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THE FAITH OF AN AGNOSTIC

THE FAITH OF AN AGNOSTIC;

OR,

FIRST ESSAYS IN RATIONALISM

BY

G. G. GREENWOOD

("GEORGE FORESTER")

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LT

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οὗτος μὲν οἴεταί τι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς, ἐγὼ δέ, ὥσπερ οὖν οὐκ οἶδα, οὐδὲ οἴομαι. ἔοικα γοῦν τούτου γε σμικρῷ τινι αὐτῷ τούτῳ σοφώτερος εἶναι, ὅτι ἃ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἴομαι εἰδέναι.

This man thinks that he knows, though he knows nothing; but I neither know nor think that I know. I seem, then, to be in some small way wiser than he, in this very point, that with regard to those things which I do not know neither do I think that I know them.

—PLATO, *Apology of Socrates*, ch. vi.

Thou art the King, O Truth! we bend the knee
To thee; we own thy wondrous sovranty;
And still thy praises in our songs we'll sing,
Bidding all people with blithe minstrelsy
Go forth, and welcome the eternal King.

—SAMUEL WADDINGTON, *The New Epiphany*.

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FROM THE PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The mind of an ordinary man is in so imperfect a condition that it requires a creed—that is to say, a theory concerning the unknown and the unknowable, in which it may place its deluded faith or be at rest. But, whatever the creed may be, it should be one which is on a level with the intellect, and which inquiry will strengthen, not destroy. As for minds of the highest order, they must ever remain in suspension of judgment and in doubt. Not only do they reject the absurd traditions of the Jews, but also the most ingenious attempts which have been made to explain, on rational and moral grounds, the origin and purpose of the Universe. Intense and long-continued labour reveals to them this alone: that there are regions of thought so subtle and so sublime that the human mind is unable therein to expand its wings, to exercise its strength.

WINWOOD READE, *The Martyrdom of Man* (1892), p. 179.

"To my sons when they are twenty years old" was the dedication prefixed by Daudet to his celebrated romance. To my children when they are old enough to think—nay, to all children who are old enough to think, I would fain dedicate these first Essays in Rationalism. I remember indeed the sage counsel of Schopenhauer: "No child under the age of fifteen should receive instruction in subjects which may possibly be the vehicle of serious error, such as philosophy, religion, or any other branch

of knowledge where it is necessary to take large views; because wrong notions imbibed early can seldom be rooted out, and of all the intellectual faculties judgment is the last to arrive at maturity."[1] But, alas! Custom and Convention have proved too strong, and the child's receptive mind has been crammed with beliefs which have no more foundation than the fairy-tales and demonology of old times. Such is the rule of our society, a rule which very few have the audacity to disobey. Here and there are to be found husband and wife in perfect accord on these subjects who resolve that no creeds, no stories of the supernatural, shall be forced upon their helpless children, and that judgment shall be allowed to ripen before it is asked to consider the doctrines and dogmas of the current theology. But how well-nigh impossible is the task they set themselves! And how must they suffer from the misunderstanding, ridicule, and reproaches of those among whom they live! The children must almost of necessity be kept from school. They must be taught by their parents, or very special masters and mistresses must be sought for them, and such it will be extremely difficult to find. They can hardly be allowed to associate freely with other children to whom their ignorance of the Bible stories and of "the sacred truths of our blessed religion" will appear almost incredible, and altogether shocking. Then what obloquy for the

[1] *Studies in Pessimism*; Essay on "Education."

parents! How base to allow their poor children to grow up in godlessness! Thus the children are, from a worldly point of view, put under serious disadvantage, and the parents have to steel their hearts against censure and criticism of a kind that is peculiarly hard to bear. The question, therefore, arises: Were it not better to yield? Is it possible, is it profitable, to struggle against the iron tyranny of Convention? In the interest of the children themselves, is it not our duty to follow the beaten track, and to leave further consideration of these high matters to later years? Great is Tradition, great is Prejudice, and they shall prevail!

Thus it comes to pass that the man who recognizes the solemn duty of thinking for himself on these great subjects—of considering the question *de novo*, divesting himself, as far as possible, of all preconceived ideas—so frequently finds himself under the necessity of plucking out and casting from him beliefs sown in his early childhood, and firmly rooted in that virgin soil upon which they were so assiduously scattered. And a belief of childhood is a plant like unto the mandrake—it wails as it is pulled from the ground.

But the majority of mankind pass their lives without attempting any independent investigation of these matters. They accept what has been handed down to them; nay, they make it a virtue and a source of self-commendation so to do. They are full of the comforts and satisfactions

of unquestioning faith. Many, nevertheless, only await an impulse to set them upon the path of rational inquiry. Into the hands of some of these I would fain hope that this work may fall. It makes small pretence. It does not attempt to grapple with great metaphysical problems.[1] It speaks in simple language. It says little that has not been said before. It is elementary only. It is merely an introduction to Rationalism.

But, such as it is, it has at least the merit of sincerity. I was brought up in the old beliefs, and held them as a boy without questioning, though even in my schooldays I remember being exposed to some obloquy for venturing to discredit the orthodox doctrine of eternal punishment. But, as I grew older, the many other difficulties—nay, the impossibilities, as they seemed to me—of the orthodox position forced themselves more and more upon my attention. I could not but think of these great questions. They are indeed of all-absorbing interest, for they are not of yesterday, or to-morrow, but for all time.

> Οὐ γάρ τι νῦν τε κἀχθὲς, ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
> ζῇ ταῦτα.[2]

In the result, after some thirty years of thought and

[1] Unless, indeed, ch. ix, which was not in the first edition, be considered an exception.

[2] Sophocles, *Antigone*, 455.
"They are not of to-day or yesterday,
But ever live." *(Donaldson's translation.)*

half a century of life,[1] I find I have little faith left save that faith which "lives in honest doubt." I find that the guidance of my reason (and, in the ultimate resort, there can be no guide but reason) has inexorably brought me to the Agnostic position. But the position of the Agnostic is not, as some would seem to think, a merely negative position. He asserts, for one thing, and asserts with all the ardour of profound conviction, that thought and reason must be free. He asserts the duty of independent and fearless inquiry. He asserts that all false teaching must be prejudicial to the best interests of mankind. He makes war on all pretence and insincerity. He condemns the too facile sin of credulity. He condemns all compromising with the truth. Truth he worships; and, with the late Dr. Martineau, he maintains that "no inquirer can fix a direct and clear-sighted gaze towards truth who is casting side-glances all the while on the prospects of his soul." He believes that an infinite amount of harm has been done to humanity by the doctrine that doubt is wicked, and a blind unreasoning faith the greatest of the virtues—in a word, by the false teaching of theology, and the degrading influences of sacerdotalism; and he looks for example and encouragement to the lives of such men as the late Professor Huxley, who devote themselves "to untiring opposition

[1] Alas, now nearing the three-score years and ten.

of unquestioning faith. Many, nevertheless, only await an impulse to set them upon the path of rational inquiry. Into the hands of some of these I would fain hope that this work may fall. It makes small pretence. It does not attempt to grapple with great metaphysical problems.[1] It speaks in simple language. It says little that has not been said before. It is elementary only. It is merely an introduction to Rationalism.

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to that ecclesiastical spirit, that clericalism, which in England and everywhere else, and to whatever denomination it may belong, is the deadly enemy of science," and, I would add, of true ethical progress.

Let me, then, suppose that I am dedicating this little work to my children. It shall be my *Apology*, and I need not tell them that I use the word in its ancient and classical sense of answer and justification. I will, then, address them thus:—My children, when you read these Essays, which, whatever their demerits, are, in truth, part of *myself*—poor things, it may be, but mine own—you will perhaps understand more of the writer than you did before. But that is a small matter. I have written in the conviction that it cannot but be good to write what one honestly believes to be true. I wish you to think for yourselves in the knowledge that there is a duty laid upon you to seek the Truth. Do not "let your beliefs be determined by the mere accident of birth in a particular age on a particular part of the earth's surface."[1] Consider, as Tom Hood puts it in his inimitable *Ode to Rae Wilson, Esq.*,

> That by the simple accident of birth
> *You* might have been High Priest to Mumbo Jumbo.

These Essays are intended to set you thinking. They are introductory only. You will, probably, and as I

[1] Spencer's *First Principles*, pt. i, p. 11. My references throughout are to the fifth edition.

hope, wish to read more, in order to understand at least the position of those who find it absolutely impossible to serve any longer within the lines of orthodoxy. Let me, then, give you a little help, a little advice, to guide your reading. Remember the old Italian maxim, "*Chi va piano va sano, chi va sano va lontano*";[1] or, to change the metaphor, if you are going to accustom yourself to a more vigorous form of diet, let it, at the commencement, be of a simple and not over-stimulating kind.[2]

[1] "Who goes slow goes sound; who goes sound goes far."

[2] I proceeded to make mention of some works which I thought might be useful to the children—"grown" or otherwise—at the commencement of their reading, beginning with Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, as to which see the Introductory chapter to this edition. I now omit the list of books recommended as unnecessary, and certainly not up to date, though some of those mentioned are still, and must always be, indispensable.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTORY

The Faith of an Agnostic was published by Messrs. Watts and Co. on my behalf some seventeen years ago —*viz.*, in 1902. The book has long been out of print, and, the publishers having proposed a new edition, I have, though not without much diffidence, complied with their suggestion. The task has not been altogether easy, for much of the old work had to be re-written, much omitted, and many additions had to be made. And now *cui bono?* Whom shall such a book advantage? What good end shall it serve? What, if any, is the justification for publishing such a book?

Well, in one view, at any rate, the work may be found to have some value. When a man of average intelligence and at least "*mediocriter doctus*" has for many years, honestly and with the sole desire to arrive at a truthful conclusion and to avoid all pretence and self-deception, directed such reasoning powers as he is endowed withal to the consideration of the great problems of life, and yet finds, at an age when, in the natural course of things, he must shortly follow "quo pater Æneas, quo dives Tullus et Ancus," that on the greatest of these great questions he has no choice consistent with intellectual integrity but to adopt the Agnostic position, his mental aspect, if only as a psychological study,

is generally not without interest even to those who are in disagreement with his reasoning, and conceive that they know things to a knowledge of which he is convinced that he cannot attain. In this spirit, then, I venture to make myself responsible for this second edition of *The Faith of an Agnostic*, in the hope that at least as "a human document" it may prove to possess some degree of interest, and, possibly, of usefulness, to any who may read it with an impartial mind.

But why "Faith?", asked certain critics of the first edition. What faith can be found in the pages of this Agnostic work? Well, it may be answered, in the first place, that the word "faith" is a generic term, of which faith in the theological sense is but a species. The word πίστις, and its Aramaic equivalent, existed long before the New Testament was written. "Faith," in the theological sense, is said to have been defined by an undergraduate as "the faculty by which I am enabled to believe that which I know to be untrue"! That is a humorous travesty of the theological teaching, but it nevertheless contains a substantial measure of truth. *Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?* We are all familiar with the "*credo quia impossibile.*"[1]

It may be at once admitted, then, that "Faith," in the theological sense, is not to be found in this book.

[1] A friend—a well-known minister of a large Congregational church—assures me that a Roman Catholic priest of his acquaintance delivered himself as follows with regard to Faith: "Faith is the faculty by which I am enabled to believe that which otherwise I should know to be impossible." Those, says my friend, were his actual words, uttered in all seriousness.

That is not the faith of an Agnostic. But faith, it will be said, must always be with us at every turn of life. When I go a journey by train, says a writer of some distinction, I perform an act of faith. When I commit myself to sleep, I do so in the faith that I shall wake up again. If we pursue this line of reasoning, it may be said that whenever I enter an omnibus, or take a dose of medicine prescribed by my doctor, or commit myself to a hairdresser or "pedicurist," or even eat a dozen oysters, I am supplying examples of an act of "faith." Quite so; but this is not the faith which consists in believing something which we cannot understand, for which there is no evidence, and which appears to us incredible, just because we are told to do so by sacerdotal or ecclesiastical authority. *That* is faith in the theological sense. But it is not the faith of an Agnostic.

Let us hear the late Professor Huxley on this subject:—

> It is quite true that the ground of every one of our actions, and the validity of all our reasonings, rest upon the great act of faith, which leads us to take the experience of the past as a safe guide in our dealings with the present and the future. From the nature of ratiocination, it is obvious that the axioms, on which it is based, cannot be demonstrated by ratiocination. It is also a trite observation that in the business of life, we constantly take the most serious action upon evidence of an utterly insufficient character. But it is surely plain that faith is not necessarily entitled to dispense with ratiocination because ratiocination cannot dispense with faith as a starting point; and that, because we are often

obliged, by the pressure of events, to act on very bad evidence, it does not follow that it is proper to act on such evidence when the pressure is absent.

And here is another passage from the same able and perspicuous writer even more to our purpose:—

> Agnosticism, in fact, is not a creed, but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle. That principle is of great antiquity; it is as old as Socrates; as old as the writer who said, "Try all things, hold fast by that which is good"; it is the foundation of the Reformation, which simply illustrated the axiom that every man should be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him; it is the great principle of Descartes; it is the fundamental axiom of modern science. Positively the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect, follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable. That I take to be *the agnostic faith*, which, if a man keep whole and undefiled, he shall not be ashamed to look the universe in the face, whatever the future may have in store for him.[1]

I would not be taken as under-rating the power and importance of faith. Faith healings (*e.g.*) have been known since the dawn of history, and they have taken place at pagan in the same measure as at Christian shrines—at the shrine of the young Antinous as at the shrine of the Virgin of Lourdes. It is *faith* that accomplishes such healings, not the God or Goddess of the shrine. So, too, the "prayer of faith" has an effect in proportion to the strength

[1] *Science and Christian Tradition* (1902), pp. 243, 245. Italics mine.

of the faith which inspires it—*i.e.*, a *subjective* effect. In that sense it is true that "the prayer of faith shall prevail," and as Meredith, himself an Agnostic, has finely said: "Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered." But that prayer has any *objective* effect is no part of the Rationalist's belief. The Rationalist cannot subscribe to the belief in a Deity who allows his purposes to depend upon the existence or non-existence of one or more of his "creatures" who may offer prayers to him in this way or in that, and to vary according as such prayers are or are not offered to him. No prayer has ever affected the sequence of events according to the laws of nature. No prayer ever altered meteorological conditions, for example. "It is in reality as foolish to pray for rain or a fair wind as it would be to pray that the sun should set in the middle of the day. It is as foolish to pray for the healing of a disease or for daily bread as it is to pray for rain or a fair wind."[1]

But, yet again, faith, though not necessarily faith in the theological sense, is of an importance in the life of man which all must recognize. For, as Carlyle so strongly inculcated, with faith a man may accomplish things which without faith he would attempt in vain. *Possunt quia posse videntur.*

So much then for "faith"; but what of the name "Agnostic"? There are some Rationalist writers

[1] Winwood Reade, in *The Martyrdom of Man* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1892), p. 179. He adds: "It is as foolish to pray for a pure heart or for mental repose as it is to pray for help in sickness or misfortune." Here, however, he seems to forget the possible *subjective* effect of the prayer of faith.

who appear to think that that name is already out of date. They prefer to substitute some other term, such as "Humanist" for example. I am not of that opinion. The word "Agnostic" expresses better than any other term the position of those who with regard to certain propositions relating to great transcendental questions, such as the meaning and existence of Deity or the survival of man after death, find themselves neither able to affirm nor to deny, because knowledge of these matters lies beyond the limits of the human intellect.

There are, it need scarcely be said, three possible states of mind with regard to the truth of any proposition—viz., belief, unbelief, and suspension of judgment. To take an example which, if I remember rightly, was put forward by Professor Huxley: if I am asked whether I believe that there are inhabitants in the planet Mars, I can only reply that I neither believe nor disbelieve. *I do not know.*

But this is a case where it is want of evidence only that stands in the way of definite belief or unbelief, and it is at least possible that at some future time evidence warranting the belief in the existence of such inhabitants may become available. When, however, we attempt to deal with great metaphysical problems, we soon find that we are face to face with those unanswerable questions which Herbert Spencer assigned to the region of "The Unknowable." I have observed that certain recent writers of Rationalist views appear to chafe under the restriction of knowledge so implied. Why, they ask, should we be forbidden to conceive that at some

time in the illimitable future the human intelligence may find it possible to comprehend things now beyond the pale of man's understanding? We can only answer that unless these malcontents are prepared to contest the truth of the doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge—a doctrine which is, surely, founded on the sound basis of our mental and psychological experience—it is impossible for the human mind to have any knowledge of the Abstract, the Infinite, the Eternal, the Unconditioned. If such knowledge were ever to become possible for men, that which is now "human knowledge" would, surely, cease to be merely "human" and become "super-human." Man would have become "Superman" indeed! I see no reason, therefore, why we should rebel against Spencer's division of things under two heads or categories, "The Unknowable" and "The Knowable," and as to the first of these the Agnostic cannot profess any definite belief, just for the reason that he *does not know*.

Huxley, it is true, regarded Agnosticism from a somewhat different point of view. He laid special stress on the injunction that we ought not to hold, or pretend to hold, any definite belief with regard to propositions in support of which there was no evidence adequate to amount to proof, or, as he has put it in imperative form: "In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable." But he, of course, recognized no less clearly than Spencer that there are certain matters which altogether transcend the human understanding, and that, "although that

which is unproven to-day may be proven by the help of new discoveries to-morrow," yet, nevertheless, there must be for the Agnostic, as for all others—however much they may pretend to a knowledge of the supernatural—certain "negative fixed points"; to wit, "those negations which flow from the demonstrable limitation of our faculties."[1] And such "negations" obviously belong to that class of things which are "unknowable" to man. Ultimate truth remains ever beyond his reach.

"But why," some will ask, "do you style yourself 'Agnostic' rather than 'Atheist'?" "You are afraid," say the avowed Atheists, "to call yourself by your right name!" The criticism is unjust. The Atheist is generally understood to be one who denies the existence of God. Now, to the Agnostic, who finds that to him "God" is an incomprehensible term, it does not seem rational to deny the existence of a possible something of which he can form no conception. To say "I can form no conception of Deity, therefore I deny the existence of Deity," is a form of reasoning which does not commend itself to the Agnostic, who knows that many things may exist which he cannot understand. He has no belief in such things, because he has no knowledge of them. Neither does he deny the possibility of their existence. *He does not know.*

A very able writer has put the case in favour of the word "Agnostic" rather than the word "Atheist," in a somewhat different way. "I prefer the term

[1] *Science and Christian Tradition*, p. 246.

'Agnostic' to 'Atheist,'" writes Mr. Joseph McCabe, "because there is a common tendency to conceive the Atheist as one who believes he can disprove the existence of God, and there are men who hold that position. An able French work was recently published on those lines."[1]

Moreover, the term "Agnostic" connotes the mental attitude of those to whom it is properly applied towards other questions besides that of the existence of God. With regard to the survival of man after death, for example, the Agnostic, at least as I conceive him, though he may have an opinion as to which way the balance of probability would appear to incline, neither affirms nor denies the possibility of such survival. If any man can prove that the individual consciousness cannot possibly be prolonged after what we call death here, he, said Huxley, "is just the man that I want to see." But no such proof can be given.[2]

[1] *The Existence of God*, by Joseph McCabe (Watts and Co., 1913), p. 144 *n*. I am aware that many Atheists repudiate the idea that they deny the existence of God. Thus Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner writes: "No thoughtful Atheist denies God. It would be no crime if he did; but he does not, because it is as foolish to deny as it is to affirm something of which no one knows anything" (*Literary Guide*, October 1, 1917). That is well said, and it correctly expresses the mental attitude of the Agnostic; indeed, the very term Agnostic prevents all misunderstandings on this matter, for it carries with it by implication that he who so calls himself neither denies nor affirms in such a case. But, as Mr. McCabe writes, there is at any rate "a common tendency to conceive the Atheist" as one who denies the existence of God; and some Atheists actually have taken up such a position. They are not all so thoughtful as Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner. It was, I think, Comte who said: "Atheists dogmatically assert a negative about an unprovable hypothesis."

[2] The Spiritualists, of course, believe that they have found proof to the contrary effect. See Note *infra* p. 29, and Appendix.

The Agnostic, it is needless to say, is a Rationalist; and here it may be as well to explain what I mean by that term, for it seems that on the other side of the Atlantic it is used with a very different connotation from that in which we employ it here. The late Professor Walter James, for example, writes: "The actual universe is a thing wide open, but Rationalism makes systems, and systems must be closed. For men in practical life perfection is something far off and still in process of achievement. This for Rationalism is but the illusion of the finite and relative; the absolute ground of things is a perfection eternally complete." And again: "Pragmatism is uncomfortable away from facts, Rationalism is comfortable only in the presence of abstractions." Or take the following: "On the Rationalist side we have a universe in many editions —one real one, the infinite folio, or *edition de luxe*, eternally complete; and then the various finite editions, full of false readings, distorted and mutilated each in its own way.....The Rationalist mind, radically taken, is of a doctrinaire and authoritative complexion; the phrase 'must be' is ever on its lips."[1] All this "Pragmatic" criticism may have weight against the Rationalist as conceived at Harvard University in the year 1907, but the English Rationalist dismisses it with a smile. His withers are unwrung. What, then, do we mean by

[1] *Pragmatism* (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1916), pp. 27, 67, 259; see too p. 51 as to "the Rationalist temper," and *passim*. See further p. 11 as to the supposed antagonism between Rationalism and Empiricism. This does not hold with Rationalism as we understand the term.

a Rationalist? We mean the man who, recognizing the truth of Bishop Butler's remark that "reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself," unhesitatingly follows his reason so far as it will take him. Rationalism has been defined as "the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience and independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority."[1] But, it may be asked, does, then, the Rationalist ignore emotion? By no means! He remembers with what consummate ability it was argued by Schopenhauer that the very basis of morality is to be found in the instinct of compassion. He knows that "some of the noblest thoughts born of human genius have emanated from the impulse of emotion." Yes, "but it was when that emotion was controlled by reason."[2] When not so controlled emotion is but a blind guide that may lead us far astray from the path of truth and right.

I am now writing in the fourth year of the World War. There has been much speculation as to what will be the effect of this appalling conflict on religious thought and faith. Among the clerical and sacerdotal party the opinion seems to be held that it will produce a reaction in favour of religion, meaning thereby, of

[1] Memorandum of the Rationalist Press Association, Limited.
[2] *The Meaning of Rationalism*, by Charles Watts, 1905, p. 3.

course, the religion of the Churches. This party, with that unfortunate "economy of truth" which seems to be characteristic and, indeed, an inevitable result of ecclesiasticism, are endeavouring to exploit German brutality and savagery in the cause of State-provided theological teaching. The abominable crimes of Germany during the War, which have so grievously made manifest the moral deterioration of the people, are asserted to be due to the absence of "religious" teaching in the German system of education. Nothing could be more grotesquely at variance with the truth. What are the facts? They are well stated in the *Encyclopædia Britannica:* "The Prussian system remains to-day both for Catholics and Protestants essentially denominational. All schools, whether elementary or secondary, are Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, or mixed.....In all cases the teachers are appointed with reference to religious faith; religious instruction is given compulsorily in school hours, and is inspected by the clergy." Or take this statement published by the Board of Education: "Religious instruction is a compulsory subject in all German schools, and very great importance is attributed to it. Special teaching is provided for children of each different faith—for Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Jewish. The aim of the instruction is clearly stated: To bring up young people in the knowledge of God's Word, to instruct them in Holy Scripture, and to train them so that they may set a good example, may share in the religious work of the community to which they belong, and in general may fulfil every

pious duty which falls to their lot in life."[1] Or, again: "In the two German countries [Prussia and Saxony] all the schools are denominational, and the State insists upon the religious instruction of every child of whatever creed."[2] No, indeed, it is not the Germans but our gallant allies the French who have established complete Secular National Education, "and if the Secular Solution *v.* Religious Teaching by the State were brought before the entire world for judgment, to be tested by their respective moral results in Germany and France, the world condemnation of the German brutality which marks the lowest degradation of humanity would put out of court a State system of religious teaching which has been powerless to prevent that degradation, and award the palm to a Secular System of State Education such as obtains in France, whose standard of honour in the conduct of the War commands the homage of the civilized world."[3]

On the other hand, the stupendous calamity of the War seems to have set many persons thinking, as, apparently, they never thought before, on the difficulties of reconciling the existing state of things with the theory of an All-Powerful and All-Good Creator, in accordance with whose Will all things take place, since nothing can, of course, take place against an Omnipotent Will. The result has been

[1] *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, vol. ix, p. 230.
[2] *Ibid*, vol. ix, p. 352.
[3] See an excellent leaflet on *German Crime and Secular Education*, issued by the Secular Education League.

that in many instances these belated thinkers on this elementary problem have "found salvation" in the idea of the "Pragmatists"—to wit, that God, though All-Good, is not All-Powerful; and we have seen such a man as Mr. H. G. Wells, among others, proclaiming his conversion to this remarkable form of religious faith. I venture to suggest that the Agnostic position is the only reasonable one with regard to questions of this kind—questions to which the human understanding can find no answer.

But as to what the result of the War will be upon the community generally with regard to religious belief, I am inclined to doubt whether it will be so great as appears to be commonly supposed. If we look back on the history of the last hundred years, we see that Rationalism and Free-thought have everywhere made great and remarkable progress. I do not believe that that progress will be arrested by the War, if, indeed, it be not thereby accelerated. One result, at any rate, of the War will be *to make people think*, and that is just what the Rationalist desires. When thought is free experience shows that its tendency is towards Rationalism. Meantime the Rationalist cannot expect that the progress will be very rapid. The existing conditions are greatly in favour of theology and "Church-Christianity," and it would be foolish to ignore or under-rate the forces that make for their continuance. In the first edition of this work I wrote as follows in a chapter (now omitted) headed "The Persistence of Dogmatic Theology":—

"In spite of science, and reason, and 'the higher

criticism,' and 'the trend of modern thought,' Church-Christianity seems, on the whole, to be holding its own. Why is this? The devout orthodox, turning his eyes to heaven (that is, to the infinite space above his head), ascribes the fact to the grace of a superintending Providence. The continued prevalence of these beliefs, he will tell you, is of itself a proof of their Divine origin. We can, however, afford to pass by such an assertion with a smile, for the truth is that so many causes conspire to maintain the existence of dogmatic theology in our society that it would be indeed extraordinary if that existence were not almost indefinitely prolonged. It is all very well for the enthusiast to shout *Magna est veritas et praevalebit*, but a very cursory study of human history is sufficient to demonstrate that falsehood, prejudice, passion, ignorance, superstition, credulity, self-deception, *et hoc genus omne*, have constantly been victorious over truth, so that we may almost doubt if the true maxim for this world should not rather be expressed, 'Great is error, and it shall prevail'—or, as a modern poet has put it:—

> When all its work is done the lie shall rot.
> Great is the Truth, and shall prevail
> When no man cares if it prevail or not! [1]

"But now let us examine some of the potent influences which are always at work in support of the cause of dogmatic theology.

"The first of these is a very obvious one, and is

[1] Coventry Patmore.

found in the fact that there are very few people who ever think for themselves; very few, especially, who either can or dare think for themselves in the matter of their religious belief. *Stare super antiquas vias* is so much easier, and involves so much less risk and trouble and discomfort! Let us 'put our conscience into commission'; let us be loyal to the Church in which we happen to have been born; let us worship in that Church on Sundays, and for the rest of the week go quietly about our business, our amusements, and our mundane affairs generally.

"Secondly, we have the allied fact expressed in the word *Atavism*. Men are what their ancestors have made them, and the human brain is a store-house of ancestral tendencies. What our fathers believed we too are prone to believe. Infants are endowed with supernaturalism even in the womb, and imbibe faith with their mother's milk. Thus it is that, as Renan said, men are ready to accept as sacred truths things which, were it not for *Atavism*, they would simply smile at. Thus it is that in the domain of religion men are accustomed to apply entirely different canons of judgment and criticism from those which they employ and deem necessary in all the other affairs of life. It is indeed a hard thing to shake off beliefs which have been held by long generations of men, whose peculiarities, mental and physical, have been transmitted to us according to the mysterious laws of heredity. Nay, such is the pride of race, such the inherent conservatism of mankind, that men will even pride them-

selves on holding, without further thought or investigation, the faiths that were bequeathed to them by their fathers and grandfathers, as though, like the wine inherited from the same ancestral sources, such faiths do but gain enhanced value as the dust of years settles down upon them.

"Again, Theology has one of her strongest allies in our system of education. Priests in all countries and in all ages have been shrewd enough to see that the surest method for the preservation of their power, and for the maintenance of the religious system to which they are wedded, is to obtain control over the education of the young. The child is trusting, confiding, uncritical. His mind is plastic and receptive. He will believe anything that he is told by his parents and teachers. The marvellous and the supernatural present no difficulties to him, and he is entirely amenable to the two-fold influences of love and fear which are brought to bear upon him by those who guide his tottering footsteps into the narrow path of faith. It is then with 'the wisdom of serpents' that the Church has acted in laying claim to the infant in his cradle that he may be received into the fold by means of a solemn and mysterious 'sacrament,' at a time when the innocent subject, 'muling and puking in his nurse's arms,' is all unconscious of what is being done to him. It is with a like wisdom that the clergy have further provided for the exercise of their influence over young boys and girls at an age before the critical faculty has awakened, and when emotional tendencies are at their strongest, by means of that

strange rite which they have invented, and which they term *Confirmation*—a rite the preparation whereunto so often leads to a deplorable state of nervous excitement, miscalled 'mental exaltation,' and upon which they insist as a condition precedent to admission to that other and greater mystery invented by the perverse ingenuity of man, wherein they teach that, while eating bread and drinking wine, their disciples may 'verily and indeed,' whether by actual and constantly-recurring miracle or in some other way equally, if not yet more, inexplicable, take and receive the body and blood of the second person of their Trinity, the crucified Man-God Christ.

"But it is not alone by means of these mysterious and esoteric rites that the Church entwines the fibres of her ubiquitous influence around emotional, unresisting, and unsuspecting youth. The schools of the country have been up to a very recent date entirely, and still are to a paramount extent, under the direction and subject to the ascendency of the Churches. What chance, then, has the average man of emancipating himself from doctrines to which he was at his very conception made inclined, which he both inherited from his father and sucked from his mother's breast, and which have been from the first carefully nursed and studiously tended by parent, priest, and pedagogue? How is the ordinary *bourgeois*—the lawyer, the man of business, the stockbroker, the politician, the country gentleman, the farmer, the tradesman, the soldier, the sailor, the shopkeeper, or the artisan—to rise superior to

innate ideas and life-long associations such as these, and to emancipate himself from convictions permeating his inmost being and his daily existence, which rest, as he has been taught, upon divine and awful sanctions, and which have been maintained and fortified by all the resources and strategy of the Church militant—that all-pervading Church which has not only thrown her spells around our earliest childhood and ingenuous youth, but which has been careful to impress upon us that we can take no important step in life without her aid; that without the sign of her cross upon our infant foreheads we must remain as we were born, 'the children of wrath,' and that we can neither be happily married nor hopefully buried except under favour of her ministering grace and superintending care?

"It is, indeed, almost superfluous to point out that all the power, position, wealth, and prestige of the Anglican Establishment, all the tremendous organization of Rome, all the vast forces of the Nonconformist Trinitarian churches (however bitterly these bodies may differ among themselves), are permanently engaged in support of the cause of dogmatic theology. And all these influences are further strengthened and reinforced by a vast number of considerations—social, political, and sentimental. In the first place, as I have already said, most men cannot, or will not, think for themselves in these matters. It is a trouble, an exertion, to which they have never tried to habituate themselves, and from which they instinctively recoil. And in this case they find that their *vis inertiae* is

encouraged and approved by their trusted spiritual mentors. They are warned against the pride and danger of reasoning on these high subjects. They are taught that true Christian humility consists in believing what they are told without inquiry, and 'like a little child'; and it is this virtue of faith, they are assured, which shall guide them happily through this world and save them in the next; whereas reasoning means 'scepticism' and 'infidelity' which will infallibly bring them to misery both here and hereafter. It was, indeed, a masterly stroke of policy to make belief the chief of the virtues, and doubt a deadly sin. It is thus that the feeble and pusillanimous spirit is induced to 'hedge' in this matter of religion. For, thinks he, if what they term Christianity be true, I may hope, if I stand by it, to reap its promised rewards in a future life; whereas, if I abandon it, everlasting punishment awaits me. If, on the other hand, it is not true, I shall, at any rate, be no worse off because I have been a believer!

"By these and other familiar arguments men are dissuaded from the operation of thinking, which is naturally so painful and distasteful to them. But should one here and there, in spite of all these warnings and cautions, so far emancipate himself as to adventure upon the beginnings of independent inquiry, he at once finds, or thinks he finds, that all the dictates of his interest, of his ease, and of his comfort are in close alliance with his theological advisers. Orthodoxy is highly respectable. Orthodoxy is the professed creed of the great majority.

It is patronized and countenanced by the higher, aristocratic, and official classes of society, who, if they do not give it their intellectual adherence, visit with marked disapproval the man who refuses to yield it at least external conformity. Indeed, it is undeniable that generally throughout society, and in every walk of life, it *pays* best, and is more comfortable, to be a professed disciple of Church-Christianity. Freethought and Agnosticism are very generally suspected and disliked. They are not understood, and, owing to influences which have for long ages been at work, cannot be understood by persons of the ordinary (so-called) 'religious' frame of mind. Vast numbers of good and earnest Christians are deeply pained when they listen to the avowal of opinions antagonistic to the teachings of dogmatic theology. These good people regard the man who follows his reason in such matters as a more or less conscious enemy of all religion and morality. To them Agnostics are not only offensive persons, but they are what the Christians were to the pagan—*hostes humani generis*. Then, again, Freethought is associated in the minds of some with such terrible things as Radicalism, Democracy, Socialism, and the forces of disorder, real or supposed, and therefore it has inveterate prejudices of a political as well as social nature to surmount before it can make good its position. It is within the knowledge of most of us that there are many educated men who are sceptical in religious matters, but who, nevertheless, are constant in their attendance at their parish church (aye, and 'communicants' too), and who

support the Establishment and all its works with might and main, as the embodiment of all that is safe and 'respectable' in society—all that is most implacably opposed to revolutionary change.

"It is a hard thing, too, for any man to break with the past; to discard doctrines taught to him in his childhood at his mother's knee; to see, perhaps, wife and children attending the religious services which he feels he cannot join without hypocrisy, and without that offence which comes of listening to those attacks upon reason which, alas! are so often delivered from the secure fortress of the pulpit—'six feet above the possibility of reply.' For, perchance, 'he loves the church where he worshipped in his happy childhood; where his friends and his family worship still; where his grey-headed parents await the resurrection of the just; but where *he* can worship and await no more.'[1] To such a man it may be that 'the pursuit of truth is as a daily martyrdom.' In any case he naturally shrinks from the necessity, under which he finds himself, of giving pain to many who are near and dear to him, and from the misunderstanding and obloquy to which he is inevitably exposed. 'He is an Atheist—he never goes to church' will be the mildest form of judgment passed upon him by the congregation of the faithful. No, certainly it is easier to keep to the old ways, to go with the crowd, and to swim with the stream.

"Then, again, the influence of woman has been

[1] Preface to *The Creed of Christendom*, by W. R. Greg (first edition).

almost entirely upon the side of Church-Christianity. 'As a general rule,' writes a well-known German Socialist, 'the development of the heart and fancy has hitherto been cultivated in woman to an altogether disproportionate extent; the development of her reasoning faculties, on the other hand, has been checked or grossly neglected. She consequently suffers literally from an hypertrophy of feeling, and is therefore generally accessible to every kind of superstition and fraud; she is a fruitful soil for all forms of religious and other charlatanism, and a willing tool in the hands of every reactionary party.'[1]

"Some may possibly think that this description is rather too highly coloured, but, at any rate, it cannot be denied that womankind, more emotional than logical, and in whom the reasoning powers have been unfortunately allowed to slumber in times past, has always been a great ally of the Churches; and the importance of this alliance can hardly be over-estimated in considering the forces which tend to support the cause of supernatural religion. Who, indeed, can exaggerate the influence of woman upon the lives, the creeds, the habits, and the prejudices of man? How often does reason succumb to emotion and sentiment, or, at least, to a desire for 'peace and a quiet life'? Moreover, the earliest education of children is naturally left to

[1] *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future*, by the late August Bebel (translated by H. B. Adams Walker), p. 65. But in these days of woman's "emancipation" perhaps we shall soon be able to say "*nous avons changé tout cela.*"

woman. The father may urge that the teaching of his children may be as simple as possible. Let it be the religion of the Good Shepherd and the Lord's Prayer. But the child must learn its catechism at its mother's knee, and, if the mother believes what she teaches, as nearly all mothers do, stern, indeed, if not brutal, would be the father, however logical, however convinced a Freethinker, who would wish for one moment to interfere with this early teaching which most of us, amid the shadows and sorrows of later life, look back to with that longing and regret for days long-gone wherein lie thoughts too deep for tears. Moreover, as things now are, the child must be seriously prejudiced in the handicap of life unless it be instructed in that knowledge which will, by-and-by, be required of it by its teachers. For soon will come pastors and masters and schools and colleges; and with them the church formularies, and the three creeds, and all the apparatus of theology. The father, let us assume, wishes to give his son the advantage of a public school education, and he knows that at all the great public schools the headmaster is an ordained priest, and that Trinitarian theology is taught as part of the curriculum. Therefore, preparation in Church-Christianity is as necessary as preparation in Latin, Greek, or arithmetic—necessary in the nursery, the school-room, and the private school. The father, therefore, lets things take their course, thinking, perhaps, that as his children grow older he will let them know his opinions, and invite them at least to the undogmatic Christianity of Matthew Arnold or Mrs. Humphry

Ward.[1] Thus, after all, the children are probably left to think, or not to think, for themselves.

"So great are the social agencies and conventions, so rooted the prejudices, so tremendous the forces, so overwhelming the influences which are ranged upon the side of Church-Christianity. I have glanced at some of them, but many more will suggest themselves to the reflective reader. Shall we, then, wonder that supernatural religion still largely holds her own in spite of all the argumentative victories which reason and science and criticism are continually gaining over her? Rather, I think, we shall marvel that Rationalism has succeeded in gathering to her banner that formidable body of volunteers who now do battle in her cause."

I have mentioned "Science," and upon that subject it may, perhaps, be well to say a word. Some "humanist" and "humanitarian" thinkers, with whose teaching and principles I am, speaking generally, in profound sympathy, have of late attacked "Science" in language which appears to me very unwise and very ill-advised. For what is science but organized knowledge? And to proclaim war upon knowledge, organized or not, appears to me to be a singularly futile proceeding. Still, though I think their action is much to be deprecated, it is not difficult to understand what is in the minds of some of those who speak so slightingly of Science. In the first place, we must remember that the path of Science is strewn with the corpses of dead delusions, and it may well be that some of the much-

[1] I refer, of course, to *Robert Elsmere*.

lauded "scientific" beliefs and "discoveries" of to-day may be consigned to-morrow, or the day after, to the limbo of exploded fallacies. Secondly, we must remember that there is always a certain impostor masquerading as "Science"—an impostor to whom Huxley so frequently alludes, and which he has castigated as "Pseudo-Science." If it was merely this "Pseudo-Science" which was intended as the object of the recent attacks, then the only complaint to be made is that they were delivered nominally against Science itself. Thirdly, we must bear in mind that, in practice, Science is but too frequently misapplied. How deplorable, for instance, it is to see all the resources and ingenuity of Science employed, not for the benefit and happiness and elevation of mankind, but for the destruction of the human race! But that, surely, is not the fault of Science, but the fault of the human race, which has not yet succeeded in emancipating itself from the atrocious folly and wickedness of war. It was this misapplication of Science which induced George Gissing to put his hatred of Science upon record in the following prophetic words: "I hate and fear Science because of my conviction that for long to come, if not for ever, it will be the remorseless enemy of mankind. I see it destroying all simplicity and gentleness of life, all the beauty of the world; I see it restoring barbarism under a mask of civilization; I see it darkening men's minds and hardening their hearts; I see it bringing a time of vast conflicts which will pale into insignificance 'the thousand wars of old,' and, as likely as

not, will whelm all the laborious advances of mankind in blood-drenched chaos."[1]

This prophecy was written many years before the World-war, and, in truth, it has been only too truly fulfilled. And well can we understand the thought and feeling that inspired it. Who does not shudder at the thought of that "Science" which is so closely associated with the "Kultur" of the German? Verily, misapplied Science is, justly, an object of hatred. It remains, however, none the less true that Science itself, worthily employed, and honestly engaged in the quest of truth, and further—for this is of vital importance—making use of none but legitimate means to facilitate that quest, not putting knowledge above all things, but recognizing that honesty, justice, mercy, and compassion are above and more valuable than knowledge: Science, so understood, is the minister of all human progress, and worthy of our most profound reverence. He who would dethrone Science must be ready to set up Ignorance in her stead. For myself, I write as a humble votary of Science, albeit I can hardly claim to have penetrated beyond the vestibule of her temple.

But a few words more, and I will bring this already overgrown Introduction to a conclusion. In

[1] *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Constable), p. 268. Prof. H. E. Armstrong, F.R.S., in his Postscript to Edward Clodd's book, *The Question* (Grant Richards, 1917), writes as follows: "It is to be feared that too much of 'modern science' is but a spurious article; even when sound on the experimental side the interpretation is too often faulty and heavily biassed. Too many are playing at science who are not and cannot ever be scientific; science, in fact, is under a cloud of ecclesiasticism."

the Preface to the first edition of this work, the second title whereof was "First Essays in Rationalism," I recommended to the reader certain well-known books which he might find useful guides in his path to Agnosticism. Some critics found fault with the selection. In particular I was asked whether we had not, even then, got far beyond such a book as Greg's *Creed of Christendom*? Well, no doubt that excellent work can no longer be called "up to date," but it is written in such an admirable spirit, and conducts the faltering steps of the novice with such gentle persuasiveness, that I still think it may be usefully included in the curriculum.[1] But knowledge, thought, and criticism have, of course, made great advances since the appearance of this book, and the difficulty of the student of Agnosticism now arises from the *embarras de choix* which confronts him as he considers the multitudinous publications of the Rationalist Press Association, including its cheap reprints of standard works. I make no further attempt to direct the course of his studies,

[1] The best edition is that of 1892, in two volumes (Kegan Paul and Co.), containing the excellent Introduction to the third edition, wherein (p. iii) the writer points out that "the specialities for the conduct of life prescribed by Christ's precepts and example ....are five in number—viz., non-resistance to violence, the duty of almsgiving, the impropriety of providence and forethought, the condemnation of riches, and the communism which was supposed to be inculcated, and which was certainly practised, by the early Christians." Mr. Greg proceeds to show that none of these precepts is or, indeed, could be carried out in our society at the present time. They are impracticable. These pages are well worth reading. It must be remembered that the early Christians implicitly believed that the world was very shortly coming to an end. This was, in fact, part of the Christian faith, and with persons obsessed by such a belief the above-mentioned precepts might readily find acceptance.

but will merely refer him to the instructive catalogues issued by Messrs. Watts and Co.[1]

Finally, should some impatient critic ask me, "By what right or title do you, who have no status in the scientific world, presume to instruct us?", I will reply as follows. In the Preface to his edition of the *Fifth Book of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* one of the greatest scholars of the day did me the high honour of naming me, in company with some scholars almost as distinguished as himself, as being one of those who had helped him in the preparation of that learned work. "But how," I subsequently asked him, "did I help you?" For it was I who had come to him for help in my reading of this difficult book. He answered: "You were of very great help to me by pointing out the difficulties that struck you." In similar manner I may, perhaps, be allowed to hope that this work may prove useful to some, if only by "pointing out the difficulties."

NOTE TO CHAPTER I

I am aware, of course, that this book will be received with scorn and derision by the "Gnostics" of to-day, should they deign to bestow any consideration upon it. "Why," they will ask, "should you prate to us about the teachings of such men as Huxley or Herbert Spencer, for example? These things belong to a past generation. They are as dead as the Dodo. We stand to-day on a

[1] I might, nevertheless, be allowed to say that, among smaller books dealing with Rationalism, he would be well advised to read *The Religion of the Open Mind*, by Mr. Adam Gowans Whyte, and two books by Mr. Joseph McCabe—viz., *The Bankruptcy of Religion* and *The Bible in Europe*.

higher plane and in a different atmosphere—'an ampler ether and diviner air.' We know things of the spirit that were hidden from these men. Investigate for yourself. Read the works, and listen to the instruction of those who understand what modern 'occultism' really means, and what it has revealed to us; and if only you have eyes to see and ears to hear, then deeper than did ever plummet sound you'll drown your book."

I am also well aware that this modern "occultism" has at the present day—and more especially as a result of the late terrible war—made a multitude of proselytes, and that it exercises a very wide influence in our society. And, truly, its teachers speak from a position of some advantage. Cultivate the spirit, they admonish us, and you will be able to leave this gross material body behind you, and see and understand the things that belong to the spiritual life.

Let me cite just one striking example of this frame of mind, though one much less startling than is to be found among the phenomena of Spiritualism, or "elementals," or clairvoyance, or crystal gazing, or "ghost stories" such as we are all familiar with.

A well-known author, an apostle of esoteric doctrine, is firmly convinced that in a state of spiritual ecstasy (as I gather) he is able, when standing at spots of historic or pre-historic interest, to see, not with his "mind's eye" only, but in the ordinary sense of the word, people and scenes long since passed away. At one place he writes: "I looked on what seemed an earlier civilization, saw the people, noted their dresses, the colours of natural wool, saffron or blue.....even such details were visible as that the men cut meat at table with knives, and passed it to the lips with their fingers." This one might imagine to be merely the result of a strong imagination concentrated on the associations and traditions of the place in question. But it is not so. And here is the point. "This is not, I am convinced, what people call imagination, an interior creation in response to a natural curiosity about past ages. It is *an act of vision* [my italics], or perception of images

already existing breathed on some ethereal medium." These phantasmata, therefore, are not imaginary, not subjective only, but have real existence, being visible for him who is so spiritually endowed as to be able to see them. The pre-historic people were seen "by an act of vision," though why, in view of the fact that countless men and women must have lived on, or passed over, the particular place in question since the first appearance of man upon this earth, the seer should see this one particular set of people only, he does not stop to explain.[1]

Now, I make no attempt to deal with all this esoteric teaching, except in the few words on "Spiritism" which I have added in an Appendix to this work. I can only say that, possibly to my great loss, I am not gifted with these psychic attributes. I do not even know what is meant by an "astral plane." "Astral" means, I apprehend, something pertaining to the stars, and a "plane" is a surface, or superfices; but beyond that I am in darkness as to the meaning of the phrase. Where this "astral plane" is situated, or what it is, I have no knowledge or conception at all. Yet I constantly hear the phrase in the mouths of persons who I cannot suppose would consciously make use of meaningless expressions. It is the same with the term "the fourth dimension," to which I allude elsewhere. But all these things I must leave to others to discuss. They are "beyond my skyline," and I must, I fear, endure the reproach of being outside this magic circle of esoteric knowledge.

[1] If one takes some hundreds of photographs on the same film, the result is apt to be somewhat blurred. In what state, then, must the "ethereal medium" be, I wonder?

Chapter II

THE OLD ENIGMA

I look around me on a calm, still November midnight. All the heaven is bright with stars, glorious to behold. Yonder rides Orion, most magnificent of constellations, and below him hangs the mighty Sirius, noblest and most brilliant of all those flashing points of light.

Let us dwell for a moment on some of the truths that astronomers have revealed to us. That brilliant Sirius is about one million times as far from us as the sun. Now the sun, we know, is, in round numbers, 93,000,000 miles from our earth. If, then, we take the distance of Sirius from the earth and subdivide it into one million equal parts, each of those parts would be long enough to span that wholly unimaginable distance of 93,000,000 miles from the earth to the sun. The light from the sun is about twenty thousand million times as great as the light that comes to us from Sirius; yet Sirius is a sun nearly fifty times as brilliant as our sun, and possibly fifty times as large.

Or take that star in the constellation of the Centaur which is known as the nearest of the fixed stars to our earth. The light from that star takes not less than four and a quarter years to reach us, yet light travels with the stupendous velocity of

185,000 miles in one second! But, if that be the case with the nearest of the stars, what is it with those distant suns which the largest telescopes reveal to us only as trembling specks of light? Among such, as Sir Robert Ball has written, "we feel confident there must be many from which the light has taken hundreds of years, or even thousands of years, to arrive here. When, therefore, we look at such objects we see them, not as they are now, but as they were ages ago; in fact, a star might have ceased to exist for thousands of years, and still be seen by us every night as a twinkling point in our great telescopes."

All these stars are suns, and such suns are wholly innumerable. There are countless myriads of them. To whatever distances the greatest of telescopes, or the most sensitive of photographic films, have been able to sound the depth of space, there new suns have been revealed. And then the appalling thought[1] is borne in upon our minds that space is illimitable, that eternity can find no end to it. All of the universe that we can see is as nothing to that which is invisible in the sombre shades of night. Innumerable suns scattered through illimitable space!

[1] A critic has cast a sneer at the epithet. The idea of *limited* space, he says, would be much more "appalling." These hardly seem to me the words of wisdom. There is nothing appalling in the thought of limited space, because that which is limited can be conceived by the human mind; but the mind might well be appalled when asked what was *beyond* that limited space! However, if the reader objects to the epithet "appalling" as applied to the idea of infinite space, he is at liberty to substitute another. Shall we say "paralysing," or "annihilating"? It is not worth while to dispute concerning an adjective. (Note to second edition.)

Our splendid sun, then, is but a star of comparative insignificance when matched with those stupendous orbs of which Sirius may be taken as a type. But round our sun revolve the planets, and among them that poor little globe which we inhabit. What planets revolve round those other suns? What world systems are there in the unknown depths of space? What unknown forces, what unknown forms of life, exist in the light of those distant suns? These are questions which we can never hope to answer, but upon which we must ever speculate.

And then arise the eternal questions: Whence? How? By whom or by *what?* The stereotyped answer comes at once: "God made it all." But, pray, dear friend, what do you mean by "God"? What can we affirm of "Him"? What can we think? What idea, what conception, can we form of him that does not lead us into the most hopeless contradictions, or *antinomies*, as the philosophers would say?

One of the wisest of men has said: "It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him."[1] But can the human mind form any opinion of God? Yes, certainly; and the more limited its power of thought

[1] Bacon, essay *Of Superstition.* In order to anticipate the captious critic, let me here say that I am quite aware of what Bacon has written in his essay *Of Atheism.* But, in the first place, as I have already explained (see Preface), there is, as I conceive, a real distinction between Atheism and Agnosticism. And, secondly, I need hardly say that I do not attach equal wisdom to all the utterances of the "large-browed Verulam." It is interesting, however, to speculate what would have been the opinions of that great intellect if he had lived at the present day.

the easier it finds it so to do. The human mind has conceived God in a multitude of forms: as a fetich of wood or stone, as a phallic emblem, as a dog-faced baboon, as a bull, as a serpent, and in a vast variety of other forms too numerous to mention. In very early days the human mind, as was, indeed, very natural, conceived God as a gigantic Superman, and this anthropomorphous conception is the one still commonly, however unconsciously, entertained by Christian men and women of the present day.

But has man ever formed—*can* he ever form?—such an opinion of God as shall be worthy of him? "Of *him!*" Are we, then, to conceive the Deity as a person of the male sex? Are we to accept the Biblical teaching that "God created man in his own image"? Are we to adopt this old idea that God is a kind of Superman—that he has a front, a back (such as he showed to Moses), head, trunk, arms, and legs? Are we to perpetuate this anthropomorphic conception of Deity? Is *that* an opinion of God which is worthy of him? Is not the truth rather, as it has been happily put, that it was man who "created God in his own image"?[1]

It has been well said that "to define is to limit."

[1] The theologian bids us believe in a "personal" God; but is not every conception formed by man of "a personal God" necessarily an anthropomorphous conception? "Anthropomorphism of some kind and degree," wrote the late Mr. Charles Voysey, "is inevitable; but our reason forbids the grosser anthropomorphism which likens God to the bodies of men, while reason sanctions the higher anthropomorphism which likens God to the human soul" (*National Review*, November, 1905). The more I consider the latter part of this pronouncement the less illuminating it appears to me. To begin with, I have no conception what the human soul may mean in this connection.

That proposition is obviously and undeniably true. If, then, we are to define Deity, we must be content to accept a Deity which is limited. If not, we must admit that Deity is indefinable. But what conception can we possibly have of that which is incapable of definition?[1]

What Being is this, then, of whom we are told to believe that he created these innumerable suns and this illimitable space? Did he create matter out of nothing by a mere act of volition? Let us think a little.

Is God material or immaterial? Immaterial, you will probably answer. Matter was created by him. But an immaterial Being is inconceivable by us. What limits and what bounds can there be to the immaterial? But you reply: "Quite so; there are no limits or bounds to the Deity." Do you, then, find God in formless immateriality? That is much the same as identifying him with nothing; for of separate, independent, immaterial existence the human mind can form absolutely no conception.[2]

[1] "God is above the sphere of our esteem,
And is the best known not defining Him."
So wrote Herrick, who evidently saw the futility of trying to define the Deity. But to say that an indefinable something is "best known" by not making any attempt to define it is the language of poetry, and not of philosophy.

[2] See chap. vi, on "The Immaterial." Mr. P. Carnegie Simpson writes in *The Fact of Christ:* "When Mr. Spencer asks us if we can believe that 'the Cause, to which we can put no limits in space or time, and of which our entire solar system is a relatively infinitesimal product, took the disguise of a man,' he may think he is giving us an imposing conception of God; but no conception of God is less imposing than that which represents Him as a kind of millionaire in worlds, so materialized by the immensity of his possessions as to have lost the sense of the incalculably greater worth of the spiritual

Again, where does the Deity dwell? Is he in the universe or outside it? Is God to be identified with the universe? Does he pervade all things? Is he "immanent in things"? No, you reply, for this is Pantheism, and—to settle the question by an epithet—Pantheism is "degrading."[1] Well, then, does He reside in interstellar space? If so, can you limit His abode to any part of that space, or is He not boundless as that space, and therefore all-pervading?

But, you will perhaps answer, I do not vex myself with such vain questions. God is the Absolute, the Infinite, the Irrelative, the Unconditioned. Alas, our knowledge is of the Positive, the Finite, the Relative, the Conditioned. Of the Absolute we can form no conception whatever. It is that which transcends knowledge. Human knowledge is relative only,[2] and our terms are applicable to the Relative alone. Say, then, that your God is the Inconceivable. Say that of Him (if "Him" I am still to write) you can predicate absolutely nothing, except, it may be, existence.[3] He is like the God

interests of even the smallest part of them" A reviewer in the *Speaker* (January 26, 1901) calls this "a well-put sentence," but it involves an entire misconception of the Agnostic position. The Agnostic does not attempt to give a "conception of God," imposing or otherwise, for the simple reason that he believes Deity to be inconceivable by man. At the same time, he protests against all unworthy conceptions of the inconceivable God.

[1] Pantheism teaches that God and the world are one. Schopenhauer writes: "The truth of Pantheism lies in its destruction of the dualist antithesis of God and the world, in its recognition that the world exists in virtue of its own inherent forces."

[2] *I.e.*, nothing can be perceived or apprehended but by way of contrast with something else.

[3] Can we conceive of bare existence without attributes? It is

of that sect of refining philosophers who, wishing to find Deity by a process of abstraction, found him at last in "the negation of all attributes"!

"God," as Shelley wrote, "is represented as infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; he is contained under every predicate in *non* that the logic of ignorance could fabricate. Even his worshippers allow that it is impossible to form any idea of him. They exclaim with the French poet, '*Pour dire ce qu'il est, il faut être lui même*'"[1]—or, we may add, with the Arabian philosopher, as rendered by his French translator, "*on peut dire ce qu'il n'est pas, mais ne peut dire ce qu'il est.*"[2]

Therefore, when you tell me that God created this immeasurable void, these innumerable suns, these planetary systems, these nebulæ, these comets —that God created space and matter—I can only reply that the word "God" is to me, alas! little better than a meaningless term. The First Cause must, you say, be Infinite and Absolute, and of the Infinite and Absolute I can have no conception. The First Cause is, therefore, unthinkable by me. It is in no way an object of cognition. It belongs to the sphere of the Unknowable.[3]

hardly an illuminating thought! Philosophers sometimes speak of Deity as "Absolute Mind." What possible conception can we have of "Absolute Mind"? It is merely an attempt to conceal our nescience by a phrase.

[1] Notes to *Queen Mab*.

[2] "We can say what he is not, but we cannot say what he is." Renan ascribes this saying to Maimonides, the follower of Averroes. See *Averroes et Averroïsme*, p. 141.

[3] It is curious, and also lamentable, to note how the anthropomorphic idea of God persists even in the minds of men who have

Has, then, the time-honoured word "God" no meaning at all for the Agnostic? Yes, in the sphere of Physics—or should I say "Metaphysics"?—it shall stand for the Unknown Explanation of the Universe. In the sphere of Ethics it shall stand for Righteousness—for we must not allow the theologian to have a monopoly of that grand old word—and we will say with Matthew Arnold:—

Wisdom and Goodness, they are God!—what schools
Have yet so much as heard this simpler lore?
This no Saint preaches, and this no Church rules;
'Tis in the desert, now and heretofore.

