

# THE RELIGION OF EXPERIENCE

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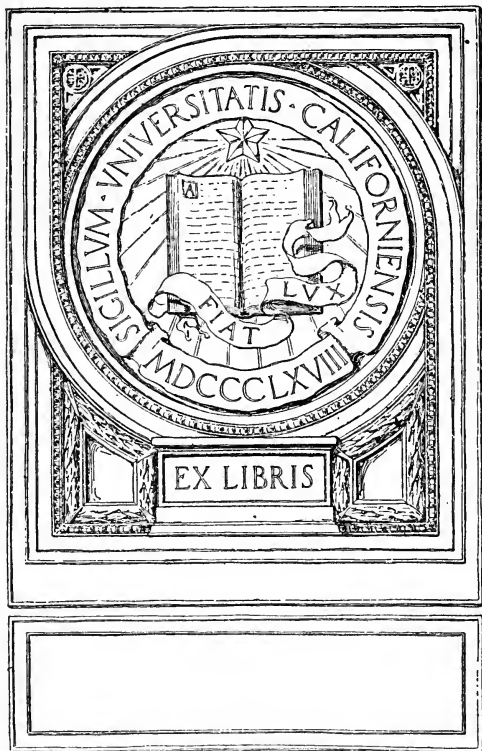


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THE RELIGION OF EXPERIENCE



# THE RELIGION OF EXPERIENCE

AN EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE  
DIFFICULTIES OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

BY

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*"Authority and the Light Within," "The True Way of Life,"*

*"What is Quakerism," &c.*

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## PREFACE

MOST of the chapters in this book contain the substance of Lectures delivered by the author at Summer Schools and other gatherings for religious study. They have been put together in such a way as to form a more or less consecutive exposition of Christian belief in relation to some of the questions that still perplex sincere enquirers; whose difficulties the author appreciates, alike through his own experience and from the many opportunities he has had for personal discussion. He writes as a simple layman, who has found in the Quaker principle of the Inward Light that which leads to a satisfying experience of Jesus Christ as the way to God.

The selection and arrangement of the topics to be dealt with has not been an easy matter, and some repetition has been unavoidable. The fabric of Christian belief is not like a tower, where stone is laid on stone till the whole is completed; its nature is rather that of an organism, in which the development of each part involves all the others. Experience of the Fatherhood of God, for example, raises (when its implications are thought out) the whole question of Divine and human Personality and is inseparably bound up with the Christian conceptions of Sin and

Redemption, of Prayer and Providence, and with the problems of Evil and of human Immortality. These questions have necessarily to be dealt with in succession; but none of them can be adequately treated in isolation from the rest. The endeavour has been made, by the free use of cross-references and in other ways, to reduce as far as possible the repetition of arguments.

The thanks of the author are due, for permission to reprint matter that has previously appeared, to the Editors of *The Friend*, *The Expository Times*, and *The London Quarterly Review*.

Mr. A. Clutton-Brock's *Studies in Christianity* (Constable, 4s. 6d. net) has appeared since this volume was written. While the author has not attempted to cover the whole ground, his book contains a most illuminating exposition of some of the foundation principles of our faith, and should be read by all who wish to work out more deeply some of the leading thoughts suggested in the following pages.

EDWARD GRUBB.

Croydon, *October*, 1918.

## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I.—THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

	PAGE
Experience the Vital Core of Religion . . . - - -	13
Insistence on Experience by Modern Religious Writers - - -	16
The Experimental Method, in Religion and in Science - - -	16
What Religious Experience is, and what it is not - - -	17
Its Validity: is it merely "Self-suggestion" ? - - -	19
It needs the support of Reason - - - - -	21
The Conscience: in what sense it is the Voice of God - - -	22

### CHAPTER II.—THE INWARD LIGHT AND FAITH.

An Inward Light at Work in all "Judgments of Value" - - -	26
Moral and Æsthetic Appreciation - - - - -	27
The Understanding of Personal Character - - - - -	29
Apprehension of the Personality of Jesus Christ, and so of the Character of God - - - - -	30
The Inward Light and the Faith that receives it - - -	33
Faith as the opening of our inward eyes - - - - -	34
The Moral Demand of Faith - - - - -	35

### CHAPTER III.—FAITH AND REASON.

The Use of Reason as laying a foundation for Faith - - -	37
"Existence" or "Reality" means Existence for Thought or Consciousness - - - - -	38
Conflict between Faith (as Intuition) and Logical Reasoning - - -	41
The Use of Reason in correcting the credulity of Faith - - -	43
Faith demands a God of personal and ethical character, which Reason is slow to grant - - - - -	44
But even Reason requires the self-limitation of the Divine, which includes self-revelation - - - - -	47

### CHAPTER IV.—BERGSON ON "INTUITION."

Present tendencies to depreciate the Intellect: - - - - -	50
Pragmatism, its strength and weakness - - - - -	50

	PAGE
Bergson's Criticism of the Intellect : - - - - -	51
Perception does not give us the "real inwardness" of things - - - - -	52
Conception yields symbolic and abstract, not real, knowledge - - - - -	52
Conceptual knowledge as a cinematograph - - - - -	53
" Mental States " abstractions not realities - - - - -	54
Only by Intuition can we discern reality, outward or inward - - - - -	54
The Life-Impulse freely creative and essentially purposive - - - - -	55
Its Manifestations in Vegetism, Instinct, and Intelligence - - - - -	56
The Intellect evolved for action in relation to Matter - - - - -	57
Intuition as Instinct that has become reflective and intelligent - - - - -	57
Intuition and Religious Faith - - - - -	58

## CHAPTER V.—REVELATION THROUGH PERSONALITY.

Revelation does not consist in dogmatic statements about God, but is the manifestation of His character or quality - - - - -	60
Revelation to persons, in Religious Experience, and through persons : work of the Hebrew Prophets - - - - -	62
Jesus Christ the Supreme Revealer of the Personality of God - - - - -	63
Value of Modern Psychology in enlarging the idea of Personality - - - - -	64
(1) Personality not atomistic but conjunct - - - - -	64
(2) Personality larger than our conscious self : the sub-conscious life unites us to other persons and to God - - - - -	65
(3) Personality as a goal to be achieved - - - - -	68
God as the perfect Person - - - - -	69

## CHAPTER VI.—THE CHRIST OF HISTORY.

Tests of the assumption that the Gospels give accounts of a real Person - - - - -	70
Other witnesses to the reality of Jesus : Josephus, Tacitus, Paul, the Book of Acts - - - - -	71
Character and History of the Synoptic Gospels - - - - -	74
The Career of Jesus in Mark - - - - -	77
The Teaching of Jesus : its inimitable quality - - - - -	77
The Character and Person of Jesus : - - - - -	79
Human yet Super-human - - - - -	79
His claims not obtruded - - - - -	80
A Person so perfect in character as to be perfect in humility - - - - -	80
This is the final proof of historicity - - - - -	81

CHAPTER VII.—THE CHRIST OF EXPERIENCE.

	PAGE
Two Orders of Religious Experience, Historical and Spiritual, blend in Christianity - - - - -	82
Transition from the Outward to the Inward Experience of Christ found(a) in the Resurrection - - - - -	83
Its Difficulties - - - - -	83
Essentially a religious, not a merely sensuous, experience -	86
(b) In the experience of Pentecost - - - - -	87
Early Christianity the Religion of the Spirit - - - - -	87
The "Spirit" identified with the risen Jesus - - - - -	87
This blending of two strains of experience made a Christology necessary - - - - -	88
Growth of New Testament Christology : - - - - -	88
Christ as "Wisdom" - - - - -	88
Christ as "Logos" or Word - - - - -	90
The Fourth Gospel and its Purpose - - - - -	91
Note on the theological importance of the Subconscious - - -	94

CHAPTER VIII.—FAITH AND FACTS.

Christian Faith not a blind acceptance of outward authority, but a response to present Divine revelation - - -	97
T. H. Green's criticism of the dependence of Faith on historical statements - - - - -	98
This overlooks the distinction between belief in the occurrence of events and assurance of the character of a person - - -	99
The right place of Criticism in preparing the ground: but Intuition has a real place in discovering the facts - - -	100
Our certainty of the perfection of Christ's character - - -	101
It is not ideas but apprehension of the significance of objective facts that gives assurance - - - - -	104
Conflict of Christianity with rival ethics: Nietzsche - - -	105

CHAPTER IX.—THE SUPERNATURAL IN CHRISTIANITY.

The question of the supernatural affects not only the Bible but all real religion - - - - -	106
Rigid mechanical Determinism is in conflict with religion, but it is not necessarily the verdict of science - - -	107
The future is not absolutely determined by the past; but freedom is freedom for purpose, not for breach of law - - -	108
Events in the Gospels cannot be rejected simply because they look "supernatural," but must be judged in the light of Christ's whole personality - - - - -	110

	PAGE
A "miracle" is a supernatural event in which God is specially manifested: Jesus Himself the greatest miracle	112
Special fitness of His "mighty works" as an aid to establishing the Kingdom of God	113
The Supernatural in our own religious life	115
Note on some particular Gospel Miracles	116

### CHAPTER X.—THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

Abandonment of the idea of infallibility in the Bible does not make it worthless.	120
The necessary place and function of Criticism	120
Objections answered	121
Jesus and the Old Testament: He recognised the progressive character of Revelation	122
The meaning of Inspiration must be discovered experimentally	124
Inspiration a matter of degree	124
But we may speak of the Inspiration of the Bible as a whole, since it is the record of a Divine movement towardsmen	125
The need of a written record	128
Criticism brings some loss but greater gain	129

### CHAPTER XI.—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

The Fatherhood of God in the teaching and life of Jesus	131
In what sense it was new: the changeless love of God, and His providential care for the individual	132
The Christian life joyous because free from care	133
But can God's Fatherhood be reconciled with the facts of life, especially in time of war?	134
Survival of human faith, and its justification in history	134
Belief in God's Fatherhood is faith in a good Purpose, which may be thwarted. Also faith in Guidance	135
It must be understood in the light of Divine immanence. Immanence in inorganic nature, in living beings, in personaiity, in the good will, in Jesus Christ	137
Jesus the way to assured belief in the Fatherhood of God	139
"Law" and "Chance" as subject to the Divine Purpose	140
The Cross the supreme revelation of Providence	141

### CHAPTER XII.—THE WORTH OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP.

Prayer as the main condition of religious experience	142
Universality of the prayer instinct: it culminates in Jesus	142
Illustrations of the worth of prayer:	144
(a) As Correspondence with Environment	144
(b) As Work in the spiritual sphere	145

# CONTENTS

II

	PAGE
Difficulties : (1) The Reign of Law. This is no obstacle to prayer in the sphere of free personality - - -	146
(2) The unchangeability of God. True object of prayer not to change His will but to bring our will into conformity with His - - - - -	148
(3) The seeming uselessness of prayer. This is largely removed if God meets us mainly in the sub-conscious	150
Prayer in regard to special temptations - - -	151
The Worth of Worship: (1) As fellowship in the religious life - - - - -	151
(2) As the offering of ourselves to God - - - - -	152
Worship "in spirit and truth"; the use of Silence - - - - -	152

## CHAPTER XIII.—SIN AND REDEMPTION.

The fact of Sin not a theological fiction - - - - -	155
Its manifestation in the War - - - - -	155
It is not natural but unnatural - - - - -	155
Not dependent on the historical truth of the " Fall " - - -	156
Not mere Animalism, for animals do not sin : it only arises with intelligence and free choice - - - - -	156
Its nearest analogue is in the parasitic habit : but it is a disease of the Will, and can only be cured by change of will	158
Deepening of the thought of Sin with the personal thought of God : the meaning of Forgiveness - - - - -	159
Christ proclaims God's forgiveness, and calls on us to complete it	160
Divine punishments for sin can only in part be remitted, and this by making us new creatures - - - - -	160
The Atonement as based on the Fatherhood of God - - - - -	161
The Redemption of man from Sin was Christ's whole work ; but was consummated by His Death - - - - -	162

## CHAPTER XIV.—THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN THE WORLD.

The world, without and within, presents a spectacle of discord.	
Can God be at once all-powerful and all-good ? - - - - -	165
No problem presented by goodness and happiness - - - - -	166
Three aspects of Evil : - - - - -	166
(1) Suffering : its uses in teaching us what to avoid, and in developing character - - - - -	167
(2) Heartlessness : Impartiality a necessary consequence of the unity of the world. Calamities not "sent" by God, but the inevitable consequence of taking risks. Impartiality of the world order recognised by Jesus -	169

	PAGE
(3) Moral Evil: unnecessary and unnatural, but the outcome of intelligence and freedom - - -	170
Tragedy of the will gone wrong - - -	171
Christianity, as the religion of redemption, the only satisfying solution - - -	172

### CHAPTER XV.—HUMAN IMMORTALITY.

Widespread uncertainty as to the reality of a Future Life - -	174
The need of strenuous search for the truth - -	175
Causes of Doubt: (1) Apparent dependence of Mind on Brain	
Evidences of increasing independence of Mind - -	176
(2) At what point in development does man become possessed of an immortal soul? Are animals excluded? Is immortality universal or conditional? These questions must be considered in the light of the achievement of personality - - -	177
(3) The Silence of the Grave. Attempts to obtain positive evidence of survival - - -	179
(4) Absence of clear information in the New Testament as to future conditions. The dogma of Eternal Punishment - - -	180
Belief in Immortality is bound up with faith in the Fatherhood of God, and neither can stand alone - - -	182
The belief remains as Faith and not as positive Knowledge -	183

### CHAPTER XVI.—THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The Kingdom of God as the Christian Ideal - - -	185
Development of the conception of the Kingdom among the Jews	186
The deeper thoughts of Jesus as to the Kingdom and the work of the Messiah: His use of apocalyptic imagery -	187
His "Coming in Glory" is His death and consequent victory	188
The inward basis and outward expression of the Kingdom -	189
The Kingdom as seed growing in secret. But "natural" processes do not exhaust the Divine resources - -	189
The Kingdom as a Love-system can only be established by Love to the uttermost - - -	190
The Church at first understood this, but afterwards forgot it; and from the first was hampered by apocalyptic expectations - - -	191
The Kingdom for us the crown of life's endeavour. The need for its coming: war, social confusion, the unchristianised East - - -	193
Unity of all work for the coming of the Kingdom. Undying worth of the apocalyptic hope - - -	196
List of Books - - -	199-202



## CHAPTER I

### THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

THE inner heart of all religion consists in a consciousness of relation to an unseen Something, whether regarded as Power, Principle, or Person, which the religious mind calls God. Even in its elementary and in its degraded forms, religion, if it is rightly so called at all, is rooted in the sense of an Unseen Presence, and of a demand that with this Presence life shall be brought into relation.

This vital core of religion has to find expression in life and action; and in the process it is often overlaid and obscured by ideas and practices which grow up around the centre, and which attract so much attention that they tend to be mistaken for the essence of religion itself. Institutional religions arise, in which the due performance of ceremonial, generally with some form of sacrifice, appears to be an end in itself; legal religions, like that of the Pharisees, in which the detailed fulfilment of a code of written precepts seems almost to exhaust the field; dogmatic religions, where the one thing necessary appears to be the profession of belief in a series of statements represented as vouched for by Divine authority.

To one who looks at the surface only, it may well appear that Religion is simply a device whereby the ruling authority, or a caste of priests, has imposed upon men's minds an elaborate system designed to secure and retain its power or its emoluments. But on deeper scrutiny this is clearly seen to be a shallow theory, which misses the central fact. There would be no great

institution with its ceremonies and creeds, there would be no priests to administer and expound them, there would be no code of written precepts, were it not for the fundamental religious needs and religious experiences to which these were originally intended to minister, and on which as a foundation they have been built up. Deep behind all the forms and creeds and precepts there is the inward experience, collective and personal, which is the seed out of which these external manifestations grow and develop

If we confine our thoughts to the higher religions of men, it is probably quite safe to say that every new variety has originally sprung from a deepening of the religious consciousness of some one person.\* "Any religious faith that has been long held tends to stereotype itself in forms and institutions which, while not necessarily destructive of personal religious life, too often become a substitute for it. A man is held to be religious if he accepts the forms and directs his conduct in accordance with the institutions, even though his character be unchanged, and his inner life untouched by their true meaning. Then, it may be after generations of formal or 'dead' religion, there arises a prophet or leader, whose soul, on fire for truth, melts through the crust of forms and comes into direct contact with their inner reality: that is to say with the experience of God which produced them, and which, for many minds, they obscure rather than illuminate. He finds for himself a personal faith, and calls upon men to share it. In a time of spiritual drought and hunger, many, it may be, respond with joy to the message of one who can tell them at first hand of that which they have, consciously or unconsciously, yearned for, but

\* "As religion enters into the deeper and more fertile strata of the knowledge of God, it becomes evident that the development of religion falls increasingly upon the shoulders of individual men, whose experience of God and its cognitive content becomes authoritative for others." (Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 337).

which they have sought in vain in the outward practices of conventional religion. If this is so, a new religious movement begins: a movement which may very probably take the form of a revolt against the established forms and institutions, coming into sharp conflict with the people of power, whose interests lie in maintaining them. The new faith is a persecuted faith—until, if it survives the conflict, it too, in time, tends to lose its fresh inspiration, and to become stereotyped like that which it replaced.”\*

Illustrations of this will occur to us at once in the cases of the Hebrew Prophets, of the rise of Christianity, and of many of the new religious movements within Christianity itself. Further illustrations might be drawn from the founding of most other religions, and of new movements within their borders. The vital heart of religion, which consists in a consciousness of relation to that which is felt to be Divine, comes freshly to the surface in some one soul, and spreads from him to the souls of others.

It is probably also true to say that, at any rate in the higher religions, this inner heart is never wholly lost. At least in Christianity, with all its failures, it would seem that there has always been somewhere, if only in obscure and unknown lives, some persistence, whether dim or clear, of that direct consciousness of God which to its Founder was the very breath of life. “The Church,” says Dr. Rufus Jones,† “has never in any period quite sunk to the level of tradition and the automatism of habit, for it has always had beneath its system of organisation and dogma a current, more or less hidden and subterranean, of vital, inward, spiritual religion, dependent for its power of conviction, not on books, councils, hierarchies, creeds,—not upon

\* From *The Unity of Faith*, edited by Geoffrey Rhodes: the chapter by the present writer on “The Society of Friends,” pp. 147, 148. (Kegan Paul, 1912).

† *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. xiv.

anything kept in cold storage,—but on the soul's experiences of eternal Realities." This has been conspicuous in the Catholic mystics, though not felt by them to be independent of the ecclesiastical forms to which they were accustomed.

In our own day there is, throughout the world, wide spread and deep seated, a weariness of the old forms of religion, and a hunger for something more vital and more real. This is true of all "Christian" countries, whether the prevailing forms are Orthodox or Catholic or Protestant. In far-off Japan and China the religions of centuries are being relegated to the dust-heap; in populous India movements of reform are being tried on every hand. And happily there is a rapidly growing conviction, in the minds of religious leaders, that what will meet this need is not the forms or institutions of any particular Church, but an appeal and a response to that inward hunger which can only find its true satisfaction in personal contact with God Himself. The note of direct religious experience is characteristic of all our best religious teachers to-day, whatever form of faith they may profess—Catholic and Protestant, Anglican and Free Churchman, Methodist and Quaker; and while they touch this note they are all at one. A great religious poem, like Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*, wins response from all alike, and it never occurs to any of us to ask what particular form of religion the writer professed.

Further, there is a close relation between the experimental note in Religion and that of Science, which in our own day has changed not only the outward face of human life, but men's whole conception of the universe and their very methods of thought. The man of science insists on verification—on bringing every theory or doctrine to the test of facts that can be observed and described. The modern religious teacher equally insists that the doctrines of his faith arose out of

experience—out of what men actually felt, and thought they knew, of God ; and that if we are to understand and appreciate these doctrines, or even criticise them to any purpose, we must ourselves come into the place of experience. And not the “ modern ” religious teacher only ; the same demand was made by the Founder of Christianity when He taught that “ the pure in heart ” alone should “ see ” ; that he who would “ do the will ” of the Father should “ know concerning the doctrine.”

“ There is a noble contribution, which the scientific mind is making to the religious, a keen and quickened sense of truth and a passion for verification. And it is a curious situation when the man of science says to the disciple of Jesus of Nazareth : ‘ Make sure ; be sure that you know ; look to it for yourself : verify.’ It is the method of Jesus Himself, and it will give us again ‘ the deep and firm sense of reality,’ which, as Matthew Arnold pointed out, characterises the thinking of Jesus ; for ‘ theory ’ as Arnold elsewhere says, ‘ Jesus never touches, but bases Himself invariably upon experience.’ ”\*

Now, what is this “ experience ” to which religious teachers in these days are more and more appealing ? It includes everything in human consciousness which has to do with an awareness of relations with that Unseen Presence which is called God. It is needless to deal with its cruder manifestations ; our purpose will be answered if we illustrate it from the higher forms of religious life. There is a consciousness of *Sin* : the discomfort of feeling that we are out of tune with that which was meant to be a harmony ; the sense of an inward discord between what we are and what we were meant to be ; the strain and friction of a divided will. Along with this there is often *Penitence* : sorrow and shame for what we have done, or what we are, with the

\* Glover, *The Christian Tradition and its Verification*, p. 16.

longing to do better or to be different ; and (in Christianity at least) there may be also the joyful sense of Divine *Forgiveness* and restoration, the germ and pledge of a life in the true harmony.

There is also *Prayer*, the inward approach to God, the aspiration to know Him better, the cry for help and strength, the utterance of the soul in thankfulness and praise ; and with this sometimes the consciousness of an answer, which comes bringing inward peace and strength and purity : an experience of Divine *Grace* "made perfect in weakness."

Such are among the normal elements of the higher religious experience. In some persons of a particular psychical quality—in whom the "subconscious" part of the personality lies, so to say, near the surface, and who are subject to "uprushes" from the subliminal region—there may be seasons of ecstasy, when the walls that usually confine the *ego* seem to be dissolved and the whole being is flooded with a sense of the Divine. Such have been many of the Mystics. But it would be a grave mistake to imagine that theirs is the only type of religious experience worthy of the name, or that the multitudes of devout and holy souls who are strangers to it are shut out from communion with God.

Another mistake often made is to confound religious experience with Emotion. Intense feeling may indeed often accompany it, especially in its more ecstatic forms ; but emotion is no more the thing itself than the joy which accompanies the perception of beauty in nature or in art is the same as the perception of beauty itself. Religious experience, in fact, goes down deeper into the personality than the common division of the functions of the *ego* into Feeling, Thought, and Will. It is not Thought or Intelligence, though it involves thought : it is not Feeling, though it is normally accompanied by emotion ; it is not Will, though the will must be set on God if He is to be experienced. "Faith," says the Dean of St. Paul's, "is something

deeper, more universal, more fundamental, than anything that can be assigned to the independent activities of the intellect, will, or feelings. . . . It is a basal energy of the whole man."\*

The ordinary experience of the senses, ordered by the unifying intellect, yields the fabric of what we call our Knowledge. These inward experiences yield that which we call our Faith. But just as the word "Knowledge" means both the sum of what is known and also the power or process by which we know it, so the word "Faith" is used not only objectively, for the sum of what is believed or held on to, but also subjectively, for the power or process of holding on. This we must consider further in the next chapter. For the present it is enough to point out that Faith (in its subjective sense) bears to religious experience a similar position to that which the senses and the intellect bear to ordinary experience. It is by faith our primary and deepest self responds to our spiritual environment; just as by the senses and the intellect we respond to our material environment.†

A difficult question here emerges. What is the *validity* of religious experience? If Faith is "the evidence (or proving) of things not seen," in what sense does it "prove" them, and what is the value of the "evidence" it yields? In the case of ordinary knowledge we have an easy test. If our experience agrees with that of other people, we believe it gives us reality.‡ If I see what I take to be a human being in

\* *Faith and its Psychology*, pp. 42, 53.

† The distinction here drawn between "religious" and "ordinary" experience is only a rough one, true so far as it goes, and it must not be so pressed as to make it appear that our lives are to be lived in water-tight compartments of thought. We are right in striving, as we are bound to strive, for the unification of all our knowledge, religious and "secular."

‡ Compare Hocking, *The Meaning of God*, p. 288: "It is through a prior recognition of the presence of Other Mind that my physical experience acquires objectivity at all."

a place where the people round me can see no one at all, I naturally conclude that either I have mistaken what I saw or else that I have experienced a hallucination; and in the latter case I assume that my experience is not "valid," does not represent reality. But in the case of religious experience we have no such easy test. Some people assert, and with obvious sincerity, that they have no consciousness of God at all, and this (in some cases) even when they are giving evidence of living good and worthy lives. The language used by religious people appears to them all unreal, because it answers (or seems to answer) to nothing in their own experience. Even if my religious experience, or the "faith" by which I acquire it, affords to me (as at its best it does) absolute certitude of Reality, it is yet largely *incommunicable*: I cannot share it, as I can ordinary knowledge, with the first person I meet.

Hence religious experience is easily open to the charge of being nothing more than "self-suggestion": just as some artists are said to have the power, by concentrating their thoughts on an imaginary object, of seeing it as plainly as if it were objectively before their eyes. The essentially personal and incommunicable character of religious experience must always make us careful not to take for granted that what is absolutely real to ourselves is objectively valid; careful also not to infer that other people who are without it, or whose experience is very different from our own, are wilfully obtuse or morally inferior.

"There are some," says William Temple, "who, though they have been in touch with what is spiritual, have felt compelled by motives which we must respect, by reverence for truth, to believe that it was all illusion; while others have never come in touch with what is spiritual at all, because the intellectual barrier has always stood in the way and prevented them from yielding themselves to the influences. That



means that religious experience appeals for external support.”\*

It means that we cannot do without a rational enquiry into the meaning and validity of the word “God.” Such an enquiry is not the direct purpose of this volume; but it is hoped that indirectly there will be not a little to indicate that the concept “God,” as representing the deepest ground of all reality, is one that Reason cannot dispense with. The point, just now, is this: religious experience *by itself*, on account of its personal and incommunicable character, cannot be assumed to be objectively valid. It needs the support of Reason, which is common to all normally constituted minds: what is proved true is true for all who think sanely. If Reason can show that the only condition on which we can make the distinction between truth and error—which in fact we all do make—is the real existence of an Intelligence at the back of Nature, then the verdict of religious experience, which claims to have direct access to such Intelligence, cannot be set aside as of no validity. Reason and religious experience will then afford each other mutual support.

Further, historical study may convince us that religious experience is a very great and important factor in human life; that it is normal to humanity at its best; that such a faculty cannot have been developed out of nothing, and cannot persist (as it has done and seems likely to do) if there is no response to it, no spiritual Environment to which it corresponds. Thus the religious experience of the race, though we cannot say the same of that of the individual person taken alone, affords evidence, open to all, of something more than its own existence.†

Again, it is possible that Thought may throw light on the difficult question *why* religious experience is

\* *The Faith and Modern Thought*, p. 6.

† For a severely scientific treatment of this question see W. James *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

incommunicable: why it is so easy for most of us to doubt the reality of the spiritual world. It may be that the highest purpose we can discern or imagine in the world is the development of *character*, and that such development requires the effort and the strain and the venture which we call Faith: that if the spiritual world obtruded itself upon us as the natural world does, if we could not doubt it, a main condition of our training in character would be taken away. This is a thought which we cannot here pursue; it has been followed out with great suggestiveness by Henry Churchill King, in his volume *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life*.

Let us conclude this chapter by a brief consideration of religious experience in a simple and rudimentary form—that of *Conscience*—and of its value as a witness to the Divine. “There is,” says Dr. Rufus Jones, “an augustness in Conscience which has made men in all ages name it the Voice of God.”\* “Duty,” says James Martineau, “involves the discovery of something higher than ourselves which has claims upon us.”†

But, if this is so, why is Conscience so uncertain and variable in its witness? Why does it teach a Jew or a Moslem that the eating of pork is wrong, while it tells a Christian that “nothing entering into a man can defile him” morally? Why does it teach a modern Christian that to hold his fellow men in bondage as slaves is absolutely wrong, while to the best of the Greeks of old it made no such deliverance? Conscience, as we have it, is obviously the result of education and training, and of the moral ideas that are current all about us. Are we to suppose that the Voice of God is thus variable, and says one thing to men to-day and another thing to-morrow? To assert this would be

\* *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. xviii.

† *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii., 104.

to make the way easy for the denial that God ever speaks to men at all.

To answer this difficult question it must be recognised that the word Conscience, like many others, has different meanings. There is, first, the perception of the difference between right and wrong (which we may compare with the difference between beauty and ugliness), along with the conviction that the right is better, that we ought to follow it, and that we stand self-condemned if we follow the worse. Purely for the sake of distinction, let us term this the " Rational " or " Formal " Conscience.

Secondly, there is the feeling which Conscience arouses in us that some particular classes of actions are right and others wrong: that I ought not to lie, steal, kill, commit adultery, and so forth. Let us call this, again for the sake of distinction, the " Empirical " or " Material " Conscience.

It will be found that it is in the second sense only that Conscience varies from age to age and from people to people—that it is in this sense, and not in the other, that it is the product of education and environment, and of the moral standards of the day. The history of human progress is very largely the story of the development and enlightenment of the Empirical Conscience. All of us, in these days, are absolutely sure that Slavery is wrong—many of us are becoming convinced that War, and preparations for War, are equally evil. It is to the further development and enlightenment of the Empirical Conscience that we have chiefly to look as the condition of human progress.

How is this development possible, and what are its conditions? Surely it is only made possible by the presence in men everywhere, throughout all human history, of something higher—the Rational Conscience. Why is it that the teachings of the prophets and seers of humanity, many of whom have suffered martyrdom for opposing the conventional morality and customs of

their day, have been adopted by their successors, and have helped to form a new Conscience among men? Simply because there was in those who heard the new teaching, even if (in support of the customary standards) they opposed and tried to stifle it, something that compelled them, in spite of their prejudices, to see that it was true and good and must be followed. A deeper Light than was clearly discerned by them was at work within them, developing a new and larger and truer Empirical Conscience.\*

In this higher sense then—what we have termed the Rational Conscience—we may still call Conscience the Voice of God within us. The great prophets and moral reformers of humanity have believed that God was working through them, revealing Himself and His will more clearly than it had been known before. It is the great glory of the Hebrew prophets that they, once for all, united religion with morality, and made men sure that no ceremonies apart from righteousness were of any religious significance. Since they have spoken, no new religion that does not call men to higher and *real* moral duties has any chance of general acceptance among men.

And we, looking back, may be sure that unless there had been at work in men a Light and Truth beyond their own, something of the Divine that was progressively revealing itself, the emancipation from the bondage of customary moral ideas, and the setting up of new and larger and truer standards, would have

\* We may recall what happened to Peter on the house-top at Jopp when he saw that he must no longer "call any man common or unclean"; and the parallel awakening of Paul to the unimportance of circumcision and other details of the Mosaic law. We may also note the rapid dying-out, in Anglo-Saxon communities at least, of the idea of personal "honour," which led to the supposed necessity of the duel. The idea persists in the national sphere among those who imagine that "nations will never consent to submit to arbitration a question that affects their honour." A notion of "honour" which was purely self-regarding is giving place to a larger and truer thought: that that alone is "honourable" which is just and true and right.

been impossible. That Light and Truth we need as much as ever, and it is still at work. Our present Empirical Conscience is no final authority ; it provides us with no infallible text-book on the whole duty of man. There is infinite room for progress yet—in the relations of man to man, of man to woman, of nation to nation, of race to race. Our knowledge of the Good, like that of the Beautiful and the True, is ever growing, and can never be defined by any formula.

The nature of the Divine Light which shines in man, and has gradually developed his Empirical Conscience, will be further considered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INWARD LIGHT AND FAITH.

THE Inward Light which has been at work in men in all ages, developing and purifying the Empirical Conscience, has its analogue in other departments of human life. Wherever men are led to discern *worth* or *value* in the objects of their experience, to differentiate and classify them as better or worse, beautiful or ugly, noble or base, the distinction is made in virtue of a power within them that may be called an Inward Light, because it is immediate, direct, and intuitive.

Religious experience is not an isolated portion of our life ; it is closely connected with the instinct or tendency to assign values to the things we meet with ; it is akin to that which leads us to admire and strive after the Beautiful and the Good ; it is a part of all that makes life worthy and glorious. But this tendency to assign values to things is altogether different from the use of the senses and the intellect, whereby we obtain knowledge of things themselves.

All the judgments we make about things may be arranged in two categories : judgments concerning matters of *fact* or *existence*, and judgments of *value* or *worth*. Science (which includes Mathematics) deals almost wholly with the first kind ; Æsthetics, Ethics, and Religion deals almost entirely with the second. Philosophy, as the criticism of *all* our experience, should include both. For reaching sound judgments of the first order—as that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that the tides are caused by the attraction of the moon—sense

experience, ordered by the intellect, is (broadly speaking)\* sufficient. But for arriving at sound judgments of the second class—for deciding what is really beautiful, noble, and worthy—a faculty must be employed altogether different from any that the senses or intellect can supply. No amount of investigation of what *is*, however patient and accurate, will ever inform us how things *ought to be*, or give us a criterion for distinguishing them as better or worse. "There is nothing," says Miss Benson (in what is perhaps rather an over-statement), "in the scientific aspect of phenomena which can make anything in any possible way worth while; for even the idea of 'worth' does not enter into the conceptions of science, and thus the essential nature of everything we care for is entirely outside it. Science can analyse the production of sound, and ignore the soul of music; it can show the cause of colour, and miss the joy of beauty; it can show the genesis of all manner of social institutions, and miss the heart of love; it may even find the conditions of life, but cannot ask what life is; it may sweep the heavens with its telescope, and fail to find God."†

And yet it would be quite erroneous to infer that "judgments of value" are purely subjective and individual, and that there is no true objective standard of real worth. In the domain of æsthetics, for example, a child begins by preferring bright colours, even if inharmonious, and crude forms. But as he attends to the teaching of persons of more developed powers of perception, *and learns to judge for himself*, he awakens to harmony of colour and beauty of line and composition. It is the same in music and poetry. This development is only possible because of the presence in all normally constituted persons of an

\* I say "broadly speaking" because moral qualities such as patience, accuracy, disinterestedness, can by no means be excluded as among the conditions needed for the discovery of scientific truth.

† *The Venture of Rational Faith*, pp. 174, 175.

æsthetic faculty, which, though at any particular stage it may yield imperfect verdicts, gradually comes to perceive *real* beauty, and pronounces judgments in which all competent authorities agree. The development of the æsthetic sense is parallel to that of the Empirical Conscience. In both cases, the faculty, as it develops, leads us in the direction of *truth*: towards an understanding and appreciation of real values.

In all these matters of æsthetic and moral judgment, we say that an "Inward Light" is at work within us, because the judgments are *our own*, or they are nothing at all. They are direct, immediate, and individual, though they issue in conforming to an objective and universal standard. They are not reached by argument, nor by submission to authority however competent; we cannot *prove* a picture or a symphony to be beautiful to one whose perceptions are undeveloped, nor convince him of its worth by naming those who have praised it. "You may be right," is the best he can say if he is sincere, "but it is not so to me."

In the teaching of Literature, to take another example, there is all the difference in the world between the most minute and painstaking analysis of the *facts* of a poem or drama or prose masterpiece, and the awakening, in the learner, of a real power to appreciate its worth. The facts can be learned by intellectual processes, and for the most part are accepted on the authority of competent students. The knowledge of them may be important. It is of great service, even as a help to the appreciation of a poem, to know when and under what circumstances it was written, to study its language and metrical form, to be informed about its logical and grammatical structure, its literary and historical allusions, and, above all, the main thought that it is intended to convey; yet this knowledge at its best is but a skeleton whose purpose should be to support the living fabric of flesh and blood—to



deepen and steady, that is, the whole impression made by the poem itself. That impression must be *mine* if it is to be real for me; another person can never impart it, though he may do much, by pointing out beauty of thought and language, to quicken my power of perception. Unless an Inward Light comes into play within me, I miss the inmost soul of literature.

