, and promote happiness. But this process has been no mere play of forces in action and reaction. Without the im-

perial self slowly emerging and gradually winning a fuller measure of the power of self-initiative and control, there is no morality to talk about. Psychology remains but physiology—ethics a phase of mechanics.

**Materialism and Religion.** A word must be added in conclusion concerning materialism (or materialistic monism) and religion. It has become very evident that no place whatever is left for religion. Belief in God as a Supreme Intelligence and Creator is regarded as more or less refined and beneficent superstition. Matter defined as that through which the eternal energy of the universe manifests itself, is itself eternal. The only soul man has is his brain. At death man lies down with his more lowly brothers, the beasts. Materialism has nothing to offer but the gospel of life's insignificance. "As a loaf of bread is covered with a coating of mildew—a world of living plants—so too the earth is covered with a world of living organisms; and among them man appears as a variation of these forms. After a brief bloom this world sinks back again into the nothingness from which it came. One thing alone remains—eternal matter and the laws of its motion. Between the infinite past when there was no life, and the infinite future in which there will be no life, the moment of the present and of life emerges—a moment only, though we measure it by a million years. And at this moment a small portion of infinite matter reveals that wonderful phenomenon of phosphorescence, as it were, which we call self-consciousness or mental life—a brief interlude which, however great and important it may seem to us, is none the less an altogether

insignificant incident in the history of the immense universe.”<sup>6</sup>

And yet Strauss, in his “Der Alte und Neue Glaube,” expounds the religion of materialism at considerable length! And Haeckel, in his Riddle of the Universe, grows quite eloquent over “Monistic Religion” and devotes a whole chapter to it. He would even allow those of his scientific brethren who may not be able to shake off their hankering for places of worship to have monistic churches! The object of worship in this religion is NATURE—the impersonal abstract conception of the totality of all things. Some, like the older Positivists, propose Humanity as an object of worship. And by Humanity is meant an abstract and idealized conception of the human race.

As a world-view we totally reject materialism and its corollary, determinism. It fails utterly to interpret the great facts of human experience and upon this basis every philosophical doctrine must be judged. The fact that it leaves no place for a religion resting upon belief in superhuman power is a further evidence of its weakness as a world-view. The faith of mankind in this power—a faith which has persisted in the human breast in one form or another for countless ages—may not be ignored as a worthless superstition. And any philosophy which does ignore it is thereby discounted and discredited as hopelessly inadequate.

## 2. AGNOSTICISM

**Meaning of Agnosticism.** Agnosticism can hardly be called a world-view. In fact, a world-view in the

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<sup>6</sup> The cosmological view of materialism is thus summed up by Paulsen in his masterly Introduction to Philosophy, p. 66.

sense of a philosophical conception of the universe is the very thing the agnostic refuses to hold to. The word "agnostic," like the word "socialist," is difficult to define with any degree of exactness. The meaning is best gained from the beliefs or, rather, the lack of beliefs of well-known thinkers who have expounded agnosticism as their position. Most prominent among these are Professor Huxley and Herbert Spencer. Huxley was the first to use the words agnostic and agnosticism. The older words were skepticism and positivism. Skepticism means the general view that our rational thinking cannot grasp reality, and hence that all our knowledge is relative to us. It includes, of course, the view that we can know nothing of God. Positivism rests upon this general skeptical view, but is, properly speaking, a scientific position. The positivist protests against the importation into science of any metaphysical conceptions such as matter, cause, force. Positivism demands that science work simply with what is gained through sense experience. This alone is knowledge; all else is idle speculation with which the well-instructed scientist should have nothing to do. Agnosticism has come to be applied generally to the denial that we can have any knowledge of the Infinite Being. It will be seen at once that such a denial puts agnosticism over against religion in sharp antagonism. For the fundamental teaching of the agnostic, if it were true, would shatter the foundations of religion.

**Kant's Agnosticism.** Skepticism is, of course, not modern. It was a recognized standpoint among the thinkers of ancient Greece. Kant and Hume were the

first great expounders of the limitations of rational reflection. Hume set forth the sensational theory of knowledge which was afterward so thoroughly discredited. Kant broke new ground, and in his analysis of the knowing process showed that the mind reacting over against the stimulus of sense experience builds up knowledge by its own activity in accordance with the categories—those immanent principles which lie in the very nature of reason itself. Kant's outcome showed the incompetence of reason alone to give us any knowledge of matters lying beyond the boundaries of experience. But Kant did not stop with this. He affirmed that there are some certainties for the soul which we do not gain through metaphysical reasoning. They are absolute postulates, and we accept them because of the practical needs and demands of the moral life. These great postulates are God, freedom, and immortality. Metaphysical reasoning has never been the foundation of our assurance of these beliefs, and therefore nothing has been lost when we find that such reasoning has no power to yield us knowledge of them.

**Spencer's Agnosticism.** But Spencer's agnosticism, though far more pretentious, is really much cruder than Kant's. Spencer professed to harmonize science and religion at just the time when they seemed to be in sharpest conflict. But his reconciliation was a very doubtful boon to religion. He warned the theologians that "the basis of the reconciliation must be this deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts—that the Power which the universe manifests is inscrutable." God, therefore, is not to be thought of except as a great Mystery—the Unknowable. Any-

thing more than this, Mr. Spencer tells us, swamps thought in a lot of contradictions. But, according to Spencer, we are in the same plight in respect to other fundamental ideas—matter, motion, force, consciousness, space, time. These, he assures us, are just as hopelessly contradictory as Infinite, Absolute, and First Cause. It certainly looks as bad for physics and psychology as for theology. And here is a most interesting question which finds no adequate answer in Mr. Spencer's writings. If we can have no knowledge in religion because the fundamental notions of religion are inscrutable, how does it come that we can have knowledge in physics and psychology even though the fundamental notions matter, force, space, time, and consciousness, are inscrutable? The reply would be, of course, that those sciences are purely empirical, using knowledge which comes to us through sense-experience, but that God, not being an object of our sense-experience, cannot be regarded as an object of our knowledge. The superficiality of this lies in the assumption that knowledge can come to us from sense-experience alone. And since the central weakness of agnosticism is its theory of knowledge, we shall have to point out as briefly as possible the untenability of the sensational doctrine of knowledge. Ultimately we shall find that any foundation in knowledge for science is also a foundation for religion.

**The Sensational Theory of Knowledge.** Locke, Hume, and Spencer all rest their speculations upon a conception of the knowing process which has been entirely discounted by criticism. The sensational psychology treated knowing as a kind of mechanical process.



Somehow the mind was "impressed" with the object, or an "image" of the object "passed into the mind." These and other crude metaphors were made to do duty in explaining perception and knowledge. But how objects which are physical ever produce sensations in the mind which are mental has never been shown. When we see an object the ether vibrations strike the retina and set up a stimulus which is presumably some kind of molecular motion. This is transmitted to the central organ of the nervous system, the brain. But, as we have seen, this molecular motion is no nearer being a thought in the brain than it was on the retina. To all attempts to explain the origin of thought from physical sensations the only tenable answer is that the mind creates thoughts by virtue of its own activity. On the occasion of the stimulus from without, the mind reacts, and thoughts arise which are the mind's interpretation of reality. That the thoughts which are constantly being born in our minds are parallel to and do interpret in some adequate way the order of objective reality, is one of the great fundamental assumptions of our rational life. Why our thoughts do arise, and why those thoughts grasp reality we can no more say than we can tell why we are rational beings. A theory of knowledge which denies the independent existence and activity of the conscious self ends in a skepticism which is not only fatal to religion, but to all science as well.

The knowing process is not simply the mechanical registering of sensations, but is the interpretation of that which comes to us from the object. We know more than simply the sense qualities of things.

Knowledge arises from the perception of relations among our ideas. In strict conformity with that which comes to us from objective reality, the mind relates its objects of thought and so builds up knowledge. That this mental product called knowledge is valid for reality is the fundamental assumption upon which all our rational life depends. But we have transcended phenomena in this spontaneous activity of the mind. Mere sensations could give us no knowledge. They could not associate themselves. It is our reason which associates and interprets. The sensational theory of knowledge leads to absolute skepticism—scientific no less than religious.<sup>7</sup>

**The Agnostic's Unknowable.** But we must inquire further concerning this Unknowable of Mr. Spencer. He tells us we can know that the unknowable exists. All other knowledge is relative—phenomenal, that is, merely appearance. Spencer assures us that science deals only with phenomena. But what ground of existence have these phenomena? Let us see. According to the agnostic, when I perceive an object, my knowledge of it is a sensation or associated sensations. We must not inquire concerning the ground or source from which those sensations come. That would be to get beyond the limits of the phenomenal and meddle with notions, which we have been warned are inscrutable. But is the (phenomenal) object of my knowledge simply my own affair? Does the existence of this phenomenon of my experience depend simply and solely upon my own individual sense impressions? Or is it a common affair for all finite

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<sup>7</sup> Probably the most thorough overhauling the sensational doctrine of knowledge has ever received is that in *The Introduction to Hume*, by Thomas Hill Green.

minds? It cannot be an individual affair, for that would make the reality of the object to depend upon individual knowledge of it, which is absurd. The thing existed, of course, before I perceived it. Nor can there be any basis of reality for the object in common knowledge, for the philosophy of agnosticism does not permit us to think of things as objects of our knowledge in realistic fashion, that is, in the sense of being substantive realities. They are only phenomena. Where are the phenomena then? What possible basis can we assign for the reality of the things of which we have phenomenal knowledge? This is the inevitable embarrassment into which all doctrines of the phenomenality of knowledge are soon driven. Kant tried to save himself, as is well known, by the notion of the "thing-in-itself." And when Fichte demolished the thing-in-itself the only way that lay open was toward idealism.

But Mr. Spencer did not try to save himself, for the reason that he did not realize the plight his theory was in. The weakness and inconsistency of his doctrine of relativity never dawned on him. Now, as a matter of fact, the above problem as to the basis of reality for the phenomenal object of our knowledge, can be solved only on the plane of theistic idealism, which thinks of the Infinite Mind as the ground of both the finite object and the finite subject. It is true, of course, that objects can exist only for the mind that perceives them. Their existence, however, cannot be made to depend upon that mind. We cannot say that things exist only for this or that individual mind. If, then, they are independent of each and every finite mind, their existence must depend

upon an Infinite Mind as the ground and condition of their reality.

In Mr. Spencer's thinking, phenomena seem to be independent of us. Their existence certainly does not depend upon us. What does it depend upon? What is their relation to the basal reality—the Unknowable? Mr. Spencer is obliged to make changes and relations among things point to some corresponding changes and relations in basal reality. He had to choose between making the phenomenal objects of knowledge independent of the Unknowable (and this would be to drop back into materialism) or else to find no ground whatever for the phenomenal objects of knowledge. He really had to make his objects to depend upon the Unknowable, with the result that he is gradually forced to affirm quite a good many things about the Unknowable—so many, indeed, that Mr. Mill complained that we were receiving “a prodigious amount of knowledge respecting the Unknowable.” And Mr. Bradley remarks that Spencer gives us more information about the Unknowable than the most dogmatic theologian would dare to about God!

Spencer tried to work out agnosticism as a philosophical system, but he failed. Some of his followers tried to tinker the synthetic philosophy so as to make it philosophically respectable, but without success. The weaknesses are too deep-seated. They are constitutional. Spencer's doctrine of the relativity of knowledge was derived from Kant and Hamilton. In the thinking of the latter “The Absolute” was a purely logical abstraction. Hamilton said that to think is to condition, that is, it is to relate the thing thought to all other things. But to do this with the Absolute

and the Infinite is clearly impossible without destroying the Absoluteness. Hence the Absolute is unthinkable, and of the Infinite and the Absolute we can therefore have no knowledge. But all this is abstractly logical—and purely verbal. To think a thing is indeed to know it in its relations to other things. But to set up a conception of the Absolute as unrelated and therefore as impossible to our thought, and then to charge our thought with hopeless limitations because such a conception is found to be unthinkable, is entirely illegitimate. It is an artificially made dualism. Yet this is the gist of Hamilton's doctrine of the Unconditioned. Its fallacies are understood now, and the older agnosticism of Hamilton and Mansel is not taken very seriously.

**Conclusion.** And now in summing up the case against agnosticism we must note a few important considerations. Agnosticism's denial that there can be any knowledge of God sets definite limits to human knowledge. The limitation is in two forms: First, the human mind is declared to have such inherent limitations that knowledge of God is impossible. Second, God is so constituted that he cannot make himself known to the thought of men. The agnostic often poses as the humblest among the thinkers. He is the last to grow dogmatic! But here is dogmatism indeed! The affirmation that knowledge must be only of the phenomenal has already been considered. We rest the matter by repeating that all knowledge of things as real must rest upon some assurance that we know also the ground of their reality. To this any tenable theory of thought brings us. But how does the agnostic know that the Infinite cannot make him-

self known, since all knowledge, we are assured, is confined to the phenomenal in our sense experience? If God is inscrutable, as agnosticism urges, what ground is left from which the agnostic may infer that God cannot make himself known to the finite mind? The truth is we meet here the same old dualism. The Infinite and finite are thought of as standing over each other in mutual exclusion. But surely we may affirm an Infinite which does not exclude but includes the finite. This is the conclusion of all sound philosophy. And this disposes of the agnostic objection that the Infinite is the unrelated. And who shall say that knowledge which must always involve both the reports which come from the things and the independent rationality of the mind does not grasp reality? Now, we have seen how the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge fails to find any basis for the reality of phenomena. Our knowledge of them is the basis of their reality *for us*, but the basis of their reality as part of the world of existence cannot be our mind, but must be the Infinite Mind. This Infinite Mind is not only a part of reality, but is the Eternal Ground of Reality. And who shall say that if we, in knowing, grasp reality at all, we may not know the Eternal Ground of Reality, God, and God may not make himself known to us?

**Agnosticism and Christian Thought.** Agnosticism is not a system of philosophy. It has no doctrine which stands the test of critical examination. But it was a powerful protest, and as such it has exerted a great influence. It was a protest, in the name of modern science, against the conceptions of God which Christianity had inherited from former ages. The tre-

mendous advance in scientific thinking during the second half of the nineteenth century rendered the older idea of God and his relation to the world wholly inadequate. A reconstruction had to come if Christian thought was to continue to command the respect of the modern mind and serve the needs of modern life. Indeed, every age needs to reinterpret and restate the great fundamental verities. And the agnostic movement served the purpose of a call to the Christian Church to bring her teachings about God and the world into better harmony with the great revelations which God had been making through modern science. And the Church is always sluggish in this important work. This is because of the mental inertia of the theological conservative, and also because so many erroneously suppose that to change doctrine is to tamper with the truth. They do not realize that the truth about God is eternal and indestructible. The defenders of a traditional dogmatic orthodoxy have always been temporarily blinded by rather sudden bursts of truth. But some of them come slowly trailing along in time. This has been unfortunately the story of the attitude of church leaders to the truth quite generally—from the days of Galileo even to the present. But agnosticism has done its work, and we may well be thankful to God for scientists of such splendid intellectual integrity as Professor Huxley. He and many like him were loyal to the truth as they saw it. They would not profess allegiance to an orthodoxy which did not represent their profound convictions of truth. And what they did was to force the issue clearly. The mighty array of facts which modern science has won is, of course, a great exten-

sion of the divine revelation. And Christian scholarship has made and is still making the necessary reinterpretation.

It has been often assumed that agnosticism means utter irreligion, and that the agnostic has no belief in God. But while there is some ground for this assumption, it is not always true. Toward the close of his life Professor Huxley made the only confession of religious faith which we find. He quotes the great statement of the meaning of religion from the prophet Micah: "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" He then added this comment: "If any so-called religion takes away from this great saying of Micah, I think it wantonly mutilates, while, if it adds thereto, I think it obscures the perfect ideal of religion."<sup>8</sup> It may be that beneath his controversial spirit and his hostility to the orthodoxy of his time, he did have some glimmering that the self-disclosures of God are not cast in the set molds of dogmatic orthodoxy, but are a living and growing revelation to the human spirit.

After all, a broad view of the divine revelation as it may be discerned not only in nature but also in the thought-life of mankind, finds a place for the great scientists as prophets of God's truth, no less than the great preachers. And if we believe that the advance of truth has gone on under the immanent guidance of God himself, may we not even think that God has in his inscrutable wisdom used even the stern and earnest prophets of honest doubt to help expand and purify Christian thinking, so that the spiritual

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<sup>8</sup> See Huxley's *Essays*, "Genesis Versus Nature."



religion might not be bound by speculative theology?

### 3. PANTHEISM

**Meaning of Pantheism.** The name is one, but that for which the name stands is many. Pantheism is a way of thinking about the world, especially a way of conceiving rationally the relation of the world of finite persons and things to the Ground of all reality—the Eternal Spirit. This way of thinking about the world may be primitive—mythological rather than philosophical in the modern sense. The early mystical pantheism of India is of this sort. The doctrine of the impersonal World-Soul of Brahmanism is poetic and mythological. Salvation through union with this spiritual principle is a mysticism as positive as it is primitive. But pantheism may also be said to be not only a way of thinking but a way of *feeling* about the universe. And that basal unity and consistency which is the profoundest assumption of all science and philosophy becomes an underlying harmony and beauty when we think of the soul seeking to grasp something of the meaning of the universe through feeling as well as through thought. A philosopher like Hegel seeks to set forth the great principle of cosmic unity in the conception of Absolute Mind. A poet like Shelley sings of the great Spiritual Presence in the universe which is manifested in cosmic harmony and beauty. We may recognize pantheism as a perception through feeling of Eternal Reality, but the feelings are fleeting and somewhat vague. Though real, they defy definition and analysis. For our present purpose, then, we shall consider the pan-

theism which is an attempt to find by way of speculative thinking some rational conception of the relation of the finite and the Infinite.

**Pantheism a Monism.** The pantheistic world-view is not only a philosophical but also a religious doctrine. It is one answer to the profound problem of the relation of the finite world to the Infinite—the world of things and persons to God. There are three thought systems or world-views which seek to answer this great problem. They are deism, pantheism, and theism. Materialism finds no place for God, and therefore is not concerned with the relation of the finite world to the Infinite Ground of the World. Materialistic monism identifies the world of things and persons with the Ground of all Reality. It says Ultimate Reality is matter in motion. Pantheism too seeks to identify the world of things and persons with the Ground of all Reality. But pantheism results when the metaphysical problem of the ground of being has been answered in an idealistic way. Ultimate Reality is not matter but spirit, and pantheism affirms not simply the rational harmony but the unity and identity of the finite world with the Infinite Spirit of the universe.

**Pantheism and Deism.** Pantheism does indeed meet the demand of reason for a unitary principle of Being back of all the complexity of finite existence. We have seen that such a demand appears in every philosophic world-view. For ages this vague but great conviction has persisted in human thinking—this conviction that beneath its diversity the world is a unity. The crude doctrine named deism gave up all attempts at a monistic solution of the problems of existence.

Its teaching was dualistic. According to this view, the world was created by God. This creation was a definite act or series of acts at some period in past time. The universe at its creation was endowed with certain inherent forces which were supposed to be sufficient to provide for all future development. But, according to this view, the God who created the world is to be thought of as entirely separate from it—he is apart from it or above it. The philosophy of the deists in no way forbade God interposing his divine power in the affairs of the universe. The creation was a tremendous miracle and it was conceivable that other exhibitions of divine power might follow. But as a matter of fact, deism considered miracles superfluous and really irrational. The divine work was so perfectly done at creation that to think of the need of any later interpositions is to discount the divine wisdom. This view, it will be seen, erects nature into a complete system which runs with a certain independence of its own after the Creator has once set it in motion. That this really destroys the most characteristic attributes of the Divine soon becomes apparent. John Stuart Mill, in one of his essays on religion, says that God is a “Being of great but limited power, how or by what limited we cannot even conjecture; of great and perhaps unlimited intelligence, but perhaps also more narrowly limited than his power; who desires and pays some regard to the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for, and who can hardly be supposed to have created the universe for that purpose alone.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Three Essays on Religion, p. 194.

Against all such dualisms, and present-day pluralisms as well, pantheism stands as a protest. And whatever its weakness (and we shall see that it is gravely inadequate), pantheism rests upon the broad conception that the world is at bottom a unity, and that all its discord is resolved in the great fundamental harmony of the Infinite.

**Criticism of Pantheism.** In the case of materialism we found that anything like a thoroughgoing criticism was impossible because of the limits imposed by the character and purpose of these studies. But we must seek to do with reference to pantheism what we tried to do with materialism, namely, to indicate the direction in which its most serious shortcomings as a world-view are to be found.

Taking as our starting point the foundation tenet of the idealistic metaphysics that the ultimate ground of reality is Infinite Mind, the crucial question is, How are we to think of the finite world—the world of persons and things—as related to this Infinite Mind? The answer to this question makes the difference between theism and pantheism. Theism affirms a dependence of the world upon God. God is thought of as an Infinite Person or personal Spirit. He has created human beings with the capacity for personality. This capacity develops under the conditions of our life. It involves to a greater or less degree the limited independence implied in freedom. Freedom is the indispensable factor of personality and, therefore, a fundamental doctrine of theism. But any degree of independence of God which the finite person has is, of course, the bestowal of God and the direct expression of his divine will. The ground for this

relative independence in the freedom of the finite person is found in God's greatest purposes concerning men, namely, that they should receive moral and spiritual development.

Pantheism, on the other hand, affirms not only the dependence but the identity of the world of persons and things with the Infinite Spirit. But though pantheism uses the phraseology of identity, it really never means absolute or metaphysical identity. If the world and God were really identical, then the existence of the two concepts and the two names "finite" and "infinite" would be meaningless. There are, of course, fundamental differences between the finite and the infinite; some essential marks of the infinite as contrasted with the finite, and the finite as contrasted with the infinite. Pantheism gains standing ground, logically at least, by blurring but not obliterating these characteristic differences. Those modern pantheists in India and elsewhere who speak of the possibility of attaining a complete harmony with the Infinite—a merging of their finite thought, feeling and will with the Infinite Spirit—deny vigorously that this means the annihilation of human personality. In other words, they repudiate any absolute identification on the plane of the human. Generally, the world is viewed as a part of God, or a mode of God's existence. Pantheistic world-views are of two sorts: First, those theories in which nature is lifted up into the supreme place as the eternal ground of existence. Of this sort is Spinoza's pantheism. In his *Ethics*, where his views concerning the finite and Infinite are expounded, the words "nature" and "substance" could be substituted for "God" with no loss

of meaning. This kind of pantheism is akin to materialism. It views God as a world-substance rather than a First Cause. Spinoza was rightly judged an atheist by his contemporaries. Second, those theories in which God is thought of as existing in and through the finite world. This view, which regards God as Eternal Spirit and as the First Cause, involves the idea of immanence. By immanence is meant that the finite world ever manifests God—it is a revelation and expression of his activity.

**Pantheism and Theism.** But at this point emerges the difference—and a most important difference it is—between the pantheistic view and theism. Pantheism conceives the Divine Spirit in the world as impersonal, while theism affirms the personality both of the Divine Spirit and of finite spirits. This conception of personality is the greatest one of philosophy, and it determines absolutely the character of the world-view where it is present as the central dominating idea, or where it is absent. Pantheism views the Divine Spirit as unconscious and impersonal. Now, the conception of unconscious impersonal spirit is extremely difficult, and I believe really impossible to our reason. When so qualified the word “spirit” can mean little more than Being conceived as activity. And in proportion as materialism outgrows the “stuff” theory of matter and adopts an idea of matter as the seat or manifestation of eternal energy, in just that proportion do pantheism and materialism approach each other and merge. There is a good deal of materialism which is essentially pantheism. Of such character was Spencer’s speculations so far as they touched upon an Unknowable—the ground of all existence.

So also are the hybrid, mystical notions of materialistic monism such as the "mind stuff" of Clifford. All the logical landmarks are gone and thought staggers around blindly when "unconscious spirit," "conscious matter," "mind stuff," and such logical monstrosities are introduced into what professes to be rational speculation. Where the adjective devours the noun, thought is left so confused that in other matters than philosophy we generally do not hesitate to pronounce the result nonsense. We repeat, then, our conviction that the world-view which rests upon such an idea as "unconscious spirit" is incapable of being thought through in any sober and rational fashion. If we are content with a philosophy which can be felt rather than thought, pantheism will no doubt serve us. But just as soon as we begin to subject pantheism to legitimate philosophical analysis (by that we mean inquire what relation its underlying conceptions have to our experience and also what is their value for our experience), then their rational firmness and vagueness appears. Pantheism always begins to approach theism as soon as it is taken seriously as a practical religious doctrine; that is to say, as soon as it begins properly to reckon with experience. Indeed, the way some of the modern expounders of the Absolute philosophy have had to turn their faces toward theism and adopt its ideas and phraseology even while professing to hold to the fundamental Absolute doctrine, is an illustration in point.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the older theism has felt the

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<sup>10</sup> Professor Royce, in his admirable discussion of the place of the self in the universe, seems to be far more of a theist than a pantheist, though his speculative position is that of the philosophy of the Absolute (see Royce, *The World and the Individual*, vol. ii, Lecture vii).

strong influence of pantheism. While holding to the transcendent conception on the personal plane, modern theism also expounds a doctrine of the divine immanence. The world of things can have no independent existence. The Divine Mind is the ground of all the activity of the natural universe. And here again we see that the division is on the basis of whether the Divine Mind shall be thought of as personal or impersonal. A personal Divine Mind swings our thought over to theism, while an impersonal Divine Mind sends our thought back into materialism.

There are, then, after all, only two great world-views. One regards a personal Eternal Spirit as the source and ground of all existence. The other sees the ground of existence in an impersonal Eternal Energy (unconscious Spirit-Energy). The first of these is theism, the second is materialism in one of its several forms.

**Pantheism and the Moral Life.** We are now in position to see what are the implications of pantheism so far as our moral life is concerned. If the Eternal Spirit is unconscious and impersonal, then all activities which come from the Eternal Spirit as their ground are mechanically determined. Purpose finds no place in the activity of the impersonal World-Spirit. The evolutionary processes whereby the manifold forms of life are unfolded are just as thoroughly necessitated in a pantheistic system as in a materialistic scheme. This means that a pantheistic view has all the embarrassments under which materialism suffers. The problem of error in cognition and of moral evil in conduct are cases in point, for a consistent pantheism must affirm that not only the ongoing forces of nature



but also all the activities of the finite self are modes or manifestations of the Divine Activity. The doctrine of immanence may, indeed, be applied to nature without consequences serious to reason. While difficult problems loom up, yet we cannot think of nature's power as other than God's power. But if we think of human activity as God's activity, we are soon involved in consequences of the gravest nature—so grave, indeed, that they threaten the destruction of rational thinking. Is the divine thought really immanent in all the thoughts of men? Then their error, blundering, stupidity, meanness, and malice are all somehow either modes of the Eternal Spirit's activity, or else they have no real existence. Some pantheists do indeed say that since we cannot include error and evil as a part of the activity of the Divine Mind, therefore error and evil are not real. Error, we are told, either does not exist at all or else is truth imperfectly perceived and inadequately realized. And as for evil, it too has no existence, or it is good, laboring under the same temporary disadvantages! This is the position into which thoroughgoing and consistent pantheists have been forced from the Vedanta philosophy of India to modern theosophy and Eddyism to-day. It is difficult to call this kind of thing by the name of philosophy at all, or even to be patient with it.

And this is not all. A pantheism which makes human thought and action a mode of the Absolute not only must turn away and refuse to reckon with facts of our human experience which stare us in the face, but it wrecks its own doctrine. For how can the unity of the Absolute itself be preserved? If my thoughts

with their obvious imperfection and limitations are a manifestation or mode of the Divine Thought, what is the relation of the Absolute, thinking perfect thoughts, to the same Absolute manifesting itself in my imperfect thoughts? The essential characteristics of the human—namely, moral limitation and imperfection—must be denied and the human made essentially divine, or else an element of moral imperfection must be admitted in the Absolute.

**Pantheism and Religion.** By teaching that the Eternal Spirit of the universe is impersonal, pantheism undermines and renders irrational all religious worship except the attitude of awe and reverence in the presence of infinite power. Some would remind us that the love and appreciation of the beauty of the universe is religion. It is, indeed, a part of religion when it helps us to realize communion with the Eternal Spirit. But if God be conceived as impersonal, as principle, as eternal energy, then fellowship and communion are impossible. We cannot be thankful to a principle, nor can we expect response from an Absolute conceived as the sum of all energy. In any system where nature is identified with God, prayer will find but slight place. The main motive which prompts the human spirit to seek the Divine Spirit in thanksgiving and prayer is the expectation of some response. And in the absence of such expectation worship, as it has found expression in the religious beliefs and practices of men, becomes impossible.

But we have pointed out enough to show that as a world-view pantheism also is very inadequate. When consistent with itself the doctrine involves us in many desperate embarrassments. And avoiding these, pan-

theism must approach theism. The question of personality is central and fundamental. In Chapter V we take up its discussion. Personality is not only the foundation doctrine of theism, but it is the most important conception of modern philosophy. Its evolution in our life is the most characteristic feature of human existence. It is the ultimate reality in all human relationships. Physics and chemistry may perhaps be discussed without it, but not ethics, economics, sociology, psychology, or religion. Most of our discussion in the subsequent chapters of these studies will center around it. It is the basis of all that makes our life of abiding worth here and now, and it is the only philosophical ground of a hope for the continuance of our life in the great unknown future.

#### 4. THE CHRISTIAN WORLD-VIEW

**Theism the Only Christian World-View.** We have now briefly discussed two of the three great world-views, materialism and pantheism. We have found ample reasons to consider both inadequate. We have noted also that neither leaves any place for the basic beliefs of Christianity. It remains now to ask whether there is a philosophic way of looking at things, of thinking about God and the world and humanity and their relation, which will "hold the facts together" and yet afford a rational and adequate interpretation of the whole of our experience. *To point out that we find such a world-view in Christian theism is one of the purposes of these studies.* We hope to show that Theism is a consistent and tenable philosophical framework into which it is possible to build the great essential beliefs of Christian Faith.

**The Aim of Religious Philosophy.** To bring our great religious convictions and our scientific conceptions into fundamental harmony is one of the principal aims of religious philosophy. And the necessary condition of finding this harmony is to obtain some substantial basis in philosophy for our great religious beliefs. Indeed, to find a basis of unity and solidarity in all our thinking is the purpose of philosophizing. This does not mean that a philosophy of religion demands that all our beliefs must be brought into the rational or philosophic form, or even that they must be capable of logical demonstration or rational analysis. It only demands that there shall be such adjustment of beliefs to facts and principles that no irrational elements are given a place. In other words, it seeks to carry out our deep conviction that truth is *one*, and if we are to secure the fullest assurances that our conceptions are in harmony with the truth, they must be in rational harmony with each other. This applies even to our ideas of God. They must be consonant with the truths we have won from life. This we have already urged.

We shall need to state the doctrine of Christian theism only in outline here, for the remainder of these studies are devoted really to the exposition of the theistic view and some of the more important religious implications of that view.

**Christian Theism Outlined.** The two greatest questions of religious philosophy are: (1) What is the nature of reality—what is the ground of all being? (2) What is the relation of this Ground of all Reality or World-Ground to the human Spirit? It will be seen that both of these great questions underlie religion.

It depends upon the answer to the first question whether any place is made for the Christian religion or not. When the answer to that question is that the ground of all reality is matter in motion, the religious standpoint which results is atheism. And whatever we may say as to the possibility of some kind of feeling which might be called religious on the basis of materialistic monism, religion as it is understood by students of the science of religion is entirely impossible. This we have seen. When, on the other hand, the answer is that the ground of all reality is impersonal Spirit, the religious standpoint which results is pantheism. And unless pantheistic religion saves itself (as it usually does) by some form of personification, the outcome is practical atheism. This also we have seen.

The answer of theism to this great problem of the relation of the Infinite to the world is that the Infinite, or Absolute, is a personal ethical Spirit, in vital moral relations with finite spirits; and that the relation of the world of things to the Infinite is that of dependence. The world of things is the manifestation or revelation of the purposeful activity of the Divine Spirit.

Now a word in regard to the terms we use denoting the World-Ground. In philosophy God is often spoken of in cosmic relations as "the Absolute" and in relation to finite human existence as "the Infinite." But for religion we think of God with respect to personal relations. God therefore for religion is not so much the Absolute or the Infinite as he is a personal Spirit, in vital moral relations with men. And while we may use the philosophical terms for the Divine,

we shall generally speak simply of *God* in outlining the argument for theism.

**No Explanation of Creation.** The ground of things is the purpose of God fulfilling itself constantly in his divine activity. But how? We cannot tell. It is no more the task of philosophy rationally to expound creation than it is to attempt to explain why we are rational beings. All the old mythological and theological theories of divine creation belong to an age when picture-thinking was made to do duty for rational reflection. The notion that God created the world out of some kind of raw material—premundane “matter”—or that the world was created out of “nothing,” or that it “emanated” from the “divine essence”—all these notions and others like them were crude thought struggling to express the great truth that the world is dependent upon the Divine Activity for its being. And this is the gist of theism’s doctrine of creation. That it cannot be explained we hasten to admit. The process by which the will and activity of God result in the physical order is completely beyond us. Did the world have a definite beginning in time? The affirmative answer brings with it a swarm of serious difficulties. For example, was the Deity inactive for a long period and then awoke, as it were, to increased action? If the creation of the world was good, was God content with less than the possible maximum of good during all the time before creative activity began? These may appear to some to be overdone speculative refinements, but they express a real difficulty to which there is no satisfying answer. But while the matter is by no means cleared up, yet its impenetrable difficulty is modified when we discard

as uncritical the notion of an empty time in which things take place. Time is a thought form. It is that mode in which we apprehend events in experience and recognize them as related in sequence. God's activity, being eternal, is unbegun in time. This is all we can say. To attempt further analysis is to go off into the realm of pure speculation with nothing whatever in the way of experience upon which to base our conclusions.<sup>11</sup> In any event creation is a mystery. All we can affirm is that the divine will and activity are ever causing that to exist which previously had no existence.

And what shall be said of the creation of finite spirits? Again we confess that we certainly cannot fathom either the creative purposes or the process. Theologians have told us that God in the early ages of cosmic existence needed men as objects of his love, and that therefore their creation was in reality the grand consummation of the Divine Existence. As a suggestion deepening our feeling and enriching our content of the meaning of the divine Personality, this idea might perhaps be received in some of its forms. But it must be confessed that as soon as we try to relate it to the facts of science or put it into philosophical form it becomes dark and difficult. The conception that *at some point in past time* God completed his realization of himself by reproducing himself historically is a proposition which grows exceedingly obscure when either scientific or metaphysical criticism is applied to it. But we can say that lesser or finite spirits as they develop under the limitations of human life do indeed manifest the eternal moral

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<sup>11</sup> See Lotze, *Microcosmus*, book ix, chap. v, sec. 4. Bowne, *Metaphysics*, chap. v.

purpose of God—and constitute his highest possible manifestation. Now, if God is to have in finite spirits any worthy fulfillment of himself, they must have such possibilities and capacities that they will manifest aspects of the divine purpose not manifested by other modes of creation. Does not this mean that finite spirits must have the power to develop those characteristics which are the essential elements in the divine nature? In other words, a worthy fulfillment of the divine plan in creation means the growth of personality—self-consciousness, self-determinism, and moral love.<sup>12</sup> In personal spirits even under the limitations of finite conditions, we have then what theism declares is a manifestation—indeed, the highest manifestation we can know—of God. This is the significance of the biblical teaching that “God made man in his own image.”

**God's Moral Purpose.** But now emerges the question concerning the relation of the world and God in the matter of causality. God is the first cause, as we have seen. He is the ground of all finite existence. But how are we to regard all movement and change in the world of things? Science has opened the world to our knowledge. We recognize the reign of law. The great forces of nature are constant. We dare not say they are invariable. Such an affirmation would be logically indefensible. But we may say that, so far as our experience has gone, they seem to be invariable. But theism makes the world to depend upon the will and energy, that is, the purposive activity of God. God's purpose is, therefore the supreme matter, not invariability. If God's purpose demands fixity in the

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<sup>12</sup> The nature and implications of Personality are taken up in Chapter V.



operation of nature's forces (and so far as our experience goes it generally does), then we know the forces will be constant. But may not God's purpose demand variation? Why? There is only one answer, namely, for moral ends. And this brings us to the realm of the personal again. Theism teaches not only that God rules the universe of things but also governs the world of finite spirits. If the divine purpose be, at some point, to realize a great moral end which we may believe God has willed, shall he not seek the realization through the possible variation of nature's schedule as well as through her unvarying sequences?<sup>13</sup>

And if self-manifestation be the highest end of God's moral purpose, then his creation of finite spirits must be in order that a spiritual nature may be developed in them. Thus the winning of moral selfhood through the growth of character appears as a significant consequence of the divine activity. If God is to have any worthy fulfillment of this purpose, men must have a degree of moral freedom. However it develops, through whatever media it is realized, freedom in the finite spirit is indispensable to the realization of the divine purpose for men.

The possibilities of freedom are those of moral evil. When these possibilities have become actualities, and error and evil—or, to use the religious word, *sin*—have devastated human life, then the divine purpose becomes one of *redemption*; and the will of God and the activity of God must be thought of as expending themselves, not in repairing the disaster of an unfortunate miscarrying of the divine plan, but in realizing

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<sup>13</sup> This is worked out more fully in Chapter XIII, where the natural and the supernatural are discussed.

the eternal purpose in the best and only way possible in a moral universe.

