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G. LOWES DICKINSON

LETTERS

FROM JOHN CHINAMAN

and other Essays

With an Introduction

by

E. M. FORSTER



London

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

** The other essays are .*

AN ESSAY ON THE
CIVILIZATIONS OF
INDIA, CHINA & JAPAN
THE CONTRIBUTION OF
ANCIENT GREECE TO
MODERN LIFE
RELIGION: A CRITICISM
AND A FORECAST
RELIGION AND
IMMORTALITY

Here are collected together for the first time five of Lowes Dickinson's well-known works. The first three illustrate Lowes Dickinson's profound response to all that was beautiful and noble in the civilizations of ancient Greece and the ancient East, *Letters From John Chinaman*, which created such a stir when it was originally published, was probably his finest prose achievement. *The Contribution of Ancient Greece to Modern Life* was his last work.

The last two groups of essays in this volume, *Religion; a Criticism and a Forecast* and *Religion and Immortality*, bring together Lowes Dickinson's religious and philosophic writing (including the well-known Ingersoll Lecture on "Is Immortality Desirable? "), He believed that though religion may not be true, it is necessary to Society. Distrusting intuition in these matters, he preferred to proceed by the intellect; refusing to defend dogmas and creeds, he would defend mythology, but what he meant by mythology was not mere fiction, but a first apprehension of some Reality.

The lover of Lowes Dickinson's work will welcome this collected edition; to those unacquainted it provides a fine introduction to the work of a political philosopher of singular integrity and one of the finest, modern prose stylists.

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INTRODUCTION

GOLDSWORTHY LOWES DICKINSON (1862--1932) was a Cambridge don whose life was outwardly calm and academic. Appearances can deceive and he was really in close and constant touch with the problems of his day and a prophet of much that has happened since his death. He was, it is true, a scholar, a philosopher, and something of a mystic, he was, in his private life, a charming and considerate companion, who understood friendship and valued and respected the young. But he was also a vigorous student of public affairs, he went about the world and learnt, he was horrified by the coming of the 1914 war and of the threat of worse war to follow, and he worked with all his might for the League of Nations and can claim to be one of its originators. Diversely gifted, he was an individual who managed to live both for himself and for humanity, and perhaps that is the only sort of life worth living.

Dickinson's hopes failed, and he will always be dismissed as a failure by the type of person who used to hail Mussolini as a success; the E-type is still prevalent. But when mankind has digested its recent achievements, when it has gone everywhere and done everything, and has encountered at the end of every vista its own blood-stained face, it may perhaps pause and try to think. Should it do so, it will certainly listen to the message, and—more important still—will hear the accents of Lowes Dickinson, who believed in reason, integrity, tolerance, compassion, love, and art (yes: in art), and who had the mental strength to fight and suffer with his eyes open.

The following essays, which have been selected by his publishers, well illustrate his interest in the East, and in religion, and also indicate his debt to Ancient Greece. But he was many-sided, and some of his aspects have necessarily been missed out. There is, for instance, the mass of political work which culminated in *The International Anarchy*. There are the dialogues

amongst which the exquisite *Modern Symposium*, though not technically a dialogue, must be classed. There is the fantasy of *The Magic Flute*. Perhaps the present selection may lead readers to his longer books and if they should wish to know more about his life there is a detailed biography of him, written by myself.

E. M. FORSTER

NOTES ON THE ESSAYS

Letters from John Chinaman.—This, the most famous of his shorter works, was published in 1901. The Boxer riots, and the European expeditions to suppress them, were in his mind when he wrote. The sympathy and insight displayed gained him a durable reputation in China, though he had not then visited that country. In America it was actually mistaken for the work of an oriental, and W. J. Bryan the politician wrote a refutation of it in which he observed that the author had clearly never seen the inside of a Christian home. Dickinson's feeling for China was profound and he once amused an English audience by saying: "I am speaking to you about China, not because I know anything about the subject nor because I once visited the country, but because in a previous existence, I actually was a Chinaman."

An Essay on the Civilisations of India, China, and Japan.—He had been awarded an Albert Kahn Travelling Fellowship in 1912 and here is his Report to the Trustees. Though not well known this is a very important essay: the differences between the East and the West have never been more skilfully, nor more respectfully, analysed. His heart belonged to China. He was also sympathetic to Japan, while foreseeing the disasters which would come upon her through her rulers. With India he had no natural affinity; I was with him there, and I can still remember him cowering under the great sandstone jyrta of a temple, JKPfilkiby the rqrptrosity of its forms.

The Contribution of Ancient Greece to Modern Life.—A popular lecture delivered at the Summer School at Cambridge in 1932. His last published work. He dealt more fully with the civilisation of Greece in *The Greek View of Life* (1896) and in *Plato and his Dialogues* (1931).

Religion; A Criticism and a Forecast.—Essays published together in 1905. He gives an account of their origin, and their character, in his introduction.

Religion and Immortality.—Essays published together in 1911. The most important is the third "Is Immortality Desirable?" which he delivered as a lecture at Harvard during his second American tour. The last essay, "Euthanasia," though not in itself very satisfactory, exemplifies his mystic tendency. It opens with a quotation from Goethe and closes with one from Shelley; these two writers were, with Plato, his guides through life.

E. M. F.

Letters from John Chinaman

RECENT events in China have brought into new prominence at once the fundamental antagonism between Eastern and Western civilisation, and that ignorance and contempt of the one for the other which is mainly responsible for the present situation. In the face of the tragedy that is being enacted, I have long held my peace. But a growing sense of indignation, and a hope, perhaps illusory that I may contribute to remove certain misunderstandings, have impelled me at last to open my lips, and to lay before the British public some views which have long been crying for utterance. Of the immediate crisis I do not propose to speak. It is my object rather to promote a juster estimate of my countrymen and their policy, by explaining as far as I am able the way in which we regard Western civilisation, and the reasons we have for desiring to exclude its influences. For such a task I conceive myself to be not altogether unfit. A long residence in England gives me some right to speak of your institutions; while absence from my own country has not disqualified me to speak of ours. A Chinaman remains always a Chinaman; and much as I admire in some of its aspects the achievement of Western civilisation, I have yet seen nothing which could make me regret that I was born a citizen of the East. To Englishmen this may seem a strange confession. You are accustomed to regard us as barbarians, and not unnaturally, for it is only on the occasions when we murder your compatriots that your attention is powerfully drawn towards us. From snrhr spasrnodic outbreaks, you are apt overhastily to i n f e r that we are a nation of cold-blooded assassins: a conclusion as reasonable as would be an inference from the conduct of your troops in China to the general character of Western civilisation. We are not to be judged by the acts of our mobs, nor even, I may add, by those

of our Government; for the Government in China does not represent the nation. Yet even those acts (strongly as they are condemned by all educated Chinamen) deserve, I venture to think, on the part of Europeans, a consideration more grave, and a less intemperate reprobation, than they have hitherto received among you. For they are expressions of a feeling which is, and must always be, the most potent factor in our relations with the West—our profound mistrust and dislike of your civilisation. This feeling you, naturally enough, attribute to prejudice and ignorance. In reality, I venture to think, it is based upon reason; and for this point of view I would ask the serious and patient consideration of my readers.

Our civilisation is the oldest in the world. It does not follow that it is the best; but neither, I submit, does it follow that it is the worst. On the contrary, such antiquity is, at any rate, a proof that our institutions have guaranteed to us a stability for which we search in vain among the nations of Europe. But not only is our civilisation stable, it also embodies, as we think, a moral order; while in yours we detect only an economic chaos. Whether your religion be better than ours, I do not at present dispute; but it is certain that it has less influence on your society. You profess Christianity, but your civilisation has never been Christian; whereas ours is Confucian through and through. But to say that it is Confucian, is to say that it is moral; or, at least (for I do not wish to beg the question), that moral relations are those which it primarily contemplates. Whereas, with you (so it seems to us) economic relations come first; and upon these you endeavour afterwards, to graft as much morality as they will admit.

This point I may illustrate by a comparison between your view of the family and ours. To you, so far as a foreigner can perceive, the family is merely a means for *nourishing and PRO-*tOTflg the child until he is of age to look after himself. As early as may be, you send your boys away to a boarding school, where they quickly emanqgate themselves from the influences of their home. As soon as they are of age, you send them out, as you say, to "make their fortune"; and from that moment, often

enough, as they cease to be dependent on their parents, so they cease to recognise obligations towards them. They may go where they will, do what they will, earn and spend as they choose; and it is at their own option whether or no they maintain their family ties. With you the individual is the unit, and all the units are free. No one is tied, but also no one is routed. Your society, to use your own word, is "progressive"; you are always "moving on." Everyone feels it a duty (and in most cases it is a necessity) to strike out a new line for himself. To remain in the position in which you were born you consider a disgrace; *a*. man, to be a man, must venture, struggle, compete and win. To this characteristic of your society is to be attributed, no doubt, its immense activity, and its success in all material arts. But to this, also, is due the feature that most strikes a Chinaman—its unrest, its confusion, its lack (as we think) of morality. Among you no one is contented, no one has leisure to live, so intentions are all on increasing the means of living. The "cash-nexus" (to borrow a phrase of one of your own writers) is the only relation you recognise among men.

Now, to us of the East all this is the mark of a barbarous society. We measure the degree of civilisation not by accumulation of the means of living, but by the character and value of the life lived. Where there are no humane and stable relations, no reverence for the past, no respect even for the present, but only a cupidinous ravishment of the future, there, we think, there is no true society. And we would not if we could rival you in your wealth, your sciences and your arts, if we must do so at the cost of imitating your institutions.

In all these matters, our own procedure is the opposite to yours. We look first to the society and then to the individual. Among us, it is a rule that a man is born into precisely those relations in which he is to continue during the course of his life. As he begins, so he ends, a member of his family group; and to this condition the whole theory and practice of his life conforms. He is taught to worship his ancestors, to honour and obey his parents, and to prepare himself from an early

age for the duties of a husband and a father. Marriage does not dissolve the family; the husband remains, and the wife becomes a member of his group of kinsmen. And this group is the social unit. It has its common plot of ground, its common altar and rites, its tribunal for settling disputes among its members. No man in China is isolated, save by his own fault. If it is not so easy for him to grow rich as with you, neither is it so easy for him to starve; if he has not the motive to compete, neither has he the temptation to cheat and to oppress. Free at once from the torment of ambition and the apprehension of distress, he has leisure to spare from the acquisition of the means of living for life itself. He has both the instinct and the opportunity to appreciate the gifts of Nature, to cultivate manners, and to enter into humane and disinterested relations with his fellows. The result is a type which we cannot but regard as superior, both morally and aesthetically, to the great bulk of your own citizens in Europe. And while we recognise the greatness of your practical and scientific achievements, yet we find it impossible unreservedly to admire a civilisation which has produced manners so coarse, morals so low, and an appearance so unlovely as those with which we are constantly confronted in your great cities. Admitting that we are not what you call a progressive people, we yet perceive that progress may be bought too dear. We prefer our own moral to your material advantages; and we are determined to cling to the institutions which, we believe, insure us the former, even at the risk of excluding ourselves from the latter.

IN my last letter I endeavoured to give some general account of the salient differences between your civilisation and ours. Such differences have led inevitably to conflict; and recent events might seem to give some colour to the idea that in that conflict it is we who have been the aggressors. But nothing in

fact can be further from the truth. Left to ourselves, we should never have sought intercourse with the West. We have no motive to do so; for we desire neither to proselytise nor to trade. We believe, it is true, that our religion is more rational than yours, our morality higher, and our institutions more perfect; but we recognise that what is suited to us may be ill adapted to others. We do not conceive that we have a mission to redeem or to civilise the world, still less that that mission is to be accomplished by the methods of fire and sword; and we are thankful enough if we can solve our own problems, without burdening ourselves with those of other people.

And as we are not led to interfere with you by the desire to convert you, so are we not driven to do so by the necessities of trade. Economically, as well as politically, we are sufficient to ourselves. What we consume we produce, and what we produce we consume. We do not require, and we have not sought, the products of other nations; and we hold it no less imprudent than unjust to make war on strangers in order to open their markets. A society, we conceive, that is to be politically stable must be economically independent; and we regard an extensive foreign trade as necessarily a source of social demoralisation.

In these, as in all other points, your principle is the opposite to ours. You believe, not only that your religion is the only true one, but that it is your duty to impose it on all other nations, if need be, at the point of the sword. And this motive of aggression is reinforced by another yet more potent. Economically, your society is so constituted that it is constantly on the verge of starvation. You cannot produce what you need to consume, nor consume what you need to produce. It is matter of life and death to you to find markets in which you may dispose of your manufactures, and from which you may derive your food and raw material. Such a market China is, or might be; and the opening of this market is in fact the motive thinly disguised, of all your dealings with us in recent years. The justice and morality of such a policy I do not propose to

discuss. It is, in fact, the product of sheer material necessity, and upon such a ground it is idle to dispute. I shall confine myself therefore to an endeavour to present our view of the situation, and to explain the motives we have for resenting your aggression.

To the ordinary British trader it seems no doubt a strange thing that we should object to what he describes as the opening out of our national resources. Viewing everything, as he habitually does, from the standpoint of profit and loss, he conceives that if it can be shown that a certain course will lead to the increase of wealth, it follows that that is the course that ought to be adopted. The opening of China to his capital and his trade he believes will have this result; and he concludes that it is our interest to welcome rather than to resist his enterprise. From his point of view he is justified; but his point of view is not ours. We are accustomed, before adopting any grave measure of policy, to estimate its effects not merely on the sum total of our wealth, but (what we conceive to be a very different thing) on our national well-being. You, as always, are thinking of the means of living; we, of the quality of the life lived. And when you ask us, as you do in effect, to transform our whole society, to convert ourselves from a nation of agriculturists to a nation of traders and manufacturers, to sacrifice to an imaginary prosperity our political and economic independence, and to revolutionise not only our industry but our manners, morals, and institutions, we may be pardoned if we first take a critical look at the effects which have been produced among yourselves by the conditions you urge us to introduce in China.

The results of such a survey, we venture to think, are riot encouraging. Like the prince in the fable, you seem to have released from his prison the genie of competition, only to find that you are unable to control him. Your legislation for the past hundred years is a perpetual and fruitless effort to regulate the disorders of your economic system. Your poor, your drunk, your incompetent, your sick, your aged, ride you like a nightmare. You have dissolved all human and personal ties; and you

endeavour, in vain, to replace them by the impersonal activity of the State. The salient characteristic of your civilisation is its irresponsibility. You have liberated forces you cannot control; you are caught yourselves in your own levers and cogs. In every department of business you are substituting for the individual the company, for the workman the tool. The making of dividends is the universal preoccupation; the well-being of the labourer is no one's concern but the State's. And this concern even the State is incompetent to undertake, for the factors by which it is governed are beyond its control. You depend on variations of supply and demand which you can neither determine nor anticipate. The failure of a harvest, the modification of a tariff in some remote country, dislocates the industry of millions, thousands of miles away. You are at die mercy of a prospector's luck, an inventor's genius, a woman's caprice—nay, you are at the mercy of your own instruments. Your capital is alive and cries for food; starve it, and it turns and throttles you. You produce, not because you will, but because you must; you consume, not what you choose, but what is forced upon you. Never was any trade so bound as this which you call free; but it is bound, not by a reasonable will, but by the accumulated irrationality of caprice.

Such is the internal economy of your State, as it presents itself to a Chinaman; and not more encouraging is the spectacle of your foreign relations. Commercial intercourse between nations, it was supposed some fifty years ago, would inaugurate an era of peace; and there appear to be many among you who still cling to this belief. But never was belief more plainly contradicted by the facts. The competition for markets bids fair to be a more fruitful cause of war than was ever in the past the ambition of princes or the bigotry of priests. The peoples of Europe fling themselves, like hungry beasts of prey, on every yet unexploited quarter of the globe. Hitherto they have confined their acts of spoliation to those whom they regard as outside their own pale. But always, while they divide the spoil, they watch one another with a jealous eye; and sooner or later, when there is nothing

*Letters**from**John**Chinaman**B*

left to divide, they will fall upon one another. That is the real meaning of your armaments; you must devour or be devoured. And it is precisely those trade relations, which it was thought would knit you in the bonds of peace, which, by making every one of you cut-throat rivals of the rest, have brought you within reasonable distance of a general war of extermination.

In thus characterising your civilisation, I am not (I think) carried away by a foolish Chauvinism, I do not conceive the inhabitants of Europe to be naturally more foolish and depraved than those of China. On the contrary, it is a cardinal tenet of our faith, that human nature is everywhere the same, and that it is circumstances that make it good or bad. If, then, your economy, internal and external, be really as defective as we conceive, the cause, we think, must be sought not in any radical defect in your national character, but in precisely those political and social institutions which you are urging us to adopt at home. Can you wonder, in the circumstances, that we resist your influence by any means at our command; and that the more intelligent among us, while they regret the violence to which your agents have been exposed, yet feel that it weighs as nothing in the scale, when set against the intolerable evils which would result from the success of your enterprise ?

III

IN one of your journals I recently read that "the civilisation of China" is the ultimate object of the nations of Europe. If so, the methods they adopt to attain their end are singular indeed: but of these I do not trust myself to speak. Looting, wanton destruction, cold-blooded murder and rape, these are things which you do not, I know, here in England approve, which you would prevent, I am convinced, if you could, and which I am willing to set down to the licence of ill-disciplined troops. It is for another purpose than that of idle deprecation that I refer to them in this place. The question always before my mind

when you speak of civilisation is this: What kind of men has your civilisation produced? And to such a question recent events in China seem to suggest an answer not altogether reassuring. But that answer I do not press. It may be that all culture, ours as much as yours, is no more than a veneer; that deep in the den of every human heart lurks the brute, ready to leap on its prey when chance or design has unbarred the gates. We at any rate, in China, lie under the same condemnation as you; and our reproaches, like yours, fly back to the mouths of them that utter them. I pass, therefore, from scenes like these to normal conditions of life. What manner of men, I ask, are we, what manner of men are you, that you should take upon yourselves to call us barbarians?

What manner of men are we? The question is hard to answer. Turning it over in my thoughts, hour after hour, day after day, I can hit on no better device to bring home to you something of what is in my mind than to endeavour to set down here, as faithfully as I can, a picture that never ceases to haunt my memory as I walk in these dreary winter days the streets of your black metropolis.

Far away in the East, under sunshine such as you never saw (for even such light as you have you stain and infect with sooty smoke), on the shore of a broad river stands the house where I was born. It is one among thousands; but every one stands in its own garden, simply painted in white or gray, modest, cheerful and clean. For many miles along the valley, one after the other, they lift their blue- or red-tiled roofs out of a sea of green; while here and there glitters out over a clump of trees the gold enamel of some tall pagoda. The river, crossed by frequent bridges and crowded with barges and junks, bears on its clear stream the traffic of thriving village-markets. For prosperous peasants people all the district, owning and tilling the fields their fathers owned and tilled before them. The soil on which they work, they may say, they and their ancestors have made. For see! almost to the summit what once were barren hills are waving green-with cotton and rice, sugar,

oranges and tea. Water drawn from the river-bed girdles the slopes with silver; and falling from channel to channel in a thousand bright cascades, plashing in cisterns, chuckling in pipes, soaking and oozing in the soil, distributes freely to all; alike fertility, verdure and life. Hour after hour you may traverse, by tortuous paths, over tiny bridges, the works of the generations who have passed, the labours of their children of to-day; till you reach the point where man succumbs and Nature has her way, covering the highest crags with a mantle of azure and gold and rose, gardenia, clematis, azalea growing luxuriantly wild. How often here have I sat for hours in a silence so intense that, as one of our poets has said, "you may hear the shadows of the trees rustling on the ground"; a silence broken only now and again from far below by voices of labourers calling across the watercourses, or, at evening or dawn, by the sound of gongs summoning to worship from the temples in the valley. Such silence! Such sounds! Such perfume! Such colour! The senses respond to their objects; they grow exquisite to a degree you cannot well conceive in your northern climate; and beauty pressing in from without moulds the spirit and mind insensibly to harmony with herself. If in China we have manners, if we have art, if we have morals, the reason, to those who can see, is not far to seek. Nature has taught us; and so far, we are only more fortunate than you. But, also, we have had the grace to learn her lesson; and that, we think, we may ascribe to our intelligence. For, consider, here in this lovely valley live thousands of souls without any law save that of custom, without any rule save that of their own hearths. Industrious they are, as you hardly know industry in Europe; but it is the industry of free men working for their kith and kin, on the lands they received from their fathers, to transmit, enriched by their labours, to their sons. They have no other ambition; they do not care to amass wealth; and if in each generation some must needs go out into the world, it is with the hope, not commonly frustrated, to return to the place of their birth and spend their declining years among the scenes and faces that were dear to their youth.

Among such a people there is no room for fierce indecent rivalries. None is master, none servant; but equality, concrete and real, regulates and sustains their intercourse. Healthy toil, sufficient leisure, frank hospitality, a content born of habit and undisturbed by chimerical ambitions, a sense of beauty fostered by the loveliest Nature in the world, and finding expression in gracious and dignified manners where it is not embodied in exquisite works of art—such are the characteristics of the people among whom I was born. Does my memory flatter me? Do I idealise the scenes of my youth? It may be so. But this I know that some such life as I have described, reared on the basis of labour on the soil, of equality and justice, does exist and flourish throughout the length and breadth of China. What have you to offer in its place, you our would-be civilisers? Your religion? Alas! it is in the name of that that you are doing unnameable deeds! Your morals? Where shall we find them? Your intelligence? Whither has it led? What counter-picture have you to offer over here in England to this which I have drawn of life in China? That is the question to which I have now to endeavour to reply.

IV

IN attempting to lay before you a characteristic scene of Chinese life I selected for the purpose a community of peasants. I did so because it is there that I find the typical product of our civilisation. Cities, it is true, we have, and cities as monstrous, perhaps, as yours; but they are mere excrescences on a body politic whose essential constitution is agricultural. With you all this is reversed; and for that reason you have no country life deserving the name. On the one hand wastes of common" and moor, on the other villas and parks, labourers poorly clad, wretchedly housed, and miserably paid, dreary villages, decaying farms, squalor, brutality and vice—such is the picture you give, yourselves, of your agricultural districts. Whatever in England

is not urban is parasitic or moribund. If, then, I am to give an impression that shall be candid and just of the best results of your civilisation, I must turn from the country to the life of your great cities. And in doing so I will not seek to win an easy victory by dwelling unduly on those more obvious points which you no less than I admit and deplore. Your swarming slums, your liquor-saloons, your poor-houses, your prisons—these, it is true, are melancholy facts. But the evils of which they are symptoms you are setting yourselves to cure, and your efforts, I do not doubt, may be attended with a large measure of success. It is rather the goal to which you seem to be moving when you have done the best you can that I would choose to consider in this place. Your typical product, your average man, the man you call respectable, him it is that I wish to characterise, for he it is that is the natural and inevitable outcome of your civilisation. What manner of man, then, is he? It is with some hesitation that I set myself to answer this question. I am a stranger among you; I have enjoyed your hospitality; and I am loath to seem to repay you with discourtesy. But if there be any service I can do you, I know none greater than to bring home to you, if I could, without undue offence, certain important truths (so they seem to me) to which you appear to be singularly blind. Your *feet*, I believe, are set on the wrong path; I would fain warn you; and useless though the warning may be, it is offered in the spirit of friendship; and in that spirit, I hope, it will be received.

When I review my impressions of the average English citizen, impressions based on many years' study, what kind of man do I see? I see one divorced from Nature, but unreclaimed by Art; instructed, but not educated; assimilative, but incapable of thought. Trained in the tenets of a religion in which he does not really believe—for he sees it flatly contradicted in every relation of life—he dimly feels that it is prudent to conceal under a mask of piety the atheism he is hardly intelligent enough to avow. His religion is conventional; and, what is more important, his morals are as conventional as his creed. Charity, chastity, self-abnegation, contempt of the world and its prizes—

these are the words on which he has been fed from his childhood upwards. And words they have remained, for he has neither anywhere seen them practised by others, nor has it ever occurred to him to practise them himself. Their influence, while it is strong enough to make him a chronic hypocrite, is not so strong as to show him the hypocrite he is. Deprived on the one hand of the support of a true ethical standard, embodied in the life of the society of which he is a member, he is duped, on the other, by lip-worship of an impotent ideal. Abandoned thus to his instinct, he is contented to do as others do, and, ignoring the things of the spirit, to devote himself to material ends. He becomes a mere tool; and of such your society is composed. By your works you maybe known. Your triumphs in the mechanical arts are the obverse of your failure in all that calls for spiritual insight. Machinery of every kind you can make and use to perfection; but you cannot build a house, or write a poem, or paint a picture; still less can you worship or aspire. Look at your streets! Row upon row of little boxes, one like another, lacking in all that is essential, loaded with all that is superfluous—this is what passes among you for architecture. Your literature is the daily press, with its stream of solemn fatuity, of anecdotes, puzzles, puns, and police-court scandal. Your pictures are stories in paint, transcripts of all that is banal, clumsily botched by amateurs as devoid of tradition as of genius. Your outer sense as well as your inner is dead; you are blind and deaf. Ratiocination has taken the place of perception; and your whole life is an infinite syllogism from premises you have not examined to conclusions you have not anticipated or willed. Everywhere means, nowhere an end! Society a huge engine, and that engine itself out of gear! Such is the picture your civilisation presents to my imagination. I will not say that it is so that it appears to every intelligent Chinaman; for the Chinese, unlike you, are constitutionally averse to drawing up an indictment against a nation. If I have been led into that error, it is under strong provocation; and already I feel that I owe you an apology. Yet what I have said I cannot withdraw: and I shall not regret that I have

spoken if I may hope that my words have suggested to some among my readers a new sense in the cry "China for the Chinese!"

V

WHEN first I was brought into contact with the West what most immediately impressed me was the character and range of your intelligence. I found that you had brought your minds to bear with singular success, upon problems which had not even occurred to us in the East; that by analysis and experiment you had found the clue to the operation of the forces of nature, and had turned them to account in ways which, to my untravelled imagination, appeared to be little short of miraculous. Nor has familiarity diminished my admiration for your achievements in this field. I recognise in them your chief and most substantial claim to superiority; and I am not surprised that some of the more intelligent of my countrymen should be advocating with ardour their immediate introduction into China. I sympathise with the enthusiasm of these reformers; but I am unable, nevertheless, to endorse their policy. And it may be worth while to set down here the reasons which have led me to a Conclusion which may appear at first sight to be paradoxical.