Here again it may be well to point out that this perception of beauty in nature or art, as well as the apprehension of moral excellence, is not mere emotion. Emotion may, and usually does, *accompany* the sense of beauty, but the perception and the emotion are not the same. I feel because I see or hear; the thrill of pleasurable emotion is not the sense of beauty itself. The psychologist and physiologist may attempt, possibly with some success, to show *why* harmony of colours or sounds is pleasing, and discord the reverse; *why* certain forms and designs give pleasure and others are unendurable; but such analysis does not really explain the perception of beauty, which remains something quite apart from all that scientific study can accomplish, apart also from the emotional feeling that accompanies it.

The same working of an Inward Light is seen in another field—that of the appreciation of *personal character*. It is by an Inward Light—by something direct, immediate, and intuitive—that I apprehend the character of my nearest friend (or enemy), or of the historical persons of whom I read in history or literature. Sense perceptions, of course, have their place here, just as in the apprehension of beauty. I judge of my friend's character from what I see in his face, hear in his words, discern in his acts; the intellect, too, comes into play in forming correct inferences as to what these indications mean. But how do I know that certain signs mean Love, others Anger or Resentment, and so on? Simply because I know *in myself*, in my own inner experience, what these things are. Apart

from such personal and incommunicable experience, his looks and words and acts would have no meaning for me—they would be a riddle without an answer. And if my own inner experience has been partial and one-sided, I may altogether misapprehend and misinterpret the signs of character. It has often been pointed out that we judge others largely by what we are ourselves. The sensual man does not believe in the purity of women; the persistent egoist has no conception of disinterested goodness. A prodigal son may see in his father or mother nothing but sternness and old-fashioned prejudice; not until he awakens to love may he have any conception of the depth of long-suffering devotion with which they have sought to win him to his better self.

In all our knowledge of persons, then, and our apprehension of personal character, there is an Inward Light at work. This holds true even when the person is one in history. "The inner content," says Herrmann, "of any historical personality is laid open only to those who become personally alive to it and feel themselves aroused by contact with it, and see their horizon widened. The picture of a personality becomes visible to us in this way, and cannot be handed over to us by any communication from others; it must arise within ourselves as the free revelation of the living to the living."\*

Most of all is this true in the case of the one perfect Person who, as we Christians believe, lived and breathed on earth as Jesus of Nazareth. A Christian is essentially one whose inward eyes have been opened to behold the beauty and significance of the character of Jesus, and whose life is being moulded by what he has seen therein. Such knowledge of Him is based indeed upon the picture contained in the Gospel records, interpreted by the experience of the Christian Church; but no mere acceptance of the truth of Scripture, or

\* *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 74.

submission to dogmatic authority, will ever make a Christian. Unless an Inward Light reveals to us something of what Jesus was (and is), and draws us into growing conformity with that character, we have no right to the name.

Christian experience, at its best, everywhere testifies that, as we yield ourselves to that influence, we shall be brought into acknowledgment of two things: that we have in Jesus, first, a revelation of perfect human character; and second, a revelation (such as we get from no other source) of the quality and character of God.

“In this respect,” says Herrmann, “Jesus is incomparable, that He first saw what is good in all its glory, its fulness, and its power, and that He nevertheless had not to feel ashamed of what He was, compared with what He knew and what He said. In all other cases, the very men whose goodness raises us give us such a conception of what is good that we measure their own moral shortcomings by it. Jesus alone has had the conviction that it was not so with Him, and the man who learns to know Him admits that conviction to be correct.”\*

The other assertion of the Christian consciousness is that the perception of the character and moral worth of Jesus carries with it a unique revelation of the significance of the word “God.” We do not always recognise sufficiently how little we know of the meaning of that great word, how urgently we need a revelation if it is to be to us more than a term with which to argue, if it is to represent to us a warm, living, concrete reality, of which we are absolutely assured. Just as we do not know in detail what “perfection” is

\* Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 91. The difficulty felt by many in these days, that the assertion of the moral perfection of Jesus is after all a *historical* judgment, and that statements as to what happened in past history must always be open to critical correction and can never represent more than probabilities, I must leave for later treatment. (See Chapter VIII., pp. 100ff.)

until we see it embodied in a concrete human personality, so it is with the term "God," until we learn the meaning of the words "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

It follows that the knowledge of God must come to us by revelation, or by an Inward Light. The assurance that "God is real" is much more like a "value-judgment" than like a judgment of bare fact or existence such as the intellect properly deals with. That God *in some sense* exists, no one can rationally deny. That there is a Power of some kind working behind the phenomenal universe everyone practically believes, and, as he examines his experience, finds that he *must* believe. The real question on which men's minds are divided, or doubtful, is as to the quality and character of that Power. Is it *intelligent*, is it *purposeful*, is it *good*, is it *personal*, in the sense that we can enter into personal relations with it? Does it care for us as individuals, or is it more correctly described as a "stream of tendency"? These are among the questions really at issue when men ask whether God "exists," and they are all questions of quality and worth rather than of mere fact. And what Jesus has done for men is to give them, as no other religious teacher ever did, positive assurance in answer to such questions. He does it by bringing them into that personal apprehension of His own character, of which I have been speaking.

"Jesus does establish in us, through the fact of His personal life, a certainty of God which is superior to every doubt. When once He has attracted us by the beauty of His person, and made us bow before Him by His exalted character, then, even amid our deepest doubts, the Person of Jesus will remain present with us as a thing incomparable, the most precious fact in history, and the most precious fact our life contains. If we then yield to His attraction, and come to feel with deep reverence how His strength and purity dis-

close to us the impurity and weakness of our souls, then His mighty claim comes home to us. We learn to share His invincible confidence that He can uplift and bless perfectly those who do not turn away from Him. In this confidence in the Person and cause of Jesus is implied the idea of a Power greater than all things, which will see to it that Jesus, who lost His life in this world, shall be none the less victorious over the world. The thought of such a Power lays hold of us as firmly as did the impression of the Person of Jesus by which we were overwhelmed. It is the beginning of the consciousness within us that there is a living God."\*

" So, through the thunder comes a human voice,  
Saying, ' O heart I made, a heart beats here !  
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself !  
Thou hast no power, nor mayst conceive of mine,  
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,  
And thou must love me who have died for thee ! ' "†

That is what I have been leading up to : the thought that if we are to know God it must be by " revelation "—that is, by an Inward Light that shines in our own souls individually, and which is not the mere result of sense experience, or intellectual demonstration, or the testimony of others embodied in the authority of Church or Bible. While all these things may have their right and necessary place in *preparing* us for the knowledge of God, by themselves they cannot give it. But I have endeavoured to lay a strong foundation for this doctrine by showing that the same thing is true in measure of all the best part of our experience—of all those " judgments of value," whether in regard to beauty, or moral worth, or personal character, which make our life truly worth living.

Now what about the " Faith," which (as was said in the last chapter) " bears to religious experience a similar relation to that which the senses and the intellect bear to ordinary experience ? " Well, the

\* Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

† Browning, *An Epistle*.

Inward Light, and the Faith which receives and responds to it, come so near together that they may be almost used as convertible terms ; but while " Faith " has primary reference to an energy of our own being, the " Inward Light " suggests something above and beyond ourselves that yet works in us. Even in the experience of the senses Seeing involves Light, but Light also involves Seeing ; for apart from a seeing eye and mind there is no Light but only molecular and etherial vibrations. There is only light for those who open their eyes and see. So, in the domain of spiritual experience, the Inward Light that comes from God, and the human Faith that uses it, imply and involve one another. Whenever we respond actively to the call of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, seeking to " think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well "—whenever we strive loyally to be true to the best we know—we are exercising essential Faith.\*

When, on the other hand, we allow ourselves to be so immersed in the things of the outward world that we let our finer powers of perception atrophy and decay ; when we give no thought to the meaning and purpose of life ; when we become pessimists, and see in the world of our experience only the working of a hostile power ; or sceptics and cynics, denying the worth of the true, the beautiful and the good—then a force is working within us which is the exact antithesis of Faith. The Inward Light shines, in measure and potentially, in the souls of all men ; but we ourselves determine whether we will or will not open our inward eyes to its radiance. Faith essentially is the opening of those inward eyes—the response of our deepest personality to the unseen spiritual environment that we call God, who is ever striving to reveal Himself to us in the True, the Beautiful, the Good, in those

\* " All Faith consists essentially in the recognition of a world of spiritual values behind, yet not apart from, the world of natural phenomena." (Inge, *Faith and its Psychology*, p. 51).

personal characters that inspire and uplift us, and most of all in the one perfect Person of Jesus Christ.

“ Will we willingly surrender to the spiritual power whose influence we thus perceive to be all around us? Or will we treat this incomparable thing as an everyday matter, and in laziness forget it and turn our backs on it? This, at last, is the real test-question of Faith. And it passes over immediately into the other question, whether or not we are willing to be sincere.”\*

“ The Way into the Great Values,” then, is to be willing to take pains with our inner life, and to give free play to those deepest instincts of our nature which lead us to respond to the things of eternal worth.

“ There need be no pretence. We are called simply to give attention, time and thought; the great realities and values will, thus, finally verify themselves. But where one has given a great value no opportunity to make its legitimate impression, he cannot wonder that the sense of its reality and significance is lacking. We have no right to expect conviction and sense of value where we have not given the best an honest chance at us. Probably the greatest reason for failure in the sense of reality and achievement in the spiritual life lies just here. And it is thus, above all, that ‘ the inner light fails.’ ” †

We learn to appreciate the beauty of a picture by attending to what experts tell us, and then, to the best of our ability, judging for ourselves. We learn the worth of a friend’s character by attending to his words and acts, and responding to them with sympathy and trust. We enter into a deepening personal relation, like that of a true marriage, by learning to forget ourselves and our doubts and hesitations, and letting ourselves go in a venture of faith which is rewarded. So also we learn to know God by taking advantage of

\* Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

† H. C. King, *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual World*, pp. 113, 114.

such "proofs" as sound reason can offer, of such testimony as comes to us from the larger experience of saintly souls, and (most of all) of the light that was brought into the world in the person of Jesus Christ ; and then making the great venture of living resolutely as if all this were true. We shall find that here too the venture is rewarded, and faith is verified by experience.

" Jesus Christ has revealed the nature and character of our Heavenly Father, the Creator of this world in which we live ; has revealed that nature and character to be such as we could not, in the absence of that revelation, have assumed it to be ; but, now that we have that revelation, we can progressively verify its truth for ourselves by living as if we knew it to be true, and finding that all along the line our experience is what it would be if the revelation were true."\*

Which is an excellent exposition of the nature of true Faith.

\* Inge, *Speculum Animæ*, p. 26.



## CHAPTER III

### FAITH AND REASON

THE purpose of this chapter is to examine the place and function of Reason in relation to Religious Experience, and to the Faith which is its organ. Religious Experience, as we have seen, is in the first instance personal and incommunicable: however abundant the assurance of Reality it brings to the experient, he cannot share that certainty with others as he can the normal experience of the senses and the coercive demonstrations of mathematical truth. It needs, therefore, the support of Reason; it needs to be upheld and justified against the criticism that it is purely subjective, that the seeming reality of its object is due merely to self-suggestion.\*

The old "proofs of the existence of God" have almost ceased to count since the days when Kant once for all exposed their weakness—a weakness which the modern doctrine of Evolution has rendered more conspicuous. Roughly speaking, its root lies here: that you cannot get out of a syllogism more than is implicitly contained in the premisses. You cannot, starting with particular and finite and imperfect experiences, make them yield a cogent demonstration of the Universal, the Infinite, the Perfect. There cannot be a proof of the reality of God like that which shows that the three angles of a triangle are equal to

\* All our "judgments of value" are likewise incommunicable, but most of them are not open to the charge that their object is unreal, because it is usually given in sense experience. When we are enthralled by the beauty of a landscape, we are not likely to be told that the landscape is not there at all.

two right angles. For, to give another reason—the only proof of the “existence of God” that would be of any use would be not merely quantitative, like the demonstrations of mathematics, but *qualitative*: the real question, as I urged above (p. 32) is not whether *some* kind of God exists, but *what* kind.

And yet Reason, in the shape of philosophy, can do something. Though it cannot give us the rich qualitative Being that religious experience requires, it can prove that the material universe is not self-sufficient and self-explanatory—that its reality depends on a deeper Reality which is spiritual and not material in its nature. In other words, philosophy can destroy the illusion called Materialism, and thereby remove one of the chief obstacles to belief in God. The God of philosophy is not all we need, but it is something: it is a Form, the living Substance of which must be reached along other lines of approach.

What Kant taught us to do is to examine and criticise our experience of the world: to see (if we can) how we come to have such experience at all, and investigate the conditions under which it is possible: to find what is implied in the marvellous fact that we do actually reach, through science, a progressive knowledge of the real world in which we live.

It is, of course, quite impossible, here and now, to enter on such a task. All I can do is to indicate, with the utmost brevity, some of the results of such investigation, which appear to me to be soundly reached. The first of these is to bring new force and freshness into the old axiom of Descartes, “*Cogito ergo sum.*” My knowledge of the world is nothing apart from myself as the knower. Even if—as I am compelled to do—I imagine the universe of matter as existing long ages before I was born, and continuing ages after I shall have passed away from it, still *I am imagining that*. I cannot by any sort of possibility think of a world without a thinker in the background.

*Thought* is thus the "prius" of all knowledge of reality; there cannot be knowledge without a knower; to "exist" means to be an object of Thought or Consciousness, without which the word *reality* has no meaning.

Further, it is Thought or Consciousness which works up the formless, disconnected experiences that come to me through the senses into a *unity*, which makes me sure that they bring me into relations with one world—with one real and persistent world, such that what I find true in it to-day will be true to-morrow. Without this assurance of the unity of the world, or (what amounts to the same thing) of "the uniformity of nature," science could not even begin.

But psychology is showing, with ever increasing clearness, that I do not reach this experience of a real world alone. If from earliest infancy I could have been kept alive in total isolation from other persons, there is strong reason to believe that I should never have reached it effectively at all. From the dawn of self-conscious life I have discovered that what is true for me is true for other persons also—that we have a joint experience of the world. This is the main reason why I pronounce "unreal" the world of my dreams. I could not reckon them unreal unless I had a standard of reality with which to compare them, and this I gain in my daily intercourse with others. "To those who are awake," said Heraclitus, "there is but one world; but sleepers have each a world of their own." What is real, then, is what exists for a larger consciousness than that of the individual taken singly.

We all suppose, however, that the world would have existed even if no human beings had ever appeared in it, and that it would continue to exist even should the human race disappear. But if this "existence" or "reality" means (and to us it can never mean anything else than) existence *for Consciousness*, what is this but to assume—in the background of our

minds, perhaps quite unrecognised by ourselves—a universal and eternal Consciousness, of which the consciousness of each one of us is (so to say) but a fragment: a focus-point in which the Universal Light is operating? It is not merely my consciousness or yours, or both together, that underlies the unity of objective truth; that which is really true is an object to a Consciousness greater than our own, of which ours are but partial and fragmentary manifestations. This is what the philosopher means by “creation.” God is that Eternal and Universal Consciousness which is necessary for the existence of the world; His thoughts are objective truth.

I am quite aware that the “criticism of experience” which this argument involves is not convincing to all; and that, for those who are convinced by it, there is a very long step from “universal Consciousness” to the Christian idea of God; but I think it safe to say that most people, at any rate, who will carefully and patiently examine what is implied in Experience will end with the assurance that Materialism is out of court—that Mind or Consciousness is behind Nature—that the unity of Truth implies as its condition a Mind, and not merely separate minds, for which that Truth exists. So much, it may fairly be said, Philosophy has accomplished.

It follows, then, that the thought of God to which Reason leads us is that of a God who is *immanent* in, and not external to, our experience. All true thoughts of the world, we shall take it, are (so far as they *are* true) not our own thoughts merely but God’s thoughts: our Reason itself, in so far as it is rightly used, is not simply ours; it is the Divine Mind working in us and through us.

Now, what is the relation between this Divine Reason working in us, and the Faith whereby we gain religious experience? Well, we need not too closely

distinguish them. It may be that true Faith is Reason working in a special way—laying hold of the hidden Reality, not by the successive steps of “dialectic” thought, but in a more direct and intuitive manner. It has been shown above that, in those departments of experience that have to do with “values” rather than mere existence, it is by such intuition, and not by sense experience and intellect alone, that we get at the truth. In our apprehension of personal character, we very often reach true conclusions by intuition, long before we are aware of the steps by which we might have inferred them. Faith, as has been said, is a basal activity of our primary self, working at a deeper level than those special activities which we distinguish as Feeling, Thought and Will, and therefore involving them all.\* And the same may be said of Reason in its broadest sense.†

And yet we know that Faith and Reason often seem to be in conflict: the affirmations that Faith would fain make it is not allowed to make, or makes with difficulty, because they appear unreasonable. Tennyson has expressed this conflict in *In Memoriam* :

“ I falter where I firmly trod,  
 And falling with my weight of cares  
 Upon the great world's altar-stairs,  
 That slope through darkness up to God,  
  
 I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
 And gather dust and chaff, and call  
 To what I feel is Lord of all,  
 And faintly trust the larger hope.”

One cause of this conflict is that the word Reason is often used in a more restricted sense, which really

\* It should be carefully borne in mind that in no sense is the “self” divisible into such “faculties” as Feeling, Thought, and Will. Always it is the undivided self that is called into play, now mainly in one way and now in another.

† It may be noted that nowhere in the New Testament is Faith opposed to Reason: the opposition there is between Faith and “Sight” (See 2 Cor. v. 7; 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10).

covers one of its modes of action to the partial (or entire) exclusion of others: that mode, namely, which is expressed by the word *reasoning*. Whenever we reach conclusions by argument or inference, using the words "because" and "therefore"—as when we infer that it is raining because the roofs are wet, or because people are going by under umbrellas—that is the way in which Reason is working, and we often speak as though this were its whole function. This function is better expressed by the term "Logic" or "Intellect," and it is this that frequently conflicts with Faith. It does so because it is not ready to admit that truth can be reached by intuition: it demands evidence: it requires that a statement shall be *proved*, either by the direct witness of the senses, or by being deduced from some other statement which is accepted.

Now it is, as we have seen, the very nature of Faith to make affirmations which cannot be thus proved. In the next chapter, when dealing with Bergson's contribution to modern thought, I hope to examine the nature of Intellect, and to show what is its real place and function in the investigation of Truth. Here it must suffice to point out that the Intellect always proceeds by the use of *concepts*: that is, ideas of classes or kinds of things which are supposed to be rigidly defined, so that we know what is included in them and what is excluded. To be used intellectually ideas must be exact, rounded and finite, subject to precise definition. But it is obvious that many of the most important and valuable of our ideas are not of this character—for example, our idea of beauty. Who could define what it is that constitutes the beauty of a sunset sky, or what it has in common with the beauty of a symphony? All our "judgments of value" are thus indefinite, there is something in them that defies exact statement, something that can never be fully expressed in words, something therefore that is beyond strict logic.

Religious ideas fall, in the main, into this category.

If we begin to ask about the quality or character of God, to enquire into the nature of Christ's person and work, we are at once in a region of "value," where intuition is more in place than logic. To expect precise and rigid demonstration in these realms of thought is unreasonable: the conflict is not really between Faith and Reason, but between Reasoning and Reason in the larger sense.

The reasoning or logical faculty deals with a *part* of truth; Faith has a wider outlook, and reaches fields of truth that are none the less real because they elude precise definition. It has a stronger hold on Reality, because it sees more and deeper.

Here an obvious objection arises. Surely, it will be said, the judgments of Faith are not always sound—it leads men into credulity and superstition at least as often as into truth. Well, certainly the objection holds. We must admit at once that Reason is in place (even in its narrower form of Logic) in *criticising* the affirmations of Faith, and showing where they contradict general experience. When, for instance, certain Scotch ministers informed their congregations that the Tay Bridge disaster was a punishment inflicted on people for travelling on Sunday, Reason was quite rightly used to point out the number of disasters that happen to people not guilty of Sabbath-breaking, and the number of Sabbath-breakers who escape them altogether. The thought of a God who interferes now and then, in an arbitrary manner, making scapegoats of a few sinners as a salutary warning to the rest, is one that Reason absolutely refuses to entertain.

Faith, it is clear, is liable to make bad mistakes: especially to confuse with its real Object the temporary and conventional framework of ideas within which it is accustomed to work, and to assert that it has an equal certainty of one as of the other. When Faith was appealed to in support of the truth of the Ptolemaic system of the universe, with the earth in the centre,—

or when it is now appealed to in justification of belief in the absolute inerrancy of the Bible,—Reason is perfectly right in showing that these ideas are not true, and that Faith is out of place in holding on to them. The principal safeguard against the tendency of Faith to lapse into credulity is that its affirmations should be vigorously criticised by Reason.

The apparent conflict caused by this criticism is specially felt in times of change, like that in which we are now living, when a flood of new knowledge has swept away the customary framework of ideas, to which Faith has grown accustomed, and in which it knows its way about. Periods of reconstruction are almost inevitably times when Faith seems to many to have lost its way: to have committed itself to so many untenable positions as to discredit it altogether. What is needed, in such seasons of stress and strain, is the vigorous but restrained exercise of Reason, and at the same time of Faith, holding on to its central affirmation: that of a God who is behind all the seeming confusion, who is Himself working in the new knowledge, in the Reason that is striving to reduce it to order and evolve a new framework. There is a real exercise of Faith in the patience and trust with which we may calmly await developments, sure that all truth is of God. Such faith has already justified itself, as is seen in the willing acceptance of Evolution by many of the most religious minds to-day.

There is, however, a field of thought where Faith and Reason appear to be in especially close conflict, which is still engaging many of the best minds of our time. What, after all, is actually the nature and character of the God whose reality both affirm? Reason, as we have seen, may assure us of an eternal and universal Consciousness, *immanent* in all true thought, the source and ground of all objective reality. The philosophic idea of God, however, though certainly real so far as it goes, remains a thin and bloodless conception,



with little power to aid us in the moral struggle of our lives. It seems cold and ghostly, while we need a living personality, warm and breathing, to sustain our inner life. Faith asks for a God who is not merely immanent but *transcendent*, who is above us and beyond us, and yet akin to us—One whom we can really *worship*—with whom we can come into personal relations as we do with men whom we respect and love.

To express the difference in scientific rather than philosophic terms, Reason may assure us of a God who works by *law*, who is expressed in the order and uniformity of Nature—which means that what has happened once, under certain conditions, will assuredly happen again, if the same conditions are repeated. If Reason can find a place for answers to Prayer, it is in the sense that, if we supply the right conditions, the Nature of things will inevitably respond along certain definite lines—just as when we sow a field with wheat we shall reap that and no other crop. That is much, but it is not enough for Faith. Faith seems to demand, for the support of our religious experience, a God who is not tied to mechanical uniformity; who has some spontaneity, some freedom and initiative, as we believe persons have. It needs a God who deals with us *as individuals*: who makes approaches to us in detail, and responds in detail to our approaches to Him. In short, Faith requires a *personal* God, which Reason is slow to grant.\*

To revert to more philosophic language: so long as we try to make shift with the God of philosophy alone, we are always in danger of lapsing into *pantheism*: not necessarily the "scientific" pantheism which identifies God with the world, and is ultimately destructive

\* Dr. Hocking (in *The Meaning of God*, p. 336) urges that until we can conceive of personality in large enough terms to include law, we must use *both* in our thoughts of God. "Until I can perfectly conceive personality, God must be for me alternately person and law; with the knowledge that these two attributes of one being are not in truth inconsistent,"

of philosophy, but the pantheism that refuses to assign to God any particular "nature" or character, beyond being the ground and source of all that exists. It means that we find Him immanent in all experience, and not in one class of experience more than another; the source and ground therefore of moral evil as well as of good: a Being who is raised above ethical distinctions. Faith, on the other hand, at least in its higher forms, insists that this is destructive of our moral life: that we must have a God who is interested in some things more than in others, who purposes and wills the good, who takes sides in our moral struggle, a struggle in which He is Himself engaged. Faith claims to fill in the bare outline of the God of philosophy with a real and assignable content: a *character*, of which the highest human character is a true and valid picture. Faith is irrevocably committed to "anthropomorphism," which Reason always dreads.

This is a very imperfect indication of what I take to be the central battle-ground of "modern thought"; and it is not for me, in a few pages, even had I the ability, to attempt to point out the solution. All I can do is to suggest a few lines of thought and experience along which I believe the solution will be found.

In the first place, parallel with the criticism of our experience of the world, which we owe to Kant, there should go a criticism of our *moral* experience, directed especially to showing the implications of what I have termed our "Rational Conscience"—of the fact that we do always distinguish between right and wrong in human conduct, and know that we ought to follow the one and avoid the other. Such an enquiry would, I believe, show that, just as our experience of the world involves a Universal Consciousness for which the real universe exists, so our moral experience involves a Universal Righteousness: that is to say, a Supreme

Righteous Purpose, of which the Rational Conscience in each one of us is a fragmentary expression. Just as every *true* thought is God's thought and not ours only, so every *right* desire and aim is divine and not merely human. Moral evil will then take its place along with error: we shall say, not that either does not exist, but that God is not the Source of it.

So far as I am aware, this enquiry into the implications of our moral consciousness has not been adequately followed out by philosophers; and, if it has, I do not think any one has succeeded in showing that Universal Consciousness and Universal Righteousness are one and the same: philosophy has not yet achieved the task of demonstrating the goodness of God. Kant accepted the "categorical imperative" of duty, and deduced from it conclusions in regard to God which his "critique of pure reason" had set aside; but he left the "practical" reason confronting the speculative, and never showed how their findings were to be reconciled. Faith is therefore in place in holding on to the conviction that they will be reconciled, though we may not at present see how.

Then, again, if we follow out on philosophic lines the thought of God as Creator, we shall see that this leads us to something more definite and assignable than a mere Infinite or Universal Consciousness. Prof. James Ward has shown that, while we cannot present Creation to our minds so as to understand its *modus operandi*, because it altogether transcends our experience, we may yet catch some hints of its working by thinking of the "creations" of genius: an idea is present in the mind of a great poet or painter, which he gradually materialises by the use of words or colours. The difference, of course, is that he is limited by the nature of the material which he finds to hand; whereas such external limitation is impossible for One who is the Source of all. But what happens is that some new thing takes shape as an object, which was at first (dimly

it may be) present as an idea; something that is different from the mind that created it, and yet in which that mind is expressed. This may help us in some measure to conceive how God can be transcendent to the world of His creation, and yet immanent in it. His transcendence is not that of mere externality, as one material object is external to another; it is that of the Thinker to the object of His thought: an object which He does not simply find, as most of us do, but makes by thinking it—somewhat as an artist of genius makes a picture or a statue, bringing into being something that the world has not seen the like of before.\* It may also help us to understand that God does not simply remain as “the Infinite”; He *limits Himself* by bringing something into being which is other than Himself.

“No theist,” says Dr. Ward, “assumes that creation involves external limitation. But the point is that if creation is to have any meaning it implies internal limitation. . . . If the reality of the world be admitted, then this reality stands over against the reality of God. God indeed has not been limited from without, but He has limited Himself.” †

This thought of the self-limitation of the Divine is even clearer to those who believe in human free-will. If persons are really free, then God has brought into existence beings that can turn their own wills against His—can in some measure even thwart His purposes. If this is once admitted it will carry us far. For a self-limited God admits of *qualities*, as the pure Infinite does not. “All determination is negation:” that is to say, the attribution of qualities to any object of thought limits it by distinguishing it from what it is not. *What* qualities we are to assign to God, philosophy may not yet be in a position to say. But as soon as philosophy reaches this conception of a self-

\* This subject is more fully treated later (see p. 55.).

† *The Realm of Ends: Pluralism and Theism*, p. 243.

limited God as the only one that is really rational, it leaves Faith free to endow Him with such qualities as religious experience necessitates. Reason no longer pronounces as irrational the longing of Faith :

“ 'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ; my flesh that I seek  
In the Godhead.”

If God has limited Himself in creation, it is not irrational to think of Him as further limiting Himself that He may come into personal touch with the rational creatures who have their being through and in Him. The God of philosophy may yet be a *self-revealing* God, who does not leave His creatures to grope for Him in the dark as best they may. The longing for such a God was felt by Plato.

“ I think, Socrates, [said Simmias], and I daresay you think so too, that it is very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to obtain clear knowledge about these matters [of the soul] in this life. . . . It is our duty to do one of two things. We must learn, or we must discover for ourselves, the truth of these matters ; or, if that be impossible, we must take the best and most irrefragable of human doctrines, and embarking on that, as on a raft, risk the voyage of life ; *unless a stronger vessel, some divine word, could be found, on which we might take our journey more safely and more securely.*”\*

That Divine Word, we Christians believe, has come to us in Jesus Christ. His incarnation and redemptive work are for us the culmination of the age-long self-limitation of God, the supreme manifestation of the Love that Faith declares to be His inmost nature. It is in Christ that Faith and Reason find their abiding harmony. The Christian can cling to the affirmations of Faith purified by Reason, and to the conclusions of Reason enlightened by Faith.

\* From the *Phædo* : “ The Trial and Death of Socrates,” translate into English by F. J. Church, (p. 156).

## CHAPTER IV

### BERGSON ON "INTUITION"

WE have now endeavoured to show that, while Faith and Reason both have their place in apprehending the ultimate spiritual reality which is the Object of religious experience, Faith carries us further than Reason, especially in that department of our experience which has to do with the great values on which the whole worth of our life depends. Most of all is this the case in our estimation of personal character, and our apprehension of the revelation of the Divine which may come to us thereby.

At the present time there is a widespread tendency among thinkers to acknowledge the failure of the purely logical Reason or Intellect to yield an insight into ultimate Reality. This tendency is by no means confined to those who may be supposed to have an interest in defending the affirmations of religious faith. We see it in the "Pragmatism" of the late Professor William James and others, who endeavour to persuade us that Reality is developing, and that we by our efforts can contribute to the growth of Truth itself. That is "true," we are told, which *works*—which makes human life a fuller, completer, more satisfying experience; we are warned against the illusion of supposing that Truth exists anywhere rounded and complete, a whole which only needs the perfection of intellectual scrutiny to be brought within the compass of our knowledge. We have to contribute to it, by striving to live the fullest life of which we are capable—to use all our powers to the best advantage, those of

instinct, feeling and will, equally with those of sense-perception and intellect.

While there is much in this view that is bracing and life-sustaining, a wholesome corrective against the Scepticism which in history has been the usual outcome of the attempt to wrest from the Universe its secret by the use of the intellect only, we cannot hold it to be satisfactory. There is in us all a deep-lying impression that ideas that "work" do so *because they are true*, and we revolt instinctively against the notion that they are true because they "work." We ask how we are to know beforehand whether a new idea will "work" or not; how we are to be sure that we see enough to judge correctly the "working" of ideas in the past. Will it not be easy to fancy that anything works well which seems to satisfy our own requirements, and is not the way opened for all sorts of subjectivism and credulity?

Much more luminous and penetrating would seem to be the philosophy of the great French thinker, Henri Bergson, to which we may with advantage devote a chapter of this book. His whole method of thought, as expounded particularly in *Creative Evolution*,\* is extraordinarily fresh and suggestive, and it is lit up by a power of apt and vivid illustration which is rare among philosophers. There is indeed a danger that superficial readers may too easily imagine they have understood the illustrations, when they have not really mastered the thought which these are intended to convey.†

On the critical side, Bergson devotes himself to showing that the failure of the Intellect to bring us into touch with Reality applies to *all* departments of our

\* English translation published by Macmillan, 1911.

† For instance, the comparison of our conscious personality to a rolling snowball, which at any given moment is the sum of all it has gathered since it began to be.

experience, and not to those only which are concerned with what we have called "values."

Starting with the world of inanimate objects, our sense-perceptions register "views" we have taken of these objects from various standpoints; and they do not give us the reality of these objects any more than a collection of photographs of a town we have not seen gives us a sense of the reality of the place itself. However numerous and diversified the view-points, we can never from such a collection gain the "real inwardness" of the place, in the way we gain it the moment we have set ourselves actually in the midst of the town. The perceptions of an object which we acquire and remember, however indispensable, can never be more than symbols—partial representations of different aspects of a reality that is beyond them all. To get at the real object, we should have in some way, by some kind of sympathetic insight, to place ourselves within it, and see it from the inside.

So, again, with the Concepts with which the Intellect works in reaching truth by reasoning. Concepts are ideas of Classes of things,—of things which resemble each other in certain definite characters. All our study of Nature consists essentially in finding resemblances and differences between the objects we perceive, and grouping them accordingly. I find, for instance, two glassy-looking crystals, which to the eye appear much alike. To ascertain whether or not they belong to the same class, I try scratching them with the point of a knife. If one is easily scratched, and the other not, I infer, from previous experience that the first is "calcite," and the second "quartz." The particular respects in which certain objects agree, taken together, form the "definition" of the class to which they belong; or in other words the "connotation" of the concept that represents the class. If I come across a new object, and find that it possesses some of these characters, I shall infer that it probably possesses others—and



thus new truth is provisionally reached by reasoning. It may be correct, or it may not—the truth awaits *verification* by further study and observation. If my inference is found to hold, the new object will take its place in the old class ; if not, a new class may have to be made for it, and a new *word* found to describe the class, and to stand for the concept that represents it.

Thus most of our words—nouns and adjectives at any rate—are names of Concepts ; and it is these we use in reasoning. They provide a kind of mental shorthand, whereby, instead of having to enumerate all the objects that compose a class of things, we lump them together, and proceed easily from one group to another.

All this, of course, may be found in any elementary text-book of Logic. What is new in Bergson's investigation is the freshness with which he points out that *symbolic* knowledge, such as is obtained by the help of concepts, and the words that represent them, is very far indeed from *real* knowledge of the Universe itself.

This is still clearer when we pass from inanimate or "dead" objects to those that are alive. For no living thing remains the same for two consecutive seconds—nor, indeed, for the minutest fraction of one second—but is in a perpetual change or flux. The best the intellect can do, therefore, is to take a series of snapshots, as it were, of the object as it appears at successive instants ; and, by combining these as in a kind of mental cinematograph, to form some notion of the change it has undergone. But no such cinematograph representation is equal to the task of giving us *change itself*, and it is vain by such means to seek for real knowledge of living things. The only way to get such real knowledge would be to project ourselves, if that were possible, into the moving flux of life, and see it from within.

There is one department of life in which this may seem to be in some measure possible—that of our own conscious experience. We have some power of "turning

the mind inwards," and reflecting upon what goes on within us. But, here, again, if we are to express in any words what we find there—and therefore if we are to make our conscious experience matter for reasoning and intellectual demonstration—we have to isolate certain experiences under the name of "mental states," and treat them as if they remained fixed when really they are changing all the time. Such isolation of particular elements in our mental life, even when we try to recombine the "mental states" which we have artificially isolated, can in no way give us the reality of what goes on within us. For in every so-called "mental state" there is really our whole individual personality at work, with all it has gained in the course of our whole mental experience. It is the whole *I* that has any particular sensation, or thought, or desire; apart from *me* it has no real existence.

"The isolated psychical state is hardly anything but a sketch, the commencement of an artificial reconstruction; it is the whole considered under a certain elementary aspect in which we are specially interested, and which we have carefully noted."\*

We might almost as well, Bergson suggests, try to construct a poem out of the letters that compose it, thrown in a heap, as to construct the reality of our inward experience by combining the abstractions known as "mental states." Only if the poem is there, already in our minds, would there be any chance of success; and the reality of our inward life is known to us by Intuition and not by Analysis.

Such Intuition he believes to be possible in relation to our "outward" as well as to our "inward" experience, and he regards it as the only path to the knowledge of reality. But before attempting to set forth its nature, let us follow him in his study of the process we call Life.

Life, for Bergson, is essentially a free creative impulse, which is continually tending to break through the

\* *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 23.

chain of rigid physical causation with ever new beginnings—bringing about conditions which were not previously there, and which are not predictable even with completest knowledge of physical and chemical laws.\* This must by no means be understood to indicate that in his view the world of living things is *disorderly*; it means that a higher kind of order replaces the lower order of purely physical causation in which mechanism rules. What exactly may be the nature of that "higher order" Bergson does not seem to say; but he regards it as psychical rather than as physical, as working out something like a mental *purpose*. He does not, indeed believe that the course of life is fully mapped out beforehand by omniscient intelligence; were it so, he could find no room for the real though limited *freedom* which, he is sure, all life possesses. The creative purpose manifested in life he compares to that of an artist or poet, who conceives dimly that at which he aims, and whose purpose is only fully revealed, even to himself, as his work reaches completion.†

The variations on which Natural Selection works are not for Bergson merely fortuitous, as Darwin thought them, but *purposive*, in the sense that through them the Life impulse is ever seeking new and higher forms, in which it may have larger liberty. He points out how organisms, when their environment changes, at once begin to adapt themselves to the new conditions. The variations which are struck out, and which may enable

\* For the facts on which this "vitalistic" view is based, see *Creative Evolution*, chapters I.-III.