If this brief and fragmentary outline of theism has emphasized the really essential matters, I think it will be agreed that such view of the world is in essential harmony with the matchless life and profound teachings of the Divine Founder of Christianity. This world is not a mere assemblage of things and persons, but is a great system, expressing in all its change and growth the eternal purposes of God. In him who is eternal and over all we live and move and have our being.

MATERIALISM—READING SUGGESTED

Hermann Lotze—*Microcosmus*, Book III, Chapter I.

Borden P. Bowne—*Metaphysics*, Part III, Chapters I, II.

J. Ward—*Naturalism and Agnosticism*, Lectures V and VI.

PANTHEISM—READING SUGGESTED

Borden P. Bowne, *Theism*, Chapter V.

Hermann Lotze, *Microcosmus*, Book IX, Chapter V.

George Trumbull Ladd, *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapter XXXV.

Borden P. Bowne, *Metaphysics*, Chapter V.

## CHAPTER III

### KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF, AND FAITH

**Religious Knowledge.** Knowledge cannot be satisfactorily defined. In any attempt to set forth its meaning all we can do is to take some characteristic element and make that serve as a beginning in our search for a fuller thought content. Remembering this, it may be suggested that we *know* when we have rationally grounded assurance that our mental conceptions adequately and truthfully interpret reality. In the present chapter the discussion will have to do with the question of the validity of our knowledge chiefly from a religious point of view. Is there such a thing as *religious* knowledge? Can we have certainty that the great fundamental religious ideas upon which the superstructure of belief and worship rests are an adequate interpretation of reality?

**Authority of Religion—Its Basis.** In the last analysis the authority of religion depends upon the validity of our fundamental religious ideas. Let a man begin to think that religion is, after all, only the expression of the fond hopes of humanity, and the power of religion over his life may be greatly weakened, if not destroyed. For the thinking man the question of religion's authority is bound up inevitably and inextricably with that of validity. And by validity we mean truth, not as an abstract or intangible ideal, but truth

which may be realized through some firm assurances that our thought agrees with an order of reality. The mediæval dictum, "*Credo quia impossibile est,*" can never be the attitude of a rational mind earnestly in search of truth. No matter how far we may go in search of the truth, we shall have to admit that there is an element of mystery in religion. And the mystery will remain. The human mind cannot attempt to think of the Infinite and his relation to the world of finite spirits, nor attempt to trace divine activity in nature, without soon discovering its own limitations. But, granting this, we urge that the authority of religion will depend upon the way its fundamental conceptions can be accredited through the reason as essentially truthful interpretations of reality.

It becomes evident, then, that before we attempt to present a philosophical study of Christianity in its broad outlines we must make sure of our ground by inquiring into the validity of our fundamental religious ideas. We must seek the sources of religious certainty. We must search for a standard, or at least a method by which to determine the truth of the fundamental conceptions of religion. This is a profoundly important venture, and it is not to be denied that upon the possibility of finding some satisfying grounds for religious certainty, or at least upon our belief in such possibility, will depend the vitality and permanence of our religious conceptions.

**Divine Revelation and Religious Authority.** We ask, then, where shall we look for the ground of the authority of religion? It is often urged that authority in religion rests upon truth, and that our guarantee of truth rests upon the fact of a divine revela-

tion. Christianity claims to possess truth which has been historically revealed. We are told that all we need to do is to accept the revelation and the truths it contains will accredit themselves on the ground of their origin. But while this appears perfectly simple and almost final, yet a little careful reflection shows us that it is not. We need to accept the revelation. And what does "accept" mean? The common answer is that it means to believe the revelation. And "believe" in turn means to take as true on grounds which seem sufficient to the one believing. But what are these grounds upon which rest the beliefs which we take for true? They must be either reasons or feelings, or both reasons and feelings. In other words, they can be nothing external to us. This suggests how impossible it is for us to find a standard of validity for our religious conceptions in anything independent of our own thought processes—those of both reason and feeling. The divine revelation has to become divine to us and hence authoritative to us on some grounds. Of course it is possible to stop thinking almost anywhere and declare that we accept our beliefs on the authority of our church, and feel satisfied with them and perfectly certain of their truth. But one would hardly be justified in thus setting his own subjective states up as a standard by which to judge the truth of the great fundamental religious conceptions. Admitting fully the possibility and need of a divine revelation, we see that it cannot be an authority independent of the experience of the individual believer. A revelation does not furnish ready-made knowledge of spiritual things. Knowledge, as we shall see, is always a creation of the mind. All

that a revelation does is to afford us the record of the spiritual experiences of other men and to impart a deepening of our own spiritual consciousness. The real basis for the recognition of the authority of religion lies within the self.

**Experience the Ground of Religion's Authority.** Then, again, we often hear it urged that our assurance of the truth of religion, and hence its authority, rests upon experience. This is undoubtedly true. But we must ask what is meant by experience. Whose experience? And what does the experience mean? As a matter of fact, experience includes about everything. In the psychological sense, experience stands for all that arises in the mind. Of course this cannot be the meaning. We must mean by experience in this connection all that arises in the mind—of knowledge, feeling, and belief—which affords assurance and certainty. Now, when a religious man says concerning the fundamental conceptions of religion, "O, I know these things are true; I have a profound feeling of certainty in regard to them; I cannot doubt these things," and so on, he seems to be giving expression to some very solid certainty. Utterances like these are often taken as of high value. They are generally called appeals to experience and are commonly supposed to be a valid criterion of truth. But a moment's reflection shows us that the appeal is not to experience but only to one element of experience, namely, to feeling. The man feels that these things are true. Now, we would not underestimate the religious value of feeling, but, taken alone, apart from reason and from the practical test of moral values in the outcome, feeling is

generally worthless as a standard of validity. Indeed, the feelings may be worse than worthless when appealed to alone, for in the absence of enlightened reason they may lead to outcomes positively vicious. Highly immoral acts, such as the burning of heretics, have been performed in the name of religious devotion. The feeling of the wretches who did such things was probably that they were acting according to the will of God.

Then, again, if I am to be allowed to urge the strength of my feelings as a valid standard for the truth of my religious beliefs, what of the man who does not share in my feelings and holds different beliefs? Surely, my subjective certainty cannot be urged as authority for him. But if we must admit that individual feelings are no valid basis of religious certainty, may we not urge that the great universal feelings of the human heart certainly are? The word "experience" may be used with reference to individuals, and it may also refer to the way in which great religious values have been established as the net result of the experiences of countless thousands who have believed and trusted and left their contributions to the great common legacy of humanity's faith. In this broad sense I think we may, indeed, urge experience as the ground of religious authority. And the way in which the great religious ideas have determined moral outcomes would lead us to acknowledge experience in this wider sense as a valid ground of religious authority. But we shall return to this matter of the corroboration of experience later.

**The Nature of Belief.** And now, having suggested a preliminary meaning for knowledge, we must ask

about belief. What is belief and how do knowledge and belief differ? No one will deny that a religious man is perfectly justified in saying, "I worship God because I believe that God exists," or, "I believe that when I have prayed to God responses have come." A belief is the acceptance of a thing as true on grounds which seem adequate to the person holding the belief. It follows that the grounds of belief which may seem perfectly adequate to one will seem insufficient to another. The range of one's knowledge will determine the grounds of one's beliefs. Thus, the man who is but little acquainted with the laws of nature or the processes of the human mind will often assign very different grounds for occurrences than the man who has extensive knowledge in these fields. But the grounds which the man of very limited knowledge assigns he believes to be adequate. A widening knowledge may cause him to feel dissatisfied and abandon his earlier explanations, and search for others. Our beliefs, then, are in a sense special to us. We take them for true; that is, if we are intellectually honest, we feel a reasonable degree of assurance that they do interpret reality. We see, then, that the degree of certainty one feels concerning his beliefs may be very high and still the belief may be badly founded, for with larger insight he would perceive the inadequacy of the grounds upon which his belief rests. It appears, then, that the feeling of assurance which a person may have that his beliefs are true cannot be accepted as a standard for valuation in the absence of other reasons for maintaining their truth. This we have already seen.

**Religion Claims Knowledge.** But not only does the



religious man say "I believe"; he says "I know." And he will insist that, when he says he knows, he means actual knowledge. He means that his religious conceptions afford him not only satisfying assurances of certainty, but that his certainty rests upon a veritable apprehension of truth. He would say, "I know these things because they are true." The religious believer would protest against the statement that his knowledge involves simply a relative content and would urge that it has a universal validity.

We reach the heart of the matter here. And the all-important question is whether this claim for the validity of religious knowledge can be sustained in philosophy of religion, where we are required critically to examine the nature and content of our fundamental religious ideas. This brings us back again to a consideration of knowledge. We ask, then, whether, besides religious *faith* and religious *belief*, there is, indeed, religious *knowledge*; in other words, does certainty concerning the world of spiritual realities rest upon the same foundations in experience as certainty concerning the world of objective reality about us? Or, if we admit that religious certainty does not rest upon the same foundations in experience as our ordinary knowledge, does it ground itself in such elements and factors in experience as bring full assurance that our religious thought interprets reality? It must be carefully noted that the validity of religious knowledge is involved in the validity of knowledge in general. If our discussion is to be thorough, we must take up the latter question first and show how we gain certainty that the mental processes which yield us our general knowledge are valid for reality. Per-

haps we may then see that the differences between the grounds of valid knowledge in general and of religious certainty are not nearly so great as is commonly supposed.

**Analysis of Knowledge.** We must therefore attempt a brief inquiry into those processes of the mind which we feel sure yield us knowledge of reality. The simplest form in which knowledge emerges is in the judgment. A judgment is the affirmation of certain relations (matters of agreement or difference) between two or more of our ideas. Thus we see a stove and do not know that it is hot. We approach it or touch it. There are now two ideas both of which have arisen through sensation—that of the stove and the perception of heat. The mind unites them in a judgment, and the judgment is expressed in the words “The stove is hot.” We may go further and, without being anywhere near the stove or seeing it at all, know that there is a fire in it. This knowledge may be based upon a simple process of reasoning, the data for which we gained in sense-perception. Perhaps as we approached the house we saw smoke issuing from the single chimney, and we know that some one has built a fire in the stove. Through inference, then, we may affirm relations between objects of our perception. We gain knowledge then (1) through perception, (2) through an act of the reason based upon data given in perception, and (3) through a kind of direct perception of a simple truth of reason. This last is knowing what is called the “self-evident.” Stating these specifications of knowledge in other words, we may say that we have a degree of certainty amounting to knowledge (1) of that which is imme-

diately given in experience, (2) of that which may be proved through a process of logical inference from data given in experience, (3) of that which is self-evident.

That these are proper designations of knowledge will be generally agreed to. But the question is important whether this is all there is of knowledge. If so, then we shall have to deny to the religious consciousness the possession of any knowledge in a proper sense. For it is very sure that the object of our worship and the fundamental facts of our religious consciousness are not objects of knowledge in the sense that they are known in any of the three ways specified. But is there good reason why we should limit knowledge in this fashion? Are there not some matters concerning which we have a high degree of certainty which cannot be included in the three specifications just enumerated? Let us see. Few would care to deny that the degree of certainty we can feel, for example, about the reliability of an old friend whom we have known for years does not amount to knowledge. At any rate, we act upon the feeling of certainty in the case of our friend in precisely the same fashion as we do upon the most solid items of our sense experience. If the certainty we have concerning our old friend were simply a matter of the feelings, we might question its right to the title of knowledge. But surely it involves the reason as well. We might apply the threefold test of knowledge already suggested to many other matters concerning which we feel the highest degree of certainty without justifying them as knowledge. Thus for example, while suffering from an acute attack of speculative

logic, we might claim that we do not "really know" whether spring will ever come again, for the assurance is not given us in sense experience; nor is the matter capable of proof (except indeed by analogy, which, alas, fails to give full demonstration); nor is it by any means self-evident. While in this frame of mind we might say that we cannot *know* but can only believe that spring will come. But, recovering from the attack, we would probably say, as everybody else does, that we do know spring will come again.

From this it would appear that we often do act upon the assumption that (1) matters given in sense experience, (2) logically provable, or (3) self-evident in the nature of reason, are, after all, not all there is to knowledge. That these are three well-tested pathways to the heights of certainty all will agree. But are we called upon by any sound reason to conclude that there are no other pathways? Of course there is nothing to forbid anyone from setting up these three specifications and declaring them to be the limits of knowledge. But all this can mean is that notice is hereby served that everything beyond will be named belief and not knowledge. But, after all, what has been done more than to mark off two logical classifications and then give directions as to which of our mental furniture shall be put into the one and which into the other? But we repeat that the real issue is not the maintenance of certain logical boundaries between knowledge and belief, but the attaining a degree of certainty which emerges as the result of our own ideas not only by way of formal reason but in the practical experiences of our personal, that is, our social life. Who has the authority to tell us that we

may not take as true whatever brings us a high degree of practical assurance and cannot be shown to be inconsistent with truths already accredited?

But we must keep up the search for a standard of validity in our knowledge. Concerning knowledge of that which is self-evident there is little or nothing to be said. The feeling of certainty emerges at once as a kind of simple resultant. But when we begin to talk about knowing objects because they are immediately given in perception we may find that the apparent simplicity of the process of knowing things in this fashion turns out to be highly complex. And after we have traced it, probably we shall not have the naïve feeling that we perceive reality directly. We learn from psychology that when we perceive an object all that comes to us from the object itself is a certain form of activity which serves as a stimulus or excitation to our minds. In the case of vision it is various shades of light. The physicist assures us that when light rays fall upon the retina of our eyes it is really an impinging of an intensely rapid vibration. He gives us the number in trillions per second for those various degrees of excitation which the mind interprets as different shades of color. It will be noted that the vibrations which reach the retina go no farther. It is some sort of stimulus—molecular motion we are assured—which passes along the soft threadlike nerves to the brain. And on receipt of this stimulus we think. There is always an exact correspondence between what we think and the particular stimulus on the occasion of which the thought arises. We say “always,” but should qualify it by the phrase “under normal condi-

tions of consciousness and nerve sensitiveness." Fever, color-blindness, and other pathological conditions cause the mind to render false interpretations with the result that the ideas arising in consciousness are illusion and error.

But now it must be noted that the thought in the mind is totally different from the object from which the excitation came. All the old conceptions of "images" being formed in the mind, and so the knowledge of the object emerging, are uncritical. So are all ideas of the "impressing" of the mind by objects. Knowledge could never arise in this fashion. From the standpoint of psychological experience, all we can say is that constant and varied stimulus comes to the mind through the sense organs. This stimulus is motion in various forms, without our physical organism, and nerve excitation of various sorts within our physical organism. That certain changes in the molecular structure of the brain take place as thoughts are born we may well believe. Here, then, is a constant stream of sensations taking place in the mind. They become perceptions of objects only by virtue of a considerable activity of the mind which creates them such. How now is knowledge to emerge?

**The Growth of Knowledge.** A mere series of sensations can never become the knowledge of things. Each sensation occurs and is ended and is followed by another. Knowledge comes only when the conscious subject (which is not the series of sensations but which holds them in consciousness) recognizes the sensations, and interprets them with certain thought values. The result is the formation of ideas. These ideas are perceptions and they give that simple

rudimentary knowledge of things which we call perceptual knowledge. But the experience merely of particular things can never give us a knowledge of the world. To know the order of reality about us we need to build up an organized body of knowledge. How is this done? On the basis of the perception of its objects, the mind now establishes various relations among its particular perceptions. It recognizes similarities and differences, groups its ideas and creates class ideas which stand for many similar objects. These are the concepts of psychology, the universal terms of logic. With the general or universal ideas the mind interprets the constant flow of particular perceptions, ever seeking to discover new relations among its ideas.<sup>1</sup>

But in all this we have only an order of thought. We know now that knowledge is not something given to us from without but something built up from within by the constructive activity of the mind itself. This activity of the mind goes on in accordance with certain fundamental principles which lie in the very nature of the reason. These are the so-called categories. It is immaterial whether we say they are postulates or whether they are principles developed in the evolution of rational experience in the early years of consciousness. The important point is that they are the forms or mental principles, in accordance with which the mind in mature consciousness builds up knowledge from the data furnished in perception.

Through this very brief attempt to analyze the

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<sup>1</sup> But it is to be noted that in thus forming concepts or general ideas the mind goes beyond what is given in experience. The process is that of abstraction and generalization. For example, from our particular knowledge of individual men we form the idea of "man" or "mankind" and proceed to use such ideas in the building up of knowledge with perfect assurance that the mental processes are valid for reality.

knowing process we see that there is no way of deducing knowledge from that which is not the product of the mind's activity. Thus far all is mental, and the question may well be asked, How does thought ever grasp objects in the world of reality about us? From mere thoughts in the mind how are we to get to objects in the world; in other words, how are we to know these ideas not simply as mental products but as objects in the external order?

**Evolution of Subject and Object.** In order to answer this question it will be necessary for us to note some facts in the evolution of conscious experience. In full-developed consciousness knowledge rests upon the clear perception of the difference between the knowing subject and the object or thing known. But this sharp antithesis between subject and object, while it characterizes all mental activity in our fully developed consciousness, does not extend back into the early beginnings of experience. There is good reason to believe that as our conscious life begins to dawn in the earliest years of childhood, its first element is that of sensation, not as leading immediately to the perception of objects, but sensation as vague feeling. Then different varieties and intensities of feeling arise—differentiations, to use the current word. These are the basis for the development of the conscious life. And soon certain of these feelings, now fully distinguished as differing from each other, are associated by the mind. Those whose content is most vivid and immediately presented are grouped and in time are regarded as the center of those activities which produce other feelings. This is the beginning of a consciousness of self. Consciousness grows gradually;



but in time a certain set of feelings is thus referred to the self and contrasted with another set not so referred. In this way the fundamental distinction between the self and the not-self is born in the increasing varieties of feeling. The sensitiveness of the physical organism determines the possible variety of feeling and the increasing differentiation in feeling marks the rise in the level of the conscious life. The critical analysis of knowledge which has been current since the time of Kant ordinarily begins with full-fledged experience. It has been assumed that the original data of experience are a lot of sensations. These are analyzed and found to be the work of the mind based upon certain excitation received by the mind through the senses. Thus knowledge is expounded very properly as the product of the mind's activity. There can be no *things* for us except as these things have first given rise to thoughts in the mind. Unless the thoughts are born in the mind, the things of which the thoughts are assumed to be mental counterparts could never become objects of our knowledge. But when the thoughts are born in the mind, how can we ever transcend our experience, which is mental, and gain certainty that the thoughts adequately and truthfully represent an order of objective reality? Here, then, is the deadlock which must somehow be broken if our knowledge is to be accredited as valid for reality.

The standard attempts to solve this great problem are familiar to the student of philosophy. From the time of Locke, Hume, and Kant it has been wrestled with from both sides. On the one hand the attempt has been made to deduce the subject from the object,

to ground the order of thought in the order of things. On the other hand it was sought to ground the objective world of things in thought. And when this second attempt was confined to finite thought or lost itself in impersonal abstractions like "Thought" and "Cosmic Thought," the outcome was the same. And that outcome was either to fail to find sufficient ground for the reality of the thing, on the one hand, or for the validity of thought on the other. In both cases a skepticism resulted.

It would take us too far into the field of metaphysics to reason our way step by step to the solution of this problem. And if we did, we would be brought to the point where we would have to acknowledge that there is absolutely no way of bringing the order of thought and the order of reality together on the plane of reason alone. For thought cannot transcend itself. The outcome, by the pathway of reason alone, is a general skepticism, or the inability to find adequate grounds for the validity of knowledge. This was seen in the result of Kant's Critique of the Pure Reason. But there is a vindication of knowledge. We can establish its validity. There is a way to satisfy ourselves that our mental experiences which yield us such subjective certainty are an essentially truthful representation of an objective order of reality. But in order to find that way we may have to give up some beliefs for which we have entertained great respect—considerably more respect perhaps than they were ever entitled to.

**Logical Demonstration and Knowledge.** And the first of these is the notion that real knowledge emerges only as the result of demonstration or proof. This is

a superstition of the intellect, and the sooner we are clear of it the better. The plan of doubting everything which cannot be cogently inferred according to the laws of logic doomed Descartes to an exceedingly narrow area of certainty, and it will confine us in like manner if we let it. It is *practically* abandoned in all fruitful scientific thinking. True, it applies in mathematics and wherever we deal with abstract values. But as soon as we begin to build up our knowledge of an order of objective reality we have to abandon it. The finest triumphs in scientific thinking have come from a use of the imagination, from splendid ventures into regions where thought could never go had it not forsworn loyalty to merely formal logic. The hypothesis put forward at first as an act of intellectual faith, under the slow revelations of reality in experience begins to afford the certainty which deserves the name knowledge. And if it does not do this, it is ere long discarded as no longer of value. Its validity or worthlessness is in time vindicated by the practical logic of life.

**Assumption and Knowledge.** Then, too, we must be willing not only to discard the hoary superstition about knowledge and logical proof, but we must see the absolute need of making some great assumptions. These will furnish the only emergence from the subject-object dilemma. They themselves will find ample justification in the fact that without them there can be no accrediting of any of our knowledge as valid for reality. These assumptions are such as the following: First, that even though our senses do deceive us at times, yet, on the whole, they are to be trusted, for they do give us reliable data from a great order of

objective reality, which, though known only through our thought, is not the product of *our* thought. Second, that this great order of objective reality is a rational order. We assume this simply because we know that we know it; and because we know it we conclude that it is knowable, that is, capable of being grasped, and to some degree represented and interpreted by our rational thinking.

This assumption seems natural and inevitable in view of the fact that in the evolution of self-consciousness the world of things is at first presented only in feeling and then in simple sense perception. The perception of qualities of things and the distinction between the knowing subject and known object emerges late, after our conscious life has developed to the higher levels. These are the great assumptions, postulates—call them what you will—which we simply have to accept as true before we can go on to such a discussion of our subjective experience as will lead us anywhere in establishing its validity for objective reality. The simple truth is that we know that we know some things. Complete skepticism is irrational and absurd, for the skeptic must at least know that he does not know. No one urges that knowledge is complete. We know full well that it is partial and fragmentary. Our practical problem is to vindicate the knowledge we have. And what shall be the great principle through which we vindicate it or establish some basis of validity? How shall we know the truth—not merely know that we feel certain? For knowing the truth means that our thoughts agree in the main with reality.

**Knowledge Tested by an Appeal to Values.** The prin-

ciple by which we may test the validity of our knowledge is this: How does our knowledge fit in with life and serve the great practical needs of life? Instead of talking about our knowledge satisfying the demands of logical completeness or revealing "ultimate reality," let us, rather, ask how our knowledge enables us to realize the great rational and moral values of life. Life itself affords the best vindication of this principle. The correction of imperfections in plans and errors in hypotheses comes through the gaining of better knowledge. The better knowledge corrects the faults and errors. The knowledge is better presumably because it more nearly approximates reality. The knowledge was *recognized* as better because it more adequately met some practical need or fulfilled some end, and the faulty knowledge was shown to be faulty in the testings of life, and out of life's practical interests the improved knowledge was born. Hence we may truly say that there is a revelation of reality in life itself. But the manner in which this revelation of reality is made will be determined, of course, by the limitations of our mental life. It will be in terms of our experience. Just as there is, as we shall see, a necessary anthropomorphism in thinking about God the Ultimate Personal Reality, so it appears to be necessary that what we shall grasp of an order of reality beyond our thought-world shall be fixed or determined by the forms and limitations of our mental experience and as such will be far from complete. We cannot transcend the finiteness of our mental experience; and if our finite thought is to grasp reality at all, it will only be within the forms of our experience which have become common and familiar to us,

as the real is being constantly made known to us in our personal life.

And this revelation of reality in life itself has often been overlooked because men fancied that there is only one faculty for the perception of truth, and that one the reason. But man not only reasons but he feels and wills. And while there is good cause, as we have already urged, to regard the individual feelings and volitions with suspicion, yet we must not forget that there are the great representative and universal feelings not of particular men but of all men. These have to be reckoned with in any estimate of great life values.

But some one may now object that if we go on after this fashion we shall abandon reason as a test of truth, which will never do for a discussion professing to be philosophy. Is the test of practical usefulness indeed a standard of validity? The answer must be that it certainly is, but we do not mean that it is the only standard. We must admit that reason leads us toward truth and not away from it. And any belief which is logically inconsistent with other great beliefs whose validity has been vindicated by their value and reasonableness must be pronounced without proper foundation. Reason is not abandoned or neglected when we urge the test of practical values as the standard of validity, for we shall still lean heavily upon rational judgments in seeking to determine what the practical values really are. And feeling also leads us toward the truth and not away from it. And by feeling we repeat we do not mean some particular emotion of the individual, but the great common and universal feelings of the human heart.

**Knowledge Vindicated in Experience.** The conclusion toward which we have been advancing is that whatever meets the demands of our *whole experience*—that is, the deepest needs of our entire personal life—must be accepted as essentially truthful revelations of reality. And experience is to be interpreted not by its particular or individual aspects but by its universal elements. Reason has this universal character, and so have the great common feelings of humanity. The practical needs of the moral life are also a common factor in our experience. When we affirm that our knowledge of reality is vindicated in experience we mean, therefore, that we must accept as true those convictions which (1) are *felt* to be true, (2) which harmonize with our rational thinking, and (3) which are valuable and helpful in serving the great moral ends of character and the enrichment of our personal life.

In view of these considerations, we repeat the question propounded earlier in the discussion and ask who has the authority to tell us we may not take as adequate representations of reality, affording us the highest degree of certainty, those great convictions born out of life, which meet the universal needs of our moral being—those convictions which are demanded by the great common feelings of men, and which reason shows are not inconsistent with other convictions that vindicate themselves in like manner?

In view of these considerations, we also repeat that it is possible for anyone wishing to do so to define knowledge as “that which is self-evident in the nature of reason, and that which may be demonstrated from data given in experience,” and, having so defined it,

serve an injunction upon us from using the word other than in harmony with this definition. But if we grant this for the sake of the argument, it would only follow that we have agreed to name a great deal of our mental furniture belief and very little of it knowledge. And yet the degree of certainty we felt would not be materially impaired by this verbal performance. The binomial theorem would be an item of knowledge, but the conviction of the Divine Existence and the doctrine of evolution would be beliefs—but pretty well grounded beliefs, by the way—and beliefs affording a considerable degree of assurance of the truth.

**Knowledge and Belief—Conclusions.** Let us in conclusion gather up some of the significant points which our discussion has yielded.

1. We conclude that there are no hard-and-fast boundaries between knowledge and belief. Little is gained by seeking to maintain them. The important matter is the attaining of certainty on grounds which will stand the tests of our rational and moral experience.

2. Valid grounds for certainty cannot be found in individual feeling, though the great common and universal feelings of men are important facts and must be reckoned with.

3. Reason alone cannot vindicate our knowledge of reality, but leads to a practical skepticism.

4. Our convictions are vindicated as true in proportion as they are seen to be life values. There is a revelation of reality in our experience, though it is conditioned by the forms of our finite consciousness.

5. Though reason and feeling are not sufficient in themselves, yet we need both these elements of our



experience to corroborate. They both must be taken as leading us toward truth.

6. The higher degrees of certainty grow out of our total experience. Our hopes may grow into beliefs, and beliefs gain a degree of certainty which, whether we call it knowledge or not, brings deep assurance that they are true and reveal the Infinite Reality. This verification in experience comes through life. We live by such assurance as we have that our deep convictions of God and his relation to us are the eternal truth, and in experience also the assurance deepens. On the higher levels of certainty the soul needs no outward or material witness for the reality of the things of the spiritual life. None is possible. Thus we may come to know God by a direct communion of spirit with Spirit. This certainty is not reached by rational thinking, nor is it wholly verified in that way. It grows and generally comes along after the soul has earnestly striven to know God. Concerning it but little can be said in the way of philosophical explanation. It is an experience of the inner life, and as an experience, its value can be known only as one enters into it. It was in some such sense as this that Paul, at the close of a life in which the certainty of God's presence had been deepening as the years fled on, said, "I know him whom I have believed."

**Faith.** In a very true sense there is an element of faith in all our knowledge. We feel certain that we can and do know reality. We believe with confidence that there is a revelation of reality in experience, and that those deep convictions which prove themselves to be important values in our intellectual and moral life

are true. Even our scientific knowledge rests upon a substratum of faith.

But we are concerned at present with faith as a means to religious knowledge. While the word "faith" is often used in the sense of the content of our beliefs, yet we ought to distinguish faith from belief. While belief is the holding of certain convictions as true on grounds which satisfy our rational and emotional nature, faith is the whole personal relationship of the soul to the object of its trust and love. "Faith is an act of the spiritual and self-conscious person, who affirms the religious values, and God the Supreme Value, to be essential to his own soul and to the meaning of the world. It is a movement of the self, conscious and free, which expresses the needs and states the postulates of the spiritual life. Faith so conceived is neither partial nor wavering, but speaks of full assurance and an abiding ideal."<sup>2</sup>

In its genesis faith comes from the deep needs and demands of the human soul. Men seek to know God, and make the supreme venture of faith, because they feel their helplessness and need. It is not because they feel they must comprehend God, but because of the deeper demands of their inner life that men are impelled to search for the Divine. There is an impersonal quality, a disinterestedness, in scientific knowledge. Men seek to know because of their desire to understand the universe, but religion always centers about personal needs and interests.

We note, further, that religious faith is claimed by men only under certain conditions. It involves an attitude of the soul toward God—a personal relation-

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<sup>2</sup> Galloway, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 330.

ship expressing itself in trust, confidence, submission, and expectation. This attitude is the necessary antecedent, we learn, of certain experiences of the inner life, which, so far as we can discern, would not have taken place had it not been for the preceding act of venture, surrender, and trust to which we give the name faith. To this act there is response which comes in the form of an experience of the inner life. The form of this experience cannot be prescribed, for it varies greatly according to the age, training, and temperament of the person experiencing it. But its essential content is much the same. The experience usually results in a feeling of spiritual rest and confidence. The person believes that he has a larger insight into God's nature and will. A deep desire to respond to the divine love and conform to the divine will is born, and this desire serves as a motive power in the attaining of higher moral ideals. Religious men have confidently believed for ages that such an experience of the inward life is the response of God to their faith.

**The Certainties of Faith.** And out of such experiences of the inner life certainty is born. It is hardly necessary to point out that such certainty is not the fruit of reason, and therefore is not verifiable by the processes of demonstration or logical proof. There is no good reason why we should not call such certainty knowledge, provided we remember that the data of experience upon which it rests are generally those of feeling and will and not those of sense perception. And we find a counterpart of such knowledge on the higher levels of personal living. Thus when one person surrenders himself in trust to another in a

close friendship a knowledge of the qualities and sympathies of one's friend grows not as the result of logical thinking. To justify our absolute confidence in our friend by processes of reason might prove to be quite impossible, and yet we would keep on affirming that we knew the friend as perfectly trustworthy for all that. Some one will urge that again this is not properly knowledge, but should be called belief. And in answer we repeat that whether we use the one term or the other, the degree of certainty we feel is the important matter.

After all, the question is one of the recognition of real values. Friendship means trustworthiness, and the recognition of that value is knowledge. Such knowledge comes not of single acts of the reason but is a kind of moral resultant of a great deal of life-experience. Of other values we may be very sure. We know that certain masterpieces in literature, art, or music are of deep significance. But who wishes to debate the matter? If a person out of a poverty of emotional as well as rational experience cannot see the truth and beauty of the masterpieces, then there is nothing to say except that such knowledge is not his. Life itself—that is, experience—must become richer and fuller in order to afford the needed discernment.

But now some one may object when we thus seek to ground religious knowledge upon personal experience of the inward life, for is not such inward experience a variable? How can we secure a sure and steadfast foundation when we thus build upon the shifty ground of individual experience?

In answer we repeat that there are inward expe-

riences which are particular and isolated and there is inward experience which is practically universal. We are speaking of the great common experiences of the spiritual life—those which, while they may vary greatly in their form, are essentially identical in their content or meaning. These guarantee the spiritual community of humanity. When we study the way in which Christian faith, for example, has been wrought out in the lives of countless men and women, we gain insight into this vast community of experience.

Jesus Christ has been for centuries the center of the affections and personal loyalties of myriads. And the truths revealed in historic Christianity have been personally appropriated and lived by those who have through their faith become a part of the mighty spiritual movement. With the infinite variety of detail there is a vast community in the type of inward experience which has followed Christian faith. And from it there has been born a degree of confidence and assurance which has amounted to a high degree of certainty. And in this deeper verification through personal spiritual experience, the words of religious faith, “I *know* him whom I have believed,” find their profoundest meaning.

#### RECOMMENDED READING

- J. Ward—The Realm of Ends, Lecture XIX.  
 A. J. Balfour—The Foundations of Belief, Part IV.  
 Francis J. McConnell—Religious Certainty.  
 Borden P. Bowne—Theory of Thought and Knowledge.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD

IN these studies we are attempting to set forth some phases of a philosophy of Christianity. It need hardly be suggested that this attempt cannot be one in which we shall lay any claim to exhaustive or complete treatment. We must content ourselves with the less ambitious and probably more useful task of outlining the broad fundamental conceptions of the Christian revelation, so that they may be seen to be in harmony with other truth. While the essential teachings of Christianity are few and may be stated in a brief compass, yet they are of the deepest significance. We shall seek to offer such exposition of these teachings that they may be seen to be in rational harmony with other great truths of the universe which have been won through the achievements of modern science.

The teaching of Christianity is that the Eternal Reality, the ground of all being, is a Personal Spirit, and that this Divine Personal Spirit, of whose infinite thought and will all things are manifestations, is beneficent and kind, sympathetic and loving in his attitude toward men. Indeed, so tender is the Infinite Spirit's affection for mankind that we can express the relation in human speech only by the use of the word "Father," which stands for one of the

closest and dearest relationships of our human life. And, further, Christianity teaches that this Infinite Spirit—the Eternal God who stands thus in this relationship of love to men—makes himself known in human experience and has been manifested in Jesus Christ; that in Christ we have a supreme revelation of this loving God, and that through Christ as the revealer of the divine love and mercy men may enter into spiritual relations with the Infinite God.

**Christianity and Philosophy.** The most fundamental and determinative characteristic of any religion is its conception of the Divine. And while we have here the doctrine of God taught by Christianity—a doctrine which can be stated thus simply and practically—we know that this Christian idea of God has not remained unchallenged by philosophy. It must be our endeavor so to set forth the meaning of this Christian conception of the Divine, so to expound the various ways in which God has been and is revealing himself, that the essential harmony of Christian teaching, when adequately interpreted, with the other truths of philosophy and science may be seen. Christianity is not a philosophy, but Christianity is capable of being interpreted philosophically. Truth will in the last analysis satisfy the entire personality and represent the whole of experience. This means that our convictions will find their accrediting as truth in the great practical values of our moral life in the universal feelings of humanity as well as in rational reflection. Philosophy is supposed to lead us to truth by way only of the logical and the rational. As a matter of fact, that is, strictly speaking, impossible, as we have seen. Whenever the search for truth has

been by way of the reason alone, the outcome has been a failure to find adequate grounds for knowledge with consequent skepticism. Philosophy needs the "practical reason," and in the "logic of life" some conceptions reveal their truth which would otherwise forever remain in doubt. All this modern philosophic thought has abundantly demonstrated. And if philosophy, which is so predominantly rational in its method, needs the other elements in experience, it is certain that religion, which is a matter of feeling and moral conduct, must have the sanctions of rational reflection. And after ages of hostility and misunderstanding we are at last finding a better basis of concord for our philosophy and our religion. Indeed, there ought to be no discord. Our religions no less than our philosophic certainty rests upon the deep, underlying conviction of the unity and harmony of all truth. For religion to attempt to ignore philosophy is to deprive herself of a most valuable source of strength.

**Human Thought about God a Gradual Development.** As we trace the growth of religion we must not forget that we are studying the thoughts of men concerning God. When, therefore, we discover that there has been a progressive development of the conception of God—an evolution, if you please, of that fundamental religious idea—we must not fall into the fallacy which has beset the thinking of many good people who dread the word "evolution," especially when it is used in relation to religion. These persons seem to think that God is being made the subject of the evolution. This is a curious misunderstanding, and when combined with the erroneous notion that the evolution of the various forms of organic life excludes the



idea of Divine creation, evolution does indeed seem to be a most dangerous doctrine. But this misunderstanding clears away when we remember that there has been no progressive development of God, but only a gradual advance *in men's thinking about God*. The Eternal God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

**Begins with Primitive Conceptions.** The history of religious thought is the record of men's efforts to grasp something of the nature of the Divine Being and to comprehend his relation to them. In the childhood of the race men thought of their gods as greater than themselves in power, yet a good deal like themselves in other respects. The primitive sacrifice was generally a gift of food. By some early peoples the food was left at a sacred spot, and when it disappeared (being devoured by wild animals) it was thought the god had come down and eaten it. Later the sacrifice was burned, and then it was the savor, or finer essence, of the food of which the god partook. This idea is reflected in Gen. 8. 21 and Ezra 6. 10. Compare Ezek. 6. 13.