- The truth is that a study of your history during the past century and a closer acquaintance with the structure of your society has considerably modified my original point of view. I have learnt that the most brilliant discoveries, the most fruitful applications of inventive genius, do not of themselves suffice for the well-being of society; and that an intelligence which is concentrated exclusively on the production of labour-saving machines may easily work more harm by the dislocation of industry than it can accomplish good by the increase of wealth. For the increase of wealth—that is, of the means to comfort—is not, to my mind, necessarily good in itself; everything depends on the way in which the wealth is distributed and on its effect on the moral character of the nation. And it is from that point of

view that I look with some dismay upon the prospect of the introduction of Western methods into China. An example will best explain my point. When we began to construct our first railway, from Tientsin to Peking, the undertaking excited among the neighbouring populace an opposition which quickly developed into open riot. The line was torn up, bridges were destroyed, and it was impossible to continue the work. We therefore, according to our custom in China, sent down to the scene of action, not a force of police, but an official to interview the rioters and ascertain their point of view. It was as* usual a perfectly reasonable one. They were a boating population, subsisting by the traffic of the canal, and they feared that the railway would deprive them of their means of livelihood. The Government recognised the justice of their plea; they gave the required guarantee that the traffic by water should not seriously suffer, and there was no further trouble or disturbance. The episode is a good illustration of the way in which we regard these questions. Englishmen to whom I have spoken of the matter have invariably listened to my account with astonishment not unmingled with indignation. To them it seems a monstrous thing that Government should pay any regard whatever to such representations on the part of the people. They speak of the laws of supply and demand, of the ultimate absorption of labour, of competition, progress, mobility and the "long-run." To all this I listen with more or less comprehension and acquiescence; but it cannot conceal from me the fact that the introduction of new methods means, at any rate for the moment, so much dislocation of labour, so much poverty, suffering and starvation. Of this your own industrial history gives abundant proof. And I cannot but note with regret and disappointment that in all these years during which you have been perfecting the mechanical arts you have not apparently even attempted, you certainly have not attempted with success, to devise any means to obviate the disturbance and distress to which you have subjected your labouring population. This, indeed, is not surprising, for it is your custom to subordinate life to wealth;

but neither, to a Chinaman, is it encouraging; and I, at least, cannot contemplate without the gravest apprehension the disorders which must inevitably ensue among our population of four hundred millions upon the introduction, on a large scale, of Western methods of industry. You will say that the disorder is temporary; to me it appears, in the West, to be chronic. But putting that aside, what, I may ask, are we to gain? The gain to you is palpable; so, I think, is the loss to us. But where is our gain? The question, perhaps, may seem to you irrelevant; but a'Chinaman may be forgiven for thinking it important. You will answer, no doubt, that we shall gain wealth. Perhaps we shall; but shall we not lose life? Shall we not become like you? And can you expect us to contemplate that with equanimity? What are your advantages? Your people, no doubt, are better equipped than ours with some of the less important goods of life; they eat more, drink more, sleep more; but there their superiority ends. They are less cheerful, less contented, less industrious, less law-abiding; their occupations are more unhealthy both for body and mind; they are crowded into cities and factories, divorced from Nature and the ownership of the soil. On all this I have already dwelt at length; I only recur to it here in explanation of a position which may appear to you to be perverse—the position of one who, while genuinely admiring the products of Western intelligence, yet doubts whether that intelligence has not been misapplied, or at least whether its direction has not been so one-sided that it is likely to have been productive of as much harm as good. You may, indeed—and I trust you will—rectify this error and show yourselves as ingenious in organising men as you have been in dominating Nature. But meantime we may, perhaps, be pardoned if even when we most admire we yet hesitate to adopt your Western methods, and feel that the advantages which might possibly ensue will be dearly bought by the disorders that have everywhere accompanied their introduction.

And there is another point which weighs with me, one less obvious, perhaps, but not less important. In any society it must

always be the case that the mass of men are absorbed in mechanical labours. It is so in ours no less, though certainly no more, than in yours; and, so far, this condition does not appear to have been affected by the introduction of machinery. But, on the other hand, in every society there are, or should be, men who are relieved from this servitude to matter and free to devote themselves to higher ends. In China, for many centuries past, there has been a class of men set apart from the first to the pursuit of liberal arts, and destined to the functions of government. These men form no close hereditary caste; it is open to anyone to join them who possesses the requisite talent and inclination: and in this respect our society has long been the most democratic in the world. The education to which we subject this official class is a matter of frequent and adverse comment among you, and it is not my intention here to undertake its defence. What I wish to point out is the fact that, by virtue of this institution, we have inculcated and we maintain among our people of all classes a respect for the things of the mind and of the spirit, to which it would be hard to find a parallel in Europe, and of which, in particular, there is no trace in England. In China letters are respected not merely to a degree but in a sense which must seem, I think, to you unintelligible and overstrained. But there is a reason for it. Our poets and literary men have taught their successors, for long generations, to look for good not in wealth, not in power, not in miscellaneous activity, but in a trained, a choice*, an exquisite appreciation of the most simple and universal relations of life. To feel, and in order to feel to express, or at least to understand the expression of all that is lovely in Nature, of all that is poignant and sensitive in man, is to us in itself a sufficient end. A rose in a moonlit garden, the shadow of trees on the turf, almond bloom, scent of pine, the wine-cup and the guitar; these and the pathos of life and death, the long embrace, the hand stretched out in vain, the moment that glides for ever away, with its freight of music and light, into the shadow and hush of the haunted past, all that we have, all that eludes us, a bird on the wing, a perfume escaped on the gale—to all

these things we are trained to respond, and the response is what we call literature. This we have; this you cannot give us; but this you may so easily take away. Amid the roar of looms it cannot be heard; it cannot be seen in the smoke of factories; it is killed by *the* wear and the whirl of Western life. And when I look at your business men, the men whom you most admire; when I see them hour after hour, day after day, year after year, toiling in the mill of their forced and undelighted labours; when I see them importing the anxieties of the day into their scant and grudging leisure, and wearing themselves out less by toil than by carking and illiberal cares, I reflect, I confess, with satisfaction on the simpler routine of our ancient industry, and prize, above all your new and dangerous routes, the beaten track so familiar to our accustomed feet that we have leisure, even while we pace it, to turn our gaze up to the eternal stars.

VI

AMONG Chinese Institutions there is none that provokes the European mind to more hostile and contemptuous comment than our system of government. The inadequate salaries of our officials and the consequent temptation, to which they frequently succumb, to extort money by illegitimate means, is productive of much annoyance to foreigners; nor have I anything to say in defence of a practice so manifestly undesirable. At the same time, I cannot but note that corruption of this kind is a far less serious evil in China than it is, when it prevails, among yourselves. With you the function of government is so important and so ubiquitous that you can hardly realise the condition of a people that is able almost wholly to dispense with it. Yet such is our case. The simple and natural character of our civilisation, the peaceable nature of our people (when they are not maddened by the aggression of foreigners), above all, the institution of the family, itself a little state—a political, social and economic unit—these and other facts have rendered

us independent of governmental control to an extent which to Europeans may seem incredible. Neither the acts nor the omissions of the authorities at Peking have any real or permanent effect on the life of our masses, except so far as they register the movements of popular sentiment and demand. Otherwise, as you foreigners know to your cost, they remain a dead-letter. The Government may make conventions and treaties, but it cannot put them into effect, except in so far as they are endorsed by public opinion. The passive resistance of so vast a people, rooted in a tradition so immemorial, will defeat in the future, as it has done in the past, the attempts of the Western Powers to impose their will on the nation through the agency of the Government. No force will ever suffice to stir that huge inertia. The whirlwind of war for a moment may ruffle the surface of the sea, may fleck with foam its superficial currents; it will never shake or trouble the clear unfathomable deep which is the still and brooding soul of China.

If our people are ever to be moved, their reason and their heart must be convinced; and this lesson, which you in Europe are so slow to learn, was embodied centuries ago in the practice and theory of our State. Government with us is based on the consent of the people to a degree which you of the West can hardly understand, much less imitate. What you have striven so vainly to achieve by an increasingly elaborate machinery happens among us by the mere force of facts. Our fundamental institutions are no arbitrary inventions of power; they are the form which the people have given to their life. No Government created and no Government would think of modifying them. And if from time to time it becomes desirable to add to them such further regulations as the course of events may seem to suggest, these, too, are introduced only in response to a real demand, and after proof made of their efficacy and popularity. Law, in a word, is not, with us, a rule imposed from above; it is the formula of the national life; and its embodiment in practice precedes its inscription in a code. Hence it is that in China government is neither arbitrary nor indispensable.

Destroy our authorities, central and provincial, and our life will proceed very much as before. The law we obey is the law of our own nature, as it has been evolved by centuries of experience, and to this we continue our allegiance, even though the external sanction be withdrawn. Come what may, the family remains, with all that it involves, the attitude of mind remains, the spirit of order, industry and thrift. These it is that make up China; and the Governments we have passively received are Governments only so long as they understand that it is not theirs to govern, but merely to express in outward show, to formulate and define, an order which in essentials they must accept as they accept the motions of the heavens. China does not change. The tumults of which you make so much, and of which you are yourselves the cause, are no signs of the break-up of our civilisation. You hear the breakers roaring on the shore; but far away beyond your ken, unsailed by ship of yours, stretch to the blue horizon the silent spaces of the sea.

How different is the conception and fact of government in the West! Here there are no fundamental laws, but an infinity of arbitrary rules. Nothing roots except what has been planted; nothing is planted but what must be planted again. During the past hundred years you have dismantled your whole society. Property and marriage, religion, morality, distinctions of rank and class, all that is most important and most profound in human relationships, has been torn from the roots and floats like wreckage down the stream of time. Hence the activity of your Governments; for it is only by their aid that your society holds together at all. Government with you is thus important to an extent and degree happily inconceivable in the East. This in itself appears to me an evil; but it is one that I see to be inevitable. All the more am I surprised at what I cannot but regard as the extraordinary inefficiency of the machinery on which you rely to accomplish so vast a work. It is, I am aware, hard, perhaps impossible, to discover or devise any sure and certain method of selecting competent men; but surely it is strange to make no attempt to ascertain or secure any degree of moral or intel-

lectual capacity in those to whom you entrust such important functions! Our own plan in China of selecting our rulers by competitive examination is regarded by you with a contempt not altogether undeserved. Yet you adopt it yourselves in the choice of your subordinate officials; and it has at least the merit of embodying the rational idea that the highest places in the Government should be open to all, rich or poor, who have given proof of ability and talent, and that they should be open to no others. Compared to the method of election it appears to me to be reason itself. For what does election mean? You say that it means representation of the people; but do you not know in your hearts that it means, and can mean, nothing *of the kind*? What is really represented is Interests. And in what are Interests interested? Your reply, I suspect, will be, In public abuses! Landlords, brewers, railway directors—is it not these that really rule you? And must it not be so while your society is constituted as it is? There is, I am aware, a party which hopes to bring to bear against these the brute and overwhelming force of the Mass. But such a remedy, even if it were practicable, does not commend itself to my judgment; for the Mass in your society is itself an Interest. The machinery which you have provided appears to aim at bringing together in a cock-pit egotistic forces bent upon private goods, in order that they may arrive, by dint of sheer fighting, at a result which shall represent the good of the whole. It is perhaps the inveterate respect, inherent in every Chinaman, for the authority of morality and reason, that prevents me from regarding such a procedure with the enthusiasm or even the toleration which it seems commonly to command among yourselves. When problems of such vast importance have devolved upon, and must be assumed by, a Government, I cannot but think that some better means might have been devised for interesting in their solution the best talent of the nation. And I am confirmed in this view by the reflection that I have met in your universities and elsewhere men who have profoundly studied the questions your Legislature is expected to determine, whose intelligence is clear, whose judgment unbiassed, whose

enthusiasm disinterested and pure, but who can never hope for a chance of putting their wisdom to practical effect, because their temperament, their training, and their habit of life, have unfitted them for the ordeal of popular election. To be a member of Parliament is, it would seem, a profession in itself; and the qualities, intellectual and moral, which open the door to a public career appear to be distinct from, and even incompatible with, those which contribute to public utility.

VII

To grave and fundamental distinctions of national character and life commonly correspond similar distinctions in religious belief. For religion is, or should be, the soul of which the State is the body, the idea which informs and perpetuates institutions. It is not, I am aware, in this sense that the word is always understood, for religion is not seldom identified with superstition. I propose, however, in this place to distinguish the two, and to concern myself mainly with what I conceive to be properly termed religion. But I note, at the outset, that among the masses of China superstition is as widely spread as among those of any European country. Buddhism and Taoism lend themselves with us to practices and beliefs as regrettable and absurd as any that are fostered by Christianity among yourselves. Our people, like yours, hope by ritual and prayer to affect the course of the elements or to compass private and material benefits; they believe in spirits and goblins, as Roman Catholics do in saints; they worship idols, practise magic, and foster the impositions of priests. But all this I pass by as extraneous to true religion. I regard it merely as a manifestation of the weakness of human nature, a vent for the peccant humours of the individual soul. Different indeed is the creed and the cult on which our civilisation is founded; and it is to this, which has been so much misunderstood by Europeans, that I propose to "devote a few words of explanation.

Confucianism, it is sometimes said, is not a religion at all; and if by religion be meant a set of dogmatic propositions dealing with a supernatural world radically distinct from our own, the statement is, no doubt, strictly true. It was, in fact, one of the objects of Confucius to discourage preoccupation with the supernatural; and the true disciple endeavours in this respect to follow in his master's footsteps. "Beware of religion," a Mandarin says, meaning "beware of superstition"; and in this sense, but in this sense only, Confucianism is irreligious. Again, it is said that Confucianism is merely an ethical system; and this, too, is true, in so far as its whole aim and purport is to direct and inspire right conduct. But, on the other hand—and this is the point I wish to make—it is not merely a teaching, but a life. The principles it enjoins are those which are actually embodied in the structure of our society, so that they are inculcated not merely by written and spoken word, but by the whole habit of everyday experience. The unity of the family and the State, as expressed in the worship of ancestors, is the basis, not merely of the professed creed, but of the actual practice of a Chinaman. To whatever other faith he may adhere—Buddhist, Taoist, Christian—this is the thing that really matters to him. To him the generations past and the generations to come form with those that are alive one single whole. All live eternally, though it is only some that happen at any moment to live upon earth. Ancestor-worship is thus the symbol of a social idea immense in its force to consolidate and bind. Its effects in China must be seen to be believed; but you have a further example in a civilisation with which you are better acquainted—I mean, of course, the civilisation of Rome.

This, then, is the first and most striking aspect of our national religion; but there is another hardly less important in its bearing on social life. Confucianism is the exponent of the ideal of work. Your eighteenth-century observers, who laid so much stress on the ritual of the Emperor's yearly ploughing, were nearer to the heart of our civilisation than many later and less sympathetic inquirers. The duty of man to labour, and primarily

to labour on the soil, is a fundamental postulate of our religion. Hence the worship of Mother Earth, the source of all increase; hence the worship of Heaven, the giver of light and rain; and hence also that social system whose aim is to secure a general access, to the soil. The willing dedication of all, in brotherhood and peace, to labour Wessed by the powers of heaven and earth, such is the simple, intelligible ideal we have set before our people, such is the conception we have embodied in our institutions. And if you seek more than this, a metaphysical system to justify and explain our homely creed, that too we have provided for our scholars. Humanity, they are taught, is a Being spiritual and eternal, manifesting itself in time in the series of generations. This Being is the mediator between heaven and earth, between the ultimate ideal and the existing fact. By labour, incessant and devout, to raise earth to heaven, to realise, in fact, the good that as yet exists only in idea—that is the end and purpose of human life; and in fulfilling it we achieve and maintain our unity each with every other, and all with the Divine. Here, surely, is a faith not unworthy to be called a religion. I do not say that it is consciously held by the mass of the people, for in no State does the mass of the people reflect. But I claim for us that the life of our masses is so ordered and disposed as to accord with the postulates of our creed; that they practise, if they do not profess, the tenets of our sages; and that the two cardinal ideas on which every society should rest, brotherhood and the dignity of labour, are brought home to them in direct and unmistakable form by the structure of our secular institutions.

Such, then, in a few words, is the essence of Confucianism, as it appears to an educated Chinaman. Far harder is it for me, though I have spent so long in Europe, to appreciate the significance of Christianity. But perhaps I may be pardoned if I endeavour to record my impressions, such as they are, gathered from some study of your sacred books, your history, and your contemporary life. In such observations as I have made I have had in view the question not so much of the truth of your religion—of that I donotfeel competent to judge—as of its bearing

upon your social institutions. And here, more than anywhere, I am struck by the wide discrepancy between your civilisation and ours. I cannot see that your society is based upon religion at all; nor does that surprise me, if I have rightly apprehended the character of Christianity. For the ideal which I seem to find enshrined in your gospels and embodied in the discussions of your divines is one not of labour on earth, but of contemplation in heaven; not of the unity of the human race, but of the communion of saints. Whether this be a higher ideal than our own I do not venture to pronounce; but I cannot but hold it to be less practicable. It must be difficult, one would think, if not impossible, to found any stable society on the conception that life upon earth is a mere episode in a drama whose centre of action lies elsewhere. An indifference to what, from a more mundane point of view, must appear to be fundamental considerations, a confusion of temporal distinctions in the white blaze of eternity, a haphazard organisation of those details of corporate life the serious preoccupation with which would be hardly compatible with religion—such would appear to be the natural result of a genuine profession of Christianity. And such, if I understand it aright, was the character of your civilisation in what you describe as the Ages of Faith. Asceticism, monastic vows, the domination of priests, the petty interests of life and death overshadowed and dwarfed by the tremendous issues of heaven and hell, beggary sanctified, wealth contemned, reason stunted, imagination hypertrophied, the spiritual and temporal powers at war, body at feud with soul, everywhere division, conflict, confusion, intellectual and moral insanity—such was the character of that extraordinary epoch in Western history when the Christian conception made a bid to embody itself in fact. It was the life-and-death struggle of a grandiose ideal against all the facts of the material and moral universe. And in that struggle the ideal was worsted. From the dust of battle the Western world emerged, as it had entered, secular: avowedly worldly, frankly curious, bent with a passionate zeal on the mastery* of all the forces of nature, on beauty, wealth, intelligence,

character, power. From that time on, although you still profess Christianity, no attempt has been made to christianise your institutions. On the contrary, it has been your object to sweep away every remnant of the old order, to dissociate Church from State, ritual and belief from action. You have abandoned your society frankly to economic and political forces, with results which I have endeavoured in an earlier letter to characterise.

But while thus, on the one hand, your society has evolved on a purely material basis, on the other religion has not ceased to be recognised among you. Only, cut off from its natural root in social institutions, it has assumed forms which I cannot but think to be either otiose or dangerous. Those who profess Christianity—and there are few who, in one way or another, do not—either profess it only with their lips, and having in this way satisfied those claims of the ideal from which no human being is altogether free, turn back with an unencumbered mind and conscience to the pursuit of egotistic ends; or else, being seriously possessed by the teachings of Christ, they find themselves almost inevitably driven into the position of revolutionists. For those teachings, if they be fully accepted and fairly interpreted, must be seen to be incompatible with the whole structure of your society. Enunciated, centuries ago, by a mild Oriental enthusiast, unlettered, untravelled, inexperienced, they are remarkable not more for their tender and touching appeal to brotherly love than for their aversion or indifference to all other elements of human excellence. The subject of Augustus and Tiberius lived and died unaware of the history and destinies of imperial Rome; the contemporary of Virgil and of Livy could not read the language in which they wrote. Provincial by birth, mechanic by trade, by temperament a poet and a mystic, he enjoyed in the course of his brief life few opportunities, and he evinced little inclination, to become acquainted with the rudiments of the science whose end is the prosperity of the State. The production and distribution of wealth, the disposition of power, the laws that regulate labour, property, trade, these were matters as remote from his interests as they were beyond his

comprehension. Never was man better equipped to inspire a religious sect; never one worse to found or direct a commonwealth. Yet this man it is whose naïf maxims of self-abnegation have been accepted as gospel by the nations of the West, the type of all that is predatory, violent and aggressive. No wonder your history has been one long and lamentable tale of antagonism, tumult, carnage and confusion! No wonder the spiritual and temporal powers have oscillated between open war and truces as discreditable to the one as to the other! No wonder that down to the present day every man among you who has been genuinely inspired with the spirit of your religion has shrunk in horror from the society which purports to have adopted its principles as its own! It is the Nemesis of an idealistic creed that it cannot inform realities; it can but mass together outside and in opposition to the established order the forces that should have shaped and controlled it from within. The spirit remains unembodied, the body uninformed. So it has been and so it is with this polity of yours. It purports to represent a superhuman ideal; in reality, it does not represent even one that is human. It is of the earth, earthy; while from heaven far above cries, like a ghost's, the voice of the Nazarene, as pure, as clear, as ineffectual, as when first it flung from the shores of Galilee its challenge to the world-sustaining power of Rome.

The view which I have thus ventured to give, candidly, as I feel it, of the relation of your society to your religion, will, I am aware, be received by most of my readers with astonishment, if not with indignation. Permit me, then, to illustrate and confirm it by an example so patent and palpable that it cannot fail, I think, to make some appeal even to those who are most unwilling to face the truth.

If there is one feature more marked than another in the teaching of Christ it is his condemnation of every form of violence. No one can read the Gospels with an unprejudiced mind without being struck by the emphasis with which he reiterates this doctrine. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." These are his words, and they are spoken

in sober earnestness, not in metaphor, nor yet as a counsel of perfection, something that should be, but cannot be put into effect. No! they are the words of conviction and truth, backed by the whole character and practice of their author. The principle they embody may, of course, be disputed. It may be held—as in fact it always has been held by the majority of men in all ages—that force is essential to the preservation of society; that without it there could be no security, no order, no peace. But one who holds this view cannot be a Christian, in the proper sense of a follower of Christ. If, then, as is undoubtedly the case, this view has been universally held throughout their whole history by the nations of the West, then, whatever they may call themselves, they cannot be truly Christian. Yet this consequence they have always refused to accept. They have interpreted the words of their founder to mean the reverse of what they say, and have conceived him, apparently without any sense of the solecism they were perpetrating, to be the defender and champion not only of their whole system of law, based as it is on the prison and the scaffold, but of all their wars, even of those which to the natural sense of mankind must appear to be the least defensible and the most iniquitous. In proof of what I say—if proof be required—I need not recur to historical examples. It will be enough to refer to the case which is naturally most present to my mind—the recent attack of the Western Powers on China. That there was grave provocation, I am not concerned to deny, though it was not with us that the provocation originated. But what fills me with amazement and even, if I must be frank, with horror, is the fact that the nations of Europe should attempt to justify their acts from the standpoint of the Gospel of Christ; and that there should be found among them a Christian potentate who, in sending forth his soldiers on an errand of revenge, should urge them, in the name of him who bade us turn the other cheek, not merely to attack, not merely to kill, but to kill without quarter! What further proof is needed of the truth of my general proposition that the religion you profess, whatever effect it may have on individual lives, has little or none on public policy? It may

inspire, here and there, some retired saint; it has never inspired those who control the State, What use is it, then, to profess that, in essence, it is a religion higher than ours? I care not to dispute on ground so barren. "By their fruits ye shall know them," said your own prophet; and to their fruits I am content to appeal. Confucianism may, as you affirm, be no religion at all; it may be an inferior ethical code; but it has made of the Chinese the one nation in all the history of the world who genuinely abhor violence and reverence reason and right. And here, lest you think that I am biassed, let me call to my aid the testimony of the one among your countrymen who has known us most intimately and long, and whose services to our State will never be forgotten by any patriotic Chinaman. In place of the ignorant diatribes of your special correspondents, listen for a moment to the voice of Sir Robert Hart:

"They are," he says of the Chinese, "well-behaved, law-abiding, intelligent, economical, and industrious; they can learn anything and do anything; they are punctiliously polite, they worship talent, and they believe in right so firmly that they scorn to think it requires to be supported or enforced by might; they delight in literature, and everywhere they have their literary clubs and coteries for learning and discussing each other's essays and verses; they possess and practise an admirable system of ethics, and they are generous, charitable, and fond of good works; they never forget a favour, they make rich return for any kindness, and, though they know money will buy service, a man must be more than wealthy to win public esteem and respect; they are practical, teachable, and wonderfully gifted with commonsense; they are excellent artisans, reliable workmen, **and** of a good faith that everyone acknowledges and admires in their commercial dealings; in no country that is or was, has the commandment 'Honour thy father and thy mother' been so religiously obeyed, or so fully and without exception given effect to, - and it is in fact the keynote of their family, social, official, and national life, and because it is so 'their days are long in the land God has given them/ "

Thus Sir Robert Hart. I ask no better testimonial. Here are no superhuman virtues, no abnegation of self, no fanatic repudiation of fundamental facts of human nature. But here is a life lived according to our rational ideal; and here is a belief in that ideal so effective and profound that it has gone far to supersede the use of force. "They believe in right," says Sir Robert Hart—let me quote it once more—"they believe in right so firmly that they scorn to think it requires to be supported or enforced by might." Yes, it is we who do not accept it that practise the Gospel of peace; it is you who accept it that trample it underfoot. And—irony of ironies!—it is the nations of Christendom who have come to us to teach us by sword and fire that Right in this world is powerless unless it be supported by Might! Oh do not doubt that we shall learn the lesson! And woe to Europe when we have acquired it! You are arming a nation of four hundred millions! a nation which, until you came, had no better wish than to live at peace with themselves and all the world. In the name of Christ you have sounded the call to arms! In the name of Confucius, we respond!

VIII

HITHERTO I have avoided any discussion in detail of the existing political and commercial relations between ourselves and the West, and of the events which led up to the situation we all deplore. I have endeavoured rather to enlist your sympathies in the general character of our civilisation, to note the salient points in which it differs from your own, and to bring into relief the more fundamental and permanent conditions which render an understanding between us so difficult and so precarious. I cannot, however, disguise from myself that even a sympathetic reader may fairly demand of me something more; and that if I am to satisfy him, I am bound, however unwillingly, to enter upon the field of current controversy. For, he may reasonably inquire, If it be really true that your people possess the qualities

you ascribe to them, if they be indeed so just, so upright, so averse to violence, how is it that they have committed the greatest breach of international comity that is known in the history of the civilized world? How is it that they have been guilty of acts which have shocked and outraged the moral sense of communities, according to you, less cultured and humane than themselves?

In reply, I will urge that I have never asserted that the Chinese are saints. I have said, and I still maintain, that if they are left to themselves, if the order to which they are accustomed is not violently disturbed, they are the most peaceful and law-abiding nation on the face of the earth. If, then, they have broken loose from their secular restraints, if they have shown for a moment those claws of the brute which no civilisation, be it yours or ours, though it may sheathe, will ever draw, the very violence of the outbreak serves only to prove how intense must have been the provocation. Do you realise what that provocation was? I doubt it! Permit me then briefly to record the facts.