NOTE 1 TO CHAPTER II

The generally professed belief that God is both all-powerful and all-good demands some consideration. It is evident that, if God be all-powerful, all things in being,

studied the marvels of astronomy, a science which of all others ought to impress upon them the futility of such a manner of regarding Deity. Thus, Mr. G. F. Chambers, in *The Story of the Stars* (p. 69), writes: "In the case of a system the form of whose orbit is very eccentric (such as Centauri), any attendant planets must be warmed sometimes by two suns very near, sometimes by one sun very near and by another very far off. Who can calculate the transformations of life which go on under such circumstances without remembering the wisdom of Him who, often *with small apparent means*, is able to bring about an infinite variety of results?" What is this but the conception of an extremely clever and powerful man-god—"the intelligent engineer," as he has been styled? One would have thought that a sense of humour, if nothing else, would have saved such a cultured and thoughtful man from representing God as working out grand results "with small apparent means." What has omnipotence to do with "means"? Or are we, perchance, to consider the God of the universe as not omnipotent? Into such depths of absurdity do we fall when we try to talk about Deity. As Mr. Winwood Reade writes: "All attempts to define the Creator bring us only to ridiculous conclusions. The Supreme Power is.....something for which we have no words, something for which we have no ideas." (*The Martyrdom of Man*, p. 521.)

and all things that are done, exist and are done in accordance with his will. It is futile to speak of any human action as being contrary to the will of God. Had he willed it otherwise, such action could not have taken place. In this sense we must subscribe to the truth of Pope's familiar line, "Whatever is, is right"—right that evil should exist, and right that we should have to struggle against it; for "whatever is," *ex hypothesi is* because an all-powerful and all-good Being willed it so. It is absurd to fix the mind upon all that is beautiful in the physical and spiritual world, and therein to see a reflection of the infinite goodness of the Being who created it, while ignoring all that is evil and hideous and miserable in the world. Earthquakes and inundations; wars and shipwrecks; plague, famine, and pestilence; cancers and all forms of disease; vice, crime, and misery in all their forms—*all* must exist in accordance with his will. How, then, can we say that he is all-good as well as all-powerful? We know that a good man having the power to put an end to evil and suffering would at once do so. If, therefore, the all-powerful Being, who, having the power to end these things, nevertheless allows them to exist—nay, *wills* them to exist—is to be called "Good," it would seem that we must use that term in a sense quite different from that in which we employ it with reference to all other things, that we use it, in fact, with little or no meaning—a nebulous meaning which we do not really understand. And how can the doctrine of human free will co-exist with this belief? Shall it be said that God divested himself of his will, so far as human action is concerned, in order that man might be free to act according to his own will? Obviously that is but a shallow sophism. It is only making two bites of the metaphysical cherry. For, obviously, if there be an omnipotent, omniscient Being, all things that take place must take place according to his will, and it makes no difference whether that will acts by two stages, as it were, or by one.[1]

[1] See chapter ix, on "The Problem of the Will."

Yes, says the theologian, you have got entirely out of your depth, because, with a finite intelligence, you are attempting to reason about the Infinite. These are things altogether beyond your understanding. Exactly so, we reply; that is precisely the Agnostic position. *We do not know.* And if you agree with us in that, then you also, with your finite intelligence, must refrain from enunciating propositions concerning the Infinite. You must cease to tell us that God is both all-good and all-powerful, because you must admit with the Agnostic that concerning God nothing can be known. And here I had intended to end this Note; but since the above was written I have read some observations concerning Deity by one of our "men of science" which are so remarkable that I think it will be both interesting and instructive to set them before the reader for his consideration. Sir Oliver Lodge tells us that "the Christian conception" of God, which is also his conception as it appears, is not that of a God who takes "no personal interest" in the "behaviour of His creatures," but "One who anxiously takes measures for their betterment, takes trouble, takes pains—a pregnant phrase, takes pains—One who suffers when they go wrong; One who feels painfully the miseries and wrongdoings and sins and cruelties of the creatures whom He has endowed with free will" (*Raymond, or Life and Death*, by Sir Oliver Lodge, p. 395). God, therefore, has created the world and all that therein is. He is the Creator of the Universe. He is, presumably, omnipotent. Men are "His creatures." He has "endowed them with free will," so that they can do what they like. He need not have done so, of course, but he thought it well so to do. (How absurd, by the way, does language of this sort seem when used with regard to the supposed eternal omnipotent creator of the Universe!) So endowed he sets them on this planet, and then proceeds to watch their doings, which are no longer controlled by Him, with great interest—nay, with anxiety. Having allowed them to fall into misery and sin and cruelty and all manner of wrongdoing, he "*anxiously* takes measures

for their betterment"; He "takes trouble"; He "*takes pains.*" He "*suffers* when they go wrong"; and as they are always going wrong He is, of course, always suffering. He willed it all; He did it all; and if He were a man—and really he is here represented as nothing more nor less than a Big Man or Superman—we should say that He was responsible for it all. He could, of course, put an end at once to all these "miseries and wrong-doings and sins and cruelties," etc.; but he prefers that man—yes, and all other sentient beings—should suffer, and that he should suffer with them. He prefers that men should go on committing crimes and cruelties and all manner of evil. He will, indeed, "take measures for their betterment"; He will "take pains"; but He will, nevertheless, allow all these things to go on indefinitely! I forbear to comment. I will only say that if any of my readers should see fit to subscribe to this idea of Deity as put forward, not, indeed, by Science—far from it—but by one of our present-day scientists, I cannot think that he is to be congratulated either upon his creed or upon his intelligence, even though he has a great physicist on his side.

NOTE 2 TO CHAPTER II

As Herbert Spencer writes: "If, respecting the origin and nature of things, we make some assumption, we find that, through an inexorable logic, it inevitably commits us to alternative impossibilities of thought, and this holds true of every assumption that can be imagined."

But now comes round my friend Jones, the curate, and tells me that I am losing myself in vain philosophy. For him there are no difficulties. There is a personal God, who exists from all eternity, and who created all things in six days and rested on the seventh day. This belief reposes upon "the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture," as the theologians call it, apparently thinking to fortify their position by the use of a high-sounding epithet. Well, the account of the creation given in the book of Genesis is interesting, as are other ancient

cosmogonies; but, my dear friend Jones, it contains all the absurdities that you would expect from a very ignorant and wholly unscientific people. There are, in fact, two accounts[1]—the Elohistic and the Jehovistic, or Jahvistic.

"In the beginning Elohim," we are told, "created the heaven and the earth"—Elohim being, as we know, a plural word, signifying the supernatural powers, and used as an appellation of the Deity. This, I imagine, is intended to mean that Elohim created "the heaven and the earth" out of nothing. The primitive cosmogonist (and the account was probably derived from Chaldean or Accadian—that is, Babylonian—sources) assumes the pre-existence of Elohim, and sees no difficulty in supposing that his (or their) will alone is sufficient to create something out of nothing. Then "the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." This is often spoken of as being sublime; but it rather reminds me of the sweet simplicity of childhood, when we painted imaginary pictures of Fairyland, where we had only to wish for a thing and it would at once appear. Observe, also, that this light, which God called "day," as he called the darkness "night," is thus made long before "the lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night"—that is, long before the sun. The next thing after creating light is to make a "firmament," to "divide the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." I wonder how many of those good people who hear Genesis read in our churches have ever reflected what this means! A "firmament" means a

[1] The Elohistic account is contained in the first chapter of *Genesis* and the first three verses of chapter II. Add to these chapter V. In translating we have only to write Elohim for "God," and Jahveh for "Lord God." The two different and often contradictory narratives, the Elohistic and the Jehovistic, run side by side through a great part of the earlier portion of the Old Testament.

solid dome erected over the flat disc of the earth, which was supposed to support the celestial waters—"the waters that were above the firmament." The earth, as Professor Huxley writes, "was still surrounded and covered by the lower waters; but the upper were separated from it by the 'firmament,' beneath which what we call the air lay." In this dome the sun, moon, and stars were conceived to be set, so that they revolved as in a sort of orrery. This idea of a "firmament" is well known in primitive cosmogonies. Thus among the Chaldeans "it was a cardinal point in their cosmogony that the heavens formed a crystal vault, which revolved round an exceedingly high mountain as an axis, and the 'ziggurats' (Chaldean temple-observatories) were miniature representations of this sacred mountain of the gods."[1] After the firmament was fixed, the lower or terrestrial waters were "gathered together" to form seas, and the part of the earth-disc thus laid bare became dry land. Then the earth is commanded to "bring forth" plants, and does so; and thus the third day is brought to a close. After this, though light had been created on the first day—apparently as a "thing of itself," a separate entity—lights are set in the firmament "to divide the day from the night," and to be "for signs and for seasons, and for days and years"—that is, I presume, to be serviceable with regard to the computation of time, and in the formation of the almanack. And we read: "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also." This "he made the stars also" strikes one as somewhat more comic than cosmic. It seems to be thrown in as a sort of afterthought—a trifle on which it is hardly necessary to dwell! The stars are set "in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth." Such is the account, which we are told is divinely inspired, of the creation of the innumerable and glorious suns throughout illimitable space. They are set in the firmament to give light upon our earth! What, then, of

[1] *Human Origins*, by S. Laing, chap. v, p. 152.

those stars which only the largest telescopes, or the sensitive plates of the photographic camera, reveal? What of those that must surely exist in the unseen profundities of space? How absurd to ask a reasonable being to accept this as a true account of the creation of the universe! But so ends the fourth day's work. Then the waters are commanded to "bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" —*i.e.*, in the open part below the vault by which the earth disc is spanned. Thus aquatic animals ("great whales" are specially mentioned) and birds are created on the fifth day. On the sixth day land animals are created—first beasts and reptiles, and then man.

Of the creation of man there are two different accounts. The Elohistic account says: "So Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim created he him; male and female created he them." So, also, in the fifth chapter of Genesis, we read, in continuation of the Elohistic account: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that Elohim created man, in the likeness of Elohim made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth." Here observe that man is created last. He is created in the image or likeness of Elohim (*i.e.*, God), just as Adam begat Seth "in his own likeness, after his image." Thus we have an anthropomorphic God. Moreover, in the Elohistic account, man and woman are created together—"male and female created he them, and called their name Adam."[1]

Quite different is the Jahvistic account of the creation contained in the second chapter of *Genesis* beginning at the fourth verse. "This extraordinary story," as

[1] Some learned men think the meaning of this to be that man was originally created with the attributes of both sexes; and there is, perhaps, something to be said in favour of that view.

Professor Huxley writes, "starts with the assumption of the existence of a rainless earth, devoid of plants and herbs of the field." "For Jahveh (the Lord God) had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." Then Jahveh forms a solitary man "of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." After this Jahveh "planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed." Then he causes trees to grow out of the ground, including the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which done, he formed out of the ground "every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them." After this we have the curious tale of the taking by Jahveh of one of Adam's ribs during sleep, and the formation of woman therefrom.

These two accounts are quite irreconcilable one with the other, and both equally irreconcilable with scientific truth. What reasoning man can doubt that Professor Huxley expresses the simple and obvious truth when he writes that "the Pentateuchal story of the creation is simply a myth"? "I suppose it," he continues, "to be an hypothesis respecting the origin of the universe which some ancient thinker found himself able to reconcile with his knowledge, or what he thought was knowledge, of the nature of things, and therefore assumed to be true. As such, I hold it to be not merely an interesting, but a venerable, monument of a stage in the mental progress of mankind; and I find it difficult to suppose that any one who is acquainted with the cosmogonies of other nations—and especially with those of the Egyptians and Babylonians, with whom the Israelites were in such frequent and intimate communication—should consider it to possess either more or less scientific importance than may be allotted to these."

It is surely clear to any one who will take the trouble to think that these ancient cosmogonies (including the Pentateuchal one) all start from an utterly false assump-

tion, though an assumption which was naturally made in those early days before the dawn of history, when ignorant man first began to speculate concerning the origin of the world in which he found himself. It was assumed that the earth was the centre of the universe, and man the centre of created things. Thus all old beliefs are both *geocentric* and *anthropocentric*. Our poor little planet is looked upon as the "hub" about which all things turned. God creates the earth, and builds the vault of the firmanent above it, and sets the sun, moon, and stars to revolve therein, and to give light to the earth. But it is for *man* that the earth is created. For him was the world and all that therein is; for him were the fowls of the air, for him the fishes of the sea; for him the beasts of the earth; and he was to have dominion over them. For him, too, was the light of the sun and the moon and the stars that were set in the firmament. In short, the paramount importance of man and his world was the very keystone of the system.

But now we return to the point from which we started. We look out again on the calm, bright autumn night with its infinity of stars. How different is the truth as modern science has revealed it to us! Instead of sun and planets revolving round a central earth, we have learned that our world is but one comparatively insignificant member of that family which revolves round our own peculiar sun, while beyond our system, as far as the most powerful telescope can penetrate into the depths of space, we find suns infinite in multitude, transcendent in size and splendour, and each of them, as we may reasonably conceive, the centre of a cluster of worlds which we can never see—worlds which it is not unreasonable to suppose either have been, or are, or will be inhabited, though possibly by beings entirely different from the creatures of our own tiny globe. It is this stupendous thought of an infinity of planetary systems swimming beyond our ken in the infinite depths of space which, more than all things else, brings home to us the absurd presumption of untutored man, who must needs suppose that the stars were called into existence

"merely to officiate light
Round this opacous earth,"

and who, conceiving himself to be, as it were, the very pole star of the system, cried aloud to his brethren, "Come, let us make God in our own image!"

And now, what need to dwell upon the other stories of this quaint old mythology? Are we really to go on teaching our children that this creation took place in the year 4004 B.C.;[1] that some fifteen hundred years later the earth was entirely submerged by a deluge which "covered all the high hills that were under the whole heaven"; that all terrestrial life was thereby destroyed with the exception of Noah, his three sons and their wives, and a certain number of beasts, fowls, and creeping things which he took with him into the ark; that from the small remnant of humanity thus preserved were developed, in an amazingly short space of time, all the various races of mankind—Aryans, Semites, Mongolians, Negroes, Negritos, Australians, Hottentots, Red Indians, and the rest; and that, similarly, all the birds, reptiles, and mammals now found distributed over the face of the globe, with all their countless varieties and specific differences, are the lineal descendants of the "pairs" that went up with Father Noah into his miraculous ship? My answer must be, in the words of a modern Agnostic: "I can only marvel that any man should seriously suppose that all that is most precious and elevating in his beliefs should be held on the tenure of the acceptance as historical facts of legends only to be paralleled by the stories of folk-lore. I can no more understand that any serious injury can come to my moral nature from disbelief in Samson than from disbelief in Jack the Giant-killer. I care as little for Goliath as for the giant Blunderbore. I am glad that children should amuse themselves with nursery stories, but it is shocking that they should be ordered to believe in them as solid facts, and then be told that such superstition is essential

[1] It was so taught in my boyhood, but I think that precise date has now been tacitly dropped. (Note to second edition.)

to morality.[1] It is the more shocking because the idolatry of the Bible deprives it of its strongest interest. *It is just by reading what is strangely called destructive criticism that I have at all discovered the unique interest of the Bible.* Accept the Jewish legends as historical truth, and you have to believe in a state of things grotesque in itself and absolutely divorced from all living realities."[2]

The sentence in the above quotation which I have italicized exactly expresses what I have long felt with regard to the Bible. So long as my reason was unemancipated from the old thraldom as to inspiration, the identity of Jehovah with God, and the rest, so long did the Old Testament, or the greater part of it, appear strangely repulsive to me. *Now* I have learned to appreciate "the unique interest" of those wonderful old stories. *Now* I can look upon them with respect and read them with pleasure. If some simple-minded men of old conceived of God as "walking in the garden in the cool of the day," I need not ridicule the idea—only do not ask me to believe that this man-god is the Great Abstraction, the inconceivable, incomprehensible God of the universe. The story of Jonah is delightful, but do not require me to believe that it is Divinely-revealed truth. The history of Balaam is an instructive moral tale if only you will not insist that the talking ass is an historical fact, and impute to me the sin of disbelief because I refuse to commit the sin of credulity.[3]

[1] What is here said of "children" applies with great force to the children in our State-supported elementary schools.

[2] *An Agnostic's Apology*, by Leslie Stephen, p. 56.

[3] Some of the Bible stories are of very low morality, and inculcate lessons of treachery, cruelty, and barbarity. I hold it monstrous to teach such to children as the inspired word of God. Take the story of Elisha, for instance, the holy man of God, who cursed "little children" in the name of the Lord for laughing at his "bald head," whereupon a benevolent Providence sent two she-bears out of the wood, which "tare forty and two" of them! A brutal and disgusting story. Yet these fairy-tales are taught as God's truth to the children in our State schools, though even divines of the Church of England have recognized them as wholly mythological.

As to the New Testament, it is no part of my intention to repeat the arguments of modern critics. I can only refer to their works. But just as a sample, let us take the story of the Conception and Incarnation, both essential dogmas of sacerdotal Christianity.

We are told by Matthew that Mary, being at the time espoused to Joseph, was found to be with child, wherefore Joseph, in ignorance of the Divine conception, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But an angel appears to him in a dream, and tells him "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Then follows the story of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, and of the Magi and their star, after which the angel again appears to Joseph in yet another dream, and bids him fly into Egypt with Mary and the child for fear of Herod.

Now compare with this the account given by Luke. Here we have an entirely different story. First we read of Zacharias the priest and his wife Elizabeth, of whom we are told that "they had no child because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years." Then the angel Gabriel appears to Zacharias in the temple and informs him that Elizabeth shall bear a son to be called John, in accordance with which announcement "Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months." Then, "in the sixth month," Gabriel was sent from God to Nazareth "to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph." Accordingly, Gabriel announces to Mary that she shall conceive and bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. Upon which Mary arose and went into the hill country, into a city of Juda, and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth, who thereupon breaks out into a Divinely-inspired blessing, answered by Mary in the same lofty, poetic strain. Mary then abides with Elizabeth for about three months, after which she returns to her own house.

Now, here is no mention of an angel appearing to Joseph in a dream. The angelic appearances are to Zacharias and to Mary herself, and these are represented

not as dream apparitions, but as objective realities of waking life. There is no hint of any doubt in Joseph's mind as to his wife's chastity. As to Mary, she would, of course, when she found herself pregnant, if not before, have informed Joseph of the angelic vision, and of the Divine promises which had been made to her. In *Matthew*, as Strauss observes, "the pregnancy is discovered in the first place, and then afterwards justified by the angel; but in *Luke* the pregnancy is prefaced and announced by a celestial apparition." Further, we read in *Luke* that when the days of Mary's purification were accomplished they brought Jesus to Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord" according to the Mosaic Law, and there Simeon, a just and devout man, came "by the Spirit" into the Temple, took the child in his arms, and pronounced over him the words with which the Prayer Book has made us all familiar. Then we are told "Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him." Yet, as Mr. Greg well says,[1] "It is impossible, if an angel had actually announced to Mary the birth of the Divine child in the language, or in anything resembling the language, recorded in *Luke*, i, 31–35; and if, in accordance with that announcement, Mary had found herself with child before she had any *natural* possibility of being so—that she would have felt any astonishment whatever at the prophetic announcement of Simeon, so consonant with the angelic promise, especially when occurring after the miraculous vision of the shepherds, which, we are told, 'she pondered in her heart.'" Nor, we may add, would Joseph have felt any such astonishment if things had been explained to him by an angel in a dream. Yet upon these essentially divergent accounts have been built the stupendous dogmas of the Miraculous—or, as the Roman Catholic would say, the Immaculate—Conception, and the Incarnation of God in the body of Jesus.

And now let us turn to the Gospel of Mark, which modern critics pronounce to be, if not the earliest of the

[1] *The Creed of Christendom*, ninth edition, vol. ii, p. 30.

synoptic Gospels, at any rate that which most closely represents the primitive groundwork of the three—the common threefold tradition. What do we find? Not a word of these angelic apparitions, not a word of the miraculous conception. Nay, even in that strange and remarkable work, the Fourth Gospel, though we have mysterious pronouncements concerning the Logos, savouring of Alexandria and Neo-Platonism, we hear nothing of these extraordinary stories. As Strauss says, with reference to the supernatural conception: "Nowhere in the New Testament is such an origin ascribed to Jesus, or even distinctly alluded to, except in these two accounts of his infancy in Matthew and in Luke. The history of the conception is omitted not only by Mark, but also by John, the supposed author of the Fourth Gospel and an alleged inmate with the mother of Jesus subsequently to his death, who therefore would have been the most accurately informed concerning these occurrences." Moreover, neither Matthew nor Luke makes any further allusion to this miraculous mode of conception. Indeed, as Mr. Greg observes, "the whole story of the Incarnation is effectually discredited by the fact that none of the Apostles or sacred historians make any subsequent reference to it, or indicate any knowledge of it." Paul had no knowledge of these marvellous stories, yet his reputedly genuine *Epistles* are, by common consent, the oldest documents in the New Testament. "He has no single allusion to the parents of Jesus; and therefore, of course, has no thought of the dogma of the Virgin Mother, any more than of the doctrine of the Trinity. He has no allusion to the birthplace of Jesus, and never once does he, any more than James, writing to the Jews of the Dispersion, name Jesus as 'of Nazareth.' He never mentions John the Baptist. He cites no Jesuine teachings whatever. He mentions no Jesuine miracles. He never alludes to Judas Iscariot, or to a betrayal, or to a trial of Jesus before a Roman official. He never alludes to the Passion. He never alludes to Peter's denial of Jesus."[1]

[1] From an essay entitled "The Jesus Legend" in *Studies in*

All this, of course, is familiar as household words to those who have made any study of Biblical criticism. But how few there are who ever read or consider such criticism at all! Strauss has been in great measure superseded by the higher criticism of to-day, but for masterly analysis, and for the clearness and acumen with which he points out the discrepancies between the Gospel historians and lays bare the subterfuges of harmonists and apologists, he still stands unrivalled, and it is quite sufficient for my purpose to refer to his well-known work. Readers should not omit to study his criticism of the story of the Magi and their star (which is to be found in Matthew alone), of the flight into Egypt, the massacre of the innocents, and other legends connected with the birth of Jesus.

I have merely taken the story of the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus as an example, and I have

Religious Fallacy, by J. M. Robertson. It is to be noted that many modern critics consider 1 *Cor*., xi, 23-26 and xv, 3-8 as obvious interpolations. "Each passage," says Mr. Robertson, "is introduced with a formula which confesses forgery at a glance"—viz., "I delivered unto you that which also I received," or "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" Observe, also, the suspicious "according to the Scriptures" in chap. xv, 4. See *The Creed of Christendom*, Introduction, pp. xxvi. xxvii And even if these passages are genuine, the ignorance of the Apostle of the stories told by the Gospel writers is extraordinary, unless those stories were of later growth, as no doubt they in fact were. Moreover, as Mr. Greg has observed, "the evangelists contradict the Apostle. Nay, more, they show that the belief of the Christian Church was not simple, uniform, and self-consistent, as Paul's statement would lead us to suppose, but that it was singularly vague, various, and self-contradictory. Nay, worse still, they not only show in how many fluctuating shapes it existed, but they suggest how the belief may have formed itself by specifying a number of the circumstantial details around which it grew and solidified so rapidly.....*we cannot frame any theory whatever as to the resurrection which is not distinctly negatived by one or other of the evangelical accounts*" (Introduction to the third edition of *The Creed of Christendom*, p. xxviii). It will be observed that one of the interpolated passages in the Epistle to the Corinthians (1 *Cor*., xv, 6) contains the amazing statement that the risen Christ appeared to above 500 brethren at once. How strange that the Gospel writers deemed this not of sufficient importance to chronicle!

given the merest sketch of the criticism to which it is open. It seems perfectly clear that it is a myth such as in ancient times frequently grew around the names of great men, great philosophers, and great conquerors. Thus it was said that the virgin mother of Plato became pregnant by Apollo. There are similar legends concerning Pythagoras, and the Buddha, and Alexander the Great. Zingis Khan was said to owe his birth to the miraculous conception of a virgin, and many other instances might be quoted. Such myths were not the deliberate inventions of imposture, but grew up naturally around the great men to whom they relate, as the result of that love of the marvellous which is so deeply rooted in men's minds, and which has free play in a credulous and uncritical age.

Let us be content, then, to regard Jesus as a man; his suffering as human suffering; his last cry a cry wrung by agony from a tortured man, no longer perplexing us by the necessary implication that divinity and fallibility may be found together.[1] We are no longer called upon to believe that God—the Infinite, the Eternal, the Inconceivable God of the Universe—went through all the stages of an embryo in the womb of a woman.[2] "*Dieu n'a pas de fils, Dieu n'a pas de mère, Dieu n'engendre pas, Dieu n'est point engendré.*" [3]

[1] See Mr. Lionel Tollemache's admirable essay on "The Divine Economy of Truth" in the volume of essays published under the title *Stones of Stumbling*. But some, of course, doubt altogether as to "the historicity of Jesus."

[2] As everybody now knows, the embryos of fish, salamander, tortoise, chick, dog, hog, calf, rabbit, and man, are, in early stages, practically indistinguishable.

[3] This is the teaching of the Koran, as quoted by Renan. See Averroes, p. 77.

Chapter III

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION[1]

It was in vain that Christianity taught a simple doctrine and enjoined a simple worship. The minds of men were too backward for so great a step, and required more complicated forms and a more complicated belief. What followed is well known to the students of ecclesiastical history. The superstition of Europe, instead of being diminished, was only turned into a fresh channel. The new religion was corrupted by the old follies. The adoration of idols was succeeded by the adoration of saints; the worship of the Virgin was substituted for the worship of Cybele; Pagan ceremonies were established in Christian churches; not only the mummeries of idolatry, but likewise its doctrines, were quickly added, and were incorporated and worked into the spirit of the new religion; until after a lapse of a few generations Christianity exhibited so grotesque and hideous a form that its best features were lost, and the lineaments of its earlier loveliness altogether destroyed.—BUCKLE, *History of Civilization*, vol. i, p. 259 (Longmans, 1882).

WHAT is Christianity? I would answer: The teaching of Christ. Now, if Christ did not teach that he was God; if he did not teach the doctrine of the Trinity, of the miraculous conception and Incarnation, then the Christianity of the Churches is, at least so far as concerns its dogmas and its

[1] On the subject-matter of this chapter the reader would do well to consult White's *Warfare Between Science and Theology*. See also Mr. McCabe's instructive little work *The Bible in Europe* (Watts and Co., 1907). A writer in the *Nineteenth Century* asks us to "conceive, if we can, what would have been the state of Europe after the fall of Rome had Christianity never come to

doctrines, not real Christianity at all, but a *pseudo-Christianity*, the product of man's inventive genius and his longing for the marvellous and mysterious —his religious *megalomania*, in short. As, then, I believe that all these marvellous doctrines and dogmas were no part of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth,[1] but were evolved by a process of religious fermentation; that they are a superstructure, an aftergrowth, and incrustation on the real teaching of Jesus; it is evident that when I speak of Christianity I would exclude all these doctrines and marvels of human invention. Still, the usage of centuries must prevail, and undoubtedly all these things are included in what the world now speaks of as Christianity. To make my meaning clear, therefore, I will call this Christianity of the miraculous *Church-Christianity*, being the Trinitarian Christianity taught by the various Churches, whether of Greece or Rome, or of the numerous Reformed, Protestant, or Nonconformist sects.

I have often thought how much better the world would have been if this Church-Christianity had never been invented. What progress should we

enlighten its misty glooms.....when moral habit died under the sway of new environment and the pressure of temptation unknown before, what ideal would have been found failing Christianity to set a higher standard aloft.....amidst the warring passions of mankind?" ("If a man die shall he live again?", by Harold F. Wyatt, *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1917). One had really hoped that such a perversion of history as this passage imports had "gone out with the early Victorians"! Mr. McCabe pertinently refers to "the mind of a youth who thinks he knows Paganism when he has read a translation of Juvenal"!, *op. cit.*, p. 75. (Note to second edition.)

[1] I here assume "the historicity of Jesus."

not have made! What suffering should we not have been spared! How far, far happier might our lives have been! What greater evils have mankind ever suffered from than those which have resulted from sacerdotalism and the *odium theologicum*?

In the first place, this Church-Christianity proclaimed, as Mr. Lionel Tollemache has well said, "sad tidings of great sorrow which are unto all people,"[1] for it announced that by far the larger portion of mankind were to be everlastingly tormented in Hell. It is impossible to exaggerate the misery of which this odious doctrine has been the cause. Priests have used it as an engine to compel men's obedience by working upon their terrors. For what despair, what madness, what hypocrisy, what neglect of all the healthy duties and enjoyments of life, has it not been responsible? The fiendish exultation of Tertullian (a Father of the Christian Church, save the mark!) has often been quoted, but may well be cited once more. "How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs and fancied gods groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red-hot flames with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ; so many

[1] *Stones of Stumbling*, p. 89.

tragedians, more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers....." But I take the quotation from Gibbon, and the historian has not had the heart to proceed with it to the end. "The humanity of the reader will permit me to draw a veil over the rest of this infernal description, which the zealous African pursues in a long variety of affected and unfeeling witticisms."[1]

Yet the horror of this passage has been equalled in modern times by our own Jeremy Taylor. The author of *Holy Living and Dying* does not perhaps actually exult in the tortures of the damned; but consider the following: "We are amazed to think of the inhumanity of Phalaris, who roasted men alive in his brazen bull; this was a joy in respect of that fire of hell which penetrates the very entrails of the body without consuming them.....Such are the torments and miseries of Hell that, if all the trees of the world were put in one heap and set on fire, I would rather burn there till the day of judgment than suffer only for the space of one hour that fire of hell.....Who would not esteem it a hideous torment if he were to be burnt alive a hundred times, and his torment was to last every time for the space of an hour? With what compassionate eyes would all the world look upon such a miserable wretch! The torment comprises as many torments as the body of man has joints, sinews, arteries, etc., being caused by that penetrating and real fire of which this temporal fire

[1] Gibbon's *Roman Empire*, vol. II, chap. xv, citing Tertullian de Spectaculis, c. 30.

is but a painted fire.....What comparison is there betwixt a hundred hours' burning, with some space of time betwixt every hour, and to burn a hundred years of continual torment? And what comparison will there be betwixt burning for a hundred years' space and to be burning without interruption as long as God is God?"[1]

O miseras hominum mentes o pectora cæca! What greater service could be rendered to wretched humanity than to deliver it from a belief so monstrous, so revolting, and at the same time so contemptible? Yet how dear has it been to the hearts of priests! What long years will still be required before this poisonous weed can be finally eradicated from the fair pastures of the world! *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!*

Burns, in his inimitable way, has portrayed the contrast between the fresh beauties of nature and this hideous belief which has so long overclouded them.

Upon a summer Sunday morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walked forth to view the corn
And snuff the caller air;
The rising sun owre Galston muirs
Wi' glorious light was glintin';
The hares were hurplin' down the furs,
The lav'rocks they were chantin'
Fu' sweet that day.

What a delicious picture! The poet at early morn snuffing "the caller air," the sun rising over the

[1] Quoted in *Stones of Stumbling*, p. 42, and by Olive Schreiner in *The Story of an African Farm*.

moor, the hares "hurpling" (what other word can so well express their peculiar limping gait when at feed?) down the furrows, and the lark singing sweetly above the green corn-fields. With what true poetic skill is this beautiful description introduced to mark the contrast with the grotesque and gloomy sequel! He visits "the Holy Fair," the spot where rival preachers were gathered together to hold an open-air service and to vie with one another in evangelical eloquence. And what is the theme which these Christian divines most loved to dwell upon? The poet soon informs us:—

Now a' the congregation o'er
Is silent expectation,
For Moodie speels the holy door
Wi' tidings o' damnation.

Observe, not "glad tidings of great joy," but "*tidings of damnation.*"

Hear how he clears the points of faith
Wi' rattlin' and wi' thumpin'!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He's stampin' and he's jumpin'!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeal and gestures,
Oh how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plasters,
On sic a day!

One is reminded of the story of the "meenister" who, being angry with his congregation, announced to them with great gusto: "Ye'll all go to the *deevil.* It's my *consola-a-tion;* it's my solace!"

No doubt the Church of England of to-day is in a fair way to emancipate herself from this night-

mare. Apparently she is now inclined to agree with the philosopher of Hope's *Anastasius*, that "whatever number of crimes a man, using his utmost diligence, might crowd in the short span of this life, they still might possibly be atoned for in the next by only five hundred thousand million of centuries (he would not abate a single second) of the most excruciating torture; though this period was absolutely nothing compared with eternity."[1] At any rate, belief in the eternity of punishment hereafter is not now apparently deemed essential to orthodoxy, in spite of the "without doubt he shall perish everlastingly" of the Athanasian Creed. The Church of Rome, however, still clings to the old doctrine. For is not the Church of Rome infallible? If, then, she were to admit that her teaching of hopeless damnation was founded upon error, what would become of her infallibility? Therefore she cannot shake it off if she would; nor, as far as one can see, would she if she could. It is altogether too congenial to her methods. It is part and parcel of that tremendous system—the very paralysis of all reason—with which she enthrals men's understandings, and binds them to her in slavery, intellectual and moral, from the cradle to the grave.

Oh, Pope and Cardinals! Oh, Archbishops and Bishops! Oh, proud prelates, one and all, and of whatsoever Church!—by what strange irony of fate, by what lamentable perversion of men's minds, were you set up to lord it over the *soi-disant* Christian

[1] Hope's *Anastasius*, vol. i, chap. ix.

world? Assuredly you belong to the Christianity of human invention, and not to the Christianity of Christ. That infallible Italian priest, who, not satisfied with his (so-called) *spiritual* dominion, still bewails the loss of his temporal power—is *he* the representative on earth of the carpenter's son of Nazareth? Ye great ecclesiastical dignitaries—Roman, or Anglican, or Greek, or whatsoever be the title it pleases you to assume—are not your state and your power, and your possessions even ludicrously repugnant to the spirit of him whom you profess to serve? And what a terrible impediment has this Church-Christianity proved itself to the progress of humanity, to the march of intellect, and the advance of civilization!

The conflict between science and religion[1] has been, and still is, a very bitter conflict. Dr. Alexander Hill, indeed, in his *Introduction to Science* (one of the Temple Primers), writes: "The expression, 'the contest between religion and science,' is an absurdity; there can be no contest in which one of the combatants is absolutely passive." And again: "'The antagonism between religion and science' is an absurd expression, which was used most frequently after the publication of the *Origin of Species*.....But science had no quarrel with religion. It was the false in religion quarrelling with the true." Now, if Dr. Hill merely means to say that science has no quarrel with what is true in religion, no objection can be taken to the state-

[1] I speak here of religion in the theological sense.

ment, except that it is a mere platitude. But the expression "the contest," or, rather (as Professor Draper writes), "the conflict between Religion and Science," has a very real and a very different meaning, and, with all respect, is not "an absurdity" at all. It means that the pioneer of science has always found his chief obstacle in the prevalent religious beliefs of his age and country. "Religion" here, as generally, includes a theory of the supernatural—that is, Theology.[1] We need only point to the examples of Galileo in the seventeenth and Dr. St. George Mivart at the end of the nineteenth century, to make very clear what is meant by "the conflict between Religion and Science"; and a reference to Dr. Draper's work may make it clearer still. And when Dr. Hill says that science is "absolutely passive" in the matter, he does Science an injustice. Science can never be passive where Truth is at stake. Professor Huxley's essays show that, on the contrary, Science is, and ought to be, most active in her opposition to the false teaching of so-called revealed religion. Nay, Dr. Hill himself teaches the same lesson. "Science," he says, "proved that the earth did not come into existence in the stages described in the first book of *Genesis;* that the various species of animals and plants were not separate creations, that every organ in man's body shows that it has been adapted by a process of evolution from an organ of the body of an animal belonging to the 'brute creation.'" Yes, but the

[1] Theology—*i.e.*, "the science of God"! I humbly doubt if God, in any aspect, can be reduced to the rules of science.

"religious men" opposed and controverted this teaching of science. Witness (*e.g.*) Professor Huxley's controversy with Mr. Gladstone concerning Genesis. The fact is that Science has to win its way in face of the opposition of the received religion of the time and country (whether "Church-Christianity" or any other received religious system), and although this is less apparent in the present day, when "Religion" has lost much of her power to persecute, than it was formerly, it is no less true now than in the days of Galileo. Science has no quarrel with *true* religion certainly, but to say so is "an absurdity," for it is equivalent to saying that Science has no quarrel with truth!

Let us hearken once more to the late Professor Huxley, than whom no one knew better what this conflict between Science and Religion really means. "The myths of Paganism are as dead as Osiris and Zeus, and the man who should revive them would be justly laughed to scorn; but the coeval imaginations current among the rude inhabitants of Palestine, recorded by writers whose very name and age are admitted by every scholar to be unknown, have unfortunately not yet shared their fate, but even at this day are regarded by nine-tenths of the civilized world as the authoritative standard of fact, and the criterion of the justice of scientific conclusions in all that relates to the origin of things, and, among them, of species. In this nineteenth century, as at the dawn of science, the cosmogony of the semi-barbarous Hebrew is the incubus of the philosopher and the opprobrium of the orthodox.

Who shall number the patient and earnest seekers after truth, from the days of Galileo until now, whose lives have been embittered and their good name blasted by the mistaken zeal of Bibliolaters? Who shall count the host of weaker men whose sense of truth has been destroyed in the effort to harmonize impossibilities—whose life has been wasted in the attempt to force the generous new wine of science into the old bottles of Judaism, compelled by the outcry of the same strong party? It is true that, if philosophers have suffered, their cause has been amply avenged. Extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules,[1] and history records that, whenever science and orthodoxy have been fairly opposed, the latter has been forced to retire from the lists, bleeding and crushed if not annihilated, scotched if not slain. But orthodoxy is the Bourbon of the world of thought. It learns not, neither can it forget; and though, at present, bewildered and afraid to move, it is as willing as ever to insist that the first chapter of *Genesis* contains the beginning and end of sound science, and to visit with such petty thunder-bolts as its half-paralysed hands can hurl those who refuse to degrade nature to the level of primitive Judaism."

I repeat, then, that this conflict between Science and Religion has been, and still is, a very real and very bitter conflict. In truth, it has been the con-

[1] Alas, of theology it may be said: "*Non Hydra secto corpore firmior Vinci dolentem crevit in Herculem*"—Like Hercules, you may cut off the Hydra's heads, but they still keep growing!

flict between Science and the dogmatic system which I have called Church-Christianity. Science, indeed, always conquers in the end; but at what cost of suffering, and after what lamentable delays and hindrances! The history of civilization since the beginning of the Christian era is but a history of this prolonged struggle. Illustrations might be multiplied without end; but they are familiar to all readers, and I will content myself with two or three only, by way of example. Take, for instance, the glorious science of astronomy. Where did astronomers of old find their most bitter opponents? Where but in the high-priests of that Church-Christianity which claimed to be specially conversant with heavenly matters? "A divine revelation of science admits of no improvement, no change, no advance. It discourages as needless, and, indeed, as presumptuous, all new discovery, considering it as an unlawful prying into things which it was the intention of God to conceal. What, then, is that sacred, that revealed science, declared by the Fathers to be the sum of all knowledge? It likened all phenomena, natural and spiritual, to human acts. It saw in the Almighty, the Eternal, only a gigantic man. As to the earth, it affirmed that it is a flat surface, over which the sky is spread like a dome, or, as St. Augustine tells us, is stretched like a skin. In this the sun and moon and stars move, so that they may give light by day and by night to man. The earth was made of matter created by God out of nothing, and with all the tribes of animals and plants inhabiting it was finished in six days. Above

the sky or firmament is heaven; in the dark and fiery space beneath the earth is hell. The earth is the central and most important body of the universe, all other things being intended for and subservient to it."[1]

Now astronomers soon began to teach that the earth was not flat, but globular, and that it had no firmament or dome fixed over it in which the stars were set; but that it was poised in space, and itself moved around the sun. But all this teaching was in the eyes of Church-Christianity nothing but rank heresy. It was inconsistent with the revealed word. To say, for instance, that since the earth was spherical each spot on its surface must have its antipodes on the other side was not only foolish, but also damnable error. St. Augustine asserts that "it is impossible that there should be inhabitants on the opposite side of the earth, since no such race is recorded by Scripture among the descendants of Adam"; but the most unanswerable argument against the sphericity of the earth was this, that "in the day of judgment men on the other side of the globe could not see the Lord descending through the air!"[2]

Copernicus in 1543 published a work *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, in which he maintained that the accepted Ptolemaic system was erroneous, and that the Pythagorean theory was the true one—viz., that the earth and the other planets

[1] *The Conflict Between Religion and Science*, by John William Draper, M.D., LL.D. (The International Scientific Series), p. 63.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 64.

revolved around the sun. The Inquisition condemned the book as heretical, and in their decree prohibiting it the Congregation of the Index denounced the system as "that false Pythagorean doctrine utterly contrary to the Holy Scripture."[1]

Galileo having observed, with his newly-invented telescope, the phases of Venus, having discovered the satellites of Jupiter, and having made other observations confirmatory of the Copernican system, was summoned to Rome, and was positively forbidden by the Pope to teach the doctrine of the motion of the earth. Subsequently, in 1632, he published his work on *The System of the World*, in vindication of the Copernican theory. Summoned once more before the Inquisition at Rome, he was declared to have brought upon himself the penalties of heresy. On his knees the aged astronomer, the most illustrious man of his age, then in his seventieth year, was constrained to abjure the truth, to deny the obnoxious theory of the earth's motion. "*E pur si muove*"—It moves, nevertheless—the old story says that he muttered as he rose from his knees.[2] But even this degradation did not procure his liberation. He was committed to prison, kept in confinement during the remaining ten years of his life, and after death denied burial in consecrated ground. The thought of this last penalty, as we may well believe, would not have disturbed the equanimity of the

[1] From 1616 to 1757 the Roman Catholic Church kept the work on the Index of prohibited books as being subversive of truth.

[2] This may be apocryphal, but it is too good to be forgotten.

great astronomer. It is only indicative of the rancorous spite of his persecutors. Thus does Church-Christianity ever oppose the march of intellect and the discoveries of science.

More cruel still was the fate of Giordano Bruno. This Italian philosopher, born seven years after the death of Copernicus, published a work on *The Infinity of the Universe and of Worlds*, and was also the author of *Evening Conversations on Ash Wednesday*, an apology for the Copernican system, and of *The One Sole Cause of Things*. On the demand of the spiritual authorities (*spiritual*, quotha!) Bruno was removed from Venice to Rome and confined in the prison of the Inquisition. The special charge against him was that he had taught the plurality of worlds, a doctrine repugnant to the whole tenour of Scripture. After an imprisonment of two years he was brought before his judges, declared guilty, excommunicated, and, on his refusing to recant, was sentenced to be burnt. "Perhaps it is with greater fear that you pass the sentence upon me than I receive it," said this noble martyr of science to his judges. He was burnt at Rome on February 16, 1600.

These striking illustrations of the evil wrought by Church-Christianity in its conflict with truth and reason are, as I have said, familiar to all students of history; and as with astronomy, so has it been with geology, anthropology, palæontology, and, indeed, all science. Nor, it need scarcely be said, is it only in the persecution of great men that this malignant influence has been displayed. As the spell of witch-

craft was supposed to emaciate and attenuate the human frame, so in the daily life of mankind, for nearly two thousand years, has this subtle influence been at work, drying up reason at its source—enervating, sterilizing, paralysing. Like the frost in spring, it has nipped the fruits of thought and imagination in the bud. Like the crawling mist, it has hung over the earth, obscuring the noon-day sun of intellect. "*Magna est veritas et praevalebit,*" cries the optimist. "Great is error, and it shall prevail," would almost appear to be the lesson of history, past and contemporaneous. If Truth conquers, how slowly does she win her way to each successive triumph, and how bitter is the opposition which she has ever to encounter from the organized forces of prejudice and superstition!

Galileo and Bruno are instances of men who were persecuted by the ignorance and bigotry of the Church of Rome. But it would, of course, be a monstrous error to suppose that this Church alone has set herself in opposition to advancing thought. It is Church-Christianity—dogmatic theology, wherever taught—that has endeavoured to repress the free, untrammelled workings of men's minds. Hardly in our own day, nearly two thousand years since the death of Christ, have we, in this free land of England, won absolute liberty of speech. We have only to turn to the records of those prosecutions for blasphemy which were so frequent but a few years ago, when, as it was said, "Christianity was part of the common law," to see what evil could be wrought, what misery inflicted, by this great repressive and

coercive force. And if at the present time the high priests of this Church-Christianity cannot, as formerly, invoke the powers of the State to visit with pains and penalties those who venture to dissent from their dogmas and their ordinances, and if the threat of excommunication can now be smiled at as a mere *brutum fulmen*, there are still means and methods of persecution sufficient to terrorize the timid and the sensitive, and to cause suffering even to the more stalwart champions of Freethought.

As an illustration, I take the following from a leading article published in the *Daily News* in the year 1895. It is headed "A Scientific Martyr," and refers to the life and experiences of Mr. Andrew Crosse, a once well-known electrician. "Mr. Crosse first sprang into fame by a paper read at the meeting of the British Association at Bristol in 1837, in which he said that, in the course of some electrical experiments, he 'was looking for a salicious formation when animal matter appeared instead.' In her *History of the Thirty Years' Peace* Miss Martineau thus describes the discovery: 'In the midst of elements fatal to animal life, under the surface of a caustic fluid, within an enclosure from which the atmosphere had been driven out, and where there was no possibility that ova could have been deposited, or could have escaped destruction if deposited, insects appeared after an electric current had been established for a sufficient number of months. Without the electricity, and without some other conditions, the insects have failed to appear. With those con-

ditions they have been produced again and again to the present.' Hereupon a furious controversy arose. Mr. Crosse was, as he said, treated with so much virulence on account of these experiments that 'it seems as if it were a crime to have made them.' The insects were of the genus Acarus, and he was nicknamed 'Acarus Crosse.' The experiments were, nevertheless, continued for thirteen years, always, as he told Harriet Martineau, with the same results. Mr. Crosse himself never ventured to give an opinion as to the cause which produced them, but *he was reviled as an assailant of the faith, a presumptuous claimant of creative power.*[1] He was driven by this senseless persecution to live the life of a recluse, but the discussions to which his supposed discovery led resulted in the complete establishment of the fundamental scientific truth that wherever life appears there has been first a germ. Mr. Crosse never pretended to create life. All that he did, as he said in a letter to Miss Martineau, was to urge scientific men to ascertain the truth, which they have done in this matter since his death."

No, truly, the spirit which imprisoned Galileo and which burnt Giordano Bruno is not yet dead. The stake and the rack are happily things of the past, but the temper which invoked them still survives. And against that spirit and temper science has ever to struggle. Thought and knowledge ever press forward, but are ever delayed by the troops of black-stoled priests who would fain bar their progress. The history of the conflict is always the same. As

[1] The italics are mine.

science propounds some new theory, some new discovery, which is seen to be inconsistent with the teachings of Church-Christianity, such theory, such discovery, is denounced, ridiculed, anathematized by the ecclesiastic. A desperate attempt is made to strangle it at its birth; to stamp it out as though it were a noxious weed. Thus is the spread of truth impeded and delayed. But gradually the evidence becomes too strong, the reasoning too convincing. What was condemned as an heretical error is at last seen to be a truth, founded on an "impregnable rock" against which the waves of sacerdotalism are destined to dash themselves in vain. Then at last the attitude is changed. It is now discovered that the new teaching is not (when properly understood, of course) in any way opposed to the doctrines of Church-Christianity; nay, it will at last be triumphantly shown that those doctrines (properly understood) contained, in some mysterious manner, the very essence of what science has proclaimed as a new revelation of intellect and thought! Thus, to give an example, the theory of Evolution, at first denounced as atheistical and irreligious, is now found to be quite compatible with the revelation contained in the books of Moses. But (and this is the point to bear in mind) the progress of science and knowledge is still ever made *in spite of* the opposition of the theologian, disguise that opposition as he may, and as he does in modern times, when he deems it expedient and diplomatic so to do. Resist as long as possible, then make "a movement to the rear for strategical purposes," execute a clever *volte face,* and

ultimately claim the triumph as your own. Such have always been the characteristic tactics of Theology in her prolonged conflict with Science.

Think again of all the misery which has been caused, the cruelties which have been inflicted, the lives which have been sacrificed, the hatred which has been engendered, by the action of this Church-Christianity. We are accustomed to speak with horror of the persecutions suffered by the early Christians in the time of Nero and other Roman Emperors. They were as nothing compared to the persecutions which Christians have suffered at the hands of other Christians in the name of their common religion. We justly regard war as one of the most terrible of the evils to which humanity is exposed. What more abominable or more sanguinary wars can we read of than those which have been waged in the name of the Prince of Peace? Is there in the whole of history a more revolting chapter than that which details the atrocities and the abominations wrought by that vile and hideous engine of Church-Christianity called the Inquisition, or, by unconscious irony, known as "the Holy Office"? We could hardly have a better illustration of the evils caused by the pestilent system of dogmatic theology than that afforded by the history of Spain in the reign of Philip II, and especially of his struggle with the so-called "heretics" of the Netherlands. Such fiendish cruelties, such inhuman barbarities as we there read of, seem almost to pass the measure of our understanding. Yet they were all done in the sacred name of religion! "Of the

number of those who actually suffered in the low countries we have no precise information," writes Buckle in his *History of Civilization;*[1] "but Alva triumphantly boasted that in five or six years of his administration he had *put to death in cold blood* more than eighteen thousand, besides a still greater number whom he had slain on the field of battle. This, even during his short tenure of power, would make about forty thousand victims; an estimate probably not far from the truth, since we know, from other sources, that in one year more than eight thousand were either executed or burned. Such measures were the result of instructions issued by Philip, and formed a necessary part of his general scheme." Before the horrors of this persecution of Christians by Christians the stories of persecutions of Christians by Pagans pale into insignificance. Well might the philosopher exclaim, "See how these Christians hate one another!"

And now what need to speak of St. Bartholomew and Sicilian Vespers; of burnings of Protestants by Queen Mary, and of Catholics (to say nothing of Independents and Brownists) by Queen Elizabeth; of the burning of Servetus by Calvin; of the roastings before a slow fire; of the buryings alive; of the tortures of the thumbscrew and the rack, and the whole hideous apparatus of religious bigotry and intolerance?

[1] Vol. ii, chap. viii. See, too, Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part iii, chap. ix, and *passim*. Torquemada, the first Inquisitor-General (1483), is said in eighteen years to have condemned ninety thousand persons to perpetual imprisonment and more than ten thousand to be burned. (*Ibid*, part iv, chap. iii.)

One can only exclaim once more with the old Roman poet-philosopher, "*Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!*"[1] And by "religio" here I mean Church-Christianity. Ah! how much better for the human race, how much better for human happiness, had this terrible Church-Christianity never been devised by the too-imaginative brain of man!

"By their fruits ye shall know them," said the teacher. Wars, hatreds, persecutions, tortures, bigotry, fanaticism, ignorance, suppression of free thought, impediments to science, progress, and civilization—such have been in times past some of the fruits of Church-Christianity. By excommunications and anathemas and terrorism and preachings of hell-fire it blighted the happiness of men and enslaved their minds, while the hard and repulsive asceticism which became part of its system brought misery to the domestic hearth, introduced utterly false ideas with regard to the relations of the sexes, and has left a bitter legacy of evil to modern generations.[2]

This, it may be said, is a one-sided criticism. It leaves out of account the good which Church-Christianity has effected, and dwells solely on the evil. It may be so. I am not concerned to dispute it, though I assert that Church-Christianity is constantly appropriating to herself virtues and improved modes of life and thought to which she has really no

[1] "Of so much ill religion was the cause!"

[2] See, especially, Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii, pp. 320 *ff*, 348 *ff*.

claim, and which are in truth the natural products of a progressive civilization. Such, for instance, is the now recognized duty of kindness to animals, concerning which I shall have more to say in another chapter. All I am now concerned to maintain is that the picture I have drawn, if incomplete, is nevertheless a true one. And the evils to which I have alluded still infest us, although they work by different methods, adapted to a different stage of society—methods less violent than of old, but as insidious and as dangerous as ever. These are the evils which Professor Huxley had in mind when he denounced "that ecclesiastical spirit, that clericalism, which in England and everywhere else, and to whatever denomination it may belong, is the deadly enemy of science."[1]

[1] Let me give an illustration—a small one, but very characteristic—which has come under my eye since this was penned. Science has conclusively shown that, having regard to the health of our teeming populations, cremation is a most excellent method of disposing of the dead. To many persons also the idea of cremation is far less horrible than that of slow decomposition in a wooden or perhaps leaden box. Many would far rather think of their dear lost ones as "two handfuls of white dust" than as a hideous mass of corruption. Yet the Holy Catholic Church must needs set herself in violent opposition to this enlightened substitute for the horrors of our great cemeteries. The Bishop of Salford, we read, speaking at Bury, said that "Cremation was practised by Rome when that empire became corrupt. The Catholic Church forbade cremation as a detestable abuse of our bodies. Cremation flourished where Christianity was feeble. It offended Christian instincts, for death was sleep, and sleep was connected with the churchyard, and not with frizzling and the profanity of crematoriums"! (*Morning Leader*, July 16, 1900). Such is the combined ignorance, barbarism, and idiocy which this miserable so-called "religion" brings in its gloomy train. It is notorious, too, that some Protestant divines have opposed cremation on the ground that it is likely to impair the belief in "the resurrection of the body." It is well that religious darkness should be occasionally lightened by a scintilla of

Even as I write (1915) the most terrible war known to the history of man is raging on three Continents and on the seas. This war is not actually waged in the name of religion as were some of those that I have referred to above; but, nevertheless, God is invoked on all sides, just as the Israelites of old invoked Jehovah to lead them to victory over the Gods of their enemies. God is the "God of Battles." He is appealed to as the Generalissimo of the Forces. The Kaiser speaks of him in terms of affectionate and unquestioned intimacy. He is the "good old German God," who will, undoubtedly, give him the victory over all his foes. Our own Bishops and clergy and other ministers of religion are not, perhaps, on quite such familiar terms with Deity, but they entertain no doubt that "the Lord is a Man of War," and that prayers and penitence and days of "intercession" may induce him to fight upon our side; as though, had it not been for such prayers and penitence, Omnipotence and Prescience might have acted in some other manner. If thousands of human beings are slaughtered and mutilated, if homesteads are burnt, towns and villages destroyed, women and children sent forth desolate, to starve and to perish by the way, and some of the fairest lands in the world turned into a howling wilderness, it is the good God who has done all this; to Him be the praise; to Him let our thanks be given.

humour, however unconscious! [Nevertheless thought advances, and now even a bishop has been cremated—the late Bishop Stubbs; but the Roman Catholics will have none of it.]

Thus, as usual, each side appeals, with equal confidence, to this "God of Battles." Each is equally fighting under the patronage of Jehovah. To some of us, myself included, all this invocation of the name of God as the leader of fighting men upon the face of this poor little planet appears both nauseating and supremely foolish. I believe the French poet came much nearer the truth when, in a witty poem which some good people call "blasphemous" because it is a biting satire upon an absurd and degraded conception of Deity, he represents "le Bon Dieu" as emphatically declaring:

> Si j'ai jamais conduit une cohorte
> Je veux, mes enfants, que le Diable m'emporte!

But thus apparently it will ever be with Church-Christianity. What has Church-Christianity ever done to repress war? Wars have flourished and increased under her *régime*. She gives lip-service to the Prince of Peace, but she has given Bellona an honoured altar in her Temples. One is reminded of Pizarro and his Spaniards who perpetrated the most abominable cruelties upon a gentle, an innocent, and a peaceful race, in the name of Christ, whose religion, forsooth, it was their sacred mission to spread. Fighting alike for God and gold, they waved the crucifix in triumph over atrocities which disgraced not only religion, but humanity. Bigoted, cruel, treacherous, avaricious as they were, they never doubted that they had been specially led to this land of gold to spread the light of Christianity among the heathen. "It was manifestly the work of heaven," exclaims a devout son of the Church,

"that the natives of the country should have received him (Pizarro) in so kind and loving a spirit as best fitted to facilitate the conquest; for it was the Lord's hand which led him and his followers to this remote region for the extension of the holy faith and for the salvation of souls."[1]

We may hear almost the same language from the mouths of Christians at the present day. If there be such creatures as angels, are not these, indeed, things to make them weep?[2]

[1] Prescott, *Conquest of Peru*, chap. iv.

[2] With regard to the opposition to social progress and reform which is such a characteristic of Church-Christianity, few better illustrations could be found than that of the attitude of the Church towards those who would bring our barbarous laws of divorce into consonance with the dictates of justice, humanity, and common sense. Let the reader consider the following extract from evidence given before the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce, 1910.—

Lady Francis Balfour, examining the Bishop of Birmingham before the Royal Commission, said: (p. 360) Let me take a concrete case that occurs to my mind. You may have a woman who is a Christian, and you may have her husband ill-using her in some sort of way. We have had evidence put before us, which is of course known to us all, that there are men who live on the prostitution of their wives. Now, is that a contract which has not been broken on the one side in the worst possible way? Are they twain one flesh; is that for better and for worse?

Bishop of Birmingham: Yes, I am afraid so.

Lady Francis Balfour: And is that wife to stick to that husband, she being a Christian, and to do as he commands her?

Bishop of Birmingham: Yes, I am afraid so.

But the Church has, of course, always been opposed to divorce, and for Roman Catholics marriage is indissoluble!

Chapter IV

A MAN-MADE MARVEL

The central fact in dogmatic Christian theology is the doctrine of the Trinity—the doctrine that God consists of three persons, each person being God; God, nevertheless, being one, and not three.

Of all the impossible conceptions which have been invented by the perverse ingenuity of the human brain, this is perhaps the most vexatious and the most deplorable. God, as the English Church Article tells us, is "without body, parts, or passions." God the Son, however, has "body, flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature." He is "perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." He is "of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten." "Begotten of his Father before all worlds"—which to the unsophisticated would seem to imply that he was begotten in remote ages, before he "took manhood into God" at a certain moment in this world's history during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus. Yet, if we wish to avoid Arian heresy, we must say that he is, nevertheless, co-eternal with the Father. He is "God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world." He is "inferior to

the Father as touching his manhood"; yet, nevertheless, he is in all respects equal to the Father, since the Three Persons are "co-equal."

The third Person of this Trinity is "neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding"—that is, "proceeding from the Father and the Son." The second Person "was conceived" by the third Person, and born of a Virgin on this planetary speck which we call the earth. The Three Persons are equally eternal, and equal in all respects. They are "Con-substantial" (whatever that may mean) and "Co-eternal."

The orthodox Nicene Trinity was settled for us at the Council of Nice, A.D. 325. Bitter strifes, fierce hatreds, burning passions, had raged, and yet continued to rage, round the Trinitarian controversy. Who has not heard of the fight between the *Homoousians* and the *Homoiousians?* Were the Father and the Son of the *same* substance (*Homo-ousion*) or of a *similar* substance (*Homoi-ousion*)? There was only one *iota* between the combatants, but the battle was fierce and long. At last the *Homoousians*, or *Con-substantialists*, triumphed, and theirs is now the orthodox Catholic belief, which except a man believes faithfully he cannot be saved.