† Compare the following passage from R. L. Stevenson, quoted by E. Hermann in *Eucken and Bergson*, p. 164: "I as a personal artist can begin a character with only a haze in my head; but how if I have to translate the haze into words before I begin? I can find language for every mood; but how could I tell anyone beforehand what this effect was to be, which it would take every art I possessed, and hours and hours of deliberate selection and rejection, to produce?" Also compare W. Temple, *The Nature of Personality*, p. 107: "Just as the artist finds his own meaning in the successful struggle to express it, so God realises His own intention in the process of effecting it."

some of them to survive, are clearly something more than fortuitous.

Life he thus represents as an upward stream or impulse, continually battling with the downward stream of matter and the mechanical order, with its tendency to the dissipation and degradation of energy. This upward stream manifests itself along three main lines, not exclusive of one another but intermingled.

There is, first, the *vegetative* life of plants, which appears almost "blind," but by which stores of potential energy are accumulated, in the form of carbo-hydrates, to be gradually dissipated again when death ensues.

There is, second, the *instinctive* life of the "lower" animals, which reaches its highest development in ants and bees.

There is thirdly, the *intelligent* life of conscious beings, which reaches its highest point in man as a self-conscious person, in whose experience alone true freedom is achieved.

"Bergson's Evolution is creative, then. We have the creative life-force, and the dying matter on which it acts. The law of the dissipation of energy tells us that matter is ever sliding down a slope towards inertia, decay, and death. The life-force is pushing up the slope, insinuating itself into matter, interrupting its downward impetus, moulding it into increasing adaptation to environment. Thus matter is at once a hindrance and a stimulus. The forward push of the life-impulse is beset with resistance, failure, deviations, reversions. It drives a way through many a mass of resistance, and is checked now sooner, now later. Here it can go no further, and the end of the line is called vegetism. There it bores deeper, and the terminus is instinct. In one instance only has it tunnelled its way through matter, and come out at the other end as [full] consciousness."\*

Where, then, does "Intuition" come in, and what is its relation to the Intellect? The Intellect, according to

\* Hermann, *Eucken and Bergson*, pp. 157-8.

Bergson—and this is one of his most original suggestions—is a faculty, a form of consciousness, that has been evolved to enable man to cope with matter; for *action*, that is to say, rather than for independent knowledge of reality. It focuses attention on a limited field of experience, regarding it for the time as immobile (instead of constantly shifting as it really is), and so forms ideas and concepts which give birth to words—words which fix and register concepts, make possible their communication, and enable us to reflect upon them.

But, as it necessarily represents everything statically, it gives us no true insight into the dynamic movement which alone is real. The instinct of animals is in closer touch with reality, for it proceeds organically and is "moulded on the very form of life." "The instinct that animates the bee is indistinguishable from the force that animates the cell, or is only a prolongation of that force." "If the consciousness that slumbers in it should awake, if we could ask it and it could reply, it would give up to us the most intimate secrets of life."\* But instinct in the animals is unable to reflect; it is adapted to a narrow field of action, outside of which it has no hold at all.

Instinct, however, is not confined to the "lower" animals in whom consciousness is still dormant. There is, in ourselves, surrounding the clear centre on which our intellect is focussed, a fringe of consciousness that is essentially instinctive; but it is instinct that, by its association with intellect, has become self-conscious and reflective. Certain insects, it is pointed out, are able to sting their victims, within the thousandth part of an inch, precisely in the nerve-centres, so as to paralyse without killing them. Their instinct enables to "divine" the reality, by a kind of intuition. And we too have a power of intuition, whereby we can divine reality in ways the intellect knows nothing of. We have it in the sense of beauty that accompanies our perception of a beautiful

\* *Creative Evolution*, pp. 175, 174.

object, in our insight into the meaning of a poem, which is something deeper far than our intellectual understanding of the words that compose it. And it is by Intuition, says Bergson, that alone we can reach that movement of life, that incommunicable reality, which is the secret of the Universe. It is a power which in greater or less degree we all possess, and which, if we will use it, gives us a sight of the moving reality of the world which the Intellect with its "snap-shots" can never yield. Of those who have learnt to use it a follower of Bergson says: "*They have understood in the fashion in which one loves, they have caught the whole melody.*" \*

And so, if Bergson is right, that which we have claimed as a legitimate region for the exercise of Faith, for the use of our Inward Light, holds valid not for these fields only, but for all our knowledge of ultimate reality. It is not that the Intellect is useless; it is usually not until we are familiar with the more external aspects of things that we are ready to make the ascent to their inward truth: just as we must know the meaning of the words before we can catch the thought of a poem as a whole; just as we must be acquainted with a person's ways and deeds before we can appreciate his character; just as the scientific discoverer must patiently study a mass of details before he can rise to the generalisation that brings them into harmony.

Bergson has not yet formulated for the public the application of his principles to the religious conception of the world. But there is enough already to give us confidence in holding on to the central affirmations of Faith, to the convictions that are fundamental in religious experience, when the logical Reason would fain rob us of them. If it seems to us at times that the world is in the grip of mechanical law, that human freedom is an illusion, that prayer is useless and God a dream; then let us remember that these negative conclusions are reached by the Intellect, which by the very

\* Gaston Rageot, quoted by Hermann, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

defects of its qualities is unable to present things to us in any terms other than those of matter and its laws. If we will learn to cultivate the power of Intuition, which is ours as self-conscious beings as truly as our power of Intellect, we shall be assured that neither man nor God is bound by any chains of purely physical causation ; that there is room in the world for new beginnings, in our own lives as in that of humanity at large ; that the upward striving of the life-impulse in us, against the weights that would drag us down, is itself the pledge that, as we identify ourselves with that impulse, our little life may reach the very life of God.

## CHAPTER V

### REVELATION THROUGH PERSONALITY

THE knowledge of God, as we have seen, means not the bare assurance that something called "God" exists, but an apprehension of the qualities that constitute the meaning of the word. This apprehension, we have reason to believe, is not to be gained by intellectual scrutiny of things as they appear, but must result from the self-disclosure of God to men in religious experience, as they open their minds to His revelation.\*

Assuming then that if we have any real knowledge of God it comes by revelation, we have still to ask, How does God reveal Himself? It used to be imagined by theologians of a former day that the content of "revelation" consisted of a series of statements supernaturally made by God to men, concerning matters that were undiscoverable by, and indeed largely unintelligible to, human faculties—such, for instance, as that God is three "Persons" in one "Substance." On this supposition, Faith became the passive acceptance of such statements on what was supposed to be Divine authority, and into their truth it was sinful for Reason to attempt to enquire. That, however, is not in the least the meaning that the word Faith bears in the New Testament; and, when the dogmatic statements were examined in the light of history, it was found that they were full of human imperfections—that they represented, at the best, gropings after Truth in the dim light of philosophical ideas current at the time, and that they were expressed in words which were far from representing adequately even these ideas.†

\* See end of Chapter III., p. 49.

† The Greeks, at the time when the Creeds were formulated (about the fourth century) thought in terms of "substance": each great



Further, it was shown that the dogmas expressed in these statements had been developed by a process of reasoning from *data* supplied by religious experience; and that what the New Testament itself gives us is not the dogmas themselves but the materials out of which the human intellect wrought them. In the case of the Trinity, for example, what we find in the New Testament is experience of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"—experience, that is, of the character or personality of Jesus, of the fatherly love of God into which He had lifted His followers, and of His continued presence and working in their individual and corporate lives. In the case of the Atonement it is even clearer that it was the joyful experience of reconciliation to God through the self-sacrifice of Christ which was "explained" by Origen and others as due to a ransom paid to the Devil, by Anselm as the payment by Christ of that which was necessary to satisfy the Divine honour, and so forth.

No—the dogmas of Christianity are not statements supernaturally made to men by God Himself, but products of the human intellect working on a basis of personal and collective religious experience, and striving to find for this experience a rational explanation. They are not, in my judgment at least, to be therefore thrown aside as worthless; for the human mind seems to be compelled by its nature to seek for the rational grounding and harmonising of its ideas, in this as much as in any other field. But they are all subject to enquiry, to criticism, and to revision when human experience has

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class of things was supposed to be what it was in virtue of some underlying principle or essence, conceived as something semi-physical. In the case of the concept "God" this underlying principle was at first expressed by the word *ὑπόστασις*=*substance*; but later by *οὐσία*=*essence*; the word *ὑπόστασις* (now translated by *person*) being made to do duty for the distinguishable secondary principles (Father, Son and Spirit) into which the one *οὐσία* was differentiated. Nothing could show more clearly than this change in the use of the word *ὑπόστασις* the limited and fallible nature of human language.

reached better categories of thought, and has acquired more adequate language in which to express its ideas. It was not the dogmas that were "revealed" to men in a series of infallible statements, but the character or quality of God Himself, which became gradually clearer to men as their religious experience deepened and widened, and as their inward eyes were opened to see the manifestation of the Divine.

If we ask how this self-manifestation of God to men was achieved, it is clear that, in the main, it was *through persons*, through the experiences that came to them, and through their faithfulness to the best they knew. We can trace through the Old Testament the gradual unfolding of the idea of God from a mere tribal Deity to a righteous Lawgiver for the nation of Israel, and onwards to an assurance that He was the God of all nations, and that His love for Israel meant that He was preparing them to carry His salvation to the ends of the earth. The chief agents in this progressive revelation were the Prophets and Psalmists of Israel, who discovered more and more of God and of His mind and will as their eyes were opened to the needs of their own day, to the meaning of the circumstances with which they were surrounded, and to the response of their own hearts to those circumstances and needs. This is clearest, perhaps, in the case of the prophet Hosea, to whom was revealed, as to no earlier prophet, the depth of Jehovah's forgiving love for His erring people. And how? By the heart-breaking experience of the unfaithfulness of his dearly-loved wife, Gomer, and the marvel that his own love bade him not to cast her off but to restore her to his home. Browning, in *Saul*, has finely imagined a similar revelation to have come to David through his love for his wayward and at times frantic king :

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,  
That I doubt His own love can compete with it? Here, the parts  
shift ?

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,  
 And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can ? . . .  
 Would I suffer for him that I love ? So wouldst Thou, so wilt Thou ! ”

All through history, it has been the men and women who have found God in their own lives, to whom He has revealed Himself in their own hearts' experience, who have been the agents of carrying revelation to others. Revelation works through Personality. God reveals Himself through persons, in proportion to the depth and power of their religious experience. In one personal Life that inflow of the Divine was perfectly unhindered, and that Life was in consequence the supreme revelation of God to man. “ No one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.”\* And who is “ he to whom the Son willeth to reveal ” the Father ? Not, says Jesus, the wise and understanding, but the “ babe.” It was because Jesus, with His “ Abba, Father,” was Himself the perfect embodiment of the child-spirit, that the Truth of God was luminous to Him ; it is only as others come to share that spirit of simplicity, dependence, teachableness, and obedience, that He can reveal the truth to them.

Revelation is an ultimate experience, and therefore undefinable in words ; but all may learn by experience something of what it means. It may be described as a personal touch of God upon our conscious life, bringing with it an assurance of ultimate reality, such as neither sense nor intellect can give. And, if we ask again, *what* is revealed, the broadest answer is that God is the perfect Person. The Personality of God is a thought that, as we have seen above, † human reason is slow to grant us.

\* Matt. xi. 27, Luke x. 22. Though this profound saying is in the language usually employed by the Jesus of the fourth Gospel, and stands almost alone in the Synoptics, it appears to have been drawn by the authors of the first and third Gospels from a very early collection of the sayings of Jesus, and to embody at least the substance of an authentic declaration.

† Chapter III., p. 45

It seems a belittling of the Infinite God to try to think of Him in personal terms, to bring Him under the limited and imperfect category of Personality as we know it. Perhaps the real difficulty is not that our thought of God is too large, but that our idea of Personality is too small. Let us therefore devote a little space to enquiring what light modern Psychology, which is the study of Personality, has to throw upon its nature. This study is as yet only in its infancy, and any answers we may find will be purely provisional; but as far they go they will certainly help us in believing that Personality is a larger thing than most of us had thought it.

(1) A "Person" is a self-conscious being, endowed with powers of perception, intelligence, memory, and will. In our ordinary experience Personality is, of course, manifested in a bodily organism, but in itself it is spiritual, not material. A Person is a being that can think in terms of "I" and "me." Most babies, when they begin to talk, do not use these words, and show therefore that their personality is yet undeveloped.

"The baby, new to earth and sky,  
 What time his tender palm is pressed  
 Against the circle of the breast,  
 Has never thought that 'this is I.'  
 But as he grows he gathers much,  
 And learns the use of 'I' and 'me,'  
 And finds 'I am not what I see,  
 And other than the things I touch.'  
 So rounds he to a separate mind  
 From whence clear memory may begin,  
 As through the frame that binds him in  
 His isolation grows defined."\*

This "isolation" of personality is what, at one stage of our experience, most impresses us. Our thoughts are absolutely our own; we cannot unlock the secrets of one another's minds. It would seem as though "persons"

\* Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, Canto 45. This is sound psychology. Note also how Browning carefully avoids making Caliban, the half-human monster, use the word "I." A young child will often call itself "baby"; I knew one who so far imitated the language of others as to call himself "you."

were wholly separate beings, impervious to one another, as the atoms of material bodies were once supposed to be. But one of the chief discoveries of modern psychology is that this is not so. We are what we are *through one another*, through the mutual interaction of the individual and the society in which he finds himself. As we have already seen,\* it is through our intercourse with others that we gain a joint experience of the world, and with it a standard by which we distinguish what is real from what is unreal. All our conceptions of duty and morality, the field where personality most displays its quality, arise from the experience that in acting we have to consider others as well as ourselves. These are but a few illustrations of the manifold facts which have convinced psychologists that our personalities are far less isolated than they seem—than they seem, above all, in our times of sorrow and separation, when “the heart knoweth its own bitterness.”

“Yes! in the sea of life enisled,  
 With echoing straits between us thrown,  
 Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
 We mortal millions live *alone*.  
 The islands feel the enclasping flow,  
 And then their endless bounds they know. . . .  
 Who ordered that their longing’s fire  
 Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?  
 Who renders vain their deep desire?  
 A God, a God their severance ruled,  
 And bade between their shores to be  
 The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.”†

The islands are represented by the poet as longing for re-union—

“For surely once, they feel, we were  
 Parts of a single continent.”

*But so they are still*—at the bottom. It is but in appearance that they are separated by “the salt estranging sea”; it is only by poetic licence that this is styled “unplumbed.”

(2) This may serve as an illustration of the second great discovery of modern psychology—that our con-

\* Chapter III., p. 39.

† Matthew Arnold, *To Marguerite*.

scious experience at any moment forms but a small part of our real personality, which stretches out, like the solid rock beneath the separating water, far below the "threshold of consciousness" into a dim mysterious region, where our persons join one another in ways of which our conscious life yields hardly any indication.

We have to be on our guard in using the facts of the "sub-conscious life" when studying Personality, lest we fall into the common error of trying to explain the little known by the less known. But of the reality and importance of this subconscious region of our real selves there can be no doubt at all. It is in this region that Memory keeps its store of past experiences. Here is the repository of those habits which we have gradually formed, which mainly determine our "character," and which largely fix the nature of our response to new emergencies as they arise. It is to this realm that our dreams belong; probably we are always dreaming, but it is only when our ordinary conscious activity is stilled by sleep or reverie that our dreams rise into consciousness—often dim and incoherent, so that they pass wholly out of memory when we wake, but sometimes clear enough to remain with us.

The "threshold" between conscious and unconscious is vague and shifting, and at any moment ideas may pass from one region to the other, as when we recall a name or a dream and then forget it. The emergence into consciousness of that which lies below may be of all degrees of vagueness or clearness. Often it is wholly vague, as in our "moods" of depression:

" Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,  
From the soul's subterranean depths upborne  
As from an infinitely distant land,  
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey  
A melancholy into all our day."\*

Or, again, it may be bright and clear, as when we suddenly remember what we had done with something that was lost.

\* Matthew Arnold, *The Buried Life*.

Worthless as most of our dreams appear, it would be a mistake to judge the quality of our subconscious life by these alone. In many ways it seems to be more efficient than our fully conscious mind. Problems that have baffled us will often "solve themselves" in sleep or when our attention is otherwise occupied, and the solution will rise into consciousness unbidden. The creations of genius, whether in art or literature, or scientific discovery or invention, usually come as flashes from the subconscious, though not without much previous mental effort.\* Hence their apparent "inspiration." The sub-conscious part of us is, perhaps, as Bergson seems to suggest, in deeper touch with the hidden reality of things than are the slow processes of our reasoning minds. Probably much of the apparent conflict between Faith and Reason within us is really an effort to harmonise the deliverances of different layers of our personality. Many of us must have been aware of intuitions, or deep stirrings of Life within us, which our more superficial intellect has resisted, and which yet in the end have become part of our settled convictions.

It is thus that the modern psychologist explains many of the phenomena of religious "conversion." That which breaks, sometimes suddenly, into a person's conscious life, revolutionising his habitual thoughts and ways of living, has usually been long preparing in the depths of his being, and it is only when the strain of effort is relaxed, or some emotional shock overcomes the normal resistance, that it is able to well up and flood the consciousness. So also would he explain many of the visions of the mystics, like that of Paul on the Damascus road. This "explanation," even if valid as far as it goes, need not make such experiences any the less Divine. It would seem to be the sub-conscious part of our strange

\* The late Dr. George Matheson, the blind poet, said that his beautiful hymn, "O Love that wilt not let me go," came to him all at once, and he wrote it down in five minutes, almost as if it had been dictated.

spirits that the Spirit of God is most able to touch—perhaps we may even say that it is the normal *locus* of our communion with the Divine. If this is so, it would throw some helpful light on our very frequent experience of the apparent uselessness of Prayer.

If the part of our personality that is hidden from us thus stretches out towards God, it also stretches out, as was suggested above in the simile of the islands, towards other persons, and our seemingly separated personalities find in the sub-conscious how much they have in common. On the surface we are sundered, but in the depths we mingle. "Telepathy" or thought-transference may now be regarded as a proved reality. If it is rarely manifested in full consciousness, it is abundantly found in abnormal conditions like the hypnotic trance, when the ordinary consciousness is inhibited, and the part of the mind that is normally subconscious has free play. Many of the genuine phenomena of "spiritualism" find their explanation here, rather than in the agency of disembodied persons.\* In silent religious worship, like that of the Quakers, when a number of earnest people sit down quietly together to wait upon God, this unity of spirit is often strikingly manifested, and the spiritual "exercise" of a company of people is found to be one whole, bringing them into a living sense of fellowship with God and with one another.

(3) A third contribution of modern psychology is the discovery that Personality is not something given us, rounded and complete, but that it is rather an ideal set before us which we have to achieve. He is most fully a Person who is least like a *thing*, determined wholly by its past or by its present surroundings—or like an animal,

\* Some years ago, a lady, who had been "sitting" with a medium whom I had never heard of and who probably had never heard of me, told me that among the "spirits" present on one occasion was my father, Jonathan Grubb, then lately deceased. He was asking for me, by the pet name that had been used in my boyhood—a name with which she, as an old friend of our family, was quite familiar. I have no doubt that the medium derived the names of both my father and myself from her sub-conscious mind.



which is the creature of impulse—but who *determines himself* in accordance with a fixed purpose which he consciously sets before him and to which his life is devoted. And, further, he is most fully a Person when this purpose regards not himself and his own good alone, but the good of the whole of which he forms a part—when, in short, it is most completely identified with the Purpose and Will of God. But this means that true personality can only be achieved by the suppression of wayward impulses and selfish desires—by the habitual endeavour to live for “the true, the beautiful, and the good.” Self-limitation is the condition of self-realisation—or rather, they are but two sides of the progress towards real Personality. Genuine self-sacrifice, when self and its good are forgotten, *is* self-realisation.

A perfect Person, then, so far as we have powers to conceive the idea, would be “a Being determined by Himself alone, and in His action always guided by His whole purpose, never by any single impulse or caprice; a Being who is absolutely selfless and realises Himself in spending Himself for others.”\* But is not this the God of real Christianity—the God whom Jesus Christ revealed, not in set words, but by living that life Himself?

Revelation, then, is the manifestation of the character or quality of God, the perfect Person, through persons; and most of all through the one Person who has lived the perfect life—the manifestation of this to immature persons who are drawn by it into the power of achieving their personality, and therefore of helping, in their turn, in the work of revelation. But our present imperfect personality, though it is, if we are followers of Christ, on its way to perfection, is no measure of what we mean by the Personality of God.

\* William Temple, *The Nature of Personality*, p. 98.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHRIST OF HISTORY

IN the preceding pages an assumption has been made throughout which in these days may perhaps be challenged. It has been taken for granted that Jesus Christ was a real historical person, and not a mythical being. It seems necessary to devote a chapter to the justification of this assumption, in view of the writings of Mr. J. M. Robertson in England, Prof. Drews in Germany, and Mr. W. B. Smith in America—all of whom have endeavoured to show that the rise of Christianity can be accounted for without an historical Founder. Apart from this attempt to resolve the Jesus of history into a myth, there is a hazy idea in the minds of some who have heard of Biblical criticism but know little or nothing of its actual processes and results, that it also is tending in the same direction—that the Gospel story will not bear historical investigation, any more than the mediæval romances concerning King Arthur and the Round Table. There are many who vaguely fancy that, if any real historical figure lies behind the Gospels, it is lost beyond recovery. It seems necessary, therefore to examine the evidence as fairly as possible, and to show what real historical criticism has to say about the credibility of the Gospel narrative.

First we will look at the evidence as to the real existence of Jesus from sources outside the Gospels, and then at that afforded by the Gospels themselves.

The support to the belief in the historical existence of Jesus from non-Christian sources is admittedly very meagre. This, however, it is fairly easy to account for. The first century of our era produced very few

historians, and these few had limited interests. Christianity during that period seemed a small and trivial thing; and, by the time it had become important, first-hand evidence as to its origin was no longer procurable. Only two early writers have anything of importance on the subject—Josephus the Jew, and Tacitus the Roman.

Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, has two allusions to Jesus. In the twentieth book he speaks of the judicial murder by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin of “the brother of Jesus who is called Christ (James was his name),” in 62 A.D. In the eighteenth book he has a longer passage, as follows:

“At this time appeared Jesus, a wise man, since it is fitting to call him a man (of distinction).<sup>\*</sup> For he was a doer of strange works; he was a teacher of men who received true words with pleasure; and he drew after him many Jews and many Greeks. He was the Christ (or, He was the man known as ‘Christ’)<sup>†</sup> On the denunciation of the first men of our nation, Pilate condemned him to the cross; but those who loved him from the beginning did not cease to revere him, for he appeared to them risen on the third day, as the Divine prophets had foretold concerning him; as also a thousand other marvels about him. The sect (or tribe) which receives from him the name of Christians exists even to this day.”

This celebrated passage has been widely regarded as a Christian interpolation, and not a genuine statement by Josephus. Origen, who wrote against Celsus in 248 A.D., mentions Josephus, but says nothing about this passage, and states that “Josephus did not believe

\* The word is *ἄνδρα*, not *ἄνθρωπον*, which would be used if the meaning were “a human being.”

† The words in the Greek are *ὁ χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν*. It is difficult to be sure of the meaning, since *ὁ χριστὸς* may be either a designation (“the Messiah”) or a proper name (“Christ.”) It seems reasonable to suppose that—if Josephus really wrote this passage—he intended simply to identify Jesus with the well-known “Christ” who gave his name to the “Christians.”

that Jesus was the Christ." Some recent critics, however, are disposed to accept it as in the main genuine, including Professor Burkitt and (though with some hesitation) Professor Harnack.\* We must leave it as doubtful; but if it is genuine it is of the utmost importance, and entirely disposes of the negative judgments of J. M. Robertson and his school.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, who wrote his *Annals* in 115 or 117 A.D., describing the persecution of the Christians by Nero in 64 A.D., says:

"The founder of this name, Christus, during the reign of Tiberius had been condemned to execution in the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate; and the pernicious superstition, having been repressed for the time, kept breaking out again, not only in Judæa where the evil began, but in the City (of Rome) also, whither all atrocious and shameful things flow together and are carried on." (*Annals*, xv. 44).

Here Tacitus writes as assured of the facts—he does not say "as is reported," which is usual with him when he is not sure. Where he got the information is not known; but if the passage in Josephus is genuine that may be the source of it. The tone of contempt and loathing with which he speaks of Christianity is noteworthy: to a superior Roman it seemed a mean and odious superstition, unworthy of serious attention.

Turning to Christian sources outside the Gospels, we should remember that our earliest witness to Jesus is Paul. His great Epistles were written in the fifties of the first century, whereas the Gospels are considerably later—as also is the first epistle attributed to Peter.

The first allusions to Jesus in Christian literature are in 1 Thess. i. 10: "Whom he raised from the dead even Jesus"; and ii. 15: "(the Jews) who both

\* In an article in the *Contemporary Review* for January, 1914, Prof. W. Emery Barnes strongly supported the genuineness of the passage, arguing that many of the expressions in it are such as no Christian could possibly have used. He interprets *ὁ χριστός* as a proper name, not as "the Messiah."

killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets." This was written about 52 A.D., and if it stood alone would be enough to show that Paul regarded Jesus as a real man who lived and died; that it would be quite unsafe to press his expression "the second man is from heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47) as if it meant that he looked on Christ as a heavenly being only. The death and resurrection of Jesus form the centre of Paul's teaching; and, though he has little to say either about other facts of His life or about His teaching, he alludes to Him as "born of a woman" (Gal. iv. 4), as "born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. i. 3), as having lived an unselfish and gentle life (Rom. xv. 3; 2 Cor. x. 1). It is clear from his writings, especially from 1 Cor. xi. 23, ("the night in which he was betrayed") that Paul took for granted a knowledge on the part of his readers of the main outlines of the Gospel story. Though he rarely quotes any sayings of Jesus, his own practical teaching is identical with that recorded in the Gospels. (Compare Rom. xii. 14, "Bless them that persecute you," with Matt. v. 44; and Rom. xiii. 8-10, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," with Mark xii. 28-31). His essential doctrine of "righteousness through faith" is but an expansion of that attributed to Jesus in Matt. v. 20, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees": it is not a thing of "works" done in man's unregenerate will, but springs spontaneously from a heart set right with God.

But further: Paul himself is a hopeless enigma if he had not Jesus behind him. His conversion to Christianity is one of the most certain facts in history; but it is wholly unintelligible, and seems indeed impossible, unless he became convinced that the Christians he was persecuting were right after all in regarding as the Son of God a man who had been really crucified.

I have not space to deal at all adequately with the evidence afforded by the Book of Acts. Much depends

on whether it was really written by a companion of Paul, or whether (as many critics used to suppose) it is mainly a romance, written later to reconcile conflicting parties in the Church. The latest tendency has been to restore it to its former place as the genuine work of Luke the physician, and to trust most of its historical statements. It is clear that, if in the main this book can be relied on, it carries the evidence as to the actual death and resurrection of Jesus back to within a very few years of the time when those events are believed to have occurred. It is, I think, safe to say that, studied in the full light of criticism, and with the best historical knowledge now available, the Book of Acts gives us very strong evidence indeed for the real existence of Jesus Christ.

We now pass on to a very brief and cursory examination of the first three Gospels (known as the Synoptics)—the fourth will receive some attention in the next chapter. The duty of a historian is to examine his documents—to ascertain their nature, probable date and authorship—in order that he may be able to judge how near the authors were to the events they describe, and what opportunities they had of knowing what happened. Further, he has to ask whether the story they tell fits into the framework of the general history of the time, so far as this is known from other sources, and whether it is consistent with itself.

A very little comparison of the Synoptic Gospels with one another will convince anyone that they are not *independent* narratives. The same incidents are related in the same general order, and often in almost the same words, frequently in two and sometimes in all three of these books.\*

\* Note, for instance, "Then saith he to the sick of the palsy" in Matt. ix. 6, Mark ii. 10, and Luke v. 24; and the incident of the ailing woman interrupting the Jairus story in Matt. ix. 20, Mark v. 25, and Luke viii. 43. Great help may be obtained in such study as this by using *The Synoptic Gospels arranged in Parallel Columns*, by J. M. Thompson (Oxford University Press).

It will be found that almost the whole of Mark is in either Matt.\* or Luke, and a good part of it in both; that the teachings of Jesus, especially most of the parables and the matter contained in the Sermon on the Mount, are not in Mark at all, but are to a large extent identical in Matt. and Luke, though with some significant variations; that the narratives of the Birth and of the Resurrection of Jesus are not in Mark† but are in Matt. and Luke, though in strikingly different forms; and that a long section of Luke, from about chapter ix. 51 to xviii. 14, is for the most part not found anywhere else. (This portion contains some of the most precious of all the Parables, such as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son).

Any careful reader may convince himself, by such study as this, that Mark is the oldest of the three narratives; that Matt. and Luke have used it as the chief source of their information about the career of Jesus; that they have supplemented it by weaving in teachings (and a few narratives) from another source (called by critics "Q");‡ that they have prefixed and added accounts of the Birth and Resur-

\* I use this abbreviated form for the author of the first Gospel, because it is practically certain that it is not the work of the apostle Matthew. There is an early tradition, ascribed to Papias, that "Matthew composed the oracles (*logia*) in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as he could." The first Gospel was almost certainly *not* written in Hebrew. The "oracles" which Matthew is said to have compiled have been supposed by some to be the collection of sayings of Jesus known as "Q"; but the reference to "interpretation" makes it more probable that they were a body of "testimonies" or prophecies drawn from the Old Testament. The first Gospel quotes such passages freely, and this may be why it is styled the "Gospel according to Matthew." (See Burkitt, *Gospel History*, pp. 126, 127; and Rendel Harris, *Testimonies, Part I.*, pp. 100-128). The author of the third Gospel is now generally believed to have been Luke, the companion of Paul.

† Mark xvi. 9-20 is not part of the original Gospel, the conclusion of which appears to have been lost. It is one of several conclusions to the book supplied in the second century.

‡ This source is believed to have been a very early collection of the most important and well-remembered sayings of Jesus, and is provisionally styled by critics as "Q"—the first letter of the German *Quelle*=Source.

rection derived by them independently from quite different sources; and that Luke has inserted an additional important section from a source of his own.

It would take too long to examine the evidence as to *date*: but critics are fairly agreed that Mark's story was written some time *before* the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., and Matt. and Luke some time *after* that event.\* There is an early tradition, dating from Papias (about 150 A.D.), that Mark was "the interpreter of Peter"—that is, that Peter was his chief informant. This tradition is borne out by the book itself, for events are very often described as they would be from Peter's point of view. (Note especially the narrative of the events leading up to the crucifixion in Mark xiv). Mark's story is more *archaic* than either of the others, containing a number of the Aramaic expressions (such as "*Talitha cumi*," v. 41) which Jesus actually used. It is often vivid and picturesque, like the account of an eye-witness, though rough and unpolished; and it does not hesitate to say things that Matt. and Luke have toned down lest they should give offence—as that the near relatives of Jesus thought He was mad (iii. 21), or that He "could" do no mighty works in His own district (vi. 5). Mark faithfully reproduces the rather crude impression which Jesus made on His first disciples, not hesitating in the least to show up their dulness of mind (note especially viii. 33)—and this at a time when the Apostles had come to be held in the highest honour. He never makes Jesus speak of Himself in the way in which the Christians of A.D. 60-70 had begun to speak about Him†—and this is a strong evidence of historical truthfulness.

\* The chief evidence of this is that the allusion in Mark to this destruction (xiii. 14) is quite vague, whereas in Matt. and Luke (especially in the latter) it is more detailed: note Luke xix. 43 and xxi. 20-24.

† The only exception, I believe, is Mark ix. 41, "Because ye are *Christ's*": and this is almost certainly an editorial addition—it is absent in the parallel passage, Matt. x. 42.



Next let us glance at the *career* of Jesus, as described especially by Mark ; at the quality of His *teaching*, which comes (as we have seen) mainly from " Q, " and at the *character* of Jesus, as it emerges from the three Gospels taken together.

(1) Professor Burkitt has very ably sketched (in *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, chap. iii.) the career of Jesus as described by Mark ; and he shows that, whatever allowances have to be made here and there for details that may have been inaccurately told, the narrative as a whole fits in exactly with the framework of history at the time, as we know it chiefly from Josephus, and that it is thoroughly consistent with itself. This I cannot now pursue in detail. I must content myself with pointing out how Jesus consistently avoids publicity and danger, *so long as He is under Herod's jurisdiction*, after opposition has begun to gather ; that He scarcely mentions His prospect of death, and never proclaims His belief that He is the Messiah, till He has had the disciples some months in training with Himself alone, and at last has won from Peter the great confession at Cæsarea Philippi (Mark viii. 27-31) ; but that after this He goes steadfastly to Jerusalem, declares His Messiahship publicly by the triumphal entry and by the expulsion of the traffickers from the Temple, and then surrenders Himself to the inevitable result. All this shows clear evidence of what we may call with reverence a consistent and intelligible *policy*—the only policy that, so far as we can see, if Jesus was truly human, could have enabled Him, in the face of premature death, to achieve success in His great mission. Unless a few men and women had been so deeply influenced by Him that their faith would survive the Cross, it is impossible to see how any Jews could have come to believe in a crucified man as their Messiah.

(2) Next, as to His Teaching. I am bound to say that to me it is unintelligible that any reasonable man

can regard this as "mythical"—that is, can suppose that it grew up of itself out of the spiritual consciousness of Jews or Jewish Christians, and was by them attributed to a teacher who never existed. Why? Just because it everywhere bears the mark of transcendent *genius*. This is equally present in the parables and discourses derived from "Q," in Luke's special portion, and in the few short sayings which are found both in Mark and in "Q," and are therefore doubly attested.\*

Works of genius do not grow up anyhow, like daisies in a field; there is always some great personality (known or unknown) who is their author. It seems as absurd to suggest that there is nothing original in the sayings of Jesus because many of the thoughts can be matched from Jewish prophets, psalmists and rabbis, as it does to deny originality to Shakespeare because we can trace where he got the stories for his plays. Why are Shakespeare's characters and their words known and quoted everywhere, while the original stories are forgotten? Because of the marvellous genius with which he has realised them, and the penetrating insight with which he has made them speak. So the rabbis are forgotten, but Jesus lives in the common speech of millions who talk of "new wine in old bottles," "a beam in thine own eye," "killing the fatted calf," "putting his hand to the plough," and so forth.

The parables of Jesus have never been successfully imitated—though many have tried to do it.† There is not a single one in early Christian literature—no Apostle seems even to have attempted it. Jesus makes the simplest things and events of every day—things He had seen in common life from infancy upwards—like a woman sweeping the floor for a lost coin, or making the

\* For these see Burkitt, *Gospel History*, pp. 148-166. An example is "How can Satan cast out Satan?" in Mark iii. 22-26. (Compare Luke xi. 15-18=Matt. xii. 24-26).

† For some of the best examples see Battifol, *The Credibility of the Gospels*, pp. 174-180,

dough rise with leaven—a farmer scattering his seed, or fishermen drawing in their nets—the vehicle and expression of the profoundest spiritual truths. This is the highest kind of poetry, yet it came from Him apparently with complete spontaneity and without conscious art. This is intelligible if the parables were uttered by a real person of transcendent spiritual genius, such as Jesus is represented to have been; it is not intelligible if He were merely the product of the fervid imagination of a sect. The mythical theory gives no explanation of the facts we find. With all respect to the great learning of men like J. M. Robertson, I am at a loss to understand how they can maintain their position without convicting themselves of literary and historical incapacity.

(3) Lastly, what sort of a Character or Person is it that the Synoptic Gospels bring before us? It is one who combines qualities that it seems safe to say the myth-making faculty of men could never have brought together.