**Mythology.** Not only were the gods thought of as having an appetite for food but also having the lusts of men. The idea of divinities having sexual relations with human beings appears in many primitive religions, notably Egyptian, Greek, and Early Semitic<sup>1</sup> (see Gen. 6. 1 and 2). Jealousy and rage were very commonly attributed to gods. The mythologies of Greece and Rome afford ample illustration. See also

<sup>1</sup>Instances from Greek mythology are numerous, for example, Zeus and Leda. The male god usually appeared as an animal. For a Semitic instance, Ishtar and Gilgamesh may be cited (see Jastrow's *Religion of the Babylonians and Assyrians*, p. 481ff.).

the strange interpolation Exod. 4. 24. In Gen. 11. 5 Jehovah is represented as coming down to see how the tower of Babel is getting along. In Exod. 10. 20 and 27; 11. 10, etc., he is represented as hardening the heart of the Egyptian king and then sending fresh plagues to compel him to free the Israelites.

Here we find the ascription of various human limitations and imperfections to the divine. This pervades all mythology, and is present to a degree in the Old Testament records of the early times. The Hebrew writers, it must be remembered, had no idea of cause and effect similar to that in modern thought. But everything which appeared unexplainable was ascribed directly to Jehovah. The obstinacy of Pharaoh seemed to the Hebrew Chronicler inexplicable upon any other supposition than that Jehovah had "hardened his heart."

**Anthropomorphism.** Anthropomorphism is the name given to this way of conceiving the divine in terms of our human life. This word comes from the two Greek words, *ἄνθρωπος*, meaning "human being," and *μορφή*, "form." And the word is applied to all thought of God which conceives him in the form or relations of human experience. It will be seen that if we are to think of God at all, we must think of him somehow in terms of our own life. The reason for it lies in the nature of our thinking, which cannot transcend human experience. We say that "God is a Spirit," but the idea of "pure spirit" is vague and unreal until a content of meaning is given to it. And, of course, the meaning must be drawn from our human experience, for it can come from nowhere else.

**The Lower and the Higher.** In primitive peoples expe-

rience remains wholly upon the lower levels of the material and physical. Hence in all primitive religions men think of the divine in the terms of their own crude life. Naturally, this means the ascribing of human imperfections to the divine beings. This is the lower anthropomorphism. It is inevitable among peoples who think of their god as localized. Along with this often goes a rude conception of the divine as existing in human form. And we see the gods depicted as men of heroic size and of great strength. Vulcan was a powerful but somewhat deformed blacksmith. Mercury was lithe in figure with wings on his feet which lent an incredible swiftness to his movements. Of course there is symbolic imagery here, but the fact remains that in thinking of their divinities early men pictured the divine in the physical forms of the human. And in the Old Testament we read of Jehovah's forehead, his hand, and eye, and foot. Moses is not permitted to behold Jehovah's face, but may look at his "back parts" (Exod. 33. 23), and so on. The ancient law of the Decalogue forbade the making of any images or pictures of Jehovah. And this one fact is of immense significance in its relation to the progress of Hebrew thought toward an ethical conception of God. For while the early conception of Jehovah preserved all that is valuable in the lower anthropomorphism, it paved the way for a worthier conception of the Divine Being. The painters of the Middle Ages, and even as far down as the Renaissance, were in the habit of portraying the Almighty. Michael Angelo painted God as an elderly man with a long flowing beard, looking down on the world from the clouds. Of course these conceptions are outgrown

when men learn the meaning of personal spirit. Thinking of God in human form and ascribing to him various limitations of our earthly life are the lower aspects of anthropomorphism.

There is a higher anthropomorphism. This consists in thinking of God not in the terms of the physical and material side of our life, not in ascribing to him human limitations and imperfections, but, rather, conceiving him in terms of all that is highest in the moral life of men. When we ascribe to God in fullness and perfection all those moral virtues which glorify human life, we have truly not escaped from anthropomorphism, but we have left behind those crudities which mark the lower levels of human thinking about God.

Without doubt the highest conception of God of which the human mind is capable is that which is expressed by the first words of the Lord's prayer—"Our Father." What does this mean? It means that the Infinite God stands in a moral, that is, a personal, relation to us, and that this personal relation includes all those tender feelings of love and sympathy which we associate with the paternal relationship. The word "father" means provider and protector in our human family economy. When we address God with the words "Our Father," if we have a realization of their meaning, we affirm our faith that the Infinite One stands in the closest personal relationship to us in love and helpfulness. This too is anthropomorphism, for we cannot escape the human molds of thought, but it is anthropomorphism of a lofty kind.

**Comprehension of the Divine Possible Only in Terms of Human Experience.** We certainly cannot think of the

infinite except in terms of our finite experience. When we affirm that God is a Spirit the question follows, What is spirit? The answer must always be in terms of our human life. The highest answer makes use of the moral relationships of life, not simply the physical and material existences. The biblical writers speak constantly of the spiritual life. They seek to make real the inner experiences of the soul, and in doing so they must use the terms of the sense life. This is why there is so much language in the Bible which must be interpreted not literally for what it says, but logically for what it means. For example, the apostle John, in the book of Revelation, has written a wonderful pen picture of the New Jerusalem. He tells us of streets of pure gold! There is a sea of glass mingled with fire! The walls of the city are made of jasper and beautiful jewels of all sorts. The city is twelve thousand furlongs square! What does it all mean? It means that human speech is here struggling to express that which lies beyond the range of our human experience. And in order to do this he must talk of those things within the realm of our knowledge and experience which are most beautiful, rare, and valuable.

The apostle must needs talk of gold and jasper and opals and furlongs, but he means something infinitely greater. And it is so when we seek in the words of human speech to express some conception of the Infinite God. We would not have our thought of God lose all traces of the human molds in which it has been cast. For this would be to take from us those characteristics of the Divine which keep God close to us. Verily, the incarnation itself is a gracious con-

descension of the Eternal One to that need of the human mind and heart to think of him and to love him as our own.

To sum up then. The principle underlying all anthropomorphism is, as we have seen, that when the human mind attempts to form some conceptions of the Infinite it is found to be impossible to transcend finite experience. It is necessary, therefore, that we think and speak of the Divine in terms of the human. On all levels of culture men attribute to God the highest ideals of which they are capable. On the lower levels of civilization the highest ideals of men are those of physical power. The gods, therefore, are thought of as endowed with extraordinary strength. Before any well-developed moral ideals had emerged, men thought of their gods as living a kind of magnified material existence. They must travel from place to place, but could go like the Valkyries or Hermes, with incredible swiftness. They must eat and drink like men, but in Valhalla they drank from immense golden flagons. Among the Greeks the gods ate ambrosia and drank nectar.

The loftiest moral ideals were embodied in the thinking of the Hebrew people. They were superior to all other peoples of antiquity in their conception, first, of the unity of the Divine Being, and, second, in the moral relations which they thought of as existing between God and themselves. But even on the plane of moral relationships existing between God and men, human thought finds its range, of course, only within the realms of finite experience. And so the higher anthropomorphisms are still ways of conceiving God in terms of human life. But we no longer find the

crude notions of the lower levels, but the conception of God's nature and relation to men is conceived in terms of all that is noblest and best in human life. But it will be noted that, however advanced the idea of God's relation to men becomes, it never gets beyond the boundaries of human experience. We who are trained under the Christian idea of God learn the meaning of loyalty and sacrifice and devotion on the plane of finite experience, and then we enlarge the range of these great virtues and learn to think of the Eternal God as related to us in a fashion not essentially different from the way in which we are related to each other. Truly, "We love him because he first loved us," but no man ever learned to love God who had not first learned human love by looking into a human face—the face of his mother in the days of childhood and the faces of others in later years.

This means that we first come to know God and to revere and love him not through any strange or mysterious revelations of himself as divine, but through the ways in which he has made himself known in human life. Our lessons of divinity come, therefore, from an experience of humanity. It is always so. The early disciples knew their Master first of all as Jesus of Galilee, who walked and ate and slept with them, who was wearied and disappointed and abused and cruelly slain. They loved him as their own in the dear fellowship of the human life. Later on their knowledge of him as the Divine Lord began to grow, but it was on the basis of what they already knew of him as the Teacher of Galilee and Judæa. With the fullest acknowledgment of the vast difference between the divine and the human, it is safe to say that

the revelations of the divine which come to us, and the knowledge of the divine which we gain thereby, will come by way of some of the experiences of our human life.



## CHAPTER V

### THE MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS OF PERSONALITY

THE conclusions reached in the last chapter bring us face to face with the problem of how we are to think of God and of his relation to the world, both the world of things and the world of persons. Theism teaches that God is a Person. But what is a person? Where do we get our conception of what a person is? The answer must be, From our experience with ourselves and with other human persons in the various relationships of life. In other words, in thinking of the Divine Personality we must begin by asking, What is the meaning of human personality?

**The Fundamental Elements of Personality.** We say that a man is a person. The content of that idea must be explored. Of course all thought of material form being essential to personality is to be dismissed as crude and uncritical. Personality means, in the first place, conscious existence. But understanding conscious as ability to feel, this applies to all living creatures. Conscious must therefore mean not only sensibility but cognition—a thinking, not simply a feeling intelligence. But we have not yet transcended the brute creation. Why is a man a person and a dog not a person? The dog surely has individuality, that is, a certain set of habits, peculiarities, and traits which make him the particular dog he is. All dogs

are a good deal alike in their habits and instincts. We say it is their canine, or dog, nature. But in addition to their dog nature there is also the individuality which can be recognized on acquaintance with a particular dog. But when we come to man we find something more. The man too has his traits and habits common to all men—his human nature. He has also the traits, habits, and tastes—physical and mental—which make him the particular man that he is. This is his individuality. But there is something else the man has which we have no good reason to believe the animals have. It is a rational consciousness, not only of the world of things and persons about him, but of *himself* as a particular existence apart from all other objects of his consciousness, both things and conscious beings. This we call selfhood, and it is distinctive and unique.

But even though the self is unique, selfhood is a gradual development amid the social relations of our human life. And some tracing of the development is possible. The mental life begins on the low plane of feeling, which is at first subrational. From this low consciousness the first beginnings of a consciousness of self emerge. This consciousness of self develops largely from the fact of differences in feeling and from the recognition that some feelings are to be associated more intimately with the self than others. Thus the fundamental distinction between the self, or subject, and the nonself, or object, emerges.<sup>1</sup> And if the human individual exhibits in a few years the main features of a mental development which required ages

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<sup>1</sup> The development of the mental life from an evolutionary point of view is significantly treated by L. T. Hobbouse in his *Mind in Evolution*.

for the race, then consciousness of selfhood is the result of a long process of growth in which the human mind, beginning on the low plane of instinctive feelings and impulses, slowly developed a full self-consciousness. The factors in this development were, of course, the constantly increasing activity of the mind over against a rational and social environment. And this development of a consciousness of self is, so far as we know, unique, and capacity for it, as well as the actual attainment of it, differentiates man from all the other animal creation.

**Personality and Freedom.** Thus far the factors essential to personality are fairly indisputable. We must now note another element, which is self-determination, or freedom. This means that the activity of the mind in thought and volition is not wholly determined by causes outside of the mind. As a matter of fact, many of our thoughts and acts are more or less mechanically determined, but the power of freedom, or self-determination, must be demanded as a fundamental and indispensable element of personality. This brings us to the much-debated question of mental and moral freedom. It is one of the greatest questions of philosophy. While it is an old question, it is by no means outgrown. Some problems become obsolete because of the change of life conditions out of which they originated. Not so with this question of freedom. It is so vital and fundamental to our moral life that no thorough consideration of ethics or religious philosophy can be offered without either assuming it or tacitly denying it. And every age needs a restatement of the answer to such a great problem as this. Its tremendous importance in our present inquiry

must be our reason for taking it up. Of course it is impossible to present here any full justification of the grounds upon which we believe in freedom. We must, however, point out the directions in which may be found those assurances or reasons which justify us in rejecting all doctrines that represent our thoughts and acts as mechanically determined by causes external to ourselves. If we believe in freedom, we ought to know the grounds in reason upon which that belief rests.

**Meaning of Freedom.** Putting the matter in familiar phraseology, freedom means just this, that you and I, under normal conditions, can act without our acts being necessitated by forces above, beyond, or apart from us. And as our rational activity is controlled by our motives, it means that we have some part in the creation of our own motives. We speak of acts as free, and a moment's reflection shows us that the free act must have proceeded from the free thought. Of course not every act we perform is preceded by an act of our own mental initiative. Most of our acts are more or less determined. They may be, as we say, performed mechanically without particular thought. They may be instinctive, or habitual, and they often result immediately from all that we have become through previous decisions and acts. But granting all this, freedom means the power of doing some things on our own initiative, without such compulsion of antecedents that the act is necessitated and could not be otherwise. After we have acted, a consistent determinist must believe that we could not have done otherwise than we did. The advocate of freedom must believe that we could.

**Meaning of Determinism.** The denial of all free initiative in our mental and moral life is known as determinism. This doctrine may be summed up in a few words as follows: All actions which appear to be performed from free choice are the results of motives, and the strongest motives determine the action. A particular act, therefore, takes place first as the result of the appropriate volition; but the volition itself has been really determined by the nature or constitution of the individual and his environment. Motives which spring from the whole physical (and mental) situation thus act and react, and it is always the strongest motives which result in what we may fancy is a freely willed act. It cannot be denied that not a little current scientific thinking is deterministic. Science aims more and more at an all-inclusive system. Its great generalization is the universality of causal connection, and this causal connection is conceived in mechanical fashion as dynamic determination. Serious objections to this are not met so long as this principle of mechanical determination was applied to life below the level of the human. But with the attempt to apply the biological principles of evolution, in connection with the mechanical doctrine of the conservation of energy, to human life with its vast network of moral relations, formidable difficulties emerged, for as soon as human thought and conduct were brought under the sway of the principle of mechanical causation, it meant that our thinking and willing, and therefore all our activity, are to be interpreted in accordance with this principle; in other words, that human activity is but one phase of the cosmic activity, and all is determined in the great unbroken chain of

mechanical causation. This means that a consistent and thoroughgoing naturalism applies the principle of the conservation of energy to all existence and no exception is made of what we call the moral life. And it is evident that belief in freedom does not fit into a mechanical view of the universe which includes human experience. Freedom must therefore be dismissed as a baseless doctrine. Haeckel does this, and puts the denial plainly enough. He says: "The freedom of the will is not an object for critical scientific observation at all, for it is pure dogma based on an illusion and has no real existence. . . . Each act of the will is as surely determined by the act of the individual and as dependent upon the momentary condition of his environment, as every other psychic activity."

**Weakness of Determinism.** There are several very serious objections to this view. They may be summed up in the general statement that any deterministic doctrine consistently applied to human life compels the conclusion that our acts are necessitated. They are not consequences of our mental activity, free within certain limits, but are resultants from forces beyond our control. Thus in no degree do we determine ourselves, but we are determined. The inevitable outcome of the consistent application of such a view as this to human life is to destroy the fundamental grounds of reason and to cancel the basis of moral responsibility. Determinism is not often stated with the consistent frankness which Haeckel exhibits. Indeed, there is a good deal of half-hearted determinism in which attempts are made to maintain the doctrine but to modify its effects by insistence that the

determinism is "inward" and not "outward." But all attempts to point out an essential difference between a dynamic determination "from within" and such determination "from without" have ended in failure. This is for the reason that unless determinism is affirmed as absolute, some room will be left for free self initiative, which means the granting of an element of freedom. This a consistent scientific materialism cannot allow.

Here is a statement of mechanical determinism which has the virtue of being consistent. It is the summary M. Bergson makes of the doctrine in the terms used in expounding the kinetic theory of matter: "As the principle of the conservation of energy has been assumed to admit of no exception, there is not an atom either in the nervous system, or in the whole universe, where position is not determined by the sum of the mechanical actions which other atoms exert upon it. And the mathematician who knew the position of the molecules or atoms of a human organism at a given moment, as well as the position and motion of all the atoms in the universe capable of influencing it, could calculate with unfailing certainty the past, present, and future of the person to whom this organism belongs just as one predicts an astronomical phenomenon."

This, surely, is the mechanical doctrine of human life pure and unadulterated. But on this view it must be noted that the material points of which it is alleged that the universe is composed are subject solely to forces of attraction and repulsion, arising from these points themselves and possessing intensities which depend only on their distances. Hence the relative

positions of the material points at a given moment—whatever be their nature—would be strictly determined by what it was at a preceding moment. Thus the energy of the universe remaining constant (according to a mechanical interpretation of the conservation of energy), nothing can in the least degree influence the movement of any body but the impact upon it of another body. And, therefore, mental initiative or creative thought on the plane of the human is quite inconceivable, for it would surely increase or diminish the existing quantity of energy. In this fashion M. Bergson pushes the mechanical view of life to its logical end and shows how the principle of the conservation of energy applied to the mental life causes the deterministic view to break down.<sup>2</sup>

**Determinism and Truth.** Another serious objection to the belief in determinism is that it leaves us no ground upon which to recognize truth from error. It is a fundamental assumption of all rational thinking that our senses bring us trustworthy reports from an order of reality. Of course they do deceive us occasionally, but we absolutely must and do assume their general reliability. Without this all attempts to build up knowledge are at an end. So also of our mental faculties. The powers and processes of our mind must be trustworthy. We must assume that reason leads us toward truth and not away from it. But what about error? There is no denying that it is a fact of our mental life. Some of our supposed knowledge turns out to be groundless, and we find that we made a mis-

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<sup>2</sup> See Bergson, *Les Données Immédiates de la Conscience*, translated under title of *Time and Free Will*, pp. 144ff.



take. Beliefs are seen to be ill-founded, and we know we strayed from the truth. But now, on the hypothesis that our mental processes are determined, what are we to say to this? Is error, which certainly forms a part of our experience, necessitated as well as truth? When we fall into error, if our mental activity is without the element of self-direction, how are we to account for the error? If error is determined like truth, what basis or criterion remains for us by which to distinguish what we call truth from what we call error? In a determined system why should not all the product of our mental activity be found to agree with reality? There is no answer to these embarrassing questions except to deny that error exists, and to call it an aspect of truth imperfectly realized. This the absolute idealism is compelled to do. But no satisfactory explanation of how anything can be imperfectly realized in an absolute system is forthcoming.

In truth, the problem of how to account for the fact of error in experience is the rock on which all deterministic assumptions are ultimately wrecked. The assumption of freedom, on the other hand, enables us to understand how error can exist in experience. Our senses are trustworthy in their reports of reality and our mental faculties lead toward truth. But the direction of our mental activity is to some degree in our own power. And if we fail in the right use of our mental faculties, the explanation and responsibility for error lie with us.

**Determinism and Moral Responsibility.** But we are not yet done with determinism. All theories of necessity break down on the problem of error, as we have seen.

And when we consider determinism in relation to ethical ideas and moral conduct its inadequacy becomes fully apparent. We need not dwell upon the argument here, for it is fairly well understood. It must be admitted that if men are to be held morally responsible for their acts, we thereby imply that they must be free to choose. Very often the choice is that of ideals, friends, surroundings, etc., which, after the choice has been made, determines the kind of influences under which habits will be formed. Great choices often determine the kind of motives which later will grow inevitably out of the soil of environment. But that free choice is the determining factor in character we must admit. A refusal to give freedom a place cancels the validity of moral responsibility and makes character a mechanical resultant. Purposes stripped of the element of freedom become mere causes in the chain of mechanical causation—the only difference being that the agent is a human being instead of a natural force, like gravitation or chemical affinity. There is no longer such distinction as merit and demerit. Men commonly called criminals are really the victims of unfortunate conditions. But, admitting that many conditions in a man's life seem determined by forces beyond his control, we nevertheless maintain the absolute need of freedom. To deny it is to cancel moral responsibility. A study of the moral life and its conditions soon shows us that the range of freedom varies. We find circumstances where freedom seems possible only within narrow limits, but this fact should not lead us to deny freedom any more than the recognition that responsibility varies greatly should lead us to deny responsibility.

Just as determinism is soon wrecked on the problem of error when we examine into the validity of our knowledge, in like manner determinism meets disaster on the rock of moral responsibility in the field of ethics.

But there is really no need to point out further the weakness of this view. Any doctrine that obliterates the basis of distinctions between truth and error, cancels moral standards, and thereby knocks the foundations away from the ethical life, is by that very fact outlawed. There is, however, a modification of the old deterministic view which must be noted. This is the doctrine generally called "modified determinism." Professor James calls it "soft determinism," in distinction from "hard determinism" just explained.<sup>3</sup> This doctrine is about as follows:

**Modified Determinism.** The decisions of the self do, indeed, play a most important part in all rational action. Volitions are formed by the mind as results of the stronger motives. These motives are not to be considered as causes apart from the self. In this the mechanical determinist is wrong. Motives are practically identical with the self. It follows, then, that what a man has become, that is, his nature and character, will determine what he does in a particular situation. What he has become has resulted from his environment. By environment is meant the sum total of all the influences which have molded and impressed him from the beginning of his conscious life. Therefore, while a man may choose his action, what he has become always determines what he will choose.

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<sup>3</sup> See James, *The Dilemma of Determinism*, for an excellent discussion of the shortcomings of the deterministic philosophy.

Freedom, therefore, means the determination of action by character. Action thus determined does not, however, admit of alternatives or open possibilities in choice. What a man has gradually become will determine what he will choose in every case. Consequently, knowing the man, his actions may be confidently predicted.

**Determinism and Character.** Now, this view, while it smooths over the harshness of mechanical determinism, proves to be just as indefensible on critical examination. Indeed, it cannot be shown to be fundamentally different from mechanical determinism. It is affirmed that action in any particular case is determined, not by mechanical forces acting from the outside, but *by the self*. But is the self to be taken here materially? Is it the physical antecedents like the brain, physical constitution, etc.? If so, then this doctrine does not differ at all from mechanical determinism. Or is the self to be thought of morally, that is, as character? If so, it is difficult to see how anything really moral can ever emerge, for note that the doctrine teaches that a man acts in each case in only one way—the way he had to act as determined by all that he had become. Following this back, we must come ultimately to a time when in early years of life conduct becomes less and less moral, and it becomes quite apparent that unless we allow the possibility of alternatives in conduct, we cannot see how the moral quality so necessary to character could ever have found its way into conduct at all, for the developing self cannot, according to the theory, escape its causal connection with the past. What a man *is*, as seen in the character of his acts to-day, was deter-

mined for him by what he had become by previous acts, and in like manner those previous acts were determined by what he had become antecedent to them, and so on. From this it will appear that the doctrine demands the belief that character, if moral, must somehow have come at some time from non-moral antecedents. But if character be taken as non-moral, then the doctrine falls by the weight of its own absurdity.

**Determinism and Repentance.** Another objection fatal to this modified determinism is that it leaves no place for regret and repentance. Life, therefore, furnishes us with facts which refute it. If the theory were true, why should men feel remorse? Remorse and repentance carry the implication that the outcome might have been different, and that the power to make them different lay in the hands of the person who thus feels the remorse. Now, it is very certain that repentance and remorse are facts of human experience. If, now, there is really no power in us to make outcomes any different than the way they actually happen, then does it not follow that remorse and repentance are emotions without adequate rational ground? Should we not, therefore, recognize them as unwarranted, and, enlightened by the teachings of determinism, seek to eliminate them from our inner experience? But, of course, that means adopting essentially the mental attitude of the fatalist toward all outcomes. Can we endure such consequences as these? Determinism struggles in vain to avoid this result. If one is not accountable for the consequences of his action, repentance or remorse is clearly not rationally grounded. All we could say is we *think* we are ac-

countable, and hence repentance remains as a kind of moral convention with no justification, however, in reason. The only basis upon which we may believe that remorse and repentance are not groundless feelings but deep convictions of wrongdoing which are rationally justified, is the belief in freedom.

**Our Consciousness of Freedom.** Freedom is practically assumed even by those who are most strenuous in advocating its untenability on abstractly logical grounds. Dr. Samuel Johnson used to end the debate on free will by saying, "We know we are free, and that's the end of it." This sounds fairly dogmatic, but there is more to it than mere dogmatism. The truth is that the debate over freedom and determinism is a good deal like that on knowledge and skepticism. To affirm complete skepticism is logical absurdity, for the skeptic must allow himself some standing ground in the domain of knowledge. He professes to know that there can be no valid basis for knowledge, and is not backward in telling those who think we have valid knowledge why he knows we have not. Indeed, considerable knowledge seems always to be involved in this task of proving that there are no valid grounds of knowledge. And in like manner to affirm complete determinism puts the determinist in much the same plight. He calls upon his brother thinker who is uncritical enough to believe in freedom to reconsider, to think again and renounce his error and accept the view of necessity as the true doctrine. But, alas for the advocate of freedom! how can he heed the deterministic exhortation to think again? If determinism is true, then he is not directing his mental activity, and

how can he think again? It begins to look as though we must either give up any thoroughgoing determinism, such as is supposed to involve our mental life, or decide that with regard to rational activity exhortations or attempts to reconsider are decidedly out of order, because reconsideration is not possible. If our intellectual life is determined, conclusions should follow from evidence automatically and without hesitation or error.

But we most assuredly know that a motion to reconsider is always in order in our thought life. Even our judgments of perception sometimes show poor mental workmanship and have to be corrected by a second and more careful observation. We know that we can direct our attention at will, that on our own initiative we can control our thoughts, that we can return to an argument and decide to make it better. Indeed, all throughout our thought life we assume, and act continually upon the assumption, that we can and do control our mental processes.

**The Abstract Problem of Freedom or Determinism Insoluble.** But we are not anxious to press the argument against what we have called complete, or thoroughgoing, determinism. For complete determinism is, after all, a pure abstraction, and so is complete and thoroughgoing freedom. There is no use in arguing for either. Logically, the one excludes the other, and we have the familiar "either—or" deadlock. This has been used again and again, and the literature of this time-honored debate furnishes some interesting illustrations of the perennial barrenness of abstract logical reasoning, apart from the concrete conditions of actual life. The truth is that those whose scientific

training has led them to think constantly in terms of mechanical causation, and who have hypostatized "Science" into a vast unity, complete and all-embracing, governed throughout by unvarying laws, seem to find very little sympathy or place for such an assumption as freedom. It introduces an element which seems to destroy the monism. Some will indeed allow freedom as a necessary belief, but wish it confined strictly to the will in the field of ethics. This is, of course, uncritical, since motives are mental products. And, on the other hand, those whose training has been in philosophy, in ethics and social science, whose thought has been engaged with the problems of the moral relations of men, find no sympathy or place for such an assumption as determinism. It introduces an idea which is unmanageable in ethics and sociology, an idea which when consistently applied cancels human responsibility for error in thought and unrighteousness in conduct. Now, if we are to escape the constant barrenness of formal debates on this problem, we had better abjure abstract discussion and see what can be done by keeping just as close to the facts of concrete life as possible. If we do this, the case for freedom can soon be stated.

**Freedom and Life.** When we turn to actual human life what do we find? We find conditions which look very much as if they were determined existing along with powers that look very much like self-control. There are some conditions of human life which may be called outward and some inward, though these adjectives are not to be taken as spatial, nor is any clear line of demarcation to be drawn between the two sets of conditions. Thus ancestry and all that limits



a man by way of heredity and environment may be called outward conditions. These will determine his thought and activity. On the other hand, the man's action will be determined by his own nature, his temperament, his attitude to his fellow men, and his view of life. This may be called inward, but is, of course, connected causally with the outward conditions. A study of these limiting factors very soon convinces us that whatever may be the range of freedom, it is not that unrestricted liberty of choice which it has been too often represented to be. The limits within which freedom seems possible are generally soon reached. The conditioning factors in our lives with which we have had nothing to do work out a kind of natural predestination in many ways. This means that important factors in life, even personal relationships, are often determined so far as we can see by forces over which we have had no control.

**Meaning of Freedom.** But, on the other hand, if the great moral task of human life is the development of character, and a man is obliged to accept these conditions and within their limits make his life of moral worth, then it is clear that some considerable power of self-determination must remain his. Character is growth, and what a man's character finally becomes is determined by the directions in which that character has grown. And, surely, those important matters and crucial choices which set the directions of character must remain within the realm of his self-determination. Motives seem to contain many factors which appear determined. They must also depend to no unimportant degree upon the rational judgments and feelings, for the psychic activity of man is a unity

and the abstraction of the will from the reason and feelings is fictitious. We may separate the mental activity logically for purposes of study, but no such separation exists in reality. If there be freedom in volition, there is also freedom in the creation of the rational judgments.

**Freedom Not Lawlessness.** And if freedom often finds its meaning within rather narrow limits, and does not mean wide liberty of choosing, we must suggest that freedom does not mean arbitrariness in choice. One of the traditional and persistent misunderstandings of the doctrine of freedom is that it means or implies chance. And chance is taken to mean lawlessness—a mere happening so with nothing to secure or guarantee the outcome. But this is wholly fallacious. What is popularly called a “chance” result is rigidly governed by law. For example, if a man flips up a coin, we say it is a mere chance how it will come down. But careful reflection convinces us that if we could know the initial impulse given to the coin, the weight of the coin, and some other data, the exact number of times the coin would turn in the air could be computed with mathematical exactness and the side upon which it would fall could be predicted. The only reason we can never know is that the data are not obtainable and the problem itself beyond our mental capacity. So we call our inability to solve it “chance.” There can be no such thing as chance in the sense of an unrelated or lawless event. All chance can mean for reflective thought is that we are not able to predict an act or an outcome in advance. And in the same manner there can be no such thing as a freedom which means lawlessness or haphazard outcomes.

The supposition that freedom must mean something like this has lent the deterministic view a strength to which it is not entitled. The demand for fundamental unity in our view of things is as important to the philosopher as to the scientist. Both must admit the universality of the principle of causation, but it is serious fallacy to suppose that the only way the demand for causal unity can be met is through mechanical determination. Surely, self-directing activity does not violate the principle of causality, and self-directing activity certainly fits the facts of human experience a great deal better than mechanical determination. Freedom, therefore, cannot mean lawless activity. Indeed, as already pointed out, the limits of freedom are generally narrow and soon reached. In our judgments we are conditioned by circumstances about us and by our own natures. If our mental activity is free, it is also strictly limited by these conditions and by the laws of reason. Thus with the variable in the equation of experience there are many constants. We find them both. Abstractly, they appear quite irreconcilable. But, as Professor Bowne points out in his discussion of freedom,<sup>4</sup> the ideas of convexity and concavity are contradictory from the abstract point of view. But in experience we find that they harmonize so well that it turns out that we cannot find the one without the other. And so there is a reconciling in the reality of concrete experience of ideas which when considered abstractly and apart seem hopelessly antagonistic.

We may embody the essential meaning of freedom in two or three concrete statements. First, moral free-

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<sup>4</sup> *Metaphysics*, p. 411f.

dom does not mean arbitrariness in self-direction or choice. Second, freedom is always limited by the conditioning circumstances and by the laws of reason. Freedom implies a judgment of values—a conclusion that some actions are better in some way than others. Third, moral freedom means that the choosing of action is indeed a resultant of previous character. If acts could be willed without any relation to character, they would be simply nonmoral acts. But every rational choice of conduct produces a moral deposit in character, with the result that as character develops there does indeed become less and less need for new moral decisions. “In the vast majority of cases, though potentially free, we act mechanically, following out the general plan of life which we have adopted, simply obeying the motives to whose guidance we have already surrendered ourselves. There is an immense moral advantage which thus allows our actions to be virtually necessitated by our character. For we do not have to fight over again the whole battle of life in every alternative of good or evil conduct which presents itself to us.”<sup>5</sup>

**Freedom and Monism.** To the objection that human freedom destroys a monistic view of the universe we reply that this is true only on a materialistic or pantheistic basis of thought. The full discussion of this point would carry us too far into metaphysics for the present purpose. It must be sufficient to point out that if the Infinite Intelligence is personal, and this is a moral universe in which the training of humanity in moral and spiritual ideals is to be thought of as a controlling divine purpose, then the possession of

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<sup>5</sup> William North Rice, *Christian Faith in an Age of Science*.

some degree of freedom by men is in no sense a destruction of a tenable monism. The ground of human freedom will lie in the eternal moral purposes of God, and any limitation of the divine necessitated by a degree of freedom in the human must be regarded as a limitation self-imposed by God in order to realize his eternal will.

**Grounds for Affirming Freedom.** There is no logical demonstration of freedom; but this is nothing to give us anxiety, for there is no demonstration of its opposite—determinism. And we believe with fullest assurance many things which we do not attempt logically to prove. Our great beliefs are, after all, mental resultants. The grounds for holding them take far wider swing than the limited radius of logical proof. These beliefs come out of the great practical needs of life. With respect to mental and moral freedom, the important question is not whether this belief can be logically demonstrated or not. The important questions are, What are the consequences of denying it? and, What are the reasons for affirming it? We have seen that a denial of freedom, if taken seriously, deprives us of rational grounds for distinguishing between truth and error. It invalidates moral standards so that ethics become really a higher aspect of mechanics—higher only by courtesy, because the activities of men happen to be under investigation, not the motions of material bodies. Can we endure the denial of freedom when it involves such consequences as these?

**Creative Thought Points to Freedom.** But there are other phases of human activity which, when examined, tend to reassure us that the confidence we feel in our

own power of choice is not ill-founded. While they are by no means demonstrations, yet they serve to strengthen our confidence in our own power of self-direction and to illustrate it. The initiative displayed by the human mind often amounts to creative activity, and creative activity on the part of the mind cannot be accounted for on the supposition that a man's mind and its product are determined by physical causes. As Bergson has conclusively shown, the application of the principle of the conservation of energy to the mental life breaks down in the face of obvious facts. Here, for example, is a man trained in the new science of irrigation. He stands on a hill overlooking a broad valley. The landscape is barren of vegetation except such as will live in arid regions, but the man is noting the configuration of the country and is planning a way to bring the waters of a neighboring stream in upon the dry soil. Soon the plans made in thought are recorded upon paper and now the irrigation engineer begins to see in his imagination the same valley dotted with trees loaded with fruit; and five years later—lo! all that the man thought has actually come to pass. The landscape is completely changed and scientific irrigation has made the desert literally to blossom as the rose. The valley as it now stands represents the creative thought and activity of the mind. The Panama Canal existed down to the minutest detail in the thought of the engineers who designed it before it could ever exist in objective reality upon the face of the earth. The great aerial of the wireless station lifts its metallic threads above the earth and an intangible medium becomes the bearer of the messages across the seas. Yet before this could

be accomplished in the world of objective fact the mind of a man had to find the invisible medium and think out and plan a wonderfully sensitive piece of apparatus with which to catch the impulses which go silently and invisibly through it.

Here is mind endowed with the powers of creation; that is to say, men by their mental activity discover the hidden forces of nature and call into being things like the blossoming desert, the great canal, the tunnel through the Alps. Those masterpieces named the Parthenon, the Ninth Symphony, the statue of David, Hamlet, could not have come into existence without that power of mental initiative which we call creative thought. We do not urge that this disproves determinism nor proves freedom. There is strictly no proof or disproof of either. But it surely lends no small weight to the belief in freedom. We admit that the ultimate ground of finite intelligence is Infinite Intelligence, but we must not conceive the relation between the two in such a fashion that the human thinker becomes the mere channel or instrument played upon by the Divine Thought. The powers of thought, feeling, and will are indeed divinely bestowed, according to Christian thought, but there must remain the sphere within which men are free to use these God-given gifts as they will. For if all is *divinely* determined, then must men's sad *misuse* of the powers be included also!

But what a contrast between the mind of the master thinker and the mind of the animal whose instinctive acts seem to be mere resultants! When we classify man zoologically, that is, as an animal, brain characteristics and other anatomical resemblances are

decisive, and we place him among the primates—the highest order of mammals—along with the apes. But what shall we say of a classification which includes two beings so totally different (in all the characteristics except anatomical) as man and the chimpanzee? We say, of course, that such classification simply emphasizes and records those physical similarities upon which it is based. But we know at the same time that the differences between man and the ape are far more characteristic and fundamental than the similarities. And the most striking of these differences is with respect to this power of thought initiative. Man thinks and then his activities produce those existences which embody his thoughts. A being who can do this is a personal being as distinguished from a mere being. An animal is a being; a man is a person. The most characteristic element of personality, therefore, is the power of self-direction in thought.

**Freedom Fundamental to Personality.** We dwell upon this question of freedom because it is so very important in the moral relationships of life. It is therefore fundamental in ethics, sociology, and religion. As already pointed out, there can be no moral responsibility for man's conduct, if that conduct is necessitated. Responsibility, guilt, merit, virtue, character, all have a real and not simply a conventional meaning, only as human conduct is thought of as resulting from the direction of the free self. Returning now to our discussion of the meaning of personality, it must be borne in mind that personal relationships are always moral relationships, for they cannot exist without involving obligation in some form, and obligations to be real must be sustained by the will. Thus it



appears that the personal always means the moral, and the moral demands the freedom of the self in order to realize the obligations which inevitably grow out of the personal relationships of life.