Again, there was bitter contention as to the single or double "procession" of the Holy Ghost. This was the battle of the *filioque* clause. Did the Holy Ghost proceed from the Father alone, or from the Father and the Son both? But this knotty point was not cleared till the third Council of Toledo, A.D. 589, when the words "and the Son" (*filioque*)

were added to the Nicene Creed—a weighty doctrinal addition which produced long afterwards the schism of the Greek and Latin Churches.[1]

The Council of Nice was the triumph of Athanasian orthodoxy. Arianism and Sabellianism were consigned to outer darkness. How well can we imagine the exuberant delight of the "orthodox" when, 325 years after Christ, the damnable errors of Arius were finally condemned by authoritative decree, and the heresiarch himself and all his followers placed under the solemn anathema of the Church! For how nearly had Arius succeeded in defeating them; and how terrible would have been the calamity if Arianism and orthodoxy had become synonymous terms! Verily these conquering Christians would have been more or less than human if they had not seized the opportunity to put the tenets of their victorious creed upon the "impregnable rock" of rigid definition and uncompromising formula. The Nicene Creed was the *Io Triumphe* and the *Væ Victis* of the conquering sect, the very charter of Athanasian Trinitarianism.

But enough of this futile attempt to define the indefinable, and to reduce the unknowable to the laws of logic, to defy Antinomies, and to compel belief in a very contradiction in terms.[2] The Trinity

[1] Gibbon's *Roman Empire*, chap. xxxvii (vol. iv, p. 340; Dr. Smith's edition). Mr. Hugh H. Stannus, in his excellent essay on the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, says the words were interpolated at the Council of Toledo in A.D. 589.

[2] Bacon, if Bacon indeed it was who wrote the words quoted, which appears somewhat doubtful, observes that a Christian believer in the Trinity "believes three to be one and one to be three; a father not to be older than his son; a son to be equal with his

is "a fond thing vainly invented," a product of the human brain. It has not even Biblical warrant. The very name *Trinity* is unknown to any Biblical writer; nor was it brought into use till two hundred years after Christ. The teaching of Jesus himself, and of the Apostles, was Unitarian. "That Jesus," says Renan, "never dreamt of making himself pass for an incarnation of God is a matter about which there can be no doubt."[1] Extraordinary, indeed, would it have been to all but orthodox theologians if Christ, knowing himself to be "very God of very God," had nevertheless studiously refrained from saying so. Surely this marvellous doctrine of Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, which we are called upon to believe on pain of everlasting damna-

father; and one proceeding from both to be equal with both. He believes in three persons in one nature and two natures in one person. He believes a virgin to be a mother of a son, and that very son of hers to be her maker. He believes him to have been shut up in a narrow womb whom heaven and earth could not contain. He believes him to have been born in time who was and is from everlasting. He believes him to have been a weak child, carried in arms, who is the Almighty; and him once to have died who only hath life and immortality in himself." Mr. Herbert Spencer writes, in his study of Sociology: "Here we have theologians who believe that our national welfare will be endangered if there is not in all churches an enforced repetition of the dogmas that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are each of them almighty; yet there are not three almighties but one almighty; that one of the almighties suffered on the cross and descended into hell to pacify another of them; and that whosoever does not believe this 'without doubt shall perish everlastingly.'" Most readers will recollect the passage in *Literature and Dogma* wherein Matthew Arnold likened the Trinity, as imagined by ordinary Christians, to a conception of three Lord Shaftesburys "infinitely magnified and improved"!—alluding, of course, to the highly respected philanthropist nobleman of that day.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, chap. xv. He adds: "Such an idea was entirely foreign to the Jewish mind, and there is no trace of it in the synoptical gospels." As before, I assume the historicity of Jesus.

tion, would have been plainly preached by Christ and his Apostles if it had been a Divine truth of this tremendous importance! Yet so far is this from being the case that one may say with certainty that nobody at the present day could by his unaided efforts find the doctrine in the Bible. He has to "open his mouth and shut his eyes," and take it from "the Church"; and if he is so bold as to ask for Scriptural authority, he is referred to two texts in the new Testament—one of which is now universally acknowledged to be spurious, and the other altogether inadequate to support the astounding superstructure which men would fain rear upon it. No; this stupendous dogma is a product not of real Christianity, but of "Church-Christianity." It is emphatically a man-made marvel. We can trace its origin to Neo-Platonic and Alexandrian sources. We can follow its history and watch its evolution. The idea of a Trinity did not, of course, originate with Christians. It was known to Pagan peoples, as the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Hindus. But these Pagan Trinities were at least not incompatible with reason. They were *partnerships* of separate individual gods, or, rather, they were conceptions of one God under different aspects; or, in other words, of the union of different *attributes* in one God. Such in Christian times was the "heretical" Trinity of the Sabellians. "Three beings who, by the self-derived necessity of their existence, possess all the Divine attributes in the most perfect degree, who are eternal in duration, infinite in space, and intimately present to each

other and to the whole universe, irresistibly force themselves on the astonished mind as one and the same Being; who, in the economy of grace, as well as in that of nature, may manifest himself under different forms and be considered under different aspects. By this hypothesis a real substantial trinity is refined into a trinity of names and abstract modifications that subsist only in the mind which conceives them. The *Logos* is no longer a person, but an attribute; and it is only in a figurative sense that the epithet of Son can be applied to the eternal reason which was with God from the beginning, and by *which*, not by *whom*, all things were made. The incarnation of the *Logos* is reduced to a mere inspiration of the Divine Wisdom, which filled the soul and directed all the actions of the man Jesus."[1] This, at any rate, is reconcilable with reason and involves no contradiction in terms. The distinction of the "orthodox" Trinity is that it is absolutely unintelligible, and involves propositions mutually destructive and utterly repugnant to reason. It is indeed a strange and unique product, evolved in the crucible of warring factions over the white heat of the *odium theologicum*.

Archbishop Secker said: "Let any proposition be delivered to us, as coming from God or from man, we can believe it no further than we understand it; and, therefore, if we do not understand it at all, we cannot believe it at all." If this be true, it is difficult to see how any belief can be given to the

[1] Gibbon's *Roman Empire*, chap. xxi.

doctrine that was formulated at the Council of Nice. But *credo quia impossibile*—I believe it because it is impossible—is still the maxim of millions, and a proverb tells us that "Ignorance is the mother of devotion." Not the least deplorable effect of this man-made mystery is that it has destroyed all that was most beautiful in the conception of the man Jesus. The man Jesus has perished in the Man-God Christ. Jesus the teacher of patience, and humility, and love, and pity, and self-sacrifice, and mercy, and forgiveness; of peace on earth and good-will towards men; of the brotherhood of mankind; of the charity that thinketh no evil; Jesus the "meek and mild," yet Jesus the courageous reformer; Jesus the great example of suffering humanity—all this has become merged in God the Son, Christ conscious that he is eternal, omnipotent God, who is to offer himself to make atonement to God, himself being God. Instantly the whole character of the legend changes. Now, instead of Mary, the sorrowing mother, we have Mary the Perpetual Virgin, the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven. Instead of a simple memorial supper[1] we have bread and wine changed into God's body and God's blood. Then come in their natural (or unnatural) sequence priestcraft's gloomy train—gorgeous ritual, superstition, sacerdotalism, *et hoc genus omne*. To find, then, the Christ that *was*, if not "the Christ that is

[1] But, as Mr. F. J. Gould has pointed out (*The Religion of the First Christians*, p. 72), "the essential idea of the Holy Meal is the simplest and most obvious—viz., that of fellowship at the board." The notion of a memorial service is of later date.

to be," we have, first, to eliminate all the legends and myths which naturally in those early times grew up around his memory (we have, for example, to learn that he did not go about cursing fig-trees or sending devils into swine); and, secondly, to get rid of all the fictions subsequently invented by subtle-minded, disputatious men who called themselves his followers, though utterly ignorant of the spirit of his calling. Amazing, indeed, is the superstructure of belief which man's deplorable love of the marvellous has erected on the basis of a very simple legend. Millions of men and women, for example, believe that a priest, by the utterance of a few magical words, is able to procure the special intervention of the God of the universe in order to change the substance of bread and wine into the actual body and blood of the man-God Christ. This astounding miracle is of daily occurrence in thousands of churches. To the eye, to the touch, to the taste, to the chemist, the analyst, the microscopist, the bread and wine still remain bread and wine. Aye, but we know "the accidents" only of matter; and, though "the accidents" remain unchanged, the "substance" is changed, and has really become in every instance the body and the blood of Christ—that is, of God. The believer, therefore, actually has his God before him. He bows down to him, worships him, eats his body, drinks his blood. The Deity may be thus carried through the streets to be administered to the sick and the dying.[1] And

[1] In France one may often hear it said of a passing priest that he is carrying "*le bon Dieu*" to some believer *in extremis*. I cannot

countless others who shrink from accepting this doctrine of "Transubstantiation" in its entirety nevertheless believe that the Deity is actually present, in a special sense, and in some equally mysterious and miraculous manner, in these material substances of man's food. Nay, men very exceptionally gifted with the power of faith have even professed to see these mysteries with the human eye. Thus it is related of the founder of the Jesuits that, as he stood praying on the steps of the church of St. Dominic, he *saw* the Trinity in Unity, and wept aloud with joy and wonder, and that in the sacrifice of the Mass he *saw* transubstantiation take place.[1]

And all this has grown from the simple and pathetic legend that Jesus instituted a memorial supper in order that his disciples might think of him when they brake bread and drank wine![2] And

but sympathize with poor Bertrand le Blas, of Tournay, whose story is thus related by Motley (*Dutch Republic*, chap. ii): "Having begged his wife and children to pray for a blessing upon what he was about to undertake, he went on Christmas Day to the Cathedral of Tournay, and stationed himself near the altar. Having awaited the moment in which the priest held on high the consecrated host, Le Blas then forced his way through the crowd, snatched the wafer from the hands of the astonished ecclesiastic, and broke it into bits, crying aloud as he did so, 'Misguided men! Do ye take this thing to be Jesus Christ, your Lord and Saviour?' With these words he threw the fragments on the ground, and trampled them with his feet." This poor wretch, who disdained to fly, since "he had come to the church determined to execute what he considered a sacred duty, and to abide the consequences," was put to death with tortures so unspeakably horrible that even at this distance of time one can hardly bear to read of them. This was in 1561.

[1] Macaulay may well say that it is difficult to relate these things without a pitying smile (Essay on *Ranke's History of the Popes*).

[2] Not entirely so, however; for to kill and eat the god was a well-known primitive custom, as to which see, among other works, Grant

men are still wrangling over these figments of misdirected human imagination; and Anglican bishops are even at this day pronouncing solemn judgments on the subtleties of the "Real Presence," and decreeing that "Consubstantiation" (but not "Transubstantiation") may be lawfully taught in the English Church! And we, to whom it clearly appears that all these things are but of human invention, can only mourn that men's minds can be thus enslaved, their ingenuity thus misapplied, their passions and animosities thus aroused, in a strife so needless and so futile.

Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God.* The perverted doctrine of the change of the elements into "body and blood" is, no doubt, a survival, like so many other doctrines of the Christian theology. To really eat body and drink blood would, of course, be repulsive to civilized man, but to profess so to do while eating bread and wine carries on the old tradition while bringing it into something like harmony with the requirements of civilization. That men should cling so passionately to this belief is a stupendous illustration of the power and vitality of *Atavism.* (The reader of to-day will, no doubt, consult Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough* on the practice of "eating the God."—Note to Second Edition.)

Chapter V

AN AFTER-LIFE

Between two seas, on one small point of land,
Wearied, uncertain, and amazed we stand.

I WONDER how many of the good people who go to church on Sunday and holy days, and make profession of their faith by devoutly repeating the words of the Creed, ever consider what they mean by "the resurrection of the body." That there is in every human body an immortal soul is a very old doctrine. At death it seemed to men of old that the breath left the body, and the breath (πνεῦμα, ψυχή—*spiritus*, *anima*) was, they thought, the soul or spirit which had continued existence apart from the body. Ψυχάριον εἶ βάσταζον νεκρὸν, said an old philosopher, or, as a modern has rendered it, "A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man." Cato, when contemplating suicide, is represented by Addison as comforted by the Platonic philosophy: "It must be so. Plato, thou reasonest well." There *must* be an immortal soul, says Cato, impressed by the Platonic reasoning, which, I fear, few moderns are likely to be. Milton wishes to unsphere

The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions, hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook.

But the doctrine of the Church, it need hardly be said, goes far beyond this. There is in every man an immortal soul which, on his death, goes, it would seem, to the place of departed spirits, and there awaits the resurrection of his body. This doctrine of the resurrection of the body is based upon the legend of the resurrection of Jesus, who, as the Article of the English Church tells us, "did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature." We read that he appeared to his disciples with the wounds in his hands and his feet, and that he ate and drank before them. The Church teaches that Christ was the first to rise from the dead. He was "the first fruits of them that slept." And, in a similar manner, according to the orthodox doctrine, at his second coming "all men shall rise again with their bodies," to which, it would seem, the souls shall then be re-united.

This is, indeed, an astounding doctrine. The body, we know, after death returns to its elements. Its component particles may go, as the ages roll on, to form the bodies of other men—a fact which would seem to present some difficulty. I am reminded of a passage in a book which once had a great success, but which now is but little known. "Tumbling together in my brain," wrote the author of *Anastasius*, "the Caloyer's bag of bones and what my friend Eugenius once had told me of the periodic renovation of whatever has life, and the successive appropriation of the same organic particles by different bodies, I dreamed I heard the last trumpet calling up the

dead, but beheld them sadly puzzled how to obey the summons, half the souls thus roused being each individually assailed by at least a dozen different bodies of different ages, which all, with equal earnestness, asserted themselves to be their own; while the other half were still more at a loss from finding no bodies at all with which to rise, theirs having been occupied, since the death of their first tenants, by a whole series of later generations."[1]

But some genial Church-Christian will exclaim: "Thou fool. All flesh is not the same flesh, and the body that will be raised will not be the same body as was buried." Alas! good friend, thou strayest far from the paths of orthodoxy if such is thy belief. For what saith the learned Bishop Pearson? "The identity of the body raised from death is so necessary that the very name of resurrection doth include or suppose it; so that when I say there shall be resurrection of the dead I must intend this much, that the bodies of men which live and are dead shall revive and rise again. The same flesh which is corrupted shall be restored; whatsoever alteration shall be made shall not be of their nature,

[1] Hope's *Anastasius*, vol. iii, p. 24. Theologians have regarded this as a serious difficulty. See *History and Theology of the Three Creeds*, by the Rev. W. W. Harvey, (1854), vol. ii, p. 523, *et seq.* "It is certain," says Mr. Harvey, "that the components of one human body may enter into the composition of another by assimilation, and be a second time resolved from bodily organization in death. A hard-fought field of battle will for many generations restore to man in after crops of grain the dissolved elements of the slaughtered host. The same particles may then re-enter into several human bodies at far distant periods of time. To which individual body, then, will these particles belong that may have been common to many?"

but of their condition; not of their substance, but of their qualities." And, again: "As his all-seeing eye observeth every particle of dissolved and corrupted man, so doth he also see and know all ways and means by which these scattered parts should be united, by which this ruined fabric should be recompacted; he knoweth how every bone should be brought to its old neighbour, how every sinew may be re-embroidered on it; he understandeth what are the proper parts to be conjoined, what is the proper gluten by which they may become united." [1]

Inexpressibly sad to me are these commentaries of the old bishop on the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Can any thinking man at the present day really entertain such a belief as this? Is it to be an article of our faith that the God of the universe will put old bones and sinews together, with their "proper *gluten*," and reconstruct the bodies of the dead out of their original atoms? And, since the particles of our bodies are always changing, one might be tempted to ask whether the bones, sinews, etc., that are to be thus renewed will be those of youth or of age? Are they to be the very ones that were laid in the grave, whether the deceased were eight, eighteen, or eighty? It would really seem that, if it be necessary to provide the soul with a body, that result might be obtained without this

[1] See *Pearson on the Creed*. This was quite the accepted doctrine. Thus Shakespeare's soldier says: "If the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make; when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in battle, shall join together at the latter day, and cry all—We died at such a place; some swearing, some crying for a surgeon; some upon their wives left poor behind them," etc., etc. (*Henry V*, act iv, sc. i).

extraordinary scheme of reconstruction. Still, as the bishop says, unless there be *identity* there can be no resurrection.

"But," says my modern Christian friend, "we have long outgrown this old literal interpretation of the resurrection of the dead. The bodies are *not* the same, or only so in a mystic and mysterious sense. What says the apostle? 'There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.' And what does he mean by that? Let Dean Alford tell us: 'Even various fountains of *light*, so similar in its aspect and properties, differ: the sun from the moon and the stars; the stars from one another; why not, then, a *body* here from a resurrection *body*—both *bodies*, but *different*?'"[1] Yes, for does not the Apostle himself tell us that the resurrection-body will be very different from the body that was buried, or cremated, or cast into the sea, or otherwise disposed of? 'It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.'[2] Can anything

[1] Alford's Greek Testament—1 *Cor.* xv, 41. The italics are the Dean's.

[2] Or, as the Dean would translate "an animal body," ψυχικὸν, a body with "an animal soul," whatever that may mean. "Bacon," says Mr. Spedding, "distinguishes in several parts of his writings between the animal soul, common, at least in kind, to man and to the brutes, and the immortal principle infused by the Divine favour into man only. To the latter he gave the name of *spiraculum*, which was, of course, suggested by the text '*spiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitæ*'" (Preface to Bacon's *Philosophical Works*, vol. i, p. 49). The reference is to *De Augmentis*, iv, 3: "*Veniamus ad doctrinam de anima humana; e cujus thesauris omnes caeterae doctrinae depromptae sunt. Ejus duae sunt partes: altera tractat de anima rationali quae divina est; altera de irrationali, quae communis est cum brutis.*" Mr. Spedding points out that Bacon is heretical in this matter.

be more different than our corruptible animal body and an incorruptible spiritual body?"

But here the question arises, Is this new resurrection body a material or immaterial body? If immaterial, we must ask further: What possible need can there be to provide an immaterial body for an immaterial soul?—putting aside the question, how does one immaterial entity differ from another? But if this new body is to be material, then is the Christian doctrine a materialistic doctrine; and that, surely, cannot be.[1] Let us assume, however, that it is for some inscrutable reason necessary to provide a spiritual body for the immortal soul, and that the soul has to wait indefinitely *somewhere* until that body be provided for it; and, further, let us assume that the spiritual body is itself incorruptible and immortal. But how can this process be called a "resurrection of the dead"? How can it be said, with any show of sense or reason, that this spiritual body is "raised from the dead"? Verily, it seems to me that there never was a more grotesque and preposterous doctrine than this confused assertion of a raising from the dead of a spiritual body which never was a living natural body, and which, therefore, never was buried, or cremated, or otherwise disposed of as a corpse. The old Bishop was logical,

[1] Can we conceive form in conjunction with the immaterial? I certainly cannot. Tennyson, indeed, writes:—

> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside,
> And I shall know him when we meet.

But to conceive immaterial form and extension appears to be beyond the power of human intelligence. (See further on this matter chap. vi and Appendix.)

but absurd. The alternative is both absurd and illogical. Alas! for that fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians! What a mockery it has seemed to me hearing it read over some loved-one's grave! Truly silence were better than such cold comfort as this. Was there ever such an example of what is called reasoning in a circle? "If there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." But our preaching *cannot* be vain, and your faith *cannot* be vain; therefore Christ hath been raised; therefore there is resurrection of the dead. Q.E.D.! We bear witness that God raised up Christ, "whom he raised not up if so be that the dead are not raised." Therefore, if Christ be not raised up, we are false witnesses. But that *cannot* be. Therefore Christ *must* be raised. Therefore there is resurrection of the dead. Q.E.D.! Again, why are people baptised for the dead if the dead are not raised? "Why, then, are they baptised for them?" Why, indeed?, we may ask; and others seem to have asked the same question, seeing that the strange custom has been long discontinued. Yet, again, What does it profit me to have fought with beasts at Ephesus if the dead are not raised? Nothing. But it is impossible to conceive that it does *not* profit me. Therefore, etc. Q.E.D.! This is even worse than the reasoning of the good people who argue: "If A, B, and C are not true, life is not worth living. But life *must* be worth living. Therefore A, B, and C are true." Then, too, we have

the false analogy of the seed which is not quickened except it die; although we know that if the seed *does* die it cannot be quickened! And listening to such reasoning as this, if reasoning it can be called, what wonder if the mourner's soul rises in protest against such futile mockery of woe? Oh! death, *here* is thy sting! Oh! grave, *here* is thy victory![1]

Let us, then, pass by this wholly unintelligible theory of the resurrection of the body, and revert to the ancient doctrine of the immortality of the soul. What is a soul? We know what we mean when we speak of the body, and we know, more or less, what we mean when we speak of the mind. "Mind," writes Dr. Maudsley, "may be defined physiologically as a general term denoting the sum-total of those functions of the brain which are known as thought, feeling, and will. By disorder of the mind is meant disorder of those functions."[2] And, again: "Whatever opinion may be held concerning the essential nature of mind and its independence of matter, it is admitted on all sides that its manifestations take

[1] Those who have never studied detailed criticism of the legend of the resurrection of Jesus may be referred to Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, vol. ii, chap. xiv (ninth ed.), and the Introduction; or, of course, to such writers as Strauss, Renan, and the more recent exponents of the "higher criticism." Mr. Greg writes: "It will be seen that we make no scruple in negativing a doctrine held *verbally* by the Church—viz., 'the resurrection of the body,' since whatever was intended by the authors of this phrase—the meaning of which is by no means clear to us, and was probably no clearer to themselves—thus much is certain, that *our* 'resurrection of the body' can bear no similarity to Christ's resurrection of the body; for his body remained only a few hours in the grave, and, we are expressly told, 'did not see corruption'; and ours, we know, remains there for untold years, and moulders away into the original elements of its marvellous chemistry."

[2] *Responsibility in Mental Disease*, p. 15 (note).

place through the nervous system, and are affected by the condition of the nervous parts which minister to them. If these are healthy, they are sound; if these are diseased, they are unsound."

"Surely," says Professor Huxley, "no one who is cognisant of the facts of the case nowadays doubts that the roots of psychology lie in the physiology of the nervous system. What we call the operations of the mind are *functions of the brain*, and the materials of consciousness are products of cerebral activity. Cabanis may have made use of crude and misleading phraseology when he said that the brain secretes thought, as the liver secretes bile; but the conception which that much-abused phrase embodies is, nevertheless, far more consistent with fact than the popular notion that the mind is a metaphysical entity seated in the head, but as independent of the brain as a telegraph operator is of his instrument." [1]

A man's mind, then, as we know it, is dependent upon his brain. Injure his brain, and we at once affect his mind. "Insanity is, in fact, disorder of the brain producing disorder of mind; or, to define its nature in greater detail, it is a disorder of the supreme nerve centres of the brain—the special organs of mind—producing derangement of thought, feeling, and action, together or separately, of such degree or kind as to incapacitate the individual for the relations of life." [2] Physiologists will tell us in

[1] *Essay on Hume*, p. 94. (The italics are mine.) This doctrine, says Professor Huxley, contains nothing inconsistent with the purest Idealism. But see chap. x.

[2] Dr. Maudsley, *ubi supra*.

what particular regions of the brain our mental powers reside, and in what manner injuries to those parts will injuriously affect the mind. Thus "the cerebral hemispheres are the seat of the perceptions, of the intelligence, and of the will."

As Dr. Alex. Hill writes: "From very ancient times it has been recognized that the great brain or cerebrum is the seat of consciousness, thought, and volition. It may now be asserted that the cortex or sheet of grey matter which covers the cerebral hemispheres is alone concerned with these processes. The cortex cerebri is, therefore, the apparatus of mind."[1]

If, then, a man be deprived of these cerebral hemispheres—this cortex cerebi—he will be deprived of his perceptions, of his intelligence, of his volition, of his power of originating voluntary movements. But even a small cerebral disturbance is sufficient to wreck the reason. The noblest mind, the loftiest intelligence, may be overthrown in a moment by some seemingly slight injury to the brain.

But now arises the question, which must have obtruded itself upon all who have given serious thought to these matters: Is this mind which is so closely associated with the material brain that it is, in this life at any rate, dependent upon it for consciousness or volition—so dependent upon it, indeed, that thought has been defined as a function of the brain—to be identified with the soul which, *ex*

[1] *Introduction to Science*, p, 28.

hypothesi, is to have independent existence when the brain has mouldered into dust, or has been destroyed by the fire of the crematorium? Milton, we may remember, desired to

> Unsphere
> The spirit of Plato to unfold
> What worlds or what vast regions hold
> The immortal *mind* that hath forsook
> Its mansion in this fleshly nook.

Is, then, the *mind* immortal? Is it *that* we mean when we speak of the soul? Or is there, besides body and mind, a *tertium quid* independent of both, which we call the soul, and which is endowed with the gift of immortality? In other words, is man a trinity of body, mind, and soul? I confess I do not know how the orthodox should answer that question.

One thing seems to be evident—viz., that unless after death my chain of identity is preserved; unless my consciousness is preserved (albeit it may be in abeyance for a period), there is *for me* no after-life. My consciousness may be suspended as in sleep or trance; but unless it be re-awakened my life is extinguished. The idea that individual souls emanate from the Universal Soul and again return to it is a beautiful one, but it contains no theory of an after-life for men. The real question which we have to consider has been thus stated in the language of physical science: "Is there any means of knowing whether the series of states of consciousness which has been casually associated for three score years and ten with the arrangement and movements of innumerable millions of successively different

material molecules can be continued in like association with some substance which has not the properties of matter and force?" And this is what the late Professor Huxley, who so stated the problem, has to observe with regard to it: "As Kant said on a like occasion, if anybody can answer that question, he is just the man I want to see. If he says that consciousness cannot exist except in relation of cause and effect with certain organic molecules, I must ask how he knows that; and if he says it can, I must put the same question. And I am afraid that, like jesting Pilate, I shall not think it worth while (having but little time before me) to wait for an answer."[1]

I remember when a child reading in an old book of Miscellanies the story of a dialogue between a sceptic and a believer which much impressed me

[1] See an essay on "Science and Morals," published in the volume of essays on *Controverted Questions*, by the late Professor Huxley. *Cf.* Clifford's essay entitled *First and Last Catastrophe*, p. 158. Dr. Hill writes (*Introduction to Science*, p. 22): "When we think of the universe these three realities stand forth—matter, force, consciousness. And as we know that matter is indestructible, it seems to us impossible to escape the conclusion that consciousness is indestructible also. We can no more conceive of it as coming out of nothing or fading into nothingness than we can conceive of matter or of force coming into existence or ceasing to be. And as the portion of matter which constitutes our bodies is but a part of a universe of matter, or as the force with which we are endowed is but a part of a universe of force, so, too, our consciousness seems to be but a part of universal consciousness." This is well enough; but there are two comments to be made on it. First, that we have no idea what is meant by "universal consciousness," nor do we know if it exists, nor can we conceive it; and, secondly, that the absorption or merger of individual consciousness in the "universal consciousness" is surely tantamount to the extinction of the individual consciousness; so that here there would seem to be scant comfort for those who desire an assurance of an after-life.

—as a child. "Have you ever seen a soul?" asks the sceptic; and the believer, of course, answers "No." "Have you ever heard a soul?" "No." "Have you ever smelt a soul?" "No." "Have you ever tasted a soul?" "No." "Have you ever felt a soul?" "Yes, thank God," answers the believer; whereupon the sceptic rejoins that there are four senses to one against the existence of the soul! The believer now assails the sceptic. "Have you ever seen a pain?" "Have you ever heard a pain?", and so on, all of which questions are, of course, answered in the negative, until he asks: "Have you ever felt a pain?" to which the answer naturally is "Yes." "Well, then," says the triumphant believer to the sceptic, "there are four senses to one against the existence of a soul and four senses to one against the existence of a pain; and yet *you* know perfectly well that there is a pain, and *I* know perfectly well that there is a soul!"

This ridiculous story affords a good illustration of the kind of reasoning which is thought good enough for children and for childish adults. It is scarcely necessary to remark, first, that, if a thing is cognisable by one sense only, it is folly to say that there are four senses to one against its existence. Because we cannot hear, or smell, or taste, or "feel" a star, we do not say that there are four senses to one against its existence. And, secondly, to say that one can "feel" a soul, in the sense implied by the question, is an absurd and glaring falsehood. If the question had been properly put: "Have you ever touched a soul?" the answer would have been,

obviously, "No." The soul is, unfortunately, not cognisable by any one of our five senses. Were it otherwise, we should have been happily spared an infinity of argument as to its existence.

Yet there is a sense in which some men say that they can "feel" a soul. For instance, the late W. R. Greg, whose admirable work, *The Creed of Christendom*, has done so much to open men's eyes to the fact that the Christianity of the Churches is founded, not on an "impregnable rock," but on the most treacherous and illusive sand; even that courageous sceptic, while admitting—nay, contending—that man's immortality can be proved neither by reason nor by appeals to the Bible, thought, nevertheless, that the existence of his own soul had been revealed to him by the soul itself. "The truth we believe to be that a future existence is and must be a matter of *information* or *intuition*, not of *inference*. The intellect may imagine it, but could never have *discovered* it, and can never prove it: the soul must have revealed it—must and does perpetually reveal it. It is a matter which comes properly within the cognisance of the soul—of that spiritual sense to which on such topics we must look for information, as we look to our bodily senses for information touching the things of earth—things that lie within their province. We, therefore, at once cut the Gordian knot by conceding to the soul the privilege of instructing us as to the things of itself: we apply to the spiritual sense for information on spiritual things. We believe that there is no other solution of the question. To the man

who disbelieves the soul's existence this will, of course, appear an unwarrantable and illogical admission. To him the soul has not spoken. My sources of information are unavailable to him. *My* soul can tell *him* nothing. Providence has denied to him a sense which has been granted to me, and all the knowledge which comes to me through the avenues of that sense must seem foolishness to him."[1]

This is, indeed, a remarkable passage to have been penned by such a thorough-going sceptic as Mr. Greg. What is this "spiritual sense" which has been granted to him by "Providence," but which has been denied to so many others? It is Newman's "Illative Sense"—*I know because I know!* It is a "sense" by which a man can prove anything that he desires to prove. It is a "sense" that cannot be reasoned with. If a man says, "I know such and such to be true because my spiritual sense has revealed it to me," there is, of course, no arguing with him. And doubtless this spiritual or illative sense is a great comfort to many. It certainly saves a world of trouble. Unfortunately, to many others it appears to be but a figment of the brain; but a self-deceiving device to enable a man to believe what he wishes to believe, the wish being, as usual, father to the thought. And, observe, it is not only to "the man who disbelieves the soul's existence" that this style of argument appears "unwarrantable and illogical." There are three states of mind possible

[1] *The Creed of Christendom*, ninth ed., vol. ii, p. 271.

with regard to any matter of opinion—viz., belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment. As to the immortality of the soul, a man may well think that the wisest course is the last—namely, the Agnostic position, which consists in humbly acknowledging that in these matters we are ignorant, that they are beyond the sphere of our knowledge, and that the question cannot be answered by us either one way or the other. "There is no means whatever by which we can learn anything respecting the constitution of the soul, so far as regards the possibility of its separate existence." So said Kant. "In short, nothing can be proved or disproved respecting either the distinct existence, the substance, or the durability of the soul." So said Huxley. And it appears to me that this is about as far as we can get in the matter—unless, of course, we happen to be endowed, by special favour of Providence, with a spiritual or illative sense. But it seems somewhat hard that a gift of such enormous importance should have been granted only to a specially favoured few, and denied to the immense majority of mankind.

And this appeal to a "belief anterior to reasoning, independent of reasoning, unprovable by reasoning," is made by a writer who specially disclaims acceptance of any "miraculous external revelation," and who, but a few pages before, had reasoned as follows upon the doctrine of a future life: "All that can properly be called reasoning—*i.e.*, inference deduced from observation—appears to point the other way. It is remarkable, too, that, while the doctrine is announced with the utmost clearness and positive-

ness in the New Testament, all the attempts there made to bring arguments in its favour, to prove it logically, or even to establish a reasonable probability for it, are futile in the extreme. Nature throws no light upon the subject; the phenomena we observe could never have suggested the idea of a renewed existence beyond the grave; physiological science, as far as it speaks at all, distinctly negatives it. Appearances all testify to the reality and permanence of death.....When we interrogate the vast universe of organization we see, not simply life and death, but gradually growing life, and gradually approaching death. After death all that we have ever *known* of a man is gone; all we have ever seen of him is dissolved into its component elements; it does not *disappear*, so as to leave us at liberty to imagine that it may have gone to exist elsewhere, but is actually used up as materials for other purposes. So completely is this the case that, as Sir James Mackintosh observes, 'the doctrine of a resurrection could scarcely have arisen among a people who buried their dead.'[1] Moreover, the growth, decay, and dissolution we observe are, to all appearance, those of the mind as well as the body. We see the mind, the affections, the soul (if you will) gradually arising, *forming* (for no other expression adequately describes the phenomenon) as the body waxes, sympathizing in all the permanent changes and

[1] *I.e.*, I presume, buried them in the earth, as distinguished from burying in caves, or rock-hewn tombs such as that provided by Joseph of Arimathea. It is curious that certain divines of our time have actually objected to *cremation* as inimical to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body!

temporary variations of the body, diseased with its diseases, enfeebled by its weakness, disordered by dyspepsia or suppressed gout, utterly metamorphosed past recognition by cerebral affection, hopelessly deranged by a spicula of bone penetrating the brain, actually suppressed by a vascular effusion of a cranial depression, wearied as the body ages, and gradually sinking into imbecility as the body dies away in helplessness."

Moreover, Mr. Greg—an author whom I like to refer to because of his great earnestness and obvious sincerity, and because he writes in a spirit of the utmost reverence, and never in that of a scoffer at the religious belief of others—raises a curious difficulty which has occurred to many: "Look, again, at an infant three years old—two years old—one year old: we say it has a soul. But take a new-born babe an hour or a minute old: has *it* a soul, an immortal part or inmate? If so, when does it come to it? At the time of its separation from the mother's life? or a moment before, or a moment after? Does the awful decision whether it is to be a mere perishable animal or a spiritual being depend upon whether it dies an instant before or an instant after it first sees the light? Can the question of its immortality—of its being an embryo angel, or a senseless clod—hang upon such an accident as a maternal movement, or a clumsy accoucheur? Inquiries these, our answers to which can only display either hopeless acquiescence in a gloomy conclusion, or equally hopeless struggles to escape from it."

It is, indeed, an impossible question to answer on

the assumption of the immortality of the soul. The individual, as we know, comes into existence by the union of two microscopic cells, the male and the female. We cannot conceive that the soul is in the female ovum or the male spermatozoon. Neither, surely, can we believe that there is an immortal soul in the just fertilized ovum. Nay, look at the series of embryos—man, dog, rabbit, tortoise, chick, and others—as depicted in medical and physiological works, showing that in early stages they are all so like (with their tails, gill-slits, and the rest) as to be practically indistinguishable. Can we imagine that this human embryo is the habitation of an immortal soul? If *not*, when does the soul come? When the child quickens? Or when it is separated from the mother? Or at what other time? This is a question which seems to have much exercised the old theologians, because, if the unborn child has an immortal soul, it might, in their view, be necessary to baptize it, in cases of danger, *before* it is born.[1] It is hopeless to attempt an answer; yet, if we believe that the human body is the habitation of an immortal soul, we ought surely to be able to form some idea as to the period of life at which such soul may be supposed to enter. There is, of course, the further question: When, in the racial history of man, did the human soul first make its appearance? The doctrine

[1] Sterne tells us that the Romish rituals directed this. Readers of *Tristram Shandy* will remember his note on the subject, and the answer of the learned doctors of the Sorbonne, in 1733, to the anxious inquiry of a certain *Chirurgien accoucheur*. (See vol. i, chap. xx.) Sterne, *more suo*, describes the method of this early baptism.

of Evolution is now universally accepted. Man is descended not indeed from the ape, but from a common ancestor with the ape. When, then—at what precise period of our evolutionary history—did the progeny of this pre-human animal ancestor first become endowed with an immortal soul? Or are we to say that all animals have immortal souls—that all life is immortal? Such speculations are serious, and cannot simply be neglected as "too curious," or waved aside, *à la* Mr. Podsnap, because we feel them to be inconvenient and discomforting.[1]

But now comes the philosopher and tells us that we are merely wasting time with all this talk about the soul, as though it were an occupier of a tenement within the body. That old-fashioned idea has passed away with "fallen leaves and outworn faces." Here, for example, is a recent definition of the *Ego*: "I,

[1] "Four different opinions," says Gibbon, "have been entertained concerning the origin of human souls:—(1) That they are eternal and divine. (2) That they were created, in a separate state of existence, before their union with the body. (3) That they have been propagated from the original stock of Adam, who contained in himself the mental as well as the corporeal seed of his posterity. (4) That each soul is occasionally created and embodied *in the moment of conception*. The last of these sentiments appears to have prevailed among the moderns, and our spiritual history is grown less sublime, without becoming more intelligible" (vol. vi, chap. xlvii, p. 4, note 8). Most believers in the immortality of the soul at the present day will, I apprehend, accept the first proposition. For, if the soul be immortal, it must surely be *pre-existent*, and therefore eternal. No. 4 is a somewhat startling proposition if the soul be immortal. Our law, which says that killing a child not yet separate from its mother is not murder, and which does not charge a mother with concealment of birth in the case of a very young embryo, does not appear to recognize or entertain it. Of course, if the "soul" be not immortal, the difficulties above alluded to almost, if not entirely, disappear. See note at the end of this chapter.

the conscious personality, the '*ego*,' the subject which perceives and knows, is neither something existing *within* the organism, in any pineal gland, to which the senses are inlets, nor is it something over and above, additional to, and numerically other than, the organism—the old barbarian conception of the soul as a sort of tenant or lodger in the body: the notion of Animism, of 'Pneumatology,' of the savage, and of Plato:—nor, yet again, is it the organism, identica with it, one and the same thing. It is the actuality of the organic powers—ἐντελέχεια τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος. To illustrate by a metaphor, which is, however, only partially adequate, the *ego* stands to its organism as its focus stands to a concave mirror: it is its outcome, essentially bound up with and dependent on it, exists through its agency and apparatus; yet it is not another extra thing located within it, nor is it the same thing. What the organic powers *can*, that the *ego is* and *does;* it is actually what they are potentially; it is the inward illumination and realization of organic possibilities.....The *ego* is not a thing like an object; it is an act; it has no parts and no magnitude; its essence and being are its action—*i.e.*, knowing or perceiving.....The *ego* is always perceiver, never perceived, because not even perceptible.....You cannot perceive it, either your own or any one else's; it is never a perceptible object, and has no qualities of perceptible objects; each of us is confined to his own, which he knows only indirectly in its exercise. And in swoons 'we' disappear like ghosts; the act ceases; nay, even in sleep, which returns at regular intervals, the *ego*

ceases, not absolutely, but temporarily. 'We' are then, not actually, but only potentially: the dream being the dim, mysterious suggestion of the potentiality of an *ego*, which for the moment is not actual, not in full being, but which emerges when the spell that bound it in sleep (we know not how) is broken, and arises, like the electric spark, once more out of its gloom, and again becomes a reality."[1] From which somewhat obscure passage one thing at any rate appears to be clear—viz., that modern philosophy has repudiated the idea of the "lodger" soul self-existent after the dissolution of the body. Mr. Greg's conception of that mysterious thing the *ego* appears, however, to identify it with such a soul. "There is one indication of immortality," he writes,[2] "which must not be left out of consideration, though, of course, its value will be very differently estimated by different minds. I refer to that *spontaneous*, irresistible, and perhaps nearly universal feeling we experience on watching, just after death, the body of one we have intimately known; the conviction, I mean (a sense, a consciousness, an impression *which you have to fight against if you wish to shake it off*), that the form lying there is somehow *not* the EGO you have loved. It does not produce the effect of that person's personality. You miss the EGO, though you have the frame. The visible Presence only makes more vivid the sense of actual absence. Every feature, every substance, every *phenomenon*

[1] *The Realization of the Possible*, by F. W. Bain, p. 123.
[2] *Enigmas of Life*, Preface vii, quoted in a note to *The Creed of Christendom*, vol. ii, p. 252, ninth ed.

is there—and is unchanged. You have seen the eyes as firmly closed, the limbs as motionless, the breath almost as imperceptible, the face as fixed and expressionless, before, in sleep or in trance—without the same peculiar sensation. The impression made is indefinable, and is not the result of any conscious process of thought, that that body, quite unchanged to the eye, *is* not, and never was, your friend—the *Being* you were conversant with; that his or her individuality was not the garment before you *plus* a galvanic current; that, in fact, the EGO you knew once, and seek still, *was not that—is not there.* And if not *there*, it must be *elsewhere* or *nowhere*, and 'nowhere' I believe modern science will not suffer us to predicate of either force or substance that once has been."

There seems to be some little confusion here. That in the dead body of a friend we have not the *ego* we have loved everybody will, I suppose, admit; for, whatever be the meaning of the term "the *ego*," there can be no definition of it which does not include life and consciousness. When these have gone the *ego* is gone too, and it is futile to fight against "this impression," or "wish to shake it off," or conceive it possible to shake it off. The whole question is, Does the *ego* (mind, soul, consciousness, or whatever we choose to call it) continue to exist after the death of the body? Mr. Greg says it must either be *somewhere* or *nowhere*, and would apparently appeal to the doctrine of the Conservation of Energy, or, as Mr. Spencer would call it, the Persistence of Force, in

support of the belief that it must exist elsewhere. I fear these considerations will not be of much assistance to us. If the *ego* be, as Mr. Bain would say, not a substantial entity at all, but only "the actuality of the organic powers," it is clear that it ceases when those powers cease owing to the dissolution of the organism. If the *ego* be a force, then no doubt we should say that, in a sense, it must always exist as force—nay, that as force it must have been pre-existent. If we exert muscular force by throwing a stone or by raising a chair, science teaches us that, in a sense by no means easy to understand, the force (which was, potentially, pre-existent) persists after the muscular effort is at an end.

"But now what is the force of which we predicate persistence? It is not the force we are immediately conscious of in our own muscular efforts, for this does not persist. As soon as an outstretched limb is relaxed, the sense of tension disappears. True, we assert that in the stone thrown or in the weight lifted is exhibited the effect of this muscular tension; and that the force which has ceased to be present in our consciousness exists elsewhere. But it does not exist elsewhere under any form cognizable by us.....the force of which we assert persistence is that Absolute Force of which we are indefinitely conscious as the necessary correlate of the force we know. By the Persistence of Force, we really mean the persistence of some Cause which transcends our knowledge and conception. In asserting it we assert an Unconditioned Reality,

without beginning or end."[1] What, then, is the force that we are to say persists after death? So far as the organism is concerned, we may answer the question thus:—At death "the transformation of molecular motion into the motion of masses comes to an end; and each of these motions of masses, as it ends, disappears into molecular motions."[2] But if now anybody shall please to say further that, apart from these forces of the living organism, there is another force, which he calls the *ego* or the soul, and that such force must persist after death, I will not quarrel with him. I would only say that this is an assumption incapable of proof, and that I cannot see how any presumption in its favour, any "indication of immortality," is raised or afforded by the contemplation of a corpse, and the reflection that what we loved was the living and not the dead body. I would remind him further that, if the force he postulates does really exist, it is not the prolongation of the life of his dead friend, unless it be a *conscious* force. If it be otherwise, the identity has gone, the *ego* has disappeared.[3]

The same considerations apply to the theory of

[1] Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, part ii, p. 192d.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 522.

[3] Bergson believes, as I understand, that consciousness exists as an entity altogether independent of the brain; but this is a mere assumption, and, in view of the close relation which experience shows to exist between these two, the brain and consciousness, it appears to me as dubious an assumption as metaphysician ever made. "Henri Bergson," says John Burroughs, "shows no hesitation in declaring that the fate of consciousness is not involved in the fate of the brain through which it is manifested, but it is his philosophy and not his science that inspires this faith." *The Breath of Life* (1915); p. 162.

those who believe that life, whether of the human or other animal (and why should not we include vegetable life also?), is never extinguished, but for ever persists. For aught I know, the theory may be philosophically true; but, unless my own conscious life is continued, it yields no comfort to the longing for immortality. It is like the doctrine that after death the individual soul becomes merged in the universal soul—a poetic assumption, but not a doctrine of immortality for the individual. "The Vital Principle," I am told, "is immortal." To which I would reply, first, that we really have no idea what we mean when we talk of a "Vital Principle"; and, secondly, that if the assertion be true (however unintelligible), it would seem to have but little relevancy to the question of an after-life for men.

There is a further thought suggested by Mr. Greg's very natural feelings on the contemplation of a corpse. It appears to me that his reasoning is equally applicable to the lower animals as to men. Take the case of a dog who has been for many years our loving friend and faithful companion, whom we too have loved in return, as surely is but natural and right. Death takes our poor friend from us. We look upon his dead body—an inert, stiffening mass. The brown eye which appealed to us with such humble confidence, such trusting affection, is fixed and glazed—horrible to look upon. *This* is not the being that we loved. It was something quite different. It was a bright, an active, an animated being. What has become of it? *Where*

is the *ego* gone? It must be somewhere or nowhere, and "nowhere" it cannot be![1]

But, in truth, the greater portion of the reasoning which has been advanced in support of the belief in man's immortality applies with equal force to the animal kingdom. Take Bishop Butler's famous *Analogy*, for instance. The Bishop's arguments appear to me quite unconvincing as proof of an after-life. But if they have any force, as some people think, that force tends to show (as the Bishop himself admitted) not merely human, but animal, immortality; and he who trusts to them may have the comfort of thinking that—

> admitted to that equal sky
> His faithful dog shall bear him company.

But if dogs, then also lions and tigers and wolves and rhinoceroses and elephants—in a word, the whole animal kingdom. And where are we to draw the line? Birds must surely be admitted; then why not, also, snakes and fishes? Shall crustaceans and molluscs be excluded; and, if so, why? Are insects beyond the pale, or is there a future life for the maggot and the moth? Surely it were better to adopt the Agnostic position than to babble of

[1] That charming writer, Pierre Loti, who is penetrated with the deepest sympathy for animals, thus writes of a dying cat. "Nous allions souvent la voir, et toujours elle essayait de se lever pour nous faire fête, l'air reconnaissant et attendri, *ses yeux indiquant autant que des yeux humains la presence interieure et la detresse de ce qu'on appelle âme*.....Un matin, je la trouvai raidie, les prunelles vitreuses, devenue une bête crevée, une chose à jeter dehors.....*Ou était passé ce que j'avais vu luire à travers ses yeux de mourante; la petite flamme inquiète du dedans, ou était-elle allé?*" (*Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort*, p. 142.)

such futilities. Yet I lately saw a letter in an evening newspaper from a lady who protested that she could not believe in a good and just God if she might not also believe in immortality for the poor dogs! Let such crude utterances be a warning to us against the folly of attempting to reason about the Unknowable.[1]

There is yet another argument advanced in favour of the belief in an after-life for men, which I can hardly think worthy of serious consideration. It is the argument from the *consensus* of mankind. Man, it is said, has always believed that he is endowed with an immortal spirit—even savages believe it. The same argument is sometimes brought forward in proof of the existence of a Deity, and of the existence of ghosts. But, in the first place, the proposition as to the universal belief of mankind in these things is not true without very serious modification. There have been, and are, numerous exceptions. In the second place, what consideration is the belief of savages (or, for the matter of that, of civilized men in the early stages of thought and civilization) entitled to on such high questions? Is it really contended that the belief of savages is to be considered a proof of the existence of the object

[1] It would be a somewhat trying experience to meet in an after-life the souls of the various animals whose flesh we have eaten in this world. The vegetarian would have the advantage of us here! It may seem "sickly sentiment," but I think I should have been less inclined to doubt of the immortality of man if he lived upon "the kindly fruits of the earth," instead of slaughtering his lowlier brethren of the animal kingdom and feeding upon their dead bodies. Yet I have never become a vegetarian. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*

of their belief? Savages naturally believe in ghosts, in the spirit-life (or ghost-life) of deceased men, and in gods "of sorts." It would have been extraordinary if they had not entertained these beliefs. How such ideas arose is patent, as every reader of Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Sociology*, or Mr. Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* (not to mention a great many other writers on these questions[1]), will readily understand. But how absurd to demand that, because a savage believes in some fetish, some god of stock or stone, *therefore* the civilized man ought to believe in something quite different—namely, the abstract, spiritual, inconceivable, incomprehensible God of the universe; or that, because a savage thinks that he can propitiate his fetish god by prayer, *therefore* I ought to believe in the efficacy of prayer addressed to that eternal, unknown God of the universe! And equally absurd is it to contend that the belief in ghost-life, which came naturally to the simple mind of the savage, affords the slightest presumption in favour of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Far more true would it be to say that the antiquity of a belief affords, *prima facie*, a presumption that it is ill-founded. It is not to savages that we turn for our opinions, but to the latest thinkers on the last steps of time.

What, then, is the sum of the matter? We have rejected "the resurrection of the body" as a meaningless term. But what are we to say as to the belief in the prolongation of man's life and conscious-

[1] At the present time the reader will, of course, consult Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough* on these subjects.

ness after the dissolution of the body? What position are we to take up as to that question of all-absorbing interest? What position *can* we take up but that of the Agnostic? What answer can we give but that the answer is unknown; that it is beyond the sphere of our knowledge? We do not know what Life is; we do not know what *consciousness* is. They are inexplicable mysteries to us. And in some mysterious manner, inexplicable to us, they may possibly be prolonged after the dissolution of the body. But who can venture to affirm it? Surely it is the subject for a hope, but not of a creed.

> Strange, is it not? that, of the myriads who
> Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
> Not one returns to tell us of the Road
> Which, to discover, we must travel too.

Neither philosophy nor religion appears to me to carry us farther than this. "All that we know is, nothing can be known."

> Myself, when young, did eagerly frequent
> Doctor and saint, and heard great argument
> About it and about; but evermore
> Came out by the same door wherein I went.
>
> With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
> And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
> And this was all the harvest that I reap'd—
> "I came like Water, and like Wind I go."
>
> Into this universe, and *Why* not knowing.
> Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
> And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
> I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

There was the door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see:
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.

The *ποῦ πόθεν*;—"Whence, and, good heavens! whither?"—is as unanswerable as ever. It may be that the old Syracusan poet expressed the truth:—

ἄμμες δ', οἱ μεγάλοι, καὶ καρτεροὶ ἢ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες,
ὁππότε πρᾶτα θάνωμες, ἀνάκοοι ἐν χθονὶ κοίλᾳ
εὔδομες εὖ μάλα μακρὸν ἀτέρμονα νήγρετον ὕπνον.

It *may* be; though we naturally shrink from it, the more so because in early days we have been trained in and habituated to a belief in the after-life. The idea of going for ever into the night; of becoming *nothing* so far as our individual life is concerned, and of never again seeing those whom we have loved in this life, is one which few of us can contemplate without extreme repugnance.

Tennyson has expressed this idea of the futility of human life in verse so beautiful that I make no apology for transcribing it. He had spoken of Nature as seemingly "so careful of the type" and yet "so careless of the single life"; but, on further reflection, he bursts forth on the following strain:—

"So careful of the type?" but no;
From scarpéd cliff and quarried stone
She cries "a thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death:
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." And he, shall he

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream.
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!

Thus the poet, giving eloquent expression to thoughts which must at times have occurred to every man who has given consideration to this great and perplexing question. And yet to some the thought of *individuality* prolonged for all time —immortal individuality, never to be shaken off —has sometimes appeared equally, if not more, appalling. The highest and happiest state for the Buddhist is that wherein he knows that at last his life, when death overtakes him, will go out like an extinguished candle, no longer, as aforetime, giving rise to some other existence with all its labour and cares and suffering and unsatisfied desires, but sinking blissfully into annihilation, like the ephemeris on the clover-bloom at the close of its

little day. So, also, some European thinkers have recoiled at the idea of the eternal, never-ending self; have longed, after life's fitful fever, to sleep well.[1]

It was this thought of sleep and rest that supplied the old Roman philosopher-poet with comfort and resignation :—

Now never more home smiles to welcome thee;
No more true wife, nor sweet bairns run to snatch
The first fond kiss, and thrill with silent joy
Their father's heart. Now may'st thou dwell no more
In prosperous ways, a safeguard to thine own.
"Ah! hapless man," they say, "in hapless wise,
One single day of doom has robbed thee wholly
Of all so many dear delights of life!"

Herein they fail to add : "Nor feel'st thou now
For all these things one shadow of regret."

[1] "Do we realize what 'eternity' means?—the uninterrupted continuance of our individual 'life for ever.' The profound legend of the *Wandering Jew*, the fruitless search for rest of the unhappy Ahasuerus, should teach us to appreciate such an 'eternal life' at its true value. The best we can desire after a courageous life, spent in doing good according to our light, is the eternal peace of the grave. 'Lord, give them an eternal rest.' Any impartial scholar who is acquainted with geological calculations of time, and has reflected on the long series of millions of years the organic history of the earth has occupied, must admit that the crude notion of an eternal life is not a *comfort*, but a fearful *menace*, to the best of men. Only want of clear judgment and consecutive thought can dispute it." So writes Haeckel in his *Riddle of the Universe*. He points out, moreover, that "the higher oriental religions include no belief whatever in the immortality of the soul; it is not found in Buddhism, the religion that dominates thirty per cent. of the entire human race; it is not found in the ancient popular religion of the Chinese, nor in the reformed religion of Confucius which succeeded it; and, what is still more significant, it is not found in the earlier and purer religion of the Jews. Neither in the 'five Mosaic books,' nor in any of the writings of the Old Testament which were written before the Babylonian exile, is there any trace of the notion of individual persistence after death."

This could they grasp in thought, in word pursue,
Then should they 'scape great pain, and dread of mind—
"Thou, as thou art, sunk in the sleep of death,
So shalt thou rest all time that is to come,
Freed from all sickening sorrows evermore.
But we, by thine appalling funeral pile,
Watching thee turn to ashes, wept for thee
Insatiable tears, and from our heart
No day shall lift the infinite weight of woe."

This, therefore, let him answer that speaks thus:
"What is there, then, so passing bitter here,
If in the end it comes to sleep and rest,
That man should pine 'neath infinite weight of woe?"[1]

But some will say, How then is this balance to be redressed? The good who have been unhappy here, are they not to be compensated? The wicked, are they not to be punished? Well, one would like to think that they who have been miserable in this life will find happiness hereafter. But as to the punishment of the wicked after death, one fails to see what good that can effect, unless, indeed, it be to lead them to better things in the future. We have, I trust, long passed the days when a Father of the Church could assert that one of the greatest pleasures in Heaven will be the spectacle of the tortures of unbelievers in Hell.[2] In these days, on the contrary, one finds it impossible to imagine how, with the knowledge of Hell, any good man could be happy in Heaven. And one fails to see how the misery of the many can in any way be said to

[1] I have made a feeble attempt to translate the magnificent lines of Lucretius (III, 894). The four last lines of the Latin poet, which contain the whole point of this passage, are too often omitted by translators, as (*e.g.*) by Mr. W. H. Mallock in his *Lucretius on Life and Death* (pp. 70–71).

[2] As Tertullian, quoted in chap. iii, p. 57.

redress the balance in favour of the fortunate few. And why should we desire any "redressing of the balance" as between the good and the bad? For are we not all agreed that, in reality and in truth, the life of the good is, even in this world, happier than the life of the wicked? "The good man only is happy." Did not even the old Pagan philosophers teach us that? Do not the theologians teach so still?

> I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
> Some letter of that After-life to spell:
> And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
> And answered, "I myself am Heav'n and Hell."

Are we to say, then, that all the aspirations of great and noble men after a higher life on what is commonly termed "a higher plane"—all their confident beliefs of prolonged existence after bodily death—are mere "futility"? It is not, surely, for the Agnostic so to say. Life and death are a mystery—a riddle which we cannot solve.

There are more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy can know or understand, and there *may* be a "great secret" yet to learn. Or there may be nothing more to learn, at least for us. Still nothing forbids us to "faintly trust the larger hope," if so we will; if so we can.

Ἀλλ' ἦτοι μὲν ταῦτα θεῶν ἐν γούνασι κεῖται.

These things lie upon the knees of the Unknowable, and there, as it seems to me, we must e'en be content to leave them.[1]

[1] Yet there are many who profess to have found absolute certitude that life and consciousness persist after the death of the body. See Appendix.

NOTE TO CHAPTER V

This chapter would be altogether incomplete did I make no mention of that school of thought of which Professor Haeckel may be taken as the leading exponent. According to these modern Monists, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is scientifically inadmissible. The argument may be thus briefly summarized. Science has proved that "in man and all other animals every tissue is made up of the same microscopic particles, the *cells;* and these 'elementary organisms' are the real self-active citizens which, in combinations of millions, constitute the 'cellular-state' of our body. All these cells spring from one simple cell, the *cytula* or impregnated ovum, by continuous sub-division." Individual existence, whether of man or other animal, has its commencement at the moment when the male cell and the female cell coalesce to form a new cell, the stem cell, or *cytula*—that is, at the moment of conception. But each of these sexual cells has its own "cell-soul"—that is, each is distinguished by a peculiar form of sensation and movement; and to these psychic activities of the sexual cells the name of "cell-soul" is given by Haeckel and his school. At the moment of conception, then, "not only the protoplasm and the nuclei of the two sexual cells coalesce, but also their 'cell-souls'—in other words, the potential energies which are latent in both, and inseparable from the matter of the protoplasm, unite for the formation of a new potential energy, the 'germ-soul' of the newly-constructed stem cell." Consequently, each personality owes his or her bodily and spiritual qualities to both parents; by heredity the nucleus of the ovum contributes a portion of the maternal features, while the nucleus of the male cell brings a part of the father's characteristics. "By these empirical facts of conception, moreover, the further fact of extreme importance is

established that every man, like every other animal, *has a beginning of existence.*" The complete union of the two sexual cell-nuclei marks the precise moment when not only the body, but also the "soul" of the new stem cell, makes its appearance. "These inquiries," writes Professor Haeckel, after summing up the various arguments—*physiological, histological, experimental, pathological, ontogenetic,* and *phylogenetic*—"prove the old dogma of the immortality of the soul to be absolutely untenable." The individual soul comes into existence at the moment of conception, and is extinguished at the moment of death. The Professor's argument should, of course, be read in its entirety.[1]

Another distinguished Monistic philosopher, the late Professor Ludwig Büchner, writes as follows concerning the theory of the soul: "The truth is that the word 'soul' does not designate an independent entity, but is an expression which was used in a period of scientific ignorance and superstitious animistic ideas to designate the manifold functions or manifestations of the brain in relation to the entire nervous system. In other words, the term 'soul' means nothing else than a collective idea, a general expression for the united functions of the brain and also sensation and volition, or the whole of our psychic life from its lowest to its highest stages, while the mind (*animus*) is only a partial phenomenon of the soul (*anima*). The seat of the mind is in the grey bed of the brain; it is an expression for the ganglionic cells contained therein, and so represents the highest psychic activity of which the brain is capable; the term 'soul' indicates the activity of the whole brain in all its sections, including the sensory and motor actions which take place in the central grey bed, and covers the whole of the nervous system. Thus the word 'soul' has, as I said, the more general and extensive connotation; the word 'mind' stands for a narrow and more specialized idea; and therefore we grant the animal a 'soul' in the fullest sense, but a 'mind' only in a lesser degree. The

[1] See *The Riddle of the Universe*, chap. xi.

highest degree of psychic activity, or mind, is found only in man, with his massive development of the cerebral lobes and of the grey cortical substance that covers them."[1]

[1] *Last Words on Materialism;* essay on "The Nature of the Soul."