When first your traders came to China it was not at our invitation; yet we received them, if not with enthusiasm, at least with tolerance. So long as they were content to observe our regulations we were willing to sanction their traffic, but always on the condition that it should not disturb our social and political order. To this condition, in earlier days, your countrymen consented to conform, and for many years, in spite of occasional disputes, there was no serious trouble between them and us. The trouble arose over a matter in regard to which you yourselves have hardly ventured to defend your own conduct. A considerable part of your trade was the trade in opium. The use of this drug, we observed, was destroying the health and the morals of our people, and we therefore prohibited the trade. Your merchants, however, evaded the law; opium was smuggled in; till at last we were driven to take the matter into our own hands and to seize and destroy the whole stock of the forbidden drug. Your Government made our action an excuse for war. You invaded our territory, exacted an indemnity and took from us the island of Hong Kong. Was this an auspicious beginning?

Was it calculated to impress us with a sense of the justice and fair play of the British nation? Years went on; a petty dispute about the privileges of the flag—a dispute in which we still believe that we were in the right—brought us once more into collision with you. You made the unfortunate conflict an excuse for new demands. In conjunction with the French you occupied our capital and imposed upon us terms which you would never have dared to offer to a European nation. We submitted because we must; we were not a military Power. But do you suppose our sense of justice was not outraged? Or later, when every Power in Europe on some pretext or other has seized and retained some part of our territory, do you suppose because we cannot resist that we do not feel? To a Chinaman who reviews the history of our relations with you during the past sixty years and more must you not naturally appear to be little better than robbers and pirates? True, such a view is unduly harsh, and I do not myself altogether share it. A study of your official documents has convinced me that you genuinely believe that you have had on your side a certain measure of right, and I am too well aware of the complexity of all human affairs to deny that there may be something in your point of view. Still, I would ask you to consider the broad facts of the situation, dismissing the interminable controversies that arise on every point of detail. Which of us throughout has been the aggressor—we who, putting our case at the worst, were obstinately resolved to maintain our society, customs, laws and polity against the influences of an alien civilisation, or you who, bent on commercial gains, were determined at all cost to force an entrance into our territory and to introduce along with your goods the leaven of your culture and ideas? If, in the collision that inevitably ensued, we gave cause of offence, we had at least the excuse of self-preservation. Our wrongs, if wrongs they were, were episodes in a substantial right; but yours were themselves the substance of your action.

Consider for a moment the conditions you have imposed on a proud and ancient empire, an empire which for centuries

has believed itself to be at the head of civilisation. You have compelled us, against our will, to open our ports to your trade; you have forced us to permit the Introduction of a drug which we believe is ruining our people; you have exempted your subjects residing among us from the operation of our laws; you have appropriated our coasting traffic; you claim the traffic of our inland waters. Every attempt on our part to resist your demands has been followed by new claims and new aggressions. And yet all this time you have posed as civilised peoples dealing with barbarians". You have compelled us to receive your missionaries; and when they, by their ignorant zeal, have provoked our people to rise in mass against them, that again you have made an excuse for new depredations; till we, not unnaturally, have come to believe that the cross is the pioneer of the sword, and that the only use you have for your religion is to use it as a weapon of war. Conceive for a moment the feelings of an Englishman subjected to similar treatment; conceive that we had permanently occupied Liverpool, Bristol, Plymouth; that we had planted on your territory thousands of men whom we had exempted from your laws; that along your coasts and navigable rivers our vessels were driving out yours; that we had insisted on your admitting spirits duty free to the manifest ruin of your population; and that we had planted in all your principal towns agents to counteract the teachings of your Church and undermine the whole fabric of habitual belief on which the stability of your society depends. Imagine that you had to submit to all this. Would you be so greatly surprised, would you really even be indignant, if you found one day the Chinese Legation surrounded by a howling mob and Confucian missionaries everywhere hunted to death? What right then have you to be surprised, what right have you to be indignant at even the worst that has taken place in China? What is there so strange or monstrous in our conduct? A Legation, you say, is sacrosanct by the law of nations. Yes; but remember that it was at the point of the sword that you forced us to receive Embassies whose presence we have always regarded as a sign

of national humiliation. But our mobs were barbarous and cruel. Alas! yes. And your troops? And your troops, nations of Christendom? Ask the once fertile land from Peking to the coast; ask the corpses of murdered men and outraged women and children; ask the innocent mingled indiscriminately with the guilty; ask the Christ, the lover of men, whom you profess to serve, to judge between us who rose in mad despair to save our country and you who, avenging crime with crime, did not pause to reflect that the crime you avenged was the fruit of your own iniquity!

Well, it is over—over, at least, for the moment. I do not wish to dwell upon the past. Yet the lesson of the past is our only guide to the policy of the future. And unless you of the West will come to realise the truth; unless you will understand that the events which have shaken Europe are the Nemesis of a long course of injustice and oppression; unless you will learn that the profound opposition between your civilisation and ours gives no more ground why you should regard us as barbarians than we you; unless you will treat us as a civilised Power and respect our customs and our laws; unless you will accord us the treatment you would accord to any European nation and refrain from exacting conditions you would never dream of imposing on a Western Power—unless you will do this there is no hope of any peace between us. You have humiliated the proudest nation in the world; you have outraged the most upright and just; with what results is now abundantly manifest. If ignorance was your excuse, let it be your excuse no longer. Learn to understand us, and in doing so learn better to understand yourselves. To contribute to this end has been my only object in writing and publishing these letters. If I have offended, I regret it; but if it is the truth that offends, for that I owe and I offer no apology.

An Essay on the Civilisations of India, China and Japan

*This Essay is a Report of the author's travels as a Fellow of
the Albert Kahn Travelling Fellowships and is published by
direction of the Albert Kahn Trustees.*

TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE ALBERT KAHN
TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIPS

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present the following report of my travels during the years 1912 to 1913.

Instead of describing my journey in detail I have thought it will be more interesting to offer some reflections on the general spirit and character of the civilisations of India, China, and Japan, and the apparent and probable effects upon these civilisations of contact with the West. Any conclusions one may arrive at on a subject so comprehensive are, of course, of the most tentative and hazardous kind, and what I set down here is rather the starting point than the end of an inquiry. I shall not, however, waste time and space in constantly qualifying and apologising for my statements; but say here, once for all, that everything put forward is provisional, and that any dogmatism of form is merely a concession to the requirements of brevity.

G. LOWES DICKINSON

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
November 1913.

AN ESSAY ON THE CIVILISATIONS OF INDIA, CHINA AND JAPAN

PART I.—INDIA

THE first thing I have to note is that the East is not a unity, as implied in the familiar antithesis of East and West. Between India, on the one hand, and China or Japan, on the other, there is as great a difference as between India and any western country. The contrast that has struck me is that between India and the rest of the world. There I do feel a profound gulf. A Chinese, after all, is not so unlike an Englishman, and a Japanese not so unlike a Frenchman. But a Bengalee is strongly unlike anybody outside India. While, however, the East is not a unity, the *modern* West is. Throughout Europe and America there is the same civilisation, intellectual and economic; so that, to a philosophic observer, national boundaries there already begin to appear obsolete and irrelevant. On the other hand, this modern West is a very recent creation. And if one goes back in history one can find more analogy between East and West than now appears. Feudal Europe, for example, was in many respects similar to feudal Japan; and a medieval Christian mystic hardly distinguishable from a contemporary Indian saint. If, therefore, we contrast East and West we shall find out contrast breaking down at every point, unless we confine the term East to India (which is absurd), and mean by the West (as of course, in fact, we do) the West of the last century only. And the contrast between *that* West and the West of the Middle Ages is perhaps as great as the contrast between the modern West and India. I think it best, therefore, not to attempt to characterise the East as a whole; but to deal separately with India, China, and Japan, and their reactions to the West, as they have shown themselves to me. I shall endeavour to characterise each of these

civilisations, first, as they were before contact with the West; and afterwards to consider the effect upon them of that contact.

To summarise, I will say, first, that I conceive the dominant note of India to be religion; of China, humanity; of Japan, chivalry. These terms, of course, to begin with, are mere labels. I shall proceed to develop my meaning in each case.

In discussing the religion of a people one is met with the perhaps insuperable difficulty of estimating what, to the mass of the people, their religious observances really mean. I think it is clear that to the peasants of most countries—of Italy, say, or of China or of Japan—religion is no more than a ritual which they would be uncomfortable if they did not perform; a kind of lightning conductor for the emotions and desires that are concerned with the ordinary business of life, with getting one's living, with birth, marriage, child-bearing, and death. And, of course, in India¹ religion is, at least, this. The people pray for children, pray for healing, pray for rain, pray for everything they want. But is not religion to Indians something more than this? Observers who try to know the people believe that it is, and I am inclined to think that they are right; that even the Indian peasant does really believe that the true life is a spiritual life; that he respects the saint more than any other man; and that he regards the material world as "unreal," and all its cares as illusion. He cannot, of course, and does not, put this conviction into practice, or Indian society would come to an end. But he admires and even worships those who do put it into practice. I have seen on the faces of poor Indians, at religious functions, an expression I have seen nowhere else, unless, perhaps, in Russian churches. At Muttra, for instance, I remember the ecstatic look on the faces of the crowd as the priests waved their torches before the image of the god; and similarly, at Kandy, the look of those who came to worship the relics—books even!—at the Temple of the Tooth, This is "idolatry," of

¹ I am speaking of Indian religion I have in view throughout **Hinduism, not Mahometanism.**

course. But what does idolatry imply? Roman Catholics choose to think that while Christians worship the god symbolised by the image, Chinese or Indians worship the image itself. But this is sheer prejudice. And, unless I am very much mistaken, an idol is far more of a symbol and less of an object of worship to the Indian peasant than it is to most Roman Catholics. Kali is a hideous idol, fed by the blood of goats. But I am inclined to believe what I have been told, that to an Indian she symbolises the divine mother; and that it is her, not the idol, that they are worshipping.

I have said thus much on a very difficult subject, because I am taking the view that religion is the dominant factor in Indian society; and I wished to deal beforehand with the objection likely to be taken that very few Indians are religious in any true or important sense of the term. Very few, I agree, do or could carry through their religion to its logical consequences; but most have it; and most admire those who carry it out. This religion, however, is radically different from the religion of the Western nations. In the first place, India has never put Man in the centre of the universe. In India, and wherever Indian influence has penetrated, it is, on the one hand, the tremendous forces of nature, and what lies behind them, that is the object of worship and of speculation; and, on the other hand, Mind and Spirit; not the mind or spirit of the individual person, but the universal Mind, or Spirit, which is in him, but to which he can only have access by philosophic meditation and ascetic discipline. Indian religion is thus very "inhuman" compared to Christianity; and very much more in harmony with the spirit of western science than with that of western religion. And this fact is exemplified not only by the religious and philosophic literature of India, but by its art. Hindu sculpture and architecture—I have examined it from north to south, and from east to west—is disquieting and terrible to a western mind. It expresses the inexhaustible fertility, the ruthlessness, the irrationality of nature; never her beauty, her harmony, her adaptability to human needs. Man, in the Indian vision, is a plaything and

slave of natural forces; only by ceasing to be man does he gain freedom and deliverance.

And this brings me to the second point in which Indian religion contrasts with that of the West. To an Indian saint or philosopher the whole world of matter is unreal, and the whole of human history illusory. There is no meaning in time or the processes of time; still less is there any goodness in it. In some way, unexplained and inexplicable, the terrible illusion we call life dominates mankind. To be delivered from the illusion—from life, that is, and activity in time—is the object of all effort and all religion. In this sense the Indian religion is pessimistic. There is, of course, an important distinction between Buddhism and the Brahminism it supplanted for a time and then succumbed to. Gautama Buddha, it would seem, was a thorough-going sceptic and rationalist; he believed neither in God nor in the soul; and the object of his teaching was to deliver men from life to annihilation by instructing them how to eliminate desire. Brahminism, on the other hand, wishes to deliver them from false life to true life. The true life is life eternal; and we may have access to it by discipline and meditation. But from my immediate point of view, this distinction is not important. What is important is that, in either form, precisely that is denied which the West most emphatically affirms: the reality and importance of the material world, and of the historic process in time. The West is often called materialistic as compared with the East. But this antithesis, so far as it is true, does not depend on any metaphysical view held or denied as to the nature of matter. The West does not profess to know what matter is, and its hypotheses about it are always changing. The real point of distinction is, that the West believes that all effort ought to centre upon the process of living in time; that that process has reality and significance; and that the business of religion is not to deliver us from effort by convincing us of its futility, but to sanctify and justify it. No modern western man would regard as an admirable type at all—still less as the highest type—a man who withdraws from the world to meditate and come into direct contact with the Uni-

versal. But an Indian who is uncontaminated by western culture still regards that as the true ideal of conduct; and views all activities in the world as lower and inferior, though, for undeveloped men, they are necessary and pardonable.

With this view of religion the history and institutions of Hinduism harmonise. The Vedas, it is true, reflect an attitude to life similar to that of the Western Aryans; but this essentially active, positive, optimistic view gradually clouds over. The cause, perhaps, is the influence of climate, of a Nature too strong for man. No impression remains more vivid with me of my visit to India than that of the dominance of nature, and the impotence and insignificance of man. But whatever the cause, there is no doubt about the fact. Indian society became impregnated with the sense of the nothingness of life in time. To escape, not to dominate, became the note of their religion. And life being insignificant, history, of course, was so too. It is not an accident, it is a consequence of their attitude to life, that there are no Hindu historians. Contrast the Mahometans, contrast the Chinese, contrast the western nations. How can you write the history of a nightmare? You don't do that. You try to wake up.

It is true that Christianity, too, has, as one of its elements, this idea of the illusoriness of the world. But Christianity contains other elements, incompatible with this; as, indeed, it was its practical wisdom and its philosophic insufficiency that it combined the most irreconcilable notions. And further, the western nations have never really been Christian. Their true religion has only become apparent as Christianity has declined. That religion—not yet expressed in forms, but implicit in all their conduct—is that the time-process is also the real process; that everything material matters very much indeed; and that spiritualism must either recognise the claims of matter or retire from the conflict. This life and its purposes are significant, and important, and what a man ought to attend to; that is the real postulate of the modern West; and that is what all Indian religion and philosophy has denied. But on this point China and Japan are at one with the West. And that is why I said that the real

antithesis is not between East and West, but between India and the rest of the world.

This, then, of general attitude towards life, carrying with it a whole psychology, and reflecting itself in religion and in art, is the first point that distinguishes the civilisation of India, as I think, from every other. The second point is one of social institutions. India is the home of caste. Caste may be defined as the hereditary determination of a man's place in society. No hard and fast line can be drawn between it and class; for wherever there are classes the position of the father plays some part, and usually the chief part, in determining the position of the son. Moreover, almost all societies—China is the great exception—have passed through an age of caste; Egypt, of course, *par excellence*, Japan, Europe in the Middle Ages. But in India caste has developed into a rigour and a multiplicity unknown in any other country. Castes and sub-castes are innumerable, and new ones are always springing up. India has never been democratic, either in theory or in practice; never had the ideal of equal opportunity; always had that of hierarchy; and at the head of that hierarchy always the priest. Nothing, of course, could be more radically antagonistic to the whole current of theory and practice in the modern West. But this antagonism does not exist at all in the case of China, and only in a very modified degree in the case of Japan. Here, too, the position of India is unique. It is the antithetic pole to the West.

What I have said so far applies to India before contact with the West, and very generally and widely applies still. But a process of modification has been proceeding since the British conquest. And I will go on now to say what I have to say on this subject.

Here, again, India differs radically from China and Japan. China, though she has been bullied and robbed, has not been conquered and administered by the western powers. That may come. But, at any rate, up to now China has been an independent country. And Japan has not only saved her independence, she has energetically reacted against the West, and shown that she

can give as well as take blows. But India, never a nation, never a unity, split up by racial, religious, caste distinctions, fell, and was bound to fall, an easy prey to a western power. That that power should be England is one of the ironies of history; for of all the western nations the English are the least capable of appreciating the qualities of Indian civilisation, and the most capable of appreciating its defects. To an Englishman, practical efficiency, honesty, and truth are the chief and indispensable goods. To an Indian, as, in a less degree, to other Orientals, all these things are indifferent. On the other hand, an Englishman has no conception even of the meaning of a philosophic or religious problem. The notion that the material world could be a mere illusion is one that could never appeal to him as even intelligible (Berkeley, it must be remembered, was an Irishman, and Hume a Scotchman). His religion, when he has one, is a transfigured morality, not a mysticism. He is practical, through and through, in spiritual as well as in material things. Between him and the Indian the gulf is impassable.

Add to this that whereas all the other conquerors of India had migrated to the country, settled down and lived there, and become assimilated to Indian conditions, the English are, of all races, the least assimilable. They carried to India all their own habits and ways of life; squatted, as it were, in armed camps; spent as in exile twenty or twenty-five years; and returned home, sending out new men to take their place, equally imbued with English ideals and habits, equally unassimilable. Facility of communication has only emphasised and strengthened this attitude. The Englishman sends his children home to be educated; commonly his wife will spend at least half her time at home; he himself returns every few years; his centre is not India, but England. It would, I think, be unreasonable and absurd to blame the Englishman for this; he is, indeed, often praised for it by foreigners. As a very intelligent and enlightened official remarked to me, an Englishman cannot be expected to lose his own soul—and his soul is the traditions and habits of his race—for the sake of other people's politics. Still, there is the fact, and

it is one of cardinal importance in the relations between the two races. It maintains the distinction between the governing and the governed people; and it does so by creating an almost impassable social gulf. For this gulf, however, it must in fairness be added, the Indians are not less responsible than the English. Their family and caste system hampers all social intercourse. If a man cannot eat with you, or introduce his wife to you, it is difficult for you to associate with him at all. Add to this that, whereas to most Englishmen sport and games are the main subjects, outside their work, of interest and conversation, to most Indians they are completely indifferent. Indians want to talk philosophy and religion; Englishmen want to talk polo and golf. There is no need, then, to suppose any kind of original sin or deliberate unkindness or wickedness on either side to account for the social chasm. Cases, it is true, still occur where individual Englishmen—generally, I think, in the army—are insolent to individual Indians, but these are becoming rarer, and are steadily discountenanced by Government. They are not the root of the difficulty. The difficulty lies deeper; and I see no way of removing it, short of removing the English from India.

If the English had been able and content to govern Indians by the sword, without affecting their ideas and institutions, this social gulf need not perhaps have created a political difficulty. Indian civilisation would have proceeded unchanged, and Indians would have been indifferent as to who it was that raised the taxes, so long as they were not intolerably oppressive. But, in fact, it would have been impossible to govern India without modifying it; and in any case that was a policy deliberately rejected by the English. They determined to educate the Indians in English ideas; and they started this process at a moment peculiarly favourable to its success. For the old Indian education was in decadence, and Indians knew and cared little about their own philosophy. Under the new influences a generation grew up sceptical and rationalistic, nourished on Mill and Spencer, cut off from its own roots and artificially grafted on to the western tree. This, however, is only what happens and is bound to

happen wherever East meets West. The paradox in India is that the English have deliberately instructed their Indian subjects in their own political ideas; in a system of thought, therefore, which radically condemns the kind of government they maintain in India. Self-government, no taxation without representation, these and the like are the watchwords of English political philosophy; while English history supplies striking examples of the refusal of a people to submit to an arbitrary and autocratic government. In this philosophy and this history Indians are carefully educated. And further, they have before them the famous proclamation of 1858, that in the government of India no distinction shall be made on the ground of colour, race, or religion. It was genuinely believed by the statesmen who inaugurated this *rigime* that under the new system of education the Indians would quickly become willing and able to administer their own country on English lines, under the aegis of English protection. And, in fact, as is well known, in the civil administration of India less than a thousand Englishmen take part; all subordinate posts are held by Indians; while in the judiciary the highest positions are open to natives of the country. Both in the central and provincial governments there are legislative and executive councils on a representative basis; and Lord Morley's recent reform has largely increased the power and prestige of these bodies. In the history of India, indeed, the critical point seems to have been reached at which any further extension of the principle of self-government would really transfer the control of the country from the English to the natives. And this, of course, would mean a real revolution, analogous to the change of water into steam or into ice when a certain point is reached in the heating or cooling process. Whether that next step shall be taken or not is the problem before which the government of India is hesitating.

There are two points here involved; first, the efficiency of a government controlled wholly or in part by Indians; secondly, its loyalty to the English political system.

When I was in India the Commission on the Indian Civil

Service was sitting, and I had the opportunity of attending their meetings in Madras, and of talking with many of the members. I also discussed the questions involved with various civilians. One thing came out clearly. Most of the English witnesses believed that Indians could not be admitted to the highest and most responsible posts without serious detriment to the efficiency of the service. They believed that, as a general rule, Indians have not the nerve and judgment necessary in a critical situation. They believed, also, that Indians cannot be trusted to be impartial. For the majority of those who would hold office would be, as they now are, Brahmins; and Brahmins will favour Brahmins at the expense of other castes. They believed, therefore, that the transfer of the highest administrative posts to Indians would be very unpopular, with the great mass of the people, for whom they genuinely believe themselves to be trustees. I am not in a position to estimate the truth of this view; but I believe it to be widely held among the English officials, and among the most intelligent and enlightened of them. On the other hand, the bulk of the Indian witnesses maintained that Indians trained in English ideas and methods would be as competent and fair as Englishmen. I must add, however, that I have met Indian officials who take the other view, and who hold that the time is not ripe for filling the highest posts with Indians.

The question of loyalty is even more difficult than that of efficiency, as, from an English point of view, it is more serious. There can, I think, be no doubt that very strong currents of disaffection are running among the educated classes in India. This, it will be remembered, found violent expression a few years ago, at the time of the partition of Bengal. It has been driven underground since; but I believe that it is still strong, and that the causes which produce it are deep-seated and permanent. The first and chief of these is the growth of an Indian self-consciousness, a feeling of nationality, which itself is due to the British occupation. In English, Indians have for *the* first time a common language spoken by all edi
very largely under the stimulus of Eng

scholars, they have recovered the heritage of their own philosophic and religious traditions; and they are reacting violently against the modes of thought which dominated an early generation. This movement—"back to the Vedas" one might call it—is not primarily political. But it almost inevitably takes a political cast. For it implies a reaction against all the ideas and ideals of the western world, the representatives of which in India are the English. The Arya Somaj, for instance, is primarily a society for educating Indians in their own religion, and for reforming by Indians, on Indian lines, what seems to be defective in their civilisation. But the association is generally regarded by the English as seditious; and I should think it quite probable that it really is so, indirectly if not directly; just as the Celtic movement in Ireland, though not political in its aim, carries with it political antagonism to the English, as a necessary adjunct to its aesthetic and religious antagonism. In short, in so far as Indians develop a self-consciousness which is fundamentally Indian in character, they must necessarily object more and more to control by a western race.

This antagonism of mental attitude is intensified and exasperated by the social gulf to which I have referred. Large numbers of Indians are educated in English universities. They find that in England an impalpable barrier separates them from their fellow-students; a barrier which is not deliberately created on either side, but results from different instincts, habits, and desires. Briefly, Indians seldom play games! On the other hand, socially they are treated in England as equals, and there is little consciousness on either side of a colour bar as such. They are isolated, but not irritated. When, however, they return to India, well instructed in democratic conceptions, social and political, they find a great difference; a difference which, one is told, manifests itself on the boat as soon as Suez is passed. The English in England do not feel that they are a governing race, and Indians a governed. They may be indifferent to Indians, they may be bored by them, but they have no sense of a superiority to be maintained. It is otherwise in India. There the English are a small

camp of conquerors planted down among millions of conquered. Nothing can alter this fundamental fact. It is expressed everywhere and in everything. Unfortunately, it is sometimes expressed in frank and brutal insolence on the part of individual Englishmen. And Indians, being immensely sensitive, suspect insolence even where none is intended. Further, they have no adequate outlet for their ambition. In the Civil Service they cannot rise to the highest posts; the Bar is overcrowded; they have little aptitude and no training for business; and they visit on the English their discontent at conditions for which the English are hardly directly responsible. Add that they are torn between two civilisations, out of touch with their own and excluded from ours. Indian society bores them, English society is not open to them; and in India it would only bore them if it were; for the English in India are of all the English the least intellectual and the least interested in ideas. Indians educated in England form, therefore, a natural centre for all seditious movements. The good and the bad elements of their character and their position alike make for this; their Indian patriotism, their personal vanity, their thwarted ambition, their idealism. They are, I think, of all gifted men—and they are often very gifted—the most unhappy. And their unhappiness makes them bitter and unjust.

In speaking thus far of the contact between East and West in India I have confined myself to what is peculiar to India, owing to the fact that it has been conquered, and is administered, by a western race. But apart from this fact, and the peculiar problems it creates, there is the larger and, from the point of view of general history, more important question of the general reaction between the civilisation of the East and that of the West. On this point, too, I must say a few words. Indian culture, I have suggested, is more remote from western than that of any other eastern country. And in India, as in China, the great masses of the people are, of course, untouched in their traditional ideas and way of life by any contact with the West. The effects, so far, of the British conquest on the peasants of India are economic

rather than intellectual or spiritual; and on the economic question I do not propose to touch. On the other hand, the educated classes in India have been subjected for several generations to the full stream of western ideas; and its effects have been radical and profound. Born into a system of caste, they have been educated in the ideas of equal opportunity and no privilege. Born into an atmosphere of all-pervading religion, they have been educated in rationalism and free thought. Born into an atmosphere of faith, they have been educated in an atmosphere of science. The earlier generations accepted the new gospel whole-heartedly, repudiated with contempt the ideas, the customs, and (as was complained) the morals of their race; cut themselves off, in a word, from the whole Indian tradition. Then came a reaction against the West; and western-educated Indians now, I think, are generally sceptical both of the civilisation of the East and of that of the West. They may, indeed, sometimes defend their own fundamental institutions, such as caste and the position of women; they may praise the religious attitude of India; but I doubt whether this is often more than a kind of irritation against the shams of western civilisation, of which they are very fully conscious. The truth is that their experience of the West has opened the eyes of educated Indians to the weaknesses of their own system, though without converting them to the system of the West. And I cannot but believe that the process of disintegration must and will proceed to the end.