**Moral Love and Personality.** But we have not yet fully explored the depths of personality. Self-consciousness and self-determination are indeed fundamental. But there is another factor in human personality which is of supreme importance from the point of view of religious philosophy, namely, the feelings or affections. Moral love is not less basic than moral freedom. In the development of human personality the affections are the first to grow. Long before the human child has any adequate conception of itself as a conscious being he has learned the sweet lessons of love. And in later years, long after the imperial will may have retreated within the ruins of the former self, the affections remain like embers still warm under the gray ashes of humiliation. This has been demonstrated again and again in life. Most of the men who have been reclaimed from the depths of moral depravity have made response, not to appeals addressed to their intellects, nor to their broken wills. The arousement has come first by their affections—some lingering memories of the love of a mother perhaps have furnished the initial impulse on the human side through which the will found strength again. The last power the human soul loses is the power to love and respond to love. Indeed, so vital to human personality is the ability to love that when we try to think of a person who never had the power of affection the result is not the conception of a human being but that of a fiend. Personality is far from being com-

plete when we have reckoned only with the mind and the will. We must also reckon with that power of the soul which men have centered in the heart. In the language of moral life the "heart" stands for the source of all those emotions, sympathies, and affections which give the life richness and depth.

**Importance of the Feelings.** The emotions rank among the highest powers of the soul. Surely, they have in the lives of most men a more commanding position than the intellect. They inspire heroism where cool reason may fail to move men to action. The warmth and glow of life, its highest joys and deepest and holiest sacrifices, flow from the springs of feeling. It is a much greater factor in the formation of beliefs, with most men, than intellect. No man's mind can possibly be the "cold, logical engine" that Huxley thought so desirable. It is always true, as Pascal said, that the "heart has reasons that the intellect does not know." And our great beliefs are practical resultants in which the cool dictates of reason are happily blended with warmer feeling.

But now some one begins to object that all this is getting rather inexact and loose-jointed for a discussion that professes to be philosophical. The feelings are such a mass of variables that no really exact and philosophical treatment can be offered if we are going to include them in a discussion of personality. We shall be apt to stray from the straight and narrow path of strictly rational thinking. While we have to admit, of course, the element of feeling as an important factor in the religious life of the individual, still we cannot do much with it philosophically, for it defies analysis. There is no philosophy of

mysticism, and in the very nature of the case there cannot be.

To all this we make a twofold reply. First, that there are feelings and feelings. We have seen in Chapter IV that mere particular or individual feeling is so variable and insecure a basis upon which to base belief that it cannot be reckoned with. But the case is different in the matter of the great common feelings of humanity. Feeling does indeed become fundamentally significant in proportion as it is really universal and not the result of particular environment. Such feelings we must recognize and reckon with in any philosophy which professes to deal with the whole of life. To discuss personality as self-consciousness and self-determination with no reference to that realm of feeling in which the person manifests himself so directly is to fail to reckon with all there is of the personal self. Second, we must remind ourselves that at the very outset we confessed that our discussion was to be from the viewpoint of religious values and not simply from that of formal or abstract logic. And the difference is simply this, that the religious ideal aims at an immediate expression in high moral action. Righteousness, not rational completeness in thinking, is its goal. And yet let us not forget that the feelings taken alone afford an insufficient and insecure criterion of truth. This has already been emphasized. The reason is needed to restrain our feelings from leading us into one-sidedness and extravagance. And intellectual honesty demands that our beliefs result, not only from feeling but from a diligent search for the truth with the best light reason can bring.

**Personality Grows Out of Social Relations.** Human personality as it grows means the increasing power to know oneself and to determine oneself. But human life means social relations, and social relations demand that the determination of the self be always with reference to the other selves about. Thus it is in that network of moral relationships which we call society that human personality develops. And because of this, one of the most characteristic features of the human person is the desire for fellowship with other persons. This impulse which drives us to seek a community of life with our fellows may be called by various names. But the most comprehensive name for it is love. And none will deny that it is so universally found in human nature that we must not fail to include it when we sum up the meaning of human personality.

**Conclusion.** We conclude that personality means mental and moral freedom. It also implies the moral love through which each human being seeks the completion of himself in the fellowship of other persons. Christian theism affirms the existence of an Infinite Being who is a Person. It also affirms the purpose of this Infinite Person—God—to realize himself by reproducing something of his divine nature in lesser spirits who live under the limitations of finite life. With a perfect freedom God expresses in his divine activity his great purposes for the moral development of men. These purposes demand that finite beings also should realize some measure of freedom. The ultimate ground of human freedom must, therefore, be found in the purpose of God to train and redeem finite spirits whom he has created “in his own image.”

The Divine Personality must also include moral love. This means that God is to be thought of as establishing personal relationships with men. And this brings us to the consideration of some of the further implications of divine personality.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Borden P. Bowne—Metaphysics, Part II, Chapters III and IV.

William James—The Dilemma of Determinism.

James Seth—The Problem of Freedom in "Ethical Principles."

Henri Bergson—Time and Free Will.

J. Ward—The Realm of Ends, Lecture XIII.

## CHAPTER VI

### DIVINE PERSONALITY

How are we to think of God as personal? What thought content are we to assign to the word "personal" when we apply it in thinking of the Divine Being? We shall have to admit at once that even though our conception of personality grows out of our own experience, that is, from fellowship with other persons in the social and ethical relationships of life, nevertheless personality, viewed as expressing the divine nature, must be far greater than the personality which sums up the nature of our finite selves. For along with our consciousness of free self-hood there goes abundant conviction of our limitations. To this our partial insight and broken plans bear ample testimony. Indeed, the very endowment of personality which is the glory of our human nature, is also the means through which we are made to realize most keenly our weakness and imperfection.

**Limitation Not an Essential Element in Personality.** But we can think of nothing imperfect in God's nature. He could not remain an object of our worship if we could. His wisdom and insight are complete, and his activity always results in a perfect expressing of his will. Lotze, in his *Philosophy of Religion*, shows that human limitations, far from being necessary characteristics of personality, as has often been

asserted, are really no essential part of it.<sup>1</sup> We must now note the objections which have been filed against thinking of the Divine Being as a personality.

**Objections to Thinking of God as Personal.** It is sometimes objected that thinking of God in terms of personality is anthropomorphism and carries with it an estimate of the cosmic importance of man which is not warranted by the revelations science has made of the vastness of the universe. This over emphasis of the importance of man detracts, it is urged, from our ability to think of God properly as the One Infinite and Absolute Being in the universe. The time was when men believed that the earth was the center of things, but modern science has shown our earth as an insignificant member of an incredibly vast system; and evolution also tends greatly to stay us in thinking that man is unique and so exalted in creation—for does not evolution trace the steps in a natural development by which man has become what he is?

But this objection rests upon a superficial naturalism. It fails utterly to reckon with the spiritual nature of man. It is this which makes man the summit of creation. John Fiske was a thoroughgoing evolutionist, but he writes in that most significant little book, *The Destiny of Man* (p. 29): "No fact in nature is fraught with deeper meaning than this two-sided fact of the extreme physical similarity and enormous physical divergence between man and the group of animals to which he traces his pedigree. It shows that when humanity began, an entirely new chapter in the history of the universe was opened.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Philosophy of Religion*, chap. iv, par. 41. Also Bowne, *Philosophy of Theism*, pp. 132-134.

Henceforth the life of the nascent soul came to be first in importance and the bodily life became subordinated to it. . . . He who has mastered the Darwinian theory, he who recognizes the slow and subtle process of evolution as the way in which God makes things come to pass, must take a far higher view. He sees that in the deadly struggle for existence which has raged throughout countless æons of time the whole creation has been groaning and travailing together in order to bring forth that last consummate specimen of God's handiwork, the human soul."

To one who regards this universe as essentially moral, and human life as supreme in creation because of its moral worth, the objection we are considering carries no weight. The implications of the objection are really materialistic and therefore atheistic. As John Fiske says, "Once dethrone humanity, regard it as a mere local incident in an endless and aimless series of cosmical changes, and you arrive at a doctrine which, under whatever specious name it may be veiled, is at bottom neither more nor less than atheism."<sup>2</sup>

Again it is urged that personality gets its meaning from the ethical and social relationships of our human life. The human person is a person by virtue of the fact that he is a member of a social organism and as such is limited, conditioned, and obligated by his various moral relations. But, it is urged, we cannot conceive of God as obligated or conditioned, for to do so would be to destroy his supreme position as the Absolute. This is the substance of several particular objections which have been urged from time to time against the idea of God as a personal Being.

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<sup>2</sup> *Destiny of Man*, p. 12.



In answer we urge that the conception of God as "the Absolute" is a product solely of abstract philosophical speculation. This speculative idea of "the Absolute" means the sum total of all reality and implies that the Divine as "absolute" is out of or beyond all relations with finite life. To exist *in relations* is to be limited and conditioned by those relations. We must therefore not think of God as related, for that destroys his absoluteness. It does not require prolonged reflection to see that an "Absolute" which must not be thought of as related in some vital way to finite existence cannot be grasped by finite thought at all. We may well believe that God in the fullness of his divine existence transcends all our finite thinking about him. But personality is the highest form of existence of which we have any knowledge. And it surely is one thing to say that our thought grasps something of the divine existence, in thinking of God under the highest form of existence we know, and quite another thing to set up a really unattainable notion of the Divine, and then, because the human mind cannot grasp the notion, conclude that God is unknowable.

Another example of this verbal and abstract objection to the conception of divine personality is seen in the conclusions sometimes urged from the conception of God's unchangeability. From Spinoza and other speculators we have inherited the idea of reality as some sort of immutable "substance." Indeed, the words "essence" and "substance" have haunted theology for generations. But when we get clear of the "stuff" theory of reality and recognize the truth that, in the last analysis, being is revealed only in and

through activity, we no longer try to conceive of God as some rigid and unchangeable manifestation of existence. There is nothing whatever to forbid the thought that God does change and adjust matters in answer to our newborn needs. His unchangeableness is to be found in the constancy of his moral relations—his love and his unvarying purpose for the best of men.

**An Abstract "Absolute" Serves No Useful Purpose.** Religious thinking and the needs of the religious life have never developed such an idea as "the Absolute," and find very little use for it. In our discussion of the foundations of knowledge (Chapter III) we have seen that any valid standard for testing the truth of our conceptions involves the whole experience. This means not only rational thinking but the universal feelings of men and the serving of great practical ends in the moral life. In this connection it is well to note that men have always assumed that the Divine is in some way socially and morally related to themselves. From the early days when primitive peoples offered a joyous sacrifice of food to their god, in the simple belief that he would come down and fellowship with them, to the moment when Jesus Christ taught men to say "Our Father," there has never been a time when religious men did not think of the Divine Being as morally related to them. Moral obligations of worshiper to divinity and, conversely, of divinity to worshiper were a part of all early religion, and they remain fundamental to religion to-day. Indeed, without this, religion could never have developed at all.

**Moral Relation Involves Obligation.** Christian teaching holds that not only does the creature stand in a rela-

tion of moral obligation to the Creator, but that the Creator also is morally obligated to the creature. The great words, "Our Father," admit of no interpretation which does not necessitate this view.

But is not this idea of a morally obligated God uncritical and indefensible philosophically? We think not. Analogy is the only way in which we can think at all of those realities which transcend the limits of our human experience. We really have to take our choice between thinking of God in the terms of our finite experience and not thinking of him at all. This is abundantly demonstrated by the speculative way in which we are bidden to think of God by the disciples of the philosophy of the Absolute.

**Speculative Conception of God Results in Practical Atheism.** We are told that we must not conceive God in terms either of the subject or the object, since the Divine is the great underlying principle which unifies the dualism of object and subject in all finite thought. God is to be conceived as "The Unconditioned," "The Absolute," etc., which practically amounts to saying that we are bidden not to think of God at all in any terms which allow a moral relationship between God and men. The "Unconditioned," "The Absolute," etc., of pantheism and the "Unknowable" of agnosticism are of equal value for the practical purposes of the moral and religious life. And that value is, as we have seen, just about zero. We have noted how a most fundamental characteristic of religion is found to be the feeling of moral relationship which the worshiper has for the Divine Being. Without this, religious feeling cannot long be sustained. If God is thought of, in agnostic fashion, as the Unknowable,

religion is not possible. Even the feeling of reverence or awe which Herbert Spencer would allow is really impossible, for one would have to have some knowledge of the unknowable as the ground in reason for revering him. Even a vague feeling of awe would be impossible in the absence of all knowledge of the Infinite. And so it has always turned out that agnosticism soon reduces itself to practical atheism. And if God is thought of in pantheistic fashion as the "Absolute," religion is not possible. Religion always means some sort of fellowship between God and the worshiper. Now it is very evident that no fellowship is possible with the "Unconditioned," even though we dignify it by spelling it with a capital, and it remains impossible to have any kind of feelings such as gratitude or love toward "the Absolute." If the Infinite be conceived in these impersonal terms, then religion becomes just as impossible as it is in the case of the Divine Unknowable of agnosticism. This is why pantheism also reduces itself to practical theism.

But we are dealing with the problems of religious thought from the standpoint of moral values, and no criterion of truth is valid which takes account of logical completeness only and neglects to reckon with the moral feelings and the great practical values of the moral life. And after all the conception of God as personal is entirely rational when interpreted in terms of our highest moral ideals. For this reason we choose to think of God in terms of our own life rather than to allow abstract speculation to dictate such a dialectic as to make thought about God practically impossible. We do not demur at anthropomorphisms provided they do not attribute the imperfections of

our humanity to the Eternal. To think of God in terms of all that is purest and loftiest in our experience is the moral limit of finite thought concerning the Infinite. Does "Father" best express the true relationship between God and men, even as Jesus said? Then the relationship must be one of mutual moral obligation, for no other interpretation of "Father" is possible than this. In human life we most surely recognize the solemn obligation of the parent to the child. But even if the idea of a morally obligated God may seem speculatively uncritical to some, we must remember that the human soul has been guided in its search for truth far more by its deepest feelings and great practical needs than by philosophical speculation. Indeed, religion as a moral power does not long survive the attempts to trim its fundamental conceptions down to the size and form demanded by critical speculation. The practical needs of life are found to be a far better vindication for philosophical belief than the demands of speculative logic. And we boldly affirm in the name of good philosophy the truth that God is morally obligated.

**God's Limitations Self-Imposed.** But the moral obligations of the Creator are, however, imposed upon himself by himself for moral ends. His divine will gave us life. We are wholly dependent upon him; we cannot therefore think of him as without responsibility toward us. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." We may consistently think of God as conditioned, provided we remember that the conditions are not imposed upon him, but are from his own will. Thus the unity of the Divine Nature is not destroyed in our thinking, and we have a personal conception of

God full of warmth and vitality instead of a cold, logical abstraction. The principal reasons, then, why we as Christians should think of God as personal are not speculative but practical, and the best philosophy of to-day recognizes that the practical demands of the moral and religious life are an ample justification for any belief which is not inconsistent with the great body of truth already won. We demand the right, therefore, in the name of all the interests of our personal, moral life to think of God. And when we think of God, our own experience will give us the forms. The noblest and best aspirations of the human spirit are indeed intimations of the moral grandeur of the heart of God. Robert Browning has expressed this truth in the noble poem "Saul." David stands beholding the unspeakable loneliness and depression of the king and his heart goes out in love and noble sympathy. If he could only help him now in all his suffering, how gladly he would. And in what his own sympathetic heart feels with all his helplessness to relieve, David sees a revelation of the very heart of God.

"I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:  
 In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.  
 See the King—I would help him, but cannot; the wishes fall  
 through.  
 Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,  
 To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which  
 I would know that my service is perfect.  
 Oh, speak through me now!  
 Would I suffer for him that I love?  
 So would'st thou—so wilt thou!"

**Divine Personality the only Basis of Religion.** Christianity makes religion a very personal matter. At

the heart of the Christian revelation stands the tremendous assurance that the Infinite Personal Spirit—the Eternal God our Divine Father—enters into fellowship with the finite spirits of men. Jesus simply assumed in all his teaching about God the very highest attributes of the Divine Personality. He told men that God their heavenly Father was concerned about all the interests of their lives, that he loves them, and that therefore they may feel that perfect confidence and trust in him which will save them from the friction and worry of life. The apostle Paul taught that God's Spirit making himself known to our spirits reveals to us the great fact that we are his children. And from Jesus Christ men have learned to call God by that dear word of human speech—Father. From first to last the Bible tells us of a God in communication and fellowship with men.

The personal conception of God is the only one which makes a vital religion possible. Hours come in the lives of men when, if their religion is to bring them comfort and moral strength, they must feel certain that God is more than infinite wisdom and infinite power. The deep-souled apostle summed up the nature of God in the words "God is Love." The highest power of human personality is the power of affection. Christianity teaches that there is an Infinite Heart back of the universe. Christ bade men look up to the Eternal God in confidence as to one who loves them with tender compassion, and call him Father!

In the last analysis the truth of the personality of God is vindicated in the personal experience of men. There have been multitudes in every age who have

entered deeply into the life of religious thought and feeling and who have abundantly testified that fellowship with God was to them a very real experience. The influence of one human spirit upon another is a common experience of our daily lives. Why, then, should not the great Infinite Spirit make himself known in personal fellowship with the spirits of men?



## CHAPTER VII

### CONCEPTIONS OF THE DIVINE ACTIVITY

THE Christian conception of God, then, is that of the Infinite Being—the Ground of all existence. For reasons which we have just considered, this Infinite Being must be conceived as personal. It is only as we think of God as personal that any place is found for religion. For the underlying thought of God as impersonal, with whom it is impossible to enter into fellowship, leads inevitably to an outcome which is practically atheism.

**God's Being Manifested in His Activity.** God being a Person makes himself known through his activity. In his activity we have a revelation of what God is. Where, then, must we look for evidences of the divine activity? We shall discover that the correct answer to that question is, We must look everywhere. The old formal "proofs" of the existence of God give place therefore to the recognition of evidences of Divine activity in the world of nature and the world of human life. In subsequent chapters we are to consider those various fields in which there is reason to believe the divine activity has been and is being manifested. In nature, in history, in the growing moral consciousness of men everywhere, and in the religious experience of the individual heart we find convincing evidence of the universal presence of God. It remains

for us now to consider the two ways of regarding God's relation to the world. They are the two cardinal doctrines of Theism—the two fundamental ways of regarding the divine activity as it has been revealed in nature and human life. These are known as immanence and transcendence.

### 1. TRANSCENDENCE

**Meaning of Transcendence.** In transcendence we have the idea of the origin and control of a thing by an activity or force the source of which lies outside the thing originated or controlled. Thus, for example, the inventor and maker of a complicated machine has called that machine into existence through his creative thought and activity. It performs the work planned. Its activity is in no sense independent, but every part and movement represents the planning and work of its builder. But the builder of the machine may journey far away from it. Still that machine works on. In case of disarrangement of its parts it may become necessary to send for the maker and again the same planning and skillfully directed activity may be needed before the machine resumes its normal condition. But it is to be noted that while the machine is a constant expression of the purpose and power of its builder, we think of the builder and the machine as separate. The builder is not thought of as in the machine. While the whole machine expresses the purposes of the builder, still we think of the machine as operating with a certain independence of its builder. This is the transcendent way of regarding action. The builder transcends, that is, stands above his machine.

For a long time this was the prevailing form in Western thought of conceiving God's relation to the universe. A traditional theology taught that divine creation took place at a particular point in past time. God's creative activity was largely confined to the "six days of creation." These "days" were long interpreted by Christian thinkers precisely as their Jewish authors had intended—days of the regular length of time. When scientific thought began to cast discredit upon this way of understanding the creative days, a modification took place. The "days" now appeared as geologic ages, of almost any length found necessary, and vast labor was expended in showing how the ancient records anticipated the conclusions of modern science.

**Resulting View of Creation.** Now, the point to be borne in mind is this: Under the exclusive domination of the idea of transcendence, God's relation to the universe was conceived as similar to that of the builder and the machine in our illustration. God created the world. But the transcendent conception regarded God's creative activity as confined to a particular part of past time. It makes no difference whether we say a week or a million years. The transcendent conception regarded creation as something which *took place* rather than something which is always taking place. God was thought of as having planned the whole universe with infinite wisdom. He created it in accordance with his perfect plans. Creation was variously conceived. One idea was that God created all the world of inorganic existences, vegetation and animal life, with their infinite varieties and species, "out of nothing." It must be said that crude

as this idea seems, it is logical in the sense that it does not attempt to explain creation or to furnish a recipe for it, but frankly confesses the impenetrable mystery of God's activities. Another conception, cruder than the first, was that God somehow made things out of a material which was already in existence. This has been ridiculed as the "carpenter theory" and deserves the reproach. Its hopeless weakness is that it sets some sort of material existence over against God in an irreconcilable dualism. This idea survived, in a rehabilitated form, in the conception of "matter" as eternal. This doctrine, while it seemed much more respectable because of its scientific dress and associations, was philosophically just as uncritical as any crude theology which taught that God had to have stuff at hand to work with.

**Leads to False Idea of Nature's Independence.** But however creation was conceived, the important thing about the transcendent view of the divine activity is that God did create the universe at some period in past time. He created it on an infinite plan and endowed it with all the forces needed to keep it going according to the plan. Under the influence of this conception the universe soon gained a kind of independence of God. He is above the universe. He is also "outside" it, in the sense that after he has completed it according to his perfect plan, it is thought to be capable of running as a vast mechanism with a certain independence of its own. From time to time it is conceivable that its maker might step in and readjust or rearrange—giving fresh evidence of his power. These are the "supernatural" events. But for the most part things run along as they were originally planned.

This is the world's activity according to the "natural" law.

It was, of course, inevitable that under this way of regarding God's relation to the universe, men should come in time to regard the universe as able to get along fairly well without subsequent attention from its Maker. The "mechanism of the universe" was God's work, and it was perfectly done. Why then, any need of supposing that it required his later attentions? Indeed, so dominant did the idea of nature as a complete mechanism become that the Maker's subsequent "attentions" came to be regarded by the materialistic spirit of the time as altogether superfluous interferences. Comte has expressed this feeling when he uttered the idea, as uncritical as it was irreverent, that modern science was gaining so large an insight into nature and would soon have so great a control of her forces, that the time would come when we might "conduct God to the frontiers of the universe and bow him out with thanks for his provisional services."

Thus we have traced in brief outline what the transcendent way of conceiving God's relation to the universe really is and what it involves. Emphasis upon transcendence to the neglect of the conception of immanence leads to a false naturalism, that is, to the exalting of nature into a position of independence. Thus transcendence gave great opportunity to urge that, while creative activity may have been needed in the past, there is not so much need for it in the present. It was easy for men dominated by the materialistic spirit in science to exalt nature to the position of a complete and independent system. Forgetting the great moral issues of life, God was identified with the

forces with which (as an earlier theology had taught) he had endowed the world. These forces were generalized and the abstract conception of "Force" or "Energy" emerged. This was urged as the sufficient Ground of all existence. And thus transcendence became a fertile breeding ground for materialism.

This great gust of naturalism with its atheistic implications which swept over the thought-world during the middle of the last century was the logical consequence of the extreme transcendent doctrine which had prevailed in theology since the days of Augustine. The way out was found through the modern philosophy of personal idealism. Idealism, from Kant to Hegel, had grown more and more speculative and abstract. Its final outcome in the philosophy of the Absolute was both agnostic and atheistic. Some will object to the last adjective and urge that we ought, rather, to say pantheistic. But, as before remarked, a consistent pantheism, so far as its outcome for the practical interests of morals and religion is concerned, is the equivalent of atheism.

But under Lotze idealism found a new lease of life. The significant emphasis of Lotze was teleology, that is, the philosophy which recognized purpose as the final ground of activity. And purpose when its implications were founded meant personality. In the philosophy of the last few decades personality has been recognized as the key to much which has been obscure and irreconcilable. The modern philosophy of personality together with the wide acceptance which evolution won has demanded a recasting of theism. And in the reconstruction two great fundamental conceptions have emerged. They are personality and

immanence. We have considered some essential matters touching personality. It now remains for us to consider its corollary, divine immanence. We turn, therefore, from that way of regarding God's activity and relation to the world known as transcendence to that way known as immanence.

## 2. IMMANENCE

**Meaning of Immanence.** If we have found a fitting analogy for transcendence in the illustration of the machine and its maker, we shall find an equally fitting illustration of immanence in the human body and the living spirit which animates it. Speaking in a rough and familiar way, we may say that the mind is "in the body," but as soon as we begin to subject this statement to criticism we find that any attempt to locate the mind spatially involves a swarm of difficulties. Where is the mind in the body? Is it located equally all over the body? Is it in the foot as well as in the brain? Revising the statement that the mind is in the body, shall we say, rather, that the mind is in the brain? Does a person think with the brain? A little knowledge of physiology tells us that even though the brain remained intact but communication were cut off from the brain to the myriad nerve ends upon the surface of the body so that no stimulus could find its way to the brain, there could be no thought, no consciousness. Shall we revise again and say that a person thinks with his nervous system, of which of course the brain is an important part? Where, then, is the center of thought?

**God "In the World" Not Spatially but Dynamically.** There is only one answer, which is that the attempt to

localize thinking and to find a place spatially for the mind is uncritical. The mind is not "in the body" in a spatial sense but in a dynamic sense. This means that the mind animates the body and controls it. The various voluntary movements of the body are a constant expression of the control of the mind. We promptly refer every movement of the normal body (except those involuntary movements necessary to its preservation) to the mind as its ground. One may speak of the guilty hand of an assassin as having committed a foul deed, but it is only a loose and popular form of speech. For we know perfectly well that every movement of the hand, and tongue, and other members may be traced back through the physical mechanism and finds no ground or final explanation until we reach the purpose of the person himself. We used to hear it said in religious phraseology that we "have eternal spirits." But, of course, the truth is not that our real life is material—that we *are* bodies and *have* spirits, but, rather, that we *are* spirits and *have* bodies. That mysterious interaction between the body and the spirit by which the body is animated and controlled is our best analogy for enabling us to understand the relation of God's activity to the world. The very name "immanence" contains a figure of speech. We must warn ourselves that the preposition "in" must never be understood spatially but always dynamically. Keeping this caution in mind, we make bold to say that God is always in his world. An exploration of the meaning of this statement will amount to some exposition of the divine immanence.

The older view of nature as a vast mechanism has



given place to the modern view of nature as an organism. And along with this, the conception of God's relation to the world has undergone a corresponding transformation. Christian theism no longer tries to represent God as the Maker of the world standing above it or apart from it, so to speak. Carlyle scornfully repudiated this idea of "an absentee God sitting idle ever since the first Sabbath at the outside of the universe and seeing it go." God is in the world dynamically; that is, he is the abiding ground of the world, and his will and activity are the ultimate source of all the world's myriad and harmonious forces. The great ongoing processes of nature are not blindly mechanical. The wonderful adjustments and adaptations to outcomes indicate that thought lies at their foundation, and not only thought but will. And so we say that all nature is a constant expression of the purpose and power of God. God is "in" nature in this sense, just as the living spirit is "in" the body. His thought and purposeful activity condition and control it.

This great conception is the only tenable view for modern thinking. It absolutely forbids us to set up nature as in any sense independent of God. The older transcendent view lent itself easily to this fallacy. What need for God, after the world had once been perfectly created and endowed with all the forces needed for its operation? Inevitably there crept in the false idea that such a universe could run, for a while at least, independently of its Creator. The forces of the universe were taken as sufficient ground of the natural changes, and natural law, it was fancied, offered all needed explanation. But these uncritical

notions no longer form a part of respectable modern thinking.

**Meaning of Natural Law.** Natural law explains nothing. A scientist who should refer a change to a natural law, and then fancy he had given adequate causal explanation, would be discredited as a thinker to-day, for we know that the "law" is only an exact statement of the manner in which a force or forces operate under certain conditions. Nature is no independent system. God is the ground of the universe. His purpose alone explains its forces. The laws of nature are, then, but formulations of the constant and more or less familiar fashion in which divine activity is manifested.

**Creation is the Eternal Manifestation of Divine Energy.** When this view of God's relation to the world as immanent takes possession of our thinking, we find that our conception of the divine activity in creation may have to undergo change. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Most of us were taught that this means that the world was created at some point or period in past time. But if God is in his universe to-day, then every activity in nature is a present expression of the creative activity of God, and every day is a day of creation. Creation is, therefore, a constant and ever ongoing manifestation of the power of God and not a manifestation of that power once completed in past time. We should not say, therefore, "God created the world," unless we add what is equally true that God is still creating the world. Science teaches us that the great day of creation is still on. The student of the earth sciences knows that the mighty changes through which the

earth has passed are not all complete. Geologic change is still taking place and will probably continue to go on for ages to come. The biologist views the world as a continual rebirth of life in its myriad forms. God did not create a few primitive organisms at the beginning in order to get the world of organic life well started. His creative activity is seen in the mysterious birth of every new organism—yes, in the genesis of every new cell. The Divine Creator is ever at work in a world that is never done being born.

This conception of God's immanent activity in the world enables Christian faith to hold to the belief that the world is the result of divine creation, and at the same time accept the great truth of evolution. The hostility to evolution which formerly prevailed among Christian people, and still remains to some extent, rested upon the supposition that those things which take place in the world through "natural" processes are not the result of God's creative activity, his action being thought as altogether supernatural. But this kind of distinction between God's work as supernatural and nature's work as natural is wholly erroneous. It rests upon the old fallacy that nature is an independent system of things. But when our thought is once dominated by the truth that nature is not and never was in any sense independent of God, then we begin to see that a "natural" event is quite as much an expression of the divine activity as what we may call a "supernatural" event.

The hopelessly uncritical question, What is there for God to do, if things originate in a natural way? needs no answer, for the conception of an ever-present

God does not permit us to think for a moment that the "natural way" in which things may originate requires one whit less of the creative energy of God. As John Fiske says, "Once really adopt the conception of an everpresent God, without whom no sparrow falls to the ground, and it becomes self-evident that the law of gravitation is but an expression of a particular mode of divine action. And what is thus true of one law is true of all laws" (*Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 428). From the standpoint of the Christian conception of God we may say, then, that the law of evolution enables us to trace the manner in which divine creation takes place in the realm of organic life.

But there is a final scruple concerning evolution which lingers. It might be freely allowed that we may hold to divine creation and yet think of the origin of the human body—man's physical organism—as originating in what we call a natural way. But what shall we say of that part of man which differentiates him from the brute creation? Man is a soul. Where does the soul come from? The answer must be, of course, We come from God. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." But the question remains, How are we to think of the soul as coming from God? It would carry us too far into the field of metaphysics were we to take up this question in any thoroughgoing way. And after we had said all there is to say, the mystery would still be there, the same mystery, by the way, which meets us when we try to construe the origin of life anywhere, the mystery of creation. The creation of life is an act of the Infinite, and as such cannot be grasped in any complete way

by our finite intelligence. Biological science has taught us how to observe the various stages in the growth of the human body, and in a crude and partial way we are thus permitted to trace the wonderful work of the Creator. But no biological science ever professes to reveal to us the ultimate origin of life. And even though the tracing of stages in the growth of a soul is impossible, we must believe that, however the soul develops, the process is the work of the ever present Creator.

This teaching of a personal God immanent in his world is not new. It is voiced again and again by the poets and prophets of the Old Testament. But, of course, they did not express the truth in philosophical phrase but always in the figurative language of devotion. The early thought of the Hebrews localized the power of Jehovah. But under the instruction of those mighty religious teachers the prophets the Hebrew conception of Jehovah as a national divinity expanded to that of Jehovah as the Lord of all the earth—the Universal Presence. In one of the later psalms we find the familiar and sublime declaration of the universal presence of God.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there:

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

We have thus set forth the most important implications of the immanent way of conceiving the divine activity. But while the older transcendence which thinks of God as outside the world is rejected, we should not forget that there must remain an important element of transcendence in the theistic view. The human spirit is dynamically in the body animating and controlling it, but there is a viewpoint from which we must say that the spirit is greater than the body—it transcends it. There is an analogous way in which we must think of God as greater than the world, and therefore transcending it.

**Personality Saves Immanence from Pantheism.** Pantheistic idealism expounds immanence in such a fashion as really to identify God and the world. And this means not only the world of nature but the world of human spirits. Indeed, the pantheistic idealist conceives the human spirit as but a part of the spirit of the universe differentiated for the time by the limitations of time and space.

But personal idealism is saved from this view, which, it will be seen, implies the impossibility of anything like individual freedom. The basic notion of personality demands that we think of the impersonal universe as dependent upon the personal God. While God is continually conditioning the world through his activity manifested in it and through it, the world in no way imposes conditions upon God. His consciousness rises above that order of things which is limited by time and space. He is the Intelligent Ground of the world. The only unity the world has in actual existence rests upon the fact that it is constantly dependent upon the thought and will of God.

It is an age-long story—the way in which mankind came into possession of that greatest of all possible conceptions: the idea of God. It began in the dim twilight of the primeval ages, when the souls of men reached out in rude worship toward the spirit of the Eternal, and when we may well believe also that God on his part began to lead men's thoughts toward himself. That twilight grew at last into the noontide of divine revelation and that noontide is seen in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ revealing as they did the truth—that the Infinite and Eternal God, the Maker of the heavens and earth, is the Divine Father of men; that he has a heart of compassion; that he loves men as his children; that he leads, teaches, and forgives them, in order to win them to himself.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REVELATION OF GOD IN NATURE

**Meaning of Revelation in Nature.** To say that nature reveals God must be taken to mean that a study of many of the facts of nature convinces us that the only way we can interpret these facts is through a belief that back of them, as their ground, lie the thought and will of a personal Intelligence. And what are some of these facts? They are, for the most part, those which appear to indicate plan or purpose. There are a great many wonderfully beautiful adjustments in organic nature, before which we stand in almost speechless admiration. Nature is found to be a great rational order. One of the postulates or underlying assumptions of all investigation is the order and intelligibility of the universe. We know that nature is intelligible because we find that when we apply our reason to its various activities we comprehend them to some degree. The planets and other heavenly bodies swing in orbits which are the curves obtained by the sections of a cone. Crystals are but solid geometry done in material forms. "God understands geometry," said Plato. Science is, as Huxley wrote, "the discovery of the rational order that pervades the universe." There is a parallelism between the activity of nature and our own mental activity. The laws of thought are the laws of the cosmic order.



**Adaptations in Nature.** But the particular aspect of Nature's rationality that interests us at this point is the presentation of those adaptations which certainly look as though they were intended. One of the standard arguments of theism is founded on the fact that there exist in nature those adaptations and adjustments of one thing to another which the mind cannot interpret except by affirming that the outcome resulting from such adaptations must be regarded as *intentional*. This is known as the Argument from Design. In this argument purpose is affirmed as the only principle sufficient to explain the facts. The cause of a watch includes all the agencies through which it was manufactured, but the final cause or purpose of a watch is to tell the time of day. And we have not really explained the watch until we have found and affirmed its purpose. And in like manner we may trace the successive stages of development of the earth or of organic forms upon it. But we have not arrived at any full and satisfying explanation in which the mind can rest until we have asked the question "Why?" and found an answer.

We learn that there is a vast number of adaptations and adjustments in the world of organic life. Taking a particular case, we notice the result, for instance, that the eye is the means by which animals see. We study the structure of the eye and conclude that no satisfying explanation of its structure is possible until we have affirmed that such wonderful adaptation of the organ to surrounding conditions indicates intention, and intention means purpose. Of course the purpose is not revealed directly in things, but is a rational interpretation to which the mind seems to be driven

by the facts. This is the gist of the argument from design. As an argument it has received the careful consideration of the greatest minds. Kant regarded it with respect. John Stuart Mill considered it the only argument of theism which carries weight. When the argument is not made to carry too heavy a load it is found to be of great practical value. We cannot take the time to enumerate some of the striking adaptations in nature which seem to demand purpose as their only adequate explanation. They will be found in the larger works which expound the theistic doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

**Evolution and the Design Argument.** But it is urged that the doctrine of evolution greatly weakens, if indeed it does not destroy, the force of the argument from design. We are admonished that the perfection of the eye, for example (a favorite illustration of the older writers on theism), came from a long process of natural selection. In this process imperfections were eliminated because the animals having the imperfect organs failed to survive. We agree to this, but still hold that the doctrine of natural selection in no way forbids us to conclude that many things in nature look as though they were intended to serve certain purposes—the eye to see, the ear to hear, and so on. It is true that the argument in the form in which it used to be urged is superseded. We may no longer think of the eye or ear or any other part of the organism as an individual bit of creation, in which intelligence wonderfully anticipated and made provision for what was coming. The conception of design

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<sup>1</sup> Janet's *Final Causes* is probably the most thorough exposition of the argument in its more modern form.

is applicable not to particular instances of creation, but to the whole creative process and its outcome. The argument from design can no longer be taken to mean that there is special contrivance in nature. It points, rather, to the truth that Divine Intelligence is the immanent guiding power in the creative process. Natural selection must not be thought of as furnishing its own motive power. It only describes the process by which, after a long series of developments by elimination, certain perfected forms remained. And we still need the conception of an underlying purpose just as much as ever to enable us to explain the marvelous selections and rejections which resulted so wonderfully. There can be in truth no ultimate explanation of the evolutionary process without the thought of an Infinite Intelligence. Nature reveals not impersonal force, but God; not a blind unconscious power working mechanically, but a living Person whose thought and will are the ground of all the marvelous processes described by science. In nature, then, we find evidence of the presence of God in his immanent activity directed for the realization of great ends.