Chapter VI

THE IMMATERIAL

Professor Huxley calls our sensations "immaterial entities," and affirms that "*an immaterial substance* is perfectly conceivable." [1] Now, I hold the memory of Professor Huxley in the highest honour. As a physiologist and biologist he was in the first ranks; as a controversialist, especially on questions of "Hebrew and Christian tradition," he was unrivalled; and as a popularizer of science he is entitled to the gratitude of all. But in the nebulous region of metaphysics he is, I venture to think, an unsatisfactory guide, and his criticism of Hume and of Berkeley seems to me to be open to much serious objection.[2]

In the present place, however, I wish only to

[1] Essay on "Sensation and the Sensiferous Organs" in the volume on Hume and Berkeley.

[2] As, for instance, when he finds fault with Hume for defining a miracle as a violation of the laws of nature. All Huxley's argument on this point seems to me so much waste of time, and, in truth, not a little irritating. The point is that those who assert miracles proclaim them as supernatural occurrences. If there has been nothing supernatural—if there has been no violation of the order of nature—then, *ex hypothesi*, there has been no miracle. It is against such disputants that Hume's argument is directed, and against them it is perfectly sound. (A bishop of to-day, however, seems to have a very different idea of what constitutes a miracle. The Bishop of London has told us that the growth of wheat from a grain of corn is in itself a miracle. One, therefore, who desires to prove his Divine mission by working miracles has only to plant a grain of corn and wait for it to grow!

consider the proposition that an immaterial substance is perfectly conceivable. Upon this proposition I take issue. I am utterly unable to conceive "an immaterial substance," and I venture to doubt if any human mind can conceive it. We may talk of such a thing, but we can form no mental picture of it. Professor Huxley admits that he "cannot conceive four dimensions in space," though he has known men "who seemed to have no difficulty either in conceiving them, or, at any rate, in *imagining how they could conceive them.*"[1] It is possible also that men imagine they can conceive immaterial substances without being really able to do so.

How are we to obtain knowledge of an immaterial substance? Is not all our knowledge derived from the senses? As Dr. Hill writes: "Anatomy and physiology have in a remarkable way confirmed the truth of Leibnitz's dictum, 'There can be nothing in the intellect which has not reached it through the senses!'"[2] What do the senses tell us of the immaterial? Can we see the immaterial? No.

A miracle, if not a violation of the laws of nature, is at any rate something contrary to the universal experience of mankind, as that the dead should become alive, or that the sun should stand still, or that a horse should speak.—Note to second ed.)

[1] Essay on "Mr. Gladstone and Genesis." Notions of what is and what is not "conceivable" seem to differ much with the individual thinker. Thus Professor Huxley writes. "In the well-known experiment of touching a single round object, such as a marble, with crossed fingers, it is *utterly impossible to conceive* that we have not two round objects under them." Professor Huxley, therefore, in the supposed case, could not conceive what he knew to be a fact, and a very simple fact. Yet he had no difficulty in conceiving an immaterial substance!

[2] *An Introduction to Science*, p. 30.

Can we touch it, or taste it, or hear it, or smell it? No. The senses, therefore, tell us nothing of the immaterial. But, it will be said, "there is the sixth sense; there is consciousness—the knowledge that I am, that I exist, that I think,[1] that I have sensations—that is not sense-knowledge; it is immediate intuitive knowledge. The proposition, *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, must be supplemented by the words *nisi intellectus ipse*." But does our consciousness give us knowledge of "an immaterial substance"? I venture to assert it does not, and that it does not render such a thing conceivable. Let us see what more Professor Huxley has to say on this subject. In support of his proposition that an immaterial substance is conceivable he writes: "In fact, it is obvious that, if we possessed no sensations but those of smell and hearing, we should be unable to conceive a material substance. We might have a conception of time, but could have none of *extension*, or *resistance*, or *of motion. And without the three latter conceptions no idea of matter could be formed.*"[2] Well, let us grant that with no sensations except those of smell and hearing we should be unable to conceive a material substance. But the inability to conceive the material does not import the ability to conceive the immaterial. It would be odd, indeed, if with only two senses I should be enabled to conceive that which I find inconceivable with five!

[1] Or rather "I think, therefore I am," as Descartes said.
[2] I call attention to the words in italics.

But what is meant by "an immaterial substance"? Berkeley wrote, in a remarkable passage, which I think deserves to be more often quoted than it is—at any rate by his opponents:—

> It is acknowledged on the received principles that extension, motion—in a word, all sensible qualities—have need of a support, as not being able to subsist by themselves. Thus far it is agreed on all hands. So that, in denying the things perceived by sense an existence independent of a substance or support wherein they may exist, we detract nothing from the received opinion of their reality, and are guilty of no innovation in that respect. All the difference is, that according to us the unthinking beings perceived by sense have no existence distinct from being perceived, and cannot, therefore, exist in any other substance than those *unextended, indivisible substances* or *spirits* which act, think, and perceive them.

Will any man tell me that he can form a conception of an "unextended, indivisible substance"—a substance without extension, and therefore without form, and yet one and "indivisible"? What *is* it, this that cannot be divided—this unextended substance, in which, nevertheless, extension subsists and finds "its support"; which "acts, thinks, and perceives"? I assert that these supposed "substances" are a mere delirium, and, under the conditions of our experience and of the constitution of our minds, altogether unimaginable and inconceivable. Berkeley, as Professor Huxley himself writes in another place, "admits that we can have no idea or notion of a spirit; and the way in which he tries to escape the consequences of this admission

is a splendid example of the floundering of a mixed logician."

But, if we can have no idea or notion of Berkeley's "unextended, indivisible substances," what idea can we have of Huxley's "immaterial substances"? How do they differ from what the child describes as "a little piece of nothing"?[1]

Let us consider the concrete instances which the Professor supplies us withal. He tells us that our sensations are "immaterial entities." Thus, after a lucid explanation of the processes leading to the sensation of smell through the medium of "the olfactory sense organ," he writes: "Attend as closely to the sensations of muskiness, or any other odour, as we will, no trace of extension, resistance, or motion is discernible in them. They have no attribute in common with those which we ascribe to matter; they are, in the strictest sense of the words, *immaterial entities.*" Now, what is an "entity"? An entity is true being: *id quod per se constat;* something which has real, independent existence. "Something that has a real existence as Ens, as distinguished from a mere function, attribute, relation, etc."[2] Our sensations, as Professor Huxley explains, are "states of consciousness." And now we are informed that these states of consciousness are "immaterial entities" or "immaterial substances."

Am I, then, to be told that something having independent existence—an entity, an "immaterial substance"—comes into being every time I experi-

[1] Or shall we say "a little piece of vacuum"?
[2] *The New English Dictionary.*

ence the sensation of sight or of smell? What, then, I would fain ask, becomes of these entities when the sensation ceases? Do they return to that nothing out of which they were apparently called? That is impossible, for they are things having real, independent existence. What, pray, becomes, then, of these "immaterial, 'indivisible' substances"?[1]

But, I shall be asked, would you maintain that sensations are material? Whereunto I would reply with another question: Is motion material or immaterial? Can we conceive of motion apart from the thing moved?—of vibration apart from the thing that vibrates? Would it not be unreasonable to talk of vibration as an immaterial entity? For myself, I must confess that hitherto I had imagined that a sensation could have no conceivable existence apart from the brain, any more than motion can have a conceivable existence apart from the thing that is moved. I can conceive no "substance" without form and extension. I cannot conceive of vibration as an independent existence apart from the thing that is vibrated. If others can conceive these things, I congratulate them on their superior powers of understanding. Only let them be sure that they really *can* conceive them, and that they do not merely imagine they

[1] Note that, according to Berkeley, the "immaterial substance" is the mind that thinks; according to Huxley, the sensation that arises—and, I presume, the mind as well. But these are "things imagination boggles at." How does one immaterial substance differ from another, I should like to know? With as much—and as little—reason might we maintain that every thought of a man's mind—*i.e.*, that which passes through his brain—is an "immaterial entity."

can do so, like the men who, according to Professor Huxley, imagine they can conceive space of four dimensions![1]

Are not sensations "modes of motion" of that which is material? Professor Huxley himself tells us that they are. "In ultimate analysis it appears that a sensation is the equivalent in terms of consciousness for a mode of motion of the matter of the sensorium." And, similarly, he writes in the Essay on Hume: "What we call operations of the mind are functions of the brain, and the materials of consciousness are products of cerebral activity." This is quite conceivable to the ordinary mind, although, of course, it does not explain that which appears to be inexplicable—namely, the phenomena of consciousness. Therefore we remain unsatisfied; but nothing surely is gained by talk of "immaterial substances," for "that way madness lies."

Professor Huxley, as a follower of Descartes, tells us that we know the immaterial better than we know the material; that our knowledge of the former is certain, of the latter uncertain. Thus, addressing the untutored, if noble, savage of "common sense," he says[2]: "You thought that your sensations were properties of external things, and had no existence outside of yourself. You thought that you knew more about material than you do about immaterial existences"; and upon both these points the ignorance of the "noble savage" is held to be demonstrated. Well, the first point need not give us much

[1] See Appendix.
[2] Essays on "Hume" and "Berkeley," p. 309.

trouble. If there are any "common-sense" persons who think that their sensations have an existence outside of themselves, they must, I think, be few in number; though certainly there are many "common-sense philosophers" who think that there is a reality "outside of themselves" which gives rise to those sensations. No doubt many persons who have not thought on these subjects are much puzzled when they are told that there would be no colour if there were no eye to see, and no sound if there were no ear to hear; but if colour be only an effect produced upon the brain by vibration through the medium of the apparatus of the eye, and if sound be only an effect produced upon the brain by vibration through the medium of the apparatus of the ear, then it is very clear that where brain, eye, and ear are not there can be neither colour nor sound. This is simple enough, and need not detain us. We shall not fall into so absurd an error as to suppose that our sensations have an existence outside us; neither shall we fall into the equally absurd error (as it seems to me) of supposing that effects produced upon the brain, which may be classed with "functions or attributes," are properly described as "immaterial entities." It would be just as reasonable to assert that our *thoughts* are immaterial entities.[1]

But what of the proposition that we know more of the immaterial than of the material—"that the immaterial world is a firmer reality than the

[1] "Life is not a thing any more than death, and thought is no more an entity than is digestion." *The Meaning of Rationalism*, by Charles Watts (1905), p. 138.

material"? Is this really so? We have no knowledge of external matter, say the idealists; we know only our subjective sensations. To explain this familiar proposition to the "untutored savage" Professor Huxley enters upon a very interesting and instructive analysis of the sensation of smell. He shows that there are three structures in the animal frame which are necessary for the production of this as of other sensation—viz., the epithelium of the sensory organ, the nerve fibres, and that part of the brain which is called the sensorium. "It is certain that the integrity of each, and the physical interconnection of all these three structures—the epithelium of the sensory organ, the nerve fibres, and the sensorium—are essential conditions of ordinary sensation. That is to say, the air in the olfactory chambers may be charged with particles of musk; but if either the epithelium, or the nerve fibres, or the sensorium is injured, or if they are physically disconnected from one another, sensation will not arise. Now these sensations are usually produced by an objective or material cause; but it is not always so, for sensations may arise though there be no material external object to cause them. And the sensations we *know*, but the external object we do not know, or, at any rate, we do not know it with the same degree of certainty. For the sensation 'muskiness' is known immediately. So long as it persists, it is a part of what we call our thinking selves, and its existence lies beyond the possibility of doubt. The knowledge of an objective or material cause of the sensation, on the other hand, is mediate;

it is a belief as contradistinguished from an intuition; and it is a belief which, in any given instance of sensation, may by possibility, be devoid of foundation. For odours, like other sensations, may arise from the occurrence of the appropriate molecular changes in the nerve or in the sensorium, by the operation of a cause distinct from the affection of the sense organ by an odorous body. Such 'subjective' sensations are as real existences as any others, and as distinctly suggest an external odorous object as their cause; but the belief thus generated is a delusion."

Now, in the first place, I would remark that there appears to me to be some confusion of thought here. The proposition to be proved is that, whereas we know the immaterial, we do not know the material, or, at any rate, "that the immaterial world is a firmer reality than the material." But how is it proof of this to show that in a given instance of sensation we may be mistaken in our belief that it is produced by an external material cause? The material something may, sometimes, not be present when we think it is; but the question is, Have we any true knowledge of it when it *is* present? But, passing by this objection, I would observe, secondly, that, according to Professor Huxley's own showing, the material must be present as the "essential condition" of sensation. The musk-plant, or musk-deer, or musk-rat, may not be present when we have the sensation of "muskiness"; but the epithelium, the nerve, and the sensorium must in all cases be there, and these are as much part of objective

and external matter as the objects above enumerated.

It is just this which Idealists like Berkeley, who set themselves to prove that, in a philosophical sense, matter *does not exist*, seem so strangely to forget. It will be found that any such philosopher is driven at the outset to assume the existence of the very things which, according to his argument, have no existence. He analyses the sensation of sight, for example; he talks learnedly of the eye, of the retina, of the optic nerve, of the brain, etc., making not the least doubt that all these material objects really exist, and that he has full knowledge of them; just as Professor Huxley, while setting about to prove that we have no certain knowledge of the material, pronounces, nevertheless, that "it is certain" that various material structures must be present "in integrity" and "with physical inter-connection" before a sensation can arise at all! Nor does he—the anatomist, the physiologist—doubt for a moment that he has true knowledge of these structures which he so lucidly explains. Indeed, all science is based upon the assumption that these things really exist, and can be known by us. If it be otherwise, science is a mere delusion, and its conclusions but "such stuff as dreams are made on." Berkeley was endowed with an extremely subtle intellect, and he used it to support a theory in consonance with his predilections and prepossessions as a Bishop of the Church, and in the supposed interest of theology; but of him and his system it may be truthfully said:—

Perdelirum esse videtur,
Nam contra sensus ab sensibus ipse repugnat,
Et labefactat eos unde omnia credita pendent.[1]

But now I am confronted with the words of a great thinker. Locke wrote[2]: "It being no more a contradiction that thinking should exist separate and independent from solidity than it is a contradiction that solidity should exist separate and independent from thinking, they being both but simple ideas, independent one from another; and having as clear and distinct ideas in us of thinking as of solidity, I know not why we may not as well allow a thinking thing without solidity—*i.e.*, immaterial—to exist, as a solid thing without thinking—*i.e.*, matter—to exist; especially since it is no harder to conceive how thinking should exist without matter than how matter should think."

[1] *I.e.*, it seems to be just midsummer madness, for the man denies the evidence of the senses in an argument based on the senses. Those who are interested in these questions should read *The Realization of the Possible*, by F. W. Bain, a work which I think is worthy of more attention than, so far as I am aware, it has hitherto received. Mr. Bain would, however, have been more likely to gain followers and conciliate opponents if he had written in a somewhat less peremptory and dictatorial style. Part II, "On the Nature of Sight," is well worth very attentive consideration. Mr. Bain contends that "Life is possible only if all this [Idealism] is absurd; only if the very external objects are and can be perceived, as they actually are, at a distance; aye, and a very great distance too.....Life, the whole organic creation, is POSSIBLE only if creatures, ourselves included, do actually perceive external objects as they really are in themselves at a distance; otherwise IMPOSSIBLE. The premises of Idealism contradict the possibility of organic existence; *ergo*, conversely, the fact of organic existence annihilates the premises of Idealism, for *ab actu ad posse valet consecutio*." Mr. Bain propounds his own theory of vision, for which I must refer the reader to the work. The book is a powerful attack on the Idealist position.

[2] *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book II, chap. xxiii, sect. xxxii.

My answer to this follows naturally from what I have already written. Locke, great man as he was, was not infallible, and I cannot but think that he falls into an error when he says "it is no harder to conceive how thinking should exist without matter than how matter should think." It is true that we cannot understand how matter thinks. We cannot explain the phenomena of consciousness. But, at any rate, we know of thought only in conjunction with matter. Let me quote once more from Dr. Hill's little primer: "From very ancient times it has been recognized that the great brain, or cerebrum, is the seat of consciousness, thought, and volition. It may now be asserted that the cortex, or sheet of grey matter, which covers the cerebral hemispheres is alone concerned with these processes. The cortex cerebri is, therefore, the apparatus of mind."[1] Apart, then, from the brain—from the cortex cerebri —we know nothing of "consciousness, thought, and volition." Injure the cortex cerebri, and these are injured. Destroy the cortex cerebri, and these are destroyed. They would seem, then, to be in the nature of functions of the brain, and I can know no

[1] Haeckel writes (*The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 187): "In the grey bed of the brain are found the four seats of the central sense-organs, or four 'inner spheres of sensation'—the sphere of touch in the vertical lobe, the sphere of smell in the frontal lobe, the sphere of sight in the occipital lobe, and the sphere of hearing in the temporal lobe. Between these four 'sense-centres' lie the four great 'thought-centres,' or centres of association, the *real organs of mental life;* they are those highest instruments of psychic activity that produce thought and consciousness....These four 'thought-centres,' distinguished from the intermediate 'sense-centres' by a peculiar and elaborate nerve structure, are the true and sole organs of thought and consciousness."

more of thought without a brain than of vibration without the thing vibrated—of motion without the thing moved. Inexplicable as thought and consciousness are, they must, to me, be always associated with matter. But when you ask me to conceive of "thinking" as existing without matter —of the immaterial thinking—you ask me to associate this inexplicable thing with something of which I have no experience, and which, with or without "thinking," is to me wholly inconceivable.[1]

Do I, then, deny that the Immaterial exists because I find myself unable to conceive it? By no means. That would hardly be a philosophical position to assume. The Immaterial may exist; nay, the Immaterial may think; but, if so, it is in the sphere of the Unknowable—the region of the Absolute, the Unconditioned, the Infinite—which I,

[1] I can, of course, conceive a *vacuum* bounded by matter, as I can form some conception of untenanted space (*vacuum quod inane vocamus*): but this, I need hardly say, is no help towards conceiving an "immaterial substance" or "entity," still less towards conceiving a *thinking* immaterial substance. Scientists tell us that there is no such thing as a true vacuum. Thus, Professor Haeckel writes: "There is no such thing as empty space; that part of space which is not occupied with ponderable atoms is filled with ether"; and ether, according to this theory, though not ponderable, is nevertheless material. So, too, Lord Kelvin, at a meeting of the British Association (at Glasgow), drew a distinction between gravitational and non-gravitational matter—viz., that form of matter which is known as "ether." An absolute vacuum, he said, was difficult, if not impossible, to imagine, ether being held to extend to all space. And ether, though "non-gravitational," is recognized as being "material"! Light, we are told, consists of waves which travel at a certain well-known velocity; and, as Sir Oliver Lodge remarks, "waves we cannot have unless they be waves in something." That "something" is assumed to be the "luminiferous ether," as it used to be called. See *The Ether of Space*, by Sir Oliver Lodge (1909), p. 2; and see, further, Note 2 to the present chapter.

as man, can never hope either to know or to conceive.

In illustration of my argument I will refer yet once more to Dr. Hill's little book. "How long," asks Dr. Hill (page 61), "have the conditions upon the surface of the earth been such as to render life possible? By life we mean the existence of such organisms as now surround us—organisms which depend upon the possession of a nitrogeneous compound, protoplasm, for the chemical changes by which the phenomena of living are exhibited; and upon the presence in the atmosphere, or dissolved in water, of the element oxygen with which their nitrogeneous constituents may combine. *We cannot imagine any other kind of life.*" Now, if we cannot even imagine any other kind of life than this which we know, very sure I am that we cannot even imagine an immaterial thinking being such as Locke asks us to assume as possible. Yet Dr. Hill had, in a previous question, quoted the passage which I have above cited from Locke with apparent approval! He continues: "If, when we ask the inevitable question, 'Is this the only planet upon which life is possible?' the astronomer or spectroscopist answers, 'There is no other in which protoplasm would remain a compound, or in which it would find itself in the presence of oxygen,' then it is idle to speculate as to whether life is possible elsewhere than on the earth. If Venus does not rotate upon her axis, but always turns one face to the sun and the other to the outer cold, there is no life in Venus. If Mars is too cold for protoplasmic

metabolism, or if, as Dr. Johnstone Stoney calculates, the force of gravity on this planet is too small to prevent water-vapour from escaping into space, then there is no life in Mars. Speculation as to the possible existence of different orders of living beings —of beings which do not contain nitrogen or exhibit life by combining with oxygen—ranges beyond the domain of science. There have not been wanting thinkers who assert that they can imagine beings in whose constitution silicon plays the same part which nitrogen plays in ours; living things with the same constitution as china dolls. Fancy may play at speculation in this way. It may surround its new creation with an atmosphere of iodine, and feed its inhabitants upon carbonate of lime. They may suffer calcareous pains and give way to siliceous emotions. But this is not science. Speculation has lost touch with experience."

If, then, science will not allow us to imagine life under other conditions than those of our own experience, *à fortiori* she cannot allow us to imagine "thinking immaterial entities." But does Dr. Hill take up the true scientific position with regard to the question whether there be life on other planets than ours? Is it truly scientific to say, because the conditions of life as we know it do not exist on Mars, therefore "there is no life on Mars"? I venture to think that the true answer is: "Life as we know life does not exist on Mars (assuming that the necessary conditions do not exist there), and whether or not there be life in another form and under other conditions we do not know." It

seems to me that here also the Agnostic position is more truly philosophical than the position of mere denial.[1]

NOTE 1 TO CHAPTER VI

Professor Haeckel, in his chapter on "The Law of Substance," writes as follows (*The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 225): "Both the theories of substance which we have just contrasted are *monistic* in principle, since the opposition between the two conditions of substance—mass and ether—is not original; moreover, they involve a continuous immediate contact and reciprocal action of the two elements. It is otherwise with the *dualistic* theories of substance which still obtain in the idealist and spiritualist philosophy, and which have the support

[1] The lawyers of old fell into much confusion as to immaterial or "incorporeal" things. Thus they have made a division of real property into "corporeal and incorporeal hereditaments." Land, of course, is corporeal, but an easement, such as a right of way, is an incorporeal hereditament, because the property consists in a bare right over somebody else's land. This is in truth a distinction without a difference. The "right" is, of course, in all cases incorporeal, in the sense that all mere names which the tongue of man speaks or the hand of man writes are incorporeal (it would, by the way, be just as reasonable to call names "immaterial entities" as so to call sensations), but the property over which the right is exercised is in all cases corporeal, and it makes no difference to the argument that in one case he who exercises the right "owns" also the land over which it is exercised, whereas in another case the right is exercised over the land of another. That only means that the first man has more rights over the land than the second man. All property is material, and must be so, for the simple reason that we have no experience whatever of the immaterial. "But," cries Mr. Superficial, "what about my right to my character? Is 'character' a material thing?" The answer, of course, is that a man's right to his character means his right that others should not so use their tongues or their hands as, by words, or writings, or signs, to do that which is derogatory to his character. Therefore, here also the right is exercised, as it ever must be, over corporeal or material things.

of a powerful theology, in so far as theology indulges in such metaphysical speculations. These theories draw a distinction between two entirely different kinds of substance, material and immaterial. Material substance enters into the composition of the bodies which are the objects of physics and chemistry; the law of the persistence of matter and force is confined to this world (apart from a belief in its 'creation from nothing' and other miracles). Immaterial substance is found in the 'spiritual world' to which the law does not extend, in this province the laws of physics and chemistry are either entirely inapplicable or they are subordinated to a 'vital force,' or a 'free will,' or a 'divine omnipotence,' or some other phantom which is beyond the ken of critical science. In truth, these profound errors need no further refutation to-day, for *experience has never yet discovered for us a single immaterial substance, a single force which is not dependent on matter, or a single form of energy which is not exerted by material movement, whether it be of mass, or of ether, or of both.* Even the most elaborate and most perfect forms of energy that we know—the psychic life of the higher animals, the thought and reason of man—depend on material processes, or changes in the neuroplasm of the ganglionic cells; they are inconceivable apart from such modifications." Again (p. 93): "Our scientific experience has never yet taught us the existence of forces that can dispense with a material substratum, or of a spiritual world over and above the real of nature." And (p. 96): "Above all, he [Virchow] emphasized the monistic character of anthropology, the inseparable connection of spirit and body, of force and matter." Professor Haeckel will not for a moment allow that thought, or consciousness, or the soul, is an "immaterial entity" —indeed, according to him, an immaterial entity exists only in the imagination of certain philosophers. Thus he writes (p. 190): "The individual development of consciousness of earlier youth proves the universal validity of the *biogenetic law*; and, indeed, it is still recognizable in many ways during the later years. In any case, the ontogenesis of consciousness makes it

perfectly clear that it is not an 'immaterial entity,' but a physiological function of the brain, and that it is, consequently, no exception to the general law of substance." I have already (chap. vi, note) referred to the passage in which he maintains that the human soul is not an "immaterial substance." Haeckel's law of substance, it may be remarked, embraces both the law of the "conservation of matter" and the law of the "conservation of energy." Students must be careful not to confound the "Monism" of Haeckel and Buchner with the old-fashioned Materialism which built up the universe out of dead atoms. "Monism," writes Haeckel, "taken in its widest sense, recognizes one sole substance in the universe, which is at once 'God and Nature.' Body and spirit (or matter and energy) it holds to be inseparable. The extra-mundane God of dualism leads necessarily to Theism; the intra-mundane God of the monist leads to Pantheism. The different ideas of *monism* and *materialism*, and likewise the essentially distinct tendencies of theoretical and practical materialism, are still very frequently confused.....Pure monism is identical neither with the theoretical materialism that denies the existence of spirit and dissolves the world into a heap of dead atoms, nor with the theoretical spiritualism which rejects the notion of matter and considers the world to be a specially-arranged group of 'energies,' or immaterial natural forces. On the contrary, we hold, with Goethe, that 'matter cannot exist and be operative without spirit, nor spirit without matter.' We adhere firmly to the pure unequivocal monism of Spinoza: Matter, or infinitely-extended substance, and Spirit (or Energy), or sensitive and thinking substance, are the two fundamental attributes, or principal properties, of the all-embracing divine essence of the world, the universal substance." This is further elucidated in *The Riddle of the Universe*, chap. xii, on "The Law of Substance." The term "Materialism," it may be well to add, is frequently used in a secondary sense as synonymous with sensual indulgence, as when we hear it alleged that the masses in this country are too much given up to "materialism." It need hardly be

said that this implies no reflection upon a philosophic Materialism, though some persons of "lounging opinions" sometimes seem to confound the two.

Here I must add that if I am totally unable to conceive an immaterial entity, even less, if that be possible, can I conceive of something which is neither material nor immaterial. As the old Greek philosophers said, a thing must either be or not be. There is no intermediate term. And similarly our reason tells us that a thing must either be material or immaterial. Take electricity, for instance. What is it? We do not know. We know only its effects. We speak of it as a force, and as immaterial; but, like every other force—like our sensations, also, and our thoughts—we know it only in connection with matter. Like other forces, it is, as Haeckel says, "dependent on matter." Yet we now frequently hear the electron (*e.g.*) spoken of as neither material nor immaterial. Thus Mr. John Burroughs writes that "the electron is matter in its fourth or non-material state" (*The Breath of Life*, 1915, p. viii). Perhaps I shall be told that it is only because I have not a metaphysical mind that I am wholly unable to comprehend how "matter" can be "non-material"! I can but reply that I even venture to doubt whether any man, however eminent, can really comprehend such a thing, and that to speak of "immaterial matter," whether it be ether, or electricity, or anything else, is, as it seems to me, merely to darken counsel. Sir Oliver Lodge says of electricity: "Surely it is in some sense a fluid, though not a material one?" (*Raymond*, p. 391). But an immaterial fluid is "a thing imagination boggles at." However, we note that it is only a "sort of" fluid or "*in some sense* a fluid." Sir Oliver, as Mr. Burroughs tells us, has been led to "conceive of life as a distinct entity, existing independent of matter" (*The Breath of Life*, p. 132). "Life," therefore, is an "immaterial entity," and I understand that this is asserted not only of the life of man, but of the life of all sentient things. And why not of vegetables also? Mr. McCabe writes that, according to Sir Oliver, "all life is spiritual—at least,

all animal life"; but he adds, "I do not find that he (Sir Oliver) has very clearly worked out his position in regard to plant life" (*The Religion of Sir Oliver Lodge*, 1914, p. 93). All this appears to me as unreal as the baseless fabric of a vision. Life, surely, is not an entity? True, we do not know what it is; but, so far as we know it at all, it is a state or activity of matter. We know no life apart from matter, as we know no force apart from matter. Then take the case of "the ether of space." We frequently hear ether spoken of in these days as though it were neither material nor immaterial. Sir Oliver Lodge, indeed, tells us that it has inertia (which we are generally told is the fundamental property of matter), and must, therefore, be called "material" whether it is called "matter" or no. But how anything can be "material" and yet not "matter" I am utterly at a loss to conceive. How can we postulate the existence of something "material" which is at the same time "immaterial"? Here we have once more "the blind man in the dark room looking for the black cat that is not there"! Mr. McCabe writes: "The Materialist says that nothing exists beyond matter and ether" (*op. cit.*, p. 85), as though ether was not matter; but his master, Haeckel, to whom he makes reference, gives no warrant for such a statement. According to Haeckel, "the two fundamental forms of substance" are "ponderable matter, and ether" which is "imponderable matter" (*The Riddle of the Universe*, chap. xii). Indeed, if the ether be not material, it is a useless hypothesis. For if not material, albeit imponderable, how can it be the medium by which light-waves are transmitted? As Sir Oliver Lodge says: "If waves setting out from the sun exist in space eight minutes before striking our eyes, there must necessarily be in space some medium in which they exist and which conveys them. *Waves we cannot have unless they be waves in something.*"[1]

And if not material, how can it be supposed to explain the action of gravity, as against the idea of *actio in*

[1] *The Ether of Space*, p. 2.

distans? if, indeed, it *does* explain such action! It need hardly be added that to Haeckel, as a Monist, matter does not mean what has been styled "dead" matter. For the Monist "matter and energy are but two inseparable attributes of the one underlying substance" (*ibid*, p. 220).

NOTE 2 TO CHAPTER VI

THE ETHER OF SPACE

Concerning "the ether of space," it may be worth while to say yet another word. "Ether or aether," said Clerk Maxwell, writing in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th edn.), is "a material substance of a more subtle kind than visible bodies, supposed to exist in those parts of space which are apparently empty."

And, further. "Whatever difficulties we may have in forming a consistent idea of the constitution of the aether, there can be no doubt that the interplanetary and interstellar spaces are not empty, but are occupied by a *material substance* or *body*, which is certainly the largest, and probably the most uniform, body of which we have any knowledge."

According to Sir Oliver Lodge, "Ether is not only uniformly present and all-pervading, but also massive and substantial beyond conception. It is turning out to be by far the most substantial thing—perhaps the only substantial thing—in the material universe. *Compared to ether* the densest matter, such as lead or gold, is a *filmy gossamer structure*" (*The Ether of Space*, 1909, p. xiv; my italics).

Again: "We proceed to sub-divide our idea of matter —according to the varieties of resistance with which it appeals to our muscular sense—into four different states, or 'elements' as the ancients called them—viz., the *solid*, the *liquid*, the *gaseous*, and the *etherial*. The resistance experienced when we encounter one or other of *these*

forms of material existence varies from something very impressive—the solid—through something nearly impalpable—the gaseous—up to something entirely imaginative, fanciful, or inferential—viz., the ether" (*ibid*, p. 18, my italics).

"The view I advocate is that ether is a perfect *continuum*, an absolute *plenum*, and that, therefore, no rarefaction is possible. *The ether inside matter* is just as dense as the ether outside, and no denser" (p. 87).

On p. 106 Professor J. T. Thomson is quoted to the following effect: "All mass is mass of ether; all momentum, momentum of ether, and all kinetic energy, kinetic energy of ether. This view, it should be said, *requires the density of the ether to be immensely greater than that of any known substance.*"

Now, the ordinary man conceives himself as living in a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen, known as "atmospheric air"; but, according to this scientific doctrine of the ether of space, he has also to conceive himself as living in, and pervaded by, an all-pervading substance, massive and substantial beyond conception, compared to which the densest matter—such as lead, for instance—is a filmy, gossamer substance.

This, it must, surely, be admitted, is a hard saying. How many men are there who can honestly say that they give reasoning intellectual assent to the proposition that they are living in, and interpenetrated by, an invisible, impalpable medium, something which offers no resistance whatever to our muscular sense, and yet which is massive and substantial beyond conception, and infinitely denser than lead?

Here I must really pause in order to give an illustration of the manner in which this "scientific" doctrine of the ether is exploited by an unscientific or pseudo-scientific writer, in order to bolster up an argument in support of the hypothesis of man's existence after death.

"There were once," says this writer, "those who deemed it impossible to believe in anything not cognizable by their own senses. But that tremendous verity—the ether—is not so cognizable; it is impalpable and invisible.

.....Yet we cannot deny its being because we can neither grip nor see it. For the reasons already given [he had quoted at length from Sir Oliver Lodge's book on previous pages] we know it to be inconceivably more *solid* [my italics] than matter." Now, this instructor of the "great, stupid" public had already chronicled the (supposed) fact that the ether is "a frictionless *liquid*," and then proceeds to inform us that it is a *solid*, and not only a solid, but "more solid than matter"—*i.e.*, it is not matter; it is something immaterial; and yet more solid than matter! To such ridiculous statements do they commit themselves who affect to write learnedly about scientific subjects while having themselves no knowledge of science![1] The writer, of course, intended to follow the *dicta* of Sir O. Lodge, but he confused "density" with "solidity," and conceived that if a thing is said to be *denser* than lead it must also be more *solid* than lead! For myself, I frankly confess that I am not able to comprehend this doctrine of ether, as expounded by Sir Oliver Lodge, but I might remark in passing that I have never been acquainted with those "who deemed it impossible to believe in anything not cognizable by their own senses." I think it has been generally recognized that it is quite possible to believe that there are suns and planetary systems in the depths of space far beyond human ken, or to believe that there are inhabitants in Mars, or even that there is an existence after death, though these things are not "cognizable by the senses." There are many things "impalpable and invisible" which "we can neither grip nor see," in which it is, of course, quite possible to believe, and I do not know who has ever denied that it is so. The proposition which the writer ought to have dealt with and endeavoured to refute is that all human *knowledge* (I do not say "belief") comes through the senses, which is quite a different matter. (See "If a Man Die shall He Live Again?" by Harold F. Wyatt,

[1] Lest the critic may reply "Physician heal thyself," I hasten to say that I do not affect to write *learnedly* about scientific subjects—far from it. But even the ordinary man is, I trow, entitled to say how these scientific pronouncements strike his apprehension.

Nineteenth Century, January, 1917, p. 138; March, 1917, p. 619.)[1]

But now, turning from this very misleading guide, let us see how the "scientific" agree among themselves about this matter. Sir William Barrett writes: "It has now become a scientific heresy to disbelieve in an imperceptible, imponderable, *infinitely rare* and yet infinitely elastic all-pervading kind of *matter*, the so-called *luminiferous ether*, which is both interstellar and interatomic, a *material medium* of a wholly different order of matter from anything known to our senses, and the very existence of which is only known inferentially."[2]

According to this scientific writer, therefore, the ether is "infinitely *rare*"; while, according to Sir Oliver Lodge, as we have seen, it is infinitely *dense*. Now, "rare," according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "not dense." Here there would seem to the unscientific to be a direct contradiction between two learned scientists. And yet, seeing that the forms of material existence are divided into "the solid, the liquid, the gaseous, and the etherial," according to the degree of "resistance" offered when we encounter them, it seems somewhat difficult to the unscientific to conceive of the etherial as something infinitely denser than gold or lead. I am quite prepared, however, to be told that this results from the ignorance of the unscientific, and that a substance may be both the "densest" possible and the "rarest" possible at the same time—nay, that it may be both "material" and

[1] Moreover, we may ask, Is it quite true that the ether is in no way "cognizable by the senses"? I hardly think Sir Oliver Lodge would say so, for he writes of "the eye" that "it is truly an *etherial* sense-organ—the only one we possess, the only mode by which the ether is enabled to appeal to us; and that the detection of tremors in this medium—the perception of the direction in which they go, and some inference as to the quality of the object which has emitted them—cover all that we mean by 'sight' and 'seeing'" (*op. cit.* p. 105).

[2] *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, by Sir William F. Barratt, F.R.S. (1917), p. 101. Sir O. Lodge writes: "Undoubtedly the ether belongs to the material or physical universe, but it is not ordinary matter" (*The Ether of Space*, p. 108).

"immaterial" at the same time. I prefer, however, to cultivate the Agnostic attitude on such antinominal propositions.

Once more, "What properties," asks Sir Oliver Lodge, "are essential to a medium capable of transmitting wave-motion?" And he answers that there are two—viz., "*Elasticity* and *inertia*. Elasticity in some form, or some equivalent of it—in order to be able to store up energy and effect recoil, inertia—in order to enable the disturbed substance to overshoot the mark and oscillate beyond its place of equilibrium" (*op. cit.*, p. 3).

But what says a great teacher from the other side of the Atlantic? "We know solids, and fluids and gases; but emanations which are neither we know only as we know spirits and ghosts—by dreams or hearsay. Yet this fourth or ethereal estate of matter seems to be the final, real, and fundamental condition. How it differs from spirit it is not easy to define.....The ether of space, which science is coming more and more to look upon as the mother-stuff of all things, has many of the attributes of the Deity. It is omnipresent and all-powerful; neither time nor space has dominion over it. It is the one immutable and immeasurable thing in the universe. From it all things arise, and to it they return. It is everywhere and nowhere. It has none of the finite properties of matter—neither parts, form, nor dimension; neither *density* nor tenuity; it cannot be compressed nor expanded nor moved; it *has no inertia nor mass*, and offers no resistance."[1]

No density! Yet, according to Sir Oliver Lodge, it is denser than lead. No "inertia"! Yet Sir Oliver Lodge says that inertia is just one of the properties that the ether must possess as a medium capable of transmitting wave motion! No "mass"! Yet, according to Sir

[1] *The Breath of Life*, by John Burroughs (p 61). He adds: "It is subject to no mechanical laws, and no instrument or experiment that science has yet devised can detect its presence; it has neither centre nor circumference, neither extension nor boundary. And yet science is as convinced of its existence as of the solid ground beneath our feet."

Oliver Lodge, the ether is "massive beyond conception"! And, according to Professor T. T. Thomson, "all mass is mass of the ether"!

Well, here I think we may be content to stop. Assuredly the ether of space is, as Sir Oliver Lodge tells us, "something entirely imaginative, fanciful, and inferential"; and the scientists do not seem to be able to agree concerning it. Is it really a "tremendous verity," as Mr. Harold Wyatt styles it? Possibly; but until our scientific teachers can arrive at some sort of agreement concerning it, and until we poor unlearned mortals are enabled to form some intelligent conception of it, it may, surely, be well to rest in the Agnostic position with regard to this high transcendental theory of the mathematician and the physicist. At any rate, here is no contradiction of the proposition that man can have no knowledge and form no conception of an immaterial entity.

In further illustration of the foregoing chapter I append a letter which I published in *The Speaker* of May 23, 1903, over the signature of "George Forester".—

"'THE PATHWAY TO REALITY.'

"SIR,—I have read with great interest in *The Speaker* of May 2 Mr. Hector Macpherson's appreciation of Mr. Haldane's Gifford Lectures. In it I find the following passage: 'Mr. Haldane reaches the idealistic view that matter is not a thing, but a state, and except in its relations has no existence, and that what seem to be distinct existences are really phases of an incessant activity. What seems to the scientific observer to be an objectively real thing is not a distinct entity, a unit, but is *simply* [my italics] a term in a numberless series of conditions.'

"Now, Sir, what I humbly ask is whether there is really more in this than 'words, words, words'? Is there any meaning which can be grasped by the human intelligence in 'a state' *per se*, apart from something of which that 'state' may be predicated? Is 'a term in a numberless series of conditions' a subject of cognition by the human understanding? Because, if not, those

who make use of such expressions are merely darkening counsel by a subtle logomachy, and wasting time and energy in a futile attempt to explain the *obscurum per obscurius*. Huxley said that to him space of four dimensions was an inconceivability, though he knew some persons who, at any rate, thought they could conceive it. In the same way there may be some who think they can conceive motion apart from something moved, or a substance without extension. My own belief is that an immaterial substance is unthinkable, inconceivable. No human being can form any mental picture of it. It does not follow from this that it has no existence, but it does follow that we cannot reason about it because it is not in any way the subject of cognition. The nearly defunct materialism which merely dissolves the world into a heap of dead atoms may be as 'impossible' as Mr. Macpherson supposes it to be, but it seems to me that we must either adopt the Monism of Spinoza (unhesitatingly followed by Haeckel and his school) and say that matter and spirit (or energy) are but two inseparable attributes (or manifestations) of the one primitive underlying substance, or fall back upon the purely Agnostic portion and say that these speculations transcend the limits of human knowledge. But to speak of something which has no existence except as 'a state,' or 'in its relations,' or as 'a term in a numberless series of conditions,' can, surely, not be the way to advance the sum of human knowledge.

"The *chimæra bombinans invacuo quia comedit secundas intentiones* makes mellow music matched with this. For what can one say of 'a state' that is a state of nothing, except that which was said of 'the Ineptitude' in the *Westminster Alice*, 'It hasn't any meaning, it simply *is*'?"

Chapter VII

THE POSSIBLE BEHIND THE VEIL

"The whole history of the spirit of religion is merely that of the fallibility and uncertainty of the human mind, which, placed in a world that it does not comprehend, is yet desirous of solving the enigma; and which, an astonished spectator of this mysterious and visible prodigy, invents causes, supposes ends, builds systems; then, finding one defective, abandons it for another not less vicious; hates the error that it has renounced, is ignorant of the new one that it adopts; rejects the truth of which it is in pursuit, invents chimeras of heterogeneous and contradictory beings, and, ever dreaming of wisdom and happiness, loses itself in a labyrinth of torments and illusions."[1]

So wrote Volney at the end of the eighteenth century. What says the philosopher of to-day? "Alike in the external and the internal worlds, the man of science sees himself in the midst of perpetual changes of which he can discover neither the beginning nor the end. If, tracing back the evolution of things, he allows himself to entertain the hypothesis that the universe once existed in a diffused form, he finds it utterly impossible to conceive how

[1] Volney, *Les Ruines*, chap. xxii.

this came to be so; and equally, if he speculates on the future, he can assign no limit to the grand succession of phenomena ever unfolding themselves before him. In like manner, if he looks inward, he perceives that both ends of the thread of consciousness are beyond his grasp; nay, even beyond his power to think of as having existed, or as existing in time to come. When, again, he turns from the succession of phenomena, external or internal, to their intrinsic nature, he is just as much at fault. Supposing him in every case able to resolve the appearances, properties, and movements of things into manifestations of force in space and time; he still finds that force, space, and time pass all understanding. Similarly, though the analysis of mental actions may finally bring him down to sensations, as the original materials out of which all thought is woven, yet he is little forwarder; for he can give no account either of sensations themselves or of that something which is conscious of sensations. Objective and subjective things he thus ascertains to be alike inscrutable in their substance and genesis. In all directions his investigations eventually bring him face to face with an insoluble enigma; and he ever more clearly perceives it to be an insoluble enigma. He learns at once the greatness and the littleness of the human intellect—its power in dealing with all that comes within the range of experience; its impotence in dealing with all that transcends experience. He realizes with a special vividness the utter incomprehensibleness of the simplest fact, considered in itself. He, more than any other, truly

knows that in its ultimate essence nothing can be known."[1] And again: "If respecting the origin and nature of things we make some assumption, we find that through an inexorable logic it inevitably commits us to alternative impossibilities of thought; and this holds true of every assumption that can be imagined."[2]

Are we, then, to say that there *is* no explanation of the mystery of things—that there *is* no answer to the enigma, because no answer is conceivable to us? Are we to look upon the universe as an accident, so to speak, and to affirm that there is *nothing* behind the veil, because behind the veil we cannot penetrate? Are we to say with that fearless seeker after truth whom surely the gods loved, for he died so young: "We have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven, to light up a soulless earth; we have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead"?[3]

Well, as to "the Great Companion" we can say but little. Conceived as the Man-God who walked in his garden at even-tide, he is dead indeed; conceived as the more vague and etherealized, but still necessarily anthropomorphic, being whom Christians, even the most philosophical of them, invoke as a constant intervener in affairs terrestrial, he is dead. The Unknowable, the Inconceivable, the Incomprehensible is ever with us, and Mystery is our great companion through life. But the Great Com-

[1] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, part 1, chap. iii.
[2] *Ibid*, chap. iv.
[3] William Kingdon Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 389.

panion of old, made by man in his own image, has passed to the land of outworn creeds. Like "Balder the Beautiful," he "is dead, is dead." *Requiescat in pace*, but not *Resurgam*, is the inscription upon his tomb.

But to say that *we* can never know the explanation of the universe is not to say that therefore there *is* no explanation. Any explanation is inconceivable to us. True; but so to say is not to deny the possibility of an explanation, "behind the veil, behind the veil." Nay, we are compelled to believe in the reality of that which to us is inconceivable. Take, for instance, existence without beginning. How utterly unimaginable! The mind recoils upon itself, aghast at the overwhelming thought. Yet we are compelled to believe in it, so far as we are able to have belief in something we are absolutely unable to understand. *Something* must have existed without beginning. The opposite hypothesis, that there was a time when *nothing* existed, is still more inconceivable, if that expression may be allowed.

I can imagine few thoughts more calculated to drive a man of strong imagination, and of a subtle and metaphysical turn of mind, into a lunatic asylum than the attempt to imagine the annihilation of all existence—in other words, to imagine *Nothing!* We can annihilate in thought all suns throughout space, with their attendant planets and satellites; all comets, and all nebulæ; we can annihilate all matter in its particular manifestations as they are known to us; but *Something* must always be left

in being. Why should anything exist? we sometimes hear asked; and we can give no answer except that *Something* must always have existed. "Self-existence necessarily means existence without a beginning; and to form a conception of self-existence is to form a conception of existence without a beginning. Now, by no mental effort can we do this. To conceive existence through infinite past-time implies the conception of infinite past-time, which is an impossibility."[1] Here, then, is an inconceivable Existence without beginning—the reality of which we are, nevertheless, inexorably forced to assume; since, cast our minds back as far as we will, we can always conceive of *something* existing at any given moment; but to suppose a moment when *nothing* existed would be mere lunacy and delirium of mind.

It is the same with Space. "We find ourselves totally unable to form any mental image of unbounded Space, and yet totally unable to imagine bounds beyond which there is no Space." But we are compelled to assume that Space is unlimited, for, while we can always conceive the possibility of continuing motion in any direction through Space, the imagination reels like a drunken man at the bare thought of "bounds beyond which there is no Space."

"It results, therefore," says Mr. Spencer, "that Space and Time are wholly incomprehensible. The immediate knowledge which we seem to have of

[1] *First Principles*, part 1, chap. ii.

them proves, when examined, to be total ignorance."[1]

So, too, of the Absolute. Human knowledge is of the Relative only. Therefore the Absolute, that of which no relation can be predicated, is inconceivable by us. But do we, therefore, deny that the Absolute can exist? So far from this being the case, "To say that we cannot know the Absolute is by implication to affirm that there *is* an Absolute. .....The very demonstration that a *definite* consciousness of the Absolute is impossible to us unavoidably pre-supposes an *indefinite* consciousness of it." And again: "At the same time that by the laws of thought we are rigorously prevented from forming a conception of absolute existence, we are by the laws of thought equally prevented from ridding ourselves of the consciousness of absolute existence, this consciousness being, as we here see, the obverse of our self-consciousness. And since the only possible measure of relative validity among our beliefs is the degree of their persistence in opposition to the efforts made to change them, it follows that this, which persists at all times, under all circumstances, and cannot cease till consciousness ceases, has the highest validity of any."[2]

The Unknowable, then, is not synonymous with the non-existent. That which is inconceivable to us may nevertheless have objective reality. To

[1] *First Principles*, part i, chap. iii. See Note 1 at end of this chapter.

[2] *Ibid*, chap. iv. It must be admitted that this is a hard saying, around which much controversy has raged.

deny, therefore, that there can ever be for *men* an explanation of the mysteries of the universe is not to deny the possibility of such explanation. And if any one chooses to designate such supposed, but unknown, explanation by the name of "God," I do not see why we should quarrel with him. But let him beware of going further. If he attempt to predicate attributes of this that he calls "God," he falls at once into hopeless confusion and contradiction, and, moreover, necessarily sinks into anthropomorphism. "Is it not just possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending intelligence and will as these transcend mechanical motion? It is true that we are totally unable to conceive any such higher mode of being. But this is not a reason for questioning its existence; it is rather the reverse.[1] Have we not seen how utterly incompetent our minds are to form even an approach to a conception of that which underlies all phenomena? Is it not proved that this incompetency is the incompetency of the Conditioned to grasp the Unconditioned? Does it not follow that the Ultimate Cause cannot in any respect be conceived by us, because it is in every respect greater than can be conceived? And may we not, therefore, rightly refrain from assigning to it any attributes whatever, on the ground that such attributes,

[1] This "rather the reverse" seems to me very questionable. At any rate, it must, I conceive, be confined to the particular proposition under discussion. "It is inconceivable, therefore it must exist," is a proposition which would hardly command assent. It is *credo quia impossibile* again.

derived as they must be from our own natures, are not elevations, but degradations?"[1]

Now, if there be anything noble in reason and intelligence, then man, brutal, cruel, cowardly, selfish, and criminal though he so often is—man, "how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! .....in apprehension how like a god!"—must be esteemed the noblest thing that exists on this earth. But is he to assume that there is no intelligence but his in the universe? Would any reasonable man venture to make such an assumption? Is it not, on the contrary, most reasonable to suppose that other intelligences may, and in all probability do, exist in other planets, or in spheres that we know not of? And may there not be an intelligence immeasurably, perhaps infinitely, transcending our own? Surely it is not the part of the Rationalist or the Agnostic to deny such a possibility?

I have spoken of human intelligence; but, in truth, there is something which we may not improperly call intelligence that pervades and is active in all organic nature. For all that is said by Professor Schäfer and scientists of his school of thought, there is still an unbridged and apparently unbridgable gap between organic and inorganic matter. What Tyndall called the "mystery and miracle of vitality" is a mystery still beyond the powers of our understanding. "The least of living things holds a more profound mystery than all our astronomy and geology hold.

[1] *First Principles*, part 1, chap. v.

It introduces us to activities which our mathematics do not help us to deal with. Our science can describe the processes of a living body, and name all the material elements that enter into it, but it cannot tell us in what the peculiar activity consists, or just what it is that differentiates living matter from non-living. Its analysis reveals no difference. But this difference consists in something beyond the reach of chemistry and of physics; it is active intelligence, the power of self-direction, of self-adjustment, of self-maintenance, of adapting means to an end." A living body has been described as a "machine," but "if a living body is a machine, then we behold a new kind of machine with new kinds of mechanical principles—a machine that repairs itself, that reproduces itself, a clock that winds itself up, an engine that stokes itself, a gun that aims itself, a machine that divides and makes two, two unite and make four, a million or more unite and make a man or a tree—a machine that is nine-tenths water, a machine that feeds on other machines, a machine that grows stronger with use; in fact, a machine that does all sorts of unmechanical things and that no known combination of mechanical and chemical principles can reproduce —a vital machine. The idea of the vital as something different from, and opposed to, the mechanical must come in. Something had to be added to the mechanical and chemical to make the vital." And yet again: "In the humblest living thing—in a spear of grass by the roadside, in a gnat, in a flea —there lurks a greater mystery [than in all the

wonders of terrestrial or celestial mechanics]. In an animate body, however small, there abides something of which we get no trace in the vast reaches of astronomy, a kind of activity that is incalculable, indeterminate, and super-mechanical."[1]

But here I must cite a passage from a book of a very different character. Mr. Joseph McCabe writes, in his able and interesting work, *The Bankruptcy of Religion*, concerning the "Conflict of Science and Religion": "Sir E. Ray Lankester and Prof. T. A. Thomson are two distinguished biologists who have declared that there is no conflict, yet in their own persons they most conspicuously embody that permanent and profound conflict to which I am drawing attention. Sir E. Ray Lankester is an Agnostic; Professor Thomson a Theist. But the most passionate contention—if one may apply the word to so placid and refined a philosopher—of Professor Thomson on behalf of his religious views is one that Sir E. Ray Lankester not only heatedly rejects, but regards as deeply antagonistic to the essential aims of biological science. Professor Thomson stakes his faith upon the inability of science to put a mechanical interpretation upon life. Sir E. Ray Lankester is an emphatic opponent of Vitalism, and he has.....laid it down that it is 'the aim or business of those occupied with biology to assign living things, in all their variety of form and activity, to the one set of forces recognized by the physicist and the

[1] *The Breath of Life*, by John Burroughs (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1915), pp. 151, 34, and 149.

chemist.' The antagonism is profound and deadly, and it is an *antagonism of religion and science.*"[1]

With those last words which I have marked by italics I can express only a qualified agreement. That there is indeed a very real antagonism between religion and science, if by "religion" we mean religion in the theological sense, I have shown in a previous chapter; but I should hesitate long before I could admit that there is a conflict between science and religion *whatever definition we may adopt for the latter term.* To define "religion" is, as everybody knows, by no means an easy matter. Many definitions have been proposed, but I do not know that any of them can be accepted as altogether satisfactory. I know men who have said a long good-bye to theology and creeds, but who nevertheless claim that religion enters, or ought to enter, into every action of their lives. For them "ethics" is religion; and we may remember that one definition of religion is "Morality touched with emotion." Moreover, we have all heard of "the religion of Humanity." If, then, the Agnostic sees no reason to believe that life is but a matter of mechanical and chemical forces—that, as it has been asserted, "life is only one of the many chemical reactions"—if the Agnostic awaits much further proof of this than is yet forthcoming before definitely subscribing to such an opinion, is it, therefore, to be said of him that he has ranged himself on the side of "religion" in its conflict with science? If so, it is a sort of

[1] *Op. cit.* (Watts and Co., 1917), pp. 101–2. My italics.

religion that I certainly am not concerned to repudiate. It appears to me to be a religion of reason and common sense. Assuredly it is not the religion of theology.

After all, these physical, mechanical, and chemical forces cannot explain the *origin* of life. *Omne vivum ex ovo*, but whence comes the original *ovum* or the force that animates it? Neither can they explain what life really is, any more than the scientist can explain what electricity really is. Very possibly the two may be the same thing or the same force under different forms. *We do not know.* Professor Schäfer has proclaimed that life may some day be produced by artificial means in the laboratory, but the actual fulfilment of that prophecy seems to be as far off as ever. But even should it be realized—if some kind of protoplasm, some living jelly, were to be produced by the labours of the chemist (and, admittedly, the gap between the lowest vegetable forms and unorganized protoplasm, such as the Monera, though very real, is not a very wide one),[1] will the mystery of life be thereby cleared up? As Mr. Burroughs asks: "Even if we ever succeed in bringing the elements together in our laboratories, so that there living matter appears, shall we then know the secret of life?" I trow not.