To speak first of what is most important, the general attitude towards life, the problem in India is essentially the same as it is everywhere in the modern world. How, if at all, can religion be reconciled with positive knowledge? The problem, indeed, is acuter in India than anywhere else, for India is more religious than any other country. On the other hand, it might be easier of solution than in western countries, for Indian religion has never been a system of dogmas, and is not entangled in questionable history. In India, it seems to me, you get the problem in its purest form, namely, not "did such-and-such events happen?" which is a purely historical question; nor "does the

individual soul survive death?" which is perhaps unascertainable; but "is there a method of discovering truth about the world as a whole, and man's relation to it, other than the method of observation and induction?" Indian philosophy and religion have always affirmed that there is; that by meditation and discipline an internal perception is opened which is a perception of truth. Philosophically and *a priori* this position can neither be affirmed nor denied. It is entirely a matter of experience. Indians affirm that the experience occurs, and I have no doubt they affirm truly. They affirm also that it is not a hallucination or a merely subjective state, which may be questioned but cannot be refuted. To this fundamental point everything else is subordinate. The persistence of Indian religion will not depend on how much, or whether anything, in the Vedas is taken as gospel; it will depend on the continuous appearance and acceptance of the "saint" in the Indian sense of that term—the man, that is, who perceives what he affirms to be spiritual truth. Hitherto the line of the saints has not been cut off. One of the most remarkable of them, Sri Ramakrishna, died late in the nineteenth century; and anyone who reads his conversations¹ will realise how little he depended on oral or written tradition, and how much on direct personal experience.

On the other hand, I cannot doubt that a training in positive science and its methods must make men more incapable either of having or desiring to have this experience, or of accepting it as evidential in others. Religion in some sense may be compatible with science; but only, I think, if religion be interpreted as a passionate contemplation of the world as made known by science, a sense of its complexity, its grandeur, and its immense, overwhelming transcendence of man. This attitude may have analogies to that of Indian religion, but it is so far radically distinct that no Indian saint, and for that matter no Western saint, ever had anything but contempt for the knowledge gained by the senses and the intellect. Sainthood, in a word, is antagonistic to

¹ Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Madras, published by the Ramakrishna Mission, 1912.

science, as science is antagonistic to sainthood. And the development in India of scientific knowledge and method must end by interrupting and destroying the old Indian religion in so far as that rests on a claim to attain truth by meditation divorced from observation.

There is then, I believe, in India as in Europe, a real, not merely seeming, antagonism between traditional religion and modern ways of thinking. The educated class is aware of this, and is making efforts analogous to those made in Europe to overcome it. These may take the form of an abstraction from all religions of their more rational elements and an emphasis of these as the essence of religion. This is the position of the Brahmo Somaj, which, in fact, is a pure theism, emphasising, however, the personal relation of the soul to God. To this sect, or rather these sects, for the society is split into several, all religions equally contain the truth, though all are tainted with error, and they make no special claim for the Hindu tradition or the Hindu sacred books. I should say, indeed, from what I saw, that their spirit is much more Christian than Hindu, though they do not give to Christ a higher position than to other great prophets. But for the very reason, perhaps, of its detachment from Hindu tradition, the Brahmo Somaj seems to be losing, not gaining, ground. It has few adherents outside Bengal, and my impression is that it exercises a small and declining influence. The Arya Somaj, on the other hand, bases itself on the Vedas, and is intensely national. It claims that its reformed faith is really the original faith of the Vedas, a claim which I should suppose would not for a moment be sustained by an impartial scholar. Its adherents have been very numerous and very active, especially in North-West India, and it has a college at Hardwar somewhat similar to Jesuit institutions, where boys are trained exclusively till they reach manhood in the tenets and spirit of the society, with a view to a future apostolate. The first generation of these students is now being sent out, and it will be interesting to learn what effect they will have on the world and the world on them. I got the impression, however, that the Arya Somaj,

too, is declining with the disappearance of the first generation of its apostles. And, indeed, the attempt to graft a belief which shall be in harmony with modern ideas and modern social movements on the text of the Vedas is, I believe, as much foredoomed to failure as similar attempts in Europe to reconcile modern positive knowledge with the Old and the New Testament. Whatever may be the future of these particular sects, they are symptomatic of a crisis of thought which is world-wide, and arises wherever the spirit of modern science comes into contact with that of traditional religion. Meantime, however, the great mass of the Indian people, being uneducated even in reading and writing, continue unchanged in their old religious routine and religious sentiments. So that it is still true, as I suggested on an earlier page, that India is the most religious country in the world, unless Russia may be put on a level with her.

Turning now from religion to social institutions, there can be little doubt, I think, that caste, the most peculiar feature of Indian life, is being gradually undermined, partly by education, still more, perhaps, by railways and the gradual spread of industrialism. An example may show what I mean better than a page of generalisations. I was travelling in South India with a Brahmin in the carriage. What was he to do? He had to eat, and there was the carriage full of unclean foreigners. What he did do was to go into a corner of the carriage, get his servant to stand behind him, so as to make a kind of screen, and there on the floor dispose of the carefully prepared food he had brought with him in tin boxes. But this kind of thing must surely end in making the whole system look ridiculous. The best way to get rid of caste is to mix people up, and there is no such mixing as that of railway travel. Again, the introduction of factories must react upon caste, for caste is not taken account of by employers. At a mill which I visited in Agra I was told that the only difficulty caused by caste was in connection with Brahmins and with sweepers. No one would work with a sweeper, and a Brahmin may make trouble with any other caste. Otherwise, for industrial purposes, caste disappears. Caste, in short, will vanish as the

social conditions which fostered it vanish; and these, I think, are bound to vanish whether or no the British rule is perpetuated, by the economic forces which now have the whole world in their grip.

The position of women, too, another peculiar feature of Indian civilisation, is being profoundly affected by Western influences. First, by the education of men, for educated men want educated wives. Secondly, by the education of girls, which is an important and growing feature of Indian life. Educated girls in India, as in other countries, marry later and demand more. In the present transition stage very real domestic tragedies result from the conflict between mothers-in-law brought up on the old system and daughters-in-law brought up on the new one, and this, perhaps, will happen for many generations. Still, for good or evil, whoever rules India, and even if she rules herself, this change, I believe, will proceed. There is something in it world-wide and secular, and it is one of the profoundest social changes which the modern world is witnessing.

There is one other point on which I will touch, one to which I attach great importance, the effect of contact with the West on Indian arts and crafts. There can be no doubt that these generally have declined, if not perished; and the immediate cause is the competition of Western wares. This is most evident in textiles, where factory-made goods, mainly imported, but partly also manufactured in India, are killing the old domestic industries. But the decline seems to be general; I, at any rate, saw nowhere any modern products, whether in brasswork, wood-carving, embroidery, or enamel, which seemed to me to have any merit. To attribute this decline, however, merely to the competition of Western wares is not to go to the bottom of the matter. For the question remains, Why are Western wares preferred? The answer that they are cheaper is sufficient, no doubt, in the case of goods used by the mass of the people; cheapness, if you are poor, will override, in the East as in the West, all other considerations. But there is something more than this. Some Indian arts, that of painting, for instance, that of architecture on

a grand scale, and the arts allied to it, always depended in India on the patronage of princes. These princes still exist and are still wealthy. But they prefer to patronise bad Western art. Why? Obviously because they have no real taste, and the prestige of the West overrides everything else in their mind. They want to have houses and clothes as like as possible to those of Europeans. And this raises the general question, to me a very interesting one, whether taste in all Oriental countries has not been for generations merely a habit; whether people went on making and using beautiful things merely because their fathers and grandfathers had done so; and as soon as anything new is offered, run to that, not only for the sake of cheapness, but for the sake of novelty and snobbery. My observations in China and in Japan, as well as in India, suggested to me very forcibly that this is the truth—that the arts of the East have long been dead, long before contact with the West, so far as active and intelligent taste is concerned, and that their collapse before the Western invasion is due not only to the cheapness of Western goods, but to an actual preference for them on other grounds, or, at any rate, an absence of preference for the more beautiful native products. Indians attribute the decline of their arts and crafts, as they attribute everything else, to the malign activities of the British Government. I believe they do not go deep enough. They should attribute it to the lack of effective and positive taste among their own leaders.

To sum up, I find in India a peculiar civilisation, antithetical to that of the West. I find a religious consciousness which negates what is really the religious postulate of the West, that life in time is the real and important life; and a social institution, caste, which negates the implicit assumption of the West, that the desirable thing is equality of opportunity. I find also that in India the contact between East and West assumes a form peculiarly acute and irritating, owing to the fact that India has been conquered and is governed by a Western Power. But the contact, none the less, is having the same disintegrating effect it produces in other Eastern countries. And I do not doubt that sooner

or later whether or no British rule maintains itself, the religious consciousness of India will be transformed by the methods and results of positive science, and its institutions by the economic influences of industrialism. In this transformation something, of course, will be lost. But my own opinion is that India has more to gain and less to lose by contact with the West than any other Eastern country.

PART II.—CHINA

WHEN I landed in China, indeed, when I first saw the Mongolian type at Darjeeling, I was aware of a feeling as though an oppressive cloud had lifted. I realised then how strange and how tragic India had been to me, how utterly alien I had felt there. The brooding over the whole country of a spirit not merely eligious, but religious in a sense so remote from anything religion has meant in the West; the tremendous forces antagonistic to man marching over the land, famine, plague, malaria, drought, flood; the handful of English camped there, fighting these things with so little help and so little hope; the gulf between rulers and ruled; the spirit of revolt which yet seemed to have in it no real capacity or promise; all these things, felt subconsciously even more than consciously, had lain like a nightmare upon me, clouding all the interest and all the pleasure of my travels. India was sublime, but it was terrible. China, on the other hand, was human. At the first sight of these ugly, cheery, vigorous people I loved them. Their gaiety, as of children, their friendliness, their profound humanity, struck me from the first and remained with me to the last. I can imagine no greater contrast than that between their character, their institutions, their habits, and those of the Indians. The Chinese are, and always have been, profoundly secular, as the Indians are, and always have been, profoundly religious. It is true, of course, that the Chinese have had religion, as the Europeans have had it; Buddhism came to them from India as Christianity came to us

from Judaea, and Taoism was an indigenous growth. They have had also saints and mystics, as Europe has had them. But Buddhism and Taoism have never suited the Chinese character any more than Christianity has suited the European. Both Buddhism and Taoism quickly degenerated to mere superstition, systems of magic, imaginary means to obtain material ends. It was, and is, Confucianism with its rationalism, its scepticism, its stress on conduct, that expresses the Chinese spirit. Over India gleam the stars; over China the sun shines. Mankind is the centre of the Chinese universe, as the Absolute is the centre of the Indian. Confucianism may easily be translated into terms of Western positivism; it could never be translated into terms of Hinduism. The religion of the mass of the Chinese has always been mere superstition, whereas in India, as I have said, it appears to be true that the superstition symbolises a real spiritualism. Ancestor worship is the centre of the Chinese system; but that, perhaps, ought not to be called worship at all. It is rather commemoration, and as such all educated Chinamen regard it.¹ It is thus rather a social than a religious institution, and serves to bind the family together rather than to foster a spiritual life. Its bearing on life is a bearing on conduct, and it is but an intensified form of the feeling which, even in the West, leads a man of distinguished family to feel that he must try to be worthy of his ancestors. What distinguishes the Chinese attitude in this matter from that of the modern West is its backward rather than its forward look. We look to our descendants, they to their forebears. And the discrediting of Confucianism under the new *regime* is due to its supposed conservatism rather than to any idea that it is irrational and superstitious. In this matter of religion the Chinese have only to throw over their superstition—and over the educated superstition never had any hold—and they will be immediately in line with the West. In India, as we saw, things are far otherwise. For what is most characteristic

¹ Probably only the educated. To the mass, I expect, it is really "worship," in the sense that they expect to receive benefits from the spirit to whom they offer.

and profound in the Indian spirit is antagonistic to and irreconcilable with rationalism and science.

This, which I call the secularism of the Chinese attitude to life, is also expressed in their art. The art of India, in my judgment, has, as art, little or no value (this, of course, is a highly controversial opinion), but it is tremendously significant of the spiritual life of India. It is all symbolic, and it is symbolic of those grandiose abstractions in which the Indian mind delights. It expresses an over-world of spiritual forces of which the world of sense is a shadowy and illusory manifestation. It does not interpret, it negates the ordinary life and the ordinary consciousness. That is why it is so disquieting, so terrible, so monstrous to the western spirit. But the art of China is through and through human. It is the kind of art that Romans, too, or Englishmen might have produced, if they had been gifted with aesthetic genius; the art of reasonable concrete-minded men, with a keen sensitivity to the pathos and gaiety of human life, and the beauty and grandeur of nature. It is characteristic of Chinese landscape-painting that it should include representation of the human observer. Their artists do not, it is true, treat nature as a mere background to human life, as, for example, the great Venetian artists do; but neither do they treat it as the vehicle of tremendous supernatural forces, which is the spirit of Indian art. They treat it as a beautiful object, itself real, contemplated by a sane and sensitive human spirit. So with their poetry. It is of all poetry I know the most human and the least symbolic or romantic. It contemplates life just as it presents itself, without any veil of ideas, any rhetoric or sentiment; it simply clears away the obstruction which habit has built up between us and the beauty of things, and leaves that, showing in its own nature, revealed but not recreated. Chinese art and Chinese poetry liave the spirit of Wordsworth and of the most modern literary movement in France. Their art is a realism, though not an actualism; a vision of what this life is as seen by those who can see it, not of some other world behind or above or outside it.

the fundamental attitude of the Chinese towards life is thus,

in my judgment, and always has been, that of the most modern West, nearer to us now than to our mediaeval ancestors, infinitely nearer to us than India. And the same is true, at bottom, of social institutions. China, so far as I know, is the only country whose civilisation has been for centuries, if not always, democratic. There has never been caste in China, there has been, I think, less even of class than in most countries. That equality of opportunity which is the essence of democracy, and which has been denied by every other civilisation, has been affirmed by China in theory, and to a great extent in practice, from the date at which her written annals begin; There has never been a priestly caste, there has never been a governing caste. The rich, of course, have necessarily had advantages in the race as they have with us, but the barrier between rich and poor has never been as great as it is in the modern West, and it has been at least as easy, probably easier, to rise from bottom to top. And this social fact is reflected in the bearing and manners of the Chinese. I have never been in a country where the common people are at once so self-respecting, so independent, and so courteous. In America, for example, everybody appears to think it necessary to assure you that they are as good as you are by behaving rudely to you. Nothing of the kind obtains in China, for it would never occur to them that they are not as good. There is none of this self-conscious assertion of their rights; still less is there anything of that obsequiousness which one meets everywhere in India. The Chinese man is the democratic man. He is already, so far as his attitude to himself and to his fellows is concerned, what democrats hope the western man may become. His attitude is democratic, just as it is positive and secular. And this underlying and fundamental likeness to the man of the modern West is, in my judgment, far more important and significant than the superficial differences which are usually dwelt upon by western travellers and residents.

There is one other important point in which China contrasts with India. China has been and remains politically independent and united. This statement needs some qualification, but it is

essentially true. The Tartars and the Manchus have conquered China, but they have imposed on her nothing but a dynasty. They have adopted completely the manners, customs, ideas of the conquered. Of China it is truer even than of Greece that *Capta ferum victorem cepit*. Not so India. The Mahometans, in spite of conversions, remain Mahometans, different in religion, different in sentiment, different in social institutions, from the Hindus. Nothing yet has brought the two communities into harmony; and their antagonism is still, and perhaps increasingly, an important factor in the Indian situation. Again, India, until the British conquest, has never been welded into a political unity. The largest native empires, like that of Asoka, the largest alien ones, like that of the Moguls, never included the whole peninsula. And, in addition, there have been always the vertical divisions of caste. But China, except for short periods, has been for two thousand years at least under one head; and though the provinces have had a very large measure of autonomy, they have been administered by officials appointed by the Central Government, and have recognised its existence by the payment of taxes. The various dialects of China, though unintelligible one to another, are varieties of the same language; and the common script has always given to the educated a common medium of communication, much as Latin gave it to mediaeval Europe. China has been a political unity, even though a loose one; and though this unity has not given rise to a strong national feeling, there is in China a basis for such feeling more real and more powerful than anything that seems to exist in India. For this reason, among others, China would not be so easy to conquer as India was, nor so easy to govern by any race that did not assimilate itself to Chinese customs and standards.

I see, then, in China, so far as the most fundamental conditions are concerned, a far greater similarity to the modern West than to India. But, of course, points of similarity to India and of difference from the West do strike the eye. Like India, but unlike western Europe, China is predominantly agricultural, and the bulk of her people are peasants. Like India, and unlike the

West, indeed to a much greater degree than India, she is untouched by industrialism. The era of railways, of mines, of factories, is but just beginning, and the immense resources of the country have hardly been tapped. Like India, and unlike the modern West, the family is the cardinal point on which all her social life and a great part of her government turns. And this family solidarity, while it fulfils many of the functions which in the West have to be undertaken by Government, is a very serious obstacle to the introduction of western forms of business—for example, the joint-stock company. Still, these differences, important as they are, are comparatively superficial; and it would, I believe, for good or for evil, be much easier to westernise China than it would be to westernise India. The Chinese would only have to apply their attitude to life in a new way; but the Indians would have to transform theirs. The Chinese are already secular, practical, matter-of-fact; they require, to westernise them, only a new technique. But the Indians require a new spirit.

Although, however, as I have suggested, it would be easier to westernise China than to westernise India, the process of westernisation has not as yet gone so far in the one country as in the other. Effective contact between Europe and China dates only from the opium war.¹ From that date the activities of the western powers in China have been continuous, discreditable, and indefensible. But though the Powers have robbed China, have bullied her, have interfered with her independence and sovereign rights, have imposed upon her teaching which she did not want and trade which she thought disastrous and immoral, they have so far made no serious attempt to conquer and annex her. The servitude of China is financial; but the history of Egypt shows how easily financial may pass into political control. It may be so with China; the next few months or years will decide. But meantime and up to now China is independent. The activities, commercial and other,

¹ In spite of Mr. Morse's apologies, I consider this to be the proper description of that war.

of the foreigners have been mostly confined to the treaty ports. And though these are now very numerous and include a number of cities far inland on the Yang-tze, they are of course but isolated points in the vast territory of China. And even in these ports the western spirit has hardly touched even the externals of Chinese life. The foreign communities build their own cities outside the native city; there they administer themselves, lead their own life as in Europe, their life of business and of sport, and never, if they can help it, enter the native city or any part of the interior of China. The British firms, who were first in the field, did and still do their business through the medium of Chinese merchants, and have no direct relation with their customers in the country. They never stir from the treaty ports, and they know nothing and care nothing about Chinese conditions except so far as these may react upon their business. "We see too much of things Chinese here," the agent of a British firm said to me, when I made some comment on the Chinese city. And the sentiment I believe, is pretty general among Europeans in China.

While these conditions prevailed there was nothing in the presence of the foreign traders which need have led to any radical change in Chinese institutions or ideas. But the conditions are now rapidly changing. The new enterprise, especially of Germans and Japanese, is sending bagmen acquainted with the language all over the interior of China. Oil and cigarettes are the pioneers of this commercial invasion. The skin-disease of advertisement is beginning to disfigure the face of the country, and German *art nouveau* appears in the stations of the railway from Tsinan-fu to Peking. The grip of the West has begun to close, and will more and more be felt in the general dissemination of ugliness, meanness, and insincerity throughout the empire.

More important, however, I think, than commercial enterprise in disturbing the secular tradition of China has been missionary activity. I did not, indeed, gather, and I do not believe, that China is in process of Christianisation or will ever be Christian-

ised, though I have met Chinese Christians and, I think, sincere ones. But the missionaries have been the pioneers of western education, and it is western education that has made the revolution. All the new leaders have been educated, first at missionary schools and colleges in China, then abroad, mainly in Japan and the United States. And this education has produced a new and surprising type of Chinese. Nothing in my travels has struck and perplexed me more than this. China has always been regarded as the type of the unchanging. If ever there was a stable national character, a stable national mentality, it might have been supposed that it would be there, in a homogeneous people of the same stock, never conquered, or at least never affected in race, in manner, in laws, in language, by conquest; never interrupted or disturbed for centuries in their traditional ideas and their traditional manner of life. Here, surely, if anywhere, sudden revolution was impossible. Here change, if it came at all, would come by slow degrees, fighting its way against an immense and profound psychological immobility. But what happens in fact? A Chinese taken as a boy and brought up in a missionary school, then transferred during the impressionable period of life to a foreign country to complete his education, returns to China transformed through and through. There is no vestige of conservatism left in him. He has adopted not only the manners, the dress, the speech, the very intonation of a foreign country; he has adopted its whole mental and moral outfit. There is nothing in China he does not want to transform, nothing he does not believe he can transform. This is particularly true of the Chinese educated in America. I met in Canton some of the chief officials of the revolutionary government, the chief justice, the foreign secretary, and others. I was astounded. They were exactly like American undergraduates. Their whole mentality, so far as I could see, was American. They had not only the manners, the dress, the speech; they had the confidence, the light-heartedness, the easy and disconcerting superficiality. On the other hand, those educated in England 'were comparatively critical, sober, and cautious. Those educated in Japan, I was informed, had the

revolutionary *èlan* of that country; and when the second revolution broke out, the students that were in Japan crowded over *en masse* to join the revolutionary troops. The one student I met from Germany looked and spoke like a German. This conversion may, of course, be superficial. There may be underlying it an unchanged basis of Chinese character. But if so, it is the superficial part that is active in China. It is these young men that have made the revolution and established the Republic; that are doing all they can to sweep away the old China, root and branch, and build up there a reproduction of America. There is nothing, I think, which they would not alter if they could, from the streets of Canton to the family system, from the costume of a policeman to the national religion. This attitude of theirs exasperates the foreigners, who seem as much disgusted and alarmed at the actual appearance of a new China as they used to be critical and censorious of the old one. But it is, after all, very natural. These young men find their country a prey to foreign aggression. They see that the only way to meet the foreigners is to meet them on their own ground, and they have before them the triumphantly successful example of Japan. It must, however, be admitted that there has not appeared in China, any group of men of the capacity and power of the statesmen who piloted Japan into the new era. The young men have ideas in plenty, but they have no experience, and, it would seem, no practical capacity. Too often they have not character. For it is, I fear, indisputable, as it is undisputed, that many of the new officials and of the new legislators are corrupt as well as incompetent. Certainly it is remarkable and so far as my knowledge of history goes, unique that in a great revolution in a nation of four hundred millions one man only should emerge with the capacity for government; and Yuan Shih Kai, I believe, will not appear to history to be more than an astute and tenacious opportunist. The recent revolution has exposed the incapacity and the lack of character of the southern leaders. And, however sympathetic one may be with the revolutionists, the question forces itself upon one whether we have not here another demon-

tration that old bottles will not hold new wine; that ideas derived from an alien civilisation may transform the brain, but cannot penetrate the soul *of* a different race. I suspect, at any rate, that in young China there is some dislocation between their convictions and their character, which makes them ineffective for action towards ends in which they genuinely believe.

On the other hand, the problem before the republican revolutionaries is a vast one, and one which no country has solved without years of confusion and bloodshed. European critics are apt to forget this. It took France a century of successive revolutions and reactions before the Republic was definitely established. Two revolutions and a series of civil wars were necessary to get rid of the Stuarts in England. The surprising thing in China is that the dynasty has disappeared with so little effort and so little regret. For among all the possibilities of the future, the one which is universally repudiated is a Manchu restoration. Still, to get rid of the Manchus is one thing, to set up a new government is another. The breach of continuity has been complete, as complete as in revolutionary France. Nothing in Chinese history or tradition has prepared them for a representative republic, and it is quite possible that it is not under a republic that the new era, which in any case is inevitable, will be best inaugurated and furthered. At present, however, it must be admitted that republican institutions have not been given a fair chance. That, I believe, has been the weakness of the President's policy. Instead of endeavouring to gain the confidence of all parties in the National Assembly, and to get all to work together for the common good, he seems to have set out from the beginning to discredit the Assembly. When I was in Peking the two Houses were meeting day after day and doing no business because a quorum could not be obtained; and this was due to the deliberate abstention of the Chin-Pu-Tang party, which is admittedly the party of the President, and which, no doubt, was in his pay. True, serious differences *of* policy **had** developed between him and the southern party. He had contracted the quintuple loan over the head of the Assembly in

defiance of their protest and in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the constitution. But the fact that he did so is precisely an example of what I should call his bad statesmanship. What is worse, he was believed to be privy to the assassination of Sung, the southern leader; and as the facts have never been allowed to come out in Court, he must continue to lie under that suspicion. If the National Assembly hitherto has been impotent and futile, the fault, I believe, lies rather with the President than with them.¹ But these, after all, are transitory conditions. The fundamental fact is that the revolution was accomplished by a handful of men educated in foreign customs and foreign ideas, and working with a mercenary army (for it is clear that the troops who have taken part on either side are mercenaries who transfer their allegiance from one party to the other according as they are paid). There is no national movement in China, for there is no Chinese nation, in the sense that there is an English or a French or a German nation. The Chinese, as I have already pointed out, though they have never been divided as India has, have never been united by a common political consciousness. Their social organisation has rested not on the central government, but on the family and the village. Government has been a mechanism imposed from above to make roads and canals, to do justice, and to collect taxes. And the comparative isolation of China for many centuries, the absence of wars waged for very existence, such as have built up the European system, prevented the formation of national sentiment by outside pressure. The Chinese have been the most peaceable, and, in many respects, the most civilised people the world has seen. They have not had, because they have not needed, a national self-consciousness, and they cannot improvise one in a moment. There can be no doubt, I imagine, that the mass of the people do not know what the revolution is about; and that they welcomed it less because it got rid of the Manchus than because it relieved them for a time from the payment of taxes.

¹ Since this was written, the President has dissolved all elective bodies in China, and made himself an absolute dictator.

It does not, however, follow, as European critics often imply, that China can never acquire a political sense or work a constitution. Given education, a press, better means of communication, and in a generation the change might be effected. The Chinese, as experience has now shown, are the most educable of people; and this, no doubt, applies to the masses no less than to the handful who have hitherto had the opportunity. And the education has begun. In elementary schools modern subjects are beginning to be taught; geography, history, elementary science, the existence, the character, and the power of other nations. I myself, visiting a school in a small village on the Upper Yang-tze, far from all foreign influence, found an English-speaking teacher who had been educated by missionaries, an English spelling and reading book, maps of China and of the world, and drawings of bacteria. These things must be taking effect. And those who seem still to think that the revolution in China is a mere flash in the pan, implying no radical transformation, are likely before many years have passed to be very much astonished. What may happen politically, whether the government be republican or monarchical, on the American or the French or the German model, is comparatively unimportant. The important thing is that the educational process has begun, the education both of events and of schooling; and that to education the Chinese are eminently responsive. For good and for evil the old China is a thing of the past. The penetration by western ideas has begun, and whether it go faster or slower it will go far and go to the end.