(a). In the first place, Jesus is thoroughly and completely human. He is hungry (Mark xi. 12); He falls asleep from weariness in a boat (iv. 38); He is genuinely surprised at what He finds (vi. 6); He asks questions for information like anyone else (vi. 38); He says frankly there are things He does not know (xiii. 32). He has ordinary human feelings like ourselves—love for particular individuals (x. 21); anger (x. 14); longing for solitude (i. 35); intense horror at the approach of death (xiv. 33). He supports His inner life by prayer and quiet communion with God (i. 35).

(b). Yet He gives the impresson, even from the first, that there is more in Him than the qualities and powers of ordinary humanity. The note of authority with which He speaks—as knowing the Truth and only needing to state it that others may perceive it *is* truth—astonishes His hearers (Mark i. 22). His “mighty works” amaze

them, especially His power over those obscure complaints that were regarded as possession by evil spirits (i. 27). He claims power to forgive sins (ii. 10). He has a quite unique consciousness of God as His father, and the sense of a special relation to Him (xiv. 36 ; compare the great " Q " passage Matt. xi. 25-27=Luke x. 21, 22). He identifies Himself at once with " little children " and with God (Mark ix. 37). In the very passage in which He confesses ignorance of certain things, He places Himself, " the Son," between " the angels " and " the Father " (xiii. 32). He claims to be the Judge of men (" Q," Matt. vii. 21-23=Luke xiii. 25-27). He gives the impression of a sinless personality—of a spiritual life that is lived in active and unbroken communion with God.

(c). Yet these high claims are not *obtruded*—in the Synoptics, though they are in the fourth Gospel. The note of authority is touched with much restraint. His power over evil spirits is not claimed as glory for Himself, but as evidence of the presence of the Kingdom (Matt. xii. 28). It is not He, but the " men of Nineveh," and other outsiders who showed more power of appreciation than the Jews, who will condemn the generation that is unable to recognise His worth (Matt. xii. 41, 42). Would this restraint have been found in a fictitious account of Jesus, written at a time when the whole Church had begun to worship Him as Divine? Let the mediæval legends of the saints provide an answer. The note of restraint and unstudied simplicity is constant in the Synoptics, especially in Mark.

The truly amazing fact is that in the Synoptic story humility and exaltation are so united in Jesus that they give no sense of incongruity : His highest claims do not *shock* His hearers (as they do in the fourth Gospel). *Jesus is so perfect in character that He is also perfect in humility.* This, it appears to me, is absolutely beyond the reach of the myth-making faculty, and is the deepest evidence that the portrait is drawn from life.

Further—Jesus foresees and foretells His speedily-

approaching death, but goes on calmly with His work of preparing the disciples to face it, and to believe in Him in spite of it, and gives hints that only through death can He accomplish His work of bringing in the Kingdom, delivering men from sin (Mark x. 45), and achieving for them assurance of communion with God (xiv. 24).\*

Thus the humblest of men, who is among the disciples as "he that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27), is also their Judge and their Saviour, the revealer of the Father, the One who can give them "rest to their souls" (Matt. xi. 28-30), and who by His perfect self-sacrifice can deliver them from sin. Such a blending into a harmonious whole, of apparently contradictory elements in the portraiture of Jesus, affords the strongest evidence that these Gospels are worthy of our confidence.

\* The "ransom" of Mark x. 45 implies deliverance; and the "blood of the covenant" in Mark xiv. 24 alludes to that which, in accordance with Jewish ideas, assured men of access to and communion with God.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHRIST OF EXPERIENCE.

THE experience which lies at the root of the Christian religion is of two orders: one outward and historical, the other inward and spiritual. Christianity as a vital force in the world is due to the blending of these two strains of religious experience: to the work and influence of the historical person Jesus Christ, and to a consciousness of a personal relation to God, of which Christ is felt by the Christian to be the author and mediator.

Some of the special difficulties of our faith arise from this combination of different elements, which to some thoughtful minds appear incongruous. In the next chapter I hope to consider more particularly the difficulty caused by the connection of Faith with facts in history, which has led teachers like the late Professor T. H. Green, of Oxford, to throw over the historical element, and to find the essence of Christianity in the inward experience alone. There are many in the present day who have reached some knowledge of God, and some sense of a direct relation to Him, who do not know what to do with Jesus Christ. They can revere Him as a saint and teacher; but fail to see how a person who lived long ago can be the centre of their spiritual life to-day. They are inclined to ask whether prophets and psalmists in Israel, and many saintly men of other faiths, have not nourished the life of God in their souls without any knowledge of, or dependence upon, the person and work of Jesus; and whether, if they have, the Christianity that insists on this dependence is not a small and narrow form of religion.

In the preceding chapter I tried to deal, though in a bald and summary fashion, with the evidence of the real existence of Jesus, and with the kind of Person who is presented to us in the Synoptic Gospels. We now pass on to deal with the experiences that came to His immediate followers which led them to regard Him as Divine, and to find in Him the centre of their religious life. Whether there was necessarily anything in this experience that tended to narrowness, or to depreciation of other forms of religion, will perhaps appear.

The disciples began by following Jesus as a prophet (Luke xxiv. 19) ; they ended by worshipping Him as the Life of their lives (Col. iii. 4), and the Light that lighteth every man (John i. 4, 9). The transition between their two attitudes is to be found, first in their assurance of the Resurrection, and second in their experience on the Day of Pentecost.

The difficulties presented by the Resurrection narratives are very great. We have four accounts : by Paul, and by the authors of the first, third, and fourth Gospels ; and it is very hard to bring them into agreement. None of the narrators professes to have been an eye-witness, except the last. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 3-8 gives a careful statement of the evidence as he had received it ; and probably Matt. and Luke faithfully reproduced traditions which they believed to be authentic. But the accounts diverge very widely. Paul's record of an appearance of Jesus to " above five hundred brethren at once " is not matched in any of the Gospels, nor is his mention of the appearance to James. Matt. mentions two appearances : one to the two Marys on their way from the tomb, and the other to the eleven disciples in Galilee, when " some doubted. " Luke mentions appearances to the two disciples going to Emmaus, to Peter (xxiv. 34) and to the Apostles collectively immediately before the Ascension. He puts all these, apparently, on one day, and there is no time for a visit of the disciples to Galilee. The fourth evangelist records

an appearance to Mary Magdalene alone in the garden, and on two occasions (a week apart) to the disciples gathered in a room with the doors locked. In the Appendix (ch. xxi.) we are told of an appearance to several of the disciples who had returned to their fishing at the Lake of Galilee.

This evidence, which is fragmentary and even in part contradictory, is supplemented by the early chapters in the Book of Acts. If these can be relied on as (broadly) historical,\* they carry the evidence back to very near the time of the departure of Jesus. The earliest preaching of the Apostles, as recorded here, is above everything else their witness to the reality of the Resurrection. Jesus, though crucified, is to be recognised as the Messiah after all—because God has raised Him from the dead (Acts i. 22, ii. 32, 36). The tone of joyful assurance in which they speak, as contrasted with the utter despair that had come over them after the crucifixion, is the most striking thing in these chapters. It is, I think, impossible to account for it—and therefore to account for the rise of Christianity, which is certainly a fact—unless *something really happened*, to give rise to that assurance.

What, exactly, it was that happened we shall, perhaps, never know for certain. The four Gospels all agree that the tomb was found empty. But I think we may dismiss at once, as fantastic and wholly improbable, the idea that Jesus had not really died upon the Cross, that He revived in the tomb, came forth and met a few of His disciples, and then went away into seclusion, to die a natural death. Most of the accounts suggest a psychological rather than a physical event—the difficulty of recognition (Matt. xxviii. 17, Luke xxiv. 16, John xx. 15), the vanishing, the passing through closed doors. Paul names his experience on the Damascus road as in line with the other appearances. There is only one that necessarily implies a physical presence—Luke xxiv. 41-43, where the

\* See above, Chap. VI., p. 74.



risen Jesus asks for food and eats it. The statement attributed to Peter in Acts x. 41, that Jesus was manifested, *not to all the people*, but only to chosen witnesses, suggests a psychical manifestation. It may be that the experience of the disciples was akin to that of the many people who have seen, heard or felt the presence of distant friends at the moment of death or severe distress—experiences that have been called by the Society for Psychical Research “telepathic hallucinations.”\* If this view of the nature of Resurrection wins acceptance, as seems likely, it may be necessary to set aside the story of the broiled fish (Luke xxiv. 43) as inaccurately told; practically all the rest of the appearances could be accepted as substantially correct. It would mean that the spiritual person, Jesus, survived death, and carried on His work by making the disciples aware of this fact—somewhat in the same way as (it seems) a few individuals, while still in the flesh, have been able to appear to others at a distance by strongly willing to do so.†

Of course this implies that the essential fact about the Resurrection is not what happened to the physical body of Jesus. It appears to me quite impossible that His body can have been secretly removed, either by His enemies—for then they would certainly have produced it in disproof of the Apostles’ assertions—or by His friends, who would then have been carrying out a fraud. It does seem just conceivable that in some way it may have been lost, through a mistake about the tomb or otherwise; but to my own mind it is much more probable that something quite unusual, akin to what the spiritualists call “dematerialisation,” happened to it

\* “Hallucinations” because the appearance is not due to the presence of an actual material body, as it seems to be; “telepathic” because it is not purely subjective, but is due to the subconscious action of one person on another. Such hallucinations may be of touch as well as of sight. (See *Phantasms of the Living*, 1886, esp. Vol. I., pp. 225ff. and Vol. II., pp. 133ff.).

† *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. I., pp. 102ff.

If so, then the Resurrection would fall into line with the other principal "miracles" of the Gospels, \* as being needed to help forward the great work that Jesus had come to do. If the body had "gone the way of all flesh," and evidence of this had been produced, such evidence would almost certainly have destroyed the disciples' belief that He had really conquered death; for any ideas of "resurrection" which the Jews of that day held were of a grossly materialistic character.† Hence the importance for them of the empty tomb. Paul never mentions this; and he seems to have risen to a more spiritual view of the matter. It is one of his principles that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Cor. xv. 50); and his idea of the "spiritual body" of the risen Jesus (vv. 44, 45) is almost certainly one that we should describe as psychical rather than physical; in all probability he conceived that it was in this "spiritual body" that Christ appeared to him on the way to Damascus. It is possible that Paul's belief in the Resurrection would not have been shattered by the production of the dead body of Jesus.

These, however, are largely speculations; what is important is that the experience which produced belief in the resurrection of Jesus was not merely sensuous or intellectual, but *religious*. What renewed the faith of the disciples was not the physical marvel that *somebody* who had been really dead was restored to life; it was the assurance that this particular Person, their Friend and Teacher, with all He had meant to them, was not gone to the limbo of the departed, but was still alive, present and active, still carrying on His work of bringing in the Kingdom.‡

\* This subject will be considered later. (Chap. IX., p. 114).

† Note especially the crude statement about the "bodies of the saints" in Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

‡ Professor Harnack says, "No appearances of the Lord would permanently have convinced them of His life, if they had not possessed in their hearts the impression of His person." (*History of Dogma*, Vol. I., p. 86n.).

This assurance of the living presence of Jesus with His followers was immensely deepened by their experience at Pentecost. Here again we may have difficulty in presenting clearly to our minds what exactly it was that happened. The occurrences described by Luke in Acts ii. bear resemblances to phenomena that are familiar to us in many "revivals" of spiritual religion. The really important thing is not the outward marvels of the wind, the fire, or even the gift of tongues (whatever that may have been), but the flooding of their whole being with a new moral energy, a new hope, a new joy, a new love—with a triumphant sense of power, brought by the consciousness that the Jesus who had conquered death was not only with them, but *in* them, and working through them. We have to be on our guard against interpreting the experience here described in the light of the Trinitarian ideas in which most of us have been trained, but which were then unknown. Early Christianity was, above everything else, *the Religion of the Spirit*; and to the first Christians "the Spirit" did not mean a separate "person" from Jesus. It meant *Himself* in spiritual presence—triumphant over death, come back to His friends as their Comforter and Guide and Energiser, filling them with wisdom and power, raising their whole being to a new level of insight and efficiency. The Spirit who guides them is "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts xvi. 7, R.V.). "The Lord (*i.e.* Jesus) is the Spirit," Paul says, in 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. The promise of Jesus to send the Comforter is, without perceptible difference of meaning, the promise to return to them Himself (John xiv. 16-18). The first Christians were so sure of this that we never once find in the New Testament a looking back to "the days of His flesh" as to a time when Jesus was nearer at hand. There is not one sigh:

"But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still."

That is the distinctive note of early Christianity—

the certainty of the living presence of Jesus with and in His people ; and it involves the dual strain of experience which we have already spoken of as the historical and the spiritual. The Christ of history became the Christ of experience ; and the strength of *vital*, as distinct from ecclesiastical and dogmatic, Christianity has always stood in this identification of the inward Saviour from sin, the Purifier and Strengthenener and Guide of the individual and corporate Christian life, with the Jesus who had lived and died and risen.

It was this blending of the two strains of experience that made a Christology necessary. The question could not be resisted—especially when faith in Christ had to be maintained and defended in face of the attacks of Greeks trained in philosophic thought—*who is Jesus* that He should be able to do for the lives of men what only God can do ? It is no part of our present purpose to follow out in detail the process of thought that had its outcome in the Creeds ; but it seems desirable to indicate the kind of answers found in the first century, and which influenced the writers of the New Testament in the days when the living experience of the Christ within remained fresh and strong, and before it had been overlaid with intellectual speculation and a rigid ecclesiastical organisation.

One of the most learned of living students of primitive Christianity, Dr. Rendel Harris, has recently been calling attention to an element in early Jewish-Christian thought which has hardly received sufficient emphasis from previous critics—the identification of Jesus with the “ Wisdom ” (*Sophia*) of the later Jewish literature. The starting-point of Jewish thought about the “ Wisdom of God ” is in the Book of Proverbs. In Prov. iii. 19 we read :

“ The Lord by Wisdom founded the earth :  
By understanding he established the heavens.”

And in the eighth chapter Wisdom speaks as almost a separate agent of God in the work of creation :

“The Lord possessed (in LXX ‘created’) me in the beginning of his way,

Before his works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,

Or ever the earth was . . . .

When he established the heavens I was there,

When he set a circle upon the face of the deep : . . . .

Then I was by him as a master workman ;

And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him,

Rejoicing in his habitable earth ;

And my delight was with the sons of men.” (Prov. viii. 22-31).

In the later Wisdom literature, which we find in the Apocrypha, this thought is carried further. The book called “Ecclesiasticus” begins :

“All Wisdom cometh from the Lord,  
And is with him for ever.”

In the 24th chapter Wisdom says :

“He created me from the beginning before the world :  
And to the end I shall not fail.”

In “The Wisdom of Solomon” (chap. vii.) there is a fine passage in which Wisdom is styled “only-begotten” (*μονογενής*, which really means “unique”), and goes on :

“For she is an effulgence from everlasting light,  
And an unspotted mirror of the working of God,  
And an image of his goodness.  
And she, being one, hath power to do all things,  
And remaining in herself reneweth all things ;  
And from generation to generation passing into holy souls  
She maketh men friends of God and prophets.”

(Wisdom vii. 26, 27).

In the preceding chapter (p. 75) I alluded in a footnote to a collection of “Testimonies,” or prophecies of Christ from the Old Testament, which may have been the “oracles” said by Papias to have been compiled by Matthew, and which has been proved by Rendel Harris and others to have been widely used in the early Church. There is no doubt that in this collection such “Wisdom” passages as have been just quoted appeared as prophecies ; so that the beginning of Christian reflection on the mystery of Christ’s person would seem to have been the identification of Him with the pre-existent “Wisdom of God” who had been His agent in creation and in the

inspiration of the prophets. It is just possible that Jesus made the identification Himself, though He never in the Synoptic Gospels claims pre-existence. The great passage Matt. xi. 28-30, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour," is perhaps an echo of the invitation given by Wisdom in Prov. viii., and is still more closely paralleled in *Ecclesiasticus* xxiv. 19, "Come unto Me, ye that are desirous of Me," and li. 26, "Put your neck under the yoke, and let your soul receive instruction."\*

Whether or not it can be traced back to Jesus, the identification was certainly in the minds of Paul and of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In 1 Cor. i. 24 Christ is spoken of as "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God"; and in verse 30 He is "made unto us Wisdom from God—that is to say, righteousness and sanctification and redemption." The lofty Christological passages in Col i. and Heb i. are, throughout, echoes of the praises of Wisdom in the Jewish literature, and contain many of their characteristic words:

"Who is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created; . . . all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Col. i. 15-17).

"(A Son) whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, etc." (Heb. i. 2, 3).

A further step was taken when Christ was identified with the Divine Logos or "Word." In Jewish literature the "Word" of God is also spoken of as the agent in creation:

"By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made,  
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

(Ps. xxxiii. 6).

This is no doubt an allusion to Gen. i. 3, etc., "And God said." But gradually the "Word" became more

\* Luke xi. 49 begins: "Therefore also said the Wisdom of God, I will send unto them prophets and apostles." The parallel in Matt. xxiii. 34 has "Therefore behold I send unto you." Tatian in his *Diatessaron* (Second Century) combined these into "Therefore behold I, the Wisdom of God, send unto you," and perhaps he caught the real meaning. (See Rendel Harris, *Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*, pp. 59, 60).

or less "hypostatized," or regarded as a separate being, just as we find with "Wisdom." In Is. lv. 11 it "goeth forth" from God. In *Wisdom* xviii. 15 we have: "Thine all-powerful-Word leaped from heaven out of the royal throne, a stern warrior, into the midst of the doomed land"; and in the Jewish Targums the "Word" is represented as walking in the garden, speaking to Adam, etc.

So Christ came to be identified not only with the Divine Wisdom (Sophia) but with the Divine Word (Logos); and this change was doubtless facilitated by the fact that, Sophia being feminine and Logos masculine, it was easier to speak of the "Son" of God as Logos than as Sophia. And, moreover, the term Logos had immense advantages for *Greek* Christians, for the term was quite familiar to all educated Greeks as a name for the impersonal God of the Stoics, who is manifested in the rational order of the universe by which all things fulfil the law of their being. The Jewish and Stoic thoughts of the Logos had been combined by Philo, the Alexandrian Jew-philosopher, during the first half of the first century, and the conception became the corner-stone of his philosophy.

This identification of Christ with the Logos or Word—carrying with it, as it did, belief in the Incarnation of this Divine principle in a human life, an idea that had never entered the minds of either the Stoics or of Philo—is the starting-point of the fourth Gospel.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God; all things were made by him; in him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the Word became flesh."

(John i. 1-14).

The thought that Christ is the Logos is here taken for granted, as something already well-known and accepted; but what the unknown author clearly felt was that the story of Jesus needed retelling from this new point of view, in order that its inner significance might be brought out as it had not been by the Synoptists. Whether he can really have been a companion of Jesus, as he seems to profess to have been, is uncertain and must perhaps re-

main so. The historical setting of his book is true to all the known conditions of the time, and some of his facts (as for example the date of the Crucifixion) seem to be more correct than in the other Gospels. The chief difficulty is to imagine that any of the known companions of Jesus could have written the Prologue, or advanced to such profound spiritual conceptions as mark the book. An attractive theory is that the "disciple whom Jesus loved" was not John the son of Zebedee, the Galilean fisherman, but a well-educated and influential adherent of Jesus, living at or near Jerusalem; that he carried to Ephesus the knowledge he had of Jesus, on which he had brooded through a lifetime of deep Christian experience; and that he is the chief informant of the actual writer, somewhat as Peter is thought to stand behind the Gospel of Mark.

Whatever the truth of this may be, the author of the fourth Gospel felt that his main work was to present a picture of Jesus that would combine in one luminous whole the historical person with the Christ of inward experience. Already by the end of the first century, when probably the book was written, the need for this had begun to be felt. The mysticism of Paul, and his relative inattention to the historical facts about Jesus and His teaching, was being carried further by Greeks who aspired to superior "knowledge." To them spirit alone mattered, and the material world appeared unclean. They tended to reject the idea that Christ was ever "made flesh," and resolved His humanity into a mere "appearance." It was to vindicate the real humanity of Jesus, and at the same time to lead up to the loftiest spiritual ideas concerning Him, that the fourth Gospel was written.\*

\* The first Epistle of John is probably a companion work by the same writer, and its purpose is clearly shown in the opening verses, concerning "that which we have heard and seen with our eyes," etc. Both Gospel and Epistle, though addressed mainly to Greeks, are clearly the work of, or at least embody the thoughts of, a Jewish writer. His Logos Christology can be accounted for on the lines suggested above, without supposing him to have been influenced to any considerable extent by Greek philosophy. This is where Dr. E. F. Scott, in his very able work *The Fourth Gospel*, appears to go wrong.



Probably we must regard it rather as an *interpretation* of the life and the teaching of Jesus, in the light of Christian experience, than as a strictly historical record. It is often the Christ of experience, the Word-Christ, who speaks here rather than the Jesus of a particular time and place. It is the Christ who has always been the "life" and "light" of men who declares that "No man cometh unto the Father except by me." He is the Light that lighteth *every* man (John i. 9); *all* are "taught of God," and those that "hear and learn" (before they have ever heard of Jesus) come to Him gladly when He is made known (vi. 45). The theological narrowness that seems to many to cling to some of the expressions in this Gospel disappears if we read them in their true setting.

It is not possible to enter further into the question of the religious worth of the Logos Christology, which formed the starting-point of all the philosophical speculations about Christ and the Trinity that issued in the Creeds. What I wish to emphasise here is that it was, in its origin, the outcome of religious experience—the religious experience of the faithful followers of Jesus, who felt that what had come to them through Him was but an expansion and a heightening, to a new degree of intensity, of what had been given to their predecessors, in the Divine Wisdom which had always been "entering into holy souls and making men friends of God and prophets.\*" It may be that most of them retained something of the Jewish intolerance of other forms of religion in which they had been trained; but some of them and of their successors certainly transcended it.

"Jesus," wrote Origen in the third century, "though He has only now for worthy reasons fulfilled the Divine plan of His incarnation, has at all times been doing good to the human race. For no noble deed has ever been done among men without the Divine Logos visiting the souls of (men)." \*

\* Origen, *Contra Celsum*, vi. 78.

## NOTE.

*The Theological Importance of the Fact of the Sub-conscious.*

Recent psychological enquiries, especially into the facts of the sub-conscious life, seem likely to have an important bearing on the attempt to frame a satisfying theory of the Divine-human nature of Jesus Christ. The orthodox creed, as finally formulated at Chalcedon in 451 A.D., declares that two "natures," Divine and human (regarded as radically different), were in some mysterious way united in a single "Person." In the present day many thoughtful people who feel themselves to be fundamentally orthodox are altogether dissatisfied with this formulation. They are convinced by historical enquiry, no less than by their intuition of the character of Jesus, that there were *not two natures* in Him, but only one, and that it was at once human and Divine. This means, of course, that they do not admit the assumption on which the formula was based, that the Divine and the human are totally and fundamentally different. It is impossible that they should be so, if (as philosophy suggests) our self-conscious minds are, as it were, focus-points in which the Universal Consciousness is striving to find expression. And the blending of personalities is, as we have seen, one of the facts to which recent psychology has opened our eyes.\*

The subconscious life proves to us that our personalities are much greater, and more indefinite, than would be suggested by the completed and apparently impervious circles of our separate consciousnesses. Each of us has a wide margin of personality, stretching away indefinitely from the centre of clear consciousness into a dim mysterious region, where we touch and mingle with other personalities and with God; and, if Jesus was really and truly man, that which is true of

\* See above, p. 65.

us must *a fortiori* have been true of Him. If it is in the unseen depths of our being that God meets and communes with us—if “our souls open inwardly into God” provided we do not shut the door by our self-will or sin—may not the Divine in Jesus have been similarly hidden, not only from the general gaze, but from His own normal consciousness? His sub-conscious life must in any case have been infinitely larger, fuller, richer than ours; why should it not have stretched out to all “the fulness of God?”

“The advantage of this way of conceiving of the Person of Christ is that it leaves us free to think of His life on earth as fully and frankly human, without at the same time fixing limits for it which confine it within the measures of the human; it leaves us an opening, which in any case must be left, by which the Deity of the Incarnate preserves its continuity with the infinitude of Godhead . . . . Whatever there was of Divine in Him, on its way to outward expression whether in speech or act, passed through, and could not but pass through, the restricting and restraining medium of human consciousness. This consciousness was, as it were, the narrow neck through which alone the Divine could come to expression. This involves that only so much of the Divine could be expressed as was capable of expression within the forms of humanity.” (Sanday, *Christologies, Ancient and Modern*, pp. 166, 167).

Dr. Sanday has earned the thanks of all students of Christianity for his courage in venturing out into this new field of thought, whither he has been drawn both by philosophers like the late Professor W. James, and men of science like Sir Oliver Lodge. We must not follow blindly; but it will surely be along such lines as these that advance will be made. If such suggestions are unwelcome to some, as making too little of the difference between the sinless One and ourselves, let Dr. Sanday speak again:

“ If we believe that there is but one God, then we must believe that there is but one Divine. There are not two kinds of Divinity or Deity ; there is but one kind. If, or in so far as, the Holy Spirit may be said to dwell in our hearts, it was the same Holy Spirit who dwelt in Christ. The difference was not in the essence, nor yet in the mode or sphere, of the indwelling, but *in the relation of the indwelling to the Person . . . .* There are Divine influences at work within ourselves ; and those influences touch more lightly or less lightly upon the person ; but they do not *hold and possess* it, as the Deity within Him *held and possessed* the Person of the incarnate Christ.”

(Sanday, *Personality in Christ and in Ourselves*, p. 48.)

## CHAPTER VIII

### FAITH AND FACTS

FAITH has been described above as the opening of our inward eyes to the direct revelation that God gives us by His Light in our souls: as "the response of our deepest personality to the unseen spiritual Environment that we call God, who is ever striving to reveal Himself to us in the True, the Beautiful, the Good, in those personal characters that inspire and uplift us, and most of all in the one perfect Person of Jesus Christ."\*

Now, what is the relation between Faith, as thus described, and belief in the Gospels as substantially true? Can our interpretation of the records of what is alleged to have happened centuries ago affect our lives here and now? Have any facts in history a real significance for Faith?

We may, I think, at once rule out as irrelevant the answer that used to be given by some Christian apologists: that since the Bible is the "Word of God" everything it contains is to be accepted by Faith as vouched for on His authority. The real nature of Biblical inspiration will be dealt with later; here it is enough to say that this view degrades Faith by making it—what it never is in the New Testament—the blind and passive acceptance of outward authority. If the Bible states (as it does) that certain events occurred in history, then human Reason is as much in its right place in examining the evidence for such events, as it would be if they were related by Herodotus or Gibbon. "Wherever History is," says Dr. A. S. Peake, a devout Christian scholar, "Criticism cannot be excluded."†

\* Chapter II., p. 34.

† Peake, *The Bible, its Origin, Significance, and Abiding Worth*, p. 225.

Christian Faith holds that God has made Himself known to men, in a special way and degree, in the life, death, and resurrection of a historical Person; and this involves it in a difficulty which we have already touched on, but which must now be examined more at length. The best statement of it that I am acquainted with was made many years ago by Professor T. H. Green of Oxford:

“The faith which is supposed to be demanded of us as Christians involves two elements which, to say the least, are wholly different: on the one side, a certain intellectual assent which, if the propositions assented to concerned any other events than those purporting to convey a Divine revelation, we should say could make no difference to the heart or spirit or character—call it what we will—which is alone of absolute value in a man; on the other side, a certain attitude or disposition which belongs distinctively to this ‘inner man’ and gives us our worth as moral or spiritual beings. The deepening of the conception of Faith in the Lutheran theology only brings this discrepancy into clearer relief. The more strongly we insist that Faith is a conscious and personal relation of the man to God, forming the principle of a new life, not perhaps observable by others, but which the man’s own conscience recognises, the more awkward becomes its dependence on events believed to have happened in the past. The evidence for their having happened may be exceedingly cogent, but at any rate the appreciation of it depends on processes of reasoning which it would be a moral paradox to deny that a man may perform correctly without being the better, and incorrectly without being the worse. . . . It is not on any estimate of evidence, correct or incorrect, that our true holiness can depend. Neither if we believe certain documents to be genuine and authentic can we be the better, nor, if we believe it not, the worse. There is thus an inner contradiction in that conception of Faith which makes it a state of

mind involving peace with God and love towards all men, and at the same time makes its object that historical work of Christ, of which our knowledge depends on evidence of uncertain origin and value." \*

There is in these words a very salutary reminder, especially to those of us who are addicted to religious controversy, that we have no right to question the moral integrity of persons who reach a different conclusion from ourselves on matters of history. Moreover, it must be freely admitted that there is a radical difference between the temper of mind which Faith demands and that which is required for the decision of historical questions. The scientific student of history should be cold and critical, examining his authorities carefully, taking nothing for granted that is not proved, determined to go no further than the evidence warrants: *scepticism*, in its true meaning of relentless enquiry, is his true qualification. The religious spirit, on the other hand, is one of whole-hearted and unquestioning *receptiveness*, in which we "let ourselves go" in the warmth of adoration, and long to believe everything. Which of these mental attitudes should be ours when we face the historical statements in the Gospels; or, if we have to combine them, how can this be done?

A full answer is beyond my powers; but I have found help in distinguishing between historical statements made concerning a *bare event* and those that involve the interpretation of a person's quality or character. When we are confronted with the story of an event alone—let us say, of the Virgin Birth of Jesus—it is right, I believe, to practise the cautious scientific method to the best of our ability; and if, when we have examined the evidence thoroughly, it seems to us inconclusive, to have the courage and humility to suspend our judgment.

When, however, the event is one that involves the interpretation of a Character or Person, another factor

\* Sermon on "Faith," in Green's *Works*, Vol. III., pp. 259, 260.

comes into play in influencing our decision, involving what we have called an Inward Light. There are events in all our lives in which belief or disbelief may make an enormous difference to us morally. Suppose a "prodigal son" in disgrace in a far country receives a letter purporting to be from his father, who assures him that if he will come home he will be lovingly received and given a new start. It may make all the difference in the world to him whether he accepts the invitation and acts upon it, or questions whether he is not being hoaxed or played with, and refuses to return. What he decides to do will largely depend on his perception of his father's character: "Is this the sort of letter he would write, and can I trust him?"

Whenever the appreciation of a person's character is involved, we have to exercise a power of "intuition" which is quite different from the critical examination of evidence, *and which is equally needed if we are to get at the real facts.* The more abundant our love and devotion, if the character is a worthy one, the deeper and more intimate will be our knowledge of it. It is true that our inward perception is conditioned by evidence: if, for example, we are to appreciate the character of Jesus, we must be convinced that there is some valid evidence on the matter, and this may involve its critical examination. But, when once we are convinced that we are in touch with reality, our insight into the character goes behind the evidence we have to criticise, and becomes indeed a touchstone by which we may be helped in judging it. The sense that the character is too great and noble to have been invented may (as we have seen)\* be an important factor in convincing us that the record is true. Take a simple illustration to show how insight into character may assist us in judging the worth of evidence: let us suppose we have a dear and honoured friend, and that someone comes along with evidence purporting to show that he has forged a cheque. We

\* Chapter VI., p. 80.



may be perfectly right in saying, "I don't care what evidence you think you have; *I know the man*, and I am perfectly sure he is incapable of such an act." Here we must admit there is room for the possibility of mistake—our inward light or intuition is not absolutely infallible. But, the more fully our mind has become one with his, the more we have an inward perception of his character, on which new evidence may throw fresh light, but which it cannot fundamentally alter.

This, as was shown earlier,\* is true of some historical characters, and above all of Jesus Christ. We may gain a knowledge of Him which, though it begins in history and is conditioned by historical evidence which has to be carefully examined, goes behind this into the region of first-hand experience, so that we may truthfully say that we know Him as well as, or better than, we do our nearest friend. Christian experience has testified to this all down the ages, and we may add our testimony to that of others. "We must not talk about having faith in facts, but we may have faith in a Person; that, indeed, is what Christian faith essentially is—the response of our whole being to the Person whom we recognise as perfectly true and beautiful and good."†

This assurance of the perfection of the character of Jesus I believe to be a vital element in Christian faith. We may have to reach it gradually, but it will not be gained by the critical examination of facts alone, though some of us at any rate must, in loyalty to truth, give this its due place. We are not to stifle our reasoning powers by a blind assent to the infallibility of a record of past events or of its traditional interpretation. It is only by the loyal and disciplined use of such powers of reason, by those who have the knowledge and ability to use them, that the reality and true meaning of the facts can be assured *for all*; it is fatal to warn us that

\* Chapter II., p. 30.

† From *The Historic and the Inward Christ* (by the present writer) p. 81.

they must be accepted as facts but will not bear examination. But intellectual processes alone will not give us the insight we require; our reason needs to be enlightened by something above itself. If our criticism is to sift and weigh the facts rightly, it must be enlightened by some degree of personal religious experience; for a person who has no perception of the spiritual value of events is not in a position to judge truly of their nature. It is by *living with Christ*, and following Him in the path of obedience, that we really learn to know Him.

Many attempts have been made to show that the records as we have them do not support our intuition of the perfect holiness of Jesus. As Dr. Forrest has shown, these attempts "largely rest on an abstract treatment of certain elements in the case, and a misapprehension of the spiritual issues involved. Any slight difficulty that remains springs from our ignorance, in part, of the precise circumstances which determined Jesus' action. But the real and final answer is that He stood self-vindicated; that the memory of these incidents brought Him no tremor of regret in later hours. . . . If He followed unperturbed a course which at all perplexes us, it was because His clearer vision perceived facts which lie beyond our range."\*

There is, for instance, a very real difficulty in His stern denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, especially as related in Matt. xxiii.† If anyone puts this down to personal resentment because they would not recognise His Messianic claims (a plausible inference, perhaps, from a superficial reading of some passages in the fourth Gospel), we should, I believe, be quite within our right in replying, "It was not that, for I know the Man, and I can see that He was too personally humble to resent a mere affront to His dignity." That would be the report of our "inward light," but it is borne out by all the rest of the record. For instance, his sternest rebuke

\* Forrest, *The Christ of History and of Experience*, p. 31.

† Note that Mark gives this in three verses only, Mark xii. 38-40.

(Mark iii. 22-30) was administered to those who, when they could not deny His works of healing, deliberately attributed to an evil spirit that which their consciences must have told them was good. What He denounced was not a personal insult, but sinning against the light of God in the soul.

Take, again, the allegation by Mr. Roberts, of Bradford, that " His teaching on divorce recognises the husband's right to accuse, judge, condemn and dismiss the wife, while the wife, having no such rights as against her husband, or even over her own children, is left the helpless victim of the husband's caprice."\* I should myself be disposed to dismiss this as shallow and misleading exegesis ; but, if it were really the meaning of the passage as it stands, we should have to set against it the whole impression made on our minds by Jesus' treatment of women as we have it in the Gospels ; and I at least should conclude, in the light of this, that the evangelists had incorrectly understood and reported Him.

These examples may serve to show that we can and must meet special difficulties by bringing to bear upon them our total impression of the character of Jesus ; we need the enlightenment of His Spirit to read even the record rightly. But this brings us back to the point at which we started. If we have the enlightenment of the Spirit in our lives—if it brings us into a true religious experience, into a growing apprehension of the character of God and of right principles of life—does the record matter after all ? Can we not leave alone as unimportant the question whether certain things ever happened, whether Jesus ever lived the perfect life ? Why not walk by faith alone, like T. H. Green ? If Christ taught of God, and made us understand that the way to know God and eternal life is to deny ourselves, taking up the cross in obedience and dedication ; and

\* Article " Jesus or Christ ? " in the *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1909, p. 363.

if we have proved this in our own lives; is not this eternally true and valid, whether or not He lived it out completely Himself? And, more than that, might not the Spirit of God have taught it to men even if Jesus never lived at all? Would not this great principle of "dying to live" be just as eternally true if His life and death and resurrection were simply a story, in which those who had learnt this lesson dramatised it in the imaginary career of a fictitious person?

Now, while we must never set limits to what the Spirit of God might and could teach men, apart from any manifestation in an actual human life, this is not the way in which (as a matter of fact) men have learnt the greatest moral lessons. "First that which is natural, then that which is spiritual." Revelation, as we have seen,\* has come in the main through Personality. It is not *ideas*, however true, that mainly mould our characters, and form our ideals, but *personality* and personal influence. Unless the ideas of Christianity had first been suggested by an actual life, unless they had first been lived, would they ever have had power to sway the lives of men? Dr. K. C. Anderson, a follower of T. H. Green, says the ideas are too great to be expressed in facts. Is not the case rather that the facts are too great to be adequately interpreted by our ideas?