We are usually told by modern scientists that to

[1] "The state of unorganized protoplasm which Haeckel named the Monera, that precedes the development of that architect of life, the cell, can hardly be more than one remove from inert matter." Burroughs, *The Breath of Life*, p. 285.

speak of a "vital force" is very unscientific and, in fact, absurd. Well, we may at once grant that to postulate such a force explains nothing whatever. But, then, to postulate a force of "gravity" explains nothing. We are quite ignorant of what gravity really is. We cannot explain it, and even the hypothesis of the ether of space, as the medium by which gravity acts, does not help us to explain what gravity really is. Gravity is only a name, and not an explanation. So by "vital force," if we make use of that expression, we mean that force which makes the acorn germinate and lift its shoots above the ground, and grow into a lofty oak in spite of gravity; that force which enables the roots of a growing tree to split the rocks that surround it, and the plant, delicate and yielding though it be to all appearance, to *force* its way upwards through opposing earth and stones; the force that enables that same plant when cut down by the hand of man to spring up again and renew its growth with unimpaired energy, or which enables the lobster to renew its severed claw. In a word, "vital force" stands for all the energies and activities of the living thing, and is at least a convenient term and, as it seems to me, quite as appropriate a term as "biotic energy," the new phrase invented by Prof. Moore to supply what appears to him and many others to be a manifest want. It *may*, of course, be that these energies and activities are but the mechanical, or physical, or chemical forces "recognized by the physicist and the chemist." But the truth of that proposition, strongly though it be

asserted by scientists of the school of Professor Schäfer and Sir E. Ray Lankester, has really not yet been established. Meantime, if only we remember that it is but an expression, and not an explanation, I see no reason why the Agnostic should be debarred from the use of that convenient term "vital force," or why he should profess himself a "Gnostic"—profess to have knowledge and certitude—concerning this inscrutable mystery of life, instead of maintaining with regard to this as to other problems for the solution of which no sufficient evidence is forthcoming that attitude of Socratic wisdom and philosophic doubt which his name imports. *οὐ γὰρ ἐπίσταμαι ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι.* This surely is a case where it is unwise either to affirm or to deny.[1]

Let us, however, conclude our somewhat desultory remarks upon this question—far too great a question to be considered at any length here—with the following cautionary quotation from the interesting and brilliantly written work from which I have already cited: "If there is a distinct vital force, it must be correlated with physical force; it must be related causally to the rest. The idea of a vital force as something new and distinct and injected into matter from without at a given time and place in the earth's history must undoubtedly be given up. Instead of

[1] Lord Kelvin wrote. "Modern biologists are coming, I believe, once more to a firm acceptance of something beyond mere gravitational, chemical, and physical forces; and that unknown thing is a '*vital principle.*' We have an unknown object put before us in science. In thinking of that object we are all *agnostics.*" (*Nineteenth Century*, June, 1903.) Was he right, or are Prof. Schafer and Sir Ray Lankester right? *Non nostrum tantas componere lites.*

escaping from mechanism, this notion surrenders one into the hands of mechanism, since to supplement and reinforce a principle with some other principle from without is strictly a mechanical procedure." "But," adds the writer, "the conception of vitality as potential in matter, or of the whole universe as permeated with spirit, which to me is the same thing, is a conception that takes life out of the categories of the fortuitous and the automatic."[1]

As a Rationalist and Agnostic, I see no reason to reject such ideas as unreasonable and appertaining to "religion" rather than to science. True I do not know what "spirit" is, any more than I know what "vital force" is. But neither do I know what chemical force is. "That mysterious force, chemical affinity, is the true and organic magic. That two substances should cleave to each other and absorb each other and produce a third totally unlike either is one of the profound mysteries of science."[2] All these are things which bring before us with profound significance what possibilities there are "behind the veil." Hamlet's saying that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy" has been quoted almost *ad nauseam*, and sometimes absurdly, as though it implied that we should subscribe to some belief in the occult,

[1] *Op cit.*, pp 101–2. I would strongly recommend Mr. Burrough's book to any reader who can bring himself to consider it with an impartial mind, and not with *parti pris*, or in a spirit of carping criticism.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 195.

even though there be no evidence to support it. But that there *are* "things" in the universe still unknown to and undreamed of by science no reasonable man can doubt. It would be absurd for the Agnostic to deny the existence of "the possible behind the veil."

The Great Enigma must for ever be insoluble by man; but that there *is* a solution to it we may yet conceive. "The more I think of it the more I am convinced that there must be something at the bottom of it all." So Professor Huxley is reported to have said in conversation with a friend. "Something at the bottom of it all"—that is, an explanation "behind the veil." Surely the Agnostic cannot deny that it may be so. Our knowledge is so small, our ignorance so great. We cannot explain the phenomena which we see daily before our eyes. We do not know what life is. We do not know what consciousness is. They are mysteries to us. But "man is not the measure of the universe." Somewhere there may exist minds whose powers so far transcend the human that they can understand things which to us are unintelligible. So, too, in the regions of transcendental thought, far beyond human ken, and for which human language is utterly inadequate, there may be that explanation for which religion and philosophy have ever sought, and ever sought in vain. It *may* be, then, that the spring sun does not shine out of an empty heaven upon a soulless earth. It *may* be that there is "something at the bottom of it all." Only let us remember that the explanation is for ever hidden

from men. Let us shun all man-made theories of necessarily anthropomorphic gods. Let us avoid the folly of the theologian, who, in all the pride of ignorance, would fain define the undefinable, and explain to us the nature of the Unknowable. Whatever the interpretation may be, it must, like the Great God Pan of old,

> Be still the unimaginable lodge
> For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
> Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
> Then leave the naked brain.

Creeds have failed us, but hopes may yet survive.

NOTE 1 TO CHAPTER VII

SPENCER ON TIME AND SPACE

Spencer writes: "It results, therefore, that Space and Time are wholly incomprehensible. The immediate knowledge which we seem to have of them proves, when examined, to be total ignorance. *While our belief in their objective reality is insurmountable*, we are unable to give any rational account of it. And to posit the alternative belief (possible to state, but impossible to realize) is merely to multiply irrationalities."

The words I have marked by italics seem to require some consideration. Is it a fact that our belief in the *objective reality* of both Time and Space is insurmountable? To the ordinary thinking man, who makes no claim to be a metaphysician, there appears to be a distinction between Time and Space in this connection. He looks at the sky above, he sees the moon and the stars shining, and, in consonance with what Spencer says, he cannot rid himself of the belief that Space is an

objective reality; that it extends to those inconceivably distant stars whose light he sees, and beyond them to infinity—incomprehensible though that idea is to him; that it is capable of containing matter; and do not scientists tell him that Space is *filled* with "the ether of Space"? Could he conceive that nothing existed but void space, the *vacuum inane* of Lucretius, that, he reasons, would still be something in existence; it would not be tantamount to "nothing," or non-existence. For of space you can at least predicate something—to wit, extension—and the potentiality of containing something else—viz., matter in some form or another. And would it not still be "Space of three dimensions"? Thus the ordinary thinking man, who is not a metaphysician, does find that his belief in Space as an "objective reality" is, apparently, "insurmountable," though he is, certainly, "unable to give any rational account of space," and may in his heart conceive that, if he could only understand it, it may not be an objective reality after all, but only a condition of thought, or, as Kant said, a "form of perception," little meaning though that expression may convey to him. With regard to Time, however, the case is different. Speaking as an ordinary thinking man, so far from finding my belief in Time as an "objective reality" insurmountable, I find it, on the contrary, impossible to conceive of Time as an "objective reality." What we call "past time" certainly has no objective existence. It has no existence at all. Neither has what we speak of as "future time" any existence. It would be absurd to imagine future time as something which has, somewhere, objective existence, but which has not yet come to us. A highly imaginative novelist may invent a "Time Machine" to rush us into this imaginary future time among beings yet unborn; but, though we enjoy the fairy tale, we are well aware that we are in the realm of unreality and impossibility. Then can it be said that "present time" is something having objective existence? If so, it can only be the almost unimaginable moment which is gone as soon as thought of,

> Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
> Ere one can say "It lightens."

We say that "time flies fast," but if we ask "*how* fast does time fly?" we cannot answer. We cannot measure time by itself. And can we attribute "objective reality" to that moment which is gone almost before it can be thought of? Can we say that we exist and act *in* that moment as in something that has objective existence? It would, surely, be ridiculous so to say. Mr. Mallock, indeed, writes: "Time is divided by an ever-moving point, the present, into two eternities—the past eternity and the future. Portions of the latter are being continually added to the former, but the one is not diminished and the other is not increased" (*Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 236). But this, as I venture to think, is fallacious. Mr. Mallock speaks of the two "eternities" as though they were entities having objective existence. But neither "time past" (so-called) nor "time future" (so-called) has any real or "objective" existence. All we can say is that things have been, things are, and things will be. "Time" would appear to be only an expression employed to signify the possibility of co-existence and sequence. As a "thing in itself" having independent objective existence, it is, to me at least, inconceivable. More reasonably might we say with Heraclitus of old: "All Being is Becoming, the totality of things is an eternal flux, in uninterrupted motion and mutation, and their permanence is only an illusion." It is possible, of course, that Kant was right when he laid it down that Time and Space are merely "forms of perception." Space the form of external, Time of internal, sensitivity, for Time and Space must assuredly stand in the same category. (See Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, ch. xiii, p. 249.) But as I profess not to deal with metaphysics, save in so far as is absolutely necessary when writing of "the faith of an Agnostic," I here leave this bewildering question, as to which what answer can be given except it be to repeat the Agnostic formula, "I do not know"?

[If any one wishes to acquaint himself with the cryptic

utterances of certain modern metaphysicians on these matters, I would refer him to an article on "The Union of Space and Time," in the *Athenæum* of May 30, 1919; and if he can understand and appreciate it, I take off my hat to him. To me, I confess, Minkowski is but a *chimæra bombinans in vacuo*.]

NOTE 2 TO CHAPTER VII

The late Professor Ludwig Buchner objected to the Agnostic theory of the Unknowable as opening a side-door for the return of theological dogma and mysticism. It is well to be on our guard against such a danger, but I cannot help thinking that it has been much exaggerated. To formulate any sort of belief under the head of the Unknowable would be the depth of absurdity, since of the Unknowable nothing can be affirmed. Professor Büchner himself writes: "When Kant shows that our knowledge is relative, and that absolute knowledge is impossible, he is undoubtedly right." The Absolute, then, is not only unknown, but unknowable. That is sufficient for the Agnostic. But when Buchner declares that "faith in the Unknowable is the distinctive feature of Agnosticism," we must take issue. I, at least, can profess no such faith—indeed, to make the "Absolute" or the "Unknowable" a subject for "faith" seems little short of absurd. "The existence of a thing," says Büchner, "is only possible in so far as it manifests itself; absolute existence without manifestation is non-existence, an impossibility, or a contradiction in terms." That may be so; but it is possible that there may be a "manifestation" which is unknown to us and unknowable by us. The Professor himself writes, in his essay on *Science and Metaphysics*. "It is possible that the two expressions (matter and force), like the words 'spirit' and 'matter,' represent only two different sides or phenomenal aspects of one and the same thing, or source of

things, the inner nature of which is unknown to us. If any one wishes to call this 'God,' there is not much to be said against it—provided it is stripped of its theological and anthropomorphic associations, and not opposed to, or set above, the principle of the uniformity of nature."[1]

[1] *Last Words on Materialism*, pp. 116, 149.

Chapter VIII

NOT WHAT IS "SATISFYING," BUT WHAT IS TRUE

It is frequently urged against Agnosticism that it is merely negative—that it is not *satisfying;* that the human mind requires much more than it can offer. And this is supposed to be an argument against the acceptance of the Agnostic position. The answer is obvious. We do not seek what is *satisfying,* but what is *true.* Men wish for an explanation of the Great Enigma, and especially for an assurance that their existence will be prolonged beyond the grave; they, therefore, cling to religions and systems which seem in some measure to satisfy their cravings. And it has been gravely argued that it is better to rest content with such religions and systems, even though false, than to confess humbly that we have no knowledge of that which is "behind the veil." Such, for instance, is the position of certain Christians, of whom Mr. Lionel Tollemache writes as follows: "It is objected," he says, "that 'man is not made to question, but adore'; it is *safer* to accept undoubtedly whatever our Bible or Church tells us of God, even if the evidence for those statements is inconclusive; nay, had the evidence been conclusive, where would be

the room for faith? Of this faith unfaithful we might summarily dispose by observing that its possessors are liable to Coleridge's censure—they prefer Christianity to truth. They might, in a word, be designated by saying that *Malunt errare cum Christo quam nobiscum vera sentire.* And they might be encountered with the reverent, yet conclusive, answer: *Amicus Christus, magis amica veritas.*"

But with these persons it is not a question of truth or falsehood; it is a question of what they call their "ideals." Better ideal falsehood than truth that is not positive and satisfying. The following extract from a newspaper which was at one time known as the organ of "the Nonconformist conscience" affords an admirable illustration of this curious mental obliquity. This is what the writer doubtless thought a telling criticism on a great man of science—the late Professor Huxley—shortly after his death:—

> What he seemed to miss was the truth that man is never more strictly and reputably "biological" than when he is trying to live up to his dreams. He should have looked further into the complex little creature, and he might then have found a dream cell. Man is really less given to the pursuit of mere bread and butter than he is commonly supposed to be, and it is astonishing what a capital of every kind of energy he is capable of putting into the business of his ideals. His truest and most essential function is to work them out, and it is really very much beside the matter to worry him too much with the *analogies of the dungheap and the slime.* He is far more essentially man when he is

> *trying to live up to even a false theory of his moral relation to this tremendous universe* than when he is simply consenting to be whirled round in it in the dull diurnal fellowship of the stones and trees. His best helpers are those who bear a hand in shaping the ideals, not those who merely knock them to pieces when they are of a faulty pattern. Mr. Huxley was too much of a mere image-breaker. He "threw things" at Rousseau or at Mr. Henry George with much satisfaction whenever a missile came to hand. But he quite failed to see that both were far more scientifically engaged than their assailant. Man is framed so as to live by the conception of his rights as a spiritual being; and his errors in the definition of them are merely incidents in the course of a career. Our great concern is what we ought to do, not what we ought not. *Mr. Huxley gave scant help of the positive sort;* and for that reason he will share the fate of most of the merely critical thinkers. His influence on all but purely scientific speculation will probably end with his life. Wanted a pathfinder. *He would have done better not to touch the tremendous problem of man's position as a social being, since he could do so little for its solution.*[1]

I have no doubt the writer of this pretentious article flattered himself that he took a much larger view of man's life and destiny than did the great man whom he so complacently consigns to oblivion; yet it is surely obvious that he is prompted by the pettiest, the narrowest, spirit of animosity against one who devoted his life to the noblest of pursuits—the search of Truth for its own sake. In a similar spirit, had he lived a few hundreds of years earlier,

[1] *Daily News*, July 4, 1895. (The italics are mine.)

he would, doubtless, have written of Galileo and Giordano Bruno. Note the spleen which seeks to find vent in the silly *ad captandum vulgus* allusion to "the dungheap and the slime"! It is only charitable to hope that the writer had not read Huxley's works, for had he done so he would have known that none ever wrote in a loftier tone of the dignity of man, of the life that he should lead, and of the ideals that he should set before him, than did this single-minded apostle of Truth. But, because Professor Huxley would make no truce with hypocrisy and lies; because he would not countenance "false theories," whether of "man's moral relation to this tremendous universe" or of anything else; because he combated beliefs which he conceived to be not only false, but also pernicious to the moral welfare of mankind; because he would not profess to understand what no man can ever understand, or to know what is beyond the limits of human knowledge—he is assailed as "a mere image-breaker." He "gave scant help of the positive sort"—*i.e.*, having thrown over superstition of one kind he did not think it incumbent on him to replace it by superstition of another kind. A Theosophist, now, or a Spiritualist may be commended, be his theories true or false, for he ministers to man's *ideal* and *spiritual* wants. But one who devotes his life to scientific truth, who spurns delights and lives laborious days, fighting for what he believes to be the right, and never sparing himself in the fight, in spite of a life-long malady; one who sacrificed legitimate ambition in order that he might be more

free to spread knowledge among the people and to combat ignorance and prejudice; one to whom we may look back with encouragement as a most brilliant example, not only of indefatigable energy, but also of high-minded and spotless integrity—this man is to be treated with contumely because, although with inexorable logic he exposed the futility of currently-received religious beliefs (so-called), he would not at the same time pander to man's appetite for the supernatural, or pose as the prophet of some new cult. "He would have done better," forsooth, "not to touch the tremendous problem of man's position as a social being"! ("*Tre-mendous*" is evidently to this writer what "*Pro-digious*" was to the dominie.) "Rousseau or Mr. Henry George" was "far more scientifically engaged" than Professor Huxley! But—*mirabile dictu*—"he quite failed to see this"! What comment can we make on this? *Solventur risu tabulae.* Surely this is a priggism gone wild and fanaticism in hysterics.

But we are told that he will share the fate of most of the merely critical thinkers. His influence on all but purely scientific speculation will probably end with his life. Scribbler, thy wish was father to that thought. But I cannot think it is a true prophecy of the fate which awaits the author of those essays known as *Science and Hebrew Tradition* and *Science and Christian Tradition*, essays replete with logic, lucidity, learning, and good sense. "There are," wrote Huxley, "one or two living men who, a couple of centuries hence, will be

remembered as Descartes is now, because they have produced great thoughts which will live and grow as long as mankind lasts. If the twenty-first century studies their history, it will find that the Christianity of the middle of the nineteenth century recognized them only as objects of vilification." Let us hope for the sake of the Christianity of the twenty-first century that it will recognize Professor Huxley also, but no longer as one of its "objects of vilification," as in the passage above cited, but with the respect and veneration that are so justly due to him; for, assuredly, if he did nothing in the cause of false ideals, he was a great worker in the cause of knowledge and of truth.

But writers who inveigh so bitterly against men who combat false beliefs regarding the supernatural should remember that it is not for the mere pleasure of "image-breaking" that an Agnostic declares war against superstition, or what he considers to be such. It is because he is convinced that false belief in these matters has done, and is still doing, incalculable harm to the human race. This, for instance, is the language used concerning what I have called "Church-Christianity" by a well-known and distinguished Rationalist of the present day: "Those who agree with the present writer are not sceptics. They positively, absolutely, and without reserve reject as false the whole system of objective propositions which make up the popular belief of the day in one and all of its theological expressions. They look upon that system as mischievous in its consequences to society for many reasons, among others because

it tends to divert and misdirect the most energetic faculties of human nature."[1]

The Agnostic, therefore, considers it his duty to attack opinions which he believes to be false, and he humbly submits that the position known as Agnosticism may be the only true philosophic position for man, in view of the limitations of the human understanding, although it may not altogether "satisfy" his craving for "positive" knowledge and information about God, immortality, and other mysteries of an altogether inscrutable universe.

Let us take an example of a belief which Professor Huxley thought it his duty to attack as false. Some people believe that devils once infested this earth (if they do not do so now) and took possession of unfortunate men. They further believe that the God of the universe, in the person of Jesus, on one occasion, after casting some of these devils out of their human tenements, sent them into a herd of swine, thereby not only tormenting these poor innocent creatures, but causing them to perish miserably by being drowned in the sea of Galilee. Now I hold that this story is distinctly demoralizing, if only because it lends itself to a very low and degrading conception of the Deity, and it seems to me that to show that such a belief has really no foundation, and that men have really no occasion to burden themselves with it, is to do a service to humanity. This story is one of those which were assailed by "the image-breaker" Huxley, and

[1] John Morley (now Lord Morley), *On Compromise*, p. 124.

absolutely riddled by his destructive criticism. I know few things more instructive or more entertaining than the reading of his controversy with Mr. Gladstone on this alleged miracle, or on the story of the Creation as told in Genesis. At the same time it is to me not a little painful. I was one of those who had a most sincere admiration, and indeed veneration, for Mr. Gladstone. I believe him to have been one of the greatest of English statesmen—a man of naturally conservative temperament, yet, in the field of politics, ever as ready to learn as to instruct; one whose life is a study in evolution of the best sort; one who was passionately devoted to the great principles of Liberty and Justice; and a man of unimpeachable honesty and integrity—not to mention many other noble qualities which it would be here irrelevant to enumerate. Professor Huxley, on the other hand, I considered to be almost as poor a politician as could be found in a day's march; indeed, when he and his brother scientist, Professor Tyndall, "let themselves go"—to use a common expression—on some political controversy, it appeared to me that politics was a branch of science (if science it can be called, which is certainly extremely doubtful) to which they had never seriously applied themselves. Yet when the dispute was as to some alleged miracle, such as the story of the Gadarene pigs, Gladstone, alas! seemed to justify only too completely Disraeli's description of him as a "sophistical rhetorician." He becomes a flagrant example of the injury which *atavism* and prejudice in such matters can inflict

upon the mind even of a truly great man. In the result he is, in my judgment, completely pulverized by Huxley's calm and irresistible logic—aye, and far superior critical knowledge.

Nor is such criticism as this of Huxley's to be characterized as "destructive" only. Destroy such weeds, and more wholesome plants will have room to grow and flourish in their stead.

To return, then, to the point from which this chapter started. Whether any teaching is or is not *satisfying—i.e.*, whether or not it satisfies man's spiritual wants, real or supposed, is not the question. The question is, Is it *true?* And the mention of Professor Tyndall (another "image-breaker") has reminded me that nobody has more strongly insisted on this point than he. In this connection there is an instructive passage in his delightful book, *The Forms of Water.* He alludes to the fact that the point of maximum density of water is 39 degrees Fahrenheit; in other words, that, although water, like other liquids, contracts as it gets colder, yet after it has reached this point in the cooling process it begins to expand again, the effect of which is that the surface-water in a lake does not become heavier after it has been cooled down to 39 degrees Fahr., and therefore does not sink. Ice, therefore, is formed only at the top, the mass of water retaining the temperature of 39 degrees. Had it been otherwise—had water become heavier as it cooled down to the freezing-point—there would, of course, have been a continual circulation until the whole mass was cooled to the freezing-point, when solidification of the whole would

ensue. Thus our lakes and rivers would be converted into solid masses of ice, which the summer's warmth would not be sufficient to melt, and the climate of our temperate zone might approach in severity that of the arctic regions. Now it used to be said that this peculiarity in the case of water—viz., that it actually expands in the process of cooling after a certain point—forms a solitary exception to an otherwise general law, and that it is an indisputable proof of *design* on the part of a wise and beneficent Creator.

"Count Rumford" (I now quote Professor Tyndall), "one of the most solid of scientific men, writes in the following strain about this question:—

> It does not appear to me that there is anything which human sagacity can fathom, within the wide-extended bounds of the visible creation, which affords a more striking or more palpable proof of the wisdom of the Creator, and of the special care He has taken in the general arrangement of the universe to preserve animal life, than this wonderful contrivance. Let me beg the attention of my reader while I endeavour to investigate this most interesting subject; and let me at the same time bespeak his candour and indulgence. I feel the danger to which a mortal exposes himself who has the temerity to explain the designs of Infinite Wisdom. The enterprise is adventurous, but it surely cannot be improper. Had not Providence interfered on this occasion in a manner which may well be considered *miraculous*, all the fresh water within the polar circle must inevitably have been frozen to a very great depth in winter, and every plant and tree destroyed.

Through many pages of his book Count Rumford continues in this strain to expound the ways and intentions of the Almighty, and he does not hesitate

upon the mind even of a truly great man. In the result he is, in my judgment, completely pulverized by Huxley's calm and irresistible logic—aye, and far superior critical knowledge.

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to apply very harsh words to those who cannot share his notions. He calls them hardened and degraded. We are warned of the fact, which is too often forgotten, that *the pleasure or comfort of a belief, or the warmth or exultation of feeling which it produces, is no guarantee of its truth.* For the whole of Count Rumford's delight and enthusiasm in connection with this subject, and the whole of his ire against those who did not share his opinions, were founded upon an erroneous notion. Water is *not* a solitary exception to an otherwise general law. There are other molecules than those of this liquid which require more room in the solid crystalline condition than in the adjacent molten condition. Iron is a case in point. Solid iron floats upon molten iron exactly as ice floats upon water. Bismuth is a still more impressive case, and we could shiver a bomb as certainly by solidification of bismuth as by that of water. There is no fish to be taken care of here, still the 'contrivance' is the same. I am reluctant to mention them in the same breath with Count Rumford, but I am told that in our own day there are people who profess to find the comforts of a religion in a superstition lower than any that has hitherto degraded the civilized human mind. So that the *happiness* of a faith and the truth of a faith are two totally different things. Life and the conditions of life are in necessary harmony. This is a truism, for without the suitable conditions life could not exist. But both life and its conditions set forth the operations of inscrutable Power. We know not its origin; we know not its

end. And the presumption, if not the degradation, rests with those who place upon the throne of the universe a magnified image of themselves, and make its doings a mere colossal imitation of their own."[1]

Thus the Agnostic, who is so constantly and so unjustly accused of a want of due humility. "In pride, in reasoning pride his error lies." A most undeserved reproach. It is the ecclesiastic, the orthodox "Church-Christian," who knows all things, and for whom doubts are not. Such men will tell you all about the Creator, and his designs, and his contrivances. They define the Three Persons which they ascribe to Him with all the precision of the subtlest logician; they will almost tell you, as Matthew Arnold said, "what were the hangings of the Trinity's council chamber."[2] The Agnostic, on the other hand, is profoundly convinced that of the eternal, the infinite, the unconditioned, the abstract, the non-relative, he can have no knowledge whatever. Of a deity he finds that he can predicate nothing without being lost in hopeless antinomies. Any theory of the origin of things brings him into the same *impasse* of inconceivabilities. The Agnostic recognizes that his knowledge is relative and his understanding finite, and, bowing his head in no affected humility, he confesses that of the supernatural, whereof the theologian makes so certain, he

[1] *Forms of Water*, p. 123 *ff*. I do not know what is the degraded superstition alluded to—possibly Professor Tyndall considered Spiritualism to be such.

[2] *Literature and Dogma*, chap. ix. One wonders why Matthew Arnold was not prosecuted for blasphemy!

has neither belief nor disbelief, because he has, and can have, no knowledge. *Οὐ γὰρ ἐπίσταμαι ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι.*

Moreover, do not let us forget that there is a sin of belief as well as of unbelief. "Belief, that sacred faculty which prompts the decisions of our will and knits into harmonious working all the compacted energies of our being, is ours, not for ourselves, but for humanity. It is rightly used on truths which have been established by long experience and waiting toil, and which have stood in the fierce light of free and fearless questioning. Then it helps to bind men together, and to strengthen and direct their common action. It is desecrated when given to unproved and unquestioned statements, for the solace and private pleasure of the believer; to add a tinsel splendour to the plain straight road of our life and display a bright mirage beyond it; or even to drown the common sorrows of our kind by a self-deception which allows them not only to cast down, but also to degrade us. Whoso would deserve well of his fellows in this matter will guard the purity of his belief with a very fanaticism of jealous care, lest at any time it should rest on an unworthy object and catch a stain which can never be wiped away.....It is wrong, always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence. If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it,

and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it—the life of that man is one long sin against mankind."[1]

"What, then, is the net result?" asks Sir Leslie Stephen in his powerful essay entitled *An Agnostic's Apology*. I will give the answer in his own words, for they sum up the matter with admirable force and lucidity: "One insoluble doubt has haunted men's minds since thought began in the world. No answer has ever been suggested. One school of philosophers hands it to the next. It is denied in one form only to reappear in another. The question is not which system excludes the doubt, but how it expresses the doubt. Admit or deny the competence of reason in theory, we all agree that it fails in practice. Theologians revile reason as much as Agnostics; they then appeal to it, and it decides against them. They amend their plea by excluding certain questions from its jurisdiction, and those questions include the whole difficulty. They go to revelation, and revelation replies by calling doubt mystery. They declare that their consciousness declares just what they want it to declare. Ours declares something else. Who is to decide? The only appeal is to experience, and to appeal to experience is to admit the fundamental dogma of Agnosticism. Is it not, then, the very height of audacity, in face of a difficulty which meets us at every turn, which has perplexed all the ablest thinkers in proportion to their ability, which vanishes in one

[1] From an essay on "The Ethics of Belief," by the late Professor Clifford—*Lectures and Essays*, pp. 343, 346.

shape only to show itself in another, to declare roundly, not only that the difficulty can be solved, but that it does not exist? Why, when no honest man will deny in private that every ultimate problem is wrapped in the profoundest mystery, do honest men proclaim in pulpits that unhesitating certainty is the duty of the most foolish and ignorant? Is it not a spectacle to make the angels laugh? We are a company of ignorant beings, feeling our way through mists and darkness, learning only by incessantly repeated blunders, obtaining a glimmering of truth by falling into every conceivable error, dimly discerning light enough for our daily needs, but hopelessly differing whenever we attempt to describe the ultimate origin or end of our paths; and yet, when one of us ventures to declare that we do not know the map of the universe as well as the map of our infinitesimal parish, he is hooted, reviled, and perhaps told that he will be damned to all eternity for his faithlessness. Amidst all the endless and hopeless controversies which have left nothing but bare husks of meaningless words, we have been able to discover certain reliable truths. They do not take us very far, and the condition of discovering them has been distrust of *à priori* guesses and the systematic interrogation of experience. Let us, say some of us, follow at least this clue. Here we shall find sufficient guarantee for the needs of life, though we renounce for ever the attempt to get behind the veil which no one has succeeded in raising; if, indeed, there be anything behind. You miserable Agnostics! is the retort; throw aside such rubbish, and cling to

the old husks. Stick to the words which profess to explain everything; call your doubts mysteries, and they will not disturb you any longer; and believe in those necessary truths of which no two philosophers have ever succeeded in giving the same version. Gentlemen, we can only reply, wait till you have some show of agreement among yourselves. Wait till you can give some answer, not palpably a verbal answer, to some of the doubts which oppress us as they oppress you; wait till you can point to some single truth, however trifling, which has been discovered by your method and will stand the test of discussion and verification. Wait till you can appeal to reason without in the same breath vilifying reason. Wait till your divine revelations have something more to reveal than the hope that the hideous doubts which they suggest may possibly be without foundation. Till then we shall be content to admit openly, what you whisper under your breath or hide in technical jargon, that the ancient secret is a secret still; that man knows nothing of the Infinite and Absolute; and that, knowing nothing, he had better not be dogmatic about his ignorance. And, meanwhile, we will endeavour to be as charitable as possible, and, while you trumpet forth officially your contempt for our scepticism, we will at least try to believe that you are imposed upon by your own bluster."

This appears to me to state very clearly and well the position of the modern Agnostic. One comment is perhaps needed to prevent misapprehension. Sir Leslie Stephen says: "Theologians revile reason as

much as Agnostics." But Agnostics certainly do not "revile reason." They do, however, assert that human reason is utterly inadequate to explain the mysteries of the universe, and to reason they appeal to vindicate their position. Indeed, in every case the ultimate appeal must be to the individual reason. The Catholic convert, of course, denies this. He says: "I have surrendered my individual reason; I rest wholly upon the authority of the Church." Upon this the question at once arises: "But how came you to take up that position? Is it not a foolish one?" "By no means," he will reply, "but an eminently reasonable one"; and he will forthwith proceed to give his reasons. His reason, in fact (such as it is), has convinced him that the right thing for him to do is to follow the reason of others; so that, after all, he has to fall back upon reason in the last resort, though, having taken the step, he may for ever after stop his ears and blind his eyes against its teaching. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.*

A negative belief, then, this of Agnosticism, affording no satisfaction to those cravings for certitude in things supernatural which are so dear to man. Better to try "to live up to even a false theory of our moral relation to this tremendous universe"! Ah! dear friends, will you never realize that there are some who cannot live either up to or down to your false theories—some to whom truth is of all things the most dear? Without truth for such thinkers there can be no "satisfaction." It is this passionate resolve to follow truth at any cost that makes the character of Robert Elsmere at once so noble and so

stimulating. "Miracle is to our time what the law was to the early Christians. We *must* make up our minds about it one way or the other. And if we decide to throw it over as Paul threw all the law, then we must *fight* as he did. There is no help in subterfuge, no help in anything but a perfect sincerity." So reasoned the ex-clergyman of the English Church, in Mrs. Humphry Ward's well-known novel; and so too, we, who have gone a few steps further from the beaten tracks of orthodoxy than that honest and self-sacrificing Theist. We ask for "the truth"—not indeed "the whole truth," for that we cannot have, but at any rate "nothing but the truth."

Chapter IX

THE PROBLEM OF THE WILL

It is a trite saying that the infirmities of language are responsible for much confusion of thought. Nowhere has the truth of this proposition been made more apparent than in the nebulous sphere of metaphysics. But the domain of ethics has suffered also. We talk, for instance, of an act as being moral or immoral, yet it is, of course, clear that moral qualities cannot in truth be predicated of an *act*. To the *agent* alone can such qualities be ascribed. The agent alone is good or bad, and whether he acts rightly or wrongly in any particular case depends upon the state of his mind at the time.[1] I believe that great confusion has often resulted from failure clearly to apprehend this very simple truth.

Of course, writers on ethics quite legitimately divide acts into good, bad, and indifferent. It is impossible to avoid this, and no harm is done if, in our judgments on concrete instances, we are careful to bear in mind the distinction above mentioned.

[1] The above was written many years before I had read Maurice Morgan's essay on the character of Falstaff (1777), wherein I find the following: "*Actions* cannot with strict propriety be said to be either virtuous or vicious. These qualities or attributes belong to *agents* only, and are derived, even in respect to *them*, from intention alone."

Thus the utilitarian will rightly say that an act is good if it tends to promote the greatest happiness of the greater number, and he will naturally classify acts as moral or inmoral according to this principle. But when we come to judge individual conduct in any particular instance, such classifications will avail little or nothing. Whether a man has acted rightly or wrongly in any particular case depends entirely, I repeat, upon his state of mind at the time when he acted. If a man truly and honestly believes that it is his duty to do any particular act, then he cannot be condemned in a court of morality because he does it. If he does what he honestly believes to be right, he cannot be said to incur moral guilt. This I believe to be a logically unassailable proposition. As Shakespeare has finely said, "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." Virtue "depends not on the outside, but the inside; not the act, but the *spirit* or *intention* of the doer. This is the essence of virtue, the essence of character."[1] We are agreed to condemn murder as a highly immoral act, if for no other reason, because it is in the highest degree prejudicial to the interests of society. Yet, if A honestly believes that it is his duty to kill B, under such circumstances that the law adjudges him guilty of murder, A, nevertheless, having, *ex hypothesi*, done only what he believed it was his duty to do, cannot be condemned *in foro conscientiae*. He is in the same position as the Thug

[1] *The Realization of the Possible*, by F. W. Bain, p. 229.

who implicitly believed that in committing murder (as we should call it) he was obeying the sacred law of his deity—a law to which he was bound to yield absolute and unquestioning obedience.

"Then," says Mr. Superficial, "I presume you would not punish him; for you surely ought not to punish a man for doing what he honestly believes to be right." The answer, of course, is that the overwhelming majority of our society are in absolute disagreement with the offender. Society has long ago come to the conclusion that it is necessary in self-defence to punish the murderer. Society will tell him that, except himself and possibly one or two other fanatics who may be left out of consideration, all its component individuals hold murder in execration; and, whatever may be his opinions on the subject, they intend to carry out the law. The case, in fact, presents no difficulty. It is necessary, if society is to exist, to enforce the law of the land, whatsoever may be the individual opinions of the lawbreaker. If a man says "I honestly believed that I was justified in stealing this shilling, or in bigamously marrying this second wife," the answer is that society as a whole thinks that you ought not to have entertained any such belief, and society in self-defence is going to punish you.[1]

[1] Sir Leslie Stephen writes (*An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 246): "The fact that a man thinks himself acting rightly, or is wicked on principle, is not a sufficient defence against *legal* punishment. If a man is a Thug, the Government is not the less bound to hang him because he thinks murder right. A thief must be punished, though he objects to property in general; and a man who deserts his wife, though he disapproves of marriage. A man is in such

The difficulty arises only when we are trying to form a right opinion as to the moral qualities of a man's acts; trying, therefore, to form inferences as to his state of mind, or, as Mr. F. W. Bain says, his "spirit and intention."

An analogous difficulty often arises when we are reflecting upon a proposed course of conduct in our own case. How far are we justified in disregarding opinions widely held by the society in which we live? It was but a few years ago that marriage with a deceased wife's sister was held to be no marriage by the law of England, although it had been legalized by our Colonies. The children of such a marriage, though legitimate in the country where it had taken place, were bastards here. In these circumstances, a man who in this country desired to marry his deceased wife's sister had to

cases punished for an action which the ruler holds to be immoral But the persecutor has to punish a man precisely for discharging a duty admitted even by the persecutor to be a duty, and a duty of the highest obligation. If the duty of truthfulness be admitted, I am bound not to express belief in a creed which I hold to be false. If benevolence be a duty, I am bound to tell my neighbour how he can avoid hell-fire," etc.

I do not think the argument will "hold water." We punish the Thug, although we are obliged to admit that he cannot be morally blamed for doing what he believes he is under a sacred obligation to do. He does but his duty in acting as he thinks it is right to act. Similarly, the persecutor punishes those who promulgate what he believes to be "poisonous opinions" (as are those of the Thug), although he must admit that, from their point of view, those whom he punishes are bound to disseminate such opinions. But he can persecute only if the great majority of the society in which he lives is with him in opinion. If the Thug is in the majority, the case is changed! Whether or not it is *politic* to persecute for opinion's sake is quite another matter. I only wish to point out that the distinction suggested seems to me (much as I hate persecution) a distinction without a difference.

ask himself whether he was justified in so doing. He believes it is the best second marriage a man can make. But the law of England forbids such a marriage—I am speaking, of course, of a time before the recent statute. He considers the law extremely unjust and ill-advised. He does not, however, propose to break that law. He will go to some colony or other country where such marriages are allowed, and will there marry according to the law of that country. Thus he will break no law; but when he returns to England he will, in the eye of the English law, be living with a woman to whom he is not married, and his children will be illegitimate according to that law. Moreover, many persons will condemn his conduct—nor will such be confined to the ranks of those who approve of the law; for there are many who, while advocating a change of the law, consider that a man does wrong in contracting such a marriage until the change is effected. Is he justified in disregarding all this hostile opinion? I myself should consider that he is; but it is a matter for his own conscience. If he honestly believes that he acts rightly he cannot in justice be morally condemned. The majority may lay down what they consider to be a general rule. The man's conscience alone can decide whether it is binding upon him.

Take another case. Suppose the question is not whether a man was justified in marrying his deceased wife's sister according to the law of a British colony or foreign country before such marriage was made legal here, but whether he

shall live with a woman whom he loves, as with a wife, without going through any matrimonial ceremony. Suppose that they both believe that there is, apart from the opinion of society, nothing morally wrong in such unions, but that, on the contrary, they are eminently desirable and consonant with the best interests of society. Would he be justified in taking the course proposed? He might well say to himself: "Were I in a country where no stigma is attached by public opinion to such relations, I should have no hesitation; but am I not bound to consider the opinion—the false opinion, as I believe it to be—of the great majority of the society in which I find myself?" Yet some good men and women have undoubtedly believed that they were justified in disregarding that opinion. Here, again, the ultimate appeal can only be to the individual conscience. He who does what he thinks wrong acts immorally; he who does what he thinks right cannot be said to act immorally—except, indeed, in a secondary sense as being guilty of an act which certain ethical systems have classified as immoral.

What, then, is *conscience?* Is it a divinely-imparted faculty—a sense by which we are enabled to distinguish right from wrong? Or is it merely the judgment which the mind pronounces on any question of right or wrong? In my opinion it is undoubtedly the latter. The verdict of conscience is constantly liable to change. When I was a child my conscience told me that it was wrong to do work on a Sunday. If, then, I did work on a

Sunday I acted against my conscience. I did wrong because I thought I was doing wrong. *Now* my conscience does not tell me any such thing; my conscience tells me that, speaking generally, I may do work on a Sunday—in fact, that within certain restrictions such work is meritorious. Conscience is merely what one thinks in a particular case on a question of right and wrong with reference to a proposed course of action. It is one's judgment on a question of practical ethics. It may be the voice of prejudice and heredity only, which reason may subsequently modify or entirely alter. It may, in the adult as in the child, be the mere unreflecting echo of what he has been taught. It may, and generally does, act, as it were, instinctively without any balancing of arguments *pro* or *con*. None the less is it merely an opinion, and, like other opinions, liable to be changed. He who acts against the voice of conscience does wrong because he does what he thinks to be wrong. To say that man should always follow the dictates of his conscience is no more than saying that he should always do what he thinks to be right. Conscience, therefore, is always a safe moral guide to the individual, though it may make him do things which the majority of mankind think foolish or ill-advised, or even criminal.[1]

[1] If any one chooses to say that conscience is that which tells us that there is a difference between right and wrong, I have no objection; nor will I stop to carry the analysis further. My point is that in any particular case the consciences of different men deliver entirely different judgments, as also does the conscience of

Here we are confronted with the old difficulty. When there is a choice of action is man's will "free" to take such course as it may choose to take? Or is the choice dictated by what used to be called "Necessity" and is now called "Determinism"?[1] Science tells us that the law of causation is of universal application. There is no effect without an antecedent cause. What, then, of the human will? Does it act without a cause, or (which is the same thing) is it self-caused? Is it the one exception to the law of causation? Or are those philosophers in the right who tell us that the will is but the resultant of forces—namely, desires?

What do we mean by "the will"? The will is

the same man at different times, though the external facts be precisely the same.

Conscience is constantly spoken of as "the moral instinct," and no doubt in the majority of cases, though by no means always, it is an instinctive judgment. Mr. Gowans Whyte says that if we trace this "moral instinct" back to its source we find "that it arises from the struggle for existence—the very struggle against which morality is so often supposed to be a God-inspired appeal" (*The Religion of the Open Mind*, 1913, p. 121). But these considerations do not affect my argument.

[1] Nomenclature is not unimportant, for, as Mr. Chapman Cohen points out in his excellent little book, *Determinism or Free Will?* (The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1912)—which, I regret to say, I had not read before these pages were in type—when the question was represented as one between "Liberty" and "Necessity" the mind was at once biassed in favour of the former; for "we all love liberty, we all resent compulsion, and, as Mill pointed out, he who announces himself as a champion of liberty has gained the sympathy of his hearers before he has commenced to argue his case.....Such expressions as 'Power of choice,' 'Sense of responsibility,' 'Testimony of consciousness,' 'Consciousness of freedom,' are all expressions that, while helpful and legitimate when used with due care and understanding, as usually employed serve only to confuse the issue and darken comprehension" (p. 20). I would recommend Mr. Cohen's book to all who are interested in this question.

no more an entity than "conscience" is an entity. As Herbert Spencer says: "Will is no more an existence, apart from the predominant feeling, than a king is an existence apart from the man occupying the throne." When the mind of man is acted upon by various motives, some urging one course and some another, the determining action, in accordance with one or more of such motives, is called an exercise of the will. The question then arises, Does the will determine what motive shall be followed, or is it the motive which determines the action of the will—that is to say, the action of the man?[1]

Now that action is, at any rate to some extent, influenced by motive is admitted by all. If a man is arrested on a charge of murder, and his guilt is a matter of doubt, the first question asked is, What "motive" had he to kill the murdered man? Such a question would, of course, be futile unless it was recognized that action is influenced by motive. "What is it," asks Mr. Cohen, "that people have in their minds when they speak of the 'Freedom of

[1] "Neither physiology nor psychology, neither a sane science nor a sound philosophy, knows anything of, or can find any use for, an autonomous 'will.' 'Will' as the final term of a discoverable series may be admitted; 'will' as a self-directing force, deciding whether particular desires shall or shall not prevail, answers to nothing conformable to our knowledge of man, and is plainly but the ghost of the wills and souls of our savage ancestors. If, instead of speaking of the freedom of the will, we spoke of uncaused volitions, the position of the volitionist [*i.e.*, the advocate of "Free Will"] would be clear, and its indefensible character plain to all. But by giving the abstraction 'will' a concrete existence, and by taking from sociology a word such as 'freedom' and using it in a sphere in which it has no legitimate application, the issue is confused, and a scientifically absurd theory given an air of plausibility" (*Determinism or Free Will?*, p. 30).

the Will'? Curiously enough, the advocates of 'free will' seldom condescend to favour us with anything so commonplace as a definition; or, if they do, it tells us little.....Now the whole of the argument for 'free will' makes the word 'free' or 'freedom' the equivalent to *an absence of determining conditions*. Either this or the case for 'free will' is surrendered. For if a man's decisions are in any way influenced—'influenced' is here only another word for 'determined'—Determinism is admitted. I need not argue whether decisions are wholly or partly determined, the real and only question being whether they are determined at all. What is called by some a limited free will is really only another name for unlimited nonsense." Again: "From the point of view of science, to speak of an absence of determining conditions is the most complete nonsense. All science is a search for the conditions that determine phenomena."[1]

So put, it appears to me exceedingly difficult to refute the Determinist case. For it is absurd to say that motives influence conduct, and yet that a man has the power to decide that the smaller or less powerful motive shall prevail over the greater or more powerful; or even to decide that his conduct shall not be determined by any motive at all, though, as we shall presently see, a learned scientist of the present day appears to imagine that this is a true statement of the case.

The contrary, or "Determinist," side of the case

[1] *Determinism or Free Will?*, pp. 22, 23.

has been strongly argued by an American sociologist. "The strongest desire must prevail," writes Mr. Lester Ward.[1] "The action follows the strongest inclination. The man yields to the most powerful influence. It is not the *man* who fights the battle and decides the issue. It is the forces within him. It is not the introduction of a third force of his own by which he settles the controversy. He is merely the battleground. The result does not depend upon anything he may do. Whatever he does is the *result* of the conflict. His impulses and opinions both depend upon circumstances. Hence his acts must also depend upon circumstances. .....The strength of opinions determines the strength of the volitions to which they give rise, and the strength of those volitions determines the probabilities of the acts which they incite. The impulsive desires are in an equal degree dependent upon all those circumstances which determine deliberative ones. Whichever course the individual adopts we may depend there will be a reason for it. That reason is a necessary one, an immediate moving cause. It is not his will; it is behind his will, and controls it, and through it the action. The only test of what the strongest inclination is, is the act itself. To say that any one ever acts in a manner contrary to the strongest inclination is equivalent

[1] *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. ii, p. 328. It seems scarcely necessary to say that this doctrine does not in any way interfere with the theory of punishment. The desire to avoid punishment constitutes a very potent force to restrain from acts which society believes to be inimical to its welfare. But I consider this point further later on.

to saying that a body may sometimes move in a direction contrary to the resultant of all the forces acting upon it. Ethics is the science of psychological mechanics."[1]

This seems to me logically unassailable. Take a simple case. A man with a liking for spirits deliberates as to whether he shall drink a glass of brandy. He has been told by his doctor not to drink brandy. He thinks it will probably do him harm, and may be a downward step in a course which will ultimately be his ruin. He has a strong desire to avoid such evils. On the other hand, he has a physical craving, a strong desire to drink the brandy. According as the one or the other of these desires prevails, so must he act. If he refrain, he takes credit to himself for having shown strength of will; but he is only entitled to rejoice that the desire to avoid future evil was stronger than the desire for present gratification. Had the latter desire been the stronger, he would have drunk the brandy. Suppose, instead of liking brandy, he hated it, and had vowed never to touch it, but that a ruffian holds a pistol to his head and threatens to shoot him unless he drink. He drinks, but says he acted against his desires; he had no free will. Yet in truth his action was the resultant of the greater desire—viz., the desire to save his life, which was stronger than the desire to keep his vow. Had it

[1] See some excellent remarks on this subject in Buckle's *History of Civilization*, vol. i, pp. 18, 19 (Longmans, 1882). Buckle rejects both "the metaphysical dogma of free will and the theological dogma of predestined events."

been otherwise, he would have refrained from drinking at the cost of his life.

"What," asks a friend, "cannot I, standing at these cross roads, choose either road A or road B exactly as I will? Now, I will bet you half-a-crown that I will take road A." The answer is: "Of course you can take road A. The very desire to prove himself right (to say nothing of winning the half-crown) is sufficient to make you choose A rather than B, and that greater desire will govern your action." But now, suppose the bet made, and my friend about to take road A; a man rushes up and tells him that a mad dog is coming by that road. The desire to avoid the mad dog will probably be greater than the desire to prove himself a free agent and to win the half-crown; and my friend, wishing to proceed on his way, feels himself constrained to take road B after all. The greater desire has determined his action. Indeed, in any case, the fact that a man has acted in a certain way proves that the desire to act in that way must, *on balance*, have been the greatest. His action, therefore, is but the resultant of forces.[1]

[1] When a man says, in reference to some past action, that in the same circumstances he would now act differently, he obviously has in view the external circumstances only; for, given *all* the same circumstances, both objective and subjective, both external and *mental*, it follows that the resulting action must be the same. Action, then, appears to be the resultant of forces—namely, desires; but it need scarcely be said that the word "desire" here includes the highest wish of which the human mind is capable. Hume says: "We feel that our actions are subject to our will on most occasions, and imagine we feel that the will itself is subject to nothing, because, when by a denial of it we are provoked to try, we feel that it moves easily every way, and produces an image of itself

Here, however, we are confronted with the *dictum* of an eminent physicist, who tells us, in direct opposition to the arguments above set forth, that human action, if not altogether independent of motive, is, at any rate, so far independent of it that it can be as well based upon the lowest or weakest motive as upon the highest or strongest. "The distinctive character of man," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "is that he has a sense of responsibility for his acts, having acquired the power of choosing between good and evil, *with freedom to obey one motive rather than another.*"[1] This is a bewildering pronouncement. It is almost a contradiction in terms. The "motive" of human action is the *desire* to act in a certain way. A gouty and rheumatic man desires to drink champagne, but he also desires to avoid the bad consequences which he knows will result to him if he does so. Nevertheless he drinks the champagne. "Now, why, sir," asks the doctor, "did you drink that wine?" "Well," replies the patient, "the fact is my desire to abstain from it was much greater than my desire to drink it; but, being a free man, I acted according to the lesser

(or a *Velleity*, as it is called in the schools) even on that side on which it did not settle. This image or faint notion, we persuade ourselves, could at the time have been completed into the thing itself; because, should that be denied, we find upon a second trial that at present it can. We consider not the *fantastical desire of showing liberty is here the motive of our action.*"

[1] *The Substance of Faith Allied with Science: A Catechism for Parents and Teachers*, by Sir Oliver Lodge, fourth edition, p. 128. My italics. Yet, as readers of *Raymond* know, Sir Oliver apparently believes in prophetic power as vested in some at least of those who have "passed over." They will remember the story of Mr. Myers and the "Faunas" prophecy. But how can the prescience of the prophet be reconciled with free will?

desire." "Nonsense," replies the doctor, being a man of common sense, "the very fact that you drank proves that your desire to drink was greater than your desire to abstain." And can it be doubted that the good doctor is right? Can it be doubted that our action, in any given case, is based upon the strongest motive acting upon us at the time? We might almost as reasonably contend that a free body acted upon by two forces of unequal strength would be "free" to move in the direction of the weaker of the two.

Observe that young retriever-dog walking through the turnips by the gamekeeper's side. A hare jumps up in front of him and runs away. The instinct of pursuit is strong upon him, and in spite of the keeper's rating voice he gives chase. On his return he is again rated and soundly beaten. Later on a covey of partridges rises before the guns. One falls, and again the dog "runs in." Again he is rated and beaten, this time more severely than before. On the next occasion, when a hare jumps up or a bird falls, he gives an instinctive start forward, but checks himself. The desire to give chase is still strong, but the desire to avoid the rating and the whipping is stronger. And it is the greater desire that determines his action. Yet he was "free" to run in if he had so chosen!

Some "free-willians" would, perhaps, say: Yes, the dog acts according to the strongest motive. It is admitted that the dog has no free will.[1] The

[1] For Sir Oliver Lodge's perplexing pronouncements as to "free will" in the lower animals see Note 2 at end of this Chapter.

case is different with the human being. *He* can disregard motives, so far as their relative strength is concerned. *He* can act upon the weakest motive, or—for, surely, this legitimately follows—upon no motive at all! What uncertain sciences, then, are those which we call Psychology and Sociology? How vain the attempts to trace the motives of human conduct! "If, under certain conditions, a human being, endowed with a certain heredity, may, within limits, act anyhow, social science is reduced to ineptitude."[1]

But is this the voice of Science or the voice of the Theologian? Let us consider the question further in the light (or the darkness) of Theology. If there be an omnipotent and omniscient Deity, by whom all things are pre-ordained, how can it be reasonable to affirm that man is free to act according to his own will? "In a high transcendental sense," wrote Mr. Froude, "I believe Calvinism to be true —*i.e.*, I believe free will to be an illusion, and that all is as it is ordered to be."[2] Here, then, is a denial of free will, not from the point of view of Science, but from the point of view of Theology.

[1] Dr. Charles Callaway, in his pamphlet *Does Determinism Destroy Responsibility?*, reprinted from the *Agnostic Annual* for 1905 (Watts). He adds: "Act anyhow! But whence comes the force in us which is to overcome both heredity and environment? By the free-will hypothesis such a force would be uncaused. A phenomenon without a cause!" This comes, says Dr. Callaway, from the vanity of mankind, who will "believe themselves centres of cosmic disturbance."

[2] *Daily News*, December 28, 1894. How the Will can be free in a practical sense, but "determined" in a high, transcendental sense, is one of those things which we must leave to the theologians to explain.

Similarly we read: "Some of the first teachers of the Christian Churches—such as St. Augustine and Calvin—rejected the freedom of the will as decisively as the famous leaders of pure materialism, Holbach in the eighteenth and Büchner in the nineteenth century. Christian theologians deny it, because it is irreconcilable with their belief in the omnipotence of God and predestination."[1]

It will be observed, however, that the theology which thus denies free will is not the theology of Sir Oliver Lodge. He, as we have seen, believes that man has "acquired the power of choosing between good and evil, with freedom to obey one motive rather than another." How did man "acquire" that wondrous power? Sir Oliver Lodge would, I presume, say that it has been bestowed upon him by the Deity—that "One Infinite and Eternal Being, a guiding and loving Father, in whom all things consist,"[2] for it must have been in accordance with the Will of this Infinite and Eternal Being (in whom Sir Oliver has expressed his belief) that man acquired such a power. But is it not absurd to suppose that an omnipotent Being can, as it were, wash his hands of all responsibility for—or, rather, we ought to say divest himself of being the cause of—the doings of his creatures by conferring upon them the power

[1] Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 133. The belief referred to, however, does not prevent "Christian theologians" from consigning man to hell-fire for doing that which was predetermined by the omnipotent Deity!

[2] "I believe in one Infinite and Eternal Being, a guiding and loving Father, in whom all things consist." *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

to do what they like? As a friend writes: "The attempt to get out of fatal difficulty in connection with the attribution to Deity of omnipotence, by asserting that He gave us free will, is ludicrous. It only removes that difficulty one step. There is no answer to the rejoinder—the power to confer such a quality as free will cannot be separated from the consequences of having conferred it. The result is that all that is said to take place by reason of man's free will actually takes place in accordance with the Will of the Omnipotent Deity, who is said to have bestowed free will on man."

Not so, perhaps some theologian will answer, for, *ex hypothesi*, the Deity is Omnipotent, and you cannot set bounds to Omnipotence. If it pleases Omnipotence to say that man's will shall be "free," although his actions are ordered according to Divine Prescience, "free" man's will must be. But this only demonstrates in what abysmal depths of intellectual futility we flounder when we make use of such terms as "Omnipotent," "Infinite," "Eternal." Can Omnipotence decree, and give effect to the decree, that a thing shall both be and not be in the same sense at the same time? Can Omnipotence make undone the things that have been done? To talk of Omnipotence is but vain babble. The Omnipotent, the Infinite, the Eternal, the Absolute, the Unconditioned—what are they? "Words, words, words!" If there be any existence that corresponds to them, it is an existence unknowable to man, inconceivable to the human intellect.

But let us return to the vexed question of man's

"responsibility" for his acts. The late Professor Huxley has discussed this question in his volume of essays on Hume and Berkeley,[1] wherein he speaks with, perhaps, not unmerited contempt of those "highly intelligent persons who rather pride themselves on their fixed belief that our volitions have no cause; or that the will causes itself, which is either the same thing or a contradiction in terms."

Further on, in the chapter on "Volition, Liberty, and Necessity," he argues that half the arguments concerning the freedom of the will "rest upon the absurd presumption that the proposition 'I can do as I like' is contradictory to the doctrine of necessity. The answer is: Nobody doubts that—at any rate, within certain limits—you can do as you like. But what determines your likings and dislikings? Did you make your own constitution? Is it your contrivance that one thing is pleasant and another is painful? And even if it were, why did you prefer to make it after the one fashion rather than the other? The passionate assertion of the consciousness of their freedom, which is the favourite refuge of the opponents of the doctrine of necessity, is mere futility, for nobody denies it. What they really have to do, if they would upset the Necessitarian argument, is to prove that they are free to associate any emotion whatever with any idea whatever: to like pain as much as pleasure, vice as much as virtue; in short, to prove that, whatever may be the

[1] *Collected Essays*, vol. vi, chaps. vi and x.

fixity of order of the universe of things, that of thought is given over to chance."

I interpret this passage as follows: A man can do what "he likes," but he cannot *like* just what "he likes"![1] In other words, his likings are determined for him. He is free to do what he likes, but what he likes depends upon the law of causation, and is not "given over to chance." This seems to me to be very much the same thing as saying that he *must* act in a certain way. Not only he *may* do as "he likes," but he *must*. Action is the resultant of forces—namely, desires; and our desires are not matters of chance, but are determined for us. How, then, as to moral responsibility? Professor Huxley tells us that the doctrine of necessity has really no bearing upon the question of man's moral responsibility. "A man's moral responsibility for his acts," says the Professor, "has nothing to do with the causation of these acts, but depends on the frame of mind which accompanies them. Common language tells us this when it uses 'well-disposed' as the equivalent of 'good,' and 'evil-minded' as that of 'wicked.' If A does something which puts B in a violent passion, it is quite possible to admit that B's passion is the necessary consequence of A's act, and yet to believe that B's fury is morally wrong, or that

[1] A superficial critic has found fault with this passage because he says the word "like" is used here in different senses. That is not so. The sense is the same in both instances. To put the meaning in other words, it is as follows: A man's likings or dislikings are, speaking generally, innate, and not determined according to his will and pleasure. If I had to take castor-oil, I should *like* to like it, but I cannot!

he ought to control it. In fact, a calm bystander would reason with both on the assumption of moral necessity. He would say to A: 'You were wrong in doing a thing which you knew (that is, of the necessity of which you were convinced) would irritate B.' And he would say to B: 'You are wrong to give way to passion, for you know its evil effects'—that is, the necessary connection between yielding to passion and evil."

Now, notwithstanding my great respect for Professor Huxley, I must submit that this reasoning is eminently unsatisfactory. A man's moral responsibility for his acts is said to have nothing to do with the causation of those acts, but to depend on "the frame of mind" which accompanies them; yet if B's passion (in the case supposed) is "the necessary consequence of A's act," how does B's frame of mind affect the question? B's frame of mind is, like other things, the effect of antecedent causes; and how is it alleged that B is morally responsible for such causes or their effect? "Did you make your own constitution?" asks Professor Huxley in the passage quoted above. The answer is, Certainly not. Neither did B make his. To assert that B's passion is the necessary consequence of A's act, and at the same time to assert that B is morally blameable for that necessary consequence ("that B's fury is morally wrong, or that he ought to control it"), seems to me another example of something very like a contradiction in terms. B is not blameable for his passion unless he might have prevented it; and if he might have prevented it, it

was not a necessary consequence. As to the "calm bystander," he appears to me an irrelevant prig, whose arguments have no weight unless we assume the very point at issue. He reasons, we are told, "on the assumption of moral necessity"; but with this he further assumes the co-existence of moral responsibility. In truth, "the calm bystander" never does assume "moral necessity." He assumes free will. He assumes, for instance, "that B's fury is morally wrong," though at the same time he assumes that it must in all probability (*though not of necessity*) be the result of A's action. This he assumes, having regard to the ordinary constitution and weaknesses of human nature. But whether B's fury is the *necessary* consequence of A's action depends mainly on the nature of the provocation given, and on B's character and temperament. "The calm bystander," however, does not recognize "necessity." He is not a philosopher. In truth, he seems merely to represent the ordinary individual, who takes for granted the existence of free will and resulting moral responsibility (which is the very thing to be proved); and his intervention appears to me as useless to the controversy as it assuredly would be to the combatants. He would in all probability merely furnish another illustration of Gay's remark that

> They who in quarrels interpose
> Must often wipe a bloody nose.