**Divine Purpose and the Problems of Providence—Conclusion.** Now, all this proves perfectly manageable to our thought and clear enough so long as we continue to look upon the bright side of nature. But we are not infrequently brought face to face with the fact that nature has her darker aspects. The heavens declare the glory of God, but what shall be said of the volcano and the earthquake? Marvelous indeed is the industry of nature, but what to say of her prodigality, not to say profligacy, in creating and then destroying

life on a scale so vast as to be beyond our conception? We speak figuratively of nature, as though "she" did these things, but an affirmation that all the ongoing processes of nature are but manifestations of the activity of the immanent Creator stands. We have said that natural selection but traces the method of God's creation. Is it he who thus sweeps away thousands of the less favored in order that the strongest and most perfect may survive? What shall we say in face of what seems to us to be the terrible wastefulness of the methods by which life advances? And what of the many agencies of destruction which seem to show a striking adaptation to the end they serve. The fang of the rattlesnake is hardly as useful as the udder of the cow, but it is certainly as perfectly adapted to the end for which it appears to have been created. When we think of the poisonous plants, the cruel talon of the eagle, the fang of the poisonous insect, the tornado, the pathogenic germs, we may become rather less voluble concerning the way in which the beneficence of the Creator shines forth revealed in the book of nature. We begin to realize that we stand in the presence of mystery. The atmosphere through which we seek a revelation of God is not always clear.

Two things are worth saying, though they do not dispel the mystery. The first is that the fuller and more exact knowledge of nature which modern science has afforded us forbids us to consider particular instances of creative activity and make them the basis for philosophical (or theological) generalization. Knowledge of nature often compels us to overhaul our conception of what may or may not be the divine will. Here we meet the small-caliber doctrines of

Divine Providence. It is natural for people to fancy that things which turn out to their favor are providential, while misfortunes which bring disappointment, suffering or grief are "inscrutable providences." That all suffering is evil is a common and natural view, but one to which Jesus gave no countenance and one which does not remain in the presence of a deeper spiritual insight. A volcano blows off and nearby villages are overwhelmed. Men ask, "Why this inscrutable providence?" That we should continue to think of such an event as a terrible and unmixed evil is perhaps inevitable. It consoles us to be told that all these people would soon have died anyhow only when we are not personally concerned in the disaster. Men will continue to ask why "inscrutable providences" happen when they ought to be asking other questions. For example, "Why will men persist in building their homes close to volcanoes?" A typhoid epidemic is often not an "inscrutable providence," but an indication of lack of proper vigilance or even of criminal negligence. Why are steamship companies permitted to rush great steamers across the Atlantic in the Northern courses in April when they know that fog and icebergs are frequent in that part of the ocean? When trains crash together because of an imperfect and antiquated system of signals which a great railroad has long since outgrown, or because the road was found to be overworking its men, is it an "inscrutable providence"? When we realize the truth that many disasters come from the carelessness or greed of men, and that men are not automata whose acts are determined from without, but possessed of some degree of freedom, then we do not have to make such efforts

at pious reconciliation to disasters which were erroneously taken for the sovereign will of God.

But the greed and ignorance and carelessness of men do not explain everything. After all has been urged, there remains an element of fearful mystery in some natural events. But how often the question has been asked, "But why does not God interfere and prevent dreadful disasters?" We do not know. But we do know that it is infinitely better that all the forces of the universe should remain constant rather than that they should be intercepted from time to time. The constancy of nature is one of the mightiest revelations of the wisdom of God. The force of gravitation must never be suspended, nor must the atmospheric pressure vary to any great degree. If these things were to happen, all life would be brought to an immediate end in unspeakable disaster. Icebergs must float. If water did not expand in freezing and ice were therefore heavier than water, it would not be long before most of this earth would be wrapped in heavy shackles of ice and thereby rendered uninhabitable. It is only as the great forces of nature are maintained constantly that life is possible. God is far too wise to intercept them. The uniformity of nature is an expression of the wisdom and constancy of the divine purpose. We repeat, then, that the teaching that nature reveals the purposes of God must be taken not with reference to this or that particular instance, but at long range. Then, and then only, do the fitful and broken gleams of light seem continuous enough to afford any real guidance to thought.

The other thing worth saying is this: that if we have only science and philosophy to live by we shall

sometimes find ourselves baffled and groping. Amid the mystery and perplexity of the problem of suffering there is but little light from reason alone. Here of all places we need the great truth of religion that we must walk by faith and not by sight. The best that reason and faith together can do is to catch gleams of light that shine through clouds which are often dark. And then Faith whispers that we must trust God when we have failed to understand him, for he is our Father. Sometimes we may feel that there are as many things in nature to indicate that God is indifferent as there are to teach that he is love; but the heart that has come to know God in fellowship of the spirit will not find it impossible to cling to him in trust and love, even under those conditions when the candle of reason begins to flicker and give forth a feeble light. This is the experience of all who have known God, even though they have failed to understand all his ways in the world about us.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

**Modern Knowledge of the Great Religions of the East.** It is not very long since the opinion prevailed among intelligent Christian people that the non-Christian religions are altogether false and unworthy of any consideration. The religions of the world were confidently divided into two classes—the *true* religions, which included Judaism and Christianity, and the *false* religions, which included all others. But this dubious and provincial way of thinking about God's relation to the greater part of the human race began to undergo transformation when the great non-Christian religions became better known. The comparative study of religion is a science of modern growth. A few decades ago the labors of certain scholars began to unlock for us a knowledge of the great religions of the Orient. This came about through the translation of the sacred literatures or "Bibles" of these religions, and through a thoroughgoing study of the great ethnic religions themselves as they survive to-day. The result has been a flood of light. A more comprehensive and exact knowledge of the non-Christian religions is one of the blessings which have come



from the application of modern scholarship to the study of the religious life of all men.

Of course our subject is vast, and an adequate treatment would require some exposition of the fundamental ideas of each of the great ethnic faiths. That is manifestly impossible within the limits of these studies. We can present only a few significant facts and indicate the general direction in which broad Christian thinking must travel.

**All Great Religions Born in Asia.** First, let us not forget that all the great religions of the world have been born and cradled in Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. The native religions of Europe and America have perished. They disappeared because in the onward march of civilization men outgrew their crude and primitive ideas. But the great faiths which began in Asia are all living to-day. And they have lived for these thousands of years not because of the errors they contain but because besides the errors they embody great truths. Their adherents far outnumber the adherents of Christianity. If we say that the divine revelation is not mediated through these ethnic faiths, then we are forced to conclude that for ages God has revealed himself to the merest fraction of the human family—all the rest seeking but not finding the comfort and assurance their spirits needed.

**Great Truths Found in the Oriental Faiths.** Again, let us not forget that in these ethnic religions we find teachings which we recognize at once as great truths. The early religion of India, especially as it is reflected in some of the hymns of the Rig Veda, seems to be

characterized by a primitive monotheism. There are indeed the various gods of the Vedic pantheon, Varuna, Indra, Agni, and the rest. But there is excellent reason for believing that, although these were worshiped as separate personifications of divine power manifested in the nature forces, yet they were also regarded as manifestations of the one Divine Existence. The following extract from the Rig Veda gives evidence of this:

What god shall we adore with sacrifice?  
 Him let us praise, the golden child that rose  
 In the beginning, who was born the lord—  
 The sole lord of all that is—who made  
 The earth and formed the sky, who giveth life,  
 Who giveth strength, whose bidding gods revere,  
 Whose hiding-place is immortality,  
 Whose shadow, death; who by his might is king  
 Of all the breathing, sleeping, waking world.  
 Where'er, let loose in space, the mighty waters  
 Have gone, depositing a fruitful seed,  
 And generating fire, there he arose  
 Who is the breath and life of all the gods,  
 Whose mighty glance looks round the vast expanse  
 Of watery vapor—source of energy,  
 Cause of the sacrifice—the only God  
 Above the gods.

—121st hymn, 10th Mandala. Translation by Professor Monier Williams, of Oxford.

This hymn was written several centuries before the earliest writings of the Old Testament. Note also the following well-known lines from another Vedic hymn, addressed to Indra:

Thou art our guardian, advocate, and friend,  
 A brother, father, mother—all combined.  
 Most fatherly of fathers, we are thine,  
 And thou art ours. Oh! let thy pitying soul

Turn to us in compassion when we praise thee,  
 And slay us not for one sin or for many.  
 Deliver us to-day, to-morrow, every day.

—FROM MONIER WILLIAMS, "Hinduism."

That we have there the expression of noble beliefs concerning God is perfectly evident.

One of the most impressive characteristics of the higher Oriental thought is the emphasis laid upon the unreality of the material. The world of physical existences is regarded as but the varying expression of the Unseen Reality behind it. The unseen is the only abiding and eternal life. The Vedas and the Upanishads breathe this fundamental view throughout. There is too, on the part of the Oriental mind, a deep longing for union with the Divine Being. Absorption into the Divine, with consequent ending of finite personality, is the religious belief which expresses this longing. This is the only form that faith in immortality took in the higher Eastern thinking. And we have learned repeatedly from our missionaries what earnest religious yearnings and heart-hungers can exist in the midst of polytheistic forms of worship. And even if the worship of the modern Hindu is a degraded polytheism, the old religion of India, that of the Vedas, was fundamentally monotheistic—the earliest monotheism recorded in the history of religion.

Now, truth is truth wherever we find it, and light is light. The difference between the dim light of early dawn and the full beams of noontide is simply a difference in the amount of light which is being shed over the landscape. But the dim light of early dawn has the same source as the bright beams of day which

stream down from the glowing sun. And, surely, we should rejoice to find evidences of the truth about God in these faiths which are much more ancient than are our own. God has indeed spoken "at sundry times and in divers manners through the prophets." And these prophets are not only the Hebrew prophets, as we may have been taught to think, but all who have given utterance to the truth of God. The view has often been put forth that the origin of religion is to be found in a primitive revelation to the Hebrew people which was later expanded into the more complete revelation of Christianity, and that beyond this there is no real religion but only superstitions of various degrees of refinement. But this view, which was defended by Mr. Gladstone,<sup>1</sup> and other sincere Christian men, dissolves away before an enlarging knowledge of the great religions of the Far East.

**Non-Christian Religions a Phase of the Divine Revelation.** We dare not declare these great faiths, which countless millions of rational beings have professed for thousands of years, to be nothing but error and delusion, for if we do, we so discredit the human reason and conscience as to make them very doubtful powers by which to accredit the truth of our own faith. With all their imperfections and weakness there is a majesty and dignity to these old religions, and it is the majesty and dignity of the eternal truths they contain. The history of religion is the age-long story of the quest of God by the human heart, and of the responses which the Eternal has made to that quest; and the non-Christian religions are earlier chapters in that age-long story. This view of the broader

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<sup>1</sup>In "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture."

revelation is absolutely necessary to our Christian thinking, and, happily, is becoming dominant in modern missions. As our knowledge of the religious consciousness of Oriental peoples grows, a new significance is found for the words of the apostle, "There is a light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

**Weakness of the Ethnic Religions.** But while it is undoubtedly true that the non-Christian religions contain great truths, we must remember that no religion can be known simply through a study of its sacred literature. Its effects or outcomes in life must be taken into account, and when we estimate religions on this broad basis we begin to realize how dismally the ethnic faiths of the Orient have failed in producing a lofty type of moral life. Socially and politically the Orient is still ages behind the Western world. We cannot forget that the Brahman faith enjoins barbaric austerities as the price of divine forgiveness, and that it founded the system of caste which is today the most terrible burden under which India struggles. Modern Hinduism is a jungle of superstitions, many of them of a revolting character, and has fostered such terrible practices as the burning of widows and the destruction of little children. Buddhism offers no better comfort for human sorrow than the promise of personal extinction at physical death; and throughout the entire Orient the development of social morality has reached only a low level and the position of women is still one of degradation except where the influence of Christianity has made itself felt. Religions are to be judged, we repeat, not by a few lofty doctrines of their founders, but by the moral

ideals they nourish and the type of ethical and social life they have brought forth. And, realizing all the difference between what the ethnic faiths have done for the Orient, and what Christianity has wrought in the Western world, we may well be glad that "God who at sundry times and diverse manners hath spoken in times past through the prophets," hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

## CHAPTER X

### THE REVELATION OF GOD IN HUMAN PERSONALITY

THERE have been those who, after studying the uniform sequences in nature, have been deeply impressed, and even depressed, because they did not discover in nature any evidences of feeling or compassion. John Stuart Mill said that "nearly all the things that men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are nature's everyday performances." Ferdinand Brunetiere declares that "nature is immoral, thoroughly immoral." And one of our recent theologians writes: "There is no equity in nature. She knows nothing of what is meant by that noble English phrase, 'Give him fair play.' She will herself cripple a man with all sorts of weakness and then crush him because he is weak. Not only so, but sometimes these weaknesses are a result, under natural law, of the action of some other man for whom the cripple is in no degree responsible; that is, nature is so indifferent to equity that she strikes the wrong man."<sup>1</sup>

We have here an impassioned outburst which surely does credit to the theologian's feelings. Dr. Curtis's purpose is really to point out the inadequacy of the revelation contained in nature, or "natural religion,"

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<sup>1</sup> The Christian Faith, by Professor Olin A. Curtis, p. 108.

as it used to be called. But ought he in careful thinking thus to personify nature and hold "her" responsible for a lot of things "she" does? If we are to hold to the conception of God as immanent, we surely must believe that the fixed sequences in organic life express the wisdom of the Divine Creator. We may think it unjust, perhaps, that impaired physical vitality in parents should weaken the offspring. But we do well to remember that, on the other hand, physical vigor in parents also strengthens the offspring. Heredity shows us children now and again almost damned into the world. But the great majority are blessed into the world under the same unvarying laws. The difference is found, not in any variation of the divine will, but in the awful consequences of human sin. And shall we ask that the natural sequences shall generally remain constant, but be varied in those cases where the consequences of sin would work out pain to the innocent? "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children" is written not only in the Decalogue but in life. And it came to be written in the ancient law because it was found to be written so large in human life. There is no theodicy which clears up the problem of human pain and reconciles it with our abstract principles of justice. But vicarious suffering is woven deeply into the very warp and woof of our human existence.

**The Revelation through Nature Not Sufficient for a Moral Religion.** Of course all this means that the moral elements of the divine character are not discovered by a study of that vast system of constant sequences which we call "the natural universe." But should we become aroused and say for that reason that nature is



immoral? That "she" does a lot of unjust things? Or should we bear in mind that nature is not an independent agency at all—that she does nothing on her own account? The blame we lay at the door of nature we are really charging up against the God who is immanent in nature and whose broad purposes nature expresses. Shall we not say, that while we must confess that suffering is a great mystery and that the ways of the Eternal are often past our finding out, that what all this means is really that in nature we find only a partial revelation of God. While men might possibly have come to some knowledge of God's wisdom and power through nature, they never could have attained a knowledge of his ethical love.

**Personal Relations Demanded.** Let us agree, therefore, that in nature we have a revelation—but that revelation is not enough to lay the foundations of religion. But men have never been satisfied with the revelation in nature. And this is the reason why the human heart has so long believed in a God whose nature is moral, a God who not only thinks and wills, but feels and loves. The justification of this deep faith of the human heart in a moral God is found chiefly in the feeling that the divine cannot be less than the human. We do not need to be told what a large part the affections of the human heart play in making our life what it is. We dare not leave out the element of moral love in summing up human personality. Must we not think, then, that the Divine Being, who we have every reason to believe is intelligent and purposeful, is also moral? There is, indeed, no way of arguing from nature to an ethical God, for the rea-

son that it turns out that nature, so far as we can find, does not reveal the higher ethical side of the divine character. But there surely is a pathway for reason from our life, made rich as it is with human affections, to the heart of the Eternal. The argument for the divine love is, therefore, from a moral effect to a moral cause. The effect is the constitution of human personality with its affections and the acts of love and sacrifice which express them. The only adequate cause of this effect is the Creator of the human personality, himself a moral Person. Shall the Creator of the human spirit which loves not himself love? If we are to think of the Divine Being as personal at all, his personality may not be less complete than the human; but, rather, must the Divine Person include in the fullness of his being all the essential elements of our human personality, but without the limitations and imperfections which beset the finite.

**Speculative Objections.** But here we meet the speculative philosopher again. We have met him before. He objects to thinking of love as a necessary part of God on the ground that it destroys the Divine Absoluteness, for, he will urge, the necessary condition of ethical love is the finding of some object for the affections other than the subject who loves. But we cannot think of the Absolute as having to go beyond himself to find objects for his mental activity. Therefore to think that the Infinite loves finite beings, as we do each other, is an anthropomorphism which clearly destroys the absoluteness of the Infinite. This objection is cited not because we feel great respect for it, but because it stands for a class of objections to the Chris-

tian conception of God where the difficulties are speculative rather than real. We have already disavowed (in Chapter VI) all philosophical allegiance to the idea of God as the speculative "Absolute." This idea has little practical religious value. Its religious outcome is pantheism, and, as we have said before, pantheism is the practical equivalent in religion of atheism. We are engaged in a discussion of fundamental religious conceptions. Atheism, or any conception which leads to it, does not fall within the range of such religious conceptions. We give over the task of treating religious ideas from a merely speculative point of view and content ourselves with the more useful task of clearing our underlying Christian conceptions of inconsistencies.

"God Is Love." But as over against any such speculative objection to the divine love, we urge that the unique and characteristic teaching of Christianity is that "God is love." These are the great words of the apostle who thus sums up the divine nature. The only interpretation we can possibly put upon these words is that the divine nature is not complete without the human. The very fact that moral love is the most characteristic power of God's divine nature means that an object or objects of love are in this sense ethically necessary to God. Just as the parent cannot be a parent at all without the child, so the Infinite cannot be the Infinite without the finite as an object of infinite love. In other words, humanity is necessary to the completion of the divine nature. In this ethical and Christian sense we affirm the absoluteness of God and confess that the human must be included as a necessary part of the divine.

And as for anthropomorphism, we have already shown its necessity and that there can be no objection to it in principle. In accordance with the principle of higher anthropomorphism already set forth, we urge that in seeking to know the nature of the divine love we shall have to be guided by our knowledge of love on the plane of our own human experience. The moral affections must be essentially the same in the Divine Personality as in the human, or there is no use of talking of a moral relation at all. Now, on the human plane love appears as the warmest and most positive of the human emotions. It ought to be remarked here that we are using the term "love" with an ethical content. The word is sometimes used where it stands for nothing but physical passion. Genuine love prizes the object of affection so highly that there can be no contentment without possession. But possession of the object of affection is only partial. With this alone we have only the selfish desire to have and to enjoy, which may soon degenerate into selfishness and even brutality. The other part of moral love is the desire to bestow every possible benefit and gift to protect and to serve the one loved. Without this latter what is called love loses its ethical content and becomes mere selfishness of varying degrees of coarseness. Moral love then, we repeat, means not only fellowship with and enjoyment of the object of the affection, it means also the consuming desire to serve, protect, and give joy to the one loved. And apart from this unselfish element, there can be no genuine moral love.

Another characteristic of moral love in human life is a supreme valuing of the object of the affections.

This does not always mean moral approval. Many times human love clings to the object of the affection in the full knowledge of moral shortcomings, as, for example, when a mother continues to love and stand by a dissipated son. The great essential elements in moral love, therefore, as we know it in human life, are the desire for fellowship with the one loved and the unselfish giving to the one loved of every care and protection and joy irrespective of whether these bestowals are deserved or not.

Now, the love of God cannot be essentially different from this, though, of course, it must be thought of as complete and perfect in a way no human affection can even be. God loves men. This must mean that God desires the fellowship of men, and that he seeks to promote their happiness in every way. The divine love means, the granting of every gift which will minister to the joy and highest well-being of men, not as moral desert, but as the free outflowing of love itself. It means also that there must be a deep desire in the mind of God for a return of the love he feels and expresses to men.

**Moral Love Made Known Only through Personality.** If, then, moral love is an essential of the Divine Nature, the question arises, How shall it be made manifest to men? Love is impossible except between persons. We may speak of loving inanimate things, but the word is but an accommodated sense. We love the old homestead, not because of the material things of which it is made, but because of the personal associations which gather about it. It is because of the persons we loved who dwelt there that the house seems so dear. Moral love therefore exists only on the plane

of the personal. Where, then, should we look for a revelation of the ethical love of God? Nowhere but in *Personality*. And since, as we have already seen, our knowledge of the Infinite must be in terms of our finite experience, the revelation of the ethical love of God must be made through human personality. We must seek the divine revelation, therefore, not only in nature, but in *human* nature. It appears, then, that the divine revelation begins in nature, but finds its completion in human life. Shall God, therefore, come into human life? Shall he make himself known through man? Shall he manifest through human personality those higher moral attributes of his nature? Is the course of the Christian revelation through man to God? It must be so. That God really has come into human life, is the great and unique message of Christianity. The incarnation, that great and comprehensive Christian teaching, means that the Divine is revealed supremely in the human—that the deepest secrets of the divine nature are made known in humanity. Through the personal finite, the personal Infinite may be known with a fullness not otherwise possible.

**God Revealed in Particular Personalities.** Now, this great truth of the incarnation may be understood (1) in a general way as God revealed in human nature, and (2) in a special or particular way as God revealed in a particular human personality. These we must explain.

(1) There is in a very true sense a revelation of the Divine in our common humanity. One of the great truths which we have noted before in our discussion is the kinship of God and men. If the divine and the

human were totally unlike it would be idle to talk about a revelation of the divine in the human. But from the earliest days of religion to the present the great assumption underlying all worship is that response is to be expected and some kind of fellowship with the Divine is possible to the human; and the Bible constantly teaches the truth that there is a kinship between God and men. Man is "made in the image of God." This is to be understood as referring not to bodily form, of course, but to mental and spiritual capacities. Even the old Testament prophets taught men that the relation between them and God was one of the Father to his children.<sup>2</sup> And in the teaching of Christ the word "Father" sums up the whole of the relation of God to men. Now the clear implication of Fatherhood is that the child partakes of the Father's nature. The child will never become the father, for the two are separate personalities; but with all the great differences in knowledge and power their natures are the same. The child has come from the parent.

**God Revealed in Humanity.** This surely means that we are not searching vainly when we look for evidences of the divine in our common humanity. Most of us feel a sense of reverence when we stand before a great canvas portraying a Madonna. This is not simply because it suggests to us the woman who gave physical life to Jesus Christ of Galilee, but because the picture stands for that great, universal, holy fact in our life—the fact of human motherhood. We see in that fact the purest affection, the giving by one person of the whole self in sacrifice and loving service

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<sup>2</sup> Jer. 31. 9; Isa. 63. 16; 64. 8.

that another may have life. To perceive in all the noblest features of our human life reflections of the Divine—this is to recognize the revelation of the Infinite in the finite.

(2) But there has been another manifestation of the Divine in the human. We are still holding in mind the great truth of the kinship between the finite and the Infinite. Christ taught men to think of God as the Infinite Father. And again we urge that this means an essential identity of nature between the child and the parent. Of course the analogy must not be pushed too far. But clearly Christ's teaching of the Divine Fatherhood means that there is no impassable gulf of difference between the finite and the Infinite—the two are akin. The finite is such by reason of its limitations. The boundaries which mark the range of finite powers and activities are definitely drawn. By reason of these the finite never can transcend itself and become the Infinite. But that does not mean that the Infinite may not enter the conditions of life which characterize the finite. And this brings us to the second or specific manner in which the incarnation has taken place. Christianity teaches that in the human personality of Jesus we have the highest possible revelation of the divine personality of God.

**Most Perfectly in Jesus Christ.** Again let us reiterate the truth that knowledge of God comes to us by way of our human experiences. The ascent to the divine is through the human. We recognize that our worthiest conceptions of God are formed in terms of the noblest ideals of human life. It follows, then, that the most perfect personality known in human life will be



the highest and most complete manifestation of God. And there is no difference of opinion as to where the most perfect personality known in human life is to be found. It is in Jesus Christ. A more perfect embodiment of love, a purer spirit, or more flawless character we cannot conceive. The portrait of Christ as it has been presented in the four Gospels of the New Testament corresponds in every way to the highest ideal of which the human mind is capable. Let us refresh our thought in regard to a few significant facts.

**Significant Facts Pointing to This.** Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but lived in Nazareth of Galilee. Though his parents were of the peasant class, they were descended from the ancient royal stock of Israel. For all who accept the New Testament records as an essentially trustworthy account of his life, ministry, and death, the following propositions will be accepted as undisputed. (1) Jesus manifested as he grew up such remarkable moral and religious characteristics, that he made a very deep and lasting impression upon those who knew him. (2) His life was brief, but during its few years somehow he gave to those who became his more intimate friends the profound conviction that he was the "Messiah," or Anointed One of Jehovah, whom the Jewish nation had been expecting for many years. (3) To his intimates he also gave the conviction that he was in constant spiritual fellowship with God in a way that was absolutely new in religious experience. (4) After three years spent in religious teaching and ministering to the sick and helpless he was crucified. Everything connected with his death—his foreknowledge of it, his conduct as he

approached it, the wonderful prayer for the forgiveness of his tormentors, gasped out in the most unspeakable agony—all this convinced his followers that he was indeed the Suffering Servant of Jehovah of whom the great Prophet of the exile had spoken.

(5) But that which gave the greatest certainty to all this growing conviction in the minds of his followers was the fact that after his death had been accomplished they saw him again. He appeared to them and talked to them a sufficient number of times to convince them that he was alive. His parting message to them was that they should proclaim as witnesses the great facts which had now come to their knowledge. After they had waited a few days they set about the task.

(6) And now remarkable manifestations begin to follow the proclaiming of Jesus as the risen Messiah. Marvelous moral power is given to those who believe the testimony of the followers of Jesus and who seek the divine forgiveness through his name. Men appear among the followers of Jesus whose lives have been marvelously transformed. A moral enthusiasm appeared to take possession of them and so transformed them that they became changed men. One of the most conclusive reasons for believing that Christ did indeed appear to his followers after his death is found in the otherwise unexplainable reviving of their prostrate faith and the powerful spiritual movement which followed the efforts of those who began to preach in his name. Those who come to believe in Christ now declare that they have an inward experience of cleansing from the burden and guilt of sin that is new in their lives. They exhibit power against sin which can be accounted for only by ac-

knowledging the fact that they now possess moral energy quite beyond anything yet known in the religious experience of mankind. The distinct type of life thus produced, with the purifying of the moral nature and the enlightening of the understanding, led to a larger faith in Him who had been their teacher and friend. He now becomes the dominant power in their lives, and loyalty to him is the great source of their moral energy, and from calling him "Master" and "Teacher" they begin to speak of him as their Saviour, and as the "Son of God."

Now we must leave aside all discussion of the metaphysical aspects of Christ's relation to God. The reason for this is simply that we are seeking to formulate a philosophy of Christian faith not from the abstractly logical or speculative point of view, but from the standpoint of religious values. Those considerations which have a bearing upon the practical matter of the place Christ should have in our religious thinking are our affair. Everything else we leave to dogmatic theology. The question arises then: Was Jesus Christ divine? If so, what shall we understand by his divinity? Was he divine in a sense which no other human being who ever lived was divine? What are the practical implications of his divinity for Christian faith?

**Divinity of Jesus.** In seeking rational foundation in our thinking for a conception of the divinity of Christ we begin, where we always must begin, upon the plane of the human. There is no other approach to the divine. We may learn "definitions of God" and certain formulations of accepted belief about divinity, after the manner of the old theologies, but this is generally

barren for the religious life. The one fact always emerges that the gleams of the divine possible to us always shine forth in some way through the human. "No man cometh unto the Father but through me." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said Christ. We turn away, therefore, from all attempts to grasp the meaning of divinity in Jesus Christ in any other way than through those qualities of his personality which we recognize as thoroughly human.

It was so with the early disciples of Jesus. They all came to be his devoted friends and followers not because of theophanies or unusual displays of divine power. Jesus was walking along the beach of the Sea of Galilee. Some fishermen sat there working on their nets. After earnest conversation—we know not for how long—they decide to give up their business and become the intimate friends and followers of this deep-souled Teacher. The scene is as perfectly human as it is profound in its spiritual destinies. This was the beginning of their personal knowledge of Jesus and fellowship with him. But before many months they were confessing his divinity and in the later years they joyously sealed with their life's blood their faith in him as the Eternal Son of God.

**Divinity Revealed through Humanity.** There is little doubt that the followers of Jesus Christ in the twentieth century come to know their Lord as divine much as the disciples of the first century did. It is his normal and perfect humanity of which we first gain knowledge. We learn to admire and to love Jesus Christ as a man—the most perfect man of whom we have any conception. We recognize the truth that he was not only extraordinary but absolutely unparal-

leled. No other faultless and perfect character ever existed among the sons of earth. His humanity comes first in the growth of our knowledge of Jesus. Then the recognition of his divinity comes as a resultant—a great conviction which deepens and deepens in the soul as we learn more and more of that matchless Teacher and Royal Sufferer, whose whole life brought a new conception of God and a new valuation of humanity into the world. To any who realize that they fail to grasp the meaning of his divinity—the fact that he was one with the Eternal God in a unique sense—his own words point the way. “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” A reverent and thoughtful study of the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus Christ will prove to be a revelation of the mind and heart of God to any earnest seeker after the truth.

**The Divine in the Human.** But a final word must be added. The truth that the divine may be grasped through the human, meaning that the divine is in the human—that is, the immanence of God—is a great conception quite as necessary to enable us to explain human life as the life of nature. An “ascent of man” through humanity to some realization of divinity implies a descent of God into the realm of human life. Whence comes the hunger of the human mind for truth? Whence the passion for righteousness? Whence that constant summons to the higher choices named conscience? And has not the fire of love that burns in the heart of the parent, the patriot and the philanthropist been lighted from a divine source? And is not sacrifice that others may live more abundantly a divine gleam glorified through the prism of

human heroism? As Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you." The highest revelation of God in human personality is possible only because God is immanent in human personality. Not in any way that would destroy human freedom, for the development of moral character—possible only through freedom—is the great underlying purpose of God's revelation. Jesus Christ is, therefore, the great Mediator between the divine and the human; that is, himself completely human, and divine with a fullness possible to no other man, he stands as the great High Priest of humanity. We come to God through him, therefore, not only because we must come to God by way of the human, but because his humanity is linked with a measure of divinity which makes him the one human Being who has entered perfectly into the heart and mind of the Eternal God. The apostle's words, therefore, express a profound truth: "In him [Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the divine nature in bodily manifestation" (Col. 2. 9).

## CHAPTER XI

### THE REVELATION OF GOD IN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

THE question now arises whether the divine revelation is made through the particular experiences of the individual. Of course in a sense all divine revelation is to the individual. That is, the revelation is comprehended by the individual. The theistic doctrine means that God, the Personal Ethical Spirit, is known in human experience. We can have no knowledge of God except as that knowledge comes to us by way of the totality of our experience arising from our conscious relation to the world of things and other persons. Any knowledge of God must come as the result of the reaction of the finite spirit over against the activity of the Infinite Spirit. And the reaction is not independently our own, but depends upon God. God stands in very vital relations to the world and if we accept the doctrine of immanence at its full value we shall think of the physical, social, and spiritual conditions which surround us as the sources or media through which a revelation of God is being constantly made. God, therefore, is the only source and ground of our knowledge of himself.

**Revelation of God Through Individual Experience.** But the question now before us is concerning the particular or individualistic aspects of this experience.

There is in experience a "common to all," to use the phrase of Ferrier. But is there also a "special to me"? Does God make himself known directly in the spiritual consciousness of the particular individual? The affirmative answer to this question is believed to be the truth by countless numbers of men who declare that they have found forgiveness, strength, comfort, and guidance through a spiritual fellowship with God. That God may be known in this direct fashion is not a fact which can be verified by any of the ordinary methods of sense. It is a fact of inner experience. Of course all experience is in a sense "inner" or inward. But in all our sense experience there is always an objective reference. Perception depends upon the existence of an object as well as a subject. But when knowledge of reality has been gained in consequence of sensation we may call the experience "objective." But a form of experience which does not depend directly upon sensation we may call "subjective," or, in popular phrase, an experience of "the inner life." True, the reality of such experiences has been called into question. Let us, therefore, first of all inquire into the meaning and validity of what we may call an experience of the inner life.

**The Objective Reference in Sense-Experience.** In our conscious experience there are two sorts of mental activity continually going on at the same time. First, there are sensations, which through the creative activity of the mind become perceptions, of persons and things about us. On the basis of these perceptions the mind builds up knowledge of the world about us. These perceptions are mental events—ideas. They have no objective existence in space. But we recognize



that while they themselves have no objective existence they have been formed or created by the mind because something came to the mind from the world outside through the avenues named the senses. We cannot have perceptions as we will. There is always an absolute conditioning of our mental activity in this respect by existences outside the mind. Thus in the case of the perception of a red signal light we learn that it is the number of the vibrations in ether per second which determines the sort of stimulus that goes to the mind by way of the nerves. This particular stimulus the mind will interpret as a sensation of red. Twice the number of vibrations per second (several trillions, the physicist assures us) would cause the mind to perceive blue instead of red. Thus the perception of "objectively real" objects depends upon the reception of suitable stimulus by the mind through the physical organism.

**"Subjective" Objects of Thought.** But there is another sort of mental event. You may walk down the street. On the way you may pass a number of things. But you may really see comparatively little because your mind is engaged with your own thoughts. You are pondering certain matters, thinking out a plan, perhaps, whereby you may be able to accomplish an object you greatly desire to attain. Here is a very distinct and real mental activity which is not dependent upon any stimulus coming into the mind from without, as in the case of perception. There are, however, objects of thought in the mind. But these objects are not recognized as the sources of sensations; they are not, therefore, objectively real existences. We may employ the word "subjective" in reference to them.

We recognize a difference between these "subjective" objects of thought and the "objective" objects of thought. And the difference lies in this, that in the case of the "subjective" objects the mind makes no objective reference; that is, there is no referring the experience to a permanent and external source of mental stimulus. But this does not mean that the one kind of mental event is not as "real" as the other. That you thought out a certain plan as you walked downtown is just as real a fact in the universe as that you walk downtown. The latter fact could be perceived and known by anyone who happened to be there at the time—it was a "common to all." The former fact was known only to you and could become known to others only as you will to impart it to them. It was a "special to you."

**Meaning of Subjective and Objective.** From this it will be seen that the distinction sometimes made between objective experience as real and subjective experience as *not real* is uncritical and untenable. For what is an "objective" experience, as distinguished from a "subjective" experience? Of course both are mental events and in this sense are equally real. But the subjective experience has its origin or ground within our self, while the objective experience cannot be accounted for without reference to an order of activities which lies without the self. Those mental events which have their inception within ourselves are more or less subject to our control. Memory and imagination do not proceed with a certain independence of our initiative as sensation does. We can will to remember and make conscious and voluntary effort to imagine. But in perception we find many mental

events which arise within our consciousness from no initiative of our own. Something is given to us—the sun as it shines, the voice of a friend, the forcible contact with something producing pain. On the basis of this our mental activity proceeds. And when we find something thus acting upon us without our initiative or control, we recognize it as something other than ourselves. In other words, it belongs to an order of existence external to our mental life—that is, it is objective. And whether it be “real” or not is to be determined by its constancy and reliability and by the whole way in which it fits into the totality of our rational experience. An objective experience, then, is a mental event which is to be accounted for by reference to some activity not our own which affects us, as it were, from the outside. Our knowledge of what there is there to be known is built up by the mind in accordance with what is given in the way of affection or stimulus.

**Conversion of Paul.** And now, applying this bit of thought analysis to inner experience, let us take, by way of concrete instance, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. It has been not infrequently affirmed with an air of finality that that event was a “purely subjective” experience and “therefore had no basis in objective fact.” Let us recall the events as they are recorded in the New Testament. Saul of Tarsus was carefully trained in the faith of Judaism. He became a prominent and powerful defender of his ancestral religion against the inroads of the new faith of the followers of Christ. He participated in and even led the bitter persecution which broke out against the Christians. He gave his vote for the

stoning of Stephen and held the garments of those who did the ghastly work. Armed with special authority, he pursued the followers of Christ, determined to put down the heresy which was undermining Judaism. On one occasion he was nearing Damascus, whither he had gone with a band to arrest some Christians who had fled to that ancient city. He tells us that suddenly at midday he saw a dazzling light, brighter than that of the sun, and heard a voice calling to him. The account of what he experienced is recorded in three separate places in the New Testament, in the book of Acts, written by his close friend and companion, Luke, the physician. There are some discrepancies, but the main points are the same in each account.

This experience marked the great turning point in Paul's career. Everything that came afterward in his life was absolutely different from what it would have been had Paul never had this experience. From being the most bitter and implacable foe of the new Christian faith he takes his place among the Christians and afterward became the most powerful preacher of the gospel of Christ. To his broad vision and tireless energy was due the widening of Christianity's sweep so that within a few years of the death of Christ it begins its victorious progress as a universal religion for all mankind.

**Perfectly Real to Paul.** That this experience was perfectly real Paul himself never had the slightest doubt. He refers to it again and again in his epistles. During all the years in which he devoted his life to the loyal and enthusiastic service of Jesus Christ he looked back to that experience on the Damascus road.

The memory of it brought him strength and new courage in many a trying hour. He always insisted that he had met Christ—that Christ had definitely spoken to him, and called him to the great mission to which he afterward devoted all of his strength. However that experience of Paul's may be regarded, the fact remains that it was the source or beginning of a new order of things in his life, and as a direct result of it he wrought a work and exerted an influence in the world greater than that of any other man who ever lived, with the single exception of Jesus Christ himself.