PART III.—JAPAN

TURNING now to Japan I find here, too, affinities with the West and contrasts with India. Japan is the only country I have visited which reminds me of what I suppose ancient Greece to have been. This, at any rate, is true of externals. The costume of the men, leaving bare the legs and arms, and their perfect proportions and development, were a constant delight to me.

The most Hellenic thing I ever saw was a group of Japanese youths practising jiu-jitsu naked under the trees of a temple garden, or by moonlight on the seashore. Again, the Japanese theatre must be more like the theatre of ancient Greece than anything now extant. The audience in their loose white robes; the magnificent posing of the actors; the chant in which the text is declaimed; the dance; the choice, for subject, of ancient heroic legend, all these are striking points of resemblance. And though, as Mr. Archer has pointed out, the actual form of the theatre recalls rather Elizabethan than Greek conditions, the total effect to my judgment was much more Hellenic than Shakespearean. Again, in Japan, as in ancient Greece, there is a universal prevalence of art. The skill and the taste still persist. Every common thing is beautiful, the cups, the teapots, even the very toys. The houses, from the aesthetic point of view, are the most perfect ever designed. Fineness of taste and skill of hand seem to be general, save where the western invasion has destroyed them. Add to this the impression one receives in Japan of a people "simple, sensuous, and passionate," quick to laugh, quick to quarrel, quick to die, or kill, in everything intense and unreflective, and you get a resemblance with the Greeks which is, I think, more than superficial. The points in which the Japanese character and creation are unlike and inferior to the Greek depend upon their comparative lack of intellect. The Greeks were the originators in the West of philosophy and science, and their literature is as remarkable for its intellectual content as for its aesthetic form. The Japanese have originated nothing; they took all their ideas from China; and their literature and art is curiously unintellectual. Their whole civilisation, indeed, beautiful and passionate as it is, is thin and simple when compared with that of ancient Greece. If, in a word, Japan is the Greece of the East, it is a Greece without Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Thucydides. A curiously truncated Greece! Yet, I think, the foundation, so to speak, is the same. The same temperament, passionate and aesthetic; only a lack of the critical and constructive power of mind which has made the Greeks,

after the lapse of two thousand years, still the living masters of the West.

But it is, of course, not only with ancient Greece that the civilisation of Japan presents important analogies. In institutions, and in all those aspects of character which are affected by institutions, it was, until the revolution, an almost complete reproduction of mediaeval Europe. Japanese feudalism was, in every point, similar to European, save that it was simpler and intenser, and, of course, uncomplicated by the influences, ethical, social, and political, of the Catholic Church. If the essentials of feudalism be, as I think they are, a hierarchic organisation of society under the rule of a military caste, and the predominance, in the scheme of virtues, of those peculiar to that caste—courage, loyalty to a chief, and personal honour—then Japanese feudalism, which lasted up to the revolution of the nineteenth century, presents an exact parallel to feudalism in Europe. And its virtues and qualities still persist in Japan; they are said to have been, and no doubt were, the secret of their success in the war with Russia; and they constitute the greatest distinction between Japanese civilisation and that of India or of China on the one hand, and of the West on the other. It is for that reason that I say chivalry is the dominant note of Japanese civilisation, understanding by chivalry the qualities fostered by a feudal *regime*. These qualities are summed up in the Japanese term "bushido," and they centre about the national religion of Shintoism, the essence of which is devotion to ancestors, and in particular to the divine ancestors of the Emperor. Shintoism is the true religion of Japan; and it was a sound instinct (though, as it turned out, the policy prompted by it was a failure) which led the statesmen of the new era to foster Shintoism at the expense of Buddhism. For Buddhism, though it has had great influence in Japan, as is testified by the innumerable temples which are the chief beauty of the country and the tender and profound religious art of the earlier period, was really as alien to the Japanese spirit as Christianity to the European. The Japanese are not by nature, any more than the Chinese,

disbelievers in life. They are active, sensuous, ambitious, at need aggressive. They have to an eminent degree the qualities of citizens and patriots; and the influence of Buddhism has been with them more aesthetic than ethical. Japanese feudalism converted the Buddha's doctrine of renunciation into the Stoicism of the warrior. The Japanese Samurai renounced desire, not that he might enter Nirvana, but that he might acquire the contempt of life which would make him a perfect warrior. In him, the knight included and swallowed up the saint. And the Samurai, meditating in a teahouse on the beauty, the brevity, and the pathos of life, and passing out to kill or to die, as is typical of the Japanese attitude to life as the wandering Sannyasin is of the Indian.

But this civilisation of Japan, so complete, so simple, so homogeneous—a military system, preserved, oddly enough, without degeneration, through more than two centuries of peace, and deliberately secluded from all influences from without that might have disturbed it—is already a thing of the past. As in India, as in China, as all over the world, the aggressive western powers forced themselves and their ideals upon the reluctant nation. But Japan, a small homogeneous, military State, inspired by a strong patriotic sentiment, met the advance in quite a different way from any other nation. In order to avoid being westernised by the powers she decided to westernise herself. To save her life she made up her mind to lose it. The system she had cherished so carefully she threw overboard almost in a day; and a generation saw a centralised monarchy substituted for a nominal suzerainty, the military caste converted into officers in a national army, education in science, theoretical and applied, substituted for education in the Chinese and Japanese classics, feudalism abolished, and industrialism triumphantly inaugurated. I know of nothing in history analogous to this extraordinary transformation except the earlier conversion of Japan to Chinese ideals and practice. I proceed to comment more in detail on some aspects of this transformation.

To take first externals. In Japan, as in India and in China,

but in Japan in pre-eminent degree, one is struck by the rout of aesthetic taste before the western invasion. In old Japan, roughly, everything was beautiful; in modern Japan everything is hideous. Fortunately, in externals, old Japan is almost everywhere in evidence. It is in a few great cities that the change appears. Tokyo, for example, is becoming ugly with an intensity of ugliness I have seen nowhere else. The modern buildings in European style are as meaningless and as dead as all architecture in the West, and they have not the compensation of that kind of Egyptian slave-made impressiveness which characterises recent building in western capitals. The statues in the European style have a grotesque monstrosity which makes even the monuments of London appear dignified by comparison. The European costume of the official and educated classes—fortunately the mass of the people still adhere to the Japanese style—is a model of vulgarity and ineptitude. Japanese taste is altogether disoriented as soon as it has to deal with European and American conventions. Perhaps, as I have already suggested, the taste had really long ceased to exist, and become a mere habit with no power of resistance. However that may be, it is fortunate that so far, in most crafts, the old tradition still persists, and Japanese pottery, lacquer, weaving, and embroidery are still being produced not unworthy of their artistic past. How long this may continue I cannot prophesy. A general extension of the factory system would of course destroy it. Some Japanese, it is true, are aware of the value of their own traditions and of the devastating effect of industrialism on art and beauty, and may possibly make a successful effort to conserve what they still possess. I confess, however, that I am not very hopeful of this. For among educated Japanese I have met few who seem to care about such things, and these few were apt to be conservative and reactionary, and without much practical influence. The terrible prestige of the West covers and recommends everything bad in it as well as everything good, and the Japanese, most imitative of nations, seem to desire only to be able to say at every point that they are as good as the most advanced western nation.

Turning from this, to my mind, very important point, to those social and political questions which in the present age almost monopolise public attention, the entry of Japan into the western industrial system is carrying with it all the consequences which that system has produced in Europe and America. There is a gradual exodus from the country to the town, due to what is now felt to be the dulness and the lack of opportunity of life on the soil, and the attraction of superior wages. Pauperism, unknown under the old *rigime*, is becoming a problem, and though there is no poor law in Japan, there appears to be need for one. Unemployment is beginning to show itself; and the factory system is developing abuses similar to those which disgraced its early history in Europe, abuses which the Japanese have not yet begun to combat by legislation. For though there is a factory law on the Statute Book, it has not yet been put into operation, ostensibly on the ground of lack of funds, really, as I was informed, because of the influence with the Government of the great manufacturers. The growth of national wealth, in short, is being accompanied by all those evils of disorganisation and unjust distribution which constitute the political and social problem of the West. And these evils are intensified by a financial system which raises the bulk of the national revenue by taxes on the necessities of the poor.

This brings me to the question of the Government of Japan, a system which has been much praised, but which seemed to me, in its practical operation, to be the worst and most ominous factor in the present situation. Traditionally, as is well known, the political and national sentiment of Japan centred about the Emperor. The sentiment, no doubt, was obscured during the period of the Shogunate, when the Emperor was a mere figure-head. But long before the aggression of the West produced the great crisis an internal movement was working for the restoration of the Mikado's power. That restoration was effected by the revolution of 1867, and effected by the voluntary abdication of the Shogun. And the tradition of personal loyalty to the Emperor, as an actual descendant and representative of gods, the

tradition, that is, in a very intense form, of his divine right, was an asset which the statesmen of the revolution were not likely to throw away in laying the foundations of modern Japan. When, therefore, they made a constitution they naturally turned for a model rather to Germany than to America or France or England. They made the Emperor the centre of the whole political structure, and clause after clause in the constitution endeavours to secure, so far as the letter of the law can do it, that monarchical government in Japan shall never be transformed into parliamentary government as we have it in England. To foster this feeling about the Emperor, the machinery of public education is brought to bear. On stated anniversaries the children do reverence to the Mikado's portrait. His proclamation, which makes himself and his divine ancestors the source and centre of all the history and polity of Japan, is the text on which all moral instruction is a commentary. A deliberate attempt is made to mould the mind of young Japan to religious veneration for the head of the State; and to this general attitude all domestic and personal morality is subordinated. The Emperor is put forward as the head, not only of the political, but of the social and ethical structure of Japan. It is, however, interesting to note that in spite of the position thus given to the Emperor, he does not, in fact, appear to govern in person. Until recently he governed through and by and, it would seem, in subordination to the remarkable group of men called the elder statesmen; a group as much unknown to the constitution as the Cabinet is in England, and owing their position to the confidence of the sovereign, and to their prestige and influence among the officers of the army and navy. It is these men hitherto that have governed Japan. Their ideal is bureaucratic. They have never desired or intended that the representative element in the constitution should become the governing element, or that public opinion should reach that stage of development in which it can really dictate to ministers. This policy they have pursued with the ruthless and intelligent pertinacity which appears to belong to the Japanese character. There is, in fact, in Japan, whatever

the letter of the law may be, very little liberty in the matter of organising and directing public sentiment. Trade unions, though permitted by the law, are prevented by police regulations from directing their activity to the raising of wages or shortening of hours, by combination and the threat of a strike. I met a man who had been imprisoned for some months for encouraging men on strike, and whose whole activity, in a social settlement he had attempted to found, had been suppressed by the authorities. I heard of another who had been imprisoned for five years for making some comment not regarded as respectful on a public distribution of alms by the Emperor. In the face of this suppressive activity of the executive, the representative House seems to be powerless. Parties are still grouped about persons, not about principles, and the desire for office and the emoluments and advantages it may bring with it seems to emasculate leaders and followers alike. The very professors in the Imperial universities feel that they are muzzled on all subjects touching public affairs; for though, of course, they would not be ostensibly punished for their opinions, they know well that advancement depends on pleasing those in power. The hand of the bureaucracy lies heavy on Japan; and if it secures, as it seems to do in many departments, efficiency of administration, it secures it at the expense of liberty.

This system, however, of government by a clique of nobles, backed by the prestige of the Emperor and using the forms of the Constitution, is hardly likely to continue indefinitely. In the first place, the peculiar sanctity attached to the Emperor's person can hardly survive in a people that is daily becoming more and more penetrated by the western spirit of rationalism and criticism. The Japanese, even the Japanese masses, will not long be able to maintain the fiction that a man is a god. The very existence of a constitution is a contradiction to the principle of divine right, as much in Japan as once in France, and now in Germany. For a constitution implies, if it does not affirm, the opposite principle of the right of the people. And however much it may be formally provided that an elected assembly

is only to be consultative, all history shows that it will end by making a bid for supremacy. So far as I could ascertain, the movement in this direction has already begun in Japan. The chief political leaders seem to have paid at least lip-service to the doctrine that a minister ought to command a majority in the representative House. The fall of Prince Katsura's ministry was brought about by the pressure of public opinion, aided by rioting in the capital; and it is noticeable that in that crisis, for the first time, the name of the Emperor was dragged into political controversy. The narrow basis of representation in Japan, which confines the electorate to the upper middle class, will no doubt delay a democratic evolution. But the modern history of France and of England shows that such barriers generally disappear once public opinion is effectively aroused. There are signs, I think, that it is stirring in Japan, and its manifestations are likely to be the more violent the more it is denied the normal outlet. In a word, the Japanese statesmen are endeavouring to combine an autocratic system of government with an industrial civilisation, a free press, and an education on western lines. This I believe to be as impossible in the long run as it is to keep water in the liquid state after the boiling point is reached. Government follows social evolution; and industrialism, though it may favour plutocracy, can never favour the domination of a military caste. -

In this connection I may briefly observe that the educational system I have described, whereby loyalty to the Emperor is made the pivot of morality, seems to be producing on the youth of the country the opposite effect to that intended. They react violently, I was told, from this governmental pressure; they suspect, not without reason, the sincerity of their teachers, and emerge from the system with a bias rather sceptical or democratic than monarchical.

My impression, then, of modern Japan is briefly this: I find a people moulded by centuries of feudal institutions and feudal morality, homogeneous, patriotic, and with their natural self-reliance and pride intensified by the rapidity and ease with which

they have assimilated the teaching of western civilisation, and raised to a white heat by their victory over Russia. At the same time I find that their very success is undermining the basis on which that success rests. The extension of industrialism means the substitution of industrial for feudal psychology and ethics, the disappearance of the old simple cult of the Emperor, which made it a matter of course to die for him, and a dislocation of all social relations, which has as its immediate effect pauperism, unemployment, unrest, and discontent. Add to this a heavy burden of debt, incurred mainly by the Russian war, pressing on a country not rich in natural resources, and a population too numerous to be supported in comfort on their own territory; a governmental *régime* which discourages and suppresses popular association and popular agitation; and a financial system which throws the burden of taxation on the poor. The past and the present, oriental tradition and western culture, are at grips in Japan more intensely than in any other country; but in Japan alone the issue of the conflict will be determined by the people themselves, not by the pressure of foreign powers.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this survey of the present condition of the principal countries of the Far East, I find myself face to face with one of the fundamental issues of modern civilisation. The East, it is clear to me, has developed types of life having beauties and advantages which we have lost in the modern West. The great mass of the people live, as they always have lived, on the soil. They have a hard life, a life exposed to great physical disasters, a life at the mercy of nature. But also, it is a life *in* nature; and though the people may not be consciously alive to the beauties and sublimities of the natural world, I cannot doubt that they are aware of them and derive from them, if not happiness, at least a certain dignity and breadth of outlook. We ought not, on this point, to generalise from our own agricultural labourers,

and infer a necessary degradation as the consequence of life on the soil. It is the peasants we have destroyed, those who lived on the land when England was "merry England," in whom we ought to seek an analogy for the life of Oriental peasants; and these, I suspect, have a solidity, a sense of the fundamental realities, and the possibility of a really religious outlook on the world which it will be hard to parallel among city dwellers.

Again, throughout all the East there has been a development of culture in some respects more important and higher than that of the modern West. Under culture I include religion, literature, and art. And I regard these, not as being, in themselves, the purpose of human life, but rather as signs that that purpose is being fulfilled; that men, having satisfied, without too much exertion and exhaustion, their material needs, are living a life of rich and fine feeling, are contemplating nature and their own lives and purposes in rituals, pictures, poems, and songs. This kind of culture the East, I think, has always had in a finer sense than the modern West.

On the other hand, for causes which it would be interesting to try to trace, the East has fallen far behind the West in what I may call the machinery of life, and in all that kind of intellectual effort and achievement on which the command of that machinery depends. The West has invented, if not science, the applied sciences; and in so doing has made the externals of life, for the well-to-do at any rate, and perhaps also, when all is said, for the poor, immensely more comfortable than they have ever been before. It has made it possible for a much greater number of people to live on a given area; but at the same time it has almost destroyed the beauty of life and the faculty of disinterested contemplation. It is not really creditable, in the West, to be anything but a man of business, in the widest sense of the term; to live in any way which cannot be shown directly or indirectly to increase the comforts and facilities of life or diminish its detriments. This, of course, is especially true of the new countries, where there are no traditions, and no ancient culture; but it is becoming increasingly true in Europe, too. Now I do not

myself think that this attitude is merely contemptible, and convicts the West of sheer materialism. I believe that, under all this, hardly conscious of itself, is a great impulse which may fairly be called spiritual. The West is doing more than it knows it is doing; it is endeavouring to lift the general level of material life in order that there may be more leisure, more education, more capacity and opportunity for that impassioned reflection on life which is the essence of what I mean by culture. The pre-occupation of the West with material things does not really imply materialism; and it necessitates an intensity of life, a development of brain and will-power hitherto unknown in the history of the soul.

Still, the pace at which we are living, the competition of every kind, the intensity, the fatigue, the nerve-strain, involve a dislocation of the moral equilibrium of life. The East lives, and has always lived, at a lower tension; but it has kept a better balance between the active and the contemplative faculties. It is in that balance that I see civilisation. The West will have to recover it, and I used to think that it might learn to recover it from the East; that it might take from the East, and the East from it, what each required, and that a synthesis might result which would be more comprehensively human. My journey to the East has somewhat shaken my belief in this possibility. Civilisation is a whole. Its art, its religion, its way of life, all hang together with its economic and technical development. I doubt whether a nation can pick and choose; whether, for instance, the East can say, "We will take from the West its battle-ships, its factories, its medical science; we will not take its social confusion, its hurry and fatigue, its ugliness, its over-emphasis on activity." So, also, I doubt whether the West can say, "We will take from India its contemplative and religious spirit; but we will maintain our own pre-eminence in the material am, our popular and democratic institutions, our science, theoretic and applied." The West may receive a stimulus from the East, it can hardly take an example; and the East, taking from the West its industrial organisation, will have to take everything else.

I should look, therefore, for a redress of the balance in the West, not directly to the importation of ideals from the East, but to a reaction prompted by its own sense of its excesses on the side of activity. And on the other hand, I expect the East to follow us, whether it like it or no, into all these excesses, and to go right through, not round, all that we have been through on its way to a higher phase of civilisation. In short, I believe that the renewal of art, of contemplation, of religion, will arise in the West of its own impulse; and that the East will lose what remains of its achievement in these directions and become as "materialistic" (to use the -word) as the West, before it can recover a new and genuine spiritual life.

The Contribution of Ancient Greece to Modern Life

IN discussing this subject I feel that I must start with a word of explanation. I am not a specialist in Greek language, history, antiquities, or philosophy. All I can say for myself is that I was brought up upon Greek and that after reading much literature in many tongues I find myself returning, with an admiration that continually increases, to Greek books. You must take what I have to say, therefore, as the random thoughts of an amateur. My address will be a kind of *hors d'oeuvre*, and the solid dishes will come later. I believe, however, that there is a function for the amateur, and one that becomes more and not less important as specialisation increases; for unless people can find, through the wilderness of learning, some kind of guiding clue, they may easily lose themselves altogether. My business here is to spin a few threads of that clue; and you will receive, I am sure, my contribution in the spirit in which it is offered.

I propose to divide what I have to say into two sections. All divisions are arbitrary in this confusedly interconnected world, and mine, like others, does a certain violence to the facts. Still, it can be made, and, for my purpose, be made usefully.

I intend to speak first of Greek literature as a permanent possession, and, secondly, of Greek thought as an important phase in the intellectual movement of mankind. The literature, I shall urge, is—in the phrase of Thucydides—"a possession for ever"; the thought is a recurring stimulus; and both have played a dominating part in the shaping of the Western world.

About Greek literature, the first and most obvious point is its perennial freshness. True, it is between two and three thousand years old, but nevertheless, or even therefore, "age cannot witherjt nor custom stale Its infinite variety." For the Greeks did for the first time what Europe, whenever it has been civilised, has done again and seldom done as well. You all know, only

too well, those familiar columns and mouldings which reappear so faithfully on our "classical" buildings. Mr. Bernard Shaw once called this "the umbrella-stand style of architecture"; but I doubt whether he would have used that amusing and apt metaphor if he had once seen the Parthenon in Greek light and air. To me, the Acropolis of Athens, ruined though it is, was one of the most overwhelming sensations I have ever had; and so it must have been to many others. For suddenly the dead came alive. Well, it is the same with Greek literature. Get back to that, and you touch the fount of that great river that flows on down to our own time, often defiled, sometimes buried, and then breaking out again with something of its original purity and force. Nor has it yet reached that ocean of oblivion into which perhaps it will finally fall. Its danger is rather contamination; and that is why it is always good to return, so far as we can, to the source where first it bubbled up.

The great flowering-time of this Greek literature is very brief. Broadly it extends from the beginning of the fifth to the end of the fourth century B.C. But this statement needs important qualifications. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* belong to a much earlier period, and to a civilisation different in important respects from that of later Greece. But the quality of these epics is Greek through and through, and there is no age, no sex, no kind of man to whom they do not or may not appeal except those whose ears are closed to all literature. Mr. Herbert Spencer, indeed, remarks somewhere that, on endeavouring to read the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in order to get information about the Greek conception of the gods, he found, after a very brief attempt, that there were few things he would not rather do; but Mr. Spencer, great man though he was, was colour-blind on the side of literature. Again, schoolboys, most of them, at any rate when I was at school, were so tormented by the Greek language that it never occurred to them that anything of interest could be said in that medium. But give people a chance—and many of them will get it best through translation—and the greatness, the beauty, and the humanity of these poems will never fail in their appeal,

until or unless what we call human nature is radically changed.

Apart from these two epics, as I was saying, the great period of Greek literature was very brief. Yet brief though the time was the range was extraordinarily wide. The gulf, for instance, between Aeschylus and Euripides was almost as great as that between Shakespeare and Mr. Bernard Shaw, although the lifetimes of these two poets overlapped. Aeschylus, who had fought at Marathon, was the heroic bard, while Euripides was as modern as our own most modern youth. The contrast between them is set forth with insight and wit in "The Frogs" of Aristophanes, and it may be worth while to quote a little in illustration of the point. The two poets are made to defend their respective styles, with Dionysus as a humorous commentator. Says Euripides:

When I received the Muse from you I found her puff'd and
pamper'd

With pompous, sentences and terms, a cumbrous huge virago.

My first attention was applied to make her look genteelly;

And bring her to a slighter shape by dint of lighter diet:

I fed her with plain household phrase, and cool familiar salad,

With water-gruel episode, with sentimental jelly,

With moral mincemeat; till at length I brought her into compass.

From the first opening of the scene, all persons were in action;

The master spoke, the slave replied, the women, young and old
ones,

All had their equal share of talk—

AESCHYLUS. Come, then, stand forth and tell us,
What forfeit less than death is due for such an innovation?

EURIPIDES. I did it upon principle, from democratic motives.

DIONYSUS. Take care, my friend—upon that ground your footing
is but ticklish.

EURIPIDES. I taught these youths to speechify.

AESCHYLUS. I say so too.—Moreover
I say that—for the public good—you ought to have beenhang'd first.

EURIPIDES. The rules and forms of rhetoric,—the laws of com-
position,

To prate—to state—and in debate to *meet* a question fairly:
At a dead lift to turn and shift—to make a nice distinction.
AESCHYLUS, I grant it all—I make it all—my ground of accusation.
EURIPIDES. The whole in cases and concerns occurring and
recurring

At every turn and every day domestic and familiar,
So that the audience, one and all, from personal experience,
Were competent to judge the piece, and form a fair opinion
Whether my scenes and sentiments agreed with truth and nature.
I never took them by surprise to storm their understandings,
With Memnons and Tydides's and idle rattle-trappings
Of battle-steeds and clattering shields to scare them from their
senses;

But for a test (perhaps the best) our pupils and adherents
May be distinguish' instantly by person and behaviour.

EURIPIDES. Thus it was that I began,
With a nicer, neater plan;
Teaching men to look about,
Both within doors and without;
To direct their own affairs,
And their house and household wares;
Marking everything amiss—
"Where is that? and—What is this?"
"This is broken—that is gone,"
'Tis the modern style and tone.

DIONYSUS. Yes, by Jove—and at their homes
Nowadays each master comes,
Of a sudden bolting in
With an uproar and a din;
Rating all the servants round,
"If it's lost, it must be found.
Why was all the garlic wasted?
There, that honey has been tasted:
And these olives pilfer'd here.
Where's the pot we bought last year?
What's become of all the fish?
Which of you has broke the dish?"
Thus it is, but heretofore,

The moment that they cross'd the door,
They sat them down to doze and snore.

To all this Aeschylus retorts:

Observe then, and mark, what our citizens were,
When first from my care they were trusted to you;
Not scoundrel informers, of paltry buffoons,
Evading the services due to the state;
But with hearts all on fire, for adventure and war,
Distinguish'd for hardiness, stature, and strength,
Breathing forth nothing but lances and darts,
Arms, and equipment, and battle array,
Bucklers, and shields, and habergeons, and hauberks,
Helmets, and plumes, and heroic attire.

But I never allow'd of your lewd Sthenoboeas,
Or filthy, detestable Phaedras—not I—
Indeed, I should doubt if my drama throughout
Exhibit an instance of woman in love.

but as for Euripides, he continues:

Can the reprobate mark in the course he has run,
One crime unattempted, a mischief undone?
With his horrible passions, of sisters and brothers,
And sons-in-law, tempted by villainous mothers,
And temples defiled with a bastardly birth,
And women, divested of honour or worth,
That talk about life "as a death upon earth";
And sophistical frauds and rhetorical bawds;
Till now the whole state is infested with tribes
Of scriveners and scribblers, and rascally scribes—
All practice of masculine vigour and pride,
Our wrestling and running, are all laid aside,
And we see that the city can hardly provide
For the Feast of the Founder, a racer of force
To carry the torch and accomplish a course.¹

¹ These and the following extracts from Aristophanes are from John Hookham Frere's translation.

I have cited enough to illustrate the difference between these two great tragedians, though the satire is not to be taken too literally. Sophocles lies between Aeschylus and Euripides, perfect in form and matter, and seeming to say like Shakespeare, "Take it or leave it. That is life." That these plays still hold even those who know no Greek is the more remarkable inasmuch as they contain an element foreign to our drama—that of the chorus and the dance—and one which we try in vain to reproduce effectively on our modern stage. Moreover, this drama, in comparison with that of our own Elizabethan age, has a simplicity and severity which may well seem to us, at the outset, bare; and it is based on legends which have not and cannot have, for us, the traditional significance they had for the Greeks. Yet the greatness of the plays overrides these obstructions, and one need not be a scholar to feel it. I heard the other day of a young policeman who found in a dentist's waiting-room a translation of one of the plays of Euripides, read it through, in those unfavourable conditions, and found it absorbingly interesting. How many such young men may there not be about in our modern world, ripe for the draught that has not yet reached their lips.