In fine, this attempt to reconcile the doctrine of necessity with moral responsibility seems to me about as futile as Martin Bucer's middle system

between transubstantiation and consubstantiation. If the law of causality applies to human actions; if the action of what we call the will is itself the effect of antecedent causes, then our "frame of mind," on which Professor Huxley lays so much stress, is no exception to the law. That, also, is determined by antecedent causes.[1] No doubt, as Mill has observed, we can co-operate in the formation of our own character *if we desire to do so.* But that force of desire must be present. Our volition does not act without a cause, nor (which is the same thing) is it self-caused. Put into Socratic dialogue, the argument on this point might run somewhat as follows:—

SOCRATES: Will any man take action with the object of improving his character unless the desire to do so be present with him?

PHILEBUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: And when we say "take action," I presume we do not allude to one act, but to a series of acts done from time to time with this object?

PHILEBUS: Unquestionably.

SOCRATES: But it is possible for a man to desire to do an act with the object of improving his own character, and at the same time to desire to do another act with a different object?

PHILEBUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And if one desire is greater than the

[1] Since this was published the late Professor Huxley's "attempt to establish a fundamental distinction between things which certainly *will* happen and things which necessarily *must* happen" has been subjected to very deadly criticism, as it seems to me, by Mr. W. H. Mallock. See his *Religion as a Credible Doctrine* (1903), pp. 254-265.

other, whether will the man follow the smaller or the greater desire?

PHILEBUS: Manifestly he will follow the greater of the two.

Now in certain cases, and up to a certain point, we are all ready to recognize the absence of moral responsibility; or, at least, we reduce it to a minimum. We see a man with low, retreating forehead, and with all the cranial features which indicate low intellectual powers. We find that he was born of criminal parents, and was brought up in ignorance and in an atmosphere of vice. We say at once that such a man could not be expected to go through life without committing crime. His criminal impulses were too strong and his power of resisting too weak. His action, therefore, was shaped by his vicious desires. He cannot be supposed to have the same moral responsibility ("or anything like it") as we ascribe to the cultivated intellectual man. Carry the case a little further and show him to be of unsound mind, and we admit the absence of moral responsibility altogether—or, at least, that responsibility becomes so shadowy that we decline to make him legally responsible for his acts. It is clear, therefore, that what we call "moral responsibility" is a very varying factor. It varies according to circumstances, intellect, education, constitution, temperament, inherited tendencies, surroundings, etc.—in a word, it varies according to power of resistance.[1]

[1] We see a man with congenital physical features which we say

Now, seeing that such a clear reasoner as Professor Huxley could attain so little success in the endeavour to reconcile the Determinist doctrine with man's moral responsibility, we might almost be tempted to give up the attempt, even as we give up the explanation of space without limits, and time without a beginning. But, after all, does not the difficulty arise from the employment of a term so vague and undefined as "moral responsibility"?

Responsibility to whom? and for what? and of what kind? Unless we strictly define our meaning in answer to these questions, we may lose ourselves in vain and nebulous argument "about it, and about." Now, as to a supposed responsibility to a Deity whereof we know absolutely nothing, and knowing nothing can predicate nothing, nothing, as it seems to me, can be said. Therefore I leave that consideration out of the question altogether, only remarking that the imagined punishments of a future state, as usually conceived, being merely vindictive, and therefore useless, do not enter into the purview of the Agnostic faith. We have, therefore, to do with man's responsibility in this world; his responsibility to the laws, customs, judgments, and opinions of the society in which he is placed. Now, here it is clear that in practice the Determinist doctrine can make no change. I am, of course,

are inevitably indicative of weakness and criminal propensities. To hold him responsible for those physical features would be absurd. Is it not, then, absurd also to hold him responsible—*i.e.*, *morally* responsible—for those actions which his physical characteristics tell us we must inevitably anticipate?

arguing on the assumption of the truth of that doctrine. I will assume the truth of Haeckel's statement to the effect that "The great struggle between the Determinist and the Indeterminist—between the opponent and the sustainer of the freedom of the will—has ended to-day, after more than 2,000 years, completely in favour of the Determinist. The human will has no more freedom than that of the higher animals, from which it differs only in degree, not in kind.....We now know that each act of the will is as fatally determined by the organization of the individual, and as dependent on the momentary condition of his environment, as every other psychic activity." [1]

Assuming, then, that human will and human actions are, like everything else, subject to the inexorable law of causality, will such an assumption, if generally adopted, effect any change prejudicial to morality in the laws, customs, judgments, and opinions of men concerning the actions of their fellows? The Determinist argues that it will not. *Ex hypothesi*, human action, in any case, is but the resultant of forces—namely, those desires which, at the given moment, operate upon the will of the individual according to "the condition of his environment." But some of the most important and powerful of these forces spring directly from the laws, customs, judgments, and opinions of society. Society, by its agreement that certain actions are to be condemned as evil—many of them

[1] *The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 133.

to be held in execration, many also to be punished by the criminal law—has called into being mighty restraining forces which must influence the minds, and therefore the will and the action, of all rational beings. These forces, in any given instance, may be outweighed, and their influence may be nullified, by other forces of impulse and desire; whence may ensue actions contrary to law and contrary to the received ethical code; and we may be constrained to admit that such actions were the necessary resultants of what Haeckel has called the momentary condition of the individual environment. But this fact will not induce us to modify our judgments as to the character of the acts in question, any more than it will induce us to modify our penal code. We shall punish, execrate, condemn, or censure, just as we did before, thus taking care to preserve intact those restraining forces so essential to the welfare of society. All this was well seen and well stated by Shelley in those Notes to *Queen Mab*, which show, perhaps, more than any other of his writings, how far this great and enlightened poet —this "bright" but (*pace* Matthew Arnold) *not* "ineffectual angel"—was in advance of the opinion of his time. "He who asserts the doctrine of necessity means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in any other way than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the

connection between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other. Mankind are therefore agreed in the admission of necessity if they admit that these two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is to voluntary action in the human mind what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word 'liberty,' as applied to mind, is analogous to the word 'chance' as applied to matter; they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents. Every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act; in the eternity which preceded his birth a chain of causes was generated which, operating under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is. Were the doctrine of necessity false, the human mind would no longer be a legitimate object of science; from like causes it would be in vain that we should expect like effects; the strongest motive would no longer be paramount over the conduct; all knowledge would be vague and undeterminate.....the most probable inducements and the clearest reasonings would lose the invariable influence they possess. The contrary of this is demonstrably the fact. Similar circumstances produce the same unvariable effects.

"The precise character and motives of any man on any occasion being given, the moral philosopher could predict his actions with as much

certainty as the natural philosopher could predict the effects of the mixture of any particular chemical substances.....Some actions may be found to which we can attach no motives, but these are the effects of causes with which we are unacquainted. Hence the relation which motive bears to voluntary action is that of cause to effect; nor, placed in this point of view, is it, or ever has it been, the subject of popular or philosophical disputes.....The advocates of free will assert that the will has the power of refusing to be determined by the strongest motive; but the strongest motive is that which, overcoming all others, ultimately prevails; this assertion, therefore, amounts to a denial of the will being ultimately determined by that motive which does determine it, which is absurd."

But what as to the effect of all this upon our judgments with regard to the moral character of human actions?

"Reward and punishment must be considered by the necessarian merely as motives which he would employ in order to procure the adoption or abandonment of any given line of conduct. Desert, in the present sense of the word, would no longer have any meaning; and he who should inflict pain upon another for no better reason than that he deserved it would only gratify his revenge under pretence of satisfying justice.....At the same time, the doctrine of necessity does not in the least diminish our disapprobation of vice. The conviction which all feel that a viper is a poisonous animal, and that a tiger is constrained, by the inevitable condition of

his existence, to devour men, does not induce us to avoid them less sedulously, or, even more, to hesitate in destroying them."

So, therefore, of the murderer. We shall not abhor his crime the less, we shall not punish him the less, because we believed that he was constrained to be what he is by the inevitable conditions of his character and his environment. We shall not look upon the glutton and the drunkard as less bestial (with apology to the beasts!) because we regard them as the necessary products of the circumstances, objective and subjective, in which they were placed; nor will this belief induce us to modify our opinions as to the vices of gluttony and drunkenness. So far, so good. Society will not be shaken to its base even though all men should accept that theory of "necessity," from which in reason there appears to be no escape. Crime and vice will still be regarded with abhorrence; we shall still hold men responsible for their actions; and our penal code, though, I trust, much reformed, will still exercise its salutary influence on mankind. So much will be secured by the mere law of self-preservation, for without these sanctions and safeguards society could not exist.[1]

[1] In Mr. Mallock's able and interesting novel, *The Veil of the Temple*, it is suggested that one of the characters who has been "cut" for cheating at cards might justly turn on his "virtuous censor," a professed Determinist, and say to him: "You may be quite right in refusing to play cards with me, but if you avoid me in any other relation you're a damned humbug, assuming what you know to be a lie"—viz., that free will "is only a working hypothesis, which we assume to be true, but, at the same time, know to be false" (p. 419). It is, then, further suggested that it is

But is it true that the doctrine of necessity leaves our mental attitude towards the wrong-doer unaffected? Will our judgment of the sinner (to borrow a word from the theological vocabulary) be the same as it would be on the hypothesis of free will? Surely this cannot be so.

The man who, while gathering apples, by accident and through no fault of his own, falls upon another and kills him, is held blameless. Why? Because he was but the victim of forces over which he had no control. But of the murderer the necessarian must equally say that his action was but the resultant of forces; that he had in reality no freedom to act otherwise; that he "could not help" doing as he did. It is true that we must punish him in order to deter others, and to impress upon them the heinousness of the crime; but why should we regard him with abhorrence if he, too, was but the victim of forces over which he had no control? The reason seems to be that we abhor the mental

impossible to "believe that all our civilization—moral, intellectual, material, artistic, social—rests on what is merely a child's game of pretending." Mr. Mallock is such a strong logician that I should hesitate to assume that these suggestions represent his own opinions. The honest Determinist rightly and justly refuses to associate with the detected cardsharper not only in card-playing, but in all other walks of life, knowing that if honest men are willing to associate with cheats they will thereby lessen the forces that make for honesty, and so encourage the multiplication of cheats, and help to propagate a highly anti-social vice. In the same way, we punish the dog, in the instance alluded to above, not because we believe he could have acted otherwise than he did (in other words, that he had "free will"), but in order that in future the fear of punishment may be a restraining force superior to that which impels him to "run in." That for Determinists "all our civilization.....rests on .....a child's game of pretending" is itself a proposition which finds no support in reason.

attitude of the murderer, just as we abhor the ferocity of the tiger and the poison of the viper. In the same way, although we admit that the criminal lunatic is not properly responsible for his actions, and therefore not amenable to the criminal law, we yet feel a strong repugnance to him, mixed though it be with pity for his miserable infirmities. And these feelings will persist so long as human beings feel repugnance for the vile, the hideous, and the cruel—that is to say, so long as man is man. But it is, surely, futile to contend that the adoption of the necessarian doctrine effects *no* modification of the feelings with which we regard the vicious and the criminal.

Such was not the opinion of Shelley. "The doctrine of necessity," he wrote, "tends to introduce a great change into the established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion." By "religion" he, of course, meant "supernatural religion," with its rewards and punishments in a future state. Into that branch of the inquiry I am not now concerned to follow him. But what as to our "notions of morality"? What of our mental attitude towards our erring fellow-men? "A necessarian is inconsequent to his own principles if he indulges in hatred or contempt; the compassion which he feels for the criminal is unmixed with a desire of injuring him; he looks with an elevated and dreadless composure upon the links of the universal chain as they pass before his eyes; while cowardice, curiosity, and inconsistency only assail him in proportion to the feebleness and indis-

tinctness with which he has perceived and rejected the delusions of free will."[1]

Exception may be taken to some of the above phraseology. I quote the poet rather in illustration of my theme than as a philosophical authority. But the main contention appears to me to be true—namely, that the Determinist must look upon the vicious and the criminal with feelings profoundly different from those of the believer in the hypothesis of free will. At the same time, seeing that it is right for men to be moved to hatred and indignation by evil deeds, how is it possible for them—and, if possible, is it right—to confine such feelings to the deeds, and not also to extend them to the doers of evil? Here, as it seems to me, is a very real difficulty for the Determinist. Logic would seem to sway him in one direction, while the interests of society, wholly consonant with his own instincts and emotions, inspire feelings and suggest judgments of a very different character. Yet, amid all his doubts and questions, it may be well for him to remember that great utterance which, for its sublimity and profundity, is surely worthy of a place amid those sayings which men speak of as divine, *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.*

It would seem, then, that Determinism would lead us to regard the evil-doer with feelings analo-

[1] One is reminded of Shelley's "Lines to a Critic":—

"I hate thy want of truth and love—
How should I, then, hate thee?"

It is the evil in the man that we should hate, not the man himself, though it is certainly very difficult to separate the two.

gous to those with which we regard some noxious animal whose natural characteristics are such that we cannot contemplate it without aversion, and, it may be, loathing and disgust—with this important difference, however, that reformatory influences may be brought to bear upon the vicious and the criminal to which the lower animals are, for the most part, insensible.

But what of the Determinist himself in his individual capacity? Is he to claim freedom from responsibility for his actions, and from remorse for his evil deeds, on the ground that his conduct is but the resultant of forces over which he has no control? Such a claim could find no support either in reason or in human experience. What is "responsibility"? It is the liability to be called to account; and the Determinist knows that he is liable to be called to account for his actions, not only by the laws of the country where he dwells (that is his legal responsibility about which there is no question), but also by the opinion of his fellow-men—an opinion which he cannot disregard without woeful consequences to himself. But why, it may be asked, should he feel "remorse"—the answering *bite* of conscience for evil done?

Let us consider this a little further. Suppose that I am afflicted with some horrible facial disfigurement which makes me a repulsive object to my fellows. It is not my fault that I am so afflicted. I was so born, or it is the result of an accident. Nevertheless, that I am so afflicted causes me intense unhappiness, unless, indeed, I am so con-

stituted, so intellectually and emotionally apathetic, as to care not at all what effect my personal appearance may have upon my fellow-men. Now we know that some men of cruel or criminal propensities are so constituted that, though they never think of questioning the accepted hypothesis of free will, they feel no remorse or repentance for the cruel things they have done or for the crimes they have committed. But the majority of mankind, happily for the human race, are not so constituted as to be impervious to the feelings of shame, regret, repentance, and remorse. What, then, will be the position of one of these who has abandoned the belief in free will? The "free willians" (if I may make use of that expression) will say that, if he feels remorse for anything he has done, such a feeling is but a proof that, in his heart of hearts, he still believes in freedom. Logically, they will say, a Determinist should feel no remorse or self-reproach for any ill deed of which he may be guilty, since it was but the result of causes over which he had no control, and for which, therefore, he cannot be held responsible. But this is not a true statement of the case. Let me illustrate the position by a story taken from human experience.

I knew a man of mature age, a convinced Determinist, who was extremely fond of animals, and especially of dogs; a man to whom cruelty to animals was an abomination. But in his youth he had, unfortunately for him, been brought into contact with friends who, like so many Englishmen that live a country life, were possessed with the

idea that "sport"—and more especially the sports of hunting and shooting—is one of the great objects of human existence. In his boyhood a gun had been put into his hands, and the excitement of "shooting" had taken possession of him. At his own home there was but little land over which he could pursue his sport, and, like most "sportsmen," he was very jealous of any interference with his rights thereon. One fine September day—he was a very young man at the time—he heard a "self-hunting" dog giving tongue in a hedgerow where he had the right to shoot. It was not the first time. That dog, or others, had come hunting on the land before. This annoyed him. He took his gun and went to the spot, intending to give that dog a lesson! He came upon the animal hunting rabbits in a ditch under the hedge. When he approached it and began to rate it, the dog—it was a spaniel—growled at him, and made as though it would attack him, although, doubtless, the poor animal acted rather from fear than from fierceness. Whereupon on a sudden impulse—the thought of it haunted him for the rest of his life—he put his gun to his shoulder and fired both barrels simultaneously at the dog. He thought he must have killed it on the spot, but it was in the days of black powder, and the smoke hung so thickly he could not see the result of his shots. He heard, however, most piteous cries, and when the smoke had cleared away there was no dog to be seen. He knew he must have wounded it, but he hoped it was not badly hurt, though he was so close to it when he fired

that he wondered how he had failed to kill it. And what was the fate of the wretched animal? Months afterwards the body of a dead dog was found in an adjoining hedgerow. It had been wearing a collar, and to the collar there was a chain attached showing that the dog had broken loose from home. The chain was twisted round the stem of a sapling. Thus the poor dog, wounded and in agony, had been held fast till death at last put an end to its pain.

My friend told me that this action—this cruel and cowardly action, as he did not hesitate to call it—had haunted him all through life. He had done many things inconsistent with conventional morality, and the memory of those things did not trouble him at all. But the thought of this one cruel deed was an ever-recurring and never-ending sorrow to him. True it had not been in his mind to torture the dog. He had thought to kill it instantaneously. But why should he have wished to kill it? What right had he to take its innocent life? It was but a poor animal hunting rabbits. Did he act in fear because the dog growled? Then he was cowardly as well as cruel. In a word, he had ever afterwards felt remorse for this deed, and that feeling seemed to grow stronger with him, instead of weaker, as he grew older. Young man as he was at the time, he held the belief in God wherein he had been brought up. But he did not think of asking God's forgiveness for his cruel act. What good would that have done? God could not make the act undone. He had caused cruel suffering to a poor dog with no

possible justification, and that cruel suffering was an irremediable fact for all time.

μόνου γὰρ αὐτος καὶ θεὸς στερίσκεται
ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ἅσσ' ἂν ᾖ πεπράγμενα.[1]

Aye, but when he became a convinced Determinist was not the load taken off his mind? Did he not feel then that there was no room for remorse, seeing that his action was but the result of forces for which he was not responsible? Not so. "I know, of course," he said, "that though in the same circumstances—that is, in the same *objective* circumstances —I should now act very differently, yet in the same circumstances, both subjective and objective, I should, of course, do the same. The same self (*i.e.*, the same *mental* self) acted upon by the same forces would, of course, produce the same results. But how should that consideration take away my self-reproach? My shame and my regret are in the thought that I should have been such as I then was; that I should have been capable of doing a thing so cowardly and so cruel. Just as I should be unhappy if I had a hideous and monstrous body, though it would be none of my making, so am I made unhappy by the thought of that hideous action of mine, and by the memory of that suffering so by me inflicted upon a helpless and unoffending creature."

Let us take another case—one alluded to by Dr. Callaway in his pamphlet already mentioned. "A

[1] One thing there is to God himself denied,
Things done to make undone.

belief in free will," writes Dr. Callaway, "tends to check benevolent effort. So long as vicious actions are regarded as free and spontaneous they evoke an exaggerated sense of blame. How many of us feel sympathy with the confirmed inebriate when a magistrate's order sends him to gaol for the hundredth time? Yet the poor wretch is as much the victim of disease as the consumptive or the lunatic. But, we are told, the vicious habit was deliberately acquired, and might have been checked in its earlier stages. We reply that the early temptation was too strong and the power of resistance too weak. It is idle to urge that the man might have made more effort, that he ought to have exerted a stronger will. The amount of his will power is not determined by himself; it is born with him, and he is no more able to increase it than he can lift himself in the air by pulling at his own collar."

Now let this "poor wretch" be never so convinced a Determinist, he must feel shame and grief (unless, indeed, he has become dead to all such emotions, in which case he will but find himself in the same mental and moral position as many "free willians") at the thought that he has so become a miserable "victim of disease." The consideration that his will was weak, and the temptation, which he had so often and so vainly resolved to resist, was too strong for him, will afford him little comfort or none. He must ever lament that he is such a wretched creature and has sunk so low. And the knowledge that men must thus suffer for their weakness and their misdeeds is a force that helps to deter

others, whether disciples of Determinism or of Free-will, from yielding to similar temptations.[1]

The Determinist, then, will feel remorse for his misdeeds—that is to say, he will be made unhappy by the thought of what he has done when what he has done is evil; though these feelings will, of course, vary according to the sensitiveness and susceptibility of the individual. I repeat, however, that our estimate of the ethical character of human action must, necessarily, be greatly modified by the Determinist belief. Have I done some deed which my fellow-men look upon as a good action—some courageous deed, some deed of charity, some deed of self-sacrifice? Let me then rejoice at my good fortune. Let me rejoice that in the circumstances wherein I was placed, with the temperament and mentality with which heredity and all the conditions of my environment have endowed me, it was my happy lot to be able to do that which I feel to be good. But let me not exult as though I were justified in feeling spiritual pride—that odious aberration of the human mind. On the other hand, if I have done that which I feel to be evil, I must needs lament the perversity of my nature and my unfortunate circumstances—lament that I am so ill-equipped with those forces of character and disposition which would have enabled me to resist the opposing and misleading forces which have led me to do that

[1] As Dr. Callaway well says: "The threats of what *may* happen in a remote future and in another life are not so well adapted to influence human nature as the certain knowledge of what *must* happen in this present life if natural and social laws are outraged or neglected."

which all human experience teaches me leads to my own unhappiness as well as to the unhappiness of others. And the very fact that a man has given such long and anxious consideration to this most difficult question of Free-will or Determinism as to have convinced himself of the truth of the Determinist doctrine will be a guarantee that his susceptibilities are sufficiently acute to make him deeply sensible of the feelings which I have ascribed to him. It is among the masses of mankind, who have never given a thought to such questions, and the majority of whom are incapable of even understanding them, that we must look for callousness and insensibility. It is there, among those who accept the belief in free will as a self-evident truth, that we shall find men and women to whom evil-doing brings neither repentance nor remorse.[1]

Thus, in ethical matters as in external things, may we endeavour to observe the wise advice of the old Roman poet:—

> Aequam memento rebus in arduis
> Servare mentem, non secus in bonis
> Ab insolenti temperatam
> Laetitia.

"The free-will hypothesis," wrote Sir Leslie

[1] "No man in his sober senses," writes Sir Oliver Lodge, "really wills to do evil; he does it with some motive which he tries to think justifies it; or else *he does it against his real will because mastered by something lower*" (*The Substance of Faith*, p. 28; my italics). But if his will is "mastered" by something else, how can it be said to be free? This surely is an assertion of the Determinist doctrine by an apostle of free will! But, according to Sir Oliver Lodge's teaching already quoted, no man's will need be "mastered," for he is "free to obey one motive rather than another"!

Stephen, "is the device of the theologians to try to relieve God of the responsibility for the sufferings of his creation. It is required for another purpose. It enables the Creator to be also the judge. Man must be partly independent of God, or God would be at once pulling the wires and punishing the puppets. So far the argument is unimpeachable; but the device justifies God at the expense of making the universe a moral chaos. Grant the existence of this arbitrary force called free-will, and we shall be forced to admit that, if justice is to be found anywhere, it is at least not to be found in this strange anarchy, where chance and fate are struggling for the mastery. The fundamental proposition of the anti-Determinist, that which contains the whole pith and substance of his teaching, is this: that a determined action cannot be meritorious. Desert can only accrue in respect of actions which are self-caused, or in so far as they are self-caused, and self-caused is only a periphrasis for uncaused. No one dares to say that our conduct is entirely self-caused. The assumption is implied in every act of our lives, and every speculation about history, that men's actions are determined exclusively, or to a great extent, by their character and their circumstances. Only so far as that doctrine is true can human nature be the subject of any reasoning whatever; for reason is but the reflection of external regularity, and vanishes with the admission of chance."[1]

[1] *An Agnostic's Apology*, by Leslie Stephen, 1893, p. 21.

But the Determinist repudiates the idea of "making the universe a moral chaos." He repudiates the hypothesis that there is a great First Cause, and that there are, at the same time, in the world "some twelve hundred million little first causes which may damn or save themselves as they please."[1] He believes that the law of causation operates in the sphere of human action as well as elsewhere. Is it to be supposed that this belief will be detrimental to morality? Assuredly not. Let me once more quote Dr. Callaway: "It is hardly too much to say that the moral improvement of the race has proceeded *pari passu* with a decline in men's belief in free-will. The savage mind which perceives spontaneity everywhere, which has no conception of law in nature, is notoriously deficient in justice. In the polytheistic stage of culture the course of the world is ruled by man-like deities, and their fitful conduct is reflected in (or is the reflection of) the wayward sway of despots, who alternated a cruel pseudo-justice with lawless laxity. The only great religion which is based upon the reign of law is the most just and the most humane of all. The Karma of Buddhism is the law of causation in human nature. 'It (Karma),' writes Rhys Davids, 'is identical with one of the latest speculations now being put forward among ourselves, which seeks to explain each man's character, and even his outward condition of life, by the character he inherited from his ancestors—a character gradually formed during

[1] *Ibid, ubi supra.*

a practically endless series of past existences, modified only by the conditions into which he was born, those very conditions being also in like manner the last result of a practically endless series of past causes.' That is to say, this very doctrine of Determinism, which some suppose to be destructive of morality, is the foundation of the purest, tenderest, most catholic moral teaching the world has ever known."[1]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 12. Dr. Callaway makes quotations from the Buddhist scriptures in justification of this highly appreciative description of Buddhism in its original and purest form, which, he says, appears "to rise above the other great religions in (1) its absolute unselfishness, (2) its toleration of other faiths, and (3) its extension of benevolence to the lower animals. To the Christian theologian the contest between free will and Determinism presented itself in the futile attempt to reconcile two utterly irreconcilable things—viz., man's freedom to do right or wrong and Divine pre-determination of his actions. Hence the interminable controversies concerning Grace, Predestination, and the like, always destined to end in making confusion worse confounded." The following passage from Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is an amusing example, where the much-ridiculed "Bozzy" seems to have altogether the best of the argument :—

DR. MAYO (to Dr. Johnson) : Pray, Sir, have you read Edwards, of New England, on Grace?

JOHNSON : No, Sir.

BOSWELL : It puzzled me so much as to the freedom of the human will by stating, with wonderful acute ingenuity, our being actuated by a series of motives which we cannot resist, that the only relief I had was to forget it.

MAYO : But he makes the proper distinction between moral and physical necessity.

BOSWELL : Alas! Sir, they come both to the same thing. You may be bound as hard by chains covered by leather as when the iron appears. The argument for the moral necessity of human actions is always, I observe, fortified by supposing universal prescience to be one of the attributes of the Deity.

JOHNSON : You are surer that you are free than you are of prescience ; you are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please than you are of any conclusion from a deduction of reasoning. [This is, I fear, another example of the great Doctor's *ignoratio elenchi!*] But let us consider a little the objection from

prescience. It is certain I am either to go home to-night or not; that does not prevent my freedom.

BOSWELL: That it is certain you are *either* to go home to-night or not does not prevent your freedom, because the liberty of choice between the two is compatible with that certainty. But if *one* of these events be certain *now*, you have no *future* power of volition. If it be certain you are to go home to-night, you *must* go home.

JOHNSON. If I am well acquainted with a man, I can judge with great probability how he will act in any case, without his being restrained by my judging. God may have this probability increased to a certainty.

BOSWELL: When it is increased to *certainty* freedom ceases, because that cannot be certainly foreknown which is not certain at the time; but if it be certain at the time, it is a contradiction in terms to maintain that there can be afterwards any *contingency* dependent upon the exercise of will or anything else.

JOHNSON: All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it.

"Whereupon," says Boswell, "I did not push the subject any farther."

And, having said so much, we may, perhaps, be content to follow his example; but I cannot omit to set before my readers one gem of episcopal reasoning upon which I happened to light some time after the foregoing pages were in type. The Bishop of London, preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral on June 16, 1917, after alluding to the little child victims of the German air-raid which had taken place shortly before, is reported to have addressed his congregation as follows: "Don't slip into the idea that God is responsible for this war.....the one person you have no right to blame is God. God is not responsible. If man misuses his noblest gift, that of free will, don't blame God, who gave it to him"! Now, I am prepared to go with the Bishop at least to this extent—viz., that to say of an Omnipotent Deity that he is "responsible" for anything that takes place is manifestly absurd, because there is no one to whom he can be called upon to make answer, no one who can call him to account. The epithet, therefore, is entirely inappropriate. Nevertheless, if there is an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being from whom all things proceed, it is manifest that nothing that takes place can take place against his will, or, in other words, all that happens must happen in accordance with his will. The War, therefore, like all things else, must have been in accordance with his will; for, if he had willed otherwise, the War would not have taken place. But, says the Bishop, he did not will the War. He divested himself of part of his Omnipotence when he gave man "free will," and man is responsible for the War because he has "misused" his God-given free will! This appears to me to transcend the limits even of theological futility. An Omnipotent Being, we are asked to conceive, knowing exactly what the results would be, bestows "free will" upon his creature man, and "washes his hands," as it were, of the consequences! The First Cause

divests himself of Causation, because he creates secondary causes who act as he foresees they would act, and who cannot possibly do anything which he wills they should not do! By all means say that man was responsible for the War; but were it not wiser to leave "God" out of the account altogether, seeing that concerning "God"—whatever the meaning of that term may be, if, indeed, any definite meaning can be assigned to it, seeing that "to define is to limit"—we cannot possibly know anything whatever? (Of course, if it were a question only of a God of limited powers, we might reason somewhat differently; but the Bishop, I apprehend, is not a disciple of Mr. Wells and the "Pragmatists" in this "limited liability" conception of Deity.)

NOTE 1 TO CHAPTER IX

A writer in *The Nineteenth Century* has delivered himself of the following remarks concerning Free Will and Determinism: "There is involved here one problem, at present insoluble by man, which requires mention. It is the problem of free will. Into that mystery no attempt can be made to enter now. We may be content to base ourselves upon two evident facts. The first is that every man carries within himself an instinctive feeling that he has a certain power of choice. The second is that, unless this be assumed, the entire universe is reduced not only to an absurdity, but to a mockery, bitter and vast. For in that case it is for ever giving birth to cries and prayers and efforts which have no meaning. For if we are in truth mere machines, shaped and driven only by the twin forces of heredity and environment, then good and evil cease in any real sense to exist. The vilest miscreant becomes in essence the equal of the greatest saint. Hence we are compelled to assume, and we do assume, the presence in intelligent beings, here and elsewhere, of a power to follow the dictates either of their lower or of their higher natures according to choice—a choice which, however limited in extent, is yet the controlling factor of their moral retrogression or their moral advance."[1]

[1] See "If a Man Die, Shall He Live Again?", by Harold F. Wyatt, *The Nineteenth Century*, March, 1917, p. 618.

This appears to me such a distorted view of the question under consideration that I think it may be worth while to examine it with some particularity.

Let us take first this statement: "If we are in truth mere machines, shaped and driven by the twin forces of heredity and environment, then good and evil cease in any real sense to exist."

The writer speaks as though, according to the Determinist view, man is driven by these forces of "heredity and environment" like a scrap of paper on a windy day. But man is not something apart from heredity and environment; he is, as it were, an embodiment of these things, and inseparable from them. To say that a man's action is not necessarily *influenced* by his heredity and environment would be to make a statement which is manifestly absurd. But, admitting this, it is urged he has, nevertheless, "a certain power of choice." "A *certain* power"! What are we to infer from the qualifying epithet? Is it that, although we have a power of choice, it is but a limited power—that, in fact, we have a *limited* free will?[1] Such an idea, if carried out to its logical consequences, will be found to reduce the doctrine of Free Will to an absurdity. But I will not stress that point. I will dismiss the word "certain," which appears to be productive of so much uncertainty. We feel, it is said, that we have "a power of choice." Well, no Determinist denies the power of choice. To say that a man has "chosen" this or that course of action is but to say that he has consciously done this or that. The question is, What has determined his choice? Mr. Wyatt speaks of men as having "a power to follow the dictates either of their lower or of their higher natures." Man is, therefore, the subject of "dictates," and "dictates" which have their origin in his "nature"—*i.e.*, natural dictates. Well, then, surely his choice must be made in virtue of some bias in the one direction or the other?

[1] The writer, it will be observed, speaks of "a choice which, *however limited in extent*, is yet the controlling factor." This is tantamount to saying that the will is not *entirely* free!

The question of theft or murder, for example, cannot present itself in the same light to the "miscreant" as to the "saint." But if these things have an attraction for the "miscreant," but none for the "saint," how can we say that each of them has an identical "power of choice"? Must we not say that the choice in the case of the "miscreant" is determined by factors which do not exist in the case of the "saint"? But if, on the other hand, choice is really not determined, what conceivable reason is there why it should decide in favour either of "good" or "evil"? Does it not become a mere random selection? If A is chosen because it is good, and B rejected because it is bad, does not that mean that there are determining influences which decide our choice, and is that not an admission of the case for Determinism?

If the Determinist case be true, Mr. Wyatt apparently thinks that "good and evil cease in any real sense to exist." I am unable to follow him here. What does he mean by "good and evil"? We know nothing of absolute "good and evil." Human knowledge is of the relative only, and we know "good and evil" only with reference to humanity—that is, with reference to ourselves. So far as we know them, they are altogether human conceptions, and exist only with reference to a standard set up by ourselves. But if we admit Determinism, says Mr. Wyatt, "the vilest miscreant becomes in essence the equal of the greatest saint." What is meant by "in essence"? And what is meant by "equal"? It is far from being an illuminating statement, and it would have been well if the writer had condescended to be rather more explicit. Does he mean perchance that, if Determinism be admitted, we should have no more reason to respect the "saint" than the "miscreant"—no more reason to dislike the "miscreant" than the "saint"? Let us, then, consider his assertions in the light of that suggestion.

Why do we admire a beautiful landscape more than a sordid street; a sunset more than a muck-heap; a noble face rather than vulgar and distorted features; a bird of

Paradise rather than an octopus? It is not necessary to discuss the reason here. The fact remains that we do so. And, similarly, whether Free Will or Determinism be the true doctrine, the vast majority of mankind will continue to admire the "saint"—meaning by that term the truly good man, not a miserable fantastic of the "Saint" Simeon Stylites order—and to reprobate the miscreant.

But, it will be urged, when we are dealing with inanimate things, or with beautiful features, or with the lower animals, no moral conception is involved. It is different with the "saint" and the "miscreant." Let us, then, examine the case a little further.

Suppose the case of a man endowed by nature, by "heredity," and by "environment," with so fine a character that he has no inclination to do evil. Such a man is not affected by the "dictates" of a "lower nature" urging him to do wrong. He has, in reality, no "choice" to make; at least, he is conscious of no struggle between conflicting forces. Compare his case with that of a man less highly gifted who does right only after being conscious of a strong inclination to do wrong.

Ought we not to admire the man who, according to the free-will doctrine, has done right after a severe struggle with his "lower nature," rather than the "saint" who has been conscious of no effort at all? Even if we accept the free-will doctrine, therefore, it might be plausibly argued that the lower nature, in such cases, is more worthy of our respect than the higher. For what ethical merit is there in doing right when there is no inclination to do wrong? The greater the inclination to do wrong, the more praiseworthy the victory over the forces of evil in favour of the forces that make for good and right. The "saint," in this aspect of the case, takes his place with the beautiful landscape or the beautiful sunset. We admire him for what he *is*—for the beauty of his character, very much as we admire the beauties of Nature, or the beauties of Art, humbly recognizing that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," even though we may

not subscribe in its entirety to the poet's dictum: "That is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Mr. Wyatt speaks much of God as an "Infinite Power," as the Creator of the minds of men, and apparently of all things else. He conceives of "Him" —though, in truth, the ideas are beyond human conception—as "Omnipotence," and as absolutely good. Now, it is impossible to imagine that such a Deity has any inclination, or, as we should call it, any "temptation," whatever to do evil. He is and must be All Good, as an essential part of His Divine nature and existence. But why should we adore Him for His goodness if He could not be otherwise than good? Is it not because we adore "The Idea of Good"—that is, goodness *per se*, independently of any struggle between the forces of good and evil? To come back, then, to the "saint" and the "miscreant." Is it not, when we consider the matter a little below the surface, seen to be absurd to postulate "essential equality" between them because we say that their choice of action—it is not, of course, one choice, but a series of choices throughout life—has been determined for them by those forces which result from heredity and environment—that is, from *character*, together with external influences? The man of high character will always be recognized, not as "equal," but as superior to the man of low character, though it would be ridiculous to say that each has the same "power of choice," as between good and evil, just as it would be ridiculous to say that the "miscreant" has the same "power of choice" as the "saint." And once we admit that the "choice" is decided—nay, even that it is *influenced*—by determining factors we admit the Determinist case.[1]

[1] Professor Mackenzie writes (*Manual of Ethics*, 1904, p. 93): "A vicious man in a sense can, and in a sense cannot, do a good action. He cannot, in the sense that a good action does not issue from such a character as his. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. But he can do the action, in the sense that there is nothing to prevent him *except his character—i.e.*, except himself. Now, a man cannot stand outside of himself, and regard a defect in his own character as something by which his action is hindered. If he can *but for himself*, he *can* in the only sense that is required

NOTE 2 TO CHAPTER IX

I find it extremely difficult to understand the position of Sir Oliver Lodge on this matter of *animal* free will. At one time he writes: "Creatures far below the human level are irresponsible" (*op. cit.*, p. 128). Now the dog, I opine, is not, by comparison with other animals, correctly described as "far below the human level."[1] Therefore the dog, I presume, has free will according to Sir Oliver. Moreover, this scientist seems to have changed his opinion with regard to "creatures far below the human level," for he now tells us that even flies have free will! Hearken unto this: "Watch the orbits of a group of flies as they play; they are manifestly not controlled completely by mechanical laws as are the motions of the planets. The simplest view of their activity is that it is *self-determined*—that they are flying about at their own will and turning where they choose. .....Here we see free will in its simplest form" (*Raymond; or, Life and Death*, by Sir O. Lodge, p. 385). If, then, flies have free will—if their action is self-determined—we must, I apprehend, assume the same for at least the vast majority of, if not all, animals, including insects. An oyster, *e.g.*, exercises free will when he opens or

for morality. To be free means that one is determined by nothing but oneself." The argument here seems rather more rhetorical than logical. It is, of course, true that a man cannot actually "stand outside of himself," and it is quite true, also, that a man is a very fallible judge of his own actions. But others "stand outside of" him, and if they could know both his "character" (which gives the index of his power of resistance) and the strength of the forces acting upon him, they would be able to judge rightly of his action. "If he can, *but for himself*," says the Professor, "he *can* in the only sense that is required for morality." Be it so; but if he *can't*, because of himself, then, as a matter of fact, he *can't*. In this view, then, "morality" would appear to be based upon a non-existent possibility!

[1] If I am wrong in this, the adverb "far" seems to be superfluous. And if the flies, presently mentioned, can be said to have "free will," surely we must say the same of the dog!

shuts his shell! I should have thought it pretty obvious that the activity of the flies was determined by the forces acting on them, both external and internal; including, of course, such desires as they can feel—as desire for food, sexual desires, and other instinctive desires on which we can only speculate. But, again, if animals have free will, and can therefore act according to the weaker rather than the stronger motive, are they, too, "responsible"? And if not, why not? If they have free will, they must surely be "intelligent"! To further complicate matters, Sir Oliver quotes the following, apparently with approval, from Dr. Chalmers Mitchell's *Evolution and the War*: "The Bergsonian interpretation does nothing to make consciousness and freedom more intelligible; and by extending them from man, in whom we know them to exist [so far as "freedom" is concerned, this is mere assumption], to animals, in which their presence is at best an inference, it not only robs them of definiteness and reality, but it blurs the real distinction between men and animals, and evades the most difficult problem of science and philosophy. The facts are more truly represented by such phraseology as that animals are instinctive, man is intelligent; animals are irresponsible, man is responsible; animals automata, man is free." (Cited in *Raymond* at p. 333.) Now if Dr. Mitchell, by saying that animals are "automata," merely means that their action is the resultant of the forces (desires, &c.) which act upon them, we may readily accept the term. But if he means that the higher animals have no intelligence and no reasoning power—rudimentary though it be—he states a proposition which is in flagrant opposition to known facts, and, I venture to submit, unworthy of a scientist, and particularly of a naturalist of the present day. Further, if animals are to be styled "automata" because their action is the resultant of forces, why should we not apply the same term, in the same sense, to the animal called man? But if, as Sir Oliver Lodge holds, flies have free will, how can they be correctly styled "automata" and not "free"? The confusion seems to

become worse confounded as we proceed. Is not the truth just this: that both men and other animals act according to the strongest motive, and have no choice but to do so—*i.e.*, their choice is decided by that motive? If we suppose otherwise, we must postulate a continuing miracle.

NOTE 3 TO CHAPTER IX

Kant's supposed "Key." It may, perhaps, be thought that a chapter on the Problem of the Will ought not to conclude without some reference to Kant's supposed "key to resolve the contradiction" which appears to exist between "Determinism" and the belief in "moral responsibility." In this connection I extract the following from Schopenhauer's *Basis of Morality*[1]:—

"The strict and absolute necessity of the acts of Will, determined by motives as they arise, was first shown by Hobbes, then by Spinoza and Hume, and also by Dietrich von Holbach in his *Système de la Nature;* and lastly by Priestley it was completely and precisely demonstrated. This point, indeed, has been so clearly proved, and placed beyond all doubt, that it must be reckoned among the number of perfectly established truths, and only crass ignorance could continue to speak of freedom, of a *liberum arbitrium indifferentiæ* (a free and indifferent choice) in the individual acts of man. Nor did Kant, owing to the irrefutable reasoning of his predecessors, hesitate to consider the Will as fast bound in the chains of Necessity, the matter admitting, as he thought, of no further dispute or doubt."

Nevertheless, says Schopenhauer, "our actions are attended with a consciousness of independence and original initiative, which makes us recognize them as our own work, and every one, with ineradicable certainty, feels that he is the real author of his conduct, and morally

[1] Mr. A. B. Bullock's translation (Swan, Sonnenschein, and Co., 1903), p. 115.

responsible for it. But since responsibility implies the possibility of having acted otherwise, which possibility means freedom in some sort or manner; therefore in the consciousness of responsibility is indirectly involved also the consciousness of freedom."

Now, pausing here for a moment, the Determinist would say that this supposed "*consciousness* of independence and original initiative" and this supposed "ineradicable certainty" are but delusions of the mind, and he asks, as I have already asked, what is meant by "responsibility" here—responsibility for what and to whom? However, both Kant and Schopenhauer appear to have believed that there was a real contradiction between what they recognized as "the strict and absolute necessity of the acts of Will, determined by motives as they arise," and the "freedom in some sort or manner" implied in this supposed "responsibility." Whereupon says Schopenhauer:—

"The key to resolve the contradiction, that thus arises out of the nature of the case, was at last found by Kant through the distinction he drew, with profound acumen, between phenomena and the Thing in itself (*das Ding an sich*). This distinction is the very core of his whole philosophy, and its greatest merit."

What, then, is this wonderful "key" which unlocks the bars of this supposed contradiction? The explanation may be found in the eighth chapter of *The Basis of Morality* (Part II), to which I would refer the reader who may be interested to study this matter further. I need make only the following additional quotation:—

"As a man is, so he is bound to act. Hence, for a given person in every single case, there is absolutely only one way of acting possible: *Operari sequitur esse* (*i.e.*, his acts are a consequence of what he is). Freedom belongs only to the intelligible character, not to the empirical. The *operari* (conduct) of a given individual is necessarily determined externally by motives, internally by his character; therefore everything that he does necessarily takes place. But in his *esse* (*i.e.*, in what he is), *there* we find Freedom. He *might have been* something

different; and guilt or merit attaches to that which he is. All that he does follows from what he is, as a mere corollary. Through Kant's doctrine we are freed from the primary error of connecting Necessity with *esse* (what one is), and Freedom with *operari* (what one does): we become aware that this is a misplacement of terms, and that exactly the inverse arrangement is the true one..... But however strict be the necessity, whereby, in the individual, acts are elicited by motives, it yet never occurs to anybody—not even to him who is convinced of this necessity—to exonerate himself on that account, and cast the blame on the motives; for he knows well enough that, objectively considered, any given circumstance, and its causes, perfectly admitted quite a different, indeed, a directly opposite course of action; nay, that such a course would actually have taken place, *if only he had been a different person.* That he is precisely such a one as his conduct proclaims him to be, and no other—this it is for which he feels himself responsible; in his *esse* (what he is) lies the vulnerable place, where the sting of conscience penetrates. For conscience is nothing but acquaintance with one's own self—an acquaintance which arises out of one's actual mode of conduct, and which becomes ever more intimate. So that it is the *esse* (what one is) which in reality is accused by conscience, while the *operari* (what one does) supplies the incriminating evidence. Since we are only conscious of *Freedom* through the sense of *responsibility;* therefore where the latter lies the former must also be: in the *esse* (in one's being). It is the *operari* (what one does) that is subject to necessity."[1]

Now it must, I think, be admitted that this supposed elucidation of the postulated contradiction between Freedom and Necessity is by no means easy to follow. So far, indeed, as it lays stress upon the fact that a man may often find occasion to lament that "he is precisely such a one as his conduct proclaims him to be, and no

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 119, *et seq.* The italics in all these quotations are in the original.

other"—that he may be assailed by the most acute regret that he is what he is, and that, being what he is, he has done what he has done—the doctrine above set forth agrees with what I had already written before my attention had been called to Kant's pronouncements on this subject. But the proposition that a man is "responsible" for what he *is*, though not for what he *does*—that in his *esse*, *there* we find freedom—is surely one to which it is difficult for the reason to yield assent. If, indeed, a man be responsible for what he *does*, he may, and naturally would, after a certain period of life, become responsible for what he *is*. But how can he be said to be responsible for what he *is* while at the same time he is held to be not responsible for his actions? He might, surely, be as well held responsible for the configuration of his head, the size of his brain, or the shape of his chin! And again we ask, *How* "responsible" and *to whom?*

The supposed "Key" does not seem to fit the door, and we are left very much *in statu quo ante*.

Chapter X

MR. MALLOCK ON THE CO-EXISTENCE OF INCOMPATIBLE TRUTHS

One of the ablest of modern works dealing with the problems of Life and Religion is Mr. W. H. Mallock's *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*,[1] which has, I think, received less attention than it deserves. With the keen blade of remorseless logic, Mr. Mallock in his first ten chapters makes mincemeat of the arguments and conceptions of the current theology with regard to God, immortality, and free will. Religious apologists, whether of the old-fashioned sort or the Apologists of the "New Idealism," are scattered to the winds by his trenchant and acute reasoning. *Sufflavit et dissipati sunt.* He does not, indeed, attempt to give a definition of Religion, but he tells us that, as he makes use of the word, it involves the assent to three propositions "as statements of objective fact"; viz., (1) "that a living God exists who is worthy of our religious emotion, and is able to take account of it," (2) "that the will of man is free," and (3) "that his life does not cease with the dissolution of his physical organism."[2] He then proceeds to show that these propositions have no place in

[1] Chapman and Hall, 1903. [2] *Op cit.*, pp. 8, 9.

science, and more especially with regard to the doctrine of free will his arguments appear to me utterly destructive and unanswerable. Nevertheless, having battered these propositions "into smithereens" with the heavy artillery of science and logic, he proceeds in his three last chapters to set them up again "as statements of objective fact."

In the world of science they are false; in the world of religion they are true. In a word, they are true or false according to the point of view from which we regard them.

Now if this contention can be made good—to wit, that these three propositions, though false in the laboratory, are true in the oratory—Mr. Mallock will certainly have performed a remarkable feat of ratiocination. How, then, does he set about to make good his case?

He affirms that, "as perfectly reasonable beings, we may in certain cases believe (contradictories) to be not incompatible, though our reason can give us no hint as to how the two may be reconciled."[1] Nay, "owing to the constitution of our minds and the universe, unless we followed" this procedure of recognizing that contradictories are not necessarily incompatible, "no coherent thought would be possible." "I do not mean," he writes, "that a simultaneous assent to contradictories in most minds, or in many, takes place as a conscious process. I mean that it takes place by implication

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 219. Observe "not incompatible," though later on he speaks of the "co-existence of incompatible truths."

as a strictly logical consequence of thoughts and judgments which lie at the bottom of all our knowledge, and that a logical analysis sufficiently deep and careful is all that is wanted to bring it up to the surface."

The long and short of this is that it is not unreasonable—nay, it is absolutely necessary—that the human mind should, in certain cases, believe in the truth of contradictory propositions. And in order to establish this thesis Mr. Mallock proceeds to furnish us with certain examples which are supposed to prove it.

The first of these examples seems to me entirely unconvincing; indeed, the argument here appears singularly weak. Dealing with the "knowledge of God as the Christian religion reveals it to us," Mr. Mallock writes: "We need not inquire here whether this knowledge is true or false. All that concerns us is the mind's power of grasping it. Let us take it, then, in its simplest form—that in which a Christian mother is accustomed to impart it to her child. The child is taught that God is its Divine father, who loves all that is good in it, and hates all that is evil, and who has, moreover, created by his own paternal omnipotence not only the child itself, but the whole universe likewise. Now this teaching, whether it be truth or falsehood, presents to the child no internal difficulties whatsoever. On the contrary, the child assents to it with a quickness and a clearness that are proverbial. The absolute perfection, the absolute power, and the absolute love of God unite in its mind to form a most vivid and

coherent picture. This is a fact familiar to every nurse and mother in Christendom." He goes on to say that as the Christian children have grown into Christian men none of the vividness and coherency of this picture has been lost. "For seventeen hundred years, throughout the civilized world, the great masses of mankind—sinners and saints alike —have not only felt no difficulty in assenting to the Christian doctrine of God, but would have found considerable difficulty in assenting to any other."

"And yet," says Mr. Mallock, "it will require but little reflection to show us that this doctrine of God, which men not only grasp with such readiness, but also assimilate so completely that it affects the whole complexion of their lives, is a structure of contradictions which the mind cannot possibly reconcile," and he thereupon proceeds to demonstrate that this is so.

Now in what way can all this possibly help to establish the thesis that the human mind may reasonably believe two contradictory propositions? In the first place, I demur to Mr. Mallock's statement concerning the child. No doubt the child "assents" to all the religious and supernatural teaching which its mother imparts to it "with a quickness which is proverbial," just as it will assent to and, if so taught, accept as true the most impossible fairy stories. But that it assents to these supernatural ideas not only with "quickness," but with "clearness"—that it has anything in the nature of a clear and intelligent perception of the "*absolute* perfection, the *absolute* power, and the

absolute love of God "—is a statement which surely needs no refutation. The human mind can form no conception of the absolute, seeing that our knowledge is of the relative only. What idea, then, can the child have of it? The child is taught that "absolute" is an attribute of God, and it accepts the word and nothing more. The child thinks of God as a "big man"—a limited being, according to definition. For "to define is to limit."

And the man is really in much the same case. The man does not "*grasp*" this doctrine of God, so far as it is a doctrine of the absolute, and all Mr. Mallock's argument only illustrates the fact that of the absolute, the infinite, the unconditioned, the human mind can find no conception whatever. As to showing that we are called upon to believe in contradictory propositions, it appears to me to have no value whatsoever. Mr. Mallock, indeed, sees this, for he proceeds to anticipate the answer of the "Monist." "The Monist has a very natural answer. He will admit that it is true [I venture to doubt that he will do so, for the reasons above set forth]; but what, he will ask, is proved by it? Not that knowledge involves a contradiction in thought, but merely that false knowledge does."[1] Mr. Mallock, therefore, adduces an example from the Monistic philosophy itself. What, he asks, is the teaching of science—what is our belief—with regard to the ultimate constituents and consistency of matter?

"The Monist.....in the place of the Theist's God,

[1] This is an absurdity. There is no such thing as "false knowledge." If the supposed knowledge is false, it is not knowledge.

puts as the cause of the universe the substance of the universe itself. Now, of what, so far as our senses and our power of reasoning can tell us, does this substance consist? To this question science gives two different answers. One answer is that it consists of material bodies separated from each other by intervals of absolutely empty space. The other is that it consists of material bodies that are ponderable, separated from each other by ether—a material body that is not ponderable. The latter is the answer that is generally accepted to-day. We will, however, consider both....." And, says Mr. Mallock, "we shall find that, in reality, they are both equally unthinkable."[1]

Now I freely admit that we do find, when we try to pursue the analysis of these theories to their ultimate conclusions, that both of them are "unthinkable." How, for instance, can it be possible for the non-atomic continuous homogeneous ether to expand or contract? Mr. Mallock has little difficulty in showing that to the human mind it is "unthinkable" that it should do so. "If we are to regard the discovery of ether as freeing our minds from the nightmare of empty space and the unthinkable mystery of physical action at a distance, this ether must be absolutely continuous. Between no one part of it and any other must there be any intervals of nothingness. But if we admit it to be continuous, as we have probably every reason to do, we shall find that we have got rid of the mystery of physical

[1] Work cited, p. 244.

action at a distance only to make room for a system of expansion and contraction which is for the intellect more mysterious still."[1]

But to show that when we get to "ultimates" we get to the "unthinkable" is, really, not to show that we are bound to entertain, or, indeed, that we *can* entertain, contradictory propositions. It merely proves that we arrive at a certain point where the human mind can only say "I do not know." To say that there are things beyond human comprehension is not to say that we are to believe, or that we *can* believe, that a thing can both be and not be in the same sense at the same time. To affirm the latter proposition is a mere delirium of the mind. Granted that we are unable to understand the ultimate constitution of matter and of "the universe," it does not follow that we must believe in "contradictories." Such contradictory and mutually destructive beliefs are, in fact, impossible, and when Mr. Mallock conducts us to the "unthinkable" he does not impose upon us the necessity of professing belief in "two incompatible truths" (p. 283); he merely conducts us to the Agnostic position.

And so in the matter of Free Will, or Determinism. I may believe that the will is free, or I may believe that it is determined by the forces which operate upon it, or I may say that I do not know whether it be free or determined.

[1] *Ibid*, p. 229. Mr. Mallock's statement of scientific teaching with regard to the constitution of matter is naturally not quite up to date in a book published some sixteen years ago. But that does not affect the argument.

According to Mr. Mallock, however, I must hold both these beliefs simultaneously (viz., that the will is both free and determined) as incompatible truths, and to illustrate that proposition he furnishes us with the following example :—

"As the reader will recollect, when dealing with the question of the will, we not only saw that unless the will was free—unless it was more than the agent of the motives supplied by circumstance—no such thing as moral responsibility could exist; but we saw also that unless the contrary were true likewise, and unless, in the acts which we are accustomed to call moral, the will were conditioned by motives of a very specific kind, these acts would possess no moral quality whatsoever. If St. Anthony, for example, when accomplishing his resistances in the desert, had had none of the motives which we are accustomed to associate with sanctity, his resistance would have been morally meaningless, if not psychologically impossible. Accordingly, in the very heart of the moral idea itself we are confronted by this curious paradox—by these two incompatible truths—namely, that moral action, when considered at close quarters, and analytically, is, from its very nature, deficient in that free principle which, when we are considering any such action synthetically, we all of us recognize as the first and most indispensable condition of it. Few better illustrations can be found than this of the inveterate co-existence of contradictions in even the ideas which are practically most clear to us."[1]

[1] Work cited, p. 282.

This is a very subtle argument, and it is stated with all Mr. Mallock's habitual cleverness. But will it "hold water"? I submit not. I submit that the doctrine of Determinism, whether true or false, does not necessarily involve us in any "contradictions." With regard to the case of St. Anthony, the Determinist will say, assuming the truth of the legend, that being what he was, and in the circumstances in which he was placed, it was impossible for him to act otherwise than he did act. We will concede to Mr. Mallock that his will was "conditioned by motives of a very specific kind." So far, therefore, as such motives are indicative of the "moral quality" of his acts—and without them Mr. Mallock says they could possess "no moral quality whatsoever"—those acts may be said to be "moral." But, then, says Mr. Mallock, unless, on the other hand, the will is free, there can be no "moral responsibility." We might put this into syllogistic form, and say: "Unless the will be free there can be no moral responsibility; but there must be moral responsibility; therefore the will must be free." But, with all respect, I must take exception to the minor premiss here, if not also to the major. Mr. Mallock does not define "moral responsibility." Responsibility for what and to whom? He does not tell us this. I have endeavoured to deal with this matter in the preceding chapter, and I will not repeat my arguments here. It is sufficient to say that I can see no necessity that there *should* exist "such a thing as moral responsibility," in the sense in which the term is used by Mr. Mallock. Therefore I cannot

admit that the Determinist doctrine involves the belief in the "co-existence of contradictions," or must drive me into that mental insolvency which leads to the delirious assertion that two incompatible mutually-destructive propositions are both equally true.

If necessary, I will say: "I do not know; I cannot understand." But I must decline to commit myself to the wholly irrational assertion that a "thing can both be and not be in the same sense at the same time."

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? When we endeavour to deal with ultimate ideas we are inevitably brought to a point where human intelligence can go no further and the human mind recoils upon itself. The philosopher, metaphysician, man of science, however great his understanding, is brought to a standstill. "In all directions his investigations eventually bring him face to face with an insoluble enigma; and he ever more clearly perceives it to be an insoluble enigma. He learns at once the greatness and the littleness of the human intellect—its power in dealing with all that comes within the range of experience; its impotence in dealing with all that transcends experience. He realizes with a special vividness the utter incomprehensibleness of the simplest fact, considered in itself. He, more than any other, truly knows that in its ultimate essence nothing can be known."[1]

[1] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, 1887, p. 67.