To have asked Paul whether that experience was "real" would have brought from him all manner of assurances that to him nothing could ever be any more real. To have intimated that it rested upon no basis of objective fact would have been no doubt to invite his most vigorous protests. But we ask the question as to its reality, and perhaps we must. The word "real" is often a pitfall. We have tried to set forth what we believe the words "objectively real" should mean. The idea of existence as material or stuff, existing in a reality which is independent of thought, we pass by as hopelessly uncritical. Reality cannot be materiality. We have seen this in our study of the foundations of knowledge. Objective reality means the order of existence (and existence can be known only through activity) which lies outside of ourselves. When we can confidently refer a mental experience for its source to some activity which lies without our own mental activity, we may say that such experience is objective or has a basis in objective fact.

**Objectively Real.** From all that we learn of Paul's great "subjective experience" are we justified in believing that it had its source or origin in an order of activity beyond the realm of Paul's own mental life? And now some one comes forward to ask whether we are to believe that the light Paul said he saw was actually due to vibrations in the ether. That it was due to something is quite certain, and that something was some kind of stimulus which produced precisely the effect which vibrations in ether ordinarily do upon the organism of the eye, the optic nerve, and the brain. If, now, we believe in a personal God who was making himself known through Jesus Christ and the great spiritual movement in history which flowed from Christ's life and teaching and death, and if we can recognize that this great movement was an important part of God's revelation, and that the man Paul was an essential factor or agent in this great movement, at its beginning, then it does not become difficult nor does it seem irrational to believe that the effects produced in the consciousness of Paul on the Damascus road were the reactions of his mind to certain agencies. And these agencies resulted in effects which were the same as those ordinarily produced by the stimuli which give rise to our perceptions. His vision of the light, his hearing of the voice—indeed, the whole experience, measured not only by what it seemed to be at the time but by the mighty results which flowed from it later, rises to a level far higher than that of mere illusion or hallucination. It was, in a rational sense, objectively real.

**Was a Divine Call "Spoken" to Paul?** And yet we may still demur. There was a voice which he heard. Did

that mean actual vibrations in the atmosphere? Did it mean vocal sound—spoken words? If so, a language? In his defense of himself before Herod Agrippa Luke does indeed report Paul as having said that the words he heard were “in the Hebrew tongue.” The record also declares that the bystanders did not hear the voice. Paul says he did hear it. It was his experience. We are told that God was speaking to him. The Bible frequently states that God spoke to men—to Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, and others.

**God “Spake”;** the Essential Meaning. Now, what does “spake” mean in this connection? Shall we think that God needed to make the sounds which with us stand for ideas? What is the essential matter when we speak to each other? Is it not the conveying of the thought—the feeling—the inciting of the will? Words are necessary for us. They are a vehicle or medium of thought—more or less imperfect, to be sure, as our frequent misunderstandings show. But the essential matter when we speak is that we enable those to whom we speak to think our thoughts after us, and share our feelings with us. Language is the agency through which we effect this. When God “spake,” is not the real meaning that he conveyed his divine thought, feeling, and will to the minds of those to whom he spake? If this effect could be produced directly by the immediate action of spirit upon spirit, would the medium of language be necessary? But might not the impression produced now and again in the mind of a man be so clear and strong that a man might actually conclude that words had been spoken to him? And there would be all the more reason for

this conclusion since men who have had no critical knowledge of the mind and its activity naturally fancy that the meaning lies in words and that words are the only possible way to "convey" thought.

May we think, then, that God "speaks" to men to-day? Of course we say that in a sense God speaks to men through nature. But does he *speak*, that is, make his thought and will known directly in the inward personal life of the individual? There are many men and women about us to-day whose characters are lofty and whose lives devoted to the service of good who say that God makes himself known directly to them in their consciousness. Of course there can be no logical proof of this. The inductive method of scientific research is not available here. But the fact remains that multitudes of men have borne testimony to this experience of God's presence and knowledge of his will in individual consciousness. We are schooled to-day in the scientific spirit. This spirit dominates many of us to a considerable degree even in the estimates we make of the validity of phases of our religious life. No emotional or mystical experience passes unscrutinized and unchallenged to-day. When we say we *know* we are asked to give the grounds. But sound philosophy teaches us that any theory of knowing which does not end in speculative collapse, rests, in the last analysis, upon the great belief that beneath the rational order about us which we come to know, lies the Infinite thought as its ground. And it is no more unphilosophic to believe that God does make known his thought and will to men, by the direct action of spirit upon spirit, than it is to believe, as we must, that the universe is rational and intelligible to



us because it bears the impress of the infinite thought of its Creator.

We repeat, then, that this question of the reality of inner spiritual experiences cannot be settled by logical demonstration, nor by a show of hands. No man would agree to determine the validity of certain experiences of his inward life by submitting them to the vote of his more intelligent neighbors. In some realms of thought and feeling, the soul may speak with an authority all its own. And if a man cannot out of the richness of his spiritual experience confirm the testimony of those who say they have known God at first hand, surely he ought not out of the poverty of his spiritual experience to deny it and declare it impossible. There is such a condition as spiritual sensitiveness. Those who live near to God are more sensitive to God's inner revelations than those who do not so live. Of course by "near" to God we mean closer in the personal relations of the spirit. Nearness to God is a matter of love, loyalty, and obedience to him. God spoke to those who lived nearer to him. They were spiritually in a closer fellowship with him through their love to him and obedience to his divine will. This gave them a spiritual sensitiveness far beyond that of their fellows.

#### PRAYER

It was Heinrich Heine who said that when men call for help to the Unseen, "no one but a fool really expects an answer." As over against these sad and bitter words, standing forth as they do in lonely isolation, there are the testimonies of the countless

myriads who have called to the Unseen, and have kept calling in prayer all the days of their lives. And these have borne testimony not only by their deeds but by their words that response comes when men really pray to God.

We take up the subject of prayer not with the purpose of setting forth some purely intellectual conception of prayer which may satisfy us logically. Studied from anything else than the point of view of Christian experience, prayer soon seems to be superfluous. We hope only to suggest some truths about the Christian conception of prayer and to indicate some reasons for thinking that the conviction that God reveals himself to individual men and women in that communion of spirit with spirit which we call prayer is not an irrational belief, but one which finds its justification in experience.

But the word "prayer" stands for such a variety of ideas. The history of prayer would really be the story of the development of religion itself. Prayer in primitive religion is an accompaniment of sacrifice and means (1) both asking for some benefit or blessing and (2) expressing the feeling of gratitude and dependence. Naturally, the view of prayer as petition greatly predominates in all the lower levels of religious culture. The Divine Being is powerful and his assistance for the accomplishment of desired ends is constantly being invoked.

**The Christian View of Prayer.** But we are studying the Christian Revelation of God—and the question now under consideration is whether there is substantial foundation for the Christian belief that God reveals himself in the consciousness of the individual

in response to prayer. Prayer in some form is a part of all religion. But it is not prayer in general but prayer from the Christian standpoint which concerns us now. And what is the Christian conception of prayer? We can go to no higher source than to Christ himself. We shall summarize the spirit of his teaching and example concerning prayer rather than cite his words in defense of particular points.

**Always According to God's Will.** Prayer gains its meaning from a consideration of the whole purpose of God's revelation of himself. That is, according to Christ, the spiritual development of men as "sons" of the Divine Father. That means the growth in men of love and trust and obedience. The main factor in this spiritual development of men is that they learn to do the Father's will. This doing of the will of God in all its fullness means that ideal state of human society which Jesus summed up in the pregnant phrase "the kingdom of God." Nothing can be Christian prayer, therefore, which is asking contrary to the Father's will. All our prayers, if we are Christians, must be in the spirit of Christ's own matchless prayer—"Not my will but thine be done."

We cannot believe that prayer can be offered to inform God of our needs nor to change his attitude toward us, reducing his reluctance to grant us the best. "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Nor may we tell God how we wish things done; as for example, that we want him to effect a cure at once without the use of the usual medical agencies. Many so-called prayers seem to imply that God's part is to listen to us and do what we say. There is no Christian prayer in the absence

of a reverent willingness to leave matters in the hands of the Father who loves and knows what is best.

**Prayer Not a Form of Physical Energy.** These great conditions of prayer will help us to answer the doubts concerning the utility of prayers of petition. There are some things we cannot pray for after we have gained the personal and immanent conception of God. We will not pray for the suspension of any of the great laws of the universe—gravitation, chemical affinity, etc. Nor will we imagine that prayer can in any way take the place of physical energy, and enable us to secure results without putting forth all necessary effort to bring them to pass. To pray for deliverance from a typhoid epidemic without tireless search for germ infection in food or water supply would fall far below the level of Christian prayer. For a church to pray for social betterment in its city and put forth no strenuous efforts to make conditions more sanitary and morally wholesome would be a travesty upon Christian prayer.

And this brings us to the considerations commonly urged against the belief that through prayer any effect can be produced in "objective" reality. There is a fair agreement that prayer may at times soothe, comfort, and inspire, but many cannot see that any results are produced in the "objective" world from its use. Thus it is objected that our modern scientific conceptions of "natural law," "uniformity of nature," "conservation of energy," etc., forbid us to believe that the slightest variation may be produced in the order of natural sequences by such an agency as prayer. Now, it is very certain that prayer is not a form of energy and therefore prayer simply itself has no

power to effect any physical change whatever. Prayer must be regarded as entirely spiritual in its influence. Hence any changes in a physical order which we may think of as the result of prayer will come because prayer has influenced a personal agency, human or divine, and through the self-directed activity of this personal agency the change has taken place. From our personal Theistic standpoint, therefore, this objection urged in the name of science resolves itself at once into one to be treated by philosophy. The question whether any change in the natural order of things can take place as the result of prayer means this: May we reasonably believe that the immanent God, whose wisdom and purpose the laws of nature constantly express, will permit any variation whatever in natural events under the influence of our prayers?

**Knowledge of God's Purposes May Limit Our Prayers.** We can only say in answer that God certainly will not permit any variation in the course of nature which would not be for the good of the world, considered in its entirety. The science of meteorology tells us how perfect is the domain of law even among storms which seem to us so capricious in their coming and going. To fancy that a storm could be swung out of its regular path in order to water the crops of a community that had prayed for rain, thereby leaving dry the crops of sections which had not so prayed, is to believe that God is ready to introduce confusion in place of order in his great domain of nature.

And yet we believe that our prayers are followed by results which we must recognize as answers. In no case, however, can we believe that we have swerved God from a previous purpose and by our prayers in-

duced him to do a thing he otherwise would not have done. God never abdicates in our favor even for a moment. But God does work through human agencies in bringing about results. And the human agent is not a mere machine transmitting in a purely mechanical way the energy exerted upon it. "We are the workers together with God." Into how many outcomes human agency enters we cannot say, but their number is vastly greater than the number of those events which come to pass uninfluenced by human will and effort. To pray God to preserve the lives of all on board an outgoing steamship and bring them to port in safety is a perfectly natural and proper prayer. Indeed, to pray God to save, deliver, guide, keep, preserve from harm, restore to health, to pray for anything we need and can believe is for our best good is a perfectly natural and proper prayer. When a human soul has cried to God out of great need let us remember that there is one more fact in the moral universe, and with this one more fact God has given assurances that he would reckon. We know that in mechanics another force added to those already operating will modify the direction of the resultant force. We cannot tell what influence facts in the world of personal Spirit may not exert upon outcomes even in the world of physical existence.

**Answers to Prayer a Fact of Experience.** In this matter of assurance that answers to prayer do come our own experience is the only testimony which brings full and final conviction. Religious books written by pious people to prove this point, and filled with a lot of anecdotes of miraculous answers to prayer, may be of some interest and cause us to wonder as we read

them, but they are not convincing. At this point an intelligent use of the Scriptures can bring us some very valuable assurances. The Bible was written by men who bear clear testimony that they knew God in the experience of their inward life; and we learn that they were men in whose lives prayer formed an important place. They tell us of responses from God to their prayers. We study the lives of these men—like Moses, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Peter and Paul, and others. We realize the tremendousness of their work and see how it was performed in the face of unspeakable discouragements and opposition. And we cannot understand how they could do all that they accomplished had it not been that they did receive from time to time those responses from God which gave them insight and moral and physical strength which made them sufficient for their mighty tasks. And the biographies of some of the great leaders of modern times who were men of prayer and who accomplished great things for humanity may bring us the same assurances. Could these men have done all that they did had they not felt very sure that they were receiving responses from God when they prayed to him? Jesus Christ prayed very often and taught his disciples to pray. In that supreme hour of his life in the garden of Gethsemane he prayed with all the intensity of his spirit that he might be spared the fearful cup of suffering which he knew was coming. But he was not spared. Was that prayer of the lonely Son of man unanswered? No prayer was ever more fully answered, as the succeeding hours of his matchless life showed. Christ's example and teaching assure us that we may pray for everything we need,

in loving submission to the Father's will. The religious man or woman needs not to ask the scientist or philosopher what to pray for. We pray for everything. God knows what is best for us. And the petition is really Christian prayer only when we are willing to leave all outcomes in his hands.

**Another Objection.** But another objection is often urged. If God knows what is best, and God's love will do the best, why do we need to pray at all? Why not just trust the Divine Wisdom and Love and not trouble ourselves to bring in petitions to him? Here we must again remind ourselves that the great purpose of the divine revelation is moral. It is not that men should live in comfort and enjoyment, but that moral character should be developed. And character can be developed only as men strive in conscious effort to achieve the ends set before them. The passive reception of ready-made blessings cannot strengthen moral fiber. God grants us the gift only when we want it so intensely as to be willing to work faithfully to obtain it. It is a moral impossibility for God to guide men in their moral development and spiritual growth as "sons" without demanding a cooperation on our part. We simply have to be "workers together with God." God works in us and through us, but we too must "work out our salvation." And earnest and intense prayer to God is a part of this working out process. Not to overcome the divine reluctance, but to bring ourselves to the point where the giving of the blessing asked will contribute to our spiritual growth—this is the deeper meaning of prayer. In the fullest sense prayer involves the whole personality. All our activities are to converge toward realizing great



and worthy purposes. In this way prayer may become the whole spirit of a life devoted to worthy service—and we may indeed “pray without ceasing.” “The great end of religious effort is a developed soul, a soul with a deep sense of God, a soul in which faith, courage, and resolution are at their highest.”

“Subjective” Value of Prayer. A final word in regard to the so-called “reflex” or “subjective” value of prayer. Every change in those events which depend in any way upon human agency results from mental activity first—perception, feeling, and an act of the will. In this sense all “objective” change through human activity springs from subjective origins. The general of the great army lays his plans and issues his orders. The outcome of the battle—an “objective” effect—is almost wholly determined by his insight and skillful planning, which are “subjective.” That prayer works marked changes in one’s mental condition is undisputed. When courage, deeper insight, and fixed determination come to a man as the result of his earnest prayer, the results are bound to be objective as well as subjective.

In conclusion, we suggest that because genuine prayer is not using a form of energy, but, rather, entering into a spiritual experience the best justification of its validity is not to reason about the experience but to enter into it. He who really prays will not long remain in doubt as to the utility of prayer. Increasing knowledge of the way God works in his great world of nature may render it impossible for us to ask God with confidence to do certain things. But if we do not forget the great teaching of Christ that God the Divine Father cares for all the concerns

of our lives, and desires above all else that we should grow in spiritual character, we may confidently pray for everything which seems to us to be best, trusting that the larger wisdom of God will insure the best as the answer.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BIBLE AS A RECORD OF DIVINE REVELATION

It is a fundamental and essential doctrine of Christianity that the Bible contains a record of divine revelation. Christianity teaches that God has made himself known, not only through the activities of the natural universe, but in the experiences of our human life. This is a part of Christian faith and is founded in the last analysis upon religious experience itself. Now, all experience is individual. We may use such universal expressions as "race experience," but such a phrase can mean only those elements of human experience which are common to many or all members of the race. We have no objection to the use of such universal terms, provided we remember that concrete reality always means that an experience comes as the result of the affecting of the individual mind. A divine revelation which affords knowledge of God is an experience of the individual; and the revelation as fact must of course precede revelation as record. It is evident that if we are to have any knowledge of the religious experiences of the men of former ages, it must be through records which come down to us from those ages. The Bible contains many such records. Speaking exactly, therefore, the Bible is

a literature in which are recorded many facts of history and experiences of individuals in which we believe God has revealed himself.

**The Bible a Record of Human Experiences in which God Has Made Himself Known.** Now as to the manner in which divine revelation takes place, we can only say that it is those experiences which yield knowledge of God. Our study of the ground and implications of knowledge has shown us how impossible is the notion that ready made knowledge can be passed into the mind. This idea prevailed in the theologies of former days and survives to a considerable degree. It used to be taught that all the important doctrines of Christianity were communicated in this fashion by a sort of spiritual dictation to the prophets, apostles or "sacred penmen." We have seen that one of the great outcomes of modern philosophical inquiry into the knowing process is the truth that knowledge emerges only as the result of the constructive work of the mind, in reaction over against the activities which affect the mind from without. Now, what bearing has this upon the manner of revelation? Just this, that while God is the ground or source of every experience through which we gain knowledge of him, yet he does not pass or convey ready-made truth to the human mind, the mind itself remaining the passive recipient of his messages. If we think of God as immanent, we must not conceive him as far removed from us and needing to employ various intermediary agencies to make known his thought and will. God is very near to the spiritually sensitive and may "speak" directly. Revelation is, according to this view, an experience of the inner life—or, in usual

phrase, a spiritual experience. But while very many revelations of God are of this inner sort, and our conception of immanence bids us recognize divine revelation in the whole range of man's spiritual capacities, yet there is reason to believe that God has also used methods which, because they seem to us more unusual and striking, we call supernatural. But even in case the supernatural event merely serves as an unusual stimulus to the human mind, and the real content of the revelation is born in thought and feeling. In other words, it is an experience of the inner life, just the same as before. However we conceive of the human spirit, the Spirit of God must be thought of as the ground or source of all experiences in which we gain knowledge of God.

We repeat then, that if the experiences of the men of former ages in which they have found knowledge of God are to be known to us, it can be only through the fact that these experiences have been recorded and the records have come down to us. In this way we may learn how God led and taught and inspired those who have gone before us. In this way also we come to know facts of human history in which the purposes of God for the training of men in spiritual things may be most clearly discerned. Now, the Bible contains records which are most extraordinary in their religious significance. For these records alone, of all the writings which have come down to us, enable us to know how that nation of antiquity which was the greatest in religion and morality grew in their knowledge of God and their faith in Him. These records also tell us of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the new spiritual energy which became mani-

festated among men as the result of his life, teaching, and death.

It is not our present purpose to offer anything like a complete discussion of the Bible as containing a record of divine revelation. That would require far more space than the limits of these studies can allow. Much excellent material has been written upon a modern and tenable view of the Bible. The older dogmatic view of the Bible has pretty generally lost its authority and the historical view gained by modern scholarship has taken its place. We shall attempt to present a few important considerations which will enable us more clearly to see the truth in the great teaching of Christianity concerning the Bible. This teaching is that through the Bible alone we gain a knowledge of God and of his relation to men sufficient for the moral and spiritual needs of the human spirit.

**The Facts About the Bible.** First let us seek the facts concerning the Bible. We call the Bible a book, but it is not a book in the ordinary sense of a literary composition by one author. The Bible is really a literature. It is a collection of sixty-six writings by fifty or more different authors, extending over a period of more than a thousand years. These writings are in many literary forms—stories, poems, proverbs, hymns, sermons, drama, history, apocalypses, letters. The one thing which unites them is the fact that all are predominantly religious. The early stories are told primarily to show God's dealings with the ancestors of the Hebrew people. The history was written not merely to record the events but to set forth the manner in which God had led the nation

through all its days of growth and change. The discourses of the prophets, or preachers, show a moral earnestness and a lofty ethical conception of God absolutely without parallel in any other literature. The Gospels give us a record of the life, teachings, and death of the man Jesus Christ. There is no adequate explanation of him and of all that has come into the world as the result of his life, except to believe that in him God made a unique and supreme revelation to men. The New Testament centers about Christ and Christianity, finds its origin and ultimate ground in him. Thus we see that the biblical records have to do with two great subjects: (1) the story of the life of the Hebrew people, especially the development of their religion, and (2) the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ and the growth of the mighty spiritual movement which flowed directly from him.

**The Bible Interpreted in the Light of Experience.** Now just as the Bible found its origin in the spiritual experiences of the many who wrote it from age to age, so the Bible brings a divine message to those in whose minds some special experiences are born as the result of the acceptance of the truths about God. There can be no adequate perception of the divine revelation in the Scriptures and no appreciation of its divine authority except through the coming of spiritual experiences similar in kind to those from which the record first originated. Thus, for example, the Gospel of John was written to convince men that Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God and the Saviour of the world. And it is only when a conviction of this truth begins to possess the spirit of a man that he perceives the real meaning of the Gospel of John.

The revelation in the Bible is not a cogent array of facts and arguments which must compel the mind to see God. It is, rather, a record of the way men have found God in spiritual experience. And when one turns to the Bible with honest desire to know God's will, the revelation will give evidence of its supreme value. Experience, then, is the only ground of certainty with regard to the divine revelation. We read the Bible and grasp its truths and as a result we have experiences which otherwise could not be ours. This is the only valid ground of biblical authority.

**Authority of Bible Not Grounded in Inerrancy.** In view of this, we may see how futile are the attempts to ground the authority of the Bible on any external matters such as verbal inerrancy or moral infallibility. The claim that the Bible is verbally inerrant is so foolish and contrary to the plainest facts that only those who are ignorant of the Bible itself continue to urge it. If we are to find verbal inerrancy anywhere in the Scriptures, we would certainly expect to find it in the reports of important utterances of Jesus. But one has only to compare the record of Christ's Sermon on the Mount as it appears in Matthew with the record of it in Luke to see that on the basis of verbal accuracy, one or the other of the evangelists must be wrong. And just what the inscription on the cross over the head of Jesus really was we shall never know, though all four evangelists state what it was. But each states it differently. These examples could be multiplied indefinitely. Verbal inerrancy is wholly untenable.

**The Bible Is First a Human Record.** But the very serious difficulties which arise when we try to hold to any



theories of verbal inerrancy or moral infallibility of the Bible disappear when we begin to perceive two important truths, (1) that the Bible, even though it contains the record of divine revelation, is a very human book, and (2) that the divine revelation is progressive, exhibiting that incompleteness which we always expect in the earlier stages of a growing thing.

That the Bible is a human book and grew out of human life is very evident from the records themselves. They bear the marks of humanity and their materials were gathered in a perfectly natural and human way. Thus the materials of the early narratives of Genesis must have been traditions handed down from father to son for many generations before they finally found their place in the narratives of the prophetic and priestly authors of Genesis. And the laws of the code cannot be regarded as formulations in the desert in anticipation of the myriad moral and religious requirements of generations yet to come. These laws, rather, grew out of life, and are the crystallization, as it were, of the moral and religious needs of the nation after it had undergone a considerable religious development. They were formulated when they were needed. So of the great moral messages of the prophets. They are far more weighty and significant, coming, as they did, out of the national emergencies and moral crises than they could have been as miraculous foretelling of events which were to happen in a later age. The writings of Paul were born of the practical and emergency needs of his missionary labors. They were for the most part intended to serve as instruction, comfort, and establishment in the faith of new converts to Christianity. And the

Gospels themselves were not formal historical treatises but efforts to preserve the traditions of the eye-witnesses of Jesus's teachings and life, in order that those who came later might also know what Jesus had done and taught while he was upon the earth. And not only does the way in which the separate writings of the Bible came into existence indicate a thoroughly human book, but the way in which they were brought together into an authoritative collection or "canon" points to the same truth.

The literary composition of the Old Testament began in the ninth century.<sup>1</sup> At first some records were prepared setting forth the patriarchal period and the early history of the nation. There were probably some earlier and simpler records, and, of course, there were traditions in which stories of the earlier days had been handed down for generations. These were the materials used in the preparation of the first histories. These records were afterward combined with later histories to form the first six books of the Bible as we now have them. The authors were of the prophetic school, but their names we do not know and never shall. Amos and Hosea were probably the first of the prophets to write down some of their discourses. A collection of their most notable messages was finally made. Later the messages of other prophets were reduced to writing.

After the Babylonian exile the priests became the religious leaders of the nation. And under their influence other historical records were prepared. These histories, with the earlier version of the law (Deuter-

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<sup>1</sup> A few fragmentary writings now incorporated in the Old Testament probably originated from an earlier age.

onomy) and the later or priestly interpretation of the law (Leviticus), are soon found in a collection called the Torah, or Law, and recognized as divinely authoritative. Later on (in the third century) the discourses of the prophets were added to the sacred collection. But the other writings of the Old Testament as we now have it were not agreed upon until about a hundred years before Christ. And for generations, among the religious teachers of Judaism, there remained differences of opinion as to whether Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Esther ought to be included in the canon or sacred collection.

Nor is the case at all different with the New Testament. The apostle Paul on his second and third missionary journeys wrote a number of letters to the churches he had founded in different cities of Asia Minor and Greece. These letters were written without any thought whatever that they would ever be included in sacred Scripture and accorded divine authority like the Old Testament. Let us take a concrete example. A few months after Paul had left Thesssalonica word was received and passed around in the little group of Christians in that city that a long letter had been received from the apostle, who is now at Corinth. At the first meeting of the little church the letter is read. It is probably read again at the next meeting. It is talked over. The church at Berea hears of it and may have borrowed it to read at their meetings. Possibly it gets even to Philippi. After a time the letter will have had its influence and be laid aside. In time a second letter comes.

**The Epistles.** As the years pass on one apostle and then another passed away. The little parchment rolls,

which may have been placed in the care of some member of the church for safe keeping, take on a new value. They are now keepsakes of the beloved apostle who is no more. Again they are brought out and read and reread at the meetings. But it is to be distinctly noted that they are not read as the Old Testament was read in the service, that is, as scripture having divine authority. But now and again in discussing matters of Christian belief or practice the members of the churches would naturally get into the habit of referring to what Paul or some other apostle had said in one of his letters. Soon copies of the letters begin to be made in order that other churches than those to whom they were first sent might obtain copies. Thus the church at Philippi received a beautiful letter from Paul in the year 63 while he was awaiting trial at Rome. After his death (probably in 66) how glad the Philippian church would be to get copies of the letters the apostle had sent to the Thessalonians ten or twelve years before. And they in turn would prize a copy of the letter the Philippians had received shortly before the apostle's death. And so of the other churches. Copies of the apostle's letters were made and exchanged among the churches, and read and referred to when matters of Christian teaching, belief, and practice came up for discussion. And here we find the first beginnings of that which came later, namely, attributing to the apostle's letters some degree of divine authority.

**The Gospels.** The Gospels came to be written in a somewhat different manner. Between thirty and forty years after the death of Jesus the apostles and other prominent Christians perceived the need of com-

mitting to writing the important facts of Jesus's life and some record of his teaching. During the first few years after Jesus's death the circle of Christians included so many of those who had known Jesus, and all the things he had said and done seemed so vivid in memory that there was no realization of the need of records. But those who had known Jesus's life and teaching personally and had been eyewitnesses of his death and resurrection began to be removed by death. The story of Jesus had been the powerful factor in persuading men and women to believe on him and become Christians—so the story of Jesus must be preserved and not left to the uncertain fortunes which would surely befall it if it should continue to be passed on by word of mouth after the original witnesses of his life and words were gone.

And so Christians here and there began to write. One may have written down a couple of parables as he remembered hearing Jesus utter them. Another wrote the account of one or two miracles which had wonderfully impressed him and which he could never forget. Another may have let his pen record the story of the crucifixion as he recalled it after the lapse of years. What would we not give for a few of those frail and fleeting papyrus rolls! That they existed we know from the quotations from them made in the writings of some of the Church Fathers or Christian writers of the second and third centuries. But we shall doubtless never recover any of them.

At an early date, perhaps in the early fifties, Matthew the apostle wrote a larger work. It was a fairly good sized collection of the sayings of Jesus—a record of some of the more important teachings. He

wrote this in his native Aramaic—the current language of the Palestinian Jews at that time and doubtless the mother tongue of Jesus. Upon the work as a basis, the present Gospel of Matthew was prepared in Greek some years later. And we have not the remotest idea who it was who wrote the Gospel in the form in which we now have it.

The first attempt to write a comprehensive story of Jesus's deeds and words was made somewhere in the sixties—perhaps 66 or 68—by John Mark of Jerusalem, the cousin of Barnabas and the close friend of both Peter and Paul. Luke's Gospel describes its origin in its opening sentences. It is a careful compilation of the memories and reminiscences of several persons who had known Jesus personally. The author was a physician, the friend and traveling companion of Paul, and he enjoyed excellent opportunities of learning his facts from early witnesses. That other Gospels were written we know, for several are referred to by current writers whose works have come down to us. But failing later to be included in the canon or authorized group of writings they were lost.<sup>2</sup>

**The Growth of the New Testament.** For fully a hundred years after the penning of the New Testament writings there was no New Testament as we understand it, in the sense of a recognized collection of writings to which divine authority was ascribed. The books were current among Christians, as separate writings. Around the beginning of the third century (A. D. 200) we learn that Christian scholars and bishops

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted here to the excellent work on *The Canon and Text of the New Testament*, by Professor Caspar Rene Gregory.

were in the habit of making authorized lists of the writings which should be received as authentic and read in the churches. One such list was prepared as early as the year 170. Slowly and by the gradual growth of a consensus of Christian opinion, a group of authorized writings came to be agreed upon, and gradually they began to be regarded as having divine authority. But this formation of the canon of the New Testament was not the single act of the church council or of any other group of Christians, but was the result of a slow process of selection which went on naturally for several generations within the Christian churches. And even after a New Testament canon had become recognized the collections of writings varied to some extent, in different parts of the ancient Christian world.

We have dwelt thus upon the way the Bible came into existence not only because the facts are important and of great interest in themselves, but also because of their deeper meaning. They show that the great facts of religious experience always preceded the records. The religion of Israel did not rest upon the Old Testament, but upon a revelation of the Most High to that little nation to which they made response. Christianity is not founded upon the New Testament. Christian faith had existed for a century before the New Testament came into being. The New Testament grew out of the life of the Christian Church. The facts of revelation—the experiences—have always preceded the records and they alone are the basis for the authority of the record.

**Meaning of Inspiration.** Then too, the way the Bible came into existence throws light upon the meaning

of inspiration. That the Bible is inspired, which means that the Bible was written by inspired men, is a part of the Christian faith. But what does inspiration mean? We have already seen that it cannot mean some sort of divine dictation which would make the Bible infallible. Biblical infallibility is a doctrine which crept into the church after the Protestant Reformation. The Bible itself nowhere claims to be infallible.<sup>3</sup> What inspiration means we may learn not from some theological doctrine about the Bible, but from the Bible itself. As Professor Bowne says: "The meaning and measure of inspiration cannot be decided by abstract reflection, but only by a study of the outcome. What inspiration is must be learned from what it does. . . . We must not determine the character of the books from the inspiration, but must rather determine the nature of the inspiration from the books" (Studies in Christianity, p. 30).

From the Bible itself we come to believe that its authors were guided and inspired by God. Not, however, in any manner which would make them other than their natural selves. Inspiration does not enable a man to find out facts by any supernatural means. Luke in preparing his Gospel no doubt had to visit the original eye-witnesses from whom he obtained his material. And he was under the same obligation to exercise care and good judgment in arranging and preparing the material for writing. Inspiration might be characterized as the personal influence of God through which a man receives deeper insight and great enthusiasm for his work. This personal influ-

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<sup>3</sup> The passage in 2 Tim. 3. 16 is a mistranslation in our Authorized Version, and both this passage and Rev. 22. 18 and 19 were written generations before there was any New Testament or Bible as we have it.



ence from the Divine Mind quickens the entire human personality. Through the intense interest which is thus produced in the task in hand thought is clarified, memory strengthened, and feeling enriched. To quote from the excellent exposition of Dods: "In the account given us of creation inspiration enabled the writer, not to give a description in which thousands of years afterward perfect accuracy might be found, but to discover God in the work. And throughout the Old Testament history it is not the material which inspiration guarantees but the spirit. . . . Inspiration enables its possessor to see and apprehend God and his will and to impart to other men what he has himself seen and apprehended" (Dods, *The Bible, Its Origin and Nature*, p. 126).

**The Progressive Nature of Revelation.** One lingering scruple may be answered. It is often urged, if we once admit that the biblical writers could err, and that the sacred text contains the misconceptions of inspired men as well as their permanent contributions to mankind's knowledge of God, how are we to know which is revelation and which not? The answer is that when one remembers that the underlying purpose of the Scriptures was *spiritual*, there will be no perplexity. The Bible was never intended to be authoritative on the subject of science or history. And therefore when we meet the crude notions of centuries ago, or discover historical inaccuracies in the Bible, we need not be disturbed. And so far as low morals, ideals, and imperfect religious conceptions are concerned, we have the standard in the teaching and example of Christ, who is the highest manifestation of God. If, therefore, any conception of God be found

in any part of the Bible which is clearly out of harmony with Christ's teaching about God, there can be no question which we should choose. And as for the responsibility of choosing between that which is lower and that which is highest, when were we as moral beings relieved from that? Practically, there is no difficulty when once we give up the false idea of a divine revelation given perfect from the start and substitute the conception of a gradually progressing knowledge of God in which because of the limitations of those to whom the revelation was being made it was necessary that the imperfect should find place, but in which also the imperfect gradually gave place to that which is higher, and finally to the complete.

**The Bible and Other Sacred Writings.** Before we close our discussion of the revelation of God, a few words must be added concerning the Bible and the sacred writings of other religions. The claim has been made that the Bible is only one of many sacred writings, and that God has revealed himself to the Mohammedan and the nations of the Far East quite as distinctly in the sacred books of their religions as he had revealed himself to Judaism and Christianity in the Bible.

We have already recognized that the revelation of God is not confined entirely to Judaism and Christianity. Through the great ethnic faiths of the Orient there have shone rays of divine truth. But the light of truth as seen in the religions of the Far East is the twilight of early dawn when we compare those religions with the full noontide of Christianity. Nothing could illustrate this better than a comparison of the Christian Scriptures with the sacred writings of the

Oriental religions. It is only in recent years that we have come actually to know what these sacred books of the East are. The Koran of Mohammedanism has been translated for many generations, but the monumental labors of a group of scholars (foremost among whom was the late Professor Max Müller of Oxford) have at last opened up to English readers the sacred writings of the Oriental religions.

In the general preface with which the whole series opens, Professor Max Müller, the editor, says, "Readers who have been led to believe that the Vedas of the ancient Brahmins, the Avesta of the Zoroastrians, the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, and the Kings of Confucius, or the Koran of Mohammed, are books full of primeval wisdom and religious enthusiasm, or at least of sound and simple moral teaching, will be disappointed on consulting these volumes." In another place he says, "I confess it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the sacred books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful, and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellent." Again, speaking of the Brahmanas, he says: "These works deserve to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots or the ravings of madmen. . . . But let us only try to translate these works into our own language, and we shall feel astonished that human language and human thought should ever have been used for such purposes." To all superficial attempts to glorify the Oriental religions and place their sacred writings in the same class with the Bible we need no other answer than these words from the

great scholar who devoted his life to opening up the records of Eastern religion to Western scholarship.

**The Supremacy of the Bible.** But we must briefly suggest some of those particulars in which the Bible towers above all other sacred writings. Any comparison of the Bible with the sacred books of other religions soon brings out the fact that these latter contain immense amounts of dross in comparison with the gold of truth. The Bible, on the other hand, is singularly free from those low and impure conceptions of the Divine which can produce nothing but a degraded moral life. The character of any religion is determined by its fundamental conception of God. We do not wonder that immoral conceptions of the divine characterize all primitive religions. They are low in the scale of religious evolution. The loftier moral ideals have not yet emerged. But the great religions of the East, in spite of a certain philosophic dignity in their conceptions, stand utterly condemned by the type of life they have produced. And their most notable defect is in their conception of God. This is impersonal and highly abstract, and therefore fails to meet the deep religious needs of men. Brahmanism in its later development is rather a religious philosophy than a religion. It never became the religion of the masses in India. Its abstract and purely speculative ideas of the divine are replaced in popular religious thought by the hideous gods of the Hindu pantheon with all their groveling superstition and idolatry. The caste system, which is socially the essence of the Brahman faith, has held India in its frightful grasp for ages, and it is very certain that no social and industrial progress such as has taken place

in Japan and is beginning to transform China, will ever be possible in India until the religious teachings upon which the caste system is founded are undermined and swept away. With all the poetic dignity and spiritual depth of some of the hymns of the Vedas, the fact remains that the religion of India stands condemned by the type of morality and social life which has developed under the influence of its fundamental teachings.

Nor is it different with Buddhism. Rising in India as a popular reaction against the heartlessness and austerities of the Brahman priests, Buddhism proclaimed the principle of human religion without a God, until the cardinal defect was remedied by a popular deification and worship of Gautama, its founder. But in spite of some features of abiding worth Buddhism has taught its vast numbers of adherents no doctrine of a God in sympathy with man, no freedom from the guilt of sin through the divine forgiveness, no deep and abiding meaning in human life, no comfort for human pain and heartache, no hope of a larger and fuller life of the spirit after the earthly life is done. Indeed, the highest blessing to which Buddhism can lead the aspiration of its adherents is that of the extinction of one's personality—absorption into Infinite Being, as the river is merged in the vast expanses of the ocean. The highest virtue, according to Buddhism, is found in cultivating a sense of the unreality and transitoriness of the world. If one has this well developed, then no sorrows or disappointments can bring deep pain, but a deliverance from human woe comes by way of this attitude of insensibility toward the world.