We need something more than ideas and principles—even if it be ideas of the character of God—if we are to be *assured*. There is such a thing as self-suggestion, self-deception. Can the whole burden of our spiritual life, with its warfare against doubt and depression, its unequal struggle against the evil of the world, be carried on the shoulders of our ideas—which after all may conceivably be the product of our own subjective impressions and emotions?

Most of us will answer, No: unless the ideas are embodied in a fact, in a real personality, they are not

\* Chapter V.

strong enough to bear the burden. There are rival ethics in the world, of vast influence over multitudes of minds—like Nietzsche's, for whom "dying to live" is the abominable thing that must be rooted out at all costs. Unless Christianity is something more than a system of ideas, it is doubtful whether it will stand the strain of the conflict that is upon us.

Christian faith is essentially faith in a God who has revealed His character in an *act*: who has entered into this finite phenomenal world of ours in a real human life, lived under our limitations and conditions but conquering and transforming them; who has not simply taught us of Himself in words and ideas, but has manifested His character in a personal sinless life, a life of perfect sonship.

If that Personality is a fact, and if we are able to receive it and appropriate it,—intellectually by finding out who and what Jesus is, and morally by submitting our will to His,—then our faith rests on something *objective*, something real, which is not the creation of our own subjective impressions. His life becomes to us a real revelation, far beyond anything our own powers could have discovered, of the nature of God Himself. His birth into our world is the proof that God has that in Him which is akin to our nature, and which can adequately express itself in a human life; His works of loving service show us that in Jesus it is *God* who is seeking, serving and saving men; His death on the Cross proves that there are no depths of humiliation to which the Divine love will not stoop to rescue us from sin; His resurrection is the proof of the victory of that love over human sin and evil; His return in the Spirit the assurance that God Himself lives out His own life in the soul of every true believer in Jesus.

Thus our Christian faith stands in an inward apprehension, enlightened by the Spirit, of the historical facts of the Incarnation, Personality, Death and Resurrection of the man Jesus of Nazareth.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SUPERNATURAL IN CHRISTIANITY

MATTHEW Arnold is said to have replied, to a lady who asked him why he rejected Miracles, "Because they don't happen." There was wisdom as well as wit in the answer, for the question is not one that concerns the past alone. The Christianity of the Gospels is full of what appears to be a supernatural element; and, if this is wholly alien to our present experience, it is not easy to see how the "Religion of Experience," which we are studying, can find a place for it. I wish in this chapter to show reasons for holding that the "miracles" of the Gospels, as, for want of a better name, we must (I suppose) continue to call them, are not altogether unrelated to our own experience.

There is a real "conflict between Religion and Science" on this matter. Science is grounded on belief in Law: unless it were taken for granted that the world to-morrow will be the same as the world to-day—that, for example, when sulphuric acid is poured on salt it will always bubble and give off fumes of hydrochloric acid gas—Science could not even begin. And the assumption that Law rules is continually verified. We do, by observation and experiment, discover more and more of the fixed order of Nature, and so learn to use her forces for human ends. And, in this region of study, Science is perfectly within her rights in rejecting the supernatural. Newton, for instance, formulates the Law of Gravitation—which, exactly stated, is that "every particle in the Universe attracts every other with a force that varies directly as the attracting masses, and inversely as the square of the distance between them." This is at first a hypothesis, but it explains innumerable facts. When a distant

planet, Uranus, is found to move differently from what would be expected when the attractions of all known bodies are taken into account, it would be meaningless for a scientific man to conclude that " God " has deflected it: he is bound to assume either that his supposed " law " is not correctly stated, or else that some unknown body is attracting the planet out of its course. He makes the latter assumption; calculates what and where the force would be that would cause the deviation; and discovers the hitherto unknown planet Neptune. The law is thus established, for the whole Solar system at least; and it becomes impossible not to believe that it holds universally.

The tendency of many scientific men is to extend a similar conception over the whole field of human experience, and to regard the Universe as a vast mechanism, where everything proceeds in an unbroken chain of cause and effect—so that if we knew enough about present facts we could predict all that will happen, just as astronomers, assuming the universal validity of the Law of Gravitation, can predict the positions of the moon and planets at any particular moment of the future.

If this were really the verdict of Science, it would come into inevitable conflict with Religion; for Religion holds tenaciously that some events at any rate are due to a *personal will* (or wills) whose acts are not rigidly determined but are free: it demands a Universe that is, in part at least, free to be moulded according to the *purpose* formed by a Personality, or by personalities. This is not merely a speculative question; for religion consists essentially not in a view of the Universe but in an experience of communion with God and of revelation from Him; and, if that experience is proved illusory, as on the theory of rigid Determinism it almost certainly is, our practical life is gravely affected. The question is not only whether certain past events really happened or not; it is equally whether new things, not fully

explicable by past and present conditions, can happen in our lives here and now.

“Religion,” says Dr. Wendland, “ought to insist, as regards all events which demand a religious explanation, that God’s transcendence is perpetually working new things within the immanent structure of the world. At first this only seems to aggravate the tension. For the question no longer is: Shall we suppose that in the case of certain Biblical miracles there was a direct working of the Divine transcendence in the phenomenal world? On the contrary, the same problem arises in every separate human life: Is thy future absolutely conditioned by the present state of the Universe and the effects of God’s working it now contains, or may new disclosures of God come in upon thy life, giving it a new direction, and not deducible from the past? Religion will always insist on the latter of these alternatives.”\*

It may be that people are going too fast who claim that Science must necessarily extend the idea of rigid mechanical causation to all the facts in the Universe. If Bergson is right, the facts of Biology will never be so explained. There are, no doubt, eminent physiologists who imagine that ultimately they should be; but I venture to think that this view is the result of a materialistic *philosophy*, and is not properly Science at all. Many biologists of equal competence, some of whom are by no means followers of Bergson, entirely reject the mechanical theory. Dr. J. S. Haldane, for example, writes:

“The idea of a living organism being a mechanism made up of separable parts, and actuated by external causes, is wholly unnatural to us, and becomes more and more unnatural the more we know about organisms . . . The attempt to treat physiology on [mechanical] principles is as wide of the mark as would be an

\* Wendland, *Miracles and Christianity* (translated by H. R. Mackintosh), pp. 18, 19.



attempt to treat painting and sculpture on the basis of a mere knowledge of the chemistry and physics of paint and marble."\*

There are two questions at issue, which it is well to distinguish :

(1) Can *new things* happen in the Universe, which are not implicitly contained in, and explicable by, the present arrangement of things, and which therefore cannot be predicted? The answer would seem to be that,—while in the purely mechanical sphere of matter and energy, regarded alone (the solar system may be taken as an example), the law of rigid determinism holds,—in the realm of living things, and still more of conscious beings, “new things” are continually happening, which cannot be predicted or explained as the necessary effect of certain physical causes.

(2) If these “new things” can happen, do they involve a violation of the order of Nature or reign of Law? Do they mean that the Universe is *disorderly*? The answer here is an emphatic negative. There is no evidence, I believe, that living creatures, or conscious beings, violate any law when they exercise the limited freedom they possess. They never, apparently, create either matter or energy. What they can do, especially those endowed with full consciousness and intelligence, is to *direct* the existing forces of Nature into certain purposive channels, which these forces would not otherwise have taken—and so to affect the history of the world. This does not imply that the world of life and consciousness is disorderly; it means that *another kind of order* supervenes—one that cannot be expressed in terms of physical causation, but only in terms of purpose. When a house is built, the materials are lifted into their places either by muscular effort or by machinery designed for the purpose. In neither case is there any breach of Law, whether the Law of Gravitation or that of the Conservation of Energy. The energy

\* Haldane, *Mechanism, Life and Personality*, pp. 80, 92.

stored in the human body, or in coal or oil, is directed by human intelligence and purpose to lift these weights against the force of gravitation; so that a building results which, apart from a plan, and the conscious directing of forces towards its fulfilment, would never have come about.

Once we admit the existence and efficacy of a Purpose, whether in the world at large or in the more restricted sphere of human activity, we admit a new kind of order, other than that of mechanical causation. What takes place is not fully accounted for by the past: an essential factor in determining it is a *mind* which can look into the future, plan an ideal end to be reached, and devise means of attaining it. In this sense we may even say that the real order of affairs is one in which the present is partly determined by the future. And, if we admit that Purpose is a real factor in determining human affairs, we shall find it difficult to deny it a place in the world as a whole. In the realm of living things the Life-force, as Bergson has shown, is creative, and works towards an end—not, he would say, fully mapped out beforehand, but realised gradually, like a work of art, by the overcoming of difficulties. In the world of inorganic Nature, Purpose is harder to discover—if it is there, it seems to be buried deeply out of sight; but this impression may be due, if Bergson is right, to the defect of our intellectual powers.

Now, what is the bearing of all this on the study of the Supernatural element in Christianity? In the first place, it shows that we must not rule out narratives as mythical simply on the ground that they seem to be “supernatural.” I think that this is just as much a fault as to come to them with the presupposition that whatever we read in the Bible must be accepted just as it stands, because it is there.\* If “new things” can

\* It is I hope needless to say that of course we must put aside the confused idea that all the Biblical “miracles” stand or fall together: that if Jonah and the whale are regarded as poetry and not history, then there is no reason to believe that Jesus healed the sick,

and do happen in the world, we have no *a priori* test which can justify us in asserting that such or such an event could never occur. We must examine the alleged events *on their merits*, with the willingness to examine all the evidence there is. If we do so, we shall see that the evidence for some of the miracles is stronger than for others: for the Resurrection of Jesus than for the Virgin Birth; for *Jesus* walking on the water than for *Peter* doing it, and so on. Dr. Sanday has shown how much of the criticism of the Gospels, in Germany especially, has come short because the critics felt it necessary, if they were to maintain their reputation as scientific historians, to reject everything that looked "supernatural."\* The Jesus who is portrayed on these lines is a rather thin and bloodless figure—too much like a benevolent professor of ethics; there is not enough of Him left when all the "supernatural" is taken out. Clearly His works of healing were very closely tied up with His ethical teaching—as in the story of the paralytic in Mark ii. It seems certain that He thought of Himself as having power to do things that most men could not do, though He did not attach *prime* importance to such powers. And we may note, in passing, that Paul also claimed similar powers to some extent (2 Cor. xii. 12); and this is really first-hand evidence, for we have his own word for it. But I am sure that we cannot judge the "miracles" correctly unless we study them in the light of His whole personality. If, like His first followers, keeping close to His real humanity, we become convinced that much more lay behind—that His sinless personality, perhaps subconsciously, went right up into that of God, in a way we cannot think of in our sinful selves—then we may well ask whether deeds beyond the common order are not what we might reasonably expect from such a Person. Things impossible for us might be normal and (in a large sense of the word) "natural" for such as He.

\* *Christologies, Ancient and Modern*, pp. 98-104, 118-121.

But we have not yet grappled with the question what a "miracle" is. It is a question much more easily asked than answered. On the one hand we must, I am sure, reject the idea that it necessarily means a violation of the laws of Nature by some arbitrary power standing outside the world. If it can only mean this, then we must drop the word. On the other hand, it leads only to confusion if we so enlarge it as to include every event that we don't fully understand (which means every single event that happens). To call a rainbow, or the germination of a seed, a "miracle" is to empty the word of all real meaning. We must, I think, if we use it at all, keep it for events that are *beyond the common order of Nature*. Augustine said that "a miracle is not contrary to Nature, but only to what is known of Nature"; and obviously things do happen in ways that transcend the common order. There is all the mass of evidence collected by the Society for Psychical Research concerning telepathy, hypnotic influence exercised at a distance, and even the moving of objects without apparent cause (usually in the neighbourhood of abnormal persons). There also seems to be a residuum of fact, among a mass of fraud and error, in the phenomena of Spiritualism. There is reality in the experience of "Divine Healing" gained by Christian Scientists and others; and much knowledge of "Guidance" by direct monitions or super-sensuous impressions, on the part of many religious people, especially among the Society of Friends. I am not at all disposed to lump these various phenomena together as "miracles," and I believe it is unwise to call them "supernatural"; but they are certainly *supernormal*.\*

\* The conception of a possible "fourth dimension" is useful for helping us to think of events apparently supernatural but really natural if a wide enough meaning is given to the word "Nature." All our ordinary experience is in a world of three dimensions, and we have no power to picture in our minds a fourth. But we may imagine people living in a "Flatland," that is in two dimensions only. To such people much of our normal experience would appear supernatural—for

A miracle in the religious sense, if there is such a thing, would seem to be an event which is not only supernatural, but *in which God is manifested in some special way*. It is true that for the religious mind God is manifested in all the operations of Nature ; but not *equally* in all. He is more manifested in the creative processes of the Life-force than in the "dead" world of inorganic matter ; more in the full purposeful activity of conscious intelligent beings than in the struggles of the Life-force to find expression, which often seem to us both blind and cruel. He is more manifest in the dedicated soul that faces opposition for the sake of truth and goodness than in one that drifts with the crowd ; and most of all is He manifest in the One human Life that was fully possessed and dominated by the Spirit.

If, then, a miracle can be correctly described as "an event beyond the common order in which God is manifested," Jesus Himself was the greatest of all miracles ; and this whether He came into this world in the ordinary way, with two human parents, or not. In Him a new moral energy came flooding into this world of ours from the Unseen, and renewed its life. His "mighty works" were thus a part of Himself—manifestations through Him of the loving purpose of the Father in heaven to heal the wounds of humanity and restore men to Himself. He healed and fed men's bodies, delivered them from what was believed to be demonic possession, restored their life. The few exceptions, such as "the blasting of the barren fig-tree" (Mark xi. 12-14, 20-23), are among those which a careful examination of the Gospels shows to be less strongly attested than others—which may conceivably be

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instance, the throwing of a coin (not sliding it along the flat) from one place to another. The coin would seem to them to have changed its position without going through the intervening space, which would be just as "impossible" for them as it would be for us to get a coin out of a locked box without opening it. "Nature" in its full sense may be as much larger than the Nature we know by the senses as our world is larger than "Flatland."

due to misunderstanding or misreporting, the confusing of a parable with an actual occurrence, and so forth.

This conception of a miracle, as an event not only beyond the common order of Nature, but in which God is specially manifested, enables us to answer (more or less) the question, *What is its use?* Its use is to help in revealing the nature and character of God. There was surely a special place and need for such "mighty works" as Jesus is said to have performed. Without such special manifestations of Divine love and power, it is hard to see how He could have won and retained the confidence of people who were brought up to expect that a Prophet would show such credentials; harder still to believe that He could have inspired in them such a faith as would survive the shock of His crucifixion. It is here that His Resurrection has such a special meaning, and apparently such a necessary place. The miracles generally, whatever allowances we may have to make for possible misreporting, met a special need, and had a special fitness, in aiding His work of bringing in the Kingdom of God and redeeming humanity from sin. He seems to have reserved His special powers for this, His main work; one of the evidences of truthfulness in the Gospel records is the restraint which, as they report Him, He displayed. He would do no miracle simply to satisfy curiosity, to create a sensation, or to meet demands for credentials when made by unspiritual men.\* So also the special powers, with which (as it seems) He was able to endow some of His first followers, were enjoyed and used by them so long as the need lasted and no longer.†

\* See esp. Mark viii. 11, 12. Jesus at the last is reported as deliberately refusing the "sign" which doubtless His own human nature craved (Matt. xxvi. 53, 54).

† See esp. Acts iii. 1-10, viii. 13, ix. 36-42. But belief in the gift of healing lingered long in the Church; and it is a question whether it ought ever to have been lost. There are numerous examples of its exercise among the Quakers of the seventeenth century.

The Christian view of the Universe, to which this discussion leads up, appears to be that there is a "natural" world where law and order rule; but above, beneath, beyond and around it is a "spiritual" world of which God is the centre—a conscious, personal, loving Power who has brought the "natural" world into being that He may manifest Himself in it. The two worlds are not shut off from one another by any barrier that is only now and then broken through. They interpenetrate, and each is ever acting on the other. What the soul is in the body, what life is in matter, that the spiritual world is in the natural. Only in and through the natural can the spiritual find its proper expression. In Christ Incarnate this expression has culminated: in One who is at once the adequate manifestation of the Divine and the crown of Nature and of human life.

If we would be Christians we must live in the spiritual order which Christ above all reveals to us, not renouncing the "natural" as unclean, but using it, as Life uses matter, to find therein by striving and sacrifice and love the expression of the best we have in us. Following Christ we shall be led up to the Father whom He knew, and live in our measure, as He did fully, in communion with the living God. In the experience of that communion we shall know that into our own lives streams of new moral energy flow, lifting us above our former selves, and enabling us, poor and weak as we are, to change the "natural" order, and so to aid in fulfilling the Divine purpose, which only in and through us can find its fruition.

Knowing this, and recognising that it is to Jesus above all that we owe this experience of the living God in our souls, we shall find no stumbling-block to faith, but a powerful aid to faith, in what we read of the inflowing of this Divine energy through Him when He was here on earth. The more we know of the "supernatural" in our own lives, the less will His miracles trouble us.

## NOTE

*on some of the Gospel Miracles.*

This chapter having been devoted to a discussion of the Supernatural in general, it seemed unwise to break the sequence of the argument by dealing with particular miracles. But a very brief consideration of some of these appears to be needed.

As regards the Virgin Birth of Jesus, the evidence is conflicting. On the one hand, the two genealogies in Matt. and Luke both trace the descent of *Joseph*. They show signs of having been compiled under the idea that he was the father of Jesus, and then slightly altered to suit the new belief. The doctrine is mentioned nowhere in the New Testament except in the opening chapters of the first and third Gospels; and the two narratives of the birth and infancy are very hard to reconcile with each other. The orthodox view that one is Joseph's story and the other Mary's seems possible, but does not reconcile the differences. If we compare Mark iii. 21 with iii. 31-35, it is almost certain that the evangelist meant to include the mother of Jesus among the "friends" who tried to stop His work. Such action on her part would be well-nigh unthinkable if the Virgin Birth were a fact. On the other hand, the main evidence in favour of the miracle is furnished by the "Odes" in the first chapter of Luke, attributed to Mary and Zacharias, and known as the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*. They are *pre-Christian* in thought and language, and reflect exactly the expectant attitude of pious Jews in the reign of Augustus. Luke must either have found them in existence, or composed them himself. If the former, it is not easy to see what can have given rise to them unless an event of this kind; if the latter, Luke must have been a more consummate literary artist than the rest of his two books would lead us to suppose. The fact that the Virgin Birth seems to have



been quite unknown to the first Apostles is not necessarily adverse, for there are obvious reasons why Mary would hold it secret as long as she could.

Under the circumstances, it is almost inevitable that people will judge the evidence, so slight in amount, according to their preconceptions; and it is hardly likely that agreement will be reached. This, however, need not trouble us at all. The old idea that the Incarnation depends on the Virgin Birth cannot be held by anyone who ponders the fact that the doctrine of the Incarnation was developed by Christian thinkers like Paul and "John" who never mention the Virgin Birth at all, and who seem to have been wholly uninfluenced by it. The question is one on which Christians can very well afford to differ.

It may be objected, if we leave this an open question, why should we not leave the rest of the Gospel story an open question too? The answer is supplied by historical Criticism. Even if you drop the Virgin Birth, you have not touched Mark or "Q," which are our two main sources of information about Jesus and His teaching. It is from these that the impress of His personality comes, and they remain just as before.

The endeavour has been made by Mr. J. M. Thompson (in his book *Miracles in the New Testament*) to divide the "mighty works" of the Gospels into two classes, Miracles and Works of Healing. The latter he would not count as miracles at all, on the ground that they can be "accounted for" as instances of Faith-healing. He accepts these substantially as they stand, but tries to show, by detailed criticism, that the evidence for the "real" miracles breaks down in some important particular. While the book is well worth reading, I doubt whether Mr. Thompson has made a permanent contribution to the discussion of this question. It does not appear to me that the sharp distinction between "real" or "nature" miracles and works of healing can be

maintained. In which class are we to place the raising from the dead? \* Nor am I at all satisfied that the author has succeeded in proving that the evidence for the "nature" miracles is weaker than for those of healing. The Feeding of the Five Thousand, for instance, is vouched for by Mark and is supported by the apparently independent tradition embodied in the fourth Gospel. Moreover, Mark's story of the feeding of the four thousand (Mark viii. 1-9) seems to be a duplication of the other, and points to a double tradition of the event still earlier than Mark. And some such occurrence, with the dangerous popularity to which it gave rise, seems needed to explain the hurried retirement of Jesus with His disciples into temporary exile (Mark vii. 24; compare John vi. 15).

Mr. Thompson's definition of a miracle, which makes it involve an interference with the laws of Nature, is rather old-fashioned and crude; and his "explanation" of the works of healing as merely examples of faith-healing is really no explanation at all. For we do not know what "faith-healing" is—why it seems to be open to some people more than to others, and why it is only some exceptional personalities like that of Jesus who can, under ordinary circumstances, evoke the necessary "faith." The real reason why the works of healing are easier to believe in is that we have experience of somewhat similar events in our own day, and therefore the evidence seems sufficient to establish them. But, if only a residuum of the phenomena alleged by spiritualists to happen are genuine, we have also experience of occurrences akin to some of the "nature" miracles. The walking on the water (Mark vi. 45-52) would seem to

\* It may well be that some of the persons reported to have been raised to life, like the daughter of Jairus (Mark v. 30) were not so absolutely dead that they might not have been resuscitated by modern scientific methods; but it seems clear from the narratives that, if they were not, they soon would have been; and that, as things then were, no one but Jesus could have brought them round. The raising of Lazarus in the fourth Gospel is too large and difficult a matter to discuss adequately here.

be paralleled by the instances alluded to above (chapter VII. p. 85) in which persons with exceptional powers have succeeded by an effort of will in appearing to others at a distance—as Theosophists would perhaps say, in the “astral body.” As I have there stated, I should be disposed to “explain” the Resurrection appearances as due to a similar effort of will made by the living but usually unseen personality of the risen Lord.

## CHAPTER X

### THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

SOME years ago, when I had been lecturing to a company of Adult School men and women on the teaching of the fourth Gospel, bringing out (as I had fondly hoped) the added significance it gains when read in the light of modern knowledge, a worthy man came to me and said, in quite a kindly way, " Well, you may be right, but if you are I shall burn my Bible ! " The purpose of this chapter is to examine the real worth of the Bible when the idea of its infallibility has been abandoned, and when the full light of historical criticism has been permitted to play upon it.

It seems needless now to spend time in proving what most readers of this book will probably admit at once—that unquestioning belief in the Bible as containing nothing but the pure unadulterated " Word of God " can no longer be held by any intelligent person.\* The Bible, like every other great collection of literature, has had a human history, and is therefore full of human imperfections. The task of Biblical criticism is not to magnify those imperfections with the design of proving it worthless, but to find out and make clear what it really is and what it really means. Historical and literary criticism is just as legitimate and necessary for the right understanding of Biblical literature as of any other. The books have had a history, and that history is open to investigation by the same methods that are applied to other ancient books. And it is clear that those who do the investigation must be not only religiously minded, but frank and honest and open to new

\* See my *Authority and the Light Within*, Chapters III. and IV.

light. This they cannot be if they are committed to a certain view beforehand, and if they will not admit, or if they feel it necessary to explain away, any evidence that conflicts with their own theory.

There are three objections to Biblical criticism which seem to be worth considering. The first is that the Bible has quickened and sustained the spiritual life of multitudes who take it just as it stands, and know nothing whatever about criticism. This is unquestionably true, but it does not meet the case. The world consists of other people besides these simple souls, and Christianity to-day has to meet and answer powerful attacks from those who disbelieve it, as it has often had to do since it first arose. The books of the Bible are its sacred books, and the onslaught is largely on them. Those who attack, as well as those in doubt, must be met on their own ground,\* and not with insistence on premisses they cannot grant. It is simply suicidal to tell them that they must accept as facts all that the Bible says, but that those facts will not bear examination.

The second objection is that criticism is the use of human Reason alone, and that the Bible can only be understood and appreciated by the light of the Holy Spirit. This objection I have already in part dealt with † but it may be well to state again that it misconceives the issue. Criticism is the use of Reason, but it is only by the use of Reason that facts can be discovered and established as true. It is pure confusion of thought to suggest that the light of the Spirit, without any use of Reason, will convince us that all traditional beliefs about the Bible

\* Scholars who defend the Bible on rational grounds are just as much "critics" as those who attack it, and often much more reasonable ones. When the author of *Supernatural Religion* in 1877 maintained that the fourth Gospel was a late second-century work, Bishop Lightfoot took him over the ground and showed what the real historical evidences are. The only remedy for bad criticism is not denunciation, but *better* criticism.

† See above, Chapter VIII., p. 102.

are true—as that John, the son of Zebedee, wrote the fourth Gospel, that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, that all the chapters of Isaiah are by the same author, and so on. It is perfectly true we need to have our Reason enlightened by the Spirit if we are to appreciate the *meaning and worth* of the facts, and to reach a true understanding of what we read. It is also true that sometimes the worth of an alleged fact may afford solid ground for the assurance that it is real and not invented. But, speaking broadly, the facts themselves can only be established by critical processes.

The third objection is that Jesus accepted the traditional views as to the history and authorship of the Old Testament books, and that for those who believe Him to be Divine that settles the matter. Now, it was no part of His mission in the world to teach men historical facts, any more than to teach them the Copernican theory of the Universe. It would have interfered with His real work had He attempted to do so. His Divinity is not the annulling of His full humanity; and it is practically certain that in His human limitations He thought of the Universe, and of the history of the sacred books, very much as did the pious Jews among whom He had been brought up. There is no doubt whatever that He fed His own religious life upon the Old Testament, and that He treated it with the utmost reverence. At the same time, we do not always recognise the freedom with which He criticised it. He set His “But I say unto you” against that which was said “to them of old time,” establishing new and higher moral standards than had been recognised before. He spoke of the Mosaic law of Divorce as given “for your hardness of heart” (Mark x. 5). He swept away at one stroke the whole of the Mosaic rules about clean and unclean food, by saying that “nothing from without, going into a man can defile him” (Mark vii. 15-19, R.V.). Large parts of the Old Testament He is never reported to have quoted; the passages He does quote are mostly drawn

from Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and the Prophetic writings—the most spiritually elevated portions of the Hebrew literature. The ritual Law He ascribes to Moses rather than directly to God (Mark i. 44; John vii. 19, etc.), and the practice of circumcision He likewise attributes to “the fathers” (John vii. 22).

We know that we are on our Master's own ground when we too recognise that the Divine revelation of which the Old Testament contains the record was a *progressive* one; that it came gradually to men as their inward eyes were opened, through their experience as individuals, and through the collective experience of the Hebrew people, to receive and respond to it; that there was much that was crude and mistaken in the ideas of God and of goodness held by even the best and most enlightened in earlier days; that it remained for Him to paint, in life and word, the features of the true ideal.

If the idea of Revelation which we have here maintained is true—that it comes to men not in abstract terms but through their experience of life, and through the development of their powers of intuition to understand the meaning of that experience—then, while the Bible loses the inerrancy and formal completeness which some demand, it gains immeasurably in its power to win the human heart.

“We do not want in Scripture the whiteness and purity of the icicle; abstract accuracy in formal expression may leave the will untouched and the heart unmoved. . . . It is because Scripture is often so instinct with emotion begotten of experience that it casts so strange a spell upon us and stirs us to the inmost depths. The sublimities of the abstract may move us to wonder, but they do not warm and comfort us. It is a human heart which throbs in the Bible, and it is this which grips us with such unequalled power.”\*

\* Peake, *The Bible, its Origin, Significance, and Abiding Worth*, pp. 281, 283.

What, then, shall we say about its Inspiration? We have to *find out* what Inspiration is and means, by the careful study of the Bible itself, and by allowing it to impress us as it was meant to do. We must not impose upon it a theory of inspiration devised by ourselves or taken on at second-hand from tradition. That is not the path of true humility; it may be a subtle form of spiritual pride. It is only through some measure of experience—by realising in ourselves what it is to be inspired by a Spirit above ourselves—that we can learn what was the inspiration of the holy men of old. It was *they* rather than their writings that were the subjects of inspiration; there is no evidence that what they wrote was miraculously dictated to them, or that they acted automatically; and there is much evidence that inspiration came to them, if in much larger measure yet along essentially the same channels, as it may come to ourselves. The first broad generalisation we may make about it is that *that is inspired which proves inspiring*—not, it may be, to ourselves when we are cold and unresponsive, but when we are at our best, and can in some measure unite in the experience of the best men and women who have gone before us and who are around us now. The inspiration of the twenty-third Psalm, or of the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, is *self-evidencing* to all who crave for communion with a heavenly Shepherd, and long to know in their lives the full meaning of Love.

It may be objected that this makes Inspiration entirely a matter of *degree*, whereas we are told that we have to regard the whole Bible as inspired. Putting aside for the moment the question whether (or in what sense) we can recognise any inspiration in the parts of the Bible that do not move us in the way suggested—such as large portions of the books of Kings and Chronicles—we are bound, I think, to admit at once that it *is* a matter of degree. There is not the same inspiration in the genealogies of the sons of Jacob in 1 Chronicles



as there is in the story of Elijah's flight to Horeb (1 Kings xix.) nor in the appeal for vengeance on enemies in Psalm lxix. 22-28 as there is in the cry for pardon and purity in Psalm li. There is not the same inspiration in the wrathful denunciation of "false prophets" in 2 Peter ii.\* as there is in the Master's cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). Nor can we draw a rigid line around the books that Jewish and Christian Councils admitted to the Canon, and say that outside that circle there is no inspiration. There are many passages in "Apocryphal" writings like Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon that move us more than the weary pessimism of Ecclesiastes or the bloodthirsty nationalism of Esther; there is more that feeds our spiritual hunger in some of the newly-discovered "Odes of Solomon" than in the second epistle attributed to Peter. The inspiration of psalmists, prophets and apostles is to be recognised in their freshness and power: in the fact that they are not borrowers or imitators like the Apocalyptists or the Rabbis, but have a first-hand knowledge of that of which they write; and in the deathless language in which they have often been enabled to express their thoughts.

But, admitting all this, there is yet, I believe, a real sense in which we may hold to the inspiration of the Bible as a whole. Speaking broadly, there is more spiritual sustenance in the books of the Old Testament than in those of the Apocrypha, or of the later Apocalyptic literature of the Jews; far more in the books of the New Testament than in the best collection that could now be made of sub-apostolic writings, excellent as some of these are. Yet we have to look at the

\* 2 Peter was not admitted to the Canon of the New Testament until the fourth century, and then with grave doubts as to its genuineness (Peake, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 98). It is the latest book in the New Testament, and cannot have been written earlier than 150 A.D.

matter in a broader way than this. The question is not to be decided by the selection of isolated passages and the attempt to judge their worth for the spiritual life ; for the Bible is something much more than an Anthology, or a collection of texts. Until we have learnt to regard it as a whole, we are not at the right point of view for judging of its inspiration in the largest sense. What we have to recognise is that it is the human record of a great process by which God was gradually revealing Himself to men, to save them from sin and redeem them into His own life of love. The historical and legal, as well as the more directly " spiritual," portions of the Old Testament may therefore be regarded as inspired, in the sense that *they refer all things to God*, and are directed to display the working-out of His purpose for the nation of Israel, and through it for the whole race of men.

The inspiration of the early chapters of Genesis consists not in the correctness of their statements about historical events, for we are bound to recognise that there is in them a large element of Babylonian myth, of patriarchal legend, of poetry and folklore. What is unique about all this is *the presence of God* in it, the lofty monotheism that has replaced the gross polytheism of the early myths. We may treat the whole of the Creation and Flood stories as myth and poetry, and yet see that they contain priceless spiritual truth about God and His dealings with men ; we may doubt whether Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were real men who ever actually lived, and yet recognise that the narrators of those early stories had received and were expressing something more than had yet been discerned, or than their " natural " faculties could have discovered, of the moral character and purpose of God, and of life in relation to Him.\*

The inspiration of the law-books, such as Leviticus,

\* Note especially the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, and the revelation it embodies that human sacrifice is not acceptable to God.

will not be found in the idea that all the ceremonies ordained were "types" of Christ; for it is a wholly unworthy notion of the work of God with men to suppose Him to have been occupied with setting them riddles to guess. The great bulk of the ritual cannot be treated as allegory without a vast display of "creaturely ingenuity," and purely arbitrary fancy; and it is certain that many of the ceremonial details of sacrifice were common to the Hebrews and other Semitic tribes. It is rather to be sought in the belief that through such ordinances lawgivers were led by the Divine Spirit to train a nation in a higher morality than prevailed in the surrounding nations, and to keep alive within it the sense of communion with a righteous God. The history of the nation, fragmentarily described in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, is the story of its preparation and training, under the hand of God, to be the recipient of His revelation—not for the sake of the nation itself, as if it were a favourite of heaven, but that through it "all the families of the earth might be blessed." The writings of the prophets and psalmists are not the work of persons whose inspiration consisted in the miraculous presentation to their minds of what should happen hundreds of years later, but that of men who were filled with God, with the passion for righteousness, and with ability to teach and guide the nation in the path of His will; to instil and maintain within them the assurance that a great Divine purpose was to be fulfilled through them, if only they would be faithful to God, and so to prepare the ground for the seed of the Kingdom. The inspiration of the "Wisdom" literature, such as the books of Job and Proverbs, consists in the meditations of poets and sages who wrestled with the problems created by the presence of evil in the world, and, with Divine help, found a solution that satisfied them, and enabled them to counsel others in the way of life. We may perhaps even say that the weary, disillusioned author of Ecclesiastes was, not without un-

conscious Divine assistance, enabled to prepare the way for Christ by showing, through his despair, the need for a fuller revelation.

Thus the Bible hangs together, as the record of a Divine movement in human history, of which Christ is the culmination and the Christian Church with its world-wide mission is the working-out. The Old Testament cannot be discarded, as some have wished to discard it ; for without it the New cannot be understood, any more than we can understand a river if we disregard the streams that feed it. There is a living movement of growth and development, under the guiding hand of God, all through Hebrew and Christian history ; and the revelation to the few is, in the Divine plan of life the way in which the many are ultimately to be reached, The passion for righteousness which made the nation of Israel receptive to God's teaching, the religious genius of its great leaders, are the human side of that Divine Grace that was ever seeking to win the whole of humanity into the Kingdom of God. The Bible, which is the written record of this movement, will therefore be for us Christians the main text-book of our spiritual life ; the New Testament writings, especially, will always be the classical documents of our religion.

If we ask why it need ever have been *written*, we are bound to admit that this is not, in the abstract, necessary. In the first few decades of Christianity, multitudes were converted to Christ without any New Testament, and many of them with little knowledge of the Old. The living message of those who had known or received Jesus was enough. But is clear that, as the centuries went by, if there had been nothing more substantial than oral tradition the message would have been liable to gross distortion through pagan and other influences ; it is probable that before long it would have been changed out of all recognition. We may take it therefore that the same Divine inspiration which led the prophets to prepare the way for Christ also led the Church to

desire, and some of its gifted leaders to commit to writing, enough of the deeds and teaching of their Master to form an imperishable record; and that it also led other leaders to put in writing their own Christian thought and experience, and so much of their counsels to their brethren as should preserve for future generations the light and freshness of the morning of their faith.

There are thus two senses, a smaller and a larger one, in which, with all its human imperfections, we may speak of the Bible as inspired: first our inward perception of the unique and satisfying appeal of its more directly "spiritual" portions to all that is best in us, to our longing for God, and to our yearning for deliverance from sin and union with Him in love; and second in the sense we gain, when we regard the Bible as a whole, that it is the record of a movement of God towards men, culminating in the revelation brought by Jesus Christ, whereby God was both making Himself known and developing the powers of human response that made it possible for men to understand and appreciate the revelation. If it be objected that this is all too vague and indefinite, we may reply that all the best things in life are indefinable: we cannot express in set terms what we mean by Beauty, Justice, or Love; yet we know that these are among the great realities whereby men live. Just so we may fail in framing a definition of inspiration, and yet have no doubt whatever of its reality in the Bible, and (in some measure) in ourselves.