But because in its ultimate essence nothing can be known, because "by the nature of our intelligence we are for ever debarred from forming any conception of the reality which lies behind appearance" (once more to quote Mr. Herbert Spencer),[1] are we, therefore, justified in saying that it is open to us to accept any wild hypothesis—to entertain any belief, however irrational, such as the co-existence of "incompatible truths"? That would, indeed, be an absurd *non-sequitur*. Moreover, we must remember that we can form an intelligent belief only so far as we can understand. We are, indeed, coerced into expressing our belief in an existence without beginning, and in the infinity of space, because the contrary of these propositions appears to be yet more inconceivable than their acceptance. But our belief in these inconceivabilities, so incomprehensible to us, can hardly be said to be an intelligent one. It is hardly rational to express belief in a proposition, and at the same time to admit that it is incomprehensible.

Mr. Mallock's attempt, therefore, in his three last chapters, to set up again the gods he had so ruthlessly overthrown in the preceding portion of his most able work appears to me to have failed.

[1] See the *Fortnightly*, June, 1895.

Chapter XI

"SOCIAL EVOLUTION"

A Study in Pseudo-Science.

The ordinary man who goes to church or chapel on Sunday, and holds more or less orthodox religious beliefs, though he knows little or nothing about science, is vaguely conscious that there *is* a conflict between Science and Religion in the sense which I have already indicated.[1] He knows that, as a rule, men of science repudiate the commonly-received beliefs concerning the supernatural as incompatible with truth. When, therefore, a book appears which invokes the aid of science not to attack, but to fortify, the religious position, it naturally appeals to no small section of the community. Such a book is Mr. Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution*, published in 1894. Using the terms of science, and professing to be a scientific work, it claims to demonstrate that all human progress is dependent upon the "ultra-rational" sanctions of religion. It teaches also with an air of authority, "and not as the Scribes"; and, if we may trust the author, he has been endowed

[1] See Chapter III. [This chapter was first published many years before Mr. Kidd's death. I note that that able writer Mr. McCabe speaks of "the *pseudo-scientific* argument" adduced by Mr. Kidd "on behalf of religion" (*The Bible in Europe*, Watts & Co., 1907, p. 12; and see note at p. 13).]

with a gift of penetration which has enabled him to see points and arguments of the utmost importance which had entirely escaped the notice of all philosophers before him. Here was a book after the *Spectator's* own heart! Here was a scientific work that the religious newspapers not only might patronize with safety, but which they naturally thought it their duty to commend. The shallow sceptic of science should be hoist with his own petard!

Yet this work, though written with great cleverness and containing much that may give food for thoughtful reflection, belongs nevertheless, in my humble judgment, not to science, but to that pseudo-science of which Professor Huxley was so often wont to speak, and against which he directed some of the sharpest arrows of his penetrating logic.[1] It must, I apprehend, be ranked with such books as the late Professor Drummond's *Ascent of Man* and *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, which, posing as scientific works, were hailed with such a chorus of joy by believers who had neither the ability nor the desire to see that they were but Fallacy masquerading as Philosophy.[2]

Mr. Kidd's argument may be briefly stated Human progress, he tells us, is, like all progress in the animal and vegetable world, dependent upon

[1] See his essays on "Science and Pseudo-Science" and "Scientific and Pseudo-Scientific Realism."

[2] The reader may profitably consult Mr. J. M. Robertson's essay, "Dogma in Masquerade," in his *Studies in Religious Fallacy*.

the stress of competition. "Progress everywhere from the beginning of life has been effected in the same way, and it is possible in no other way. It is the result of selection and rejection." Human society is governed by the law of "the survival of the fittest." Mr. Kidd quotes the words of Professor Flower: "Progress has been due to the opportunity of those individuals who are a little superior in some respects to their fellows of asserting their superiority and of continuing to live, and of promulgating as an inheritance that superiority"; and he adds: "The recognition of this law must be the first step towards any true science of society. .....Where there is progress there must be selection, and selection must in turn involve competition of some kind."

The writer goes on to point out that this law of progress is inevitable. We cannot escape from it. "From time to time we find the question discussed by many who only imperfectly understand the conditions to which life is subject, as to whether progress is worth the price paid for it. *But we have really no choice in the matter.* Progress is a necessity from which there is simply no escape, and from which there has never been any escape since the beginning of life" (p. 37). Again (p. 43): "As we watch man's advance in society the conviction slowly forces itself upon us that the conflict which has been waged from the beginning of life has not been suspended in his case, but that it has projected itself into the new era. Nay, more, all the evidence would seem to suggest that he remains

as powerless to escape from it as the lowliest organism in the scale of life." And again (p. 56): "But it is not until we come to draw aside the veil from our civilization, and watch what is taking place within our borders between the individuals and classes comprising it, that we begin to realize with some degree of clearness the nature of this rivalry which compels us to make progress whether we will or not, its tendency to develop in intensity rather than to disappear, and our own *powerlessness either to stay its course or to escape its influence.*" And the same doctrine of the powerlessness of the race to escape from "these strenuous conditions of rivalry" is further preached at pp. 62 and 63.[1]

The author then goes on to argue that there is "no rational sanction for progress." Reason would teach men to put an end to these cruel conditions of progress, to abolish competition, "to suspend the onerous rivalry of individuals which presses so severely on all." But, we naturally ask here, admitting for the sake of argument that this is so, what is the use of discussing it "if we have really no choice in the matter"—if we are powerless to escape from competition, "either to stay its course or to escape its influence"? But now we are suddenly told, in contradiction of what has been so strongly insisted upon before, that we are *not* powerless after all; on the contrary, man's reason, we are now informed, could suspend the conditions

[1] I quote from the 1895 edition; twelfth thousand.

of progress, and it is put forward as a most remarkable thing that man's reason has, nevertheless, refrained from interfering. "Strange to say, however, man's reason, which has apparently given him power to suspend the onerous conditions to which he is subject, has never produced their suspension. His development has continued with unabated pace throughout history, and it is in full progress under our eyes" (p. 107).

But why, we ask, should human reason interfere to suspend the conditions of human progress, granted (for the sake of argument, and in spite of previous assertion of "man's powerlessness") that it has the power to do so? The answer, as indeed appears from what has been already said, is, according to our author, that it is contrary to the interests of the great majority of individuals to submit themselves to the hard and distressing *régime* of rivalry and competition. Evolution makes indeed for human progress, but it does not make for human happiness, in the present at least. "The possession of reason must, it would seem, involve the opportunity of escape from the conditions mentioned. The evidence would, however, appear to point indubitably to the conclusion that these conditions can have had no sanction from reason for the mass of individuals subjected to them. It may be held that they are conditions essential to progress, and that the future interests of the society to which we belong, and even of the race, would inevitably suffer if they were suspended. But this is not an argument to weigh with the individual who is concerned with his own

interests in the present and not with the possible interests in the future of society or the race" (p. 71). We are thus brought face to face with the central fact with which we are confronted in our progressive societies, and which is thus stated with all the dignity of italics: "*The interests of the social organism and those of the individuals comprising it at any particular time are actually antagonistic; they can never be reconciled, they are inherently and essentially irreconcilable.*"

Now let us examine this so-called "central fact," which I believe to be nothing more than a portentous fallacy. If for "the social organism" in the above proposition we substitute the word "society," the statement made is evidently fallacious, for, society being but an aggregate of individuals, the interests of society cannot be antagonistic to the interests of the individuals composing it. If $A = a + b + c + d$, etc., the interests of a, b, c, d, etc., cannot be antagonistic to the interests of A. Aye, but the writer does not employ the word "society." He says "social organism." He has regard, not to the interests of the individuals composing a society at the present time, but to the interests of the individuals who will compose it in the future, regarding a society as having corporate succession. He is contrasting the interests of the former with the interests of the latter, and he says that these contrasted interests are "inherently and essentially irreconcilable." But is this proposition true? I believe it to contain but a minimum of truth, and that it is absurd to state it as a law of universal

application. The utmost that we are entitled to say is that the interests of *some* of the individuals composing a society to-day may be *at times* antagonistic to the interests of some unknown and unborn individuals who will be members of the society in the future.

I will examine this statement further presently, but let us now restate the argument as it is presented to us by Mr. Kidd. It runs thus: Human progress is impossible except under the stern conditions of rivalry and competition, but it is contrary to the interests of the mass of individuals composing a society to subject themselves to those conditions. Moreover, it is open to those individuals, by the exercise of human reason, to suspend the operation of those conditions, and to emancipate themselves from the stress and suffering which is the inevitable result of evolutionary progress.

Then arises the question, Why do they not put an end to those onerous conditions, seeing that they have the power to do so? "If the interests of the progressive society as a whole, and those of the individuals at any time comprising it, are innately irreconcilable, it is evident that there can never be, for the individuals in those societies, any universal rational sanction for the conditions of existence necessarily[1] prevailing" (p. 85). Reason, therefore, dictates the suppression and determination of those conditions which individual man sees to be contrary

[1] But why "necessarily" if they may be put an end to? Perhaps the writer means necessarily for progress.

to his own interests (although necessary to the progress of society), and reason is competent to effect this change. Why, then, does Reason stay her hand? Why do individuals refrain from acting according to reason and as their own interests dictate? This brings us to the point whereunto all this elaborate argument has been leading. The answer is that religion is more powerful than reason. Religion appears as the saviour of society at the expense of reason. "*A religion is a form of belief, providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic*"—*i.e.*, whereas reason would lead men to consider their own interests, regardless of the interests of those who are to come after them, religion provides an *ultra-rational sanction* which induces them nobly to sacrifice their own interests to the interests of posterity.

No wonder the supernaturalists were in ecstasies! So far from Religion being opposed to the doctrines of evolution, she is herself, as it now appears, the sole support of evolutionary progress, in spite of all the forces of human reason! This is, indeed, science which bishops and archbishops may applaud. *O si sic omnia dixisset!*

But, methinks, on further consideration, the joys of the religious devotee may be somewhat tempered. Observe, in the first place, that Mr. Kidd's specific is not limited to any particular form of religion. Any religion, it would seem, will do if only it satisfy the definition above mentioned—viz., "a

religion is a form of belief, providing an ultra-rational sanction, etc.," for that is "our definition of a religion in the sense in which alone science is concerned with religion as a social phenomenon." It matters not, therefore, whether it be Roman Catholicism, Church-of-Englandism, Nonconformity, Unitarianism, or any other form of Christianity—nay, since human progress had made way long before the Christian era, and still continues under non-Christian religions, Mr. Kidd is, of course, obliged to admit that these religions also were, and still are, sufficient to provide the "ultra-rational sanction" which he postulates. It comes to this, then: there must be *some* belief in the "ultra-rational"; but free thought is subversive of society and the enemy of human progress! *Hostis humani generis!*[1]

It will be noticed that Mr. Kidd recognizes a very real conflict between science and religion—or, at any rate (which is the same thing), between reason and religion. Reason, according to him, dictates one line of conduct to man, while religion (ultra-rational) dictates to him an entirely different course, for which his reason can provide no sanction. Man is to be commended because he turns his back upon reason and follows the ultra-rational behests of his

[1] "It is the supernatural agents, the deities, spirits, ghosts, with which primitive man peoples the air, water, rocks, trees, his dwellings, and his implements, which everywhere provide the ultimate sanction used to enforce conduct which has a social significance of the kind in question. Whatever qualities these agents may be supposed to possess or to lack, one attribute they always have—they are invariably *supernatural*" (p. 117).

religious belief. Man, therefore, has "no reason" to act as he does (or as he is supposed to act) in this matter. "Farewell, a long farewell, to all my reason," would seem to represent his proper state of mind where religious belief is concerned. For, as Mr. Kidd informs us, "the universal instinct of mankind has recognized that the essential element in a religion is that its doctrines should be inaccessible to reason."[1]

Really, I think we might be content to leave those who find delight in "science" (save the mark!) of this description to flounder in their own irrational quagmires. When we are asked to cast reason to the winds and to follow the "ultra-rational" (which here appears to be synonymous with the irrational), for no other "reason" than that it is, or pretends to be, ultra-rational—that is to say, for no reason at all—we may well begin to think that we have listened long enough to the cackle of pseudo-science, and that it is time to return to the paths of common sense.

But, it may be said, the writer is merely stating a fact—viz., that it is only these religious beliefs (think of them what you will) that prevent men from following their own interests to the destruction of human progress, and to the ruin of the "social organism."

Let us, then, examine his propositions a little further. We have to satisfy ourselves on two

[1] P. 125, note. "A religion," says Mr. Kidd, "makes its way not by argument or by the rational sanctions which it offers"—which certainly is very true.

points. Is it true that the interests of living members of a society are antagonistic to the interests of those who are to come after them? And if this be proved, is it true that only to religious beliefs do we owe it that men do not follow their own interests rather than the interests of generations yet unborn?

I have already said that, in my belief, the first of these propositions is altogether fallacious. I have searched in vain through Mr. Kidd's book for any proof of it. I ask myself in what are my own interests antagonistic to the interests of posterity? What temptations have I to do things which will be prejudicial to the interests of the coming race, but which my own individual interests would dictate? I find no answer to these questions; nor does Mr. Kidd supply me with one. He assumes throughout, though he is very far from proving, that the interests of the individual are always and necessarily at variance with the interests of future members of the community; he assumes, but he does not prove, that past members of society always subordinated their own interests to ours—the men of the present day—that their religious beliefs taught them to do this, and that such action is necessary for evolutionary progress. All this is mere assumption. I assert, on the contrary, that if I act as my own interests (my real and highest interests) dictate, I am at the same time acting in the interest of posterity. Mr. Kidd, moreover, seems to wander away from his main proposition. What he has to prove, in order to make his

argument good, is that the individuals forming a society could, by the exercise of human reason, put an end to those conditions of rivalry and competition which, he says, are necessary for human progress; that it would be to their interest so to do, and that they are restrained from so acting only by their religious beliefs. I see no tittle of proof offered for these statements. Mr. Kidd passes away to consider the duty of restraint and self-denial which should guide an individual in his social action; but he nowhere shows that the mass of individuals in a society could, if they chose, emancipate themselves from the hard conditions of evolutionary progress; still less does he show that "the ultra-rational sanction" of religious belief is the restraining factor which saves the situation. For myself, I believe that he is probably right when, in his earlier pages, he tells us that man is powerless to escape from these conditions, whether he will or no. And when he comes to discuss Socialism he appears to be of that same opinion still. "True Socialism," he writes, "has always one definite object in view, up to which all its proposals directly or indirectly lead. This is the final suspension of that personal struggle for existence which has been waged, not only from the beginning of society, but, in one form or another, from the beginning of life." Socialists, then, we may remark in passing, are not restrained by any religious belief from advocating a course which, according to the writer's contention, would be fatal to human progress. But *could* they secure their

aim if they were permitted to carry their ideas into operation? *Could* they put an end to the struggle for existence? That is, I take it, extremely doubtful; among other reasons because, as Mr. Kidd observes, "at the outset, underneath all Socialist ideals, there yawns the problem of population." But if men could not, if they would, put an end to the conditions under which evolution now works, it is evident that it is not religious belief which restrains them from so doing.

The mention of the population question, however, reminds me that Mr. Kidd does at least give one instance of what he apparently considers a case where the interests of the individuals in being conflict with the interests of individuals yet unborn. He alludes to the stationary population of France, and to the voluntary limitation of the family practised, as we are told, in that country. Here, he says, "we have only one of the simplest instances of that enlightened selfishness in the individual which must always lead him to rank his own interests, or those of his immediate belongings, in the actual present, before the wider and entirely different interests of the longer-lived social organism to which he belongs," and he quotes with approval Monsieur P. Leroy-Beaulieu, who associates the fact with a lessening of religious belief on the part of the people.

Let us examine this. Mr. Kidd apparently is of opinion that any attempt by individuals, by whatever means, to keep down the increase of population must be prejudicial to society and disastrous to the

interests of generations yet unborn. "Increase and multiply," says religion, and that is the formula which he would have us adopt. No consideration as to whether we can adequately provide for our children, no consideration as to the health and strength of the mother who bears them, is to be allowed to prevail. Religion and science here, according to Mr. Kidd, go hand in hand, for science agrees with religion that to keep down population is fatal to the interests of the social organism.

How strange that a well-known writer on this question, himself a clergyman of the Church of England, whose work has made the term "Malthusian" familiar in our ears as household words, should have applied all his power of reasoning to warn us that the danger to society would arise from exactly the opposite state of things—namely, from over-population. But over-population has no terrors for Mr. Kidd. Nay, he very solemnly warns us of the "heavy doom" (the expression, he says, is Mr. Galton's) of any sub-section of a prolific people which multiplies less rapidly than the rest of the community. He quotes an instance imagined by Mr. Galton of two young men, M and N, of whom M marries at the age of twenty-two, as also do his descendants, while N and his descendants put off marriage till the age of thirty-three. Then, having made a few more suppositions and calculations, Mr. Galton ultimately arrives at this appalling result, which Mr. Kidd puts into italics, in order, doubtless, to emphasize the terrible warning conveyed to

us: "*In two centuries the progeny of M will be more than six times, and in three centuries more than fifteen times, as numerous as those of N.*" But I ask why, in the name of all that is reasonable, should this be represented as a "heavy doom" for N and his more limited progeny? Why should a man desire to have many descendants? Is this brief struggle of life, this journey to the darkness of the tomb, a thing so much to be coveted that it is the duty of man to bring as many children into the world as he possibly can? I repudiate the suggestion as one utterly devoid of any rational sanction; and, as for any "ultra-rational sanction," if any man tells me in the name of religion that it is the duty of a married man to beget children regardless of the considerations to which I have alluded, I can only say that here is but another of those immoral and pernicious doctrines of man-made religion (so-called) which I feel it my duty to oppose to the utmost of my power; for sure I am that the real selfishness lies (speaking generally, of course), not with those who would limit the number of their offspring according to their means, and having regard to the health and happiness of the mother, but rather with such as refuse to give heed to any such restraining and prudential considerations.[1]

[1] I would earnestly recommend to the reader a judgment delivered in 1888 by the late Mr. Justice Windeyer, a well-known and much-respected judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, on Mrs. Besant's pamphlet, *The Law of Population*. This judgment was published by the Freethought Publishing Company under the title, *Is Limitation of the Family Immoral?* I do not know whether to admire it most for its courage or its lucidity.

As to France, it is always assumed that it is a terrible misfortune for her that she has a declining or stationary population. Is it certain that this is a correct view? Of course, if it be essential to the happiness of a people that they should be able to send huge armies to fight against other nations, it is necessary that the population should not decrease;[1] but even so, we must remember that good soldiers are not to be found in the crowded slums of great cities. The miserable, degenerate, diminutive, narrow-chested product of the town is scarcely of such stuff as conquerors are made of. No, truly, if the happiness of the people is to be the object of our care, I apprehend that it is over-population which we have more especially to dread. Mr. Kidd prates of "the perversion of the parental feelings among the most brilliant and able race among the European peoples, and the consequent [assumed] failure of that race to maintain its place among others in the evolution which is proceeding under our eyes in the civilization in which we are living." And in what does that alleged perversion of parental feelings consist? By what is it evidenced? Mr. Kidd informs us (in Appendix iii) through the mouth of M. Leroy-Beaulieu. Hearken unto this: "In the case of a family consisting of one or two children *the excessive tenderness of the parents, their perpetual fears of misfortune happening to their offspring*, and the manner in which the latter are frequently indulged, have the effect of depriving the

[1] The "Huns" have now shown us that this is a necessity indeed, until the demon of militarism shall be destroyed (1918).

male children of any spirit of boldness and enterprise and of any power of endurance." This is an instance of the manner in which the spirit of militarism affects the minds of men. It is startling, but characteristic of that spirit, to be told that the excessive tenderness of parents and their fears of misfortune happening to their offspring are evidence of "the perversion of parental feelings." I should rather have supposed that such a statement was evidence of the perversion of feeling on the part of the writer. I may add that it is the spirit of militarism which appears to inspire M. Leroy-Beaulieu throughout; for after observing, sensibly enough, that "it cannot be said that this falling off in the number of births, if it only brings in its train a smaller increase and not a diminution of the population in the old countries, is an actual misfortune, for the human race cannot go on indefinitely increasing on a planet which itself does not increase," he continues: "But in the present condition of the world, now that so many lands are insufficiently populated, and *that nations have established a forced military service and are ready at any moment to declare war one with the other*, this reduction of births, particularly when it manifests itself in a country like France, for example, must certainly be regarded as a relative misfortune." One function of "social evolution," then, is to provide soldiers for the gigantic armies of modern times. Perhaps, when (if ever) an era of peace shall be established in the world, the social-evolutionary scientist will see matters in a different light.

But there is no end to the criticism to which Mr. Kidd lays himself open. Like many another writer whose object is to under-pin tottering religious fabrics, he is prone to ascribe all the improvement of our manners and customs to the effect of religious beliefs instead of to the gradual and independent progress of our thought and our civilization. According to him, the "fund of altruistic feeling with which our civilization has become equipped" has nothing at all to do with our intellectual and thoughtful development. It requires an "ultra-rational sanction." "This altruistic development and the deepening and softening of character which has accompanied it [which, by the way, is a perversion of feeling when manifested in French parents!] are the direct and peculiar product of the religious system on which our civilization is founded." He would even, as it appears, regard modern feeling in favour of kindness to animals as a product of that system. This is an egregious perversion of facts and history.[1] "Religious systems" gave us wars, hatreds, persecutions, burnings, the Inquisition, *et hoc genus omne*. They did nothing whatever to inculcate kindness for animals.[2] As a fact, and as I have before pointed out, animals are worst treated in those countries where unquestioning faith in religious dogmas is one of the chief characteristics of the people. It is the thinker, not the priest, who has taught us our duty in this matter.[3]

[1] See chap. xiii.

[2] I speak of Christian (so-called) religious systems. Buddhism and Mohammedanism *did* do something for the poor animals.

[3] As a fact, advancing thought has profoundly modified religious

Marvellous, indeed, are the works of this religion-born altruism, as Mr. Kidd conceives of it. According to him, "the power-holding classes" in this country (and I suppose in other countries also) are at the present time engaged in "enfranchising, educating, and raising the lower masses of the people," as the effect of purely altruistic feeling, though "they would know perfectly well, as they have always done in the past, 'how to keep the people in their places'" if they desired to do so (p. 232). Others might think that the fear of popular risings and tumults had something to do with the "enfranchising" of the people, and that when they obtained votes they also obtained power to make their voices heard in other matters. Others might think, too, that wise men might desire to see the people educated from motives not entirely altruistic. But such low views are not for Mr. Kidd. Religious belief gave us the blessing of altruistic peers and altruistic power-holding classes generally, for which let us go down on our knees and thank the particular deity that we may happen to adore. Mr. Kidd on religion-born altruism appears to me almost to reach the very nadir of absurdity.

On one point, however, I am disposed to agree with Mr. Kidd. He says that our evolution is not primarily intellectual, and I think it may be admitted that the human intellect of the present is not superior in capacity to the human intellect of the past. We produce no greater intellects to-day than were produced in the times of Plato and Aristotle. Nay, Mr.

beliefs. Each new discovery of science may be said to lead to a modification of such beliefs.

Kidd informs us that "one of the most marked and characteristic features of the evolutionary process which has been in progress in our Western civilization appears to be its tendency to restrain intellectual development"; and as he tells us very emphatically that "religious influences" do not derive their strength from the support given to them by the intellect, but, on the contrary, that the intellect would prescribe a totally different course of conduct to that dictated by religion, we may well believe his prophetic announcement that such influences must continue to be in the ascendant to the end, which, indeed, he states as "a first principle of our social development." Religion being altogether at variance with the intellect, and intellectual development being restrained, religion is no doubt likely to flourish. "The process at work in society," says Mr. Kidd, "is evolving religious character as a first product, and intellectual capacity only so far as it can be associated with this quality." How far that is—how much intellect is compatible with religion—Mr. Kidd omits to inform us; but we know that, as a rule, the two ingredients do not seem to get on very well together unless the intellect be kept in a strictly subordinate position. We must, therefore, reconcile ourselves to the reflection that the religious men (so-called) are always destined to greatly outnumber the intellectual men, and if we find ourselves in the minority we must endeavour to bear it, if not with Christian at any rate with philosophic fortitude.

NOTE TO CHAPTER XI

When I speak of "religion" I mean, of course, those popular beliefs in the supernatural which are usually included in that term. Mr. Kidd has cited fifteen definitions or descriptions of the word from Seneca, Kant, Ruskin (who speaks only, and that sarcastically, of "our national religion"), Matthew Arnold, Comte, Alexander Bain, Edward Caird, Hegel, Huxley, Froude, Mill, Gruppe, Carlyle, Dr. Martineau, and the author of *Natural Religion*. As we have seen, he gives a definition himself—viz., "A religion is a form of belief providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing." Compare with this rigmarole Matthew Arnold's characteristic definition of religion as "morality touched with emotion"—a delightful definition, but one which I think we can scarcely accept as final. No doubt emotion enters strongly into religion; but, as usually understood, religion is something distinct from morality. Religion, surely, in its primary sense supposes some theory of, and belief in, the supernatural, and we constantly find extremely religious people—men and women of undoubting faith, and most particular in religious observances—who are at the same time extremely immoral. We may go if we like to Spain or Italy or South America for our examples; but we can, undoubtedly, find a sufficient number much nearer home. In a secondary sense we talk of religion where we mean only veneration "touched by emotion," as in that beautiful passage where Lord Byron brings before our eyes an unsurpassed picture of the Coliseum under the soft light of an Italian moon:—

> Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
> And making that which was not, till the place
> Became *religion*, and the heart ran o'er
> With silent worship of the great of old.

This sort of religious feeling the Agnostic may have as strongly as (and often he has it far more strongly than) the most unquestioning believer in inconceivabilities; but, inasmuch as he has no theory of the deity and the supernatural (things concerning which he humbly conceives he can have no knowledge or understanding), he can hardly be said to have any "religion" in the primary sense of the word. Yet perhaps he may be well content with such religion as he may be said to possess. "Reverence and love for the ethical idea and the desire to realize that ideal in life" (Huxley's definition) may certainly be his. Reverence and love for truth and justice may certainly be his. Pity and compassion and the love of "all things both great and small" may certainly be his. He may feel, and deeply feel, all those emotions which poets so truly associate with the "Soft hour which wakes the wish and melts the heart," the hour which thrills with love the pilgrim's breast:—

> Se ode squilla di lontano
> Che paia 'l giorno pianger che si muore.

All the religion of "Nature-worship"—the worship of all that is loveliest in land, or sea, or sky, is open to him; and though he knows that he cannot penetrate behind the veil, perhaps his very recognition of the limits which must inevitably confine his human understanding may make him approach the vague, obscure, and awful thought of a possible, inexplicable explanation (if I may so speak) of the great mystery of the universe—for ever beyond all human ken—in a spirit as truly religious as that which impels the Spanish peasant woman to supplicate upon her knees, and to bargain with votive offerings, for some temporal favour from a tawdry image of the Virgin Mother of God.

Chapter XII

AN OBJECT-LESSON[1]

Not many years ago we had a very instructive object-lesson in the conflict between Science and Religion. Dr. St. George Mivart published, in the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century* for January, 1900, two articles, entitled respectively "Some Recent Catholic Apologists" and "The Continuity of Catholicism," which caused no little flutter in the dovecots of the Vatican. It must be remembered that Dr. Mivart was not only a distinguished man of science, but was himself a member of the Roman Catholic community.

Dr. Mivart had found that there was a large number of persons who were not unnaturally "scandalized by the Catholic doctrine about hell and damnation—as commonly understood." He therefore wrote an article in the *Nineteenth Century* (December, 1892; see also February and April, 1893), under the title "Happiness in Hell." What ensued may be told in his own words: "In the interests of Catholicity I did my best to show that its doctrines on this subject readily admitted of so complete a

[1] The story of Dr. Mivart's conflict with the Catholic Church is now ancient history, but it is so instructive and illuminating as "an object-lesson" in the conflict between science and religion that I do not hesitate to retain this chapter. (Note to second edition.)

transformation that they no longer need distress men of ordinary good feeling. This well-meant endeavour did not, however, meet with approval at Rome, for my articles were placed upon the *Index*. As I was called upon to make no retractation, and as not a single position put forward by me was condemned, I thought it well, out of respect for Leo XIII, and for other reasons, to submit to the decree, and I submitted. I did not, however, withdraw or renounce any one of the opinions I had maintained, and certainly I do not withdraw them now. I still regard the representations as to hell which have been commonly promulgated, in sermons and meditations, as so horrible and revolting that a deity capable of instituting such a place of torment would be a bad God, and, therefore, in the words of the late Dr. W. G. Ward, a God 'we should be under the indefeasible obligation of disobeying, defying, and abhorring.'" Dr. Mivart then tells us in a note that, his article having been freshly placed on the *Index* in a new edition of that publication, he wrote to Cardinal Steinhuber, S.J. (Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the *Index*), to say that if he did not receive answers to certain questions he should feel compelled to withdraw his submission. He adds: "The reply I received did not answer those questions, and my submission is withdrawn accordingly." As a result Dr. Mivart was inhibited from approaching the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. But before proceeding to that part of this very instructive story let us glance at some of the opinions expressed and statements made

by the biologist who had thus audaciously, and, as might have been expected, quite vainly, attempted to reconcile science and Catholicism.

In the first place, I would call attention to Dr. Mivart's honest and outspoken remarks in the *Fortnightly* article upon the story of Galileo, to which I have made allusion in an earlier chapter. "Some recent Catholic apologists" have, as he points out, very disingenuously, not to say dishonestly, attempted to pervert history in this matter. One of these is a *Quarterly Reviewer* (January, 1899), who observed that, Galileo's discovery having proved undeniable, while theologians maintained it was against Scripture, an *impasse* was thus produced. But that, said he, is now got rid of, because "more recent theological analysis has pointed out that, in the case of a divine communication in writing to fallible and changeable man, the reasoning of Galileo's critics was inadequate." Whereupon Mr. Mivart writes: "This is an untrue representation. It was not 'theological analysis,' but the progress of physical science, which forced ecclesiastical authorities, willy-nilly, to retreat; to practically own themselves beaten, and to make tardy—disgracefully tardy—concessions. This misstatement, however, is a comparatively trifling matter. Much more serious is what has been written by another Catholic apologist, Mr. Wilfrid Ward. He has not scrupled to affirm that 'Galileo was condemned for applying his theory to the detailed interpretation of Scripture, which he ought to have left to the theologian. It was for this intrusion on the theo-

logical domain that his position was condemned, although Copernicanism had already been tolerated as a scientific hypothesis.'"

Dr. Mivart, I rejoice to say, characterizes this mean perversion of the truth as it deserves. He calls it, in good, honest, downright language, an "abominable falsehood, which has been again and again refuted." He thus continues: "Now Galileo's writings found their place on the *Index*, along with other works favouring Copernicanism, in the year 1616. Then it was that the Sacred Congregation made a solemn decree about *that false and Pythagorean doctrine, altogether opposed to Divine Scripture, on the mobility of the earth and the immobility of the sun.* But there is much more than this to show what was the true reason and motive of the condemnation of Copernicanism. Galileo was condemned in 1633, not for applying his theory to the interpretation of Scripture, but because, after Copernicanism had been condemned, and in defiance of an order from the Pope and the Holy Office that he was not to hold, defend, or teach the theory in any manner, he had published his *Dialogue*, a scientific treatise in which he represented Copernicanism as a probably true theory. In the sentence pronounced on Galileo by the Inquisition we read: 'Invoking the most holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and that of His most glorious Mother Mary, ever Virgin, by this our definite sentence, we say, pronounce, judge, and declare, that you, the said Galileo, *on account of the things proved against you* by documentary evidence, and which have been confessed

by you as aforesaid, *have rendered yourself* to this Holy Office *vehemently suspected of heresy—that is, of having believed and held a doctrine* which is false and contrary to the sacred and divine Scriptures—*to wit, that the sun is the centre of the world, and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth moves and is not the centre of the universe.*'" This, the true cause of his condemnation, is also very clearly expressed by Galileo himself in his enforced abjuration: "Because after this Holy Office had juridically enjoined me to abandon altogether the false opinion which holds that the sun is the centre of the world and immovable, and that the earth is not the centre and moves, and had forbidden me to hold and defend or teach in any manner the said false doctrine, and after it had been notified to me that the said doctrine is repugnant to Holy Scripture, I wrote and caused to be printed a book," etc.

"The condemnation of Galileo by the Inquisition," writes Dr. Mivart, "was consequent on eight heads of accusation which had been drawn up against him in 1632. Now there is not one of them which refers in the very faintest way to Scripture interpretation. As to *that*, it was not Galileo, but his judges, who went wrong, and they did so doubly. Ecclesiastical authority gave judgment as to physical science, and so went *ultra vires*. But it did much more than that; it founded its erroneous decree affecting physical science, which was *not* its own province, upon an erroneous judgment about the meaning of Scripture, which, up till that time, had been univer-

sally supposed *to be* its own province. These proceedings demonstrate two facts which are most important to Catholic men of science. One is that what is declared by even the highest known Congregation (that of the *Holy Office*), whose President is the Pope, and when the subject-matter treated of is Scripture, may be quite erroneous. The other noteworthy fact is that men of physical science may have truer religious perceptions imparted to them than any Roman Congregation. This the Galileo case demonstrated absolutely and once for all; since we may safely affirm that whatever has shown itself to be a *fact* is *at least a possibility*."

Thus far Dr. Mivart, and one feels reluctant to dissent from anything written by so honest and so courageous a champion of scientific freedom. Yet there is one proposition to which I cannot wholly subscribe. The court which judged Galileo, he tells us, "founded its erroneous decree upon an erroneous judgment about the meaning of Scripture." Now, odious as the tribunal was, it is entitled to strict justice at our hands; and surely the *Holy Office* was quite right as to the meaning of Scripture. No unprejudiced man can read the books of the Old Testament without seeing that the authors of these books supposed, as they very naturally would, that the earth was the centre of the "world," and stood still, while the sun moved. That is plainly implied in the story of the creation; equally plainly in the *Book of Joshua* (chap. x). "Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until

the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." There is no distinction made here between the sun and the moon. Each is supposed to move, being set in a "firmament" above a flat earth.[1] Neither is there anything in the New Testament to a contrary effect. The error (or, I should rather say, one of the errors) of the Roman tribunal was in assuming the infallibility of erroneous Scripture as well as the infallibility of their own very fallible judgment. But that "the Scriptures" are frequently erroneous nobody knew better than Dr. Mivart. Some apologists, indeed, have made quibbling objections to the use of the word "error" in this allocation; but, writes Dr. Mivart, "If there are no 'errors' (that word being taken in some unknown sense) in the Bible, there are in it, as everybody knows, a *multitude* of statements which are scientifically (including history as one branch of science) false. The Bible says the world was made in six days; but it was not so made. It tells us that Eve was formed from a rib of Adam; but, if such person ever existed, she never was so formed. It gives two accounts of the Deluge, neither of which is true, etc., etc. It is needless to refer to other passages, because all educated Catholics know how numerous are the false statements the Bible contains. Who can accept as 'true' such recitals as those about Moses's

[1] In 1820 the Vatican graciously gave permission to teach that the earth moves. *E pur si muove!*

wife and God's manifestation to Moses (*Exodus*, iv, 24–26, and xxxiii, 18–23)? Many statements like these just referred to have long deluded and misled the world, as they delude and mislead the uneducated now.....*It is most shocking that such errors should be taught to children and preached to adults as if they were truths.*" (Italics mine.[1])

Here, again, is an instructive extract from this *Fortnightly* article: "What, in my opinion, is the great peril which Catholicity now runs is occasioned by the deep and appalling disregard for, if not sometimes positive aversion to, scientific truth which is exhibited by Catholic advocates, and, high above all, by the Roman Curia, whereof some of the most recent manifestations would seem to imply that, if only power can be thereby retained, *any amount of deception and terrorism over weak, credulous minds and tenderly scrupulous consciences is abundantly justified.*"

I make no apology for having thrown the last words of this pregnant passage into italics. The whole article should be read by those who fondly imagine that there is at the present time "no conflict between science and religion."

I now turn to Dr. Mivart's article in the *Nineteenth Century* on Catholic Continuity, which will be

[1] Quite recently the present Bishop of Oxford was reported as follows: "You can hardly exaggerate the disaster it has been to the education of children that they have been taught to associate with religion things about the Creation, the Flood, and the beginnings of our race which it was infallibly certain, when they grew up to read the literature of their time, they would find false, and would reject as alien to the whole trend of the philosophy, science, and history of their time" (January, 1918).

found equally instructive. Here the writer passes in review the very great "modifications of belief which have come to exist among earnest practical Catholics," and asks whether such modifications of belief, some of which must certainly be a little startling to the orthodox mind, ought to be considered as having occasioned a breach in "Catholic continuity"—a question which he would answer in the negative. With that question I have no concern, but it is interesting to glance at some of the very advanced opinions which, according to Dr. Mivart, are now held by some devout but enlightened Catholics.

Dr. Mivart begins his catalogue of changes of belief with "a consideration of the most universal and complete transformation of the kind which has taken place since the origin of Christianity"—viz., that wonderful transformation in belief as to the nature and structure of the universe to which I have already alluded in Chapter I. "For a millennium and a-half all Christians had regarded the earth as the centre of the universe and the object of God's unique care. It was supposed to be surrounded by revolving crystal spheres bearing the sun, moon, and stars; while above them was heaven, with its angelic host; hell being within the earth, volcanoes so many of its gates, whence issued evil spirits to tempt a corrupt mankind, while angels readily descended from above on errands of beneficence. It was also thought evident from revelation that all this fabric had been created in six days; that God had specially created and clothed the earth

with distinct species of animals and plants, formed, as were also the sun, moon, and stars, for the service of man, whose faults caused the world to be drowned in a deluge in the past, as in the future it will be destroyed by fire. To men who thus believed it could not have been very difficult to accept the doctrine that for the salvation of the race—the only material objects of Divine care and love—God himself had descended from his celestial to his terrestrial sphere, and taken to himself the nature of that being who had already been created in his image. How great must have been the shock to men brought up in this belief to learn that their earth was but a floating speck of dust amid a practical infinity of vast revolving spheres, many of which were possibly, if not probably, peopled by beings equal or superior in nature to man, and having, it might be, yet greater claims upon the goodwill of the Deity! They could no longer behold the crystal floor of heaven, nor reasonably regard a volcano as a fountain of supernatural infernal fire. So vast a change of conception with respect to the cosmos could not fail to affect the domain of religious belief."

Dr. Mivart then passes on "to consider one or two special doctrines with respect to which a complete change of belief has taken place." One of these, and a most important one, is "the change which consists in regarding as specially to be valued, not that which is most ancient, but that which is most recent. This new belief may be shortly expressed by the maxim, 'Opinions which are

newest are generally truest.' The circumstance that any belief is a specially old one makes its truth at once an object of suspicion.....Instead of proclaiming that to be true which has been believed '*Semper, ubique et ab omnibus*,' we may confidently affirm that whatever has been so believed is most probably false."

Then with regard to the Scriptures: "The old view of the Bible regarded it as an entirely supernatural work, every word of which had been directly inspired by God Himself, and such is still the official belief enjoined on Catholics. It was early an obligation so to believe, but the Council of Trent imposed it on Catholics yet more distinctly, and that of the Vatican more distinctly still. Quite recently the Pope, in his encyclical (*Providentissimus Deus*), declared the books of the Old and New Testaments, with all their parts, to be sacred and canonical, because, having been written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and therefore can contain no error.....Four hundred years ago the authority of Scripture was deemed absolute as regards all kinds of knowledge —physical no less than religious—and even in the last century any questioning of the literal sense of the first chapter of *Genesis* was resented as irreligious. Dom Calmet refers indignantly to those who were disposed to admit more than an interval of twenty-four hours between the great creative act and the production of light. The memorable condemnation of Galileo in the seventeenth century never will be, and never should be, forgotten. Now,

in spite of an apparent official maintenance of such old views in the present day, they seem to be entirely abandoned by almost all educated Catholics. The Pope's declaration that the Bible can 'contain no error' is but a matter of formal parade, only saved from falsehood by a more ingenious than honest distinction between 'errors' and 'untruths,' whereby theologians are able to declare that statements 'utterly untrue' are entirely 'free from error.' Even a theologian at Rome, formally serving the Pope as such, would not venture to deny that hundreds of statements which are not 'true' are to be found in the Old and New Testaments. Comparatively few persons now believe that the account in *Genesis* of the creation of the world, or of Adam and of Eve, is, in any sense, historical and true; or that the account of the Fall is such; or that diversities of language were due to God's fear lest men should build a tower to reach heaven; or that Joshua or Isaiah in any way interfered with the regularity of the earth's rotation on its axis."

Again, we are told that "Quite lately a Catholic writer, with the letters H. J. H., has published a paper in the number of the *American Ecclesiastical Review* for 1897, wherein he maintains that unbaptized infants may attain the same bliss as that open to those who have been baptized." This, says Dr. Mivart, "is a most startling theological innovation"! Yes, indeed, for Augustine declared that all unbaptized children would be damned, though he trusted that "this fire would be to them the most moderate of all" (Wall's

History of Infant Baptism); and Jonathan Edwards told us that, although

> in bliss
> They may not hope to dwell,
> Still unto them Thou wilt allow
> The easiest room in Hell.[1]

And these were called "Glad Tidings of Great Joy"!

Dr. Mivart gives an interesting account of certain questions put in his hearing to "a learned and austere priest" by "a man devoted to the cause of Catholicity." The questioner, it appears, had found it somewhat irksome and monotonous to be forever worshipping the Deity according to strict and inflexible monotheistic ideas. God, he said, "has many attributes, some of which our reason reveals to us, while there may be [*sic*] many more which are altogether beyond our powers of conception..... It cannot be denied that the nature of God's attributes, like the nature of God himself, is incomprehensible to us. Moreover, God's attributes, while distinct, are each of them equally 'God,' and therefore substantial. There are, to my knowledge, good Catholics who feel drawn to worship God directly, but are repelled by the symbols often set before them; such as by the figure of an old man clad in a cope and wearing a papal tiara, or some representations of the sacred heart, or of that bird distinguished by no intellectual or moral ornithological pre-eminence—the dove. Among such devout persons are some who would prefer to worship God

[1] Quoted, with the above extract from Wall, by Mr. Lionel Tollemache in his *Stones of Stumbling*, p. 82.

under one of his attributes, symbolized by representations more resembling Athene or Apollo, and who have specially felt the want in Christianity of a female symbol of Divinity; for, of course, God is as much female as he is male. I have heard there are persons who go to the Brompton Oratory to there worship the Madonna, as the only available representative of Venus; and we have lately read of the recent worship (in Paris) of Isis by persons who regarded the goddess, whose veil no man has drawn aside, as no inapt symbol of the inscrutable power that everywhere meets, yet everywhere escapes, our gaze as we seek to probe the mysteries of nature. In conclusion, I would ask whether it would be lawful for me, as a Catholic, to worship God as Zeus or Athene if I am in truth devoutly moved so to adore him."

"The answer given in my hearing," says Dr. Mivart, "by the learned and devout priest in question was as follows: 'Most certainly it is lawful for you to do so, provided you find it helps you to advance in virtue and religion. But you must only do it privately; it would not at present be right for you to carry on a public worship of that kind.'"

In order "to guard against an absurd misconception," Dr. Mivart is careful "to point out that the questioner had no idea of worshipping the mythological characters, *Zeus*, *Athene*, etc., but only attributes of the Supreme (majesty, beauty, power, love, etc.) which these old Greek types embody."

The idea that devout Catholics should have "specially felt the want in Christianity of a female

symbol of Divinity," together with the reference to Isis and Venus, is somewhat remarkable. One imagined that it was in order to supply that want that the mother of Jesus was transformed into "the Mother of God" and the Queen of Heaven. The well-known effigies of Isis with the infant Horus in her arms were continued and repeated under the name of the Madonna and Child. Many of the attributes of Venus descended to the Virgin, who, in Catholic countries, constantly becomes a local deity, the general becoming lost in the particular.[1] "Notre dame de Lourdes," for example, is very different from Our Lady of any other place, and an inhabitant of Lourdes prides himself on his Virgin Deity as being vastly superior to the Virgin Goddess of any other locality. The fishermen on the wild Spanish headlands beyond Fuenterabia believe that their Virgin goes out to sea on stormy nights to rescue poor sailors, and will tell you that her dress is frequently found in the mornings after a gale wet with the wild sea spray.[2]

Dr. Mivart, however, tells us, on the authority of Harnack's *History of Dogma*, that "there were some in the earlier ages of Christianity who were

[1] "It was a shrewd calculation that impelled the Catholic Church, when it introduced the worship of Mary, to substitute for the heathen goddesses revered in all lands over which Christianity was spreading, a Deity of its own. Mary, spiritually idealized by Christianity, took the place of the Kybele, Mylitta, Aphrodite, Venus, etc., of the southern nations; of the Edda Freya, etc., of the German races." So writes August Bebel in *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future*, translated by H. B. Adams Walther, p. 27.

[2] For an entertaining catalogue of pagan survivals in Christian ritual and belief see Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*, chap. lxxiv.

inclined to regard the Holy Spirit of God as a female principle." If these people had had their way, there would have been no necessity for the deification of the mother of Jesus. The idea that "God is as much female as he is male" is certainly philosophical, but is not likely to be much appreciated by modern society. A popular American authoress, whose novels have attracted much attention in this country, writes of New York men: "They are a rare and lovely species. They admire God because He made Himself of their gender, and knew what He was about when He invented woman."[1] To such depths of banality does the human mind descend when it seeks to penetrate the mysteries of the incomprehensible, and judges the Unknown Eternal by paltry human standards. Isis must remain for ever behind her veil, and only presumptuous Folly would attempt to raise it.

Returning to Dr. Mivart, we find that of the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus he writes as follows: "As everybody knows, each of the four Evangelists gives a graphic account of the visit to the Sepulchre, though only one of these can be accurate, seeing that no two of them agree. This and some other reasons have suggested to critics that the whole of these histories of the first Easter morning may be legendary only, and the suspicion is strengthened by the fact that the earliest writings in the New Testament—the Pauline Epistles—are

[1] *Patience Sparhawk*, by Gertrude Atherton, p. 180. The criticism which follows has, of course, no reference to the talented authoress.

utterly silent with respect to them. It would certainly be very strange, if St. Paul did know of this visit to the empty tomb, that he should have failed to add so extremely valuable a testimony to the others he adduces in favour of the belief that the Lord has truly risen! Impressed by these difficulties, I once asked a learned theologian (high in office and in great favour with the Pope) whether, if it could be proved that Christ's body had rotted in the grave, such a fact would be conclusive against the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection. 'Not in the least,' he replied; 'because we do not know in what the essence of a body consists.'" Here, says Dr. Mivart, we have an example of a change effected in belief through modifying the signification of a word—namely, the word "body"; and he considers it a change which would be innocuous to religion. One can only remark that the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ's body thus interpreted is an entirely different thing from that doctrine as always taught by Church-Christianity, whether of Rome, England, or any other Church.

Turning, now, to the doctrines of the miraculous conception and the birth of Christ from a virgin mother, Dr. Mivart writes: "To my certain knowledge there actually are devout Catholics of both sexes, well-known and highly-esteemed weekly communicants, and leading lives devoted to charity and religion, who believe Joseph to have been the real and natural father of Jesus. They do not scruple, on that account, to apply to His mother all the expressions common among Catholics; the term

'virgin' being used in the sense given to it by Isaiah, and not in the strict modern sense of that word. I know, also, priests who share this opinion, and I have heard a devout and ascetic religious affirm—not in my presence alone—that he thought the extraordinary dignity to which Rome has now raised St. Joseph may have been providentially brought about in preparation for a great change in popular sentiment and credence on this question."

Dr. Mivart then adverts to the belief firmly held by the early converts to Christianity, "that the end of the world would take place during the life of the first generation of Christians"—a belief founded on predictions, which, according to the evangelists, were uttered by Jesus himself, but which were entirely falsified by the event; and finally refers to another belief once general among Catholic and other Christians—viz., the belief in demonology, including witchcraft and demoniacal possession. This terrible superstition, which led to such horrors and cruelties, "was sustained, not by an isolated text or two in the Old Testament, but by all the Gospel narratives. They actually abound with asserted instances of such possession, and no one can read them without a conviction that the evangelists thought that Our Lord believed that 'possession' was a fact of common experience, and did not object to such a belief being entertained by his disciples." Whereupon, says Dr. Mivart, "the explanation of this difficulty is a matter quite beyond my ability, and I leave its elucidation to skilled divines."

In conclusion, this very liberal and scientific

Catholic writes: "In the face of death, I desire to do my duty in promoting what I regard as truth."[1]

And, now, what was the result of these very outspoken articles? It was such as those who had any acquaintance with the Church of the Vatican would naturally have anticipated. Dr. Mivart was required by Cardinal Vaughan, on pain of inhibition from the Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, to sign a formal profession of faith, which would have amounted to a recantation and repudiation of all those liberal views which he had thus solemnly put forward, "in the face of death," and in the cause of truth. With this request he naturally refused to comply, and accordingly the Cardinal, writing appropriately enough on "The Feast of St. Peter's Chair," 1900, from Archbishop's House, Westminster, addresses a circular to the Roman Catholic clergy of the diocese of Westminster, inhibiting Dr. Mivart "from approaching the sacraments."[2]

The Profession of Faith which Dr. Mivart was thus called upon to sign is very instructive, and I therefore give it *in extenso*. It may be summed up in the witty words of Tom Moore:—

> Resolved to stick to every particle
> Of every Creed and every article;
> Reforming naught, or great or little,
> We'll stanchly stand by every tittle,
> And scorn the swallow of that soul
> Which cannot boldly bolt the whole.[3]

[1] Death followed very closely on this noble declaration.

[2] See the *Times*, January 22, 1900.

[3] "Resolutions Passed at a late Meeting of Reverends and Right Reverends" (Moore's *Humorous and Satirical Poems*).

Here, then, is this precious document, which should be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested by all those who contemplate surrendering their reason, their conscience, and their freedom to the tender mercies of Holy Church :—

FORMULA.

I hereby declare that, recognizing the Catholic Church to be the supreme and infallible guardian of the Christian faith, I submit therein my judgment to hers, believing all that she teaches, and condemning all that she condemns. And, in particular, I firmly believe and profess that Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, in the fullness of time, for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven and was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary—that is to say, that the same Jesus Christ had no man for His father, and that St. Joseph was not His real or natural father, but only His reputed or foster father.

I therefore firmly believe and profess that the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived and brought forth the Son of God in an ineffable manner by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and absolutely without loss or detriment to her Virginity, and that she is really and in truth, as the Catholic Church most rightly calls her, the "Ever Virgin"—that is to say, Virgin before the birth of Christ, Virgin in that birth, and Virgin after it, her sacred and spotless Virginity being perpetually preserved from the beginning, then, and for ever afterwards.

I therefore condemn and reject as false and heretical the assertion that doubt or denial of the Virgin Birth of Christ or the perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, is—or at any future time ever can be in any sense whatever—consistent with the Holy Catholic faith (*cf.* Nicene and Apostles' Creed and Constitution of Paul IV, "Cum Quorundam," and Clement VIII, "Dominici Gregis").

I believe and profess that Our Lord Jesus Christ, after

His death and burial, rose again from the dead, and that His Body glorified in His Resurrection is the same as that in which He suffered and died for us upon the Cross. I reject and condemn the statement that the Body of Christ rotted in the grave or suffered corruption as false and heretical, and contrary to the Holy Catholic faith now and in all future time.

I firmly believe and profess, in accordance with the Holy Council of Trent, that the first man Adam, when he transgressed the command of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice in which he had been constituted, and that he incurred through that prevarication the wrath and indignation of God, and that this prevarication of Adam injured, not himself alone, but his posterity, and that by it the holiness and justice received from God were lost by him, not for himself alone, but for us all (*cf.* Council of Trent, Session V).

I firmly believe and profess that Our Lord died upon the Cross, not merely (as Socinus held) to set us an example or an "object-lesson" of fidelity unto death, but that He might give Himself "a redemption for all" by "bearing our sins in His Body upon the tree"—that is, by making a true and full satisfaction to the offended justice of God for the sins original and actual of all men and that these sins are taken away by no other remedy than the merit of the "one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 *Tim.*, 5), who has reconciled us to God in His own blood; "made unto us justice, sanctification, and redemption" (1 *Cor.*, i, 30; *cf.* Council of Trent, Session V).

I reject and condemn all doctrines which deny the reality and transmission of original sin, and the perfect sufficiency of the atonement by which man is reconciled to God in the blood of Jesus Christ, as false and heretical and contrary to the Holy Catholic faith now and at all future time.

I firmly believe and profess that the souls of men after death will be judged by God, and that those who are saved will "go into everlasting life" (*Matt.*, xxv, 46), and those who are condemned "into everlasting punish-

ment." I reject as false and heretical all doctrines which teach that the souls in hell may eventually be saved, or that their state in hell may be one which is not of punishment. (*Cf.* Constitution of Council of Lateran IV.)

In accordance with the Holy Councils of Trent and of the Vatican, I receive all the books of the Old and New Testament, with all their parts, as set forth in the fourth session of the Council of Trent, and contained in the ancient Latin edition of the *Vulgate*, as sacred and canonical, and I firmly believe and profess that the said Scriptures are sacred and canonical—not because, having been carefully composed by mere human industry, they were afterwards approved by the Church's authority, not merely because they contain revelation with no admixture of error, but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself. Wherefore, in all matters of faith or morals appertaining to the building up of Christian doctrine, I believe that to be the true sense of Holy Scripture which our Holy Mother the Church has held and now holds, to whom the judgment of the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scripture belongs. (*Cf.* Council of Trent, Session IV; Council of the Vatican, Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Faith, chap. ii, can. ii.)

I firmly believe and profess that the doctrine of faith which God has revealed has not been proposed like a philosophical invention to be perfected by human ingenuity, but has been delivered as a Divine deposit to the spouse of Christ, to be faithfully kept and infallibly declared, and that therefore that meaning of the sacred dogmas is to be perpetually retained which our Holy Mother the Church has once declared, and that that meaning can never be departed from under the pretence or pretext of a deeper comprehension of them. I reject as false and heretical the assertion that it is possible at some time, according to the progress of science, to give to doctrines propounded by the Church a sense different from that which the Church has understood and under-

stands, and consequently that the sense and meaning of her doctrines can ever be in the course of time practically explained away or reversed. (*Cf.* Dogmatic Constitution of the Vatican on Catholic Faith, chap. iv, can. iv.)

Moreover, I condemn and revoke all other words and statements which, in articles contributed by me to the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century*, or in any other of my writings, are found to be in matter of faith or morals contrary to the teaching of the Holy Catholic faith according to the determination of the Apostolic See; and in all such matters I submit myself to the judgment of the said See, receiving all that it receives, and condemning all that it condemns.

Here we have a categorical restatement of the old outworn dogmas and beliefs: the Fall of Adam, "the first man," bringing the "wrath and *indignation* of God" (on account of his "prevarication") not upon himself alone, but also on all mankind; "the reality and transmission of original sin"; the atonement; the perpetual virginity of "the Blessed Mary, Mother of God"; the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in all the books of the Old and New Testament, with all their parts, which are said to "have God for their author"; the rigid inflexibility and unchangeableness of all the doctrines of the Church as laid down in the past, in defiance of the progress of knowledge, learning, and science; and, of course, the blessed doctrine of eternal damnation! What unspeakable comfort for the Agnostic that he is free from the incubus of this terrible soul-slaying formula of belief! And to teach this freedom to mankind is it not indeed to preach "glad tidings of great joy"? Such, at least, is my faith—the faith of an Agnostic.

"The Vatican Council declares," writes Father Clarke, of the Society of Jesus (in reply to Dr. Mivart's articles), "that 'of all sacred dogmas that sense is to be for ever retained which our Holy Mother the Church has once declared, nor may we ever recede from that sense under a pretext of a higher understanding of it.' Moreover, the Church stamps with her anathema any departure from the sense originally given to any defined dogma. 'If any one shall assert that to dogmas proposed by the Church it may be possible, according to the progress of science, to give a meaning different from that which the Church has understood, and now understands, let him be anathema.'"[1]

But to return to the conflict of science and religion, as exemplified in the persons of the Cardinal and Scientist. Considerable correspondence passed between the two, some extracts from which will, I think, make for edification.

Thus, Dr. Mivart, writing on January 19, 1900, addresses the following remarks to Cardinal Vaughan:—

"When I was admitted as a Catholic I made, of course, a profession of the creed of Pope Pius IV. But I have no recollection of ever having made, or been asked to make, the following profession, which forms part of the document I am now asked to sign:—

> In accordance with the Holy Councils of Trent and of the Vatican, I receive all the books of the Old and New Testament, with all their parts, as set

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1900.

> forth in the fourth section of the Council of Trent, and contained in the ancient Latin edition of the *Vulgate*, as sacred and canonical, and I firmly believe and confess that the said Scriptures are sacred and canonical—not because, having been carefully composed by mere human industry, they are afterwards approved by the Church's authority, not merely because they contain revelation with no mixture of error, but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself.

"Now, I beg of your Eminence, as my ecclesiastical superior, to tell me whether I am or not right as to what would be the consequences of my signing the above? It would be easy, of course, by a little dexterity, to distort and evade what appears to be its real and obvious meaning. As God is the First Cause and Creator of all things, he is, in that sense, their author—author of the *Decameron* of Boccaccio as well as of the Bible. But to make a profession with such a meaning would be, in my eyes, grossly profane and altogether unjustifiable.

"Your Eminence, of course, means and wishes me to sign *ex animo* the document sent to me; and I, for my part, desire to be perfectly—transparently—honest, candid, and straightforward.

"Now, in my judgment, an acceptance and profession of the above-cited portion of the document sent me would be equivalent to an assertion that there are no errors, or altogether false statements, or fabulous narratives, in the Old and New Testament, and that I should not be free to hold and teach without blame that the world was not created

in any six periods of time; that the story of the serpent and the tree is altogether false; that the history of the tower of Babel is a mere fiction devoid of any particle of truth; that the story of Noah's Ark is also quite erroneous, as, again, that of the plagues of Egypt; that neither Joshua nor Hezekiah interfered with the regularity of solar time; that Jonah did not live within the belly of any kind of marine animal; that Lot's wife was never turned into a pillar of salt; and that Balaam's ass never spoke. I only put these forward as a few examples of statements (denials) which it seems to me any one who holds that 'the books of the Old and New Testament, with all their parts, were written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and have God for their author' ought not and could not logically or rationally make.