Now, in absolute contrast with all this we find in the Bible an elevated and noble conception of the Divine. God is a moral being of infinite holiness. And the Bible teaches that God is full of sympathy and compassion, that his relation to men is that of a Father to children.

The writings of other religions abound in childish stories of the creation of the world and of men. The mythologies are endless and grotesque. But in the Bible account of creation a great moral purpose appears at the outset; and while the material may be that of unhistorical legend and tradition, yet the religious spirit and motive in the narratives stand forth as their most distinctive characteristic.

Unlike all other sacred writings, the Bible lays tremendous emphasis upon morality and righteousness. The Hebrew people, in all their anthropomorphisms, never conceived their Divinity in the female form. Their national religion was therefore saved from that practice of licentious impurity in the name of religion which was so characteristic of other Semitic peoples. Human sacrifice also, so widely prevalent among nearly all the tribes and nations of the Semitic race, never existed as a part of Hebrew religion.

Nowhere else in all the realm of sacred literature do we find anything which begins to approach the work of the prophets of ancient Israel. They preached the loftiest conceptions of God, and under their moral leadership the religion of the nation advanced until all the remnants of early paganism were left behind. The burden of their message was the call to righteousness of life and the pure service of Jehovah. The later prophets even held up before the nation the ideal

of a deep responsibility devolving upon them to become the spiritual leaders and teachers of other nations in the ways of righteousness and the service of the only true God.

The New Testament sets forth the great truth that through Jesus Christ God has made himself known most directly, intimately, and personally. This marks the highest possible level of the divine revelation. The truth that God is the Infinite Father, and that all men are, therefore, bound together by the ties of a spiritual brotherhood, is the unspeakably precious teaching which the world owes to Jesus Christ. From the Bible alone has come the truth that men may receive the divine forgiveness for their sin, not through their works of expiation, but as the free gift of divine mercy. From the Bible alone has come the truth that salvation means personal righteousness and social justice. From the Bible alone has come our faith in personal immortality.

We believe that a literature which records the development of such a type of life as that of the Hebrew people, and the unfolding of such mighty truths as those found in the life and teaching of Christ, is veritably a record of the divine revelation. We would not say that the only revelation of God's nature and purpose is to be found in the Bible. But we may confidently affirm that the divine revelation contained in the Bible, compared with that in nature and in the ethnic religions, is as the noontide compared with the dim light of dawn.

**Redemption the Great Purpose of the Christian Revelation.** Before we leave our consideration of the Bible as the record of the Christian revelation we must note the

great underlying purpose of God in making the revelation. In the Scriptures we read not only of God making himself known but of God giving himself in sacrifice. The greatest word of Christianity is therefore not revelation but salvation or redemption. The exposition of this great truth of redemption through divine love belongs properly to theology. We simply refer to it here. But no one can gain an adequate conception of the range and purpose of the Christian revelation without recognizing this truth that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

To sum up: We find in the Bible the record of a gradually developing revelation of God. It is progressive because on the divine side God necessarily adapted the revelation to the mental and spiritual capacities of those to whom it was made. On the human side the Bible records the growth of man's consciousness of God. The recognition of this truth leads us to expect crude ideas of God and low standards of morality in the earlier stages of human culture. According to this view we see that divine inspiration does not necessarily mean any kind of infallibility. The men who wrote the Bible were men of spiritual perceptions whom the direct influence of God lifted far above the ordinary current religious thought of their time. It may be noted in passing that this viewpoint of modern biblical scholarship takes the meaning out of the many objections which used to be urged against the Bible by skepticism. To condemn the imperfect morality and crude religious ideas of an early age had point only as long as the Bible was held up as infallible. The truth of the progressive nature of biblical revelation completely



vacates these old perplexities. This view also opens our eyes to the greatness of the revelation. Rescuing the Bible from the indefensible position in which dogmatic theology had placed it, we have the chance really to see the spiritual grandeur and power of this wonderful Book. It is verily the "Word of God."

Through the Bible messages we see how God has been in the great currents of human history and in the dawn and deepening of the religious consciousness; through the Bible messages we learn of the infinite love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and how deep-souled men have experienced God's forgiveness and have had conscious fellowship with him. And thus the Bible is not only the source of our knowledge of God and the witness to the reality of spiritual experiences in former generations, but it becomes the means through which men of every generation may know God and themselves experience the facts of the inner life. To those who through faith make the great spiritual truths taught in the Bible their own, it becomes indeed the very "Word of God"—the great source of spiritual life.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PLACE OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION

We have now gained some conception of the nature and extent of the divine revelation. The Bible is full of interest as ancient literature—as a record of the thought and life of a most remarkable people of antiquity. But when it is perceived that in the moral and religious development of that people God has made himself known and revealed his purposes with a clearness nowhere else discerned, then the Bible becomes profoundly significant as a record of the divine revelation. In the Bible we find from time to time accounts of marvelous events. These are the biblical miracles. They are recorded as special manifestations of divine power. We must face the question of miracle and ask whether from the point of view of sound religious philosophy supernatural events may be regarded as an essential part of the divine revelation.

In beginning the discussion of this great question which has been such a storm-center we cannot make our start simply from the biblical miracles themselves, affirming that they are in the inspired scriptural records and therefore must be received for that reason as authentic and authoritative. That may be the belief of many; and it has often been the standpoint of dogmatic theology, but it is not the method of philosophy. It must be borne in mind that the sacred liter-

atures of other religions also contain many accounts of miracles of various sorts. Attempts have been made to show that the miracles recorded in the Bible are in a class by themselves and quite different from the miracles of other religions, and also from those marvels alleged of the saints by mediæval superstition. But the attempt is not successful. For while many of the biblical miracles are full of moral dignity and spring from a deep religious insight and a clear recognition of the power and purpose of God in unusual events, others are such as modern thinking would explain without any supernatural reference, while still others savor of crude magical ideas.<sup>1</sup>

**Origin of Belief in the Supernatural in Early Religion.** The conception of the supernatural begins on the low plane of animism and spiritism. Divination is found to be a feature of all early religion and the essential thing about divination is the effort to know the will of the Deity from an interpretation of unusual events. From the point of view of the origin of the supernatural, events fall into two classes: first, the frequent and familiar, and, second, the infrequent and striking events. And it is characteristic of all primitive thinking to ascribe the infrequent and extraordinary events (such as disastrous storm, famine, sickness, etc.) directly to the agency of superhuman powers. The belief in the supernatural first arose, therefore, as the result of the early crude attempts of primitive thought to account for extraordinary events.

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<sup>1</sup> Such are the stories of Aaron's rod which budded and turned into a serpent, etc. Such also are some of the Samson and Elisha stories, notably those of the she bears which devoured the children who mocked the prophet (2 Kings 2, 23-25) and of the dead man who was brought back to life by being lowered into the grave so that he came into contact with the prophet's bones (2 Kings 13, 21).

**The Problem.** It is not our problem to seek to vindicate as historical every marvelous tale found in those ancient records which comprise the Bible. It will be, rather, our attempt to point out those great truths a consideration of which in their relation to each other will give substantial ground for the belief that there has been and is what we may call a supernatural element in the Christian revelation, and that this supernatural element is an essential part of the historic revelation and has served a most important purpose in it.

**Modern Tendency to Depreciate Importance of Miracle.** There is no denying the fact that there is a pronounced tendency on the part of some strong thinkers to minimize the importance of miracle and even to wish to eliminate it altogether from essential Christian belief. Long ago Matthew Arnold wrote: "There is nothing one would more desire for a person or a document one greatly values than to make them independent of miracles."<sup>2</sup> Wendt (*System der Christlichen Lehre*) and Harnack (*Das Wesen des Christenthums*) both decide that Christianity makes a stronger appeal by abandoning dependence upon the supernatural altogether. So also does Hastings Rashdall, who is one of the strongest exponents of theism. Dr. Rashdall writes: "We may be quite confident that for minds which have once appreciated the principles of historical criticism, or minds affected by the suffused skepticism which has sprung from historical criticism, neither religious faith in general nor any doctrine of primary religious importance will ever depend mainly upon the evidence of abnormal events

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<sup>2</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, p. 137.

recorded to have happened in the remote past.”<sup>3</sup> This drift, to make the supernatural unimportant or to exclude it from what is absolutely essential in Christian faith is fairly strong to-day among many of the more liberal thinkers. And it is being advocated not by the enemies of Christianity but by its avowed friends. They do not deny the possibility of miracles outright after the fashion of Hume and Renan. Most of them say, however, that even though miracles may be regarded as not impossible, yet belief in them ought not to be demanded as an indispensable element in the Christianity of to-day. Indeed, miracles, we are told, are now to be regarded rather in the light of an embarrassment than an aid to faith.

**Value of Miracle for Christian Faith.** But this wish to eliminate the supernatural element and to regard it as an embarrassment is a grave mistake. In answer to the question whether the supernatural is still defensible by the best thinking in philosophy of religion, I would make an emphatic answer in the affirmative. It is the purpose of this chapter to point out those lines of reasoning along which lie the best, and, indeed, the only defenses of the supernatural as an essential element in the historic revelation of God in Christianity. But we ought to make an important distinction. Strictly speaking, belief in miracle is not an end in itself. The miracle was regarded as a sign that divine power was being manifested in some unusual force or through a human agency. This conception of the miracle as a token of divine presence and power prevails in the New Testament. The word most often used in the Gospels is “sign” (*σημείον*). The

<sup>3</sup> Contentio Veritatis, p. 58.

important matter, after all, is not belief in miracles in themselves, but belief in the Divine Nature and authority of Him of whom they were the testimonials. Belief in Christ is the essential thing, and the supernatural element in the Gospels is important in proportion as it leads to faith in him as the Divine Son of God. The miracles were necessary to accredit Jesus as divine to an age which believed that the extraordinary and the supernatural were unmistakable evidence of the Divine. This is the reason why a weakening of belief in the reality of miracles is so generally followed by a weakening of faith in Jesus Christ as divine. Dr. George A. Gordon says that miracles have gradually ceased to be significant for him. He is "dealing with the Eternal as it shines by its own light, and so outward witness of any kind for the things of the soul becomes superfluous."<sup>4</sup> We may acknowledge the truth of this, and yet we must recognize that for most men a weakening of belief in the reality of miracle as an essential element in the historic revelation means a distinct loss "for the things of the soul." That elevation of soul-vision and directness of spiritual insight which Gordon says he has reached, and which no longer needs the "outward witness of any kind," would never have been possible even to him without a belief in miracles as an aid to growing faith in the Divine. Robert Browning, in that great poem "A Death in the Desert," compares the miracles to the dry twigs stuck around to protect the ground in which seeds lie, but which, when the seeds have sprouted and grown to be strong plants, are no longer needed. The figure is suggestive and very true.

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<sup>4</sup> In *Religion and Miracle*, the Preface.

Surely, without belief in the supernatural power of Jesus Christ no strong and enduring faith in his divine nature and authority could ever have grown in the life of his followers. But we must turn to the argument in which we hope to show that belief in the supernatural is rationally grounded and an essential part of the Christian revelation.

**Meaning of "Supernatural" and "Miracle."** The first thing to do is to seek a clear conception of what we should mean by "supernatural." What is a miracle? Some persons will feel like suggesting that we had better begin our discussion by carefully focusing the meaning of the term "supernatural" until it stands out clear and well defined. But alas for this attempt at exact definition of terms that it is so often merely verbal performance and lends no insight! Instead of carefully constructing a definition of a miracle let us try to get at the thought value of the idea or concept of which the word "supernatural" is but the name or symbol.

It is plain that "supernatural" ought to mean above or beyond the natural. This is merely etymology. We are therefore thrown back upon the word "natural." What is a "natural" event? Is it "natural" to talk with a person a hundred miles away with no connecting wire or other visible means of communication? Yes, wonderful as it is, it is quite natural, for the wireless telephone is a fact. But if this event had happened a generation ago, would it then have been classed as "natural" or "supernatural"? Is it natural to alleviate and cure certain nervous and functional disorders by the presence and word of a commanding personality? This is being done to-day,

and the therapeutic value of mental suggestion is fully recognized by men of science. But how would such facts as those now seen in the clinics of the psycho-therapists have been classified a hundred years ago, as natural or supernatural? Bernheim, of Nancy, and those experimenters who have followed him have discovered for us some forces of which we had been in ignorance and the laws of these forces have been set forth. And to-day we call these wonderful achievements "natural." And why? Simply because they are more or less familiar. They are events similar to others which have already come within the limits of our knowledge, the laws of which we may partly understand. Thus it will be seen that "natural" and "supernatural" are terms entirely relative to the limits of human knowledge at a particular time, and what would be classed by one age as a supernatural event may come to be called natural later on. Shall we say, then, that a natural event is one which we are able to refer to forces and laws with which we are more or less familiar? A supernatural event, on the other hand, is one which we are not able to refer to forces or laws which are known to us. Let us not for a moment fancy that a natural event is one whose causes we fully understand. Who can really understand the growth of a blade of grass, or the beginning of a human life? And yet because we can trace these events in the world of nature, and because they are so familiar to us, we call them natural. The commonest natural events, however, constantly bring us face to face with mysteries which baffle our keenest speculations.



Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,  
To me, the meanest flower that blows, can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.  
—Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality."

Now, as our knowledge of the world and its forces expands, the word "natural" will be applied to an increasing number of events. It is therefore only to be expected that supernatural events should be more abundant in ages and among peoples who have gained no systematic knowledge of nature and her laws. As the realm of the known expands, the events which are considered supernatural become fewer. The history of belief in miracles shows this to have been the case.

The question now arises whether the time may not have come when, because of immense gains in our knowledge of the world and its forces, the belief in the supernatural may have ceased to fit our modern ways of thinking; when, in other words, the territory of knowledge may not have become so large that the realm which men have called the supernatural may not have narrowed down to very small dimensions. The present scientific conception of nature as a great orderly system with its laws which express not occasional but constant and regular sequences seems at first sight to preclude the idea that miracles may happen to-day. But if we think of a supernatural event as an occurrence whose explanation we cannot refer to any law of the universe with which we are familiar, surely we are by no means in the position to say that such an event may not occur to-day. To do so would imply that we not only know many of the forces of the universe, but all of them. And no one,

however thoroughly imbued with the scientific spirit, would have the hardihood to affirm this. Things may happen to-day which we are not able to refer for explanation to natural sequences with which we are familiar. Yet we would remain convinced that if such an event does occur, it is not isolated or unrelated in the universe. No event can be. We should believe that the mystery and wonder of it lay only in the fact that it obeyed some law which we had not yet come to know. The conception of supernatural as meaning only an event the cause of which lies beyond the realms of truth already known, makes it perfectly correct to say that such a supernatural event might happen to-day. We are untrue to the scientific spirit if we waste any breath setting forth what is possible and impossible. Scientific men have often declared things impossible which later took place. The only way to find out what can happen is to find out what really does happen.

But the scientist to-day has no right to deny the possibility of inexplicable events, and will not do so when he understands himself. He must seek to verify or to disprove these events. If they are verified as facts, then he seeks to find other similar facts. These are compared and classified together, after which a generalization is possible stating that under certain conditions these facts always happen as noted. A name is given to this generalization and it is henceforth called a "law." It is to be noted that the explanation of new or unfamiliar events here consists in finding other similar instances and classifying them with facts already known. The mind is thus saved from thinking of the new event as isolated or

unrelated to truth already known. This is all that scientific explanation ordinarily means. The bearing of this upon our discussion is plain. It means that modern scientific thought can find no place for the supernatural in the sense of an isolated event, unrelated to other events like it. And the theologian or Christian philosopher should hasten to make the same affirmation. A modern philosophy of Christianity finds no place for miracles as events unrelated to the great laws of the universe. The human reason demands that every event which we receive as fact must find some place in the rational harmony of all things. Our problem, therefore, is how to find a rational place for the miracle in our thinking. For an unrelated thing is an irrational conception, and no irrational conception can long maintain its place in enlightened belief. In what way then can we relate the miracle to the rest of our thinking? That is the crucial question.

**Divine Purpose in a Moral World Order.** We have agreed that a supernatural event is one which we cannot refer to some known law of the universe. But we must now take the next step and affirm that a miracle is more than this. It is an event in which it is possible to discern a plan or purpose of God. Some biblical miracles were events which, if they had happened to-day, might not be classed as supernatural. But a great many of them we would be almost as much at loss to explain on natural grounds as when they took place. We learn from theism to recognize all the ongoing processes of nature as expressions of the divine activity. Philosophy no less than theology forbids us to think of nature as independent of God. Its

laws are his laws, for nature is the constant expression of the wisdom and power of the Eternal. This we have seen in our study of that way of conceiving of the divine activity known as immanence. Like all natural events, the miracle is an act of God, but the miracle must be regarded as an act of God in which some particular purpose of his is made known in a fashion different from the way God's wisdom and will may be read in familiar events. Thus it will be seen that belief in miracle is fundamentally a religious matter. No one whose view of the world is essentially material can find any place in his thinking for the supernatural. The justification of the supernatural has been modified in recent years by the emphasis placed upon moral values in modern philosophical thinking. The old dogmatic defenses on the ground of the authority of Scripture or the theological attribute of divine omnipotence are gone. It no longer satisfies us in seeking to justify miracle to say that "God can do anything." We must now seek a justification of the supernatural as the necessary adaptation of God's method of revelation to those to whom the revelation was being made.

Two great foundation truths must,\* therefore, underlie all modern philosophical justification of the supernatural—first, the conception of God as personal, involving as that does his moral purposes for the training and saving of men, and, second, the self-revelation of this personal God in history. These are essentially religious truths. They are not capable of formal demonstration, but come as great resultants in thought, after we have found that all other conceptions of the Divine give no foundation for the ethical

life and for the practical religious needs of men. Without these truths a modern thinker will find the acceptance of a supernatural element in Christianity exceedingly difficult on any other ground than that of external authority, for the great significance of the miracle lies in its being a sign or manifestation of Divine purpose in events of an unusual or extraordinary character.

We repeat, then, that the great meaning to be attached to the miracle is religious. To discuss the possibility of a supernatural event on purely physical or material grounds is to come speedily to the conclusion which many scientists have held—that such an event is incredible. The scientific thinker can allow no “breaks” in the continuity of law, for such breaks would be to allow what Huxley calls “isolated wonders” out of harmonious relation with the body of truth already gained. The modern thinker who understands himself will hasten to acknowledge that physical science can find no place for the supernatural. This is only as it should be, for the function of physical science is to deal with causal connection on its mechanical side. But this thinker should also hasten to add the important truth that physical science is not to be thought of for a moment as grasping and presenting all there is of reality.

**God as Personal Implies His Moral Purposes.** It is here that the modern view of personality as the ultimate reality points the way to a rational justification of the supernatural. The philosophy of idealism has fully demonstrated the failure of all mechanical theories of causation, and personalism has abundantly justified purpose as the only conception of

cause in which the mind can rest; and purpose means a moral order with great ends to be served. Personal relationships are the soul of a universe which is thought of as having any moral meaning. Thus it appears that the doctrine of divine immanence demands that we think of God not only as working out his purposes in the world of nature with its myriad forces and ongoing processes, but also as realizing his will in the world of moral persons. The doctrine of the immanence of God is by no means complete when we conceive the natural world alone as manifesting the divine will. Just as our highest plans and best purposes are expressed not in what we do with material things about us, but in our personal relationships with friends and neighbors, so if we are true to the personal conception of God, we must think of him as making the most complete revelation of his purpose in his relation not to things but to persons. Hence the moral becomes the highest realm in which we may look for the self-disclosures of the Divine One. And if God is to be thought of as related to persons, then it follows that the relationship will be closer in the case of some persons than in the case of others, for this personal relation is a mutual matter, calling for recognition and response as well as revelation. And it will be closer at one time than it is at another even to the same person. Lotze, in his *Philosophy of Religion*, has well expressed this great truth of the different degrees of nearness in the personal relationship between God and men. He says, "There is nothing whatever that stands in opposition to the further conviction that God, at particular moments and in particular persons, may have stood nearer to

humanity, or may have revealed himself at such moments and in such persons in a more eminent way than at other moments and in other persons."

When, therefore, a strange or unfamiliar event is well attested, it must be thought of, if possible, as having a harmonious relation with the larger moral order. In other words its acceptance as a fact may rest upon the perception that it has a moral meaning and expresses purpose. In the absence of such perception of a moral meaning the event will be sufficiently accredited to find a place in enlightened belief. A miracle, then, must have an adequate ethical occasion and a moral significance. We cannot accept it simply as a wonder, contenting ourselves with the affirmation that an omnipotent God can "do anything," and, therefore, he can perform this or that particular marvel. The protest against breaks or "isolated wonders," which has been so often urged by the scientist as an argument against miracle, is sustained. In philosophy of religion no less than in scientific thinking we must insist upon continuity, but the main matter is to be able to perceive that it is the larger continuity of moral purpose. A personal God must be thought of as concerned not only with running the universe on schedule time, but with those great moral aims which look to the advancement of men in the things of the spirit.

**Divine Purpose Realized in the Historic Christian Revelation through Miracle.** Here, then, is firm ground for the belief that there have been occasions in the revelation of the personal God to men when, in order that the moral purposes might remain continuous, God needed to manifest his power in ways that to us were un-

familiar and extraordinary. Let the supreme miracle of Christianity be our illustration, for in this discussion concerning the admissibility of a supernatural element in the divine revelation we shall be driven to the tomb of Jesus Christ ultimately, and we might as well go there at once. We may well think God's purposes are best served by having death constitute such a final end of our present existence that no return of those who have gone beyond the shadows takes place. But at a critical time in the historic revelation called Christianity we are assured on excellent historical testimony that God did permit certain men and women to see their Master, Jesus Christ, after he had gone beyond the veil of death. This was indeed an extraordinary event—a miracle.

Standing now on the vantage ground of the centuries, it is not difficult for us to see how absolutely necessary it was for the continuance of the revelation of God through Jesus Christ that those first followers should have become perfectly certain that their Lord was alive and not dead. Had not the unshakable conviction been borne into the souls of those early disciples that Jesus Christ their Lord was alive again, Christianity would not have survived its birth. The "Easter Message," to use Harnack's famous phrase, gave them the "Easter faith," and it has never yet been shown how they could have come into the firm and joyous possession of the Easter faith without the empty tomb and the appearances.

From one point of view the miracle of Joseph's garden was a gracious condescension of the Divine to human limitations. And this is what every miracle is. Those early followers of Christ were not critical



thinkers. They could not think of him separate from the well-known face and form. Face, form, voice—the print of the nail even—were necessary accompaniments to the realization of his personal presence. The meaning of the resurrection did not lie in the reviving of a dead body, but in the continuation of the personal life of Jesus. Of course he was far more than the flesh and bone of his familiar figure. We find ourselves groping as soon as we seek to establish the identity of his body after the resurrection with that body which he had before his death. How a material thing may change its attributes and characteristics and yet remain the same thing is an exceedingly dark problem. We can gain no assurances as long as we remain on the plane of the physical and inquire about the body. But we reach firmer ground and clearer insight when we come to the personal traits of Jesus himself. However much his body was changed, *he* was not. His personal interests do not seem to have been altered. His mental traits, his affections—all that made him truly what he was to the disciples—were not changed by death. Here is the great and significant fact of the resurrection. However change may have come over his body, he himself was not changed. He was “this same Jesus.”

And yet while we do well not to lay too much emphasis upon the body in thinking of the resurrection, we must remember that those deep-souled men of Galilee and Judæa needed the “outward witness for the things of the soul.” Without the sight of their risen Lord their prostrate faith in him could never have found its marvelous rebirth. The miracle itself was a gracious condescension to their limitations—

needing, as they certainly did, the sight of the empty grave and the sensible presence of the familiar form of him whom they loved, in order that faith in him as Divine Lord might be born in their souls with unshakable certainty. Without this certainty and confidence we know that Christianity could never have been. Do we not see, then, that the miracle of the resurrection more than any other event assured the continuity of God's great purpose in the Christian revelation? Thus it appears that the supernatural event known as the resurrection of Jesus far from being a "break" was really necessary to continuance of the purposes of God. The moral continuity of the divine plan demanded such adaptation of the revelation to those to whom it was being made. From the moral point of view the resurrection seems inevitable and natural. After all, the question is whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ is credible—remembering all that he was, and all that has come into the world from his teaching, life, and death.

**Miracles and Christian Faith.** In answer to those who urge that belief in miracles in these modern days is an embarrassment to faith rather than a help let it be said that by belief in the supernatural we do not mean the acceptance of every marvelous tale recorded in the Bible. We mean acceptance of those miracles in which a great moral or spiritual purpose of God may be discerned. There are miracles and miracles. The miracles of the Bible run all the way from the exploits of Samson to the record of many eyewitnesses that they saw their Lord and talked with him after his death. Even the most impervious advocate of verbal inspiration would hardly rank these as equally

significant, because both are in the Bible. The vindication of a miracle on philosophical grounds lies in perceiving how it serves great moral purposes of God in the revelation. A miracle which does this will have ethical dignity and moral meaning. The exploits of Samson and the tales told of Elisha and other material of the same sort fall far below the moral level of the acts of Jesus and the apostles recorded in the New Testament. Any modern justification of the supernatural as an essential part of the Christian revelation demands that we distinguish between the miracle which is the product of an uncritical wonder-loving age and the miracle of moral dignity and spiritual worth. The former we make no essential part of the revelation. The latter we cherish as significant adaptations of God's method in revelation to an age that needed such signs. In answer, then, to the question, How shall we distinguish? it may be suggested that the rational acceptance of any particular miracle as worthy of place in the Christian revelation may rest upon three grounds—historical attestation, moral dignity or ethical appropriateness, and spiritual significance.

**Miracles and Historic Christianity.** In answer to those Christian thinkers to-day who urge they do not need supernatural events as an outward witness for the things of the soul it is sufficient to say that the apostles and early Christians did, and the great majority of the followers of Jesus to-day do. It is a fact of religious experience that for the great mass of men positive Christian faith has not been able long to survive when confidence in the supernatural element in the Gospels has been weakened. And certain it is that

without that great and victorious faith in Christ, born in the early Christians through belief in the supernatural, there would have been no Christianity. Without doubt the testimony of personal experience ranks above the acceptance of historical evidence for making the things of the spirit real. Ultimately we know Christ as Saviour of the world because we have come to know him as our own Saviour. It was so with Paul, and it is so with every one who really finds Christ. But how shall a soul find that strong personal assurance in experience that gives the eternal certainty? Is it not something we must grow into? Does it not come with loving and serving? And where do we begin? Always with the Christ of Galilee and Calvary. Always with the historic revelation—with the gospel story. We cannot come to possess the Christian ideals by which our lives are to be shaped and dominated unless we begin with the historic Christ. Let this gospel story be stripped of its miraculous features, and it loses its power to grip men and hold them. There can be no going on in personal experience to the certainties of faith until faith has grown up to it, from the preceding certainties of faith in the historic revelation.

To a Christian who says he has outgrown the need of the supernatural because he says he sees God in everything the answer is: "You say belief in the supernatural does not now aid your faith. But it did aid your faith. Indeed, without your belief in the supernatural your faith would probably not have been born. And as for the long line of spiritual ancestors from whom you have inherited your rich spiritual heritage, they believed in the miraculous element in the his-

toric gospel. And could you ever have gotten to the realms where spiritual truths seem so clear and direct to you, unless you had traveled the long way up from a belief in the supernatural, and unless you had entered upon the possession of the spiritual riches of those who have gone before you!"

**Belief in the Supernatural a Practical Demand of Faith.** In the last analysis, belief in the supernatural, like all the rest of our convictions, comes from the practical needs of the moral life far more than from a logical process. The demands of religious faith afford the best justification. Belief, as Professor Bowne so constantly urged, is practical in its nature. It is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It is valuable for what it helps us to, and its grounds lie quite as much in practical necessity as in logical inference. The great and essential thing in the Christian life is not belief in the supernatural but faith in God showing itself in love and obedience and in the Spirit of Christ in our relations with fellow men. But the dynamic of Christianity, its moral motive power for the life of faith and service, is to be found in loyalty to Jesus Christ. And experience undoubtedly shows that when belief in the supernatural character of Jesus Christ is weakened or given up, the moral dynamic which results from a sense of personal loyalty to him is greatly diminished. Without the attestation of his divinity, which the supernatural events of his life gave, the martyrs could not have gone cheerfully to death trusting steadfastly in him. Nor could the countless thousands of his followers have acknowledged him joyously as Lord and Master, living by his teachings and dying in the hope of eternal fellowship

with him. Belief in the supernatural is, after all, not so much a deduction from evidence as it is a religious demand of the soul. For the great mass of men the things of the spirit do not remain sure and steadfast without this outward witness, which God in his wise condescension has graciously granted.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN IMMORTALITY

**Belief in Life After Death in Early Religions.** Belief in the human soul and its survival of physical death is as old as religion itself. And while it may not be as universal as the belief in and worship of superhuman spirits, nevertheless it is a very important element in primitive culture. On the human side, this belief undoubtedly arose in the thought of early men as they faced the fact of death. They could not understand it. They were unable to think of their fellow, who had so recently been among them, vigorous and active, as suddenly ceasing to exist. He had gone away. Sleep furnished the basis for the early conception that the soul or spirit could leave the body for a little while, as it was supposed, and then return. Then too, dreams seemed to furnish corroboration for this early belief in the soul and its survival. In the dream the dead warrior is seen back again fighting with his fellows of the tribe; the dead father is with his family, the mother seems to hold again the little child who has gone.

**In Religion of Assyria and Babylonia.** Out of primitive religion grew the great historic religions, and in none of these is the belief in the soul and its survival of death lacking. In the religion of ancient Babylonia and Assyria there is no trace of a belief that death

ends the life of the individual. The spirits of the dead all go to an immense underground cavern called Aralu. The entrance to this vast place was near a great mountain where the sun goes down. All who enter have to cross a river. Here their life is a shadowy and joyless counterpart of the earthly existence. To what extent the souls of the departed are conscious of their sad state does not appear. No ideas of reward or retribution are found in these early conceptions.<sup>1</sup>

**In Early Aryan Religion.** Among Aryan peoples the same general view of life after death prevailed with some significant additions. Thus besides the cheerless underworld there now appears a happier land, above ground, far away toward the setting sun. At first this better abode was for the chiefs, who had had the best of everything in this life, and for the bravest warriors who had fought in defense of the tribe. Little by little it became the belief that the valiant and the good at death went to the happier land to be with the chiefs and the heroes, while the cowardly and the bad went to the old dreary abode underground. And here is the beginning of the idea of retribution in the after life. With the growth of ethical ideals and the increasing emphasis upon each as a moral individual, standards were formed for the judging of conduct, and a doctrine of reward and punishment came into religious thinking. When the Indo-Iranian tribes separated to form the Persian and the Hindu peoples, the former developed a well-defined set of beliefs in regard to life after death. These included a judgment, a resurrection, a blessed abode, or heaven,

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<sup>1</sup> See Jastrow, *Religion of the Babylonians and Assyrians*, chap. xxv.



and a dark and cheerless abode, or hell. But it must be remembered that so long as religion remained tribal or national it was a man's relation to the tribe which determined where his soul went. The ancient Persian belief was that their own people went to heaven and other peoples to hell. The Aryan invaders of India seem not to have developed the conception of rewards and retribution in the after life, for it is not found in the Vedas. As the early Vedic faith stiffened into Brahmanism the conception of transmigration of souls took the place of the primitive heaven and hell beliefs. And in time with the growth of moral standards by which to judge the conduct of the individual, transmigration took on the character of retribution, if not reward. Thus the hell of Brahmanism became an undesirable rebirth.<sup>2</sup>

The early Greeks shared with other primitive peoples the belief that the soul is immortal and that at death it leaves the body to continue existence in a far-away subterranean abode. This place they called Hades. But it must be remembered that in early Greek thought Hades does not correspond to the later ideas either of heaven or hell. It was believed in simply because the idea of annihilation seemed impossible to the early mind. In the *Odyssey* (Book XI) we have the Homeric thought concerning the existence of those who have gone beyond death. Men did not hope for it as we do for heaven, nor were there associated with it the horrors of the mediæval hell. It had no ethical meaning. Immortality, or "immortal souls" in the modern sense, would have had no meaning of hope or joy to the men of the Homeric age.

<sup>2</sup> See Rhys David's *Hibbert Lectures on Buddhism*, p. 81.

The survival of primitive ancestor worship among the Greeks no doubt delayed the development of any moralizing of the view of the after life.

But in the seventh and sixth centuries B. C. Greek religion underwent a remarkable development. The mythological conceptions of the earlier days were transformed into a religious philosophy by the Orphic thinkers—poets and philosophers of the age of the Greek awakening. The soul, not the body, is now thought of as the reality. It lives in the prison house of the body, but is divine in origin, and when duly purified will be fit for fellowship with the Divine Spirit in the abodes of the blessed. The religion of the Mysteries takes the place of the older popular worship of polytheism. A monotheism begins to grow up in the thinking of the most enlightened. But it was speculative, and for the practical purposes of religious worship the older pantheon of gods was retained. The object of the Orphic doctrines and ceremonials was the discipline and purification of the soul. To the initiated the future held no terrors. Immortality was the essential attribute of the Divine, and he who came into harmony with the Divine became immortal.

**In Religion of Ancient Egypt.** No religion of antiquity worked out doctrines of the future life in such detail as that of Egypt. The "Book of the Dead" is a very remarkable record and is one of the oldest documents of remote antiquity dating from a period between 2500 and 3000 B. C.<sup>3</sup> The journey of the soul into the realms beyond death was thought to be full of dangers. Evil beings in many terrible forms infested the path-

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<sup>3</sup> A translation by E. A. Wallis Budge is now published in three small volumes.

way before the lonely traveler could reach the judgment hall of Osiris, and thence, if acquitted, pass to the abodes of the blessed. And so the custom grew up of securing from the priests the potent magical formulæ which would drive away the terrors or render them powerless to harm the soul. At first these were written on the inside of the mummy case or coffin. But when they became very extensive they had to be inscribed upon papyrus rolls and put into the coffin. From these grew that vast collection of instructions and incantation formulæ—the work of the priests—of which the Book of the Dead is a record. We cannot go into the Egyptian beliefs concerning the life after death. It would include almost the whole of Egyptian religion. It must suffice to note that here in this land of the Nile conceptions of moral merit and demerit and a system of rewards and retribution in the after life grew up two or three thousand years in advance of the Greeks or the Hebrews. Egyptian religion is not yet fully systematized and adequate history of its development is not yet possible. Looking at the mass of material we now have, it appears as a wonderful and pathetic mingling of well developed religious ideas and high moral conceptions with surviving superstitions of the lowest grade, the whole permeated with a contemptible priestcraft. But the important point for our present discussion is that Egypt's religion was dominated through and through with the belief in the immortality of the soul, and, unlike contemporary peoples, the thought of the Egyptians looked constantly to the future.

**Hebrew Beliefs.** Among the Hebrews the current beliefs with regard to life beyond death were not dif-

ferent from those of the Greeks of the Homeric age. The vast underground world they called Sheol.<sup>4</sup> It seems practically to have been equivalent to the Greek Hades—a great subterranean region where the souls of the dead went and where they lived a shadowy life in a cheerless condition. Comparatively little is said of Sheol, and there is every indication that the condition of the souls after death occupied an unimportant place in early Hebrew thinking. The practical character of the Hebrews and their lack of imagination is seen in the contrast between the fullness of detail concerning Hades which we find in Greek literature and the bare suggestions as to the character of Sheol in the Old Testament.

The belief in the immortality of the individual rests upon two great truths which did not come into the religious thinking of Israel until the teachings of the prophets had begun to bear fruit. The first is the moral relation of the individual to God. This great idea was not realized until ethical monotheism had become firmly established. But after the exile the supreme values in religion became those of the personal life, and then and not until then was any doctrine of personal immortality possible. It might have followed almost immediately after the teachings of the great prophet of the exile, but for the fact that the Puritan revival under Ezra was given up to the

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<sup>4</sup> This home of the departed is deep and dark (Job 11; 8. 21, 22); it is in the bowels of the earth and has many depths (Num. 16. 30; Deut. 32. 22; Prov. 9. 18). It is fastened with gates and bars (Isa. 38. 10; Job 17. 16). This means that the souls once in cannot get out. In Sheol are the souls of the dead (the Rephaim), and evil spirits (Psa. 84. 13; 89. 48; Prov. 23. 14; Ezek. 31. 17; 32. 21). It is all-devouring, cruel, and implacable (Isa. 5. 14; Cant. 8. 6; Prov. 1. 12; 27. 20; 30. 16; Hab. 2. 5). There is no return or resurrection from the dead (Job 7. 9f.). In Sheol there is no mental activity, or memory of the past (Job 14. 13; Psa. 6. 5; 31. 17; 49. 14; 88. 3-6; Isa. 38. 18). From Sheol the shades of the departed might be recalled by necromancy (see 1 Sam. 28. 7-20).

establishment of the external features of religion—the formation of the canon of sacred writings and the establishment of the ritual of the priestly law. The development of religious thought which had gone on so rapidly under the prophets was almost wholly stalled. Then, too, the delay of the promised kingdom of the Messiah occasioned the skeptical reaction of the third century. It was not until the persecutions broke forth in the second century under Antiochus Epiphanes that the religious faith of Judaism burned again with a clear and steady flame. Then it was that the nation began to take seriously and at full face value the teachings of their great prophets concerning the experience of fellowship with Jehovah. The book of Daniel was written during these fearful days when the pagan king was seeking to root out the faith of Judaism. The story of the bloody conflict between Antiochus and the faithful Jews under Judas Maccabæus is familiar. It was a life and death struggle for Judaism. Many had fallen and many must yet fall. The book of Daniel<sup>5</sup> proclaimed that those who had fallen in the Lord's battles would not lose the joy of the final victory. God will raise them up again. They have laid down their lives for God, therefore God will raise them up to a life of blessedness in the Messianic kingdom. And thus the faith in a resurrection and a personal immortality first grew strong amid the fires of persecution. It was taught by the Pharisees in connection with a strict doctrine of future rewards and punishments during the generations immediately preceding the coming of Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> Dan. 12. 1-3. Compare Enoch 90. 20-26.