Criticism has brought both loss and gain; but in my judgment the gain far outweighs the loss. We can no longer use the Bible as an armoury of texts for proving certain doctrines, as if each text were intelligible by itself. Before we can know the meaning of the texts we have to examine them in the light of the whole document of which they form a part, the thoughts the writer intended to convey, and the situation that gave rise to them; but this study brings to us a sense of reality that

isolated texts cannot give us. We cannot regard the Old Testament as a collection of enigmatic "types," or of forecasts unintelligible at the time, of what should happen when Christ came; we seek to know what the writers had to say to the men of their own day; and in the light of this study many of the parts of the Bible that seemed least intelligible, especially the writings of the prophets, glow with new light and truth. Criticism has opened to us the Old Testament with a greater breadth of vision and depth of insight than was possible even for the first generation of Christians; and if we do not find Christ there in the fanciful ways in which they sought Him, we see that the whole movement of the history was leading up to Him, and would have been meaningless without Him.

The true worth of the Bible, and the reality of its Inspiration, comes home to us when we read it reverently in the light of Reason and the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

THE deepest and central thing in the teaching and life of Jesus is His assurance that God is Father. He nowhere attempts to prove it, but always assumes it as something that needs no proof. It seems to spring spontaneously out of His inner life, His own experience of what God meant to Him ; and in this He is unique among the great religious leaders of men. It is significant that, in proclaiming the advent of the Kingdom of God, He does not call God King but Father : " my Father," " your Father," " the Father." His great work was to lift men up into a measure of the same experience that He Himself enjoyed ; and in this He was largely successful. God became for the first Christians " The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ " ; " a spirit of adoption " was theirs, whereby they cried, as He had done, " Abba, Father " (Rom. viii. 15). This is the central experience of the Christian religion, and in any account of Christianity it must always hold the primary place.

To what extent was it new ? The Greeks had spoken of Zeus as " the Father of Gods and men," but their thoughts of Him were almost without ethical content. The Hebrews had reached a lofty conception of His righteousness, and once or twice in their literature He is called Father. " Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear Him " (Psalm ciii. 13). But what of those who do *not* fear Him ? Nowhere in the Book of Psalms, priceless as expressing some of men's deepest experience of God before Christ came, is God ever once *addressed* as

Father. The prophet of the Captivity wrote : " Thou art our father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us, thou, O Jehovah, art our father, our redeemer from everlasting is thy name" (Isaiah lxiii. 16). But there it is *the nation* and not the individual who addresses Him as Father ; and, in the verses immediately preceding and following the one quoted, His compassions are said to be restrained, and He is asked why He makes His people err from His ways, and hardens their hearts from His fear. There is a lurking suspicion that He may be capricious like an oriental despot ; the sense of His overwhelming power covers and partly obliterates the assurance of His redeeming love.

What Jesus did for the first time was to bring, to those who came to share something of His own experience, the certainty that God was not an arbitrary ruler, whose ways were past finding out, but One who was absolutely constant in His yearning love, absolutely changeless, absolutely trustworthy. He tells of the father who, wholly forgetful of his own dignity, *runs* to meet the returning prodigal, and assures His hearers that God is just like that. He tells of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness, goes out to seek the one that was lost " until he find it, and when he hath found it he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing " (Luke xv. 4, 5) ; and suggests that God is like that. He appeals to their common experience of any decent earthly father, even though " evil," who will not give his children a stone when they ask for bread, and says, " How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him ? " (Matt. vii. 9-11). It is not only those who " fear Him " that He " pities " ; he " maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust " (Matt. v. 45). The children of the Kingdom are to be perfect in love, even as their heavenly Father is perfect.



We are so familiar with all this that we cannot easily recognise what fresh and joyful news it was for those who first heard it. The note of joy and restfulness is strong in the Gospels, and it springs out of the inner life of Jesus, and His absolute certainty that God is the perfect Father. His children have no need to worry about their outward needs, for God who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds will supply all they want. Only, if they would rest in Him, they must strive to follow and imitate Him, especially in the path of forgiveness. "For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." Those who do follow and imitate will find God's providential care is ever round about them. He cares for the minutest details of their lives; the hairs of their heads are all numbered. Not even a young sparrow can fall out of the nest without His notice; and "ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. x. 29-31). He gives them "authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall in any wise hurt" them (Luke x. 19).

This joyous, care-free, self-abandoning life, as of children with a Father who is perfect in love, who forgets Himself to anticipate their every want, is the life of the Kingdom that Jesus came to bring to men. It all rests upon their thought of God. His Fatherhood means that He is the Perfect Person, to whom all His children have access as individuals, and who cares individually for them all. It means perfect goodness, yet not that which is "cold like a star," but is warm with the pulses of a human heart. It means the perfect love which embraces "the unthankful and the evil" (Luke vi. 35), which is ever going out of itself in service and sacrifice, which *suffers* until the evil is put away, and the unthankful one is restored to the Father's home. It is not an abstract "doctrine of God" constructed to answer the questions of the

intellect, but a concrete reality, throbbing with life, that satisfies the hunger of the soul. It is the basis of an experimental, not of a theoretical, religion.

But—is it true? Can we verify it in our own experience? Does it fit the facts of life—can we make it agree with the Universe as we know it? This world seems all so different. The Fatherhood of God implies the Providential ordering of events; and this is just what it is so hard to recognise, especially in this awful time of war. The larger events seem to be determined by the stronger human will and the more efficient human organisation; the smaller do not seem to be “ordered” at all, they just *happen*. The orgy of violence goes on; laws, human and Divine, are set at defiance; millions of young men are being killed and mutilated; mankind is exterminating itself; and God, apparently, does nothing. Bombs are dropped from the clouds on peaceful towns, and nothing but pure “chance” seems to decide what or whom they strike. Whole populations are starved by a blockade, and the innocent suffer equally with, or more than, the guilty. Armenians are massacred by the hundred thousand, and the hand of cruelty is not stayed. Where is the faintest sign of any Fatherly care over the individual life—and, more than that, over the welfare of humanity itself?

Nevertheless, human faith survives to-day, as it has survived before when God has seemed most hidden. It was in the darkest days of Hebrew history, when the king and nobles of Jerusalem had been carried captives, and when the city, and its holy places were about to be laid in ruins, that Jeremiah could write to the exiles, “I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. xxix. 11). The saints and prophets of humanity have been the men and women who have had the insight to discern

“ That God is on the field, when He  
Is most invisible.”

That such faith has not been mere blind credulity, springing from men's need of comfort, is suggested by the fruit that it has borne. Not only has it nerved the saints themselves to worthy endeavour; it has often justified itself history: the hope which faith has kindled has brought its own fulfilment. It was because Jeremiah was able to radiate into the exiles some of his own assurance that God had not done with them, that they were able to find in the sufferings of captivity a means of discipline, and to prepare a human soil for the sowing, by a greater than Jeremiah, of the seed of the Kingdom. So it may be, to-day, that those will have the main share in the shaping of the future, whose inward eyes have been made keen enough to pierce the black night of sorrow and desolation, and to discern, with George Fox, “ behind the ocean of darkness and death, an infinite ocean of light and love.”

Faith in the Fatherhood of God implies assurance of His providential care. This does not mean that we have to try to persuade ourselves of the impossible—that He deliberately “ sends ” these monstrous evils, or that they are any part of His will for men. Faith is essentially insight into a *purpose*, not our own, latent in the order of events, and the identification of ourselves with that purpose. We may but dimly apprehend it, but we know that it is good, and that we ourselves are responsible in part for its fulfilment. It is not a purpose that will fulfil itself automatically, or without our aid.

“ The Norns shall order all,

And yet, without thy helping, shall no whit of their will befall.”

This purpose is, for the saints, the deepest thing in life: when they have touched it they have touched bottom; when they are helping it they are fulfilling the true law of their own being and of the world.

Belief in the Fatherhood of God is not the shallow

optimism that refuses to face the facts—that pretends that evil is only good in disguise, that nothing happens contrary to the will of God. What it does mean is the assurance that nothing happens outside His control and care; and that, given our co-operation, He can and will work out His purpose through the very things that conflict with it—like the “Happy Warrior,”

“Who, doomed to go in company with pain,  
And fear and bloodshed, miserable train,  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain.”

The truly religious man is sure that, as he identifies himself with the Divine purpose, that purpose will be worked out, not only in the world, but in his own personal experience, whether in this state of being or beyond the grave. He will not expect exemption from “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” but he will have the serene confidence that, if his will is being made one with the will of God, none of these things can really hurt him—that is, hinder the working through him of the Divine purpose. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” More than that, he will prove that “all things,” even the most seemingly adverse, “work together for good”—the hindering and even apparently fatal things being turned into means of blessing, whereby he learns patience, tenderness, and sympathy with others.

Further, he will learn the meaning of *Guidance*, which is an essential part of the experience of the Fatherhood of God. His way through life will not be chosen by himself, but in the spirit of following the Guide and great Companion who has a plan for him better than he could devise, and whom he has learnt to know and trust. He will not expect miracles; nor, unless he is specially endowed, the experience of “monitions” or other supernormal manifestations. But he will ask for, and receive, the enlightened judgment that can discern the facts which ought to

influence his decisions, and which will give them their proper weight. Nothing makes God real to the soul like the habit of referring everything to Him; the guidance of God will be experienced through the practice of seeking for it, and following it, in the common-place affairs of daily life.

But the purpose of God is hard to find—if we look for it, as we look for truth about the world, by the method of observation. It may be there is another method of search, by which we may have more hope of finding it. But leaving this for the moment, and confining ourselves to the world as it appears, it is clear that we must find God, if at all, *in* the world and not outside it. He did not make the world, as Augustine said, “and then go away,” as a man may construct a complicated machine, set it going, and leave it to go of itself. He made, and is making, the world as He makes a primrose bloom by the hedgeroad—by its own inherent forces. And this, the Divine Immanence, is perhaps the reason why we are so often baffled in the search for the Divine Purpose. We miss it because of its very nearness to us; we look for a Ruler and a Governor outside the Universe, and find none. The truth of God’s Fatherhood must be construed in terms of Immanence if we are to make it our own.

What does Immanence mean? We shall do well to recognise that it means different things in different departments of this complex world. God is not immanent in a stone or in a planet in the same sense that He is immanent in a Christlike soul. Perhaps we can divide the world of our experience into categories, and observe how much more the Divine Immanence means as we proceed from “lower” to “higher.”

(1) There is, first, the world of inorganic matter—the star-systems, the rocks of the earth, the sea with its tides, the air with its storm and calm. In this “dead” world, as it appears to us, God is, so to say,

buried deeply out of sight. What matter is, and how it is related to spirit, we need not now enquire. It would be rash to assert that, "where the wheeling systems darken," we can discover any Divine purpose. So far as we can tell, in this region the future is rigidly determined by the past.

(2) In the organic world of living matter it is apparently different. Many attempts have been made to reduce the activities of living things to the operation of mechanical and chemical forces, but so far without success. Meanwhile it appears that in this region Teleology holds the field: living things act in a way that cannot be explained apart from *purpose*. The smallest living cell can select, out of the inorganic materials that surround it, what it will absorb as food and what reject. If Teleology holds, the future of organic beings is not wholly determined by the past, unless in the "past" we include some Intelligence or Consciousness by which a purpose is entertained. A wholly unconscious purpose is unthinkable, and is probably a contradiction in terms.

The Life-force, as we have seen above,\* does not "break" the laws of Nature; it introduces, apparently, no new force; but it has the power of *directing* the forces already present into channels where they achieve a purpose that we can in some measure apprehend. Life, so far as is at present known, has a measure of *freedom* to pursue its own ends, which inorganic matter lacks. God is, as it were, nearer to the surface: the Divine Immanence is more clearly manifested. Yet even here, as in the inorganic world, there is little, if any, revelation of a purpose that is *good*. The life-force pushes ruthlessly on its way, by means of struggle and cruelty to the weak, as well as by "mutual aid" and the devotion of parents to their young.

(3) It may be that in all life there is some dim kind of

\* Chapter IX., p. 109.

consciousness ; but, when fully self-conscious beings appear, freedom and purpose are much more closely shown. Every " person " has a measure of Freewill. He is able to present to his consciousness the idea of an end to be reached, and to use his intelligence in the adaptation of means to attain it. In self-conscious and intelligent beings the Life-force has won a far higher freedom than in those creatures whose acts are mainly instinctive. They can appreciate the worth of ideas and ends, as true, or beautiful, or good ; they can choose the worthy and reject the unworthy. Man, made in the image of God, reflects Him in a way that Nature, whether inorganic or organic, has no power to do.

(4) The *good* will, that consciously pursues the higher and rejects the lower—that follows of set purpose the true, the beautiful, and the good, is a higher and truer manifestation of God than the bad will. God is immanent in the one in a sense that He is not in the other. Every true saint—just in so far as he forgets himself in devotion to worthy ends—is an actual manifestation of the nature of God Himself. " God is love ; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."

(5) If, as Christians believe, a human life has once been lived in entire and unbroken devotion to truth, beauty and goodness, then the Divine Immanence in that life has been absolute, and a perfect manifestation of God has been given to men. In Jesus Christ, as He is apprehended by the Christian consciousness, God is uniquely revealed. " He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The will of one Man was absolutely united with the will and purpose of God, and thereby that will and purpose was revealed. Like other prophets, Christ could bring men to God ; but He could, like no other, bring God to men.

For Christians, then, Jesus Christ is the Way—the way to assured belief in the Divine Providence. His

own certainty of the Father's care, over Himself and over all men, appears to have been wholly unclouded. He spoke of it, as I have said, not as a doctrine that needed proving, but as a fact that men had only to open their eyes to see. In the storm on the lake He calmly sleeps, and when awakened chides His disciples for their want of faith. He warns them against supposing that calamities like the massacre of the Galileans by Pilate, or the loss of life by the fall of the tower in Siloam, or physical blindness, are to be regarded as punishments for sin. Deep and all-penetrating as is His sense of God, His outlook on the facts of life is at the opposite pole from that of the fanatic.

Does not all this imply that there was for Him another method of arriving at the Providence of God than that of observation and reasoning on things as they appear? The teaching of Jesus suggests that he whose inward eyes are opened to behold God may find Him everywhere except in sinful deeds; and that even these are not outside His control, but may be made, by faith and obedience, to work out His purposes. We have not to wait for the strange and unaccountable to discover the hand of God. The very same events that to outward observation are the outcome of "law" or "chance" are to the eye of faith a part of the Divine Providence. There is, for each one of us, a Divine purpose in life which we may find and follow, and in so far as we follow it we shall be safe from harm. Disasters may come upon us, but all may be turned into means of good.

And surely this includes, for us as well as for the Master, even those calamities that fall upon us through the sin of others. Jesus undoubtedly foresaw, long before the end came, that His work would issue in apparent failure—that His only hope of victory lay in sowing, in the hearts of a few disciples, the seeds of a faith that should be strong enough to survive the Cross. He may not have foreseen clearly how the victory would



be won ; but His assurance of His Father's Purpose was such that He knew that, by obedience, He would achieve it even through defeat ; that, indeed, He could achieve it in no other way—even though the defeat should be the result of human sin and blindness, and therefore, in itself, wholly outside the Divine purpose. And if, before the end, His human powers for a moment failed ; if the cup that He had to drink was more bitter than even He had imagined to be possible ; if the beacon light of His Father's presence was for a time withdrawn, so that He felt Himself forsaken ; what does this mean, but that it was necessary for Him to enter with His brethren into the darkest valley of desolation, and prove that faith and love could conquer even there ? Who that believes in God at all can doubt that in this hour of His supreme obedience and self-sacrifice the Father was nearer to Him than ever ; that on the Cross the Father's nature was most abundantly revealed ; that the Divine Providence was not negated but uniquely emphasised in this last extremity of human woe ?

And so it is that Christian faith can survive all that seems to shatter belief in the Fatherhood of God. If, on the Cross, man's blackest crime was turned into the means of richest blessing—if life was won through death—is it too much to believe that all sorrow, including that which is caused by human sin, is within, and not outside, the circle of the Divine Providence ? War, the evil passions that produce it, and the desolation it causes, are all contrary to the will of God ; but the agonies it brings may yet be made, through human faith and obedience, to work out His purpose for the world and for the individual. The true Christian has an intuitive knowledge, based on experience, of the Fatherly purpose of God, which nothing in this world can finally obscure or overthrow.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE WORTH OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP

THE fundamental condition of a progressive religious experience is the practice of Prayer ; but it is the first to be undermined, in some people by religious indifference, and in others by the expansion of their thoughts about the Universe, which seems to make belief in the Divine Personality no longer tenable. In either case the results are serious because cumulative : the less we practise prayer, the harder it becomes to believe in a God who meets us and cares for us individually.

Prayer in its largest sense is much more than petition for particular things that we desire. It includes all the sense of communion, which religious people have, with an unseen Power that is in some kind of personal relation to us. Our conscious personality, as has been suggested above,\* is like a focus-point in which the Universal Consciousness is striving to express itself ; but this focus-point is in some mysterious way endowed with freedom and the feeling of separateness. It yearns for communion with That from which it comes, in which communion alone it can find itself or become an expression of God : " Thou hast made us for Thyself ; and our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

The instinct for Prayer appears to be universal in rational beings when at their best ; though, like all our highest powers, it is liable to distortion and to atrophy through disuse. It rises in quality as personality expands and deepens, from the infantile prayer of the savage to the communion with His Father

\* Chapter III., p. 40.

enjoyed by Jesus Christ. All the greatest leaders of humanity, all the prophet souls who have lifted men upwards in moral progress, have been men and women of prayer. Noteworthy is the testimony of William Penn to George Fox's power in public prayer :

“ But above all he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behaviour, and the fewness and fulness of his words, have often struck even strangers with admiration, as they used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say was his in prayer. And truly it was a testimony he knew and lived nearer the Lord than other men ; for they that know him most will see most reason to approach him with reverence and fear.”\*

In Jesus we see the prayer instinct at its highest and best. It was through His unbroken communion with the Father that He was able to manifest Him to others, and to lift them up into some measure of the same experience. Was He mistaken here ? Were His thoughts of God crude and anthropomorphic ? If they were, can we retain our unbounded reverence for Him, and our confidence in Him ? I believe not. Our reverence for His character implies that we regard it as grounded in Truth ; we shall have to consider carefully whether it does not commit us to acceptance of His deepest convictions, those that moulded all His life and inspired all His service for men.

And further : is the whole Christian experience into which He raised and still raises His true followers based on an illusion ? The true Church of Christ exists to answer No ; to assure men that “ the walk with God ” is no illusion but a fundamental truth. We cannot afford to throw away the experience of all the saints of all the centuries as out of date. If we do so, our life becomes inevitably shallow, an existence in and

\* Preface to Fox's *Journal*, p. xlvii.

for the things that are superficial and transient ; it is no longer grounded in the unseen and the eternal.

If we are hindered in our search for communion with the living God by the broadening of our thoughts of Him, which makes the conception of His Personality unacceptable, we must consider, as suggested above,\* whether it may not be that our idea of Personality is too small and poor ; whether we have not to learn to expand it to fit our larger thought of God, and not to narrow the latter to suit our imperfect notions of Personality.

But, even if we have not yet reached a thought of Personality large enough to apply it to the Infinite—if such impersonal terms as the Infinite, the Eternal, the Source of Life, are truer to our thoughts of God than Christ's word " Father," still we can learn to pray. There are two illustrations of the worth of Prayer that especially appeal to me, and which are not dependent on a Personal thought of God.

(a). In the first place, we may think of Prayer in biological terms, as correspondence with a spiritual Environment. We know that every living animal maintains its existence by correspondence with its environment : by seeking food and avoiding enemies. This is the use of its powers of sense and of its muscular organisation ; this is the purpose for which these powers appear to have been developed. If self-conscious beings are essentially spiritual, is it not likely that their true life will also be maintained by correspondence with a spiritual Environment ? The persistence of the religious faculty, or prayer instinct, would seem of itself to prove, on biological principles, that such an Environment really exists ; for how can any faculty be developed, or be maintained when developed, if there is no environment for it to correspond with ? The fish found in pools of water in dark caverns, where for many generations they have had no call to use their eyes, are

\* Chapter V., pp. 64-69.

found to have lost their powers of sight. Professor Gilbert Murray, at the close of a recent address, suggested that the religious instinct might be a *survival*, like the instinct of a dog to be always "smelling its way back to the pack that isn't there." But could this instinct ever have arisen if there had never been a pack, and how long will it be, if the pack "isn't there," before it disappears? If, as the existence of the prayer instinct inevitably suggests, there once was a spiritual Environment, can we imagine that it has ceased to exist? If it is still the most fundamental element of the real world to which we belong, our true life can only be maintained by resolute correspondence with it.

(b). Secondly, we may take an illustration from human activities, and think of Prayer as a species of *work*. We know that, though there are limitless materials for the support of man supplied by Nature, none of these can be turned into wealth without labour. The sun and rain, the powers of fertility in the soil, will produce no crops unless man clears and prepares the ground and sows the seed. The deposits of coal and ironstone will not yield him engines and ships unless he applies effort and intelligence to mining and metallurgy. The desert will remain arid and unproductive unless he constructs dams and digs channels for its irrigation. So Prayer would seem to be, in the Divine ordering of human life, the work whereby man is to dig channels for the water of life—to do his part in providing the means whereby a larger life than his own can flow in and "make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

This is not, as may perhaps be objected, a purely "subjective" idea of the worth of Prayer. It does not imply that prayer is merely the strengthening of our spiritual muscles by exercise. It is that, but it is much more. If we think of the use of prayer as merely subjective, we shall never really pray. The illustration requires the real existence of a Source of life and power and fertility above and beyond ourselves, which would

not (and could not, in the nature of things,) become our own possession if we did not pray.

Such prayer, whether we think of it as correspondence with Environment or as work of spiritual irrigation, we may learn to practise even if we are not yet able to think of the Source of spiritual and moral energy as personal. But, if we practise prayer and seek to follow Christ, it is certain that He will draw us into an experience more akin to His own, in which we shall know with Him that God is our *Father*, the great Companion of our spirits, and that we can, like children, really communicate with Him. This conviction we shall not gain by thought alone ; we must acquire it by experience and by trusting our powers of intuition ; and it is only so that we can learn the true and highest worth of prayer.

No doubt there will still be intellectual and practical difficulties.

(1). The intellectual ones centre for most of us around our assurance of the reign of Law. Certainly Law rules ; the Universe is orderly and not capricious. But, as we have seen,\* this does not mean, at least in the domain of life and consciousness, that all things proceed in a chain of mechanical causation, so that nothing could ever happen otherwise than it does happen. Life and consciousness have, in greater or less degree, the power of *directing* the forces of Nature into new and purposive channels ; what can happen is not rigidly predetermined by physical causes. So far as the mechanical order prevails, it does appear to limit the things for which we can rightly pray. I do not imagine that anyone would think of praying that an eclipse of the sun might not occur. And if the weather (for example) is as fully under the control of purely physical causes as an eclipse appears to be, we should not pray for a change of weather. As a matter of fact, we do not *know* that it is so ; we only think it very probable. We have not analysed and

\* Chapter IX., p. 108.

mastered the complex causes of the changes of weather as we have the movements of the heavenly bodies. The human will can in some small measure alter the weather by planting, draining, irrigation, and so on ; and we are hardly justified in asserting that the Divine will is less free than ours to direct the forces of Nature into different channels, or that there may not be ways in which this can be done " behind the scenes " without any breach of Law.

In the vast majority of matters about which religious people pray, there is no such obstacle to prayer as is presented by the mechanical order of events. In the spheres where life and the freedom of conscious beings plays its part, events are not rigidly pre-determined. The recovery of the sick, safety in danger, depend largely on the action of intelligent beings ; and there is ample room for prayer that they and we may use intelligence aright. This right use may not always bring us what we wish ; for our knowledge is very far from perfect. Our prayers must always be in the spirit of Jesus, " Thy will, not mine, be done."

It seems clear that if in this spirit we pray that we and others may use intelligence aright, we are not asking that the Laws of Nature should be interfered with. Take another helpful illustration, to show how this may be :

" There is an inland city in the State of New York which is supplied with water from a river that flows near it. The method is as follows : in a small house on the bank of the river is an engine, which goes night and day, pumping water from the stream into the main pipe that leads to the city. The demand in the city regulates the motion of the engine, so that the more water is drawn off the faster the engine goes. But when a fire occurs, someone in the city touches a spring, which rings a bell in the engine room ; on hearing which the engineer in charge by the turning of a lever causes the engine to move with such rapidity as to charge the mains to their greatest capacity, so that, when the hose

is attached to the plugs, water is sent to the top of the highest building in the place. Thus an extraordinary demand is met through the ordinary channels."\*

All such analogies are very imperfect. No illustration drawn from the world of matter can fully represent the world of spirit, for spiritual beings are not separate things in space, as material bodies are. Yet this particular one may help us to conceive how, in answer to prayer, God may direct streams of spiritual force, or moral energy, into our own lives, or into the lives of others, without any breach of law. But, if the impersonal thought of God still holds us, so that we cannot picture the "engineer in charge," we have only to imagine things so arranged that the electric message *itself* shall set the engine going faster, to see how prayer may work real effects in our lives that would never be produced without it—provided there really is a Source of spiritual and moral energy above and beyond ourselves, and provided the spiritual world is so constructed that prayer has a necessary place in it.

(2). There is another and more religious aspect of the reign of Law which may also cause difficulty. We believe that God is *unchangeable*; and we ask whether prayer is designed to change His will. If He is all-wise and all-good, does He not perfectly see what is good for us, and will He not certainly supply it, whether we pray or not? If He did not, would He not be something less than good? The answer to this surely is that what God can do for us depends on the relation between ourselves and Him. That relation is not variable on His side, but *it is on ours*, for He has given us freedom. His loving will is not affected by our failures in prayer, but what He can do for us is. Wendland says:

"It is objected that God is unchangeable, and that therefore prayer cannot influence Him. The unchangeableness of God must not, however, be allowed to make Him an impersonal being, a cosmic law, or a logical

\* Schaff—quoted by J. R. Coahu, *Oremus*, p. 167.



notion. It in no way conflicts with His unchangeableness that He should enter into mutual fellowship with men; He takes a different attitude to men according as they do or do not open their inner life to Him. . . . If a man opens his heart to God in prayer, quite different Divine influences make their appearance both in his inner and outward life. Prayer clears away obstacles which impede the working of God in our life; it is indeed an essential condition on which God does much for us that otherwise He would not have done.”\*

What “impedes the working of God in our lives” is our self-will; and Prayer is the chief agency by which self-will is overcome, and the channels are opened through which He can help us. In no case is prayer designed to change His will; its purpose is that we may lay our will alongside His and so bring Him and His purpose into our lives. It is obviously futile for us to suppose that prayer is only useful if we can have anything we choose to ask for. Even our Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane (Mark xiv. 36), that the cup might pass from Him, was not literally answered, for He had to drink it. But (Luke says), “there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening Him” (Luke xxii. 43). The Divine purpose was not altered to suit His human will, but His will was perfectly adjusted to the Divine purpose.

Nor, with some of the Mystics, should we try to annihilate our own will, and lay all prayer aside in passive submission to the will of God. This may be mere indolence and fatalism, and it is not true to the ideal of prayer which we find in the New Testament. “Prayer of a righteous man availeth much when it is energised” (James v. 16): it has to be energetic if it is to work results. “Being in an agony He prayed more fervently” (Luke xxii. 44). The Spirit itself intercedes in the prayers of the saints “with groanings that cannot be uttered” (Rom. viii. 26). God’s will is to be done

\* Wendland, *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 190.

*through ours*; and it will not be done if we remain perfectly passive. "The worth of our prayers," someone has said, "is the worth of the will-power we put into them." We must work, if the answer is to be ours.

The place of Intercessory prayer is not dissimilar to that of prayer for our own spiritual help. We can dig *collective* channels for the water of life, as well as individual ones, for our personalities are not atomistic but conjunct. But we must never make this an excuse for laziness, or for shirking our duty to others. There are times when our own spiritual desires are low, when we can yet pray for others, and find that the help we ask for them comes to ourselves also. The place of intercession may be a place of real blessing to ourselves, especially in such times of spiritual slackness. For we cannot desire spiritual blessings for our friends—the conquest of self, a clearer vision, a deeper rest of spirit, a conquering power, a larger place of service, without desiring these good things in some measure for ourselves. Our own spiritual longings will be insensibly quickened.

(3). If the main difficulty that hinders our prayers is less intellectual than practical, and arises from the seeming absence of result, it is encouraging to notice that Jesus has anticipated our trouble. He prepared His disciples to face the apparent uselessness of prayer in two parables (Luke xi. 5-8, xviii. 1-8), showing the need of persistence in the face of seeming futility. It was not that God was really unwilling or careless, but that He might appear so. A good reason for this disheartening experience, which is frequent with many of us, is provided if it is the sub-conscious part of our strange personality that is the main *locus* of God's communion with us, and if it is in this region that the answer to prayer normally reaches us. We know that it is in the sub-conscious that we touch other personalities far more than in the domain of full consciousness; and it is probable that this is the case also with our relations to God. If so, all true prayer and aspiration may be

believed to have its part in moulding our characters in the depths ; no real striving after God is ever thrown away.

If, in our experience, prayer for deliverance from particular temptations has seemed specially useless, let us remember that the answer must come *through law* and not in defiance of law. It is a psychological law that a "fixed idea," when it has got possession of us, holds the attention and tends to work itself out in act. The only remedy then is to get the attention diverted from it to something better. Many temptations are "fixed ideas" of this sort ; to struggle with them directly, and even to pray about them, leaves them dominating the attention. What we need is some stronger idea to draw away our attention from them. And is not this possible, in the inward revelation of God through Christ ? Strive to focus attention, not on the evil act or desire, but on God, on the prayer "Show me Thyself," on the perfect manhood of Christ, and on "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." Be patient with God, and we shall learn how patient He has been with us.

A word in conclusion on the subject of Worship. It is, I suppose, the general verdict that religious experience can hardly be maintained at a high level, unless under special circumstances of disability, without the practice of joining with others in the public worship of God. The two chief elements in Worship, as distinguished from private prayer, would seem to be its *corporate* character, and the desire of man to *offer* something acceptable to God.

(a). Religion in its essence is that which "binds," not only the individual soul to God, but human souls together in a corporate life. The power of religion is missed unless it is known as a *fellowship* of those who are striving to "walk in the light" of God. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one

with another." Hence the necessity felt by the Christian soul of belonging to a religious body, where his sense of loneliness and of individual weakness is merged and lost in the fellowship with others, some of whom are stronger in the religious life, and all of whom need his help if they are to be strengthened together in the Spirit. It is in the Divine ordering that we should find these needs met in the family—where the spirit of worship should find scope for expression day by day—but also in the public assembly, where we are brought into fellowship with many persons of different dispositions and capacities from ourselves, and where we realise something of the strength of communion in a common search for God and acknowledgment of the place we would have Him take in our lives.

(b). The natural and spontaneous desire of the human soul to offer something to God which it is believed He will appreciate and accept was expressed in ancient days by *sacrifice*, offered usually by priests on behalf of the people collectively. In Israel it was early discovered, under the Divine inspiration, that the practice of outward sacrifice was not what God desired—unless, at any rate, it was the symbol and expression of the real sacrifice of the heart and will to God.

“Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in :

    Mine ears hast thou opened ;

    Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

    Then I said, Lo, I am come ;

    I delight to do thy will, O my God.” (Ps. xl. 6-8).

Many of us have found that these two objects of worship, fellowship and sacrifice, are best attained when a company of people meet with one accord to wait on God, with as little as possible of formality or stated form of worship. Without assuming for a moment that the “Quaker” way of worship is the only one acceptable to God, there is yet a depth and power in this free and lightly organised method of seeking after God in common, which few who have not tried it can understand. When a company of people sit down in silent

fellowship, listening for God to speak, seeking to give themselves to Him in spirit and truth, they often find that He does speak to them in ways that they rarely find in the highly organised worship of the more usual sort. The growth in recent years of the practice of silent waiting on God in common, especially in the Anglican body, shows that some deep need of the Christian life is not being fully met by the ordinary "services" of church and chapel. There is a quietness, a restfulness, a harmony of the spirit in true worship, which may be found along these lines better than in a fully ordered service, with stated prayers and hymns and preaching.

But the *compulsory* silence which is mainly what some of the Anglicans are learning to practise is not yet the highest form of worship. There should be a place for spontaneous utterances of prayer and praise from the full heart, and for short or longer expressions of heartfelt experience or aspiration or exhortation, which anyone present who knows the meaning of Divine communion may be led to offer, whether minister or layman, man or woman. Preaching in such a company will not be a lecture, or argumentative discourse, but an expression of our need of God, of what He is to His people, and of how they may more fully receive Him into their lives. It will be in the Spirit—drawn out by the Holy Spirit through the fellowship of the gathered congregation, with a direct "message" for those who are present there and then.

That is, very briefly and imperfectly indicated, the ideal of public worship which some of us are aiming at, which is yet very imperfectly attained, but which we believe to contain limitless possibilities of helpfulness to many who are burdened with the formality, and with the feeling of a performance that has to be gone through, in much of the organised worship that prevails. There is of course the danger, not infrequently encountered, that silent waiting and freedom for ministry will be abused; that the silence will be mere vacuity, and that

the freedom will give scope for mere talkers, for ill-considered utterances, for the airing of "views," and so forth. What is often found in practice is that where the life of the congregation is deep and true, and where the spirit of fellowship is strong, these human vagaries are overborne by the tide of the Spirit as it flows through the fellowship. There is frequently an experience of the reality of the Spirit's guidance and power that is not otherwise to be known.

Whatever may be thought of this, it can hardly be denied that one of the greatest needs of this sad and sorely burdened age is more quietness, more restful communion with God. We shall do little good in the world, whether as individuals or as congregations of professing Christians, if we do not cultivate the inner life. The springs of true life lie very deep, and we need to have wherewith to draw. We are too often like a mountain torrent spreading itself over a stony bed, with much noise and little result—gaining breadth but losing depth and power to work. We need the still quiet mill-pool in our lives, where power is stored to turn the wheel. "Only he who has can give," wrote Emerson; "he on whom the Soul descends alone can speak."

## CHAPTER XIII

### SIN AND REDEMPTION

DEEP in human experience lies a consciousness that something in our life has gone wrong, that it is not what it was meant to be. All our greatest literature testifies to a *tragedy* in human life—to a grievous discord in what should have been a harmony.

“ Our life is a false nature ; 'tis not in  
The harmony of things.”

If ever we were inclined to think that the evolutionary view of the world has banished the idea of Sin, as when one awakes from a nightmare, that comfort (such as it was, perhaps, to some) can be ours no longer. Four years of European war have been to us an Apocalypse of evil. Whatever rose-water theories of life we may have held, these can satisfy us no more. The evil passions of men have been let loose, and have flooded the world with suffering and desolation such as, if we could picture it, would take away all wish for life. Humanity is “ rattling to destruction,” and as I write no end to the slaughter and the starvation of whole populations is in sight. Is this what man was made for? Is this destruction of millions of best and bravest nothing but the elimination of the weak, that “ the fittest may survive ? ”

No—there is a factor at work in human life which is not natural but unnatural. There is something here which is no mere imperfection that a mechanical process of evolution will set right. There is a fatal handicap in the struggle forwards—a force in human affairs that, if it is not countered, leads not to progress but to degener

ation and decay, to the undoing in a few short years of what has been achieved by generations of struggle. Put the blame where we may, there is no doubt to-day, if there ever was, that our life is a discord and not a harmony.

This disturbing fact, which in religious language is called Sin, is no fiction invented by theologians as a basis for their dogmas. However we may account for it, Sin is obviously here. Its reality is not dependent on any theory as to how it arose. The story of the Fall in Genesis may be a poetic myth, but it embodies, in allegory, a truth which we have only to open our eyes to see. Man has gone astray from what he was meant to be; he has thwarted the Divine purpose in his life; he is in the coils of an enemy to his peace and progress.

Assuming that the idea of Evolution holds the field—that the Life-force in its struggle to express itself is gradually evolving the perfect Person—what is Sin, and how came it to be here?