"If, however, your Eminence can authoritatively tell me that Divine inspiration or authorship does not (clerical errors, faults of translation, etc., apart) guarantee the truth and inerrancy of the statements so inspired, it will in one sense be a great relief to my mind, and greatly facilitate the signing of the document, your Eminence's decision on the subject being once publicly known, and also the conditions under which I sign it."

To this the Cardinal replies by reminding the scientist of "the fundamental principle which is the ground on which every true Catholic stands—viz., that the Church, being the Divine teacher, established by Christ in the world, rightly claims from her disciples a hearty and intellectual acceptance of

all that she authoritatively teaches," whereon he cites St. Augustine's saying that he would not believe the Gospel were it not for the authority of the Catholic Church ("*Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me Catholicæ Ecclesiæ commoveret auctoritas*" —the Church being, it seems, required as a prop to an otherwise incredible Gospel).

To this, on January 23, 1900, Dr. Mivart wrote a long rejoinder, from which I select the following for the edification of the student:—

"As to what you say about 'private judgment,' *all of us, however submissive to authority, must, in the last resort, rest upon the judgment of our individual reason. How otherwise could we know that authority had spoken at all, or what it had said?*

"It is impossible to accept anything as true which is a contradiction in terms. Upon that truth all theological reasoning is based, and all other reasoning also.

"I greatly desire to state plainly, and to make your Eminence clearly understand, what my religious position is, and what it has for some years been. As you well know, I was once an ardent advocate for Catholicism. The best years of my life have been spent in its defence, while all I said in its favour I most thoroughly meant. Though, like many others who have thought much on such subjects, I have occasionally passed through periods of doubt, yet for years I was, on the whole, happy and full of confidence in the position I had taken up, which was clearly expressed in my article, 'The Catholic Church and Biblical Criticism,' published in the

Nineteenth Century for July, 1887. Therein I rested much on the teaching of Cardinal Newman, which gave me to understand that Catholics were 'free only to hold as "inspired," in some undefined sense of that word, certain portions or passages of the books set before them as canonical.' I found great latitude of Scriptural interpretation to be not uncommon among Catholics, both cleric and lay, and my efforts seemed to meet with approbation, notably from Pius IX, and afterwards, in a less degree, from Leo XIII.

"All of a sudden, like a bolt from the blue, appeared in 1893 that terrible encyclical about Scripture known as '*Providentissimus Deus*,' containing the following unequivocal words:—

> It is absolutely wrong and forbidden either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Holy Scripture, or to admit that the sacred writer has erred. For the system of those who, in order to rid themselves of these difficulties, do not hesitate to concede that Divine inspiration regards the things of faith and morals and nothing beyond, because (as they wrongly think), in a question of the truth or falsehood of a passage, we should consider not so much what God has said as the reason and purpose which he had in mind in saying it—this system cannot be tolerated. For all the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost; and so far is it from being possible that any error can co-exist with inspiration that inspiration not only is essentially incompatible with error, but excludes and rejects it as absolutely and necessarily as it is impossible that God himself, the supreme truth, can utter that which is not true. This is the ancient and unchang-

> ing faith of the Church, solemnly defined in the Councils of Florence and of Trent, and finally confirmed and more expressly formulated by the Council of the Vatican.....Hence, because the Holy Ghost employed men as His instruments, we cannot therefore say that it was these inspired instruments who, perchance, have fallen into error, and not the primary Author. For, by supernatural power, He so moved and impelled them to write. He was so present to them that the things which He ordered, and those only, they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise it could not be said that He was the author of the entire Scripture. Such has always been the persuasion of the Fathers.....It follows that those who maintain that an error is possible in any genuine passage of the sacred writings either pervert the Catholic notion of inspiration, or make God the author of such error.

"It then seemed plain to me that my position was no longer tenable, but I had recourse to the most learned theologian I knew and my intimate friend. His representations, distinctions, and exhortations had great influence with me, and more or less satisfied me for the time; but ultimately I came to the conclusion that *Catholic doctrine and science were fatally at variance.* This is now more clear to me than ever, since my 'ordinary' does not say whether my judgment about what the attribution of any document to God's authorship involves is or is not right. To me it is plain that God's veracity and His incapability of deceit are primary truths, without which revelation is impossible. The teaching then of Leo XIII, addressed dogmatically to the whole Church, comes to this: Every statement

made by a canonical writer must be true in the sense in which he put it forward, whether as an historical fact or a moral instruction. Thus it is now evident that a vast and impassable abyss yawns between Catholic dogma and science, and no man with ordinary knowledge can henceforth join the communion of the Roman Catholic Church if he correctly understands what its principles and its teaching really are, unless they are radically changed.

"For who could profess to believe the narrative about the tower of Babel, or that all species of animals came up to Adam to be named by him? Moreover, among the writings esteemed 'canonical' by the Catholic Church are the book of Tobit and the second book of Maccabees, and also the story which relates how, when Daniel was thrown a second time into the lion's den, an angel seized Habakkuk, in Judea, by the hair of his head and carried him, with his bowl of pottage, to give it to Daniel for his dinner.

"To ask a reasonable man to believe such puerile tales would be to insult him. Plainly, the Councils of Florence, Trent, and the Vatican have fallen successively into greater and greater errors, and thus all rational trust in either Popes or Councils is at an end.....

"I categorically refuse to sign the profession of faith.....It is to me truly shocking that religious teachers, cardinals, and priests profess to think certain beliefs to be necessary, and yet will not say what they truly are. They resemble quack doctors,

who play their long familiar tricks upon the vulgar, but act otherwise to those they cannot trifle with.

"It has long been painful to me to think of the teaching given in Catholic schools, and often proclaimed from the pulpit. There need be small surprise at the opposition existing in France to the authoritative teaching of fables, fairy tales, and puerile and pestilent superstitions.

"Happily, I can now speak with entire frankness as to all my convictions. *Liberavi animam meam.* I can sing my *Nunc dimittis*, and calmly await the future."[1]

Here, then, we see the old conflict still raging just as it did in the days of Galileo. The combatants are the same; they have only shifted their ground. And, happily, there has been another change. "The Church" is no longer able to imprison, torture, and put to death those who withstand her portentous dogmas. The man of science of to-day may smile at the threat of excommunication. The thunder of the Church is now but a *brutum fulmen*, except to the ignorant, the weak, and the pusillanimous.

Out of many comments upon this instructive controversy I select the following letter, published in the *Times* above the signature of "Verax":—

"Dr. Mivart, writing with the earnestness and vigour of long-deferred conviction on solemn questions of faith, has claimed a freedom of interpretation with regard to certain portions of Scriptural narrative which the Catholic Church has not hitherto sanctioned, probably never will sanction. In doing

[1] *Times*, January 27, 1900.

so he has committed what is, it appears, technically called blasphemy. Father Bailly, of the Assumptionist Order, writing in support of an abominable propaganda of calumny and hatred, has proclaimed in *La Croix* that the condemnation of Dreyfus at Rennes must be attributed to the miraculous intervention of the Mother of God on behalf of France and the French army. Technically, this may not be blasphemy. But, if blasphemy is the sin against the Holy Ghost, against the Divine Spirit of truth, justice, and charity, which of these two men is the real blasphemer?

"Yet, at the very moment when Cardinal Vaughan tramples upon Dr. Mivart and excludes him from the fellowship of the Church, his Eminence's colleagues in the French hierarchy vie with one another in expressing their admiration for Father Bailly, the Pope commends his zeal, and the Vatican organs praise him as the champion of the Faith!

"It is an instructive coincidence."

Now this, from the writer's point of view, is doubtless a telling piece of criticism; but there is another side of the question which, in justice to the Vatican and the Cardinal, we ought surely to bear in mind. I confess I cannot understand how a man like Dr. Mivart, who had given up the inspiration of the Bible, seeing clearly that it is full of errors and puerile tales, and who had practically thrown over all the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church, could have thought it possible or desirable to remain in communion with that Church. It is idle to say that he still held the old beliefs, only in a different

sense to that in which they were formerly held. A man, for instance, who believes that the body of Jesus rotted in the grave[1] cannot honestly say that he believes that Christ "rose again on the third day," whatever may be his opinion as to what may constitute the "essence" of the body. This is not the old belief in a new form, but a new belief in place of the old one. Surely the better course for a man at once honest and courageous (and Dr. Mivart gave proof that he was both), who entertains such opinions, would be, not to wait till he is "inhibited," but, however painful it may be to him, to dissociate himself from a Church in whose doctrines he has virtually ceased to believe. At any rate, it is clear that any one who holds all the views and theories which, according to Dr. Mivart, are held by certain Roman Catholics of to-day is separated by a very slender barrier indeed from the position of the Agnostic. Surely there is but little difference in essentials between Dr. Mivart and Professor Huxley. It is the position to which all men of scientific mind, who are honest seekers after the truth, must ultimately come, by whatever name they may choose to call themselves.

Let us not forget, then, that Dr. Mivart's reasoning applies not only as against the Roman Catholic Church, but against Church-Christianity as a whole. The Anglican Church, for instance, still reads, upon fourteen feast days of the year, the preposterous "Athanasian Creed," that dreary concatenation of

[1] Dr. Mivart did not actually say that he believed this, but he clearly implied that such belief might be held by a devout Catholic.

absurdities—that fatuous attempt to define the undefinable—which seems specially framed by foolish ecclesiastics to move our ridicule, our indignation, and our disgust. "Which Faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.....This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved!" Miserable formula of bigoted and arrogant ignorance! *Quousque tandem abutere patientia nostra?*

But even if this egregious document were to be finally consigned to the limbo of outworn controversies, those who hold Dr. Mivart's enlightened opinions would find themselves practically as much at variance with the Anglican as they are with the Roman Church. And they are equally at variance with all the Churches of Trinitarian Nonconformity. Moreover, they will find, I fear, that the High Priests of Nonconformity are not always more tolerant than the High Priests of the Vatican.

Chapter XIII

REVELATION AND CRUELTY

If

> Man's inhumanity to man
> Makes countless thousands mourn,

how many countless millions are made to mourn by man's inhumanity to animals? Surely there are few more sacred duties than the duty of kindness to animals. Therefore, in a Revelation of the Divine Will, made by an Almighty and All-Merciful Father to his creature Man, it were, surely, not unreasonable to expect to find some clear directions concerning man's duty to his humbler brethren of the animal world. Yet nowhere in the Christian Bible are such directions to be found. This is an omission indeed —an omission so great and so deplorable as of itself to raise the gravest doubts in many thinking minds whether this so-called Revelation could possibly proceed from a merciful and beneficent creator, or whether it was not, rather, the outcome of human mythopœic tendencies.

It is true that if we search the Old Testament we shall find, among much that is savage and cruel, two or three injunctions which may be interpreted as giving some indication of a humane spirit—still nascent and nebulous—with regard to the lower

animals. But of what value are they? We have, for example, the injunction, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." I have heard this command solemnly instanced as a proof of the divine loving-kindness towards animals! As a fact, it is included among ceremonial, and supposedly hygienic, injunctions with regard to what is "clean" and what is "unclean" in the matter of eating and drinking.[1] If it were not for this, it might be dismissed as a matter of pure sentiment, and somewhat "sickly sentiment" to boot. For what does it matter to the slaughtered kid whether or not it be seethed in "his mother's" or any other animal's milk? Or what does it matter to the unconscious mother? How much better would it have been if some directions had been given for the humane slaughtering of the kid and the kind treatment of the mother! But of this, alas, there is nothing.

More to the point, perhaps, is the injunction with regard to bird-nesting. "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young, but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."[2] This is a very curious and very interesting injunction, and may be taken as showing some dawning perception

[1] *Deut.*, xiv, 21. The command is also found in *Ex.*, xxiii, 19, and xxxiv, 26.

[2] *Deut.*, xxii, 6, 7.

of humanity. The mother-bird, who would rather allow herself to be captured than desert her young —*she*, at any rate, is to be let go free. But all the eggs or young birds are to be taken without remorse—and thus thou mayest "prolong thy days"! This is certainly evidence of but a very inchoate and nebulous sense of the duty of kindness to animals, but it is at least something to the purpose.

Then, again, we have the command so frequently quoted: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." That at least would appear to indicate some consideration for the labouring beast. But we all know how the truculent Christian apostle treats that behest. "Doth God take care for oxen?", asks Paul, as though the question contained its own answer. The idea to him is absurd, so he proceeds to give to the passage what he conceives to be a meaning of human interest, and ingeniously evolves from it an argument in favour of the remuneration of preachers. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Muzzle not the apostolic ox that treadeth out the spiritual corn![1]

Poor oxen! I think of the long cattle trains that I have seen going through Southern France under the glaring sun of the *Midi;* those trucks full of crowded, frightened, thirsting beasts, that look so wistfully, with their large brown *souffre douleur*

[1] 1 *Cor.*, ix, 9, *et seq.*

eyes full of unutterable pathos; I think of the unspeakable horrors of the cattle-ships; of a swaying mass of animals tightly wedged together till their ribs are raw and every joint is aching; forced to stand from embarkation to landing; trampling and broken limbs for them that fall, goring and misery and pain for them that stand. I picture to myself such a voyage, let us say, from Argentina to England. "Doth God take care for oxen?" "Absurd to think so," cries the Christian Apostle. Whereupon, I can only ask in my turn: "Oh, thou blind leader of the blind, if thy God careth not for oxen, wherefore should we think that he should care for men?"

No, of a surety, if the Christian God has no care for the animals, whom, we are told, he created, no prayers will we say in his temples, no knee will we bend at his altars, no service will we render at his shrines.

What other scraps or rags of humaneness can we find in these old books? Our sympathies, truly, are enlisted on the side of Balaam's ass when she asks so pathetically: "What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times?"; yet I think it is obvious that the prophet might have smitten the poor animal to his heart's content without incurring reproach, and without her being miraculously endowed with voice to complain, had it not been for the fact—as it is presented to us in the fable—that the ass saw and obeyed "the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand"![1] But truly it is but waste

[1] *Numbers*, xxii.

of time to delay over such stories in the hope of finding therein some conception of the duty of kindness to animals.[1]

Coming now to the New Testament, we find little indeed to help us in this connection. On the other hand, we have the story of the devils who were sent into the herd of swine, only to drive the poor creatures over a steep place into the sea, where they were all drowned! To those of us, indeed, who think with the late Professor Huxley in these matters, this marvellous tale causes no surprise and no heart-searchings. We look upon it simply as an instance of the natural and inevitable growth of legend in times when the critical faculty was undeveloped, and when miracles were supposed to be matters of every-day occurrence. But what of the orthodox believer? Will he solace himself with the question, "Does God take care for swine?"

Infinite harm has been done by the story of the creation as told in the first chapters of *Genesis*. Here we read: "And God said, Let us make Man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea; and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth,

[1] A friend, desirous of producing Biblical evidence in support of such duty, cited to me the supposed text, "The merciful man is merciful to his beast." It is curious that the words are often so misquoted. Really they run thus: "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (*Prov.*, xii, 10). There are some excellent things in the *Proverbs*, but the humanitarian would like to find something more definite than this to help him. We may remember, too, that the God of the Old Testament sent she-bears out of the wood to "tear" a number of poor children for calling Elisha—who cursed them—a "bald-head"!

and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." These creatures were made "out of the ground" (*Gen.*, i, 24; ii, 9), and were handed over to men to "have dominion over" them—*i.e.*, to do what he liked with them, or to treat them as he pleased. What a contrast here with the thoughts evoked, and the lessons taught, by the far more sublime revelation of science in the doctrine of Evolution, which teaches us that the lower animals are our kith and kin, brethren of "The Universal Kinship"![1] The truth is, of course, that the recognition of this duty of kindness to animals has been a matter of very slow growth in Christian countries. It is itself a product of evolution, the child of progress and enlightened thought. "In the range and circle of duties inculcated by the early fathers those to animals had no place," says Mr. Lecky. And, again: "Catholicism has done very little to inculcate humanity to animals. The fatal vice of theologians, who have always looked upon others solely through the medium of their own special dogmatic views, has been an obstacle to all advance in this direction. The animal world, being altogether external to the scheme of redemption, was regarded as beyond the range of duty, and the belief that we have any kind

[1] I do not for a moment suggest that scientists of to-day inculcate the duty of kindness to animals, whereas Christian teachers omit to do so. That is far from my thoughts, and would be far from the truth. Unhappily, we know by experience that men of science are, not infrequently, quite callous with regard to the sufferings of animals. Nor will I demur if the Christian humanitarian contends that the duty in question is in accordance with Christ's teaching, though, unfortunately, it is not expressly included in the Scriptural ordinances, and has been in time past, and still very generally is, ignored by the Christianity of the Churches.

of obligation to its members has never been inculcated—has never, I believe, been even admitted—by Catholic theologians."[1]

The argument is not weakened by the fact that there were a few hermits, like St. Francis of Assisi, who made companions of wild animals and inculcated love for them; but justice compels us to admit that the latter part of Mr. Lecky's statement cannot be sustained in its entirety.[2] *Some* Catholic theologians, in modern times, have certainly taught the duty of kindness to animals; but it is the fact that those countries which have yielded the most

[1] *History of European Morals* (1877), vol. ii, pp. 167, 173.

[2] In the first edition of this book I quoted the following from Mr. Froude's *Oceana* (ch. v): "I heard Cardinal Manning once say that there could be no moral obligation on the part of man to the lower animals, he having a soul and they none." This, however, as I afterwards discovered, was a gross misrepresentation, and was indignantly repudiated by Manning. "Froude," wrote the Cardinal, "omitted to say that I made that statement for the purpose only of refuting it; he put it into my mouth, and there it is in a book that is sold at all the bookstalls in the railway stations, and I am credited to this day with that which I denounced as a hideous and, I think, an absurd doctrine." (See the *Zoophilist*, April 1, 1887, and *L'Eglise et La Pitié envers les Animaux* (Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 90 rue Bonapart; Londres: Burns and Oates, 28 Orchard Street), 1908, p. 292—a little book which should be consulted by those who desire to see the humanitarian side of the Roman Catholic Church.) As a fact, Manning was strongly and, indeed, passionately opposed to cruelty. It is none the less true that many, and, I believe, most, Catholic theologians have taught the doctrine erroneously ascribed by Froude to Manning; but modern thought has naturally exercised its influence in this matter even on that great unchanging Church, and Mr. St. George Mivart, some twenty years ago, instanced among "modern modifications of Catholic belief" that "many Catholics have come to recognize the ethical truth, *which only seems to have been clearly apprehended of late* —the truth, namely, that we are morally bound not to inflict needless pain on animals, and still more bound not to cause pain for the mere pleasure of producing it" (*Nineteenth Century*, January, 1900; italics mine).

blind obedience to dogmatic theology are notorious for their callous disregard of animal suffering. "*Non sono Christiani*" is, or was, the well-known reply of the Italian cab-driver to the Englishman who expostulates with him on his brutal treatment of his miserable, tortured jades.[1]

Schopenhauer, as everybody knows, believed that the very basis of morality was to be found in the sacred instinct of compassion. On this subject he speaks as eloquently as Rousseau had spoken before him, and with even a larger view, for he brings the lower animals within the protection of his moral system.

"There is nothing that revolts our moral sense so much as cruelty. Every other offence we can pardon, but not cruelty. The reason is found in the fact that cruelty is the exact opposite of *compassion* —viz., the direct participation, independent of all ulterior considerations, in the sufferings of another, leading to sympathetic assistance in the effort to prevent or remove them; whereon, in the last resort, all satisfaction and all well-being and happiness depend. It is this compassion alone which is the

[1] This was written a good many years ago. Let us hope that Italy has now greatly improved in this respect. The improvement should be in direct proportion to the measure of her emancipation from Roman Catholicism. But the reports of the Naples Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals are still depressing reading. Catholic Ireland, too, is, I fear, not free from the reproach of being still far from the recognition of man's duty towards the lower animals. As an Irish friend said to me: "A cat cannot cross the street in an Irish village without having stones shied at her"! But our own country, which tolerates such a vile sport as rabbit-coursing and the horrors of the plumage trade, is certainly not entitled to boast too highly.

real basis of all *voluntary* justice and all *genuine* loving-kindness.....There is another proof that the moral incentive disclosed by me is the true one. I mean the fact that *animals* also are included under its protecting ægis. In the other European systems of ethics no place is found for them, strange and inexcusable as this may appear. It is asserted that beasts have no rights; the illusion is harboured that our conduct, so far as they are concerned, has no moral significance; or, as it is put in the language of these codes, that there are no duties to be fulfilled towards animals. Such a view is one of revolting coarseness—a barbarism of the West.....Compassion for animals is intimately connected with goodness of character, and it may be confidently asserted that he who is cruel to living creatures cannot be a good man."[1]

So wrote a young German philosopher some eighty years ago; and all that has since happened in the world of thought has but served to strengthen his teaching as to our duty towards the lower animals. For, since he wrote, science and thought have become profoundly modified by one of those epoch-making inductions which, at very rare intervals, some great thinker is inspired to make. We have seen the establishment and the practically universal acceptance of the doctrine of evolution, involving as one of its corollaries the unity of life, and the "universal kinship" of man with his humbler brethren—or cousins, if you will—of the animal world.

[1] *The Basis of Morality*, Mr. A. B. Bullock's translation, pp. 170, 208, 218.

Is it not strange that through the books of the Old and New Testament we may look in vain for such teaching, and that there are only such meagre and entirely unsatisfactory hints that the sacred feeling of *Compassion* should be extended so as to embrace all sentient beings? Yes, strange indeed, I think, if these books really contain an inspired revelation of the Divine Will; but entirely natural, and just what was to be expected, if these books are, as the Rationalist cannot doubt that they are—of extreme interest, and of great value, for the most part, though they be—just "human documents," and nothing more.[1]

[1] It must be confessed that in this matter of kindness to animals Christianity has been far less enlightened than Buddhism. Three hundred years before Christ, and "from the time of the charitable edicts of King Asoka for the establishment of medical dispensaries both for men and *animals*," hospitals for the relief not only of human but also of animal suffering began to overspread the Buddhist East. Buddhism is, indeed, notorious for its consideration for the lower animals. "Nor does Mohammed omit to lay stress upon what I venture to think is as crucial a test of a moral code, and *even of a religion*, as is the treatment of the poor and weak—I mean the duties we owe to what we call the lower animals. There is no religion which has taken a higher view in its authoritative documents of animal life, and none wherein the precept has been so much honoured by its practical observance" (*Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, by R. Bosworth Smith, p. 214). For the Buddhism of Burma the reader would do well to consult *The Soul of a People*, by H. Fielding Hall (Macmillan and Co., 1903). Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, in his recently-published work, *My Diaries*, writes on this matter: "It is Christianity that is really responsible for the brutal attitude of modern man towards animals. No other religion that can be called a religion tolerates it; but our Christian doctors have laid down the atrocious doctrine that beasts and birds were made solely for man's use and pleasure, and that he has no duties towards them. It is only in the last hundred years that Europeans, having partly freed themselves from Christian teaching, have begun to take a humaner view." Strong language; but is not the statement historically true of the Christianity of the Churches?

APPENDIX

SPIRITUALISM

THERE are, of course, many good men and women of the present day who tell us that they have not the slightest doubt that life and consciousness persist after the death of the body. It is not, they say, a matter of belief, but of *knowledge*. They have had indisputable evidence of the fact. Well, they may be congratulated on their "certainty," if, indeed, it leads to their happiness and makes for the happiness of the community at large. Far be it from me to assert that such widely-held belief is altogether futile; that such unshakable conviction has but an imaginary basis. Who shall say dogmatically that these men and women—many of them of the highest character, of intense moral earnestness, and of proved intellectual force—are all deluded followers of futility? Of a truth, not I.

We may notice, however, that a change has, in recent times, come over the conception of existence after death. In the days of my boyhood pious men would point to the skies to indicate the direction taken by the departed soul in its flight from earth.

> Soon our souls to God who gave them
> Shall have winged their upward flight,

says the Church hymn. Somewhere in the heaven, in, or beyond, the skies, *there* was the place of departed spirits. Now, however, a different theory has obtained.

Why point to the skies, which is but to point to unbounded space? No; the spirits of the departed have not flown away from us; they are still here in our midst. We cannot see them, but it may be they can see us. They are on an "astral plane" in some unknown "dimension" of space, but still very near us. And there exists a large body of convinced opinion to the effect that they can at times communicate with us; that, indeed, departed spirits have over and over again communicated with the living, and thus furnished, if only we will open our eyes to the truth, absolute proof of the existence after death.[1]

Now it is no part of my intention to inquire into the truth or falsehood of Spiritualism; but, in connection with what I have written in Chapters V and VI, it might, perhaps, be desirable to ask what precisely is meant by "a spirit"? Let us then turn to one of the most recent exponents of the Spiritualistic belief. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells us in his work, *The New Revelation* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), that this new revelation, Spiritualism to wit, is "absolutely fatal" to Materialism. For "the fact is manifest that, if spirit can live without matter, then the foundation of Materialism is gone, and the whole scheme of thought crashes to the ground"

[1] Considering the untold millions of men, women, and children, of all races, black, yellow, and white, who have "passed over" since the first appearance of man on this earth many millions of years ago, the number of spirits in our midst, in this "fourth dimension," must be inconceivably immense. Yet, since they all have "form," as we are told, and therefore, I apprehend, extension, it would seem to the ordinary intelligence that they must occupy an enormous amount of space. It is an extraordinary idea to dwell upon, this innumerable unseen spirit population somewhere "in our midst." And if the souls of all departed animals are there too, as some confidently affirm! But it will perhaps be said that in "the fourth dimension" there can be form and extension without occupation of space. I am talking, I shall be told, of that which I do not understand; which, indeed, I most readily admit.

(p. 68). Spirits, therefore, are immaterial. A spirit is an immaterial entity. We are asked to conceive of something which, though immaterial, has nevertheless form and substance. Let us see further what Sir A. Conan Doyle has to tell us about this immaterial body.

Upon death, he tells us, "the individual finds himself in a spirit body, which is the exact counterpart of his old one, save that all disease, weakness, or deformity has passed from it[1] [p. 85]. This body is standing or floating beside the old body, and conscious both of it and of the surrounding people." Yet, apparently, at this early stage—"at this moment of dissolution"—"the new spirit body" is *to some extent material;* it is "possibly *so far material* as to be more visible to a sympathetic human eye than it would later become." Moreover, the dead man "is presently aware that there are others in the room besides those who were there in life; and among these others, *who seem to him as substantial as the living*, there appear familiar faces, and he finds his hand grasped or his lips kissed by those whom he had loved and lost."[2]

"But, before entering upon his new life, the new spirit has a period of sleep.....sometimes extending for weeks or months" (p. 88). "The spirit is simply the person,

[1] This, however, does not agree with what we are told in *Raymond*. "Persons who were of advanced age when they died are spoken of as now being old men and women in the next world; children are said (with occasional exceptions) to be still children; young men and young women are still the 'boys' and 'girls' remembered by their relatives and friends. Nay, more, their features and appearances, even to such matters of detail as their greater or less abundance of hair, the presence of a moustache or a beard, the colour of the eyes, the shape of the nose, etc., are dwelt upon.....The soul of a baby remains in a baby's environment; a club-footed man remains club-footed; grey hairs and baldness are eternal." See *Some Revelations as to Raymond*, by "A Plain Citizen" (Kegan Paul and Co.), p. 147 *et seq.*

[2] Work cited, pp. 86-7. My italics.

containing all his strength and weakness, his wisdom and his folly, exactly as he has retained his personal appearance.....The people [viz., the spirits] are *clothed*, as one would expect, since there is no reason why modesty should disappear with our new forms. These new forms are the absolute reproduction of the old ones at their best, the young growing up and the old reverting until all come to the normal" (p. 97).

"One thing," we are told, "is clear. There are higher intelligences over yonder to whom *synthetic chemistry*, which not only makes the substance, but moulds the form, is a matter of absolute ease. If they can build up simulacra in the séance room, how much may we expect them to do when they are working upon *ethereal objects* in *that ether* which *is their own medium*" (p. 102). "The spirit body is as real and tangible to another spirit as ours to our friends" (p. 107). The dead "have bodies which, though imperceptible by our senses, are as solid to them as ours to us.....these bodies are based on the general characteristics of our present bodies, but beautified. .....they have no age, no pain.....they wear clothes and take nourishment" (p. 148).

To sum up. The spirit has a body, the exact counterpart of the old one, except that, according to this exponent of the doctrine, all disease, weakness, or deformity has passed away. This body has form, substance, extension. This body is solid and tangible, at any rate to other spirits. The spirit wears clothes (also immaterial, of course), and sleeps, for a time at any rate, before entering upon its new life, though afterwards, apparently, the spirits do not sleep, although they pass occasionally into a semi-conscious state, "which seems to correspond roughly with the 'Hypnoidal' state" (p. 148). Further, the spirits take nourishment. But they are immaterial.

Now, how the immaterial can have form, substance, extension, solidity, and tangibility—not to dwell upon the other attributes mentioned—fairly passes my comprehension. I can form no rational conception of such an alleged immaterial entity. It is absolutely inconceivable and unintelligible. The "synthetic chemistry" of some "higher intelligences," we are told, "makes the substance and moulds the form." But what is the meaning of an immaterial substance, and how can the immaterial have form?[1]

The ordinary unscientific man, when he talks of "spirit" bodies, really thinks, I take it, of some very subtle attenuated gaseous bodies—such, for instance, as hydrogen, a colourless, invisible, odourless gas, the lightest substance known. But hydrogen, of course, is material, as are all other gases, and all substances that are known to us; and not only that are known to us, but whereof we can form any intelligent conception. Sir Conan Doyle talks of the spirit's "ethereal voice" and "ethereal touch," and speaks of the "higher intelligences working upon ethereal objects in that ether which is their own medium." But that which is "ethereal" is not immaterial. The existence of the ether of space is a very generally accepted scientific hypothesis; but that ether, if indeed it has real existence, cannot be conceived as immaterial. It may be imponderable matter, but *material* it must be, if it be the medium for the transmission of light waves (which, as Sir Oliver Lodge says, must be "waves in something"[2]), and to get over the difficulty of

[1] Professor Huxley writes (*Essays on Controverted Questions*, p. 120): "A material thing existing in space must have a superficies, and if it has a superficies it has a form." Is not the reverse true? Can a thing which has not "a superficies" have form? Or what is an immaterial superficies?

[2] *The Ether of Space*, p. 2.

supposing the possibility of "*actio in distans.*" In fact, as we have already seen, according to Sir Oliver Lodge, it is something denser than lead. "Ethereal" spirits, then, must be *material* spirits.[1] And, after all, Sir A. Conan Doyle, though he begins by telling us that this new revelation of Spiritualism is "absolutely fatal to Materialism," finds it impossible to get away from materialistic conceptions of his spirit world. Alluding to a well-known passage in Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond*, he writes: "We may put ourselves in the position, then, of a young engineer soldier, like Raymond Lodge, who tries to give some theory of *matter* in the beyond—a theory which is very likely contradicted by some other spirit who is also guessing at things above him. He may be right, or he may be wrong, but he is doing his best to say what he thinks, as we should do in a similar case. He believes his transcendental chemists can make anything, and that even such unspiritual *matter* as alcohol or tobacco could come within their powers and could still be craved for by unregenerate spirits."[2] Then he proceeds to say: "There are many who protest that this [spirit] world which is described to us is *too material* for their liking. It is not as they would desire it. Well, there are many things in this world which seem different to what we desire, but they exist none the less. But when we come to examine this charge of Materialism and to try to construct some sort of system which would satisfy the idealists, it becomes a very difficult task. Are we to be mere wisps of *gaseous* happiness floating about in the air? That seems to be the idea. But if

[1] As I have before said, it is absurd to speak of the ether as if it were neither material nor immaterial, but a *tertium quid*. It must be either one or the other, so far as human reason can tell us anything.

[2] Work cited, p. 103. Italics mine.

there is no body like our own, and if there is no character like our own, then say what you will, *we* have become extinct" (p. 104).

Now, "gaseous" bodies are not immaterial bodies; they are distinctly material bodies. But even "gaseous" bodies are not sufficiently tangible and substantial for Sir A. Conan Doyle. He must have a "body like our own." *A fortiori*, then, this must be a material body. What, then, has become of the absolute destruction of Materialism?[1]

I return to what I have before said. An immaterial entity is an unthinkable thing for the human understanding. We speak of motion, thought, sensations—such as smell, *e.g.*—as immaterial, but these are not entities; they have no independent individual existence apart from matter. There can be no motion without something moved, nor do we know anything of thought or sensation apart from the brain.

But I shall be asked: Do you deny the possibility of the existence of an immaterial entity just because your very limited intelligence can form no conception of it? Not so. It is reasonable to suppose that many things exist in the uncharted universe which are beyond human understanding. But if I am told that a thing can "both be and not be in the same sense at the same time," although I am totally unable to conceive the possibility of such a thing, I can only say that, since the proposition appears to me to be a mere delirium of the mind, it is mere waste of time to give a thought to it. Now, to postulate an independent immaterial body, possessing substance, extension, form, tangibility, and visibility—to

[1] It appears that spirits may "partly materialize themselves" upon occasion (p. 117), thus becoming, for the time being, partly material and partly immaterial.

say nothing of its sleeping and taking food and wearing clothes—does not, perhaps, actually involve a contradiction in terms, though I doubt whether it would be inaccurate so to describe it; but I find myself so utterly unable to form any rational conception of it that to entertain any *belief* in its existence is simply impossible for me. Immaterial entities *may* exist, though I am unable to conceive of them. But to entertain a belief in an alleged something that conveys no intelligible idea to me at all is really beyond my power. It is, therefore, useless for me to try to reason about such unintelligible supposed entities. *Non credo quia impossibile—i.e.*, I have no belief in it because it is impossible to hold such belief.[1]

I once asked a lady where she conceived the spirits to dwell. She replied at once: "In the fourth dimension." Now, we know what we mean when we say that space (and, therefore, matter, as we know it) has three dimensions—viz., length, breadth, and thickness. To conceive of a being having existence in one only of these known dimensions is, as I venture to think, beyond the power of human intelligence. But to postulate the existence of a being not in any one, or any two, of these known dimensions, or in these known dimensions at all, but in *one* dimension, and that an assumed and utterly unknown, if not also utterly inconceivable, dimension, does not strike one as being a particularly rational form of belief! Still,

[1] It is worthy of note that there are dogs—of course, as spiritual, immaterial entities—in the spirit world (p. 157); and if dogs, why not other animals? I do not see where it is possible to draw the line. Perhaps there are plant-spirits also. Raymond had the spirit of his dog "Curly" with him. "He's got a cat, too," said "Feda"; "plenty of animals, he says. He hasn't seen any lions or tigers, but he sees horses, cats, dogs, and birds." No doubt there are snakes also, and insects; but let us hope the snakes have no venom and the wasps no sting. (See *Raymond*, p. 203.)

as we now hear so much about this "fourth dimension" it may, perhaps, be worth while to say a few words on the subject.

Professor Huxley wrote: "It is true that I cannot conceive four dimensions in space, and, therefore, for me the whole affair is unreal. But I have known men of great intellectual powers who seemed to have no difficulty either in conceiving them, or, at any rate, in imagining how they could conceive them."[1] In this matter I must be content "to err" with Professor Huxley, for I certainly cannot conceive four dimensions in space. There is, I am aware, a geometry of four dimensions, but that does not in any way help us to understand the matter. If one postulates certain premises—if, for instance, one assumes the existence of a universe where "a nut can be turned inside out by simple flexion," as a mathematician once put it[2]—then, of course, certain conclusions must follow. But the initial difficulty of forming a conception of space of four dimensions still remains for those who cannot boast of an intelligence superior to that of the late Professor Huxley.

There is a little book called *Another World*, by A. T. Schofield, M.D. (Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1897), which purports to give us some instruction in this matter. We are first to consider "The Land of No Dimensions," then "The Land of One Dimension," then "The Land of Two Dimensions," then "The Land of Three Dimensions," until we come, finally, to "The Land of Four Dimensions." Here we read (p. 6): "*No dimension*, or *size in no direction*, is represented mathematically by a

[1] *Essays on Controverted Questions* (Macmillan, 1892), p. 124.

[2] Mr. Spottiswoode, many years ago, at a meeting of the British Association. What is meant by turning a nut inside out by simple flexion is beyond my poor powers of comprehension.

point, which is an object described as having no parts or magnitude." We are then told (p. 9) to "imagine a world or universe consisting entirely and absolutely of a single POINT, a country which therefore possesses neither length, breadth, depth, nor height. Imagine (*if you can*[1]) the sole being in such a world, and observe what his experience would be." The author then quotes from another small book, called *Flatland*, as follows: "He is himself his own world, his own universe; of any other than himself he can form no conception; he knows not length, or breadth, or height, for he has no experience of them; he has no cognizance even of the number two; for he is himself one and all, *being really nothing*."[2]

We are, therefore, asked to imagine, *if we can* (the writer does well to insert the parenthesis), a "being" in that which has neither parts nor magnitude—*i.e.*, a being who is "really nothing" existing in nothing! And this "world of no dimensions" is called by the author "Pointland." I leave it to the reader to say whether or not "the whole affair," as Professor Huxley would say, is not futile in the extreme, so far, at any rate, as "the world of no dimensions" is concerned.

But from "the world of no dimensions" we are asked to proceed in imagination to the "world of two dimensions"—from "Pointland" to "Lineland." We are invited "to picture a world of one dimension—a universe that consists only of innumerable straight lines, long and short, all arranged in one and the same interminable straight line—nothing else at all, no deviation to right or left, no right or left even existing to this linear world, still less any height or depth" (p. 12). Then we are told: "If one end of these creatures or lines be furnished with an eye, it is obvious they will each see the end of the

[1] My italics. [2] My italics.

line next in front of them, which will be a simple point. None, therefore, in this line (or world) can ever see anything beyond a point. To see a line, one must obviously be out of the line (or the Land of One Dimension) altogether" (p. 13).

The moral is obvious. Just as a "Point-being" cannot imagine a world of one dimension, so a "Line-being" cannot imagine a world of two dimensions, still less a world of three dimensions. In the same way *we*, who know only space of three dimensions, cannot imagine a world of four dimensions; but that does not prove that a world of four dimensions has no existence. Let us apply the lesson of the Point being and the Line being to ourselves, and "pour contempt on all our pride."

But stay. Let us examine the propositions enunciated by this author a little further. These "Line" beings, which are only length without breadth, are, in the first place, supposed to be furnished with eyes—also, of course, "length-without-breadth" eyes. Then each of them will see one thing, and one thing only—viz., "the end of the line next in front of them, which will be a simple point." But a point is that which has neither parts nor magnitude —*i.e.*, as we have already been told, "really nothing"! And what is a line? Let us take away this "end of the line next in front," and what do we get? Another point. That is to say, these imaginary lines are but a series of points; that is, a series of non-entities. In other words, a "line" itself—"length without breadth"—is "really nothing," for $O^n = O$.

With a view to making things "clear," the author writes: "Place your eye at the end of any straight line (a needle or knitting needle), and you will only see a single point" (p. 14). Yes, but the point of a needle is a point having three dimensions, just as the smallest

microscopic point has still three dimensions—viz., length, breadth, and thickness.

This again illustrates the futility of "the whole affair." Everybody who is acquainted with Euclid knows that, for the purposes of plane geometry, we begin by defining "a point" as "that which has no parts, or which has no magnitude," and "a line" as "length without breadth," and "a superficies" as "that which has only length and breadth"; but we do not, therefore, conceive these things to be entities, having real independent existence. What we mean is that when we are dealing with a line we intend to fix our attention solely on its length, leaving its breadth out of account; and when we are dealing with a "superficies" we intend to fix our attention solely on its surface—*i.e.*, on its length and its breadth; and since, until we come to the Eleventh Book, we are dealing with plane geometry only, we, of course, take no account of "thickness." In other words, a point is not to be supposed to have any *size*, but only *position;* a line is not to be supposed to have any *breadth* or *thickness*, but only *length;* a surface is not to be supposed to have any *thickness*, but only *length* and *breadth*. But these figments of the imagination do nothing towards enabling us to conceive "beings" of "no dimension," or of "one dimension," or of "two dimensions," as having real objective existence; still less do they enable us to conceive, or give us any warrant to believe in, space of four dimensions, or "beings" having existence in space of one dimension, and that the fourth or unknown dimension![1] Yet, so far as I can gather, we are asked

[1] Nevertheless, we have been told that "there is really no more difficulty in conceiving four-dimensional shapes, when we go about it in the right way, than in conceiving the idea of solid shapes; nor is there any mystery about it." See *A New Era of Thought*, by Charles Howard Hinton (Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1888), to which

to believe that the "spirits" of departed men and animals exist in this unknown fourth dimension, and are really by our side, and—according to some spiritistic teachers, at all events—can see us, although we cannot see them unless in cases where a medium has enabled them to "materialize" or "partly materialize."

But here we are confronted by another recent publication purporting to give us a revelation of the spirit world—viz., *Raymond; or, Life and Death*, by Sir Oliver Lodge, to which I have already made allusion. How far does this work bear out the assertion of Sir A. Conan Doyle, that Spiritualism is absolutely fatal to Materialism? I turn once more to yet another book by a believer in the existence of "spirits" in this world—to wit, *Some Revelations as to "Raymond,"* by "A Plain Citizen," who describes himself as "author of some recognized scientific text-books," and his work as "an authoritative statement." Here I read: "The references to gravity, etc., show that the spirit world to which Raymond is alleged to have gone is constituted of matter in the mundane sense of the word.....The material constitution of the spirit-bodies is also a part of the story presenting insuperable difficulties" (p. 171). As to the spirit world, according to *Raymond*, "its inhabitants are material beings, solid and of certain bulk" (p. 174).

the reader who is fond of intellectual puzzles may be referred. I confess I am quite unable to follow the reasoning, and therefore am quite prepared to be told that I am writing about things which I do not understand. This, indeed, is quite true; but then Professor Huxley, who wrote at a later date than that of Mr. Hinton's book, could not, as he tells us, understand them either. These higher things, then, must, it seems, be confined to a small esoteric circle of supermen—especially super-mathematicians—who can conceive of space of four and possibly of five or six dimensions (for why not?); but I only profess to write for ordinary thinking mortals of average human intelligence, not superior to that of the late Professor Huxley.

The description given of the spirit world "effectually rules out of court all such attempts at explanation as 'astral' bodies, 'ethereal entities,'[1] space of four dimensions, etc. Raymond, the spirit, is, if the New Gospel is to be accepted, just as real and solid, in the mundane sense of the terms, as was Raymond, the young officer in the Flemish trenches. He can kick and romp and scuffle and pinch himself. He has eyes that can see, and ears that can hear, and teeth that can bite. He has hair that grows. He has books to read. He attends lectures in halls of learning. He goes to religious services in church-like buildings fitted with pews. He 'dozes.' He lives in a real house in a real street, and he wears real clothes.[2] He plays with a real dog" (p. 175).

"The spirit of Raymond, we are told by the New Gospel, has a material body—of a rarer nature, perhaps, than ordinary human bodies, but subject to gravity, and occupying at every moment a definite position in space" (p. 202). "Spirits are embodied beings, each of which has a bulk equal to what he had on earth, and thus occupies a certain definite volume of space which changes its locality from time to time in accordance with the spirit's movements. The bodies, moreover, are subject to gravitation, or serve as the vehicles for energy, force,

[1] But, as I have already shown, the "ethereal" is not immaterial.

[2] "Just why a spirit should require clothes," says this writer, "is by no means obvious" (p. 165). Sir A. Conan Doyle, as we have already seen, thinks it quite natural that spirits should wear clothes, "since there is no reason why modesty should disappear with our new forms." Adam and Eve, before the fall, were, the Bible tells us, "naked and unashamed" in their pristine innocence. It appears to be otherwise with the "spirits," although "spirits" have, it seems, no sex! At any rate, they do not propagate their species. Why, then, should they be ashamed of their spiritual nudity?

and momentum" (p. 169; and see *Raymond*, p. 194 *et seq.*).

All this—and much more might be quoted—is anything but "fatal to Materialism." It would appear, therefore, that the New Gospel according to Sir Oliver Lodge differs—and differs *materially*—from the New Gospel according to Sir A. Conan Doyle.

"A Plain Citizen" has presented us with a remarkable work. He assails *Raymond* with some very telling and destructive criticism;[1] in fact, to the "plain man" he appears to knock the bottom out of the book pretty effectually. Nevertheless, just as Mr. Mallock, after having knocked theology (or "religion as a credible doctrine") prone in the dust, proceeds to set it up again—or tries to do so—in his last three chapters, so this writer ends, by informing us that, in his opinion, Sir O. Lodge, in spite of all the materialistic and other absurdities of *Raymond*, has succeeded in establishing a great many things, which he embodies in fifteen propositions, the first of which is "The existence in this world of invisible, intangible, intelligent personalities who in some cases assert themselves to be the discarnate spirits of deceased human beings." Here I note that this author does not speak of these spirits as *immaterial*. A material substance (hydrogen gas, *e.g.*) may, of course, be not only invisible, but also intangible, to all ordinary perception. I note, further, with sorrow that we are told in this "authoritative statement" that Sir O. Lodge has also established "the *certainty* that many of the communications made by the several spirits, including

[1] See (*e.g.*) his critical examination of the "Honolulu" incident, of which so much has been made by believers (ch. viii). I might here also direct attention to an excellent little book, *Reflections on "Raymond,"* by Walter Cook (Grant Richards, 1917).

Raymond himself, were untrue." It is sad, indeed, that we should at times be made the victims of "lying spirits."[1]

Another thing which I note with pain about the spirits is the remarkable levity with which they so frequently talk and behave themselves. Now, if a husband who had lived in love and happiness with his wife were able to hold communication with her after her decease I should expect her spirit to speak to him, addressing him by his pet name, in some such way as this: "Dear, doubt not that I am happy where I am"—if such, indeed, were the case—"or that we shall meet again some day"; and to speak further words of love and comfort, even though she were, for some unknown reason, unable to give any details of the abode and environment of spirit-life. But how seldom do we hear of spirit communications such as this! Let us take an example. The famous medium, Mrs. Piper, held a sitting with Sir Oliver Lodge, at his own house, on December 19, 1889.[2] Here she spoke

[1] The fact that "A Plain Citizen" is himself a believer in Spiritism makes his destructive criticism of *Raymond* more valuable, since it cannot be said that he is affected by the prejudice of the sceptic. Yet I fear he is not the embodiment of common sense. He makes one statement, for instance, which is really silly—when he asserts that it is "understood that in our lawyer-ridden Parliament the great majority of Acts are drafted *with a deliberate purpose of creating business for the legal profession*"! Nobody who knew anything of Parliament and its ways would make such a preposterous assertion, nor can I conceive any sensible man subscribing to it. Moreover, his remarks concerning the alleged power of man to interfere with the uniformity of nature (as by putting out a hand to catch a falling apple, *e.g.!*), and the "miraculous" command of matter by our will, appear to me utterly fallacious. Shakespeare knew better when he wrote:

> "this is an art
> Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
> The art itself is nature."

[2] It must not be forgotten that Sir O. Lodge became a "spiritualist," and had frequent sittings with Mrs. Piper and other

under the "control" of "Dr. Phinuit," the (supposed) French physician, and, being asked about "Uncle William," Phinuit replies as follows: "Never saw a spirit so happy and contented. He was depressed in life—had the blues like old Harry, but he's quite contented now. *It's a damn sight better here.*" What an answer to be given to a reverend inquirer from the spirit world![1] And Raymond not seldom comes romping and "rolling with laughter."[2] He talks of "Tommy rot," and says "it bucks him up when he gets through."[3] The spirits do not seem to take themselves seriously, and, for my part, I find it impossible to take them seriously as witnesses to the reality of existence after death when they so behave and speak.

Tables, also, behave like animate beings, and do very extraordinary things. At one time a table, we are told, appears to want to get on to Lady Lodge's lap; at another time, when Raymond plays off a little joke on the sitters, the table shakes with laughter[4]—a new illustration of Horace's *solventur risu tabulae!* Further, the double-medium system of communication, of which we hear so much in *Raymond*, does not seem to carry conviction to our intelligence. First, there is a medium *here*—Mrs. Leonard, for example. Through her, when in the "trance" state, communications are received from Raymond. But not from Raymond directly. There must be another medium on "the other side," who is called a "control" (see p. 357). This spiritual medium,

mediums, long before *Raymond* was published—indeed, long before the recent war.

[1] See *The Evidence for the Supernatural*, by Dr. Ivor Tuckett. Appendix Q.

[2] *Raymond*, p. 274. [3] *Ibid*, pp. 254, 266.

[4] "They enjoyed the joke together, and the table shook as if laughing" (*Raymond*, p. 224).

in the case of Raymond, is generally the spirit of "a little Indian girl," who goes by the childish name of "Feda." Feda seems always ready to come at call, in order to make communications from Raymond; and, although Indian, she speaks English quite well, but with a childish lisp and not always grammatically. She calls Sir Oliver Lodge "Soliver," talks of a "Medie," and says "cos." Asked "Is Raymond here?" she replies, "Course"—or "cos"—"Yamond's here." She tells Lady Lodge, "Feda love you and Soliver best of all." And so forth, and so forth. All this is very remarkable, and gives to think—and, perhaps, to smile.

Are we to say, then, that Spiritualism is all fraud, trickery, credulity, and self-delusion? I, for one, should not like to commit myself to any such assertion. I have friends in whose integrity I cannot doubt who tell me of things within their own experience which I cannot explain. One friend, whose sanity is undoubted—in fact, she has been noted for strong character and strength of mind—has spoken, as she tells me, not in a dark room, but in daylight, with her deceased husband and her deceased brother, the latter a very old friend of mine. A doctor, not unknown to fame, tells me that he was an entire sceptic, but after years of investigation he is now convinced of the truth of Spiritualism. Seventy per cent. of it, he declares, is fraud, but the remainder is genuine. He, too, has heard voices of the departed. He has spoken with an old patient, now deceased, whose voice he could not fail to recognize. In the presence of the same medium a spirit spoke Russian to a Russian person there present, and another spirit spoke Serbian to a Serbian diplomat, although the medium herself knew neither Russian nor Serbian!

I own I am not myself greatly impressed with these

statements; yet one would think it almost impossible for a wife to be deceived as to her husband's voice, or for a sister as to the voice of her only brother with whom she had been brought up, and with whom she was on the closest terms of affection. But when my doctor friend tells me of a medium who can command a musical-box either to play or to stop at pleasure—a command which he has seen obeyed under conditions which, in his opinion, make trickery an impossibility—I must own I am filled with what the believers stigmatize as "superstitious incredulity." It appears to me more reasonable to believe that this apparent miracle is caused by a trick, difficult or impossible though it may be to detect it, than by some mysterious psychic power. It appears to me, moreover, that if the evidence in support of all these spiritualistic phenomena is strong enough to compel us to accept them as genuine, then must we equally be compelled to believe in magic—white or black—in necromancy, demonology, astrology, witchcraft, crystal-gazing, clairvoyance, and second-sight; for there is, surely, as much and as cogent evidence in support of all these as there is in support of Spiritualism! In fact, a very wide field of belief seems to lie before us.

There are, for instance, all the miracles of the Roman Catholic Church. Take, among others, the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius. That seems to be as well-attested a phenomenon as any of the phenomena of Spiritualism. Newman tells us that Sir Humphrey Davy witnessed it, and was convinced that nothing physical would account for it. Then there is the blood of St. Pantaloon, which also liquefies on his feast day in June; nay, more, which liquefies, and even *boils*, whenever a portion of the True Cross is brought into the church where his blood is preserved. There is plenty of

evidence—I do not say "proof"!—in support of this phenomenon also. Where can we draw the line without laying ourselves open to the charge of "superstitious incredulity"?

There may be—doubtless there are—forces which are unknown to us, and of which we have no conception; and it *may* be that some of these "spiritualistic" phenomena are caused by such hidden and mysterious forces. It *may* be that there is existence for men, and for all animals, after death; and it *may* be that "the discarnate spirits of deceased human beings," if such there be, can sometimes and in some way communicate with some of us. It *may* be. But, as I have already said, it is no part of my intention to inquire into the truth or falsehood of Spiritualism. Such an inquiry is no part of the design of these "First Essays in Rationalism." Here, therefore, I will leave the matter. For the present, and as far as this work is concerned, I will be content to say once more: "I do not know. I await more light."

The majority of mankind will, I apprehend, decline to accept this position. Those who must always insist on "Yea" or "Nay"—on "it is so" or "it is not so"—will reject it with scorn. Mr. Bernard Sickert, for example, concludes an article on "Spiritualism" in the *English Review* (November, 1918) as follows: "That remarkable masterpiece of Morley Roberts, *Time and Thomas Waring*, contains a humorous but very just criticism on the Agnostic attitude. The Agnostic says: 'I have not seen my way hitherto to decide one way or the other whether there is or is not a Bengal tiger on the roof.' Would it not be more honest, says Waring, to answer: 'There is no Bengal tiger on the roof'?"

I answer: Yes, if you *know* there is no Bengal tiger

on the roof; but if you do not know whether or not there is a Bengal tiger on the roof, the only honest answer is: "I do not know."[1]

Note.—Just as the truth or falsehood of Spiritualism is beyond the scope of my inquiry, so also is the truth or falsehood of Telepathy. On that subject, therefore, I would here venture to make but very few remarks. It has been said by some that unless we believe in Telepathy we are bound to believe in Spiritualism; or, as it has been recently put by an exponent of this doctrine, "belief in thought transference (or telepathy) enables us to keep Spiritualism at arms' length." This I believe to be entirely fallacious. It is quite possible that both belief in Telepathy and belief in Spiritualism are equally unfounded. It may well be that the alleged facts and "manifestations" upon which such beliefs are based require much further investigation before either the one or the other of these doctrines can be said to be a scientifically proved discovery. (See "Spiritualism and Telepathy," by Sir Bryan Donkin, in the *Literary Guide*, August, 1919.) Further, to those who tell us that there

[1] This, however, we do know, for it is patent to every honest inquirer—namely, that belief in Spiritualism is incompatible with belief in Christianity as it has been taught by all the Christian Churches. Take, for example, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Christianity teaches that at a certain pre-ordained time the dead shall rise again with their bodies, the "natural body" having, indeed, become a "spiritual body," but being nevertheless, in some mysterious way, the same body. But it is obvious that this doctrine differs fundamentally from the teaching of the Spiritualists as expounded by Sir A. Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge, and other apostles of "The New Revelation." Certain attempts which have been made to reconcile the two doctrines are not a little painful to read. Like the writings of the old Biblical Harmonists, they show into what dishonest subterfuges otherwise honest men may be led when preconceived religious ideas are at variance with the dictates of integrity.

is really nothing extraordinary in Telepathy, who speak of "brain waves," and refer us to the analogy of wireless telegraphy, I would commend the words of a well-known scientist, who is himself a convinced believer in the reality of the phenomena of Telepathy: "Let us for a moment examine this analogy of telepathy to wireless telegraphy. Even if we assume the so-called 'brain-waves' to be infinitely minute waves in the ether that fills all space, they would still obey what is called 'the law of inverse squares'—that is to say, spreading on every side in ever-expanding waves, they would decay in proportion to the square of the distance from their source. Thus, at a thousand yards away from the source, the effect produced on any receiver would be a million times less than the effect upon the same receiver a yard away from the originating source. Hence, to transmit waves over great distances through free space requires tremendous energy in the originating source of these waves, otherwise the waves would be so enfeebled when they reached the receiver that it could not detect them. Now, we have no evidence to show that any tremendous mental effort is required on the part of the agent when experiments on thought transference are conducted at great distances apart. And what, on the brain-wave theory, must be the mental energy emanating from a dying person to transmit a mental impression from himself to a friend on the other side of the globe?—for such cases are on record. There are several other reasons that could be urged against any physical mode of transmitting telepathy; thus the incidence of 'brain-waves,' if such existed, would be felt by great numbers of people, and not by one or two percipients, as is the case [in fact, these "brain wave" messages might be "tapped" like the messages of wireless

telegraphy], and they would only create a faint, but exact, image of their source, which is not the case in telepathy." So writes Professor Barrett in *Psychical Research*, a little volume published in the Home University Library, at p. 108. His own conclusion is that these "supernormal phenomena.....do not belong to the material plane, and therefore the laws of the physical universe are inapplicable to them. It is hopeless to attempt thus to explain telepathy and other phenomena which transcend knowledge derived from our sense perceptions." If this be true, Telepathy is, like Spiritualism, "supernormal." Why, then, accept one supernormal belief in order to "keep at arms' length" another belief equally supernormal?

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ERRATA

Page 10, line 6, *for* "Walter" *read* "William."

Page 51, line 5 from bottom, omit the parenthesis. The Roman Catholic would, of course, say that the conception of Christ was "immaculate"; but when he speaks of "the Immaculate Conception" he means the distinctive Roman Catholic doctrine with regard to the Conception of the Virgin Mary—an esoteric doctrine which few but Catholics understand. This was an error of the first edition which unfortunately escaped notice.

Page 80 *note, for* "Lady Francis" *read* "Lady Frances."

Page 151, line 10, *for* "J. T. Thomson" *read* "J. A. Thomson."

Page 154, line 2, *for* "antinominal" *read* "antinomial."

Page 166, line 11, *for* "T. A. Thomson" *read* "J. A. Thomson."

Pages 193–94. I have noticed with regret that I have misinterpreted Sir Leslie Stephen. When he wrote, "Theologians revile reason as much as Agnostics," he, of course, meant to say that Theologians revile reason as much as they revile Agnostics, not that both Theologians and Agnostics revile reason, as the sentence (which, it must be owned, is an unfortunately constructed one) appears at first sight to suggest. I take much blame for the error, which appeared in the first edition of the work, and which I failed to notice when preparing the second.

Page 329, line 4 from bottom, *for* "shall have winged their upward flight" *read* "shall have sped their rapid flight."

ADDENDUM

Page 175. The following interesting passage from Montaigne, on "Time," might have been appropriately quoted here: "Time is a fleeting thing, and which appeareth as a shadow, with the matter ever gliding, alwaies fluent, without ever being stable or permanent; to whom rightly belong these termes, *Before* and *After*: and it *Hath Beene*, or *Shall be*. Which at first sight doth manifestly shew that *it is not a thing which is; for it were great sottishnesse, and apparent falsehood, to say that that is which is not yet in being, or that already hath ceased from being*." See *An Apologie of Raymond Sebond*, *Essays*, Book II, ch. 12 (Florio's translation).

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