But tragedy was only one side of the drama of the Greeks. They also invented and developed comedy. Of the surviving comedians, the only one of whom anything but fragments is left is Aristophanes; and to my own taste he is the most delightful of the Greek authors. Like Shakespeare, and like so few others, he had the double gift of poetry and laughter; and since his plays are concerned with the actual stuff of Athenian life, its political and religious controversies, war and peace, science and scepticism, the old times and the new, he gives a more vivid picture of that life than any other author. He has, of course, to be read with the remembrance that he is what we should call a Tory. He guyed Socrates rather brutally, and thus, perhaps, was in part responsible for his fate; but he was the kind of Tory one likes, the lover of the old days, the hilarious exposé of pretence and humbug and sham, the man of his own soil in revolt against

those bold adventurers who were destroying the world he loved in order to build a greater one. If Dr. Johnson had been a poet and not a hypochondriac he might have been an English Aristophanes. Rabelais is hardly a French one, although he had the temperament, for he was on the side of the new world, not of the old.

There were many other Greek comedians, but their works are lost or survive only in fragments; among them in particular is one great name, Menander. If we are to judge from his reputation and his influence he should have been a great comedian. In any case he deserves our attention for a moment because he was the master of a new kind of comedy. Aristophanes wrote in the Athens of freedom and political power; but by the time of Menander that had gone for ever. His plays deal with domestic life, and he invented, or developed to perfection, the "typical" personage—the ridiculous and tiresome old man, the youth absorbed in love intrigues, his mistress or his bride, and the clever unscrupulous slave who serves him. Moliere, who wrote in an unfree France, like Menander in an unfree Athens, may give to us moderns the best idea of his spirit, though Moliere was, I suspect, a greater genius. This comedy of daily life was imitated by Roman comedians and by many others of later ages; but it was the invention of the Greeks. Here, as everywhere, we find them doing for the first time what was to be repeated again and again, sometimes with genius, sometimes with mere imitative pedantry.

I can but touch on the other branches of Greek poetry—the Idylls, the Lyrics, the Elegies, the Epigrams. The Idylls of Theocritus idealise pastoral life, to which he was still close enough to catch from it an authentic note. I have heard a shepherd boy piping in Greece, and in a moment time was annihilated and I was back in that lovely, but yet unreal world. Here, as in other fields, the Greeks are the pioneers. Later on Virgil, himself a farmer, catches something of the same spirit. But by the time we come to Milton's *Lycidas* the artificiality of the form is only saved from pedantry by the greatness of the style. We

return, you see, continually to the same point—the freshness and first-handedness of the Greeks, which, along with their instinct for form, gives to their literature its imperishable power.

The same vitality is shown in their Lyrics. Pindar, indeed, is so difficult and so untranslatable that perhaps he is likely to remain a more or less sealed book to anyone who does not know Greek, and even to many who do. But those who tackle him seriously and with perception in the original have sometimes judged him to be the greatest and purest of all poets. That he is also one of the most inimitable is sufficiently shown by the failure of "Pindaric" odes in later times. Of all the Greek forms it is, I think, the most recalcitrant to reproduction, perhaps because it was the most intimately bound up with music. But the best-known lyrics of the Greeks, and those most likely to be loved, are contained in the famous *Anthology*. This collection extends from the eighth century B.C. to the thirteenth A.D., and thus, as Dr. Mackail has pointed out, builds a golden bridge between the ancient and the modern world. I will permit myself to quote two of these that you may realise the curious persistence, through all changes, of the Greek lyric. The first is the poem by Calimachus in memory of Heraclitus, well known to all lovers of English verse in the following paraphrase by William Cory:

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept, as I remembered, how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.¹

The second belongs to the tenth century A.D., and was composed in Byzantium by a poet who also wrote a long epic on the raising of Lazarus. That does not sound promising. But listen to these two lines addressed to the god Pan:

¹ *From Ionica: A Volume of Poetry.*

Dear Pan linger and let the pipe across your lips be drawn.
For you shall find your Echo here, here on the sunny lawn.¹

As Dr. Mackail puts it, "we seem to hear the very voice of ancient poetry, bidding the world a lingering and reluctant farewell"

I have been speaking so far of poetry, but the Greeks were also great masters of prose; in particular they produced two of the very few great histories that have been written. Herodotus, when I was a boy, was still, I think, regarded as an amusing but ignorant and credulous story-teller. We used to recite a rhyme that ran somewhat as follows:

Herodotus, Herodotus,
I blush for you, you ancient cuss!
Those priests of Egypt gammoned you,
It was not very hard to do.
I do not think you'll gammon us,
Herodotus, Herodotus.

We know better now, and judge Herodotus to be at once a serious and informing historian and a great prose poet. For his history is also the epic of the Persian wars, with the moral, so dear to the Greeks, that "Pride goes before a fall." The other historian Thucydides, is remarkable for his analysis of the political, social, and psychological effects of war. This is a theme as relevant to our age as to that of the Greeks; for though the weapons of war change, its consequences are always the same, and there are passages in Thucydides which could be taken straight out and applied to our own time.

In oratory the speeches of Demosthenes and of Aeschines are enough to illustrate what that art can be when it is developed by a race naturally capable of speech, and when statesmen, as in the case of Athens, have to persuade large public meetings, if they are to get their policies adopted. No art has declined so rapidly and completely as this, in our own time and in our own country; nor does it seem likely to be revived if, as I think and

¹ From *Translations from the Greek Anthology*, by R. A. Furness.

hope, broadcasting is supplanting public meetings and reports of specialists the debates of Parliament.

Then there is Plato. Being a philosopher he belongs rather to the history of Greek thought than to that of letters. But in his case my distinction breaks down rather badly. For he is also one of the greatest—perhaps even the greatest—of all writers. He was the inventor of the dialogue as a written form; but in inventing it he was endeavouring to recapture the conversational manner of his master Socrates. Socrates, as he tells us, did not believe in books, and there is a great deal to be said for that view. Here are the words Plato puts into his mouth: "For this, I conceive, Phaedrus, is the evil of writing, and herein it closely resembles painting. The creatures of the latter art stand before you as if they were alive, but if you ask them a question, they look very solemn and say not a word. And so it is with written discourses. You could fancy they speak as though they were possessed of sense, but if you wish to understand something they say; and question them about it, you find them ever repeating but one and the self-same story. Moreover, every discourse, once written, is tossed about from hand to hand, equally among those who understand it and those for whom it is in no wise fitted; and it does not know to whom it ought, and to whom it ought not, to speak. And when misunderstood and unjustly attacked, it can neither retaliate nor defend itself."

Plato, having actually listened to Socrates and taken part in his discussions, having frequented the same haunts, in the open air, the gymnasium, or the courtyards of houses, having participated in conversations conducted by the most intelligent people of whom we have record, having himself, in a supreme degree, dramatic sense, humour and imagination, has given us, especially in his earlier work, an impression as vivid in its way as that of Aristophanes himself of the life of ancient Athens. It must, however, be added that his work suffers from the defect inlierent in all philosophic dialogues. Constantly the human and dramatic element is compelled to give place to the intellectual. It is this that makes Plato at once so fascinating and so exas-

perating, both to those who come to him for literature and to those who come for philosophy. The former are interested in the drama, the beauty and the fun, the latter in the doctrine; and this dilemma becomes the more serious as the doctrine begins to take the first place and the other element becomes more episodic and irrelevant. Yet, even as I say this, I feel inclined to recant, so great is my admiration for Plato.

The mention of the dialogue form reminds me of another great writer whom I am unwilling to pass over—Lucian. He lies outside the great period, as do the poems of Homer. But as they were centuries earlier, he is centuries later. He belongs to the second century A.D. and was a Syrian, not a born Greek. Yet so perfect is his manner, so classical his Greek, that it is difficult to believe that he was not a contemporary of Menander. He is also the most modern of all the Greek authors. He reminds me, both in spirit and form, of Anatole France—gay, sceptical, brilliant, and of the most exquisite manners and charm. He was the climax of a very long tradition and is, so far as I know, the only Greek author extant of his late period, who is still fully and delightfully alive. If anyone is preparing to begin the study of Greek I believe there is no author he would find better and more pleasant to read.

This must conclude my impertinently brief survey of Greek literature. I will turn now to the other more difficult part of my address and speak of the substance and spirit of Greek thought. Here, too, the Greeks were the great originators. They learned, no doubt, much of the material of their knowledge from Egypt and elsewhere, but their attitude was wholly original. Their early thinkers of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. were, above all, unprofessional. They were men first and philosophers and scientists afterwards; politicians, soldiers, physicians, inventors, engineers, founders of states, as well as astronomers and mathematicians. They thus belong to the same class as the great men of the fifteenth century, such as Leonardo da Vinci or Michael Angelo—the class of which the last representative in Europe was Goethe. Emerging in the midst of an ignorant and super-

stitious society they were credited with miraculous powers, and strange legends grew up about them, such as that of Empedocles throwing himself down the crater of Etna. They were no doubt, some of them, charlatans as well as men of genius—a type well known and always interesting. Many of their speculations may seem to us now merely absurd; we can hardly guess what they meant when they taught that the world was made of water, or air, or fire, and we smile a little when they equate justice with the number four, or tell us that it is not the same sun that rises next morning as the one that rose to-day, or that eclipses occur because the sun tumbles into a hole when it comes to certain uninhabited regions of the earth. But really to smile is to be unimaginative and therefore unintelligent. For put yourself back to that early age and imagine the world to be dawning upon thought as a new and astonishing marvel. Forget what you know of Ptolemy and Galileo and Copernicus, forget all that you have read in modern text-books, and dare you say you would have guessed better or as well yourself?

And there were, of course, much better guesses than those to which I have referred. Xenophanes, for instance, concluded from the existence of shells on mountains that the earth had once been covered by a kind of wet mud. Anaxagoras conjectured that the moon received its light from the sun, and Pythagoras that the earth was a sphere. The line between guessing and science was not yet clearly drawn, but the spirit of science, the curiosity and courage to inquire and speculate freely, was born; and it was not long before science developed in the full modern sense. In the fourth century B.C. Aristotle was laying the foundations of logic, biology, physiology, psychology, political science, and ethics. In the third, Aristarchus developed the view that the earth rotates on its axis and revolves about the sun, and a little later Archimedes of Syracuse discovered the theory of the lever, the composition of forces and the principle of the equilibrium of fluids and floating bodies. He also invented military machines, thus anticipating the worst achievements of modern science, and

by a piece of ironical nemesis, was killed by a Roman soldier while intent on a mathematical problem.

Most of the teachings of the Greek scientists have been lost to us, and even the works of Aristotle we do not possess in their entirety, nor in the very words of the master. In any case, in the region of Natural Science, it is not to be supposed that we should have anything now to learn from the Greeks. But one problem of great importance is raised by the history of Greek science. Why did it not develop continuously? Why was it extinguished so early and so completely? For though it flourished and developed in Alexandria until the second century A.D. and was not finally extinguished there until the city was taken by the Arabs, elsewhere it seems to have simply petered out. Why did this happen? I dare not attempt any simple answer. No doubt, as always, there were many contributory causes. But there is one consideration which I wish to bring before you, because it has, I think, an important bearing upon our own time.¹

I will put it like this. The first thing men have to do is to live, and in order to live they must somehow make themselves at home in the world. That is the meaning at bottom of their religions. Now the Greek religion with which most of us are familiar (I cannot here digress upon the more primitive beliefs that festered below the surface) is perhaps the most human that ever grew up, for it peopled the world with beings having similar passions to men, only more powerful and not subject to death. To these beings the Greeks could refer the course of events; to them they could pray for aid, and in them they found the plastic forms that inspired their literature and their art. But the new science offered them nothing of all this; on the contrary, it bid fair to destroy the foundation of their life. We have already noticed the reaction against science of the conservative Aristophanes. He himself, it is true, was as ready as anyone to make fun of the gods. But this kind of fun was quite compatible with a regard for the old religion. The proper parallel, I think, is the

¹ I am much indebted, in what follows, to a suggestive little book by Gerald Heard, entitled *This Surprising World*.

kind of jesting which is found in some of the mediaeval Christian plays. If you really believe your religion, someone has said, you won't mind laughing at it. An admirable example of Aristophanes' treatment of the theme is to be found in the play called "The Frogs," from which we have already quoted, where his main object is to defend Aeschylus against Euripides. Dionysus is there represented as a braggart and a coward, and is flogged by Aeacus, the judge below, as a thieving slave.

Again, in another famous play, the poet does not scruple to represent the Birds as conspiring against the gods. They propose to build a wall between Heaven and earth, bigger than Babylon; and

As soon as the fabric is brought to an end,
A herald or envoy to Jove we shall send,
To require his immediate prompt abdication;
And if he refuses, or shows hesitation,
Or evades the demand, we shall further proceed,
With legitimate warfare, avow'd and decreed;
With a warning and notices, formally given,
To Jove, and all others residing in heaven,
Forbidding them ever to venture again
To trespass on our atmospheric domain,
With scandalous journeys, to visit a list
Of Alcmenas and Semeles; if they persist;
We warn them that means will be taken moreover
To stop their gallanting and acting the lover.

Another ambassador they will send to men

To notify briefly the fact of accession;
And enforcing our claims upon taking possession;
With orders in future, that every suitor,
Who applies to the gods with an offering made,
Shall begin with a previous offering paid
To a suitable Bird, of a kind and degree
That accords with the god, whosoe'er he may be.
In Venus's fane, if a victim is slain,
First let a Sparrow be feasted with grain.

When gifts'and oblations to Neptune are made,
To the Drake let a tribute of barley be paid.
Let the Cormorant's appetite first be appeased,
And let Hercules then have an Ox for his feast.
If you offer to Jove, as the sovereign above,
A Ram for his own, let the Golden-crown,
As a sovereign Bird, be duly preferr'd,
Feasted and honour'd, in right of his reign,
With a jolly fat pismire offer'd and slain.
EUELPIDES. A pismire, how droll! I shall laugh till I burst!
Let Jupiter thunder, and threaten his worst!

If Men are recalcitrant their crops will be destroyed and the eyes of their cattle pecked out. If they are obedient the Birds will destroy the locusts and midges for them, show them where treasure is buried and tell them when the sea will be calm. They will even give them a share in their own long life; for who does not know that a raven outlives five generations of men. Moreover, if Birds are their gods, worship will be economical, for Birds require no temples, but live in the trees. The project is successfully carried out and the gods are reduced to sending Poseidon, Heracles and a barbarian god to sue for peace. Heracles is represented as a stupid glutton, the barbarous god as a fool, and Poseidon is easily outwitted by the champion of the Birds. The play is supposed to be, among other things, a political allegory, but that aspect of it need not detain us now. I cite it as showing the freedom with which the gods could be handled by a poet who, nevertheless, had no idea of destroying popular religion.

But besides this attitude of comedy there is another, that of Plato and of Euripides, which is inspired by a moral revolt against the ancient religion. Aristophanes, as we have seen, parodied Socrates as a representative of Natural Science; and Socrates was in his earlier life interested *in* physical speculations. But later he recanted. The physical scientists, Plato makes him say, never explained anything. If you asked for causes, they talked about ether and water and many other strange things.

But that is not an explanation. The only real explanation would be in terms of value; one which would show you that it was *good* that everything should be just as it is.

Now this is the exact opposite of the spirit of science. For science is concerned not with goodness or badness but with facts and their interpretation. It is true that Socrates was, in fact, undermining Greek religion, just as much as science was; but he had a different motive. His objection to the gods was not that there was no evidence of their existence, but that their moral character was disreputable. It was in the interest of true religion and ethics that he criticised popular beliefs, not in that of natural science. And the same is true of Plato. He was a logician and mathematician, but nowhere in his dialogues does he show any interest in natural science, with the doubtful exception of the *Timaeus*. Very characteristic is the passage in the *Republic*, where he depreciates the study of astronomy on the ground that it deals merely with the motions of material bodies, whereas true science would concern itself with the problems of motion as such. Modern Physics appears to be taking a similar course, and I am not concerned to criticise the Platonic attitude; but it is clear that it strikes at the root of all Natural Science. It was Aristotle, Plato's pupil, who carried that to its highest point, and he did so by turning away from his master's methods and making concrete and detailed observations of facts.

The movement away from Natural Science had thus already begun before that science reached its highest point. It was a diversion from the study of things to the study of values; and this movement, in the end, was destined to prevail over the other. But here, too, it was Greek thought that led the way; for it was the Greeks who originated all the great systems of ethics. These systems were handed on to the Roman world; but the Romans, like the English, were pre-eminently practical—as one of their historians puts it: "One Cato is worth three hundred Socrates's!" So far as they theorised about ethics it was the Stoic philosophy that attracted them on account of its moral earnestness. I know of only one really philosophic spirit in the Roman

world, and that was Lucretius; but he, though a very great poet, was not and did not profess to be an original philosopher. His object was to commend to a Roman noble, and one of very dissolute character, the views of his master Epicurus; and I doubt whether he was very successful in that piece of propaganda.

No doubt if the practical utility of science for war, communications, or industry had been as great then as it is in our own time, the Romans might have fostered such studies, as we do. But in those respects Greek science was comparatively undeveloped. The Romans, therefore, did not find science sufficiently useful to counterbalance what they probably regarded as its futility and its disintegrating force. For this they paid the penalty; for their civilisation perished by a kind of atrophy, and there descended upon the Western world an age of darkness in which nothing remained of the Greek spirit but a gradually ossifying literature and so much of the Graeco-Roman tradition as was embedded in the amalgam of Christian theology. Almost everything that had been discovered and known was forgotten for a thousand years, and, what was more, the spirit itself was extinguished.

But almost at the moment when the darkest age descended upon Europe, a new light sprung up in the Near East. In the eighth and ninth centuries Syrian Christians were at work in the Court of the Caliphs translating Greek books. The Arabs thus recovered Greek music and Greek astronomy, and invented some new astronomical instruments. This movement might be called not the "new" but the first birth of Arabian science. Like the rebirth later in the West, it was the result of Greek inspiration, and it is interesting to note that it was destroyed by the Christians. With the fall of Cordova and Seville in the thirteenth century Arabian astronomy was extinguished; but about the same time began, partly through translation from the Arabic, the rediscovery of Aristotle in the West, and its incorporation into scholastic philosophy. By the fifteenth century the European Renaissance was in full swing in Italy. It was inspired by the rediscovery of Greek letters; and that led to the

rebirth of Natural Science. But the infant thus reincarnated outgrew, with extraordinary rapidity, its previous stature, so that Greek Natural Science is now, for the most part, a mere historical curiosity. Moreover, this new modern science devised elaborate means of applying its discoveries to the mechanism of life. Thereby it has transformed the whole technique of industry, and in consequence our political and social institutions. The application of science on this tremendous scale is a thing quite new in history, and one pregnant, not only with good, but with evil, beyond our imagination to conceive. In consequence there has recurred, but now in a far more urgent form, the old dilemma of Graeco-Roman society. How are we to deal with science? Shall we allow it to destroy us, or shall we destroy it to save ourselves? Neither way seems a good one; but is there not another alternative? There is, clearly, if we would but take it. Our science, we saw, is the product of the Greek spirit; but so is our ethics. In the Graeco-Roman crisis these two movements fought one another, till ethics, in the end, destroyed science. What we have now to do is to reconcile the antagonists—to apply ethics to science and science to ethics. That movement, I think, has already begun; and on its success depends the future of civilisation.

The theme of your studies in the next few weeks is the contribution of ancient Greece to modern life; but what you may well be considering, behind the literature, the art, and the history, vitalising all, giving to all its deepest meaning, is this urgent question: Can the Greek spirit, rising again more splendid and more potent than before, accomplish the salvation of mankind, in the greatest crisis with which it has yet been confronted? For remember, Greek studies are nothing unless they live; and they live only when we breathe into them the life of our own age.

Religion:

A Criticism and a Forecast

INTRODUCTION

THE chapters that follow were originally published as articles in the *Independent Review*,¹ and are reprinted here by kind permission of the editor. I have left them substantially in the form in which they first appeared, for I do not feel that I am at present in a position to improve them. But perhaps I may make my point clearer by a few words of introduction. My main object has been to raise, definitely and unequivocally, the question of the relation of religion to knowledge. I have urged that there is only one method of knowledge, that of experience and legitimate inference from experience. And while freely admitting, and even insisting upon, the importance of every kind of experience as material for analysis and discussion, I have argued that any truth that is to be elicited from such experience must be elicited by the method of science, in the broad and proper sense of the term. In other words, truth, I have maintained, is not revealed, in any sense of the word "revelation" which can be appropriately distinguished from the sense of the word "science." And though it may be the case that truth may be knowable or known about God, or the soul, or other objects of religious belief, it can only be known, or knowable, like all other truth, by perception, analysis, and inference.

This, then, is my first point; and it is one of great importance, because it affects the whole position of the Churches. For, unless there is such a thing as revelation, in the sense of a distinct and peculiar avenue to truth, open exclusively to the members of a

¹ See the numbers for October, 1903, May, June, and November, 1904*

particular religious organisation, such organisation can claim no unique privilege as a teacher of doctrine, however useful it may be as a moral or social influence. Once it is admitted that religious truth is attainable, if at all, only by the method of science, it must be conceded also that the notion of a Church with a revelation of divine truth is as absurd as the notion of a mathematical society with a revelation of mathematical truth. Truth, of whatever kind it be, may originate anywhere, and be communicable everywhere.

Supposing this to be admitted, I have gone on to a further question: If religion is not a special revelation of truth, what is it? And I have suggested that there is a certain attitude towards life which is very valuable, and which, in my opinion, may appropriately be called religious. This attitude I have defined as a reaction of the imagination upon the world as we conceive it in the light at once of truth and of the ideal. This attitude it is the object of my third chapter to expound and illustrate. But I recognise that many people may hold that the view of religion thus suggested is too wide and too indefinite. Some element, they will maintain, of hope or faith is essential; and they will deny that there can be a religion of pessimism. Such a denial would appear to be inconsistent with the ordinary use of language, seeing that it is customary to describe Buddhism as a religion, although it denies the value of life. But this verbal question is not one of great importance. The important thing is to consider whether, in default of knowledge, there remains open to us a legitimate attitude towards the objects of religion other than, though not interfering with, that of agnosticism. In my last chapter I have suggested that there is such an attitude. I have called it "faith," but with a full recognition of the ambiguity of the word. It has been suggested to me that my meaning would be better expressed by the word "hope." But that word, I think, is too weak, as the other is too strong. What I have wished to indicate is an attitude of what I may call active expectancy—the attitude of a man who, while candidly recognising that he does not know, and faithfully pursuing or awaiting knowledge, and

ready to accept it when it comes, yet centres meantime his emotional, and therefore his practical life about a possibility which he selects because of its value, its desirability. Such I conceive to have been the attitude of Plato when he wrote his myths, of Wordsworth when he platonised, of many poets, and perhaps of many religious teachers. I think it an attitude that it is possible to maintain, though I recognise the readiness with which it might lead into the illegitimate position of believing a thing to be true because we desire it. I also think it an attitude that is good, for it keeps the horizon open. The mistake of agnosticism, so it seems to me, has been that it has said not merely "I do not know," but "I will not consider." Such a position, I think, is hampering, not only to life, but to truth. For the impulse to truth is desire; and all discoveries are prompted by hope and by faith. For this reason the unknown may be more important than the known. Knowledge itself may cover the eyes with scales; and such scales it is the business of faith to purge away.

CHAPTER I

ECCLESIASTICISM

THE practical importance of religion in the history of society, the profound influence it has exercised from the beginning upon human development, the incalculable power of its motives and its sanctions over the whole life of man, are matter that now lies beyond dispute. Never again will it be possible to believe, as it was believed in the eighteenth century, that religion was a cunning invention of priests and kings for their own advantage. We know now that it has its roots deep in human nature, as deep as the primitive instincts and emotions, with which, indeed, it is inextricably intertwined. No one, whatever be his own beliefs, can afford not to take account of it; for if it were nothing else, it is a force, and, like all forces, must be reckoned with.

All the more important is it carefully and dispassionately to

consider what ought to be its place in the society of the future. And such consideration must, I think, fall under two main heads : First, whether any religion, or which, is true; secondly, whether any, or which, and under what conditions, is desirable or, as some might hold, necessary. To some minds, the second question might seem to be disposed of by the answer to the first. For, it may be said, if a religion is true it ought to be believed, and if it is false it ought to be discredited; and there is no more to be said about the matter. This opinion, however, I do not think is one that is really at bottom accepted by a number of the most influential apologists of religion. On the contrary, religion has in the past derived, and in the present, I believe, increasingly deriving, a great deal of support from the conviction, not that it is true, but that it is necessary. And if it be urged that it is not possible to believe a thing to be true because one desires to believe, I would reply that it is possible at least to decline to consider the matter, to regard the whole inquiry as ruled out by practical considerations, and to support an institution of which the object and function is to perpetuate a belief, merely on the ground, whether or no it be avowed, that the belief is useful. It is for this reason that the question whether religion is desirable may be treated independently of the question whether it is true—nay, that the answer given to the latter may depend, not in logic, but in practice, on the answer given to the former. And that is my justification for raising the one issue independently of the other. I propose in this chapter to discuss the position, that religion ought to be supported, not primarily because it is true, but because it is necessary to society. And in this discussion I propose to consider that form of religion which seems to offer most support to the position I am examining. This form I shall call ecclesiasticism.

By ecclesiasticism I mean religion as embodied in a Church; and by a Church I mean an organisation which claims to be the depository of a truth otherwise inaccessible to the human reason, and which, therefore, endeavours to propagate its doctrine by appeals, not primarily to the reason, but to the emotions, the

hopes and fears, the prejudices and habits, the deep-rooted instincts and the aesthetic sensibilities of men. It is clear that, if this definition be accepted, there is a great deal of religion which has nothing to do with ecclesiasticism. All that, however, I leave at present out of consideration, not because it is unimportant, but because, for my immediate purpose, it is irrelevant. For a religion which rests simply on the deliverances of an individual conscience could hardly give a basis for the position with which I am concerned. Such a religion is naturally anarchic in its tendencies, and has shown itself to be so in history. It could hardly form a secure foundation for a given order of society; and is not, therefore, the kind of religion supported by those who adopt the view I desire to discuss. An ecclesiastical religion, on the other hand, is essentially stable; and it is this kind of religion that people commonly intend when they assert that religion is necessary to society.