The common answer, that it is the trail left by our animal ancestry, does not meet the case. It is not mere animalism, for *animals do not sin*. Their instincts and impulses push them right—are in harmony with the condition and needs of the situation in which they find themselves. Has anyone ever seen a “profligate” animal? Has anyone ever known an animal in a state of nature to eat the wrong things, or to eat so much as to suffer from indigestion? The life-impulse pushes them forward along what is sometimes a hard way—as when a salmon leaps the falls in a river to find the spawning-ground, or the parent birds wear themselves thin to procure food for their young ones, or ants and bees exhaust their powers in collecting honey for the nest—but they have no choice in the matter; they can only follow the life-impulse that drives them to seek not their own good only but the good of the race to which they belong.

It is only when self-consciousness begins, with intelli-



gence and the power of choice, that we find the possibility of Sin. Suppose a salmon to become intelligent, and to question why it should suffer buffeting and bruises in the attempt to breast the torrent and surmount the rocks—asking “ why should I take all this trouble ? Why not swim down stream to the sea, where there is such abundance of food ? ” *That would be Sin.* Sin is a voluntary choosing of the easy path of self-indulgence, contrary to the law of my being—it is self-assertion, against the Divine ordering of the world. That is what has happened, as the result of self-consciousness, intelligence, and the power to choose. Is it a “ fall upwards ” ? Yes, in one sense it is ; but it is also a fall downwards, to a lower depth than the animals ever knew, and it is this in the history both of the individual and of the race. The contrast between the harmony of the natural creation and the discord of human life has been felt by all our greatest poets. The animals, though some of them prey upon one another, have never ruined one another’s lives as men have done.

“ I heard a thousand blended notes  
As in a grove I sat reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

Through primrose tufts in that swept bower  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths,  
And ’tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,  
Their thoughts I cannot measure,  
But the least movement that they made  
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

From heaven if this belief be sent,  
If such be Nature’s holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man ? ”\*

Every deep observer of human life is aware of this contrast ; and we all, if we are honest with ourselves, acknowledge it in our own lives. We have left the path

\* Wordsworth, “ Lines written in Early Spring.”

in which we were meant to walk, and "turned every one to his own way."

Yet perhaps there is an analogy in the life of the "lower" creation: the "parasitic habit," whereby certain races of plants and animals unconsciously turn to an easy way, and contrive to get food at second-hand, instead of taking the trouble to make it for themselves.

Parasitism always spells degeneration. Any race of plants or animals that adopts it tends to lose its best powers and to go back in the scale of life.

"Any new set of conditions occurring to an animal which render its food and safety very easily attained, seem to lead as a rule to degeneration; just as an active healthy man sometimes degenerates when he becomes suddenly possessed of a fortune; or as Rome degenerated when possessed of the riches of the ancient world. The habit of parasitism clearly acts upon the animal organisation in this way. Let the parasitic life once be secured, and away go legs, jaws, eyes, and ears; the active, highly-gifted crab, insect, or annelid may become a mere sac, absorbing nourishment and laying eggs."\*

The ill effects of the parasitic habit are not confined to the creature that adopts it, but extend to the host on which it fastens itself. Most diseases, in plants and animals and men, are now known to be caused by minute parasitic organisms, vegetable or animal. In this connection it is suggestive to recall the close relation that appears in the Gospels between disease and sin. What, if any, the connection may be is a speculative question which it is beyond the scope of this book to consider. The great difference is that Sin is a disease not of the organism but of the will, a disease that cannot be put down wholly to circumstances, but which, in some measure at least, has been voluntarily contracted. It springs from the power which a free self-conscious being possesses to make its own pleasure the end it seeks,

\* Professor E. Ray Lankester, quoted in Drummond, *Natural Law*, pp. 344, 345.

to adopt the easy way of self-pleasing instead of the hard way that leads to the good of the whole.

This is what has introduced discord into the harmony of God's creation. And it is a disease which seems to have no tendency to cure itself, which is only curable by *a change of will* from self-pleasing and self-assertion to a conscious and voluntary choosing of what, at the time, may be the hard path of surrender to the law of our being. Unless there is such a power of choice, it is impossible to account for Sin or to suggest a remedy. Determinism leaves no place for either. We are not indeed to suppose that environment is of no account. A better environment may make the change of will easier; a bad environment may render it almost impossible. But no change of environment will transform into harmony the discord in human life, if it is not accompanied by the change of will.

This view of the reality and seriousness of Sin is not dependent on theology; the fact is there, whatever our thought as to God may be. But a deeper view of its meaning and of its vileness is reached if we can hold the personal idea of God. Sin then becomes *a breach of personal relations*, unfilial conduct, treachery to our best Friend—something as loathsome as hitting one's mother in the face. It finds its classical expression in the story of the Prodigal Son, where the lad, regardless of his father, took his share of what would come to him and "wasted his substance in riotous living." And it is only with this personal view of what Sin means that we can account for the deep remorse which the sinner feels when he "comes to himself" and realises what he has done and what he is. Only when God is regarded as truly personal does Forgiveness find a place. There is no scope for forgiveness in the impersonal religions, like Buddhism, where God is replaced by an impersonal law in which everything works out its inevitable consequences.

Real forgiveness is much more than the remission of punishment—indeed this is a mere accident, which has

no necessary place at all. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son it is never even mentioned. Forgiveness is the restoration of loving relations between persons who have become estranged. Necessarily it involves *two stages*, according as one or both of the estranged persons lay aside their anger and are willing to be reconciled. I may forgive an offender, in the sense of putting away all resentment and wishing to restore him to friendship ; but until he also is willing it is clear that the forgiveness cannot be completed, the old relations cannot be restored.

The message of the Gospel brought by Jesus is that the first stage in Divine forgiveness is already reached. There is no obstacle to full and free forgiveness on God's side ; it is all on ours. God has already forgiven our sins, like the father in the parable. He calls men to accept that forgiveness by repentance and surrender, so that it may be completed and the harmony restored. In His teaching Jesus speaks quite uncompromisingly of full and free forgiveness on the part of the Father. There is no mention of sacrifice or expiation as necessary to alter the attitude of God or secure His forgiving love ; though twice He hints that the surrender of His own life is necessary to render men "forgivable," and so to complete the restoration. (Mark x. 45, xiv. 24).

Real forgiveness is no surface matter, like the wiping of bad marks from a slate. "It is not merely a smoothing over the surface to make life easy, it is a reconciliation of hearts in the depths to make life right."\* It is the restoration of loving relations between two persons, when those relations have been broken. It is not a question of punishment or its remission ; but since this is constantly confused with forgiveness it seems needful to give it brief attention. What are the Divine punishments for sin ? They are not sufferings arbitrarily attached, as by a human court of justice, to particular acts with

\* Mrs. Rundle Charles, quoted in *A Little Book of Heavenly Wisdom*, p. 186.

which they have no inherent connection—£100 fine, or six months' imprisonment, for violating certain regulations imposed by the Government. God works, not by arbitrary acts of will, but *through law*; and this no less when He is regarded as essentially personal. His punishments are the working out, through law, of the consequences of our evil deeds. What a man sows, he reaps. These consequences involve other persons, spoiling their lives, embittering their spirits; and these consequences are often irremediable. The evil has been done, and its consequences remain. They also involve the man himself, causing direct suffering and trouble, as when a person ruins himself by gambling. Such suffering we ought not to wish to have remitted, even if we could expect that God would alter His laws for our special benefit; for, if taken rightly, it is disciplinary—it is through suffering we learn to do better, and it is a part of true penitence to accept it. But there are deeper consequences than suffering—there is the hardening of the sinner's heart, the corrupting of his nature, the distortion of his view of God, and finally, it may be if sin is persisted in, the death of his true self. It is these last consequences that may be in part remitted, (and this is the message of the Gospel—but only by the sinner himself becoming a new creature, by the rebirth within him of the Divine image in and for which he was created. The Gospel is one not of Forgiveness only but of *Redemption from sin*, and therefore from some of its consequences.

Where in all this does Christ's Atonement come in, and how is it efficacious for our Redemption from sin? "Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter iii. 18).

Not "that He might bring God to us." Everywhere in the New Testament Atonement is the reconciliation of man to God, never the reconciliation of God to man. It always starts from the Divine Fatherhood, and unless we understand this we understand

nothing. Never once is Christ said to "bear the wrath of God." What He bears for us is not vicarious punishment but vicarious *suffering*, which is a totally different thing. He only relieves us from the penal consequences of sin by making us new creatures and so reconciling us to God. And this He does, not only by taking our nature upon Him, not only by His whole ministry of love, but above all by freely laying down His life for us. Clement of Rome wrote to the Corinthians, towards the close of the first century, before men had begun their speculations as to the precise nature of the Atonement: "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ, and understand how precious it is unto His Father, because being shed for our salvation *it won for the whole world the grace of repentance.*"\* It was this free self-sacrifice of Christ, manifesting the suffering and sacrifice of God Himself, which above all rendered man "forgivable," and made possible his redemption from sin.

This alone meets the need. The case of man, not as an individual only but in the solidarity of the race, is well-nigh desperate. The awakened conscience realises something of the blackness of sin, of the Divine holiness that condemns it, of the powerlessness of the human will to undo the past, to conquer inborn tendencies to evil, to bring healing and restoration. An awful chasm yawns between our actual and our ideal, between what we are and what God requires us to be. How is it to be bridged?

"Here we discover—it is the main miracle of the Gospel—that the original movement to bridge the chasm comes from the Divine side. What man hoped to do, but could not, with his bleating lamb and timid dove, God Himself has done. He has reached across the chasm, taking on Himself the sacrifice and cost, to show the sinner that the only obstacle to peace and reconciliation is in the sinner himself. 'This is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us,' and this is sacrifice

\* Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, § 7.

not that we give our bulls and goats to please Him, but that He gives Himself to draw us. Browning puts it all in a line: 'Thou needs must love Me, who have died for thee.' '\*

This bridges the chasm and reaches our need. It brings together the Divine holiness that condemns our sin and the love that reaches right down to us and lifts us up; and it further manifests the perfect human obedience that has been and can be rendered. But, if we are to see the meaning of Redemption in the Cross of Christ, we must learn *who it was* that was thus giving up His life for our salvation. It was One who was identified with God on the one side and with the whole of humanity on the other. Christ's sacrifice is God's sacrifice. It shows us that God redeems us by taking on Himself the burden of our sin, and at infinite cost to Himself seeking the lost sheep until He find it.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed,  
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through  
Ere He found His sheep that was lost."

It shows us further that the perfect surrender of man to God, which he is so powerless to make, has been offered by Jesus Christ, not as an individual man merely but as "the second Adam," the representative of the whole human race; and that what each man has to do is, in humility and confidence, to accept and identify himself with that surrender and that sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice was God's sacrifice for us, but it must also become our sacrifice of ourselves to God.

Redemption through Christ is thus our redemption from sin, and not only (or mainly) from punishment. His Atonement is directed, not to God but to us—to reconcile us to God by making us new creatures in Him. His offering to God was the perfect offering of His own life—not that we might be set free from the

\* Rufus M. Jones, *The Double Search*, p. 64.

necessity of offering ours, but that we might be able to offer it. It is only as we accept what Christ has done for us, and allow His work to be perfected in us, that Redemption and Salvation are really ours. In theological language, our Sanctification is a necessary part of our Justification, and unless it has begun within us we are not justified in the sight of God.

The infinite love of God, seeking and saving those who had lost it, is ever round about us, and always has been round about His creatures from the foundation of the world. It is because God is our Father that He redeems us. We have not to wait until we are worthy of His love, or until we have solved all the mysteries of forgiveness and atonement, to allow Him to find us and restore us to the place of sonship. All our search for Him is but a faint shadow of His yearning to find us and fold us to Himself.

“ Halts by me, that footfall ;  
Was my gloom, after all,  
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly ?  
‘ Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest !  
I am He whom thou seekest !  
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.’ ”\*

\* Francis Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven*.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN THE WORLD

APART from such belief in human Redemption as we have been considering, the Evil that is in the world presents an insoluble problem. To many sincere seekers after truth it puts an insurmountable obstacle between them and faith in "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." They recognise that the belief, could they only hold it, would be comforting and ennobling ; but it seems hopelessly contradicted by the facts. A deep instinct within us assures us that the world must be a coherent system, a rational harmony ; and indeed all our investigation of Nature proceeds on the assumption that it is so. And yet, as we look out upon it—or within, into our own hearts—we seem to see, not order and harmony but confusion and chaos. The world around is full of woe—of disappointed hopes, of suffering that appears both unnecessary and useless ; evil and injustice are rampant ; and no one seems to care. Our own hearts are the scene of warring passions, of mean and selfish inclinations which appear to have been born within us ; and God and His peace seem often far away. We do not find harmony there, any more than in the world around us. If God is what Christ represented Him to be, how can He have produced such a world as this ? Why does He not reveal Himself more clearly ? Why is it so easy to doubt of His goodness or His power ? If He were real as the sun is real, could we doubt Him any more than we doubt the sunshine ? Thus would-be faith is cast down by its doubts, and frightened at its own fears.

We are told to believe that God is at once all-powerful and all loving ; but we are inclined to say that if He

were all-powerful He *could* set things right, and if He were all-loving He surely *would*; and yet He does not. What is to be the answer? Any answer that can be suggested can only be partial and tentative, for we see but little of God's great whole. Our vision catches the "broken arcs," but is not large enough to compass the "perfect round." But perhaps we may be able to see enough to assure ourselves that it exists, and to rest in that assurance in the spirit of faith and trust.

In the first place, we may note for our comfort that there is no problem about *goodness*. When we see goodness and happiness in the world, whether or not we have faith in God, it raises no question within us why it should be there. This seems to show that we have, deep in our nature, an intuition—an ideal standard, however vague and imperfect—of what the world *ought* to be, by which we test the world as it is. How came we by this intuition? Perhaps our very discontent with the condition of the world, and the fact that we can in thought transcend it, is itself the witness that there is something in us which belongs to a higher order, to an ideal and perfect world, and which can only come from the Author of our being.

In more detail, the problem of Evil faces us in three main aspects. There is, first, the *suffering* of the world, much of which appears to be quite undeserved, and much of which does not seem to lead to any good. It is not only the suffering in human life, but in the long struggle of animal life which preceded and accompanies it. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, even until now." (Rom. viii. 22). There is, second, the apparently *heartless* character of the great world machine, which goes grinding on its way, crushing out thousands of human lives in an earthquake with as little care as that of an engine for a fly that settles on the wheels. There is, thirdly, the *moral* evil that abounds—the greed and selfishness and injustice that have wound themselves into the very fabric of our

lives and institutions, and which often make this fair earth a hell ; evil which inclines us to say that, if the purpose of God is the welfare and happiness of His creatures, that purpose seems to be perpetually thwarted. And, as part of this perception of moral evil, there is the consciousness of discord in our own inner lives.

I have tried to put all this strongly, because I feel it strongly. I have little sympathy with the easy optimism that declines to look at disagreeable things, that will not face the facts, that makes little of the tragedy of this our life, and tries to heal lightly the wounds of the soul.

What can we say in answer ?

(1). *Suffering*. Life, so far as it is sentient (and probably all life is sentient, in greater or less degree), necessarily involves pain as well as pleasure. The same nerves that yield the thrill of pleasure must also be capable of yielding pain, and we cannot see how it could be otherwise. Moreover, pain is the great educator : " the burnt child dreads the fire." If there were no pain it is impossible to see how living things could be taught what to avoid ; they would be like silly moths that fly into a candle-flame, and life would come to an end. Clearly this is part of the world order, and it seems to be an essential condition of progress.

In animal life, below the level of full self-consciousness we have reason to believe that there is a very large balance of pleasure over pain. Pleasure seems to accompany the *normal* existence of sentient beings, and happily most infra-human life is normal. It is true that creatures prey on one another ; but " Nature red in tooth and claw with ravin " is a poetic exaggeration and not sober fact. The nerves of animals, it is almost certain, are less sensitive than ours ; sensitiveness appears to increase with complexity of nervous organisation. Even when animals are destroyed and eaten by others, they probably feel but little pain except that of fear ; in intense excitement the attention

is so absorbed that bodily pain is forgotten. When Dr. Livingstone was shaken by a lion as if he had been a rat in the mouth of a dog, he declares that he felt nothing. In human life a very large part of the suffering that prevails is due to imagination, which makes possible anticipation and the dread of what is coming ; but here the part that pain can play in developing character is far greater also. There seems to be little possibility of the perfecting of personality without it ; if we want help in trouble it is to those who have suffered that we naturally turn. Largely through pain we are trained for the help of others.

“ When we are about our Father’s business, in His house, sent forth to lay healing hands on the wounds of the world, we shall be the better equipped for this holy service by every pain of the body, every mood of heart-break or despondency, passed through in our mortal day.”\*

But the paradox is that suffering only yields these fruits as it is striven against as an evil, and not courted as an imaginary good. Those who inflict it on themselves, and still more those who are content that it should be inflicted on others, learn nothing of the patience, the tenderness, the sympathy that it may develop in the human heart. And those who are fighting it most bravely, in their own lives and still more in the lives of others, are the men and women who are best able to bear it with resolute and cheerful hearts.

It remains true, all the same, that much of the suffering we see and feel cannot be shown to have good results. But we see very little of the deeper and more lasting issues. If our life is really a training for an infinite future in the unseen and spiritual world, very much of the pain that appears useless may have a meaning that we cannot yet discern. And undoubtedly suffering that is bravely struggled with yields a joy of its own—a higher kind of joy than pure unalloyed

\* From *Thoughts of a Tertiary*.

pleasure can usually give. As T. E. Brown of Clifton wrote, of one who "feels all pains not partial," but "as ripples parted from the gold-beaked stem, wherewith God's galley ever onwards strains":

"To him the sorrows are the tension-thrills  
Of that serene endeavour  
Which yields to God for ever and for ever  
The joy that is more ancient than the hills."

(2.) *Heartlessness.* The apparent utter indifference of the world process to human feelings and even to human life—of which we may take earthquake and storm as the most conspicuous examples—would appear to be a necessary consequence of the *unity* of the world. A system which is a rational whole must be impartial. It cannot be adapted to the temporary convenience of each individual; and therefore it must often present the appearance of heartlessness. The demand that each one of us shall be treated, here and now, just as we might think he deserves, is really a demand for a very imperfect world order, and therefore for an imperfect God. For, if the course of things exactly suited our ideas this year, in the course of ten years when (it is to be hoped) we shall have learnt more and grown wiser, we should see that it might have been improved. A God who exactly adapted His working to our present ideas would be one whom we should soon outgrow and discard; the work of a God who is infinite must always be beyond our full undersanding.

We must beware of confusing our minds by allowing it to be said that God "sends" calamities like an earthquake or the sinking of a ship at sea. These things do not happen by His arbitrary acts of will. They are part of the world process, which in the purely inorganic sphere (as we have seen) appears to be wholly predetermined in a chain of mechanical causation. They are not outside His will, but it is buried deeply out of sight. The occurrence of an earthquake, as the old earth cools and shrinks, and its crust "buckles," may

be regarded as equally inevitable with an eclipse, and just as little cruel. The presence of icebergs in the Atlantic, as masses of ice break off from polar glaciers and are carried south by ocean currents, may be also taken to be inevitable. But it is not inevitable that people should settle and build houses in a region known to be subject to earthquakes ; nor that a great vessel like the *Titanic* should be urged at full speed through the dark, in a part of the Atlantic known to be dangerous, to break a record.

Men are willing to take the risk of these things happening, and if they do so they must expect occasional disasters. It is essential to progress that some risks should be taken, as in learning to fly. If God, in mistaken pity, removed all icebergs from the sea to clear a passage for a particular ship, there would be no limit to human folly.

But still our hearts bleed for those who have to suffer, especially when it is through no fault of their own ; and it is clearly in the Divine ordering that, when disasters do occur, sympathy and service should be evoked and developed.

It is instructive to notice again that our Lord fully recognised the impartiality of the world order. The rain and sunshine, He said, are not given to the good alone ; calamities like the fall of the tower in Siloam are not "sent" as punishments for special sins ; we cannot assume that physical blindness is a retribution for a man's own sins or for those of his parents (Matt. v. 45, Luke xiii. 1-5, John ix. 1-3). But underneath the impartiality of the world order He discerned the heart of the Father, who was able to use these things, if men would let Him, for the working out of a purpose of love.

(3.) *Moral Evil.* The existence of Sin in God's good world is a much harder problem than those presented by real suffering and apparent indifference. It differs from these evils in that it is not natural or necessary, but unnatural and unnecessary. It is (as was

said in the previous chapter) a disturbing thing that has no business to be there ; and it is the cause of a real, if temporary, thwarting of the Divine purpose for the world. As such Jesus always treated it—not as a childish imperfection that would cure itself in time. We cannot put it down to God's account, except in the sense that the endowment of man with intelligence and the power of choice—with a portion of His own reason and freedom—necessarily made sin *possible*. With reverence we may say that if the Divine purpose was, through the life-process, to produce persons and not mere things, nor mere animals compelled by instinct, God Himself had to take the risk that the freedom He gave would be misused. Only through the use, and the chance of misuse, of such freedom could persons be developed, strong human characters achieved, and man trained to holiness.

Just now, the most appalling example of this thwarting of God's purpose is presented by War, with all that it entails of death and suffering, of moral degradation, of the sacrifice of civilisation. War is the negation of God ; and it shows at what an awful price of human suffering, which falls in large measure on innocent victims, humanity has to learn the Divine judgments on national egotism, on materialism of life, on lack of faith in the potency of spiritual forces like justice and goodwill. It shows what the world order makes of itself in human life, when man, forgetful of God and of His will revealed in Christ, chooses his own way.

So much, perhaps, we can see ; but the heart of the tragedy remains. Humanity as a whole has chosen wrong, and has largely wrecked itself. It is the victim of a poisonous thread that has woven itself deeply into the fabric of man's life, so that each individual comes into the world handicapped in the struggle, with a will biassed towards the wrong side. The solidarity of human sinfulness, the warping of the will by heredity, is the truth that underlay the old dogma of " original sin " ;

and it was Augustine who, through his own bitter experience, was the first, after Paul, to recognise adequately the tragedy of the will gone wrong. The heart of the evil is not, "I would do right but I can't"; it is "I could do right if I would, but I won't:" I will not, that is, with my whole heart and purpose. "Give me chastity," he prayed, "but—*not yet.*"

The only remedy for Sin must be some power that can reach the will, and change the great refusal into the great surrender. Force can never do it; I must will the right myself or not at all; yet I will the wrong. There can be only one solution. *Love* is the only power that can win my will and make the right act mine, so uniting my distracted and divided personality, and turning its discord into harmony. And that is where Christianity meets the need of the world, and of each human soul, in a way that no other religion ever did or can do. It never blinks or shirks the evil; it holds up the mirror to life as it is; it shows us that God sees the tragedy, and, more than that, that He shares it. That is the meaning, surely, of the Incarnation and the Cross. God Himself has provided the only remedy that can cure the disease, resolve the discord, and bring the human world back out of disorder and chaos into its proper order. The remedy is that He takes the burden and the misery upon Himself. He Himself, in the person of His Son, enters our world of woe, tastes life's bitterest cup, and shares its most fiery baptism; grapples hand to hand with the massed forces of human evil, entrenched in the highest places; and, seemingly worsted, turns His defeat into victory, the victory of an adequate manifestation at once of Divine holiness and love, and of human surrender and obedience. The only real and finally satisfying answer to the problem of evil in the world is to be found in Gethsemane and the Cross; here alone is a solution deep enough, strong enough, rich enough, to give us peace.

*Christ lifts the curtain that hides from our eyes the*



meaning of the world. He shows us the most portentous of all the world's sins, the murder of its Redeemer, turned into the very means of Redemption, whereby men may be rescued from sin, reconciled to God, and brought into their full manhood as His sons. He shows at what infinite cost, even to God Himself, this reconciliation has been effected. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them." And, if much remains unrevealed, we can see enough, if only our eyes are being opened, to rest assured that *all* is in the hands of the Father of love; whose love would never let men go, will never let them go; who has always sought and will always seek to restore them to His own heaven. And, for the tragedy within, if our cry is Paul's, "Who shall deliver me from this dead body?" the answer comes, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord; for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither height nor depth, shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

Finally, if we are to know this to the full, the restoration of harmony within us must make us eager to unite our feeble powers with His in the restoration of the harmony without.

"Evil will remain with us a problem until the day when Christian people are possessed heart and soul with the spirit of the Cross of Christ. When 'the love of Christ constraineth us,' we shall find ourselves drawn into fellowship with God's eternal passion for overcoming evil with good. Then evil will not seem less evil, but more, but we shall view it with altered eyes. Now we look at sin, seeking to solve a problem; then we shall look at the sinful, seeking to save. Instead of a problem, we shall have a work; instead of speculation, love; instead of pessimistic doubt, the hope that accompanies holy faith and high endeavour. May that day soon dawn."\*

\* W. N. Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 462.

## CHAPTER XV

### HUMAN IMMORTALITY

BELIEF in a future life has always been a vital element in Christianity, and in the solution it offers to the problem of Evil in the world. In some form or other, it holds a place in almost all religions. Judaism is often regarded as an exception, yet even there a man was not believed to perish utterly with his body, but to persist, in however vague and unsatisfying a condition, in Sheol, the dark underworld of spirits. In these days we are all aware that the truth of any personal survival is widely doubted; and the fact gives an added poignancy to the anguish wrought by the war, which is cutting off in the flower of their manhood so many millions of our youth, the hope of the future, and bringing desolation to so many homes. Even in some who have never doubted about a future life, the belief is little more than traditional, and brings little comfort or assurance. The gloom which pervades the average funeral shows that the "sure and certain hope" is too often rather a phrase than a reality, and that the continued life of the loved ones who are lost is anything but a joyful certainty. In this widespread uncertainty, it is no wonder that some are driven to confident denial, and others to the search for positive evidence in the practice of spiritualism. The denial is often very far removed from the careless desire to "eat and drink for to-morrow we shall die"; it is in many a brave refusal to drug their souls with comforting beliefs that have no foundation in experience, and a proud contempt of the spiritual selfishness that bases morality on rewards and punishments.

There would seem to be an urgent need for more serious and strenuous thought and study than most of us

are willing to give to the question of the life beyond. We are too easily convinced that there is nothing to be certainly known about it, and that, if only our life here is lived as Christ would have it, the future can be left to take care of itself. "Is there no future life? Pitch this one high," wrote Matthew Arnold, and there we are too content to leave it. Yet our minds are so made that sooner or later we must demand unity and rationality in the Universe; and the war is bringing home to many the futility and unreasonableness of a life that only breeds hopes to disappoint them utterly. I venture to plead that we shall not be content with agnosticism on this matter, but shall use our best endeavours to find whatever truth there is to be known. The reading of a recent book, *Immortality*, edited by Canon Streeter with the help of several laymen and ministers of open mind, and of one distinguished woman, may go far to convince us, as the writers declare their study has convinced them, that "the belief in personal immortality rests on a wider and surer basis in reason" than has often been supposed.

For the Christian the first appeal is naturally and inevitably to the teaching and life of Jesus; and there can be no doubt about His certitude in the matter. When the Sadducees came to Him with their rather flippant question about "the resurrection" (Mark xii. 18-27), He assured them that if they understood their own Scriptures they would never ask it. They not only misconceived it in thinking of it in physical terms, such as those of sex; they had missed the real foundation on which belief in it rested. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." At first sight this seems like playing with words; for what proof of a future life is to be found in the fact that the patriarchs believed in God and directed their lives in relation to Him? A deeper study of the reply, however, shows that it cuts much deeper than this. "He is not the God of the dead but of the living": the

patriarchs, in so far as they walked with God, were in the hands of One whose love could not allow them to perish, whose eternal life they in measure shared. The essence of the proof that Jesus brings is that belief in immortality is bound up with belief in the Fatherhood of God, and that they stand or fall together. This we shall have to consider further at a later stage.

It may be well, before going further, to pass in review some of the thoughts that in the present day give rise to doubts concerning the future life, and to consider how far experience enables us to supply answers.

(1.) There is, first and foremost, the conviction that Physiology has proved the dependence of the Mind upon the Brain; and the difficulty this causes of believing that when the brain decays the mind can continue active. Physical lesions, or the softening of the brain substance, injure the mental powers; a shock to the brain produces unconsciousness or even death. In answer to this it may be said that, while we may have no positive evidence that the mind can function without a brain, yet the modern study of psychology affords strong presumption that, as evolution proceeds, the mind becomes increasingly autonomous and independent. We have abundant evidence, from modern therapeutics as well as from "Christian Science" and allied doctrines in which mental healing plays a part, of the influence of "suggestion" in affecting the processes of the body—especially those processes, such as the action of the heart, the contraction of the smaller blood-vessels, and the secretions, which are not under the control of the conscious will. This power of "suggestion," whether the normal consciousness persists, or (still more) when it is to a greater or less extent inhibited under hypnotic conditions, seems to act, not by *reducing* the power of the mind, but by increasing it in a certain direction—arousing such a degree of attention to the particular idea suggested that for the time it dominates the personality to the partial or total exclusion of other

ideas.\* When a soldier, grievously wounded in the thick of the fight, feels no pain, it is not because his mind is inactive, but because of the very intensity of his attention to what is going on. This power of the mind over the body appears to increase as man's mental powers develop; it is closely related to the development of the will,

“ which from its place of authority can direct the stores of nerve force, now into this channel and now into that, by a power of choice which no physiological law, and indeed no psychological law, can explain or predict. . .

. . . These higher powers serve to point us still further along the road that delivers us from bondage to the flesh, and leads us to anticipate the complete emancipation of the mind from the body.”†

This conclusion is strongly supported by telepathy, which is now becoming generally recognised as a fact, and which proves that our subconscious minds, especially in hypnotic conditions, influence one another in ways that have no obvious dependence, and possibly no dependence at all, on the bodily organism.

(2.) Another difficulty is a speculative one, but it is no less real and pressing to many minds. At what point in the development of the race, and of each individual, are we to suppose that man becomes possessed of an immortal soul? Our personality appears to develop gradually out of that which is not personal. If evolution convinces us of the solidarity of all living things, how can we attribute immortality to a section only of organic beings, and deny it to the rest? And,

\* See Chapter on “Mind and Brain,” by Dr. J. A. Hadfield, in *Immortality*, pp. 32-35.

† Ditto, p. 70. It is a helpful thought that man in his development has reached a stage at which the mind or soul is not a mere function of the body, but a Personality that uses the body as its medium of expression, somewhat as a musician can only express himself by means of an instrument. If the instrument is faulty, the most perfect musician cannot make good music with it. So, when the bodily powers decay, the soul that uses them is unable to make its music, but may nevertheless in itself be wholly unimpaired.

along with this, we may take another speculative question: is immortality an attribute of the soul itself, as Plato argued, or is it rather something that has to be won by strenuous life, or received as God's gift through Christ? Does it belong to man as man, or is it *conditional* on how he lives in this world?

I am not so rash as to offer any ready-made answers to these difficult questions; and I do not think that the New Testament affords material from which any answers could be inferred. But I venture to think that it is along the line of what we have called the achievement and development of Personality\* that we must look for them. Perhaps we come into this world as part of the undifferentiated world-soul or life-stuff that is common to all living things; and perhaps those creatures that never rise to personality return at death to the unseen and undifferentiated life-mass out of which they came. And it may be that the possibilities of the achievement of personality are not confined to this life—so that those beings that have it in them to become truly persons, such as infants, will have fuller opportunities later, and that those who are most fully persons here will inherit the fullest personality in the world to come. If our life, and the life of all living creatures, in some sense survives in the unseen, but is only distinct and differentiated there in proportion as personality has been achieved here, by self-surrender, nobility of purpose, and intercourse with God, it would seem that some satisfying answers might be reached to both questions. In any case, we must I think regard personal immortality as in some sense a matter of *degree*. We can hardly rest in the idea that mankind can be divided into two sections, one of which is destined to full personal immortality and the other to mere extinction, or to an impersonal existence, at death. That is the rock on which the notion of "conditional immortality," as it has often been presented, seems to founder. We must frame any theories

\* See above, Chapter V., p. 68.

(if at all) on the basis of experience ; and all our experience would tend to convince us that the mass of men and women are neither unworthy enough to perish utterly, nor capable yet of the highest kind of immortality that we can conceive : “ neither good enough for heaven nor bad enough for hell.”

These, as has been said, are largely speculative questions. The practical one is whether we find our doctrine of immortality a tonic of the soul, bracing us to faith and worthy endeavour, or a sedative that makes us careless how we live.

“ Foiled by our fellow-men, depressed, outworn,  
 We leave the brutal world to take its way,  
 And, ‘ Patience ! in another world,’ we say,  
 ‘ The world shall be thrust down, and we upborne.’  
 And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn  
 The world’s poor, routed leavings ? or will they  
 Who failed under the heat of this life’s day  
 Support the fervours of the heavenly morn ?  
 No, no ! the energy of life may be  
 Kept on after the grave, but not begun ;  
 And he who flagged not in the earthly strife,  
 From strength to strength advancing—only he  
 His soul well-knit, and all his battles won—  
 Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.”\*

(3.) A further grave difficulty—by no means speculative, but the outcome often of agonised experience, which renders it to many earnest minds the most serious of all—is the silence of the grave. No voice comes back to us from those we love who have passed over, to tell us how it is with them there ; for most of us the separation seems to be final and complete. The spiritualists are able to convince a few that communication with the departed is possible ; but (apart from fraud and credulity) it is questionable whether the trivialities that are supposed to “ come over ” in this way are worthy of serious consideration. There appears to be very little indeed in most of these “ communications ” that could not be derived from the minds, whether conscious or sub-conscious, of the living persons concerned.

\* Matthew Arnold, *Immortality*.

The deeper and more careful investigations of the Society for Psychical Research are worthy of all support ; but any evidence they have yet secured is so subtle and so complex as to carry but little conviction to ordinary minds. The belief of most of us will still have to rest on faith ; but that is no reason why such belief should not in time be verified by scientific enquiry. Whatever the outcome of such investigations may be, it will remain true that the worth of our belief in a future life will depend very much on the *quality* of that existence ; and so far there is little in the results obtained either by spiritualism or by more scientific methods to give us assurance in this matter. The demand for faith is likely to remain.

(4.) Students of the New Testament have to face the difficulty that, while the resurrection of the dead to life immortal is clearly taught, there is no certain revelation of the conditions and character of that life. It is not even possible to be quite certain whether the doctrine of unending punishment for the finally unrepentant is taught or not ; for the word translated " eternal " (literally " age-lasting ") seems to be used to express the timeless quality of the spiritual world—as in 2 Cor. iv. 18, " the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." Also such words as " destruction," " death," would seem to be more naturally interpreted as meaning annihilation than a condition of unending misery ; and the word which appears in the Authorised Version as " damnation " is simply " judgment."

We cannot interpret what the New Testament does teach on these matters without some knowledge of the ideas such words conveyed to those who used them ; and this involves no little study of contemporary Jewish notions about Eschatology. These in the days of our Lord had been but recently developed in Palestine, partly through Persian influences but mainly by the writings of the Apocalyptists ; and the position of the



Sadducees, " who said there was no resurrection," was that of conservatives who rejected what they regarded as new-fangled speculations. The reports of our Lord's own teaching are undoubtedly coloured by these ideas, and cannot be understood if they are disregarded. In the book, *Immortality*, from which I have quoted, there is a long and illuminating chapter by Rev. C. W. Emmet, a leading student of Eschatology, on " The Bible and Hell," in which he concludes that nowhere is the doctrine of Eternal Punishment certainly taught, and that there is no evidence that it was taught by Christ at all. While it unhappily became the accepted view of the Church, chiefly through the influence of Augustine, it has never been embodied, says Mr. Emmet, in any Church formula. He believes that we must go behind the explicit teaching of the New Testament, just as we have to do in regard to such matters as Slavery and War, and form our conclusions from the revelation of the character of God which we find there. The suffering of those who die unrepentant will, he believes, be redemptive; and for any who may completely lose the power to respond to the love of God there may be final destruction.