**Immortality in the New Testament.** By this time it appears that the word "immortality" should stand for the belief in the continuation of the personal life of the individual after death. The miserable and shadowy existence in Hades or Sheol, with no life of thought or feeling and little or no memory of the past, cannot be termed immortality in the sense in which we use the word in Christian thought. A search of the Old Testament soon convinces us that immortality with the richer content which Christ gave the belief is practically absent. True, later teachers of Judaism developed a doctrine of personal rewards and punishment. And Sheol was transformed into the more awful "Gehenna," the name being applied to the ravine of Hinnom, into which the offal from the temple and other refuse was thrown. Here a fire burned constantly. This dread spot, according to the orthodox teachers of Judaism, was a fitting illustration of the place to which the souls of the wicked would be consigned at death. It was a fearful teaching, the Jewish antecedent of the later mediæval doctrine of a hell of fire and torments. The heaven of Judaism was thought of as the glorious consummation of the Messianic kingdom. It would take place on earth and the righteous dead would be raised at the sound of a mighty trumpet to meet the Lord and his Anointed.<sup>6</sup>

**Faith of the Early Christians Based on the Teaching of Jesus.** But what a contrast as we turn from the Old Testament to the New! If the Old Testament is prac-

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<sup>6</sup> See Isa. 26, 19 and Dan. 12, 2. Compare also Enoch 51, 5; Baruch 30, 1-5; IV Esdras 6, 23; 7, 32; Orac. Syb. 4, 173, and many other places in the Jewish apocalypses (compare 1 Thess. 4, 15).

tically without a doctrine of immortality, the New Testament is full of it. The solemn cadences of the thirty-seventh and ninetyeth psalms, which mournfully recite the brevity and weakness of our pilgrim life, give place to joyous expressions of victory. The faith in personal immortality dominates everything in the New Testament. It gives meaning to the word "hope" when used in the Christian sense. In the faith of the early Christian Church, based, as it was, upon the teaching of Christ and upon a sense of personal fellowship with him, we find the belief in immortality with the highest ethical implications and the richest spiritual content.

**The Christian Faith in Immortality.** From Jesus's teaching and life came the Christian belief in the future. This belief is, in a word, that through faith in Christ the believer receives the gift of eternal life. Physical death has no power to end the life of the spirit. The life beyond death has its beginnings in the present, and there are common elements enough to make our spiritual existence one. But the life beyond death will transcend the present life. All those factors which make the present unhappy and sorrowful will be eliminated. Death will be past, physical weakness, pain, and disease will be no more. Disaster, disappointment, and everything which makes life painful will be no part of the life beyond death. In the beautiful words of the apostle John, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." The physical body with its susceptibility to disease and decay will be a thing of the past. But the body serves such important uses in the personal life that the apostle Paul, when he tried to think out the conditions

of the glorified life, could not conceive the spirit without some embodiment, and so he teaches that the soul will have a "spiritual body" suited to the conditions of the life beyond death (1 Cor. 15). Paul could not conceive of "pure spirit"—that is, spirit apart from all kinds of bodily manifestation—without a sacrifice of personal reality and identity. Nor can we. Personal recognition seems inconceivable without a body of some kind. And so, because of the fact that we cannot possibly transcend our finite experience in trying to think what the life beyond death may be, we need the concept the apostle has given, as a help to faith. The dogma that the material body of our present life will be reanimated is no part of the Christian faith in immortality, even though it has found its way into theology. It is essentially a materialistic and pagan creed. The Christian faith in immortality means the continuation of all the higher and finer personal relationships which enrich our human life. Those who are near and dear to each other in the home circle, or in the bonds of friendship are not to be separated in the life beyond death.

All our thinking must be under the thought forms known as time and space. These we cannot escape; and if we are to think at all, it must be in these relations which condition all our experience. The life beyond death is everlasting. We may dimly adumbrate the meaning here, but we really cannot comprehend it. To do so would be to pass beyond the conditions and limitations of our finite thinking. Is the immortal life timeless? Are the conditions under which those live who have gone beyond the veil totally different from those which govern all our present



thought and activity? We cannot tell. Is heaven a place? It is not easy to think of existence without definite space relations. But the more permanent and profound matter, after all, is not space relations but personal relations. Where is the home? In the house where all the things are gathered which minister to the comfort of those in the home circle? Yes. But some day the devouring flame may turn the house and all in it to ashes. But the father and mother with the children safe may gather and offer a prayer of gratitude that the *home* was not broken into. The real home is not so much a place, but exists, rather, in the sacred relationships of those who make the home circle. Love makes the home in the most enduring sense. Space relations are always relative to us. "Here" is where we are—the point of departure from our vision, our activity. "Where is heaven?" it may be asked. We do not know. But Jesus taught men that the kingdom of heaven begins here and now. It is a condition of the soul growing into something nobler and diviner as time goes on. Heaven is fellowship with God—the love and service of fellow men—and it begins in this life if it begins at all. In speaking of the perfected heavenly life after death the New Testament uses the language not of space location but of personal relations. Paul speaks of the life after death as being a condition when he will be "at home with the Lord." Jesus promised his disciples that they should be with him in the "Father's house of many mansions." This is the faith of the follower of Jesus Christ in the life beyond death.

**Foundation of this Faith in Immortality.** This Christian faith in the life beyond death is founded upon the

teaching of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Let us briefly consider them.

**The Teaching of Jesus.** Christian faith in the life after death—whether in the first century or in the twentieth—rests upon what Jesus Christ taught and all that he is. Two great aspects of his teaching are most significant. First, he taught the supreme value of human personality. Men are of infinite worth. What mean those matchless parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son? Just this, that the human soul has a permanent and undiminished value. This love for men as of infinite worth is one of the great dominant motives in Jesus's wonderful devotion to humanity. He saw in the most debased the image of the eternal. No matter how dimmed with sin and degradation, it was there, an intrinsic and unalterable value. It was this sense of the incomparable worth of human personality as compared with all mere material values, which lies at the basis of the conviction of immortality which Jesus taught. For him personality was the only reality. And with God as the Supreme Personality the universe, so far as it is significant and permanent, is a universe consisting in personal relations and moral values. "This is eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send."

Second, the ground of this lofty valuation of men is found in the fact that Jesus always thought of men as "sons" of God. They are divine in their origin—children of the Eternal Father. The "kingdom of God" meant the coming into a full realization of this great relation of divine sonship and attaining the actual experience of fellowship with God. In Jesus's

thought religion means the fellowship of man, whom God has made with spiritual capacities, with God himself. And fellowship with God means entering into participation with the life of God; and this in turn implies that such a spiritual and divine fellowship endures beyond the physical change called death. Thus the immortality of the finite spirit follows as a consequence when men enter the spiritual life—the life of God. Jesus never argued for immortality. He simply assumed it in all that he said concerning the relation of men to God.

**The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead.** Not only does the Christian faith in life beyond death rest upon Christ's teaching, but it has also the foundation of historic occurrence. The resurrection of Jesus raises inevitable questions as to the credibility of such an event. These may be reduced to two considerations; first, Is the event *philosophically* credible? and, second, Is it historically credible? We have sought to answer the first of these questions in the preceding chapter. Belief in God as a Personal Being manifesting himself in an historic revelation answers all scruples as to the *possibility* of such an extraordinary event. For God must be thought of as supreme over nature, and his purposes may be expressed in the unusual and (to us) unfamiliar events quite as easily as in the ordinary and regular processes of nature.

Second, Is the resurrection of Jesus historically credible? Testimony that Jesus was seen after his death by many competent witnesses is repeatedly recorded in ancient documents which are universally considered perfectly genuine. There are only three possibilities: (1) That Jesus never really died, but

revived after a prolonged swoon. (2) That he died and never rose again. (3) That he died and did rise, even as his followers testified. Now, we certainly cannot repeat the convincing arguments which show the utter untenability of the first and second of these possibilities. They are to be found in many excellent works<sup>7</sup> on evidences of Christianity. It is very certain that fewer difficulties are encountered when we accept the Gospel records of Jesus's resurrection as essentially trustworthy accounts of actual historical occurrences. Undoubtedly the greatest single argument for the fact of Jesus's resurrection is the revival of the prostrate faith of his disciples. There is, indeed, no adequate way of accounting for this except to receive at face value the statements of the disciples that they saw their Lord. The fact that Christianity was founded upon the resurrection of Jesus and would have been impossible without that event sufficiently indicates the reason why such an event was necessary, if the historic revelation of God through Christ was to go on.

We have now traced in brief outline the belief in immortality as it has developed in the growth of religion, especially in Christianity. We see that this belief has played no small part in the history of religion. In Christianity it has become a deep spiritual conviction with an ethical content far higher than in any other religion. We come now to the question whether all the knowledge of the nature of man and of the world about us, which has been gained through modern science, adds to or detracts from the credi-

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<sup>7</sup> See Fisher, *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, p. 166f.; also A. B. Bruce, *Apologetics*, chap. IV.

bility of this belief. And what truths can we gather from the best thinking in recent philosophy which will strengthen our faith in the continuance of personal life beyond death? We shall not seek logical proof or conclusive demonstration, for there is none. No living man has ever had the experience of immortality. If it is a real experience, it is a future event for each of us. And in the very nature of the case the proof of a future event is logically impossible. All we can hope to do is to elevate belief from the level of a fond hope to that of a conviction resting upon rational considerations which seem to imply an overwhelming degree of probability.

Belief, as we have seen (Chapter III), consists essentially in accepting a thing as true on adequate rational grounds. It remains now to ask, "Upon what rational grounds may we base the belief in immortality?" For the man who thinks, faith must be preceded by accredited belief. Faith is the personal relationship expressing itself in loyalty, confidence, and trust. This necessary relation of belief to faith is well expressed by the apostle James: "He who cometh to God [in faith] must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him." Putting this truth in other phrase, it would be, Religious faith through which we experience the presence of God must rest not only upon the belief in God's existence but also upon the conviction that God reveals himself to those who seek to know him. Belief in the continuation of the personal life is necessary to that deeper trust and confidence in God which is the soul of Christian living. What, then, we repeat, are the foundations of belief in the life beyond death?

**Grounds for the Christian Belief in Immortality from Science.** Let us ask, first, what science may offer in the way of considerations for the belief in immortality. There is no direct proof from evidence. The data of science are phenomena, and thus far nothing has been won which gives evidence of the continuance of life after death. It is true that during the past few years a good deal of attention has been devoted by some reputable investigators to what is called psychical research. But the consensus of opinion among scholars to-day is undoubtedly that, in spite of a vast amount of dredging in the turbid waters of "psychic phenomena," little, if anything, has come up which throws light on the problem of the continuance of personal consciousness after death, while considerable material may have been gained which will aid in the further study of that borderland in psychology—the realm of the subconscious.

But even if science can offer no direct affirmation, she is equally impotent to urge any direct negative. While there is no proof in the ordinary sense, there is certainly no disproof of immortality. If, therefore, we are to gain something of value from science in building a rational foundation for belief, it would not be by the way of direct demonstrations but, rather, by broad inferences from the great facts and doctrines which form our scientific faith to-day. We must endeavor to relate the belief in immortality to our other beliefs and find a rational place for it in the whole of our thinking. Only thus is it a real belief, resting upon a solid foundation, and only thus can it lead to broad and intelligent faith.

Let us note one or two objections which are offered to the belief in immortality.

It is sometimes urged that the pedigree of this belief is against it. Are we to accept as profoundly significant and true a belief which originated, as anthropology assures us, in the crude thinking of primitive peoples when they came face to face with the familiar yet mysterious fact of death? But this objection loses what force it seems to have when it is remembered that all our great beliefs started in very lowly beginnings. The value of a belief or a whole science is not diminished by the humbleness of its human origin. Is medicine the less scientific and valuable because it has its origins in magic, or chemistry because it began in alchemy, or astronomy because it began in astrology? The fact is that the value and truth in a belief or institution or science is not to be determined by its origin, but by its development, not by the manner of its beginning, but by what it leads to.

Another objection to immortality has been found in our inability to conceive or even to imagine what a life apart from bodily conditions could be. It is true that our thought cannot transcend the forms imposed upon it by our conscious experience. We are not able to conceive what a spirit would be like absolutely without these bodily means of expression and communication with other personal spirits which are so fundamental to our human life. The apostle Paul could not conceive of personal spirits as disembodied (2 Cor. 5. 3), and for this reason he conceived of a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15). The adjective seems at first to cancel the noun. But not so. On the plane of

our finite experience we must think of a body as the vehicle or means of recognition, communication, and expression. But does our finite experience exhaust reality? It is one of the cardinal fallacies of which the materialist stands convicted that he assumes that it does. Is there any direct evidence in experience for the reality of the atom and the electron?<sup>8</sup> We may believe in their existence quite as firmly as the materialist, but insist that the ground of our certainty is rational inference, not direct evidence in sense experience. The ether is inconceivable in the sense that we cannot imagine how it can have the properties assigned to it. But we believe in it. We are perfectly free to admit, then, that some things may be admitted as rationally possible which we are not able to imagine or conceive. Men do this in science with no logical qualms. But they stop at the belief in immortality because they cannot conceive it, and therefore falsely conclude that there is no rational ground for the belief.

It is at this point that grave difficulties meet every attempt to think out with any detail the conditions of personal existence after death. Staggering questions and unmanageable difficulties soon appear. Do little children grow into mature intelligence in the life beyond? Does the man whose powers of thought and feeling fail as he advances into old age and whose life at last flickers out as does the flame of the candle in the socket—does he undergo a mental rejuvenation? There are no answers. Thinkers of maturity now tacitly agree to leave such matters. Many try

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<sup>8</sup> I am aware that some experimenters in the realm of molecular physics, while they do not profess to have seen electrons with the microscope, think they have seen the flash of light made by the impact of electrons upon a metallic plate in a vacuum tube.



not even to think of them, well knowing how hopeless is the prospect for an adequate and satisfying answer.<sup>9</sup>

Here the traditional and obsolete conceptions of the condition of the personal spirit beyond death come in to confuse the argument. Theological imagination, not always spiritual but often grossly materialistic, has been rife. Jonathan Edwards was no insignificant thinker, but his conceptions in eschatology were unspeakably crude, as his ferocious sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" well testifies. Matters are not mended by the suggestion that this may have been lurid rhetoric intended for moral effect. The effect could not be moral, but, on the other hand, was highly immoral in that it taught a conception of God which is very far below the level of Christian thinking. John Wesley's sermon on the "Worm that Dieth Not, and the Fire that Is Not Quenched," while not odious, produces a revulsion of feeling in the mind of everyone whose conception of God has been set by the teachings of Jesus. Why is it that the old-fashioned popular conceptions of heaven are now treated so lightly—often burlesqued and made the source of jests? Because it is seen how thoroughly outgrown and useless to our thought they really are. Dr. Jowett, speaking of the popular idea of heaven as a place where the glorified saints fill in their time in cultivating celestial music, both vocal and instrumental, says: "To beings constituted as we are, the monotony of singing psalms would be as great an affliction as the pains of hell, and might even be

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<sup>9</sup> Any attempt to think out the conditions of life after death with any detail inevitably leads to a confusing jumble of the spiritual and the palpably material such as we find in the writings of Swedenborg and others who have tried to follow this obscure pathway.

pleasantly interrupted by them." Some years ago a popular pamphlet entitled *Intra Muros* had wide circulation. It was an account of a wonderful dream which the author, a woman, professes to have had. The book was a highly imaginative conception of what heaven must be, set forth with much detail in pictorial description. Its popularity was a pathetic evidence of the hunger of the human heart to know that which lies beyond the confines of our experience. Saint John has written a beautiful description of the "New Jerusalem." It is a city with streets of gold, walls built of precious jewels, and so on. But it is very evident that these material concepts taken out of our finite experience are made to do duty for glories that are really inexpressible. The most helpful and richly suggestive references to the life beyond contained in the New Testament are those of Paul and Christ. Paul says that God has in store for those who love him "what eye hath not seen, what ear hath not heard, and what hath not entered into the heart of man." In another place he refers to the life to come in the most beautiful phrase, "to be at home with the Lord," while Jesus, in the last tender interview with those he loved, said, "Let not your hearts be troubled; I am going to the Father's house of many mansions, and you will be with me there."

No one need reject a great truth because it has been imperfectly grasped and inadequately expressed. The diamond's value does not depend upon the poor work which may have been done in settling it. It is always possible to reset the gem and throw the old setting away. But the diamond must not be thrown away with the old setting.

But there is still another objection more weighty than these we have just noted. We are reminded that nowhere in our experience do we see conscious life without a nervous system. The story of the evolution of our rational consciousness as it is now written in the science of psychology would lead us to conclude that there can be no rational consciousness without the physical organism with its highly complex nervous system. For we are assured that our conscious life began in simple feeling which resulted from the stimulus of nerves with the resulting reaction, due to some form of motion in the molecular structure of nerve tissue. This reaction of nerve to stimulus produces in the newborn infant, for example, effects which are mere feelings—a resultant at first subrational. But there is a variety in the stimulus and consequently differentiation in the resulting feelings. This is the beginning of that development of the life of mere feeling and sensation into the life of emotion and rational thought. Now, this account of the evolution of our rational consciousness, no less than what we know of the physical conditions which appear to be necessary for all our thinking, leads to the crucial question whether our conscious life does not depend absolutely upon the existence of a nervous system. So far as our knowledge goes there is no sensation without nerves to react and produce the feeling which seems so basic and indispensable to all our mental life. The conscious life of the individual, therefore, depends upon the nervous system, and with the destruction of the latter we seem compelled to infer the extinction of the former. So runs the standing argument of a materialistic science and philosophy

against the belief in immortality. What shall we say to this?

That there is a constant parallelism between mental events on the one hand and some form of motion or change in the nervous system on the other, all must admit. The oft-quoted "No psychosis without neurosis" holds so far as our finite experience goes. And if we are not to substitute mere speculation for rational thinking in this matter, we certainly must confine ourselves within the limits of our finite experience. The really important question here concerns not the coexistence of these two sets of facts but their relation. The materialistic denial of immortality rests upon the very large assumption that the nervous system is the *cause* of thought—in other words, that brain produces consciousness. Of course if this be the truth, then it is useless to hope for the continuance of any conscious life after the dissolution of the gray matter of the brain. But there are strong reasons for thinking that this is not the truth. This position of materialism is a wholly unproved assumption and, furthermore, is found to be inadequate in its power to explain the facts. Very often a vivid putting of the facts of the psycho-physical parallelism obscures the immense fallacy concealed in the denial of immortality from this point of view. We are dramatically reminded that if the heart stops beating even for a fraction of a minute and the stream of arterial blood ceases to surge through the blood vessels of the brain, consciousness begins at once to disappear. And when once the heart has ceased to beat the body fails to respond to every sort of stimulus. Therefore, argues materialism, the conscious life of the person ceases

with the functioning of the brain, and we are bidden to conclude that our brains are the source of our conscious existence.

But we repeat that the fallacy here lies in the assumption that the brain is the prior fact and that consciousness is caused by the functioning of the brain. Now, this is not only an unproved assumption, but, as already remarked, it proves very inadequate in the explanation of the facts. All attempts to explain thought in terms of physical energy have been absolutely futile, and experienced thinkers have practically abandoned the problem.<sup>10</sup> To convert molecular motion (physical energy) into feeling or thought would be quite contrary to the principle of conservation of energy. This has been considered (p. 61). If consciousness has been caused by molecular motion in the brain, then it must cease with the destruction of that organ; but if motion in the brain only *accompanies* consciousness (so far as our experience extends), then there is absolutely nothing in the facts of the psycho-physical parallelism to forbid the conclusion that consciousness may continue after the destruction of the brain, under conditions different from those of our physical life. John Fiske puts the case against materialism strongly enough when he says: "The materialistic assumption that thought cannot exist in the absence of a cerebrum, and that the life of the soul, accordingly, ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known in the his-

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<sup>10</sup>Herbert Spencer in earlier editions of his *First Principles* tried to show how physical energy might be transformed into feeling. But in the last edition (1900) he withdraws from this position and calls attention to the change as one of the most important in the book (see Fiske, *Life Everlasting*, p. 74).

tory of philosophy. No evidence for it can be alleged beyond the familiar fact that during the present life we know the soul only in its association with the body, and therefore cannot discover disembodied soul without dying ourselves. This fact must always prevent us from obtaining direct evidence for the belief in the soul's survival. But a negative presumption is not created by the absence of proof in cases where, in the nature of things, proof is inaccessible. With his illegitimate hypothesis of annihilation the materialist goes beyond the bounds of experience quite as widely as the poet who sings of the New Jerusalem with its river of life and its streets of gold. Scientifically speaking, there is not a particle of evidence for either view" (*Destiny of Man*, p. 110). We may conclude, then, that the position that the brain creates the mind is untenable. It is far more reasonable—more in harmony with the facts—to believe that we as personal beings have a ground of conscious existence other than that physical organism, upon which we do indeed seem so entirely dependent under the conditions of our present life. This means that there is nothing in the results of modern science to forbid a belief in immortality. Indeed, the somewhat negative argument from science amounts practically to a vindication of the belief in immortality as wholly reasonable and not out of harmony with the fundamental faith of science. It prepares the way for the positive argument which must always be on broad, moral grounds. We turn therefore to

**Grounds of Belief in Personal Immortality—from Philosophy.** But if, now, the brain cannot be regarded as the ground or ultimate cause of our conscious exist-

ence, the question remains, What is the relation, then, between the brain and the conscious personal life? One well-known answer is that the brain is not to be regarded as the producer but the transmitter of consciousness. This means that through the brain as the medium we receive that consciousness which makes us sentient, rational beings. But from whence does this consciousness come to us through the brain as transmitter? The answer given is from the "Consciousness of the Universe," that is to say, from God. Professor James, in his Ingersoll Lecture on "Human Immortality" (1898), expounds this "transmission theory" with his usual brilliancy of style. Material things, as he holds, and the whole natural order mask the Infinite Reality, which is the sole ground of those finite streams of consciousness we call our private selves. Through the brain as a transmitter, he suggests, come gleams of the eternal light from the great "mother sea" of reality beyond.

But any form of transmission theory clearly implies the antecedent existence of the transmitter. The brain must precede that particular stream of consciousness which it transmits. Thus the brain becomes the absolute prerequisite for our finite conscious life, and the question remains, What becomes of the conscious life of the individual when the transmitter is broken? And if this is all, are we really any better off so far as assurances of our personal immortality are concerned than we were under the materialistic doctrine which assumed that the brain produces consciousness?

But this is not all. The parallelism between brain and conscious life is the same whatever our interpre-

tation. That is, there are two orders of related facts. On the one hand we have the physical facts—molecular motion in the brain; on the other hand the mental facts—a stream of thought and feeling in the mind. What, now, is the explanation of the exact and constant parallelism? The mind does not create the brain; nor does the brain create the mind. In answer we must say that *both find their ground and harmony in the personal self*. We, as persons, as personal selves, are the only adequate explanation of the correlation of brain and mind. Unless we seek an interpretation of the functional relation between brain and consciousness in some factor higher than both we cannot reach any rational grounds for the faith in our own personal existence after death. But this is not all. We are finite selves, that is, persons, having wills relatively free, and thus we are independent sources of activity. But we certainly cannot think of ourselves as the only ground of the parallelism between brain and consciousness. We may have the power, within limits, to direct the stream of our mental activity which makes us what we are; we may use the brain as an instrument of our conscious activity much as the violinist uses his violin; but it is very certain that we did not create the instrument, nor are we responsible for its structural excellencies or defects. Now the *ultimate* ground of this finite personal life which consists in the constant use by the immaterial self of a material instrument must be the Infinite. God is the only explanation of the constant parallelism between physical function and our conscious personal life. There is absolutely no rational basis for a belief in personal immortality except in



God. And the only ground for our assurances of immortality is the eternal will of God who created the finite spirit not as temporary and fleeting manifestation of his eternal consciousness, but as a part of a moral order of existence. Here we strike the bed-rock. And it will be noted at once that the fundamental position is that of Christian theism. No other world-view finds any place for a belief in personal immortality.

And personality itself must be regarded not as a merely temporal attribute of the finite spirit, but as eternal. Here is where theism parts company with all forms of pantheism. According to pantheism, the end of our human life marks the end of our individual existence. Any immortality of which the pantheist may speak means, not the continuance of a particular personal life, but the survival of the finite *in the Infinite*. If this means the end of that particular stream of consciousness called myself, it is very difficult to see in what respect the immortality of pantheism really differs from annihilation. And, in fact, it does not.

If, now, physical death destroys the transmitter through which comes that particular stream of consciousness which I know as myself, how is that particular stream of consciousness to continue? Does not the destruction of the brain deprive the Infinite Mind of the condition through which any particular finite consciousness may be expressed? There is only one answer to this difficulty, which will save our belief in the continuance of personal existence. The alternative is the pantheistic conception of our immortality through absorption in the Infinite. There-

fore we turn at once to this answer. It is this: *The brain as the instrument of our conscious personal life is not the product of our activity, but is a creation of God, the Personal Infinite. Upon this instrument our conscious life under the present conditions of our human existence does indeed depend. And with the destruction of the instrument which seems so essential to the conditions of our personal life here, we are not able to conceive how that personal life can go on at all except as we believe that the Infinite Creator, who has given the finite personal spirit so wonderful an instrument of expression in the brain, can also give that spirit another instrument when the brain is destroyed.* It is essentially this which Saint Paul expounds in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. The difficulty of the Greek Christians at Corinth was not as to the possibility of a continuance of spiritual life, but *how* such continuance could be conceived after death. "With what sort of a body do they come?" was the real difficulty (verse 35). Paul rests the whole argument upon the power and purpose of God. He says, in substance, that as we recognize God as the Creator of the bodies of the various orders of animal existence, and that these bodies are suited to the conditions under which these various animals live, so we may believe with confidence that the same divine power and purpose will create for us bodies suited to the conditions of the life of the spirit, beyond death.

It has been urged that the difficulty of conceiving how identity could be continued when the soul's medium of expression has been destroyed militates against this view. But this is not true when the basis

of identity (and therefore recognition) is seen to be personal and spiritual and not material. You may not have seen your old friend for years. Materially, he is greatly changed—his hair white, his features altered, etc. Your first exclamation may be, "I would hardly have known you!" But as you sit before the fire in personal fellowship, the identity seems complete, and in spite of the changed material aspects you recognize again and again the marks and characteristics of your friend of years ago. But is not the basis of these recognitions personal and spiritual rather than physical? A most important way in which the physical body serves the personal life is in this matter of personal recognitions. And we may well believe that whatever the nature of the instrument or medium of the soul which God will grant us in the life beyond death, it will be not only perfectly adapted to the conditions of that life, whatever they may be, but will also preserve such elements of continuity and identity that the power of personal recognition (such an indispensable matter in our earthly fellowships) will be fully and perfectly conserved.

But memory is absolutely necessary to the continuation of personal identity. This is the one power of the mind which enables us to affirm the continuance of our self as the permanent and abiding factor in the midst of constantly changing mental experience. What, now, shall be said to the objection that memory, since it depends upon certain cerebral functionings which are now clearly recognized, cannot be conceived as continuing after the brain is destroyed? It is undisputed that an injury to a certain portion of the brain will produce lapse of memory. And when

through disease or advanced age incipient degeneration of the cerebral cortex begins, the powers of association are greatly weakened and the mental ability to recall past events is seriously diminished. But if the essential thing about memory were a mechanical "registration" through some supposed rearrangement of the particles in the tissue of the cortex, as we sometimes hear, then it would follow that the oftener a thing were repeated the firmer it would be impressed in memory. But this is very far from being the case. A sentence consisting of nonsense may be repeated many times and not remembered, while a sentence whose meaning is clear may often be recalled with a single reading. Thought which arouses interest may be carried in the memory and reproduced with ease, while thought which does not arouse interest will not be long retained. This means that the cerebral function is by no means the only, nor even the most important element in memory. Cerebral functions are very important, to be sure, but they do not originate memory, nor does memory necessarily depend upon them. The mind's activity is the essential matter in memory. The material of the cerebral cortex is entirely replaced in a few years, or even a few months, depending upon mental conditions. And in spite of this changing of the material medium in which impressions are supposed to be "registered," the mind is able to recall events after the lapse of seven, fourteen, forty years. And if ideas and feelings may be thus recalled in vivid memory after the passage of a human lifetime—when the material of the brain has been replaced again and again—it is perfectly reasonable to believe that the personal spirit will be able to re-

tain in memory a content of meaning from human experiences sufficient to guarantee the personal continuity of the life beyond death with the life of the present.

The so called *metaphysical argument for immortality* need not long detain us, for it has but little bearing upon Christian faith. Here come the formal attempts to demonstrate the immortality of the soul like that of some of the mediæval schoolmen and Descartes. The argument is really an empty form of proof, and consists in starting with a definition of the soul which contains by implication the conception of immortality and unfolding this implication with due logical formality. The purely verbal character of the performance will be evident to anyone who carefully scrutinizes Descartes' so-called proof of immortality. The more modern form of the argument generally consists in viewing the soul as an emanation of the Infinite and therefore partaking of the nature of the Infinite. On such a view the human soul is necessarily immortal. But on such a view the human soul is also preexistent, since it is viewed as a part of the Infinite and hence does not have either its end or its beginning in time. This argument rests upon the conception of the Infinite as impersonal, and therefore, of course, does not concern itself with such matters as moral purpose in divine creation. But we have already set forth the reasons why we reject the metaphysics of the Absolute with its impersonal view of existence. It is sufficient to point out that the above view is not only pantheism but implies, when thought out, both preexistence and some form of transmigration. We are saved from this abyss by the

Christian emphasis upon personality as the ultimate reality, both on the plane of the divine and the human, and by the recognition of the moral as that which is of supreme and eternal worth.

This brings us to *the ethical argument for immortality*, which is much more significant and convincing. The great fundamental assumption of our personal view of life is that the universe is not only rational but ethical. Moral purpose no less than rational consistency is necessary to the comprehension of this cosmic order as it is presented to us in experience. And at bottom the ethical and the rational will be found to be not two aspects of existence, but essentially one. Our human life cannot long appear as rational without those great ethical ideals and motives which alone give it meaning. This is what is implied in the statement, often made, that without the saving conception of moral values (which are eternal) being slowly realized in human society, existence itself is a fearful and incomprehensible riddle. Some of the pessimistic thinkers have said this and are saying it to-day with varying degrees of emphasis.

But the pertinent question here is whether the few years of our human life are a sufficient time for the soul to realize to any extent the eternal moral values. That a good beginning is made in the lives of those who strive for the "things of the spirit" is undoubtedly true. But shall we say that physical death ends it all? That just as the soul begins to attain some of the heights and to come within sight of others as yet unattained, a final end comes of all the upward strivings of the spirit? Surely, this does not com-

mend itself to our thought as the law of a rational universe where moral values are alone sufficient to solve the deeper problems even of our human life. Here, then, is the gist of the ethical argument. However it may be expounded or illustrated, the argument for immortality from the supreme value of personality and, therefore, of moral values, lies in this fact, that the upward progress of the human spirit away from the animal and material toward the higher realms of the eternal and the spiritual seems only well begun in the fleeting years of our present life. If there is a great principle of the conservation of moral energy in the realm of spirit, as there is such a principle for the physical realm, then it is difficult and even irrational to believe that physical death can end the evolution of an eternal life in the human soul. In that beautiful biography of the rare woman who for many years was his wife, Professor Palmer, of Harvard, says with fine restraint, "Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it and not call the world irrational, if out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter it excludes so fair a spirit?"<sup>11</sup>

But, in the last analysis, our only reason for belief in the conservation of moral values lies in the personal and, therefore, ethical character of God himself. The universe is the manifestation, not of the play of blind and impersonal forces, but of the moral purpose of the personal Infinite. Holding to this great truth as the basis of all our thinking about human life, we dare to affirm as the only rational conclusion that moral values are indeed supreme—that character

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<sup>11</sup> *Life of Alice Freeman Palmer*, by George Herbert Palmer, p. 327.

abides. There is no scrap-heap in the universe of God. Lotze has a noble utterance in the *Microcosmus*. He says: "That will last forever which on account of its excellence and its spirit must be an abiding part of the order of the universe; what lacks that preserving worth will perish. We can discover no other supernal law of our destiny than this, but this is itself inapplicable in our human hands. We dare not presume to judge and determine which mental development wins immortality by the eternal significance to which it has raised itself, and to which development immortality is denied. We must not seek to decide whether all animals perish or whether all human souls are imperishable, but must take refuge in the belief that to each being right will be done."<sup>12</sup>

3. *Faith in the Life beyond Death, a Spiritual Achievement.* We have now traced the early development of the belief in immortality and have found that it came to its finest flower in the faith of the followers of Jesus. We have also noted some of the weightier considerations from science and philosophy which lend support to the belief in personal immortality. But there is one important truth which ought to be emphasized before the discussion is brought to a close. It is this: A study of the matter will convince us that the men who have grasped this truth of personal immortality with the clearest insight and the greatest intensity of conviction are those into whose life has come the fullest realization of fellowship with God in sacrifice and service of their fellow men. This means that the conviction of life after death is not only a matter of belief well grounded in rational

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<sup>12</sup> *Microcosmus*, English translation, vol. i, p. 389.



thinking, but is also a matter of faith. And the essential thing about faith is that it means personal relationship in confidence, trust, and love. In the last analysis, this great conviction of eternal life is a spiritual achievement. It is wrought out not in argument but in experience. No man, however well he may learn to reason, can long enjoy here a conviction amounting to certainty, if in his life there is not a profound faith in God and a sense of fellowship with God. Immortality thus becomes not only an item of our creed but a fact of our experience. Conviction of life eternal flows from character far more than from cogent reasoning. The man who is living a life in which love finds little place—a life of selfish disregard for his fellow men—a life devoted to the superficial pursuit of pleasure, a life in which greed for gain is the dominant motive, may say, "I cannot believe in immortality; I see no evidence for it." And the answer is, "Why should you? What have you ever done to entitle you to the high spiritual privilege of really grasping as your own the great truth of the immortal life?"

And do we not here find the secret of the fact that faith in immortality does not thrive and grow strong on mere reasoning? After the weightiest arguments have been restated the heart is really not satisfied. A vague feeling of uncertainty and dread will come stealing over the spirit of the earnest inquirer from time to time. We may shake it off only to find it coming back as we are called now and again to stand near the grave of one we knew. Is there no way to banish doubt and misgivings and to establish in the heart that quiet but deep certainty in which the soul

can rest? There is but one way. And that is through faith in Christ. And faith in Christ will enable us to realize in personal experience the great spiritual fact of a fellowship with the Eternal Himself. The Old Testament, as we have seen, has very little of a doctrine of immortality. But in some of the psalms there is such a positive and glorious expression of the soul's realization of spiritual union with God, that the tide of faith in eternal life comes in strong and full when the soul attains such an experience :

Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

. . . God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. (Psa. 73. 23-26.)

The New Testament, especially the letters of Paul, abound in those expressions which indicate a personal realization in experience of a union in loyalty and affection with Christ. The title of our present chapter is Justified. It is, indeed, the *Christian* faith in immortality. For this great conviction grows strong in the life not as the cogent conclusion from plausible premises, but as the spiritual resultant of Christian living. The historic fact of Jesus's resurrection cannot be overestimated in its importance to the beginnings of faith in Christ among his followers. But our faith in him rests far more upon all that we know him to be than it does upon that occurrence in the garden long ago. Indeed, were it not for all we know Christ to be through the spiritual triumphs of the intervening ages and through the testimony of our

own heart, we could not probably accept the record of that event in the garden long ago as we do. We do not accept Jesus as divine simply because he rose from the dead. Rather do we accept the record of his resurrection as reasonable and fitting, now that we know him to be divine. And so in a very true sense Christ himself is the strength of our faith in the eternal life. He is "in us the hope of glory."

And, finally, experience teaches us also that it is much easier to believe in immortality when we are living the kind of life that is worthy of being immortal. Trivial living, selfish living, invariably cause the fires of the immortal hope to burn low in the heart. Living under the domination of great motives brings to the soul the conviction that eternal life may indeed begin here and now, even as Jesus said. No life was so pure, so lofty as his, and he lived in the very atmosphere of eternity.

I walked one autumn day in the pine woods with my friend who was battling with the white plague. He was a noble spirit. He had just entered full manhood. Life lay all before him and hope had been high. But the fight was now on and he knew he could not win. We sat down to rest under a venerable tree which had stood there in the forest many times the span of our earthly years. "Why is it thus?" he whispered. My only answer, "Dear fellow, life is larger than we now see. We know Him. Let us believe firmly that the seeds of disease cannot end the life He gives. We know Him, we love Him, we must trust Him."









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