The position to which I refer is not so familiar, and has not been so ably and frankly expounded, in England as upon the continent; and to many English readers it may seem strange, remote, and unintelligible. Yet I think it is one which it is of practical importance for us to investigate; for *it* may be influencing, half-unconsciously, many people who have never formulated or avowed it; and it finds natural allies wherever there is an established Church. Nor is it by any means among stupid people only that it finds its recruits. On the contrary, it commends itself specially to those who have been led by their reason to scepticism, and yet have convinced themselves that scepticism is dangerous in society; and these have been sometimes men profoundly versed in human nature, deeply concerned for the good of mankind, of catholic sympathies and wide experience. The deliberate conviction of such men demands a serious consideration, and I shall endeavour in these pages to give it the weight it deserves.

What, then, is the position? Briefly, I think, it may be put as follows: "It is necessary to the existence of society that men should observe certain rules of conduct; that they should obey

the laws, civil and moral, should respect property and life, should cherish the family, and should honour the King, or whatever may be the form of government; that they should be honest in business, faithful in service, generous to the poor, kindly to the weak; that they should hold their country dearer than themselves, and be prepared to sacrifice to it, on due occasion, their wealth, their energies, and their lives. That men do, however imperfectly, conform to such rules as these is the extraordinary, the almost miraculous result of habit and prejudice. But how are habits and prejudices maintained? Not, assuredly, by reason. On the contrary, reason is their great solvent. Teach men to think about the basis of their life, and it crumbles away. For reason is critical, not constructive; it may destroy, but it cannot create. The problem, therefore, of statesmen is to lay reason to sleep, so far as fundamental questions are concerned; and for this no better agent can be found than religion as interpreted by ecclesiasticism. For a Church does not doubt, but affirms; does not ask questions, but answers them. Suppressing the critical faculty, it masses in defence of the foundations of society all the emotional resources of human nature. It not only defines the end, it creates the motive; and is thus, in a profounder sense than the laws, the bond of society. For it is the living spirit, they an external mechanical force. An alliance, therefore, between Church and State is natural, if not indispensable, and has been felt to be so by some of the greatest statesmen, even by those who themselves have had no religious convictions; whence, for example, the remark attributed to Napoleon 'If the Pope had not existed, I should have had to invent him.' "

The position thus briefly stated might be copiously illustrated from continental writers of the neo-catholic school. I prefer, however, to quote an Englishman, and one who will not be accused of ecclesiastical prejudices. In Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* the superiority of prejudice to reason is a principal and constantly recurring theme; and for the support of prejudice he looks primarily to the established Church. "We

Englishmen," he says, "are generally men of untaught feelings. Instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each in his own private stock of reason, because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages. Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them. If they find what they seek—and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice, and to leave nothing but the naked reason: because prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence." So much for the value of prejudice. As for the means of maintaining it, we read a little later in the same book: "The English do not consider their Church establishment as convenient, but as essential to their State; not as a thing heterogeneous and separable; something added for accommodation; what they may either keep or lay aside, according to their temporary idea of convenience. They consider it the foundation of their whole constitution, with which and with every part of which it holds an indissoluble union. Church and State are ideas inseparable in their minds, and scarcely is the one ever mentioned without mentioning the other."

Such is the general theory of the importance of a Church to society as formulated by one of the greatest of English statesmen. But the theory may be further supported by the lessons of history, and especially by that of the French Revolution—the event which, in fact, evoked the utterances that have been quoted from Burke. When Burke wrote the storm had hardly broken. A gleam of sunshine travelled in front of the approaching thunder-cloud; and while our English prophet was raising his

warning voice the French were dancing in their orchards in anticipation of perennial summer. The tempest burst; and the reality exceeded the worst that Burke had divined. The Church fell, and with it the State; the crust of habit broke and was engulfed; the central fire burst through. Every cruelty, every vice, every sordid passion, crept out of hiding and walked the streets, jostling the rarest virtues. Every distinction of good and bad, true and false, was obliterated. A patriot was indistinguishable from an assassin, a republican from a tyrant, a statesman from a buffoon. Despotism and anarchy formed an incestuous union. And over this carnival of all the disintegrated elements of human nature presided an opera-singer in the guise of the Goddess of Reason. No wonder the English hugged themselves in their ancient orderly routine, and swore with Burke that they were "resolved to keep an established Church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree in which it exists, and in no greater!"

It would be easy to multiply examples tending to the same conclusion; to point to the political ruin of Greece accompanying the development of philosophy; to the decline of Roman morals as the State religion lost its hold; to the anarchy, political, intellectual and moral, that coincided with the Renaissance and the Reformation; to the Visconti, the Sforzas, the Borgias, the hysterical tragi-comedy of Munster, and the long agony of the Thirty Years' War. Or, confining ourselves to our own history, to trace the decline of the Puritan ideal,* from the serene and starry radiance of Milton, to the dust and ashes of Muggleton and the Muggletonians. It would be easy to do this, if it were worth doing; and all that could be said on such lines would be true. But it would not be the truth. History may be used to support any conclusion, according to the emphasis of our conscious or unconscious principle of selection. And a history written on the lines suggested above could be met by a rejoinder equally convincing. We have only to select the bad instead of the good elements in stability, and the good instead of the bad ones in

disintegration, and the whole phenomenon will wear a different aspect. For then we shall see, not the excesses of the Revolution, but the iniquities it swept away: the starving peasants, the parasitic Court, the impotent or mischievous administration, industry fettered, intellect muzzled, virtue mouldering in the dust. And, concentrating our imagination not on the delicate and factitious charm, the brilliancy and wit of the aristocracy of the Court, but on all that lay at the roots, and was the condition of the life of that wonderful flower, we shall regard in a different light both the order of society and the organisation by which it was supported; shall hear above the *Te Deums* of the Church the cries of the persecuted Huguenots, and the inarticulate misery of starving peasants; and remembering that the voices raised in behalf of common-sense and humanity proceeded not from the pulpit, but from philosophers and atheists, shall turn, not in levity, but in indignation, from Bossuet to Voltaire, and cry, with the great apostle of reason, "Ecrasez l'infâmie."

The example is sufficient to indicate the fatal flaw of ecclesiasticism. Just so far as it is calculated to support an existing order, just so far is it compelled to perpetuate abuses; for every conviction that repudiates reason repudiates also criticism, and therefore reformation. An ecclesiastical system moves, it is true, as a coherent and stable whole, but it moves under the control of fixed ideas; and these, even if once they were in accord with what is good and true, fall inevitably out of touch with it by the mere lapse of time. Of this the whole history of the Catholic Church is an illustration. That Church is now commonly regarded as one of the great civilising agencies of the world; and I have no desire to dispute its claims. Let all that is urged for it in this respect be granted. Let it be admitted that it evolved order out of chaos, that it civilised barbarism, that it fostered, the virtues of charity and peace in an age of universal war, that it kept alive the tradition of philosophy and culture, encouraged the arts, disciplined the mind, and inspired the spiritual life. Let all this be admitted, and nevertheless it is true that the evil wrought by the Catholic Church is so incalculable that a sober

and impartial historian would hesitate to pronounce whether, even to an age of barbarism it was more of a blessing than a curse. Consider its record. If it has preached peace, it has also filled the world with war; if it has saved life, it has also destroyed it; if it has raised the spirit, it has also degraded it; if it has kindled the intelligence, it has also extinguished it. Deliberately and in cold blood, in pursuance of a policy, it has tortured the souls and burnt the bodies of men. Deliberately it has struck at the root of virtue by evoking and fostering slavish fear and desire, by promising a material heaven and threatening a material hell. Deliberately it has invited men to lie, and punished them for adhering to the truth. Deliberately it has arrested, so far as it could, the nascent growth of science, and thwarted the only activity by which man may alleviate his material lot, and set himself free for the triumphs of the mind and the spirit. In saying this, I am stating simple matters of fact, such as no competent historian will dispute. And the point I want to make is, that the Good and the Evil of the Church have both proceeded from the same principle, from the principle of ecclesiasticism. Because the Church claimed to possess a revelation, therefore it conquered the world, and therefore also it harried and tortured its conquest. Because it relegated reason to a secondary place, therefore it produced Dante and Aquinas, and therefore also it persecuted Galileo and burnt Bruno. Because it appealed primarily not to the intelligence of men, but to their fears and desires, therefore it imposed upon them an authoritative moral order, and therefore also it invited anarchy when the order was superseded.

For even the anarchy attributed to reason might more truly be attributed to the attempt to suppress it. That it is which divorces reason from experience, which makes it revolutionary and rebellious, instead of tentative, cautious, and practical; so that, in truth, the very order which ecclesiasticism has founded and sustained has prepared the chaos by which it has been succeeded. For if history shows anything, it shows that an ecclesiastical order will not endure permanently; and, it may be added, if it could, such endurance would be more fatal than any amount

of confusion. For every order imposed upon the will at the expense of reason becomes, in the course of time, whatever it may have been at the outset, a chain that is only the more fatal to life if it is not felt to gall. To trust society to the naked reason is to run the risk of anarchy, but to trust it to ecclesiasticism is to incur the certainty of petrification.

With the view thus put forward, probably most Englishmen, and even most English churchmen, will be inclined to agree, supposing the premises—the antithesis between ecclesiasticism and reason—to be accepted. But this antithesis may be denied; for reason, it may be urged, is not to be found in a pure and abstract form. It is inevitably biassed by something that is not rational. No one judges of what is good and true without prejudice; for man is not man in the abstract, as certain philosophers have loved to delineate him, but man here and now, of this century, of this or that place, of this or that calling in society. He is an Englishman, or a Frenchman, or a German; he has been brought up in such and such a home, in a slum or in the West End, in London, in a provincial town or in the country; he has been educated in a public school or in a Board School. Or, it may be, at home; he has been to a university or he has not; he is an artisan, or an agricultural labourer, or a miner; a professional man, a politician, a journalist, or a gentleman at large; he has been in love or he has not; he is married or single; he has travelled or stayed at home; and the total result of all these influences has been to envelop him in an atmosphere which determines, whether he knows it or not, all his most apparently unbiassed and objective opinions. But ecclesiasticism is only a way of creating such an atmosphere deliberately, instead of leaving it more or less to chance; and in so doing ecclesiasticism is only doing, more effectively and thoroughly, what is done by every home and every educational institution. A child takes the colour of his environment at home or at school as inevitably as he takes the colour of his Church. In neither case is reason the predominant or even an important factor. Why, then, should ecclesiasticism be singled out among the innumerable non-

rational influences for special contrast with those that are rational?

The answer is that ecclesiasticism labours, deliberately and of set purpose, to fix the mind and character permanently in a certain mould—so far, at least, as what may be called fundamentals are concerned. Its object is not merely to give a certain bias—that is the object of every educational institution—but to make the subject immune against all other influences to which he may be exposed in the course of his life. It is not so much the more or less unconscious giving of a bent that is in question; it is the giving of a bent which is, so to speak, itself a bent to a bent. It is the deliberate effort to prevent a man ever coming into the rights of his reason on the assumption that, in the most important matters, the reason is incompetent. This is a thing very different, and different in a most important way, both from the unconscious and inevitable action of social environment, and from such direct or indirect inculcation of moral habits as must be part of the work of any system of education. For the inculcation of such habits is quite compatible with such a development of the reason as will enable it in turn, when it is ripe, to question and to criticise them; whereas it is the very object of ecclesiasticism, as I have defined it, and as it has historically existed, to prevent the reason from ever making claims in the region reserved for revelation. The reason, it is true, will not, in either case, be acting *in vacuo*. But in the one case it is encouraged—or, at least, permitted—to act within the limits of its range; in the other it is deliberately bound and tied.

The distinction may be illustrated by a concrete example. An ordinary public-school boy is submitted, while he is at school, to very strong habitual influences, to a weight of public opinion more constant and more powerful in its pressure than he is likely ever to meet with again in the course of his life. Whether these influences are more good than bad I do not at present discuss. What I wish to point out is that, strong as they are, they are not what I have called ecclesiastic in their character; and that, although the services of the* Church of England are part of the

traditional routine, these services do not—and I believe I may fairly say they are not intended to—work powerfully upon the intellectual attitude of the boy. They are rather, if anything, one of the means of preventing him from having any such attitude. It is the boast of the school—whether justified or not is not at present the question—that it turns him into a healthy, instinctive kind of creature, decent, well-mannered, and, on the whole, right-feeling, but without any intellectual bias at all, and without any views or prejudices as to the basis of religious belief or the authority of the Church. Such a boy, transferred to the university, may very likely go through his career there in the same condition of intellectual atrophy; but if his intelligence does awake, it will awake free. There will be nothing in the discipline of the university, any more than there was in the discipline of the school, to fetter it—nothing, that is, except the unconscious and inevitable influences of the society in which he moves. He may, as he often does, speculate boldly on the foundations of belief; may lose what is called his "religious faith," but what very commonly is no more than a block of unassimilated ideas, laid down like a pavement over the springs of religion by years of habitual but passive church-going; may question moral intuitions commonly supposed to be fundamental; and, after many mistakes and blunders, may emerge from it all a really useful and stimulating person, with some chance of contributing his mite to the clarification of ethical, social, and religious ideas.

But, now, imagine that the public schools and the universities were to adopt the ecclesiastical position; that they were to fall into a state of panic over the decline of religious belief, and to have recourse to ecclesiastical machinery to remedy it. From that moment everything would be transformed. Just so far as the system were successful, just so far would the public-school boy be converted from a healthy barbarian into a hypocrite, a fanatic, or a saint. The chapel services, instead of being, as they are now, merely a part of the discipline of the school, would become real instruments of propaganda. Every agency of rhetoric, of ritual, of emotional and sensuous appeal, would be brought to bear, to

make him feel and assimilate, with his whole being, what would rapidly cease to be the intellectual propositions, and come to be the instinctive belief, that a Church is of divine authority, that it has a final and immutable revelation of truth, that in philosophy, in ethics, in social institutions, the last word has been said, and that the function of the present is simply to apply, to the changing conditions of life, the known, fundamental, and eternal truths. At the university he would be subjected to the same influences. His whole training would be conditioned by the rule, that there is to be no inquiry into the foundations of belief. And the result would be that the universities would turn out year after year a succession of able, highly-educated men, whose one aim, so far as they had a public aim at all, would be to preserve and perpetuate those institutions and ideas which it had been the object of their whole training to impress automatically upon their minds. Henceforth they would be hermetically sealed against the bacilli of new experience. Argument, feeling, touch, sight, would avail them nothing. Whatever might act as a solvent upon the structure of their ideas would be met simply as an enemy. Polemics would be their only method of controversy; and, though they might be able to convert, they would be unable to convince, just as they would be unable to be convinced, because they would be unable to conceive that their adversary might be right.

If this account of an ecclesiastical education be thought to be fanciful or exaggerated, I would ask the reader to recall the discipline devised for the propagation of his Order by one who was, perhaps, the greatest ecclesiastical genius the world has ever known; I mean the founder of the Society of Jesus. The training of a Jesuit as prescribed in the famous Institutes was based upon a process which a modern man of science might describe as self-hypnotisation. By intense and solitary meditation, accompanied by physical exercises, by fastings, flagellations, postures, groanings, weepings, he forced himself, so far as possible, to realise, to re-enact in his own person, the Passion of Christ, to ascend With Him to heaven, to taste, in anticipation, the joys of His

kingdom, and to share the tortures of the damned in hell. Not the imagination only, and the intelligence, but almost the very physical senses were compelled to co-operate in this deliberate hallucination. He must not only think and conceive; he must hear, see, touch, and taste. The whole personality, intellectual, moral—one might almost say physical—was run in this way into a final mould. That it should take that shape, uncritically, passively, not of conviction, but of force, was the essence of the whole process. But once that was achieved, development was permitted and encouraged along the lines thus rigidly prescribed. The mind henceforth was the tool of unquestioning faith. It might calculate, but it must not reason; it might devise means, but it must not consider ends. Every accomplishment the Jesuit may and should acquire; he should be a linguist, a mathematician, a man of science perhaps, above all a man of the world, accomplished, polite, persuasive, plausible, up to date in his knowledge, his methods, his arts; he may be anything and everything, so long as he does not think, and obeys. He may study history as much as he likes, but it must be history as interpreted by the Church; he may study Latin and Greek, provided that he remains insensible to the classical spirit; he may study science, so long as he does not permit it to react upon theology. Nay, all these things he *ought* to study, in order that he may meet the enemy on his own ground. Only that the enemy is the enemy, that the truth is the truth, that the Church is the Church, and that his whole duty is to subordinate to the interest of his Order all his powers, spiritual, intellectual, moral, and physical—this is the never-forgotten command of his hypnotic dream, of the fixed idea branded upon him at the outset of his career by the deliberately anti-rational discipline to which he has been subjected. Once for all he has been cured of the possibility of asking, "Why?" His reason has not been killed. Not it has been chained to the car of Faith; and in the car rides theology triumphant, surrounded by the saints of the Order, and crushing under the wheels the heretic, the speculator, and the unbeliever.

The example, it will perhaps be admitted, is sufficient to prove

that there is an antagonism between ecclesiasticism and reason different in kind from that which exists between reason and any ordinary prejudice; that it is the object of an ecclesiastical system not merely to create an atmosphere, but to paralyse beforehand the agency by which that atmosphere might be disturbed; with the result, no doubt, of encouraging stability, but only at the cost of arresting growth. But it may be said that ecclesiasticism, as I have defined it, has ceased to exist, or, at least, has no future before it. If I thought that, I should not have troubled to write this chapter. But it is not, I believe, a view that is borne out by a survey of contemporary history. On the Continent, at any rate, the battle between ecclesiasticism and reason appears to be raging with an intensity of which we in this country have little conception. And, even in England, is it so clear that the issue has not been raised? The Church of England, I readily admit, has not commonly been ecclesiastic in the extreme and uncompromising sense in which I have been using the term. It has been, on the whole, and in comparison with the Church of Rome, a friend of compromise and of common sense. But it will be admitted that of late years it has been animated by a spirit very different from that which inspired it during the eighteenth, and for the most part during the nineteenth, century. Whether or no, from certain points of view, that spirit may be judged to be better than the old one, I am not at present concerned to dispute. I can believe that it is more zealous, more active, more devoted, more fruitful in a certain kind of result; but I am sure, and that is the point with which I am concerned, that it is more ecclesiastic. Every day it appears more and more to make the kind of claims that are made by the Roman Catholic Church, every day more and more to develop a similar machinery for silencing, by emotional appeals, the protests of the reason. While preserving the social and other advantages of the establishment, it is apparently determined not to acquiesce in the accompanying restraints. Now, just so far as the Church of England adopts this attitude, just so far as it assimilates itself to the Church of Rome, just so far is it alienating from itself not merely that large and increasing

section of thoughtful Englishmen who cannot, except by courtesy, be called Christians (though they certainly cannot fairly be described as irreligious), but also the whole body of Christian thought and sentiment included in the various Nonconformist bodies. A militant Church, confident in its mission, will, of course, regard such a statement rather as a challenge than as a warning. It will go in and fight, and expect to win. Only let it not suppose that the challenge so made will not be taken up* Many who would be glad to be relieved of the duty of setting themselves in antagonism to the Church, who feel to the full the appeal of its historical associations, to whom its ritual, its architecture, the very rooks amongst its ancient elms, preach in every village and town with an eloquence the more poignant and profound that it is half stifled in the smoke, the din, the multitudinous squalor of this age of industry—many, I say, who do not accept Christianity, and who yet would be loth to attack the Christian Church, will be, and are being, daily driven into an attitude of hostility by the new ecclesiastical policy and methods. The Church, it would seem, has before it—I hardly know whether I ought to say "has"—two courses sharply contrasted and defined; and the future of the spiritual life of England will, I believe, be largely determined by its choice, if choice is still open to it. Either, while preserving its organisation intact, and the tradition of its forms and ritual, it may develop its intellectual position in the broad daylight, in full and candid intercourse with the reasoned convictions of men, and with their developing moral experience—and this, I take it, is the attitude of what is, or was, the Broad Church; or, reverting to the position of a final and exclusive revelation, claiming, not merely a continuity of tradition, but an identity of fundamental doctrine with the medieval Church, insisting on a special and privileged position as the interpreter of God to man, repudiating philosophy, and so much of science as cannot be reconciled with its dogmas, and appealing always, in the last resort, not to reason and experience, but to authority, it may set itself, as the Church of Rome has done, across the whole intellectual movement of

the age, and play for a supremacy over the conscience and the spiritual life deliberately based on supernatural claims, supported and reinforced by the Confessional and Mass. What may be the issue of the conflict thus provoked I do not care to predict. I know only that, should the Church be victorious, it will have saved society from the possibility of intellectual and spiritual anarchy, only at the cost of arresting the growth of science, the development of the conscience, and all the hopes of a new and happier order which have been the inspiration of the noblest minds of the past century.

It is the issue thus adumbrated that gives a more than temporary interest to the controversy still raging in the sphere of elementary education. The reason why the continued control by the Church of more than half the public schools in the country is regarded with grave mistrust by many who are not animated by the jealousy of rival sects is simply the avowed determination of leading champions of the Church to use their power in the interest of ecclesiasticism. They hope to lay the foundation of their control over the intelligence of the country by bringing up a generation imbued from its earliest years with an instinctive and non-rational conviction of the authority of the Church, the efficacy of its sacraments, and the truth of its theology. This, and this only, can be meant by the creation of an "atmosphere"; this, and this only, by the expressed hope that the school may have a door opening into the Church. To begin so is to start upon the inclined plane which leads to a completely developed system, such as that which was elaborated by the Jesuits. Whether the attempt is likely to be successful in England I do not pronounce; but I am sure that it is one that the English, if they are true to their history, should resist to the uttermost.

I have thus stated briefly, and, I hope, not intemperately, what appear to me to be the valid objections to ecclesiasticism and to its intrusion into our schools. And, if in conclusion, I be asked, What, then, should be the aim of an educational system? I would reply, To surround a child with all the influences which society may judge to be healthy for body and soul, while at the

same time training the understanding to become, when it is ripe, the critic and judge of those influences. The position has been put once for all by Plato, in a passage which ought to be inscribed over the door of every school in the kingdom. Plato, it is true, presupposes, what is also presupposed by the Church, that the atmosphere to which the children would be subjected in his ideal commonwealth would be the right and true one, so that the reason, when it awoke, would inevitably approve the discipline to which it had been subjected while it slept. But, on the other hand, concurrently with the training of healthy instincts and perceptions, he postulates a free and liberal development of the understanding, and leaves to that the last word on the legitimacy of the whole process. Here is the passage—one that goes far beyond the scope of our contemporary disputes, and might well serve as an inspiration, not only to the Church, but to all who have in any degree the control of our national education:

" 'We would not have our Guardians grow up amid images of moral deformity as in some noxious pasture, and there browse and feed upon many a baneful herb and flower day by day, little by little, until they silently gather a festering mass of corruption into their own souls. Let our Artists rather be those who are gifted to discern the true nature of the beautiful and graceful: then will our youth dwell in a land of health, amid fair sights" and sounds, and receive the good in everything; and beauty, the effluence of fair works, shall flow into the eye and ear, like a health-giving breeze from a purer region, and insensibly draw the soul from earliest years into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of reason.'

" 'There can be no nobler training than that,' he replied.

" 'And therefore,' I said, 'Glaucón, musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful; and also because he who has received this true education of the inner being will most shrewdly perceive omissions

or faults in art and nature, and, with a true taste, while he praises and rejoices over and receives into his own soul the good, and becomes noble and good, he will justly blame and hate the bad, now in the days of his youth, even before he is able to know the reason why: and, when reason comes, he will recognise and salute the friend with whom his education has long made him familiar.' ¹

With what a breath of the air of dawn, what a gleam of Mediterranean light, do these words come wafting, as in a blue heaven, over **the** vapours and fumes of the Middle Ages, to remind us of what men were before they had learnt to distrust their own fairest impulses and instincts, and to seek in authority the Good and the True which it is their privilege to divine through experience. With this passage sounding in our ears, I am content to leave the subject. For the spirit of Greece is the antithesis of the spirit of ecclesiasticism. And those who regard the latter as a danger could seek no better prophylactic than a wider and more popular dissemination of Greek culture.

CHAPTER II

REVELATION

IN discussing, in the preceding chapter, what I have called ecclesiasticism, I defined it as religion embodied in a Church; and a Church I defined as an organisation which claims to be the depository of a truth otherwise inaccessible to the human reason. I offered some arguments tending to show that the existence of such organisations—at any rate, when they adopt to the full the logical consequences of their position—has been, and perhaps still is, a grave danger to society. But I did not in that discussion approach the more fundamental question of the nature and justification of the claim to possess an authority independent of, and superior to, reason, and the connection of religion with

¹ Translation by Davies and Vaughan.

such a claim. It is this question which I propose to discuss in the present chapter.

In doing so, I shall have to venture boldly and without reserve upon topics which it is customary to treat with a reticence hardly compatible with complete honesty. Perhaps, therefore, I may be permitted at the outset to express my regret should anything I may say give offence to the religious instinct of any of my readers. Nothing is further from my intention or desire; and indeed, I hardly believe that it will be those who have the finest sense of religion that will be the most inclined to resent my candour. Rather it is precisely they who will be the most willing to investigate *the* ground and nature of their belief, and who will repudiate the application to this momentous question of a method of hushing up and slurring over which they would deprecate in any of the ordinary business of life. Such readers, I think, will not receive what I have to say in a spirit of hostility, however profoundly they may disagree with it. And should they, as may very probably be the case, find my treatment to be more summary and dogmatic than comports with the difficulty of the subject, I will ask them to remember that I am sacrificing much that might otherwise be desirable to the effort to state precisely and clearly an issue which, as I think, is precedent to all theology, and vital to all religion.

That issue I would put, in a preliminary way, as follows:

"Is there a way of attaining truth about real existences which is different in kind from the method of science or of philosophy—which depends not upon direct perception, internal or external, clarified by analysis, tested by comparison, and supplemented by inference, but upon some' peculiar and unique intuition having a validity superior to any other, and not properly subject to the ordinary critical tests?"

Some such way of attaining truth seems to be implied in what is called revelation. And it is the claim to rest upon revelation that gives to religion, as it is commonly conceived, a unique and peculiar place among the forms of human activity. It is that which underlies the exceptional position assumed by certain:

Churches, and gives an exceptional weight to particular books. And, though I do not myself think that religion depends upon revelation, yet its character cannot fail to be profoundly modified by our acceptance or rejection of such an avenue to truth. The question, therefore, which I propose to put is one of great importance. It is the question whether the idea of revelation can be made to agree with the normal intellectual assumptions of the twentieth century; and we may, perhaps, best approach it if we begin by asking what kind of truth it is that is supposed to be communicable by revelation, and not communicable by other methods; for by taking this point first we shall be able to narrow the field of inquiry.