By other writers in this valuable book, including the well-known art-critic, Mr. A. Clutton-Brock, attempts are made to picture the real quality of the heavenly life, and we are led to the belief that this can be nothing but progress in love, service and knowledge, crowned with the open vision of God Himself. The joy of heaven will be the joy of escaping from the struggle of life by escaping from self. It will include the joys of achievement, recognition, and reconciliation; but it will have to be *earned* in the struggle for life here; it will not be the joy of the characterless. " Heaven would not be heaven to us if we ourselves, and all others, were made good by losing our characters. If we are to love each other in heaven, it must be we ourselves who love each other, ourselves with all the savour of individual character still about us. If we think of heaven as a real

place, it is as a heaven of real people doing real things." "If we were turned suddenly into angels, we should be but domestic pets kept by God."\*

This brings us back to the point at which we started: that our belief in Immortality is bound up with our faith in the Fatherhood of God. Neither belief, I am sure, can finally maintain itself without the support of the other. If we have not faith in the Fatherhood of God, belief in Immortality is not secure. The philosophic idea of God as the Universal Consciousness does not carry with it the assurance that separate personalities persist; few men have held a stronger belief in God as the Absolute than T. H. Green, but he had little assurance about the future life. And the attempt to reach positive conclusions by purely scientific methods has so far raised more questions than it has answered. The converse is that, if we have no belief in Immortality, any faith we may have in God's Fatherhood is gravely shaken. For, if the vast majority of those whom He has brought into being pass finally into nothing, or into impersonal existence, without reasonable opportunity of learning His love, He cannot be the Universal Father of whom Christ taught. Those who have learnt to know Him, and in some measure to share His life, cannot reconcile with this experience the thought that they, and the others who have such splendid capacities for learning it, can be finally extinguished as persons by the mere accident of physical death.†

What then does Christ do for us in assuring us of Immortality? He can do for us in our day what He did for His first disciples with their widely different outlook—give us the joyful confidence that He has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). He was able to convince

\* *Immortality*, pp. 225, 227.

† It is worthy of notice that this is how Jesus treats the death of the body. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but after that have nothing more that they can do." (Luke xii. 4=Matt. x. 28, from "Q.")

them that He had released "the spirits in prison," out of the shadowy underworld of Sheol into a real life of brightness and joy and love; and that they themselves would join Him in such a life beyond the grave. He can convince us too that such a life awaits us if we are faithful to Him. He reveals to us God as our Father, in whose hands we and our future, and the future of those we love, are safe. He comes to us victorious over death, assuring us that death has lost its sting and the grave its victory. He offers to share with us His own immortal life, which begins here in this world and which physical death can never destroy.

Yet it remains that our assurance of Immortality, like our belief in God, is *faith* rather than knowledge, and it is doubtless better so. If we knew what would befall us when we are called to step out from life in the body, as certainly as we know what will be around us when we walk through the house door into the street, where would be the worth of dying for a great cause? It is because it is a venture that it is a sacrifice; it is for this we honour those who hold their lives cheaply for a cause that is greater than themselves.

"Men who offer their lives do so because they believe there is something which matters more than life, and would prove their belief in act as well as in thought or word. The country and the cause are shadows of this something; Heaven itself is a symbol of it; and we can only express it in vague phrases from which all the passion and beauty of the reality are lost. It is a belief in the significance of life beyond the individual life itself, in a purpose which makes men one, not in a futility that divides them. This is not a certainty for any man, it is never more than a strong hope; and because it is not a certainty men are eager to pledge themselves for it, to show how they will throw themselves away on the chance of it. . . . For this belief in the significance of life, and the value of one man's death to the life of all, is deeper than any answer a man's

reason may give to the questions which he asks himself. Such answers are made by his reason alone ; but the belief, or the will to believe, belongs to the whole of his nature. It grows with experience, and is strongest in those who experience life best. Doubt is often a brave asceticism of the mind. It will not enjoy more faith than it has earned ; and there is no way of earning faith except by acting upon it before it comes."\*

We may have to make up our minds that as yet we know no facts about the future world in the way we know facts about this world ; but, though our belief in it is faith rather than knowledge, it is a faith that will persist and deepen as our knowledge of Personality enlarges, and as we strive after the Christian experience and the practice of our religion. As the writer just quoted elsewhere argues, we are shut up to the dilemma that either matter is the master of the spirit, or spirit is the master of matter. In the former case we are all machines—but the very fact that we have found it out proves that we are *not* machines.

" We do finally exist for ourselves because we think ; and that which thinks has for us a reality superior to that which it thinks about, including our own flesh, a reality persisting through all changes of flesh, even the change we call death. Therefore men will continue to believe in a future life, will indeed believe in it more and more with every increase of consciousness."†

But the faith, if it is to be a worthy one, worthier than the now discredited belief in heaven and hell as parts of a system of rewards and punishments which ministered to spiritual selfishness, must be the outcome also of a better practice of Christianity. It will be as we take our share in creating heaven on earth, including first and foremost the earth of our own hearts, that the heaven beyond will be worth living for.

\* A. Clutton-Brock, *More Thoughts on the War*, Essay on "Mourners and the Dead," pp. 80-82.

† *Immortality*, p. 11.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

IN writing of "The Religion of Experience" I have tried to direct attention in the main to matters that fall within the scope of our own experience (sensuous and spiritual), and that of other men, and to avoid as far as possible the discussion of purely speculative questions. The desire has been that we may keep the solid ground of fact beneath our feet. But it seems needful, before we close, to go somewhat beyond the range of actual experience, in considering what light we have upon a question that can hardly be regarded as irrelevant: what is the place of religious experience in the Divine ordering of the world, what is it leading up to, and how far can we apprehend the nature of the purpose of God with which our religion bids us co-operate? What, in short, is the Christian ideal?

It has often been pointed out, as distinguishing Judaism and Christianity from the "pagan" religions, that while these looked back to a Golden Age in the past, Judaism and Christianity looked forward to one in the future. Progress, therefore, has been one of their watchwords. There has been, feebly perhaps and fitfully apprehended, some picture of a goal to be reached, a world-wide purpose to be attained, which has served to give strength and persistence to the religious life.

We are all aware that the teaching of Jesus centred round the Kingdom of God, and that He taught His disciples to pray for its coming; but the phrase is so familiar to us that many of us hardly stop to consider what it meant to Him or what it means to us. The idea of the Kingdom did not begin with Him. A very little study of the Gospels will convince us that it was a general

and confident expectation of the most spiritually-minded of His immediate predecessors and of His contemporaries. Joseph of Arimathea is commended as one who was "looking for the Kingdom of God" (Mark xv. 43); Simeon is described as "looking for the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25); and Anna as among those who were "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38). These various phrases, which all have the same meaning, point to the mental attitude of the pious Jews of that day. What was it they were expecting, and how did the hope arise?

It arose in the first instance out of the work of the prophets. Jehovah had always been regarded as the "King" of Israel; but the prophets taught their people to look forward to a day when He would assert His sovereignty over all nations, and rule in righteousness from Jerusalem. Take one example only: Isaiah (chapter xxiv.), after describing the miseries of the land in time of war, breaks out: "Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously" (Is. xxiv. 23). This hope was continually disappointed, yet was again and again revived. Sometimes, as in the passage just quoted, Jehovah is thought of as reigning in person; frequently it is through His earthly vice-gerent, the Anointed One or Messiah; a second David, who will restore the glories of the ancient Davidic monarchy, and under whose beneficent sway the world will be at peace (Is. xi. 1-10). After the prophetic inspiration in large measure ceased, many pious Jews betook themselves to the writing of dreams which are known as Apocalypses. Both Prophecy and Apocalypse arose in times of national danger, and generally in days of calamity and woe. They differ in two respects: Prophecy is in the main original, and expresses the first-hand thoughts of the writers, while Apocalypse is for the most part borrowed and imitative; and, while

Prophecy finds in present conditions, however dark and evil, the means by which Jehovah's purposes are to be worked out, Apocalypse regards them as absolutely bad, and looks to their being righted by a miraculous Divine intervention. This violent transformation of the existing order the Apocaiyptic writers expected God would achieve through His Messiah. But two conceptions of the Messiah are found in the writings that immediately preceded the Christian era. In one He is represented as a human warrior, like Judas Maccabæus, who would lead a revolution and drive out the oppressors of the nation; in the other He appears as a wholly supernatural being, "the Son of Man," will come in the clouds as God's messenger to judge the world and punish the ungodly.

The Temptation of Jesus, the account of which must have been derived from Himself and is handed down in His own pictorial language, was doubtless the struggle in His mind, after at His baptism He had fully learned that His was to be the Messiah's work, as to how He should play the part that He knew the Father had assigned Him. The first conception He definitely put aside when He conquered the temptation to seek for "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." And much of the second He also put aside when He refused the suggestion that He should announce Himself by miraculous display, descending unhurt from "the pinnacle of the temple."

Yet He used many of the expressions with which the Apocaiyptic writers had made some at least of His hearers familiar. He spoke of coming "in the glory of His father with the holy angels" (Mark viii. 38), and told the high Priest that they should see "the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark xiv. 62). But it seems certain that He used such expressions symbolically, and in a deeper sense than any of His hearers understood. There are many signs that He had found what was for

Him the true picture of the Messiah's work where none of them had thought of looking for it—in the description given by the later "Isaiah" of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah (Is. xlii-liii): of One who should not strive or cry, who hid not His face from shame and spitting, who was despised and rejected of men, whose life was made an offering for sin. This picture He took as giving Him the clue to His life's work; and it meant that only through suffering and death would He win His victory and bring in the Kingdom among men. When He uses the Apocalyptic language of "coming in the clouds of heaven" it is, I doubt not, *His death* and consequent victory over the evil of the world that He has in view.\*

There is in the Gospels no suggestion of a *second* Coming. The "coming" in glory implies His assurance that through death He would triumph over the powers of evil, seen and unseen, and bring the whole world of men under the rule of God: in the words of the fourth Gospel, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John xii. 32). His Apocalyptic imagery is no unintelligible excrescence on the ethical teachings of the parables and the Sermon on the Mount; it is the crown of the whole; it unlocks the secret place of His deepest thoughts about Himself and His work.. The Kingdom of God was so near—was, in fact, in some sense, already come (Matt. xii. 28, Luke xvii. 21)—because Jesus knew, in His own experience, that one Man was found who was perfectly obedient and faithful, perfectly attuned to the Divine purpose. It was this inward relation to God which made Him the true Messiah; in Him the Kingdom was already breaking through. But it could only be established as other men were brought to share

\* This explains such difficult passages as Matt. x. 23, "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come." Compare Mark ix. 1, and note the word "henceforth" in Matt. xxvi. 64=Luke xxii. 69 (R.V.).



in His own obedience and faithfulness ; and this, as the darkness closed around Him, He saw, ever more and more clearly, could only be achieved by His death, and the perfect manifestation it would yield at once of Divine holiness and love, and of human surrender and obedience and faith.

Hence for Him the Kingdom was to begin in the salvation of individuals. It had its roots in the inmost heart, in the experience of reconciliation to God and the life of joyful obedience. But it could not end with the individual ; it must find its expression in a new order of life, in which men should live in right relations not only to God as their Father but to other men as their brothers. " Thy Kingdom come ; Thy will be done *on earth.*" The present world order was to be transformed by the winning of men to become sons of God.

How then does the Kingdom of God come ? All our present thought lives in an absolutely different world from that of the Apocalyptic dreamers who expected a world catastrophe. We have ceased to look for cataclysmic changes, and distrust them as likely, if they did happen, to be superficial and transient in effect.

And it is to be noted that the thoughts that underlie many of our Lord's words about the Kingdom are much more akin to our modern ideas than to those of the Apocalyptists. He compares it to a *seed* growing in secret (Mark iv. 26-29), and to *leaven* working unseen in a mass of dough (Matt. xiii. 31-33). He also compares it to seed scattered by a farmer, whose growth depends on the soil on which it falls—suggesting that the Kingdom is only receivable by the souls that are ready for it. All this is much in contrast with the expectation of a great spectacular display, which all would witness, whether inwardly prepared for it or not.

And yet Jesus, as we have seen, used many of the expressions made familiar by the Apocalyptic writers. And this must surely have been because He saw that

they contained a hidden truth. He knew that what we call the "natural" order does not exhaust the Divine resources; that there is a spiritual order ready to break into human life as soon as men are found who are obedient and full of faith. This spiritual order is that to which man, as made in the image of God, really belongs; and the redemption of the race, for which He has come, is simply the restoration of the race to the powers and blessings of that spiritual order—the winning of human life, with all its present discords, into the harmony of the Kingdom of love. There is no limit to what God can do, even quickly, if the right conditions are provided and the human instruments are ready.\*

Further, our Lord's adoption of the ideal of the suffering Servant meant that He saw the Kingdom of Love can only come by means of love and not by outward violence. It was not to be government-system but a love-system, a larger *family*. Hence God is not for Him the King but the Father. As a love-system it could only be introduced by love to the uttermost, and to this Divine method He was faithful to the end. He "endured the Cross, despising the shame," and out of it He won His victory.

But He Himself could only begin the work, and He left the disciples, whom He had trained, to carry it forward, and to do this by the same means that He Himself had used. He refused to let them fight for Him, and told them, as reported in the fourth Gospel, that His own spirit, that is, He Himself in spiritual presence, would come to them to be their Guide and "Comforter."

\* The more we know of the spiritual order in our own lives, the more we shall be ready to believe that it can break into human life even suddenly if men believe in it, and are prepared for it. Even in the natural world modern biologists have discovered "mutations," whereby plants or animals may suddenly change into what seems a different species when the conditions require it. In human history we have many examples of great and sudden changes: the rise of Athens, the spread of Christianity, the revival of learning, and the recent awakening of China to the desire for Western civilisation.

His own character was to be theirs, and His method and way of life was to be theirs also. He radiated into them, dull as they were, some of His own love, His own obedience, and His own faith. Though their faith was for a time shattered by the Cross, it revived with His Resurrection, and they went forth to win the world by the same methods that He had used. Those weak, dull men were raised, almost suddenly, by His Spirit into a large measure of His own faith and courage; and they went out to "turn the world upside down" with no weapons but love and trust.

And they did it. In three centuries the "hard pagan world," dying of moral exhaustion, renewed its youth, and eyes weary and disillusioned shone with the happy wonder of a child. Armed revolution failed; philosophy was found wanting; but love and faith conquered. A new flood of moral energy came surging into the world through the obedience of Christ and His followers, and began its transformation.

Then the light burned dim—especially after the new order was closely joined to the old by the nominal conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity, and the union of the Church to the State. The pagan world was partly Christianised, but Christianity was largely paganised. Its sense of a great world enterprise, a mighty heroic task, was lost. And this loss, I cannot doubt, was partly due to the failure of even the earliest followers of Jesus fully to apprehend His meaning. They adopted the Apocalyptic expressions in their old literalness, and concluded that, since their Messiah had not come "in the clouds" to fulfil their expectations, He would come *again* to do it—to set up the Kingdom, take vengeance on the wicked, and usher in the Reign of Righteousness.

Belief in a "Second Coming" involved the idea that the life of the Kingdom was disconnected from the present life of earth, and relegated to a future that ever receded. It was regarded as a scheme of things wholly

different from those that prevail on earth; and in consequence the Church became content with the existing order, and put off its transformation till the millennium should dawn. She fell a prey to religious feuds and strife about words; and when her inner corruption had made her weak against the rival religion of Mohammed, which sought conversion by the sword, she could do no better than fight it with its own weapons. She met it on the lower plane of force, and not, as the early Church would have done, on the higher plane of martyrdom.

Moreover, the break-up of the Roman Empire left the world divided into warring nations, so that the Church itself became, especially after the Reformation, divided and nationalised, and each State called upon its own Church to bless its wars against the others. There is no fact that shows how far away the Kingdom of God still is, than that branches of the one Church of Christ are to-day at war with one another.

What, then, does the Kingdom mean for us?

The work of Christianity was, as we have seen, to transform the world order, based on self-seeking, into the Kingdom of God, which is based on Love. That transformation, in spite of constant weakness and failure, the Church has partly effected—in some measure by its direct influence, as in the abolition of the gladiatorial games, but largely through the half-unconscious working of the Christian spirit of love and recognition of the worth of all men. Slavery has nearly gone; the position of women has been greatly raised; democratic feeling has spread and deepened, and care for the weaker members of the community, and for the less developed races of mankind, has greatly increased. This progress is mainly the result, not of advance in knowledge, but of a quickened sense of the inherent worth of man as man, which we owe above all to Jesus Christ.

But the transformation of the world order into the Christ order or Kingdom of God has not proceeded far. "We see not yet all things put under Him" (Heb. ii. 8). Too often it seems but a baseless dream that human life in all its aspects and relations should ever come under the sway of conquering love. And it is just here we need the stimulus of the old prophetic hope, to nerve us to worthy endeavour. "God has provided some better thing for us," as He had for the prophets of old. We have still to pray and work for the coming of the Kingdom, as the crown of our life's endeavour, the goal that is set before us. Look at three aspects of our life to-day.

(i.) We have only to open our eyes to see what the present order, based on self-seeking, makes of the world. Humanity is destroying itself, and trampling under foot its hard-won ideals of liberty and justice, because it has held a false theory of life—the theory that the law of Christ, while it may regulate the lives of individuals, has no bearing on the lives of nations. Each nation has made what it conceived to be its own interest the supreme law, and has put its trust in armaments and alliances to secure its existence against the attacks of others. One great nation, devoted to the logical working out of great ideas, has based its action deliberately on the doctrine that above the State there is no law; but the false belief that a statesman is nothing more than a trustee for the material interests of his own people is held by almost all. The result is that the activities of the nations have been guided by mutual fear and distrust; each has striven feverishly to make itself strong enough to resist attack; the crazy system has inevitably broken down, and for four years Europe has been a shambles. It is now beginning to be widely seen that unless a new doctrine of the mutual responsibility of the nations for one another replaces the old egotism, and is embodied in a common system of law and justice whereby the good of *all* nations may be

safeguarded, the only issue of the present struggle will be further wars, until civilisation itself is wiped out in blood. The settlement of the war will be a step either forwards towards the Kingdom of God, or backwards towards the destruction of humanity. If it is to be the former, there must be not merely the founding of a "League of Nations," but a change of heart and doctrine among the peoples of the earth. Each nation must cease to look exclusively "to its own things," and must regard "the things of others," in the spirit of justice and mutual trust.

(2.) But the war, after all, is but an extreme symptom of a deep-seated malady, which darkens and distresses our domestic and national life, as well as our international relations. The same spirit of self-seeking that leads at last to war underlies much of our dealings with our fellows, and has largely moulded our institutions. The avowed motive of most of our "business" activities has been to get as much as we can and give only what we must. This has borne its inevitable fruit in the stirring up of war by the greed of financial speculators, seeking for the aid of their own Government in securing "concessions" in undeveloped countries; of armament firms, desirous to sell their goods, no matter at what cost to the world. We see it in war-profiteering, where huge fortunes have been made out of the needs of the people; in the drink trade, where moral and physical degradation are regarded as of no account so long as dividends are secured. But, beyond these special evils, we see the working of the same spirit in the hard strife of commercial competition, in the struggles between capital and labour, in the horrors of our slums and colliery villages, in the chronic deprivation of our agricultural labourers of a sufficient wage for decent existence; and, beyond all these things, in the complacent belief that the best things of life are for the few, that the great majority of people, on whom the hard physical work of the world mainly falls, may rightly

and naturally be deprived of the opportunity of developing the best that is in them. This is not what God intended human life to be ; and it is no more inevitable than war is, if we would as a people seek to live by the law of Christ. Too often His representatives on earth have stood on the side of the existing order with its class privileges, and have resisted change. What is needed is that His Church should unite in the endeavour to apply His spirit to the economic life of the community.

(3.) A third subject for thought is presented by the needs of the unchristianised world. In Asia alone the bulk of the inhabitants of India, China, and Japan, numbering about half the population of our globe, are still untouched by the religion of Christ. Some of us say, why not leave them to their own religions, and reform our own first ? Well, the thing cannot be done. Their own religions are falling into ruin. They are being educated in western knowledge, and touched by our materialist science ; the beliefs of multitudes are uprooted, their ethical guides are discredited, their moral life is in the gravest danger. Are we to offer them no substitute ? And, further, if Christians leave them alone, our traders and speculators will not. The exploitation of undeveloped resources like those of China, or of tropical countries with the help of Chinese or Indian labour, means that millions of these races will learn what " Christianity " means by its apparent fruit in the lives of those who are supposed to profess it. Can we afford that this should be so ?

Just as China was awakening to a desire for Christian teaching came this war. Japan, taught by the cynicism of the west, took advantage of the situation to make humiliating demands on China, torn with civil dissensions. Is it any wonder if China, which had been for many centuries the most peaceful nation in the world, thinks that she must learn the art of modern war ? And what is the future of the world to be, if four

hundred millions of industrious Chinese learn to make war as Germany has learned to make it ?

Plainly, if the world is not to be plunged into utter ruin, war must be abolished, and Christianity be effectively taught by those who practise it in life as well as in word. And it is just as clear that social conditions in "Christian" countries must be radically altered. Japan, there is good reason to believe, would long ago have adopted Christianity as the national religion, had she been convinced that it made for the real good of the peoples who professed it. I have heard of Indian gentlemen who sent their sons to Europe, on purpose that they might *not* become Christians.

Evidently these and other problems of our life hang together, and all need solution if the Kingdom of God is to come. We must not set them in rivalry one against another, imagining that those people alone are "practical" Christians whose interests lie along a particular channel. We must not "forbid" anyone who is "casting out devils in the name of Jesus, because he followeth not us" (Mark ix. 38). We must not deride Foreign Missions as a waste of energy while our own country is unchristian at heart, or on the other hand call social and political reformers secular-minded. It is right that we should have special interests, and feel a Divine call to work in special directions, but we must have sympathy with and encouragement for all who are labouring unselfishly for the coming of the Kingdom. The work is one, and needs the help and prayers of all true Christians ; no one department of it is more holy or blessed than another.

When we look at the needs of the sad world in this way, the task seems so great as to be simply appalling, and we are inclined to give it up as hopeless. But we must remember that it is far less hopeless than that which confronted the first Christians, for we have centuries behind us of progress that, if painfully slow compared with what it might have been, is nevertheless real.



They won the world, in the face of scorn and derision, in the spirit and by the methods of their Master ; and He can use now, as He used then, the same heroic endeavour, obedience, and faith. Our Christianity has been far too poor and thin, unheroic and unadventurous. We have gloried in the self-sacrifice of those who have freely given their lives in the war, without understanding that a still greater devotion to a far loftier and more glorious work is required of us all if we are to be Christians indeed. The very purpose of a Christian Church was to be God's instrument for "turning the world upside down," reconciling it to God, transforming it into the Kingdom of love.

And it is here we still need the stimulus of the old prophetic and apocalyptic vision, not for some other world, but for this world. We have not to fold our hands in idleness, and imagine that there must be wars and greed and selfishness until Christ comes "again" to set up a new miraculous creation. He will only come, He can only come, as men are devoting themselves in obedience, fellowship, love and faith, like the early Church. But, as has been said, the slow processes of "natural" Evolution do not exhaust the Divine resources. Vast stores of spiritual energy are waiting to be released into human life as soon as men are ready for it—as soon as for the sake of full obedience they are prepared to take all risks. Think, for example, of the new flood of hope and belief in God and man that would come into this world if one nation were found willing, in the power and spirit of Christ, to disarm itself and put its faith in the spiritual defences of love and justice. That may seem a utopian dream, and perhaps it is utopian to imagine a whole nation fired with the self-devotion and enthusiasm of the early Church.

But we have not to wait for this. All through history it has been the *few*, who have caught the vision and been faithful to it, through whom God has worked

for the deliverance of the many. The truth is mighty and will prevail. The Spirit of Jesus is as real and as potent to-day as in the earliest days of our religion.

“ The Kingdom of God is present in Jesus Himself, so that the sons of the bride-chamber cannot but rejoice. The whole New Testament is a witness to the amazing strength and joyfulness which sprang from contact with His spirit. Thus the Kingdom of God was something which needed to be prepared for, yet could not be accomplished by any preparation ; something present now, yet in the end a regeneration wholly by the hand of God. *It rests on the conviction that the true Divine order is ever ready to break into the world, if men will only suffer it to break into their hearts.*”\*

\* Dr. John Oman, article ‘ Church ’ in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. III., p.619.

## BOOKS.

THE following is a small selection from among the multitude of recent books on the subjects dealt with in this volume, and might be indefinitely extended. It represents some of those that the author has found most useful and suggestive, and is offered for the information of readers who wish for guidance in the study of these questions. Only such books have been included as are fairly within the compass of those who have not had a special training in philosophy and theology.

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Benson, Margaret :

*The Venture of Rational Faith* (Macmillan, 1908, 6s. net).

An able presentation of the basis of Christian truth in the nature of human personality, and of the demand for faith as fundamentally rational.

Burkitt, F. C. :

*The Gospel History and its Transmission* (T. & T. Clark, 1906, 7s. 6d. net).

A scholarly but very readable account of the origin and history of the Gospels, and of their worth in the light of present knowledge.

Cairns, D. S. :

*Christianity in the Modern World* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1906).

A survey of the problems presented by the world of to-day, social and economic, as well as spiritual, and of Christianity as providing their only solution.

Clarke, W. N. :

*The Christian Doctrine of God* (T. & T. Clark, 1909, 10s. 6d. net).

An able and readable answer to the questions what the word "God" means in Christian thought, and whether in the light of facts this belief can be maintained.

Clutton-Brock, A. :

*Studies in Christianity* (Constable, 1918, 4s. 6d. net).

A penetrating and very illuminating enquiry into the meaning and worth of Christianity as above all the "religion of experience."

Cohu, J. R. :

*Vital Problems of Religion* (T. & T. Clark, 1914, 5s. net).

*Through Evolution to the Living God.* (Simpkin & Marshall, 1912, 3s. 6d. net).

*Oremus : the Place of Prayer in Modern Religious Life.* (Ditto, 1908, 3s. net).

*Our Father : the Lord's Prayer from a practical standpoint.* (Ditto, 1910. 2s. 6d. net).

These books give, in popular and vivid style, a thoughtful man's answer to many of the difficulties presented by Christian belief and life, particularly in regard to Prayer.

Forrest, D. W. :

*The Christ of History and of Experience.* (T. & T. Clark, 1908, 6s. net).

A careful study of the historical and the spiritual elements in Christian faith, and of the process by which the Jesus of history passed into the Christ of religious experience.

Glover, T. R. :

*The Christian Tradition and its Verification.* (Methuen, 1912, 3s. 6d. net).

*The Jesus of History.* (Student Christian Movement, 1917, 4s. 6d. net).

The first of these books is an able attempt to show that the significance and value of Christian, as of scientific, truth rests upon and can be verified by personal and collective experience. The second is an extremely vivid presentation of what Jesus was for those who knew Him in the flesh, of His teaching and suffering, and of the processes of thought to which these facts inevitably gave rise.

Grubb, E.

*Authority and the Light Within.* (James Clarke & Co., 2s. net).

An investigation into the nature of the Inward Light, and its relation to the legitimate authority of Church and Bible, of Christ and the Spirit.

Hermann, E.

*Eucken and Bergson, their significance for Christian Thought.*

(James Clarke & Co., 1912, 3s. net).

A valuable popular introduction to the philosophy of a German and a French thinker, each of whom has a living message for this age.

Herrmann, W. :

*The Communion of the Christian with God.* (English Translation. Williams & Norgate, 1906, 5s. net).

The earlier part of this book contains a fresh and stimulating exposition, from the Ritschlian standpoint, of the unique place of the historic personality of Jesus as the medium of our knowledge of God.

Hogg, A. G. :

*Christ's Message of the Kingdom.* (T. & T. Clark, 1912. 1s. 6d. net.).

An illuminating study of the Gospel teaching concerning the Kingdom, in the light of the Apocalyptic hope.

Hughes, H. M. :

*The Theology of Experience.* (C. H. Kelly, 1915. 3s. 6d. net.).

Discusses suggestively the meaning of religious experience, its relation to the historic facts of Christianity, and its place as the foundation of Christian doctrine.

Inge, W. R. :

*Faith and its Psychology.* (Duckworth, 1909, 2s. 6d. net).

A very helpful study of the nature of religious Faith, and its relation to Authority. The author maintains that Faith is not merely a function of thought or of feeling, but "a basal energy of the whole man."

James, W. :

*The Varieties of Religious Experience.* (Longmans, 1902).

In this book the greatest of American psychologists deals with the question, previously neglected, what is the philosophical value of religious experience as evidence of unseen reality. The author's "pragmatist" philosophy is hinted at in the concluding chapter.

King, H. C. :

*The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life.* (Macmillan, 1908, 6s. 6d. net).

A valuable discussion of the difficulty presented by the fact that the reality of the spiritual world cannot be demonstrated either to the senses or by intellectual proof. Christian faith and life is the way to assurance of reality.

Moberly, R. C. :

*Atonement and Personality.* (Murray, 1901, 7s. 6d. net).

The deepest and most penetrating study in the English language of the meaning of Atonement. In the author's view that meaning can only be understood in the light of a true conception of human personality, as something to be won by union with the Divine through Christ.

Sabatier, A. :

*The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit.* (Williams & Norgate, 1904, 10s. 6d. net).

In this book the gifted author deals very fully with the Roman dogma of the Authority of the Church, and the Protestant dogma of the Authority of the Bible, and contrasts with them real Christianity as the Religion of the Spirit.

Sanday, W. :

*Christologies, Ancient and Modern.* (Clarendon Press, 1910, 6s. net).

After setting out briefly the various attempts to define the nature of Christ as Divine and human, the author offers tentatively a new solution to the problem, based on the facts of the sub-conscious life.

Shebbeare, C. J.

*Religion in an Age of Doubt* (Robert Scott, 1904, 5s. net).

A thoughtful and helpful attempt to bring together the scientific and religious conceptions of the world as based on human experience.

Smith, D. :

*The Atonement in the Light of History and the Modern Spirit.* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1918, 5s. net.).

The different theories of the Atonement are here set forth, and the endeavour is made to show where they failed, and how they may be replaced by a conception satisfying to the modern mind.

Streeter, B. H. (Editor):

*Foundations : a Statement of Christian Belief in terms of Modern Thought.* (Macmillan, 1912, 10s. 6d. net).

*Concerning Prayer : its Nature, its Difficulties, and its Value.* (Ditto, 1916, 7s. 6d. net.).

*Immortality : an Essay in Discovery.* (Ditto, 1917, 10s. 6d. net.).

These three books are the joint products of different groups of writers, working together, and deal with the subjects treated in the light of the best knowledge available in our time. While the various essays that compose the volumes differ in value, they are all stimulating and helpful.

Temple, W. :

*The Faith and Modern Thought.* (Macmillan, 1910, 2s. 6d. net).

*The Nature of Personality.* (Ditto, 1911, 2s. 6d. net).

*The Kingdom of God.* (Ditto, 1912, 2s. 6d. net.).

In these small volumes the author deals very freshly and suggestively with some of the main difficulties of Christian belief and practice.

Wendland, J. :

*Miracles and Christianity.* (English Translation, Hodder & Stoughton, 1911, 6s. net.).

The author regards Miracle as essential to Christianity and also to any vital religion ; but he rejects on the one hand the idea that it involves a violation of natural law, and on the other the belief that every event is pre-determined by physical causes. He believes that a supernatural element is present in all our life, and even in nature.

Whately, A. R. :

*The Inner Light : a Study of the Significance and Character of the Religious Consciousness.* (Swan, Sonnenschein, & Co., 1908, 5s. net.).

A philosophic discussion of the nature of religious faith, and of its relation to Science and to the aspiration for a better social order.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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*Authority and the Light Within.*

Second Edition, 1909. (James Clarke & Co.,  
2s. net.)

“There will be few thinking men and women, of whatever branch of the Christian Church, who will not gather much help and inspiration from this book.”—*Daily Graphic*.

*Notes on the Life and Teaching of Jesus.*

1909. (James Clarke & Co., 1s. 6d. and 1s. net.)

“One of the best books for the student of Jesus published for many a day. It is a great book published in a brief and cheap form.”—*Primitive Methodist Leader*.

*The Personality of God, and other Essays in  
Constructive Christian Thought.*

1911. (Headley Brothers, 1s. net.)

*The Historic and the Inward Christ.*

Swarthmore Lecture, 1914. (Headley Brothers,  
1s. 6d. net.)

“In this small book most readers will find much that is new to them; much also for which they may well be grateful as an aid to clearness of spiritual vision.”—*Christian Life*.

*What is Quakerism? An exposition of the leading Principles and Practices of the Society of Friends.*

1917. (Headley Brothers, 3s. 6d. and 2s. net.)

“A handy volume such as this, setting forth in connected outline the belief and practices of Quakerism, has long been needed. No one is better equipped for the compilation of such a book than Mr. Grubb.”—*Times Literary Supplement*.

“Mr. Grubb’s work is instructive and well written, and will be acceptable to many outside the Society of Friends.”—*Athenæum*.

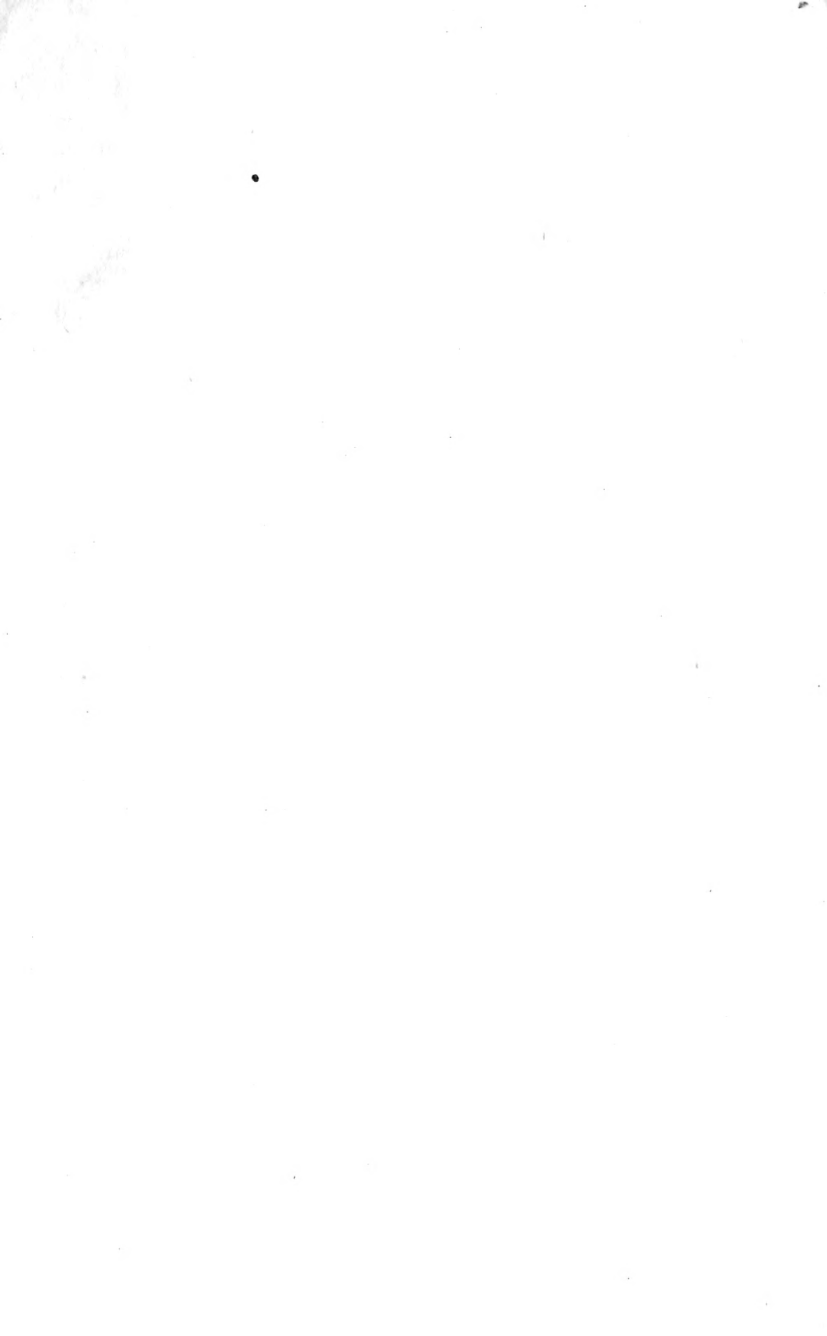
*The True Way of Life.*

Third Edition, 1915. (Headley Brothers, 2s. and 1s. net.)

“Mr. Grubb states, in the most reasonable way, the highest Quaker argument as to the Christian attitude to war. . . . Although we by no means agree with his conclusions, we are obliged to admit that the atmosphere of his book and the trend of his argument are eminently Christian and rational.”

*Commonwealth.*





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