Now, if we consider the great religions of history, and especially Christianity, with which we in Europe are most immediately concerned, it appears that they include in their revelation two distinct kinds of information: the first dealing with matters of fact stated to have occurred in the past, the second with truths, affirmed to be eternally valid, about God and His relation to the world. I shall take first the question of historical fact—the propositions, let us say, that Jesus Christ existed at such and such a date, that He was born of a virgin, that He did and said such and such things, that He was crucified and buried, that He rose again, and that He ascended into heaven; and on this point I would simply ask my readers whether they really do believe that facts of that kind ought to be accepted on any other evidence than that of history itself—whether they believe that there is a short-cut to those particular pieces of information, such as would certainly be repudiated in the case of any other historical events? If anyone replies in the affirmative, I have on this head no more to say. But if, on the other hand, it be agreed that the truth of the story of the life and death of Christ must stand or fall by the ordinary criteria of evidence, then that whole question is removed from the sphere of revelation to that of history; and religion, so far as it is conceived to depend upon the facts we are considering, becomes dependent upon historical inquiry. This is, in fact, the position which, as I cannot but believe, educated and intelligent

men do now, and will more and more in the future, adopt. But if that be so, and in so far as it is so, the result must be a profound modification of the character of religious belief.

For those who are acquainted with the nature of historical inquiries, the uncertainty of testimony, the prejudice of witnesses, the doubtfulness of documents, and have watched, in other religions than the Christian, the growth of myths and the creation of fictitious personalities, may easily assure themselves, without entering far into the laborious inquiry, that its results are bound to be in the highest degree tentative and uncertain, that scholars to the end of the chapter will continue to disagree and to dispute, and that, in fact, there is not evidence sufficient in quality or in quantity to establish any unquestionable final truth. Now, in an ordinary historical inquiry, this might be a matter of small moment. Men do not much or profoundly care whether, for example, Lycurgus existed or no, what was the exact contribution to the constitutional history of Athens of the reforms of Draco or of Solon, nor about any of the thousand and one similar points which are the subject of historical controversy. But it is a very different matter when they are asked to stake their whole conception of life on the dubious result of inquiries so difficult. And a man who thinks about the issue at all, and is bent upon honesty, will, I believe, incline to set aside the whole controversy as irrelevant to whatever is really essential in religion, and seek elsewhere than in history the basis on which to erect the fabric of his belief and conduct. He may, indeed, find a religious inspiration in the recorded life and sayings of Christ. But the inspiration would be the same, whether he regarded the record of the Gospels as myth or as fact; and would depend, not on the existence of Christ in the past or in the present, but on the conception of life embodied in His story.

Such, I cannot but think, must be the ultimate result on every really religious and candid mind, of an acceptance of the scientific criterion in connection with the recorded life of Christ. It does not, of course, follow that many men will not continue for a long time to reject this conclusion. For men tend always to

believe what they want to believe, not what they are justified in believing; and many people do very much want to believe in the factual truth of the story of Christ, if only because they have made it the foundation of their religious faith. But, on the other hand, those, be they many or few, who care enough about religion to care whether it is true, know, or may know, that the truth or falsehood of the story of Christ can only be decided by historical investigation; and, knowing that, those who have the profoundest sense of what religion means will prefer, I think, to rest it on the immediate experience of life, rather than on the result of inquiries into a remote and uncertain past.

The readers who have gone with me so far I will now ask to go a step further. Supposing that we have handed over to science all questions of historical fact, does there remain some other kind of truth which may be held to be communicable by revelation? "Yes," it will be replied, "there remain what are really the most important truths of religion: the existence and nature of God and His relation to the world." Let us proceed, then, to consider these. And, in the first place, let us note that, as a matter of fact, in the case of Christianity, as of the other great historical religions, the truth in question is intimately bound up with that factual truth which we have suggested must be relegated to the court of science. Christians believe that God exists, that He has such and such a character, and that He cares about and directs the world, primarily because they believe that Jesus Christ existed and taught in the manner recorded. So far, then, as the doctrines of Christian theology depend upon these facts, they stand or fall, if the position I have put forward be accepted, by the verdict of history. I will suppose, however, that it is urged that there is a direct revelation of theological truth, a revelation which may be confirmed, but cannot be shaken, by history, and which is communicated somehow to some special sense, so as not to be reducible to a department of science.

This revelation may be supposed to be communicated either to an individual mind or to a Church. But the revelation to a Church must, I suppose, be conceived to rest originally upon revelation

Letters

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to individuals. It is the latter, therefore, as the more fundamental, which I shall consider. And I shall proceed straight to what appears to be the fundamental question: What are the marks by which a revelation is recognised, and which lead a man to separate off a certain* set of his convictions, and say that they were arrived at by a route, and represent a kind of certainty, different from all others?

The answer to this question ought clearly to be given by one who is conscious of possessing this special avenue to truth, not by one who, like myself, is aware that he does not possess it. Judging, however, from what has been said on the subject by those professing to have experience, and from what appear to be the general possibilities of the case, I venture to suggest that revelation can only be conceived in one of two ways: either as an immediate intuition conveyed in what is regarded as a moment of supernormal perception; or as the gradually garnered result of the normal experience of life. I shall consider each of these possibilities in turn.

And, first, with regard to the intuition of the exceptional moment. It is, of course, indisputable that such experiences occur, and are conceived by those who receive them to be communications of absolute truth; the familiar phenomenon of "conversion" is a case in point. But, for our present purpose, the important question is whether the belief of the recipient in the evidential value of the experience is justified; and I think that a little consideration will show that it is not. For it is noticeable that the truth supposed to be revealed in the moment of conversion is commonly, if not invariably, the reflection of the doctrine or theory with which the subject, whether or no he has accepted it, has hitherto been most familiar. I have never heard, for example, of a case in which a Mohammedan or a Hindoo, without having ever heard of Christianity, has had a revelation of Christian truth; or even of a case of the conversion in this way to Roman Catholicism of one who has been brought up an Evangelical, or *vice versa*. Conversion, in fact, it would seem, is not the communication of a new truth; it is the presentation of ideas already

familiar in such a way that they are accompanied by an irresistible certainty that they are true. But this sense of certainty may attach to any kind of intellectual content. If a man has been brought up a Christian, he will be converted to a belief in Christ; if he has been trained as a Hindoo, he will receive the vision of the Absolute; if he is optimistic by temperament, he will have a revelation that the world is good; if pessimistic, it will be borne in upon him that it is bad. All of these revelations cannot be true. One may be true and the others false. But in that case we must find our criterion of truth and falsehood somewhere else than in the subjective certainty of the converted person. And that this must be so will be even more clear when we reflect that, so far as the element of subjective certainty is concerned, a religious revelation cannot be distinguished from what would be admitted to be the hallucinations of disease. There is no idea in a person's mind which may not, under the appropriate conditions, become an *ideefixe*, and substitute itself, in the consciousness of the patient, for what is commonly taken to be reality. A man may be convinced with equal assurance that he is a poached egg or a saint; that he has a mission to assassinate the King or to redeem the world; that he is eternally damned or eternally saved; that he has had a vision of the Virgin Mary or a vision of Nirvana. I do not suggest that there is no distinction in truth and value between the various ideas that may thus be imposed by moments of emotional excitement upon different minds—that the visions, say, of St. Francis are not more important than those of Marie Alacoque, or the conversion of St. Paul than that of a dipsomaniac in the Salvation Army. But it is indisputable that the test of validity must be sought somewhere else than in the sense of certainty felt by the person who claims to have had the revelation. In other words, the truth of a doctrine supposed to be thus conveyed, or the goodness of a moral intuition, must be sifted, before they can be accepted, by the ordinary critical processes; and, except as the result of such a sifting, performed deliberately and again and again, in calm and normal moments, no man who is at once religious, honest, and intelligent, will or

ought to accept the deliverances of any so-called revelation of this type. But to admit this is to admit that we reject revelation as a basis of religion; if, that is, revelation be conceived as the direct communication of truth in a moment of supernormal, or, as is just as likely to be the case, of infranormal experience.

But if revelation be not so conceived, how is it to be conceived? Many people who have experience of religion would, I think, reply somewhat as follows:

"We received originally—on authority, if you like—a certain doctrine which also commended itself to our affections—the doctrine, in brief, which we conceive to contain the essence of Christianity: that there is a God who loves us as a Father loves His children; that Jesus Christ is His son; that He lived upon earth and died upon the cross; that His death is the assurance of our redemption; and that that redemption is gradually working itself out under His immediate direction in the course of the history of the world and of individual lives. Further, we believe that souls are immortal, and are destined—those of them, at least, who are saved—to enter into eternal bliss. The doctrine thus received we have carried with us through the experience of life; and, if once we believed it on authority, we believe it now because we have found that it works. At moments of trouble we have had recourse to it, and have not found it to fail us. We have proved it to be progressively capable of interpreting experience. And when we say that it is 'revealed,' what we mean is that, though we could never have arrived at it by the unaided operation of the reason, yet, once it was given us, we tested and found it to be true. We cannot, indeed, prove it by the intelligence, but we have proved it by life; and, though its source be supernatural, in its operation it has shown itself to be reasonable."

I do not know whether, in this brief statement, I have done justice to the position of those whom I respect as at once the most religious and most rational of Christians. But I have endeavoured to do so; and I must now indicate what I conceive to be the intellectual weakness of the position, without questioning its efficacy as a rule of life.

And, first, I must point out that the view I have indicated depends, in part at least, on the assumption that the story of the Gospel is true. But that, I have urged, is a matter that can be determined only by historical criticism, and about which it is hardly to be expected that such criticism will ever attain to certainty. No experience of life can affect the conclusion one way or the other. Either Christ existed, and was as described, or He did not. And the truth on this subject cannot be modified by the fact that it is possible to weave about His recorded history an eminently consolatory and helpful scheme of life. Further, with regard to the other elements of the doctrine—the existence and nature of God and the immortality of the soul—these, though in the Christian scheme they are closely connected with the belief in Christ, are no doubt capable of being held independently. But, even so, in what sense can they be said to be "revealed"? The fact that they afford a solution of the riddle of the world which to many minds is satisfactory does not in itself show anything about their truth or falsehood. It shows merely the tremendous bias under which criticism has to act. The belief in what is called revelation is, I fear, in such an instance as this, only a reflection of the intense need to believe. But such need can be no guarantee of truth, though it may be the most fruitful impulse in the search for truth. Here, too, the fact that the belief works is no evidence of its validity, but only of its efficacy. Its validity can only be tested by the ordinary processes of criticism. And this is a fact which it will, I cannot but think, become increasingly impossible for the most religious and the most candid minds to deny. There is no general presumption that what is helpful and good is also true. We may desire, and rightly, that it should be so; and that desire may be, as I believe it is, the main stimulus in our search for truth. But it cannot be more; and it is, I feel sure, to the interest of religion, as well as of science, that this should be recognised as soon and as widely as possible.

This must conclude what I had to say on the subject of revelation. Revelation, I have suggested, in proportion as men become honest, educated, and intelligent, will cease to be re-

garded as a satisfactory basis for religion; for it will be increasingly recognised not to be an avenue to truth. And if, so far, I have carried my readers with me, I will ask them to proceed with me to the further question: Granting that revelation must be set aside, does religion disappear with it? Or does the ordinary experience of life evoke and justify some point of view which may properly be called religious?

In attempting an answer to this question, it will be useful, I think, to call attention to a feature which is common to all the great religions, and which differentiates them, on the one hand, from mere philosophical theories of the universe, and, on the other, from mere ethical systems. The point I have in mind is that they combine in a close and indissoluble union two things which logically are quite distinct—namely, first, propositions about the nature of the world and man's relation to it; secondly, statements of values, of objects which ought to be pursued, and ought to give rise, perhaps do give rise, to passionate aspiration. Thus, on the one hand, in providing a system of the universe, they bring it into close connection with life by associating it with ideals; and, on the other, in recommending ideals, they immensely enhance their attractive force by postulating that they can and will be realised in actual existence. But the elements which are thus closely associated in religion are, as I have said, logically distinct. A sound and true perception in the region of ideals may be accompanied by ignorance and misconception in the region of fact, and *vice versa*. And this, I think, is what has happened in the case of the great religions. Take, for instance, Christianity. It is commonly, and, I think, rightly, credited with embodying moral values of profound and singular importance, such, for example, as the brotherhood of man; and, on the other hand, intellectually, its whole system of fact, its cosmology and theology, is, to say the least, inadequate. The story of the Garden of Eden, of the apple and the serpent, of the Fall, of the penalty incurred, not by Adam and Eve merely, but by the whole human race, of the Atonement by a vicarious sacrifice, of the two societies, the World and the

Church, pursuing through history, side by side, their diverse destiny, the one to eternal damnation, the other to eternal blessedness—all this is mere mythology, and mythology not of the most edifying kind. But originally, it must always be remembered, this mythology was seriously put forward, not as a metaphor or symbol, but as matter of fact, by the man who, more than anyone else, laid the foundation of Christian theology. It was accepted as matter of fact by the Church. And if now, as I suppose is very largely the case, it is interpreted as mere allegory, that very fact only illustrates the point I wish to make, that a religion which embodies profound moral intuitions may associate them with views about the universe so inadequate and crude that subsequent generations have no choice but to interpret them as symbolism. There is thus an inherent instability in the great religions, due to the fact that their prophets, commonly men of unique moral insight, have associated their moral teaching with theories about the world based upon no proper method of inquiry, and unable to meet the first brunt of intelligent criticism.

And this brings me to the conclusion at which I am driving. If the whole development of the human mind in the last few centuries is not to be reversed, if we are not to relapse into intellectual barbarism, it will become increasingly impossible for any theory about the constitution of the world and the meaning of human destiny to be accepted, which does not rest explicitly upon the basis of science and philosophy, and is not amenable to, and competent to sustain, their criticism. In other words, it is not, and cannot be, the function of religion to proclaim truths about the general structure of the universe, or to affirm that this or that Being does or does not exist. And the frank recognition of this fact implies that, whatever religion may be in the future, it will be, unless all the intellectual heritage of the world is to be lost, something very different from what it has been in the past.

Let us turn now to the other aspect of religion, that whereby it embodies statements of moral values. These are not necessarily affected by the truth or falsehood of the cosmological ideas with

which they have been associated. And, in the future, as in the past, there will be, one may anticipate and hope, men of profound intuition in these matters, who will deliver their message to the world. The main difference that may be anticipated in the attitude of men towards the teacher will be that they will no longer regard him as a person radically different from themselves, as a God or the Son of God, nor conceive his message to have a final, exhaustive, and infallible significance; but, rather, will recognise him to be a man like themselves, only more finely endowed, and will know that it is their duty, as it will be the duty of those who succeed them, not merely passively to accept, but in appropriating, to sift and test the gospel he announces. They will regard him, in brief, as a poet, a saint, a practical reformer, and value and follow him accordingly, up to the measure of his merits and of their lights.

Now, granting all this, as I believe it will be granted by the readers whom I have in view, will there or will there not, under these conditions, be any place left for anything that ought properly to be called religion? I believe that there will, and a very important one. There will still be an interaction, though no longer a fusion, between our conception of the world and our ideals. The former, indeed, we shall then take, probably in a very tentative form, from science and philosophy; the latter we shall affirm on the warrant of our own perception, and not necessarily with less conviction than before. But, in some form or other, we shall have both; and religion will consist in the passionate apprehension, not merely by the intellect but by the imagination, of the nature, as we conceive it, of the world as a whole, and of our place in it, regarded from the point of view of our ideals. But the further elaboration of this position I must leave to the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION

IN the preceding chapter I gave reasons that seem to me to necessitate the rejection of revelation, in any sense of the term which I have been able to imagine, as an avenue to truth, and therefore as a basis for religion. I suggested, however, that religion would remain, even if we rejected revelation, and even, as I am now inclined to add, all the more because we have rejected it. For religion, in the view of it which I now wish to develop, is a reaction of the highest imagination of the best men upon life and the world, so far as we know them by experience and science—a passionate apprehension, from the point of view of ideals, of the general situation in which we find ourselves.

That situation, in essentials, has not been changed by all the developments of history; and I will venture briefly to describe it as follows. We find ourselves born without choice of our own into a universe which we do not understand, and which corresponds, as it seems, only in the most imperfect and fragmentary way with those of our desires and aspirations which we believe to be legitimate and good. From this universe we are removed, as we entered it, without notice or warning, and without any reference to our willingness or unwillingness to depart—

Without asking, hither hurried whence ?

And, without asking, whither hurried hence ?

Before departing, we have, commonly, without much reflection, produced others to undergo in their turn the same enigmatic destiny. And so from generation to generation the race is continued, achieving much, yet accomplishing nothing; learning much, yet remaining ignorant of everything; acting, thinking, feeling, yet haunted by the doubt whether it is not all a dream; pursuing Good and contending with Evil in a scheme of things which never appears itself to take sides; developing the means to

happiness, yet never becoming happier; pressing ever onward to goals that are never reached; and retiring, section after section, baffled but never acknowledging defeat, to make room for new combatants in the contest that is always old.

Such, or somewhat such, is the situation. And it is in an attitude of the spirit towards this situation that the essence of religion, I would suggest, consists; not in opinions held about it, nor in the intellectual content of beliefs—these may be of almost any character without thereby becoming or ceasing to be religious—but in the imaginative perception and feeling of the issue, however it be interpreted. It is not, in a word, the doctrine that makes religion, *it* is the spirit; and the spirit may inspire the most diverse and contradictory doctrines. This is expressed for the modern world better than I have found it expressed elsewhere, in the following passage of Maeterlinck:

Je puis croire d'une manière religieuse et infinie qu'il n'y a pas de Dieu, que mon apparition n'a pas de but hors d'elle-même, que l'existence de mon âme n'est plus nécessaire à l'économie de ce monde sans limites que les nuances éphémères d'une fleur; vous pouvez croire petitement qu'un Dieu unique et tout-puissant vous aime et vous protège; je serai plus heureux et plus calme que vous, si mon incertitude est plus grande, plus grave et plus noble que votre foi, si elle a interrogé* plus intimement mon âme, si elle a fait le tour d'un horizon plus étendu, si elle a aimé plus de choses. Le Dieu auquel je ne crois pas deviendra plus puissant et plus consolateur que celui auquel vous croyez, si j'ai mérité que mon doute repose sur des pensées et sur des sentiments plus vastes et plus purs que ceux qui animent votre certitude. Encore une fois, croire, ne pas croire, cela n'a guère d'importance; ce qui en a, c'est la loyauté l'étendue, le désintéressement et la profondeur des raisons pour lesquelles on croit ou pour lesquelles on ne croit point.

Is truth, then, indifferent? Not at all! But—and this is what we must learn to accept—religion cannot teach us what is true. Only perception, and inference, and logic, only, in the broadest sense, science—under which, for the moment, I will ask to be allowed to include philosophy—can teach us anything about the

constitution of the universe and our own place in it; can teach us whether or no there be anything corresponding with what we have called God; whether or no the individual soul survives death; whether or no the process of things moves towards a good end. These are, to my mind, questions of supreme importance. But I do not think that the existence or the value of religion depends upon the answer we may be able to give them, although its character must be determined by that answer.

Let me illustrate my meaning by examples. Suppose a man to have accepted—as many now have, provisionally at least—the view which seems to be suggested by modern science: that the world as a whole is neither good nor bad, but simply indifferent to moral values; that the life of mankind is but a brief and insignificant episode in its strictly determined but purposeless activity; that it tends to no goal having ethical significance, still less to one corresponding to our conceptions of Good—suppose a man to have accepted this, is he therefore debarred from religion? Surely not. On the contrary, there would seem to be open to him two attitudes at least, either of which he will adopt, according to his character, if he has the religious instinct at all, and either of which may be fairly called religious. Thus he may, adhering passionately to our standards of value (none the less true because their realisation is so imperfect and precarious), pursue, wherever it flees, the perishing image of Good, imprisoning it in a rule or a policy, impressing it on a fugitive act, embodying it in the flux of feeling, reflecting it in the mirror of art, always from the consciousness of frustration drawing new vigour for the chase, snatching defiance from the sense of defeat, patience from the fire of passion, from the very indifference of the universe gathering the inspiration to contend with it, and, though at last he be broken, perishing unsubdued, weaker yet greater than the blind world which, though it made him and destroyed, was incapable of understanding or valuing its own creation. Such a man, sustained by such a conviction, honestly held, I should call religious. And if to some he should appear rather to be blasphemous, that will be only because they do

not share what I have supposed to be his intellectual position. Granting a bad or indifferent world, to defy it would be a form of religion. But not the only possible form, even on that hypothesis. For where one man practises defiance, another may practise renunciation; and the conviction that Good cannot be realised, or can be realised, if at all, only in connection with greater Evil, may lead to the creed of the annihilation of desire, instead of the affirmation of will. Escape, not battle, then becomes the goal, as in the Buddhist faith, and the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Hartmann. And this attitude, too, will be religious, if it be greatly and imaginatively conceived—religious, not by virtue of its intellectual content, but by virtue of the sense of a world-issue turning upon the ideas of Good and Evil.

But, now, suppose a radically different scientific conception of the world. Suppose it to be believed that our ideas of Good and Evil are also those with which the universe is concerned; that it is moving towards a goal, and a goal of which we approve; that with it moves the human race, and even individual souls, surviving death, and ultimately entering into their perfection. On this view religion assumes a radically different complexion. It is optimistic instead of pessimistic; it has exchanged the horror of night for the midday sun. But it is still religion, for its essence is still the same—an imaginative conception of the universe as a whole in relation to Good and Evil.

Or, again, suppose that, to another man, science does not appear to justify any attitude towards the universe as a whole except that of agnosticism; suppose he feels that he does not know, that no one really knows, what is the relation of our ideals to the world; whether or no they are destined for any complete and permanent realisation; whether or no there is any significance in individual lives other than that which appears on the surface. Still, if his imagination and his feeling be profound, he is not debarred from religion—a religion not of sunshine or darkness, but of the starry twilight, tremulous with hopes and fears, wistful, adventurous, passionate, divining a horizon more mysterious and vast than day or night can suggest,

from uncertainty conjuring possibility, from doubt evoking inspiration, and passing through life as a man may float down an unknown river in the dusk, risking and content to risk his fortune and his life on the chance of a discovery more wonderful even than the most audacious of his dreams.

Enough, perhaps, has been said to bring out the point I wish to make, one, as I believe, of the very first importance to all who care at once for religion and for truth. Truth is matter of science, religion of imagination and feeling. It is possible to have truth without having religion, and *vice versa*. But if a man have religion, its character, if he be intelligent and sincere, will necessarily depend on what he believes to be truth. He will not imagine that religion implies some special organ of knowledge, whether such organ be supposed to be the possession of all men as such, or of specially gifted individuals, or of a particular Church. He will never confuse his desires and his aspirations with his positive knowledge, even though he may think them more important than his knowledge. And he will be the less inclined to do this in proportion as he has come to see that, whatever be the truth, there must always be a place for religion, and a place perhaps the most important of all. But it is a poor religion that needs to rest upon falsehood or upon the deliberate refusal to face what we know of truth; that takes refuge in excitement, or in sophistry, or in deliberate induced subjective hallucinations, from a truth which it fears may be fatal to itself. Religion is an attitude of the imagination and the will, not of the intellect. But from the intellect it receives its light; and its discipline will be the more arduous, its insight the more profound, the more candidly it accepts all that the intellect can communicate. It is possible, it is common, to believe in God, without having religion; it is less common, but it is not less possible, to have religion without believing in God.

Such, then, stated briefly, is what I conceive to be the real relation of religion to truth. I do not know that I could better explain my view by further elaboration; and I will therefore proceed to another point, perhaps not less important. I will

endeavour to set forth the relation of religion, in my sense of the term, to the other ideal activities of man—to morals, that is, and to art. And, first, with regard to morals. The statement that conduct depends upon religion is very often made, and there may be, in some sense, some truth in it; but in what sense, and what truth, is not so easy to determine, I will, however, endeavour to make certain distinctions which I think are important. A great part of conduct—the whole conduct, perhaps, of most people—is purely habitual. It appears to depend neither on religion, nor on any conscious conviction, either of the intellect or of the imagination. Men act as they do, in this the more common case, because they cannot help it, because they have always done so, because others about them do so. Economic necessities, imitation, public opinion—which itself is the result of these factors—are the determining considerations. It is, however, sometimes maintained that habitual action of this type depends also upon another element; that really, though indirectly, it is determined by religion; for that the fact of a Church in the background, with its organisation, its services, its sacraments, acts, if in no other way, yet as a kind of screen, shutting out from the horizon of practicability all sorts of anarchic and anti-social conduct which otherwise would naturally suggest itself to the imagination, and might then naturally issue in action. This is a contention which I have already discussed in dealing with what I have called ecclesiasticism. It is very hard, I think, to say whether there is any, or how much, truth in it. But if there be any, then, so far, it must be admitted that even habitual and mechanical conduct depends, in the last resort, not, indeed, on personal religious conviction, but on the existence, in the society, if not of religion, at least of religious organisation. Supposing, however, that such organisation is developed on the lines of ecclesiasticism, I have given my reasons for believing that the harm it does outweighs the possible good. The proper way to make and keep men moral is to help them to conditions of life, in which morality would be possible, and in which it would be backed and supported by intelligence. Good,

conduct based on mere habit sustained by the authority of a Church is at the best a *pis aller*; and the necessity which may be held to justify it is one which also condemns the society that cannot exist without recourse to it.

But, further, there is a certain amount of conduct which may be said to be based upon reason; by which I mean that it may depend, in part at least, upon the deliberate and conscious acceptance of a certain end—such, for example, as the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and upon the attempt to act in such a way as will tend to bring about that end. Even in such cases the conduct, I think, is really far more habitual than would be admitted by those who adopt the position. They act, in fact, much as other people act; but they believe that the rules to which they are accustomed, and to which they instinctively conform, are such as will contribute, if duly observed, to the goal they have in view. And, no doubt, in the case supposed they are, partly at least, right; for customary action has grown up under the stress of felt, if not formulated, purposes, of which one at least has been the survival and the welfare of society. Conduct of this kind I should describe as rational; but it does not necessarily imply religious conviction. A man pursuing it need not have any passion for the good end he has set before himself; he may have merely an intellectual conviction that it is good; as, indeed, I think is commonly the case with those who profess utilitarianism. Still less need he have any imaginative conception of the universe as a whole, and of the relation to it of our ideals. In such cases, conduct, I think, clearly does not depend in any sense upon religion; and, for aught I know, in some society of the future conduct of this kind may be the general rule.

I hardly, however, think that this is probable. The religious instinct is, I believe, too deeply rooted ever to disappear; and wherever and whenever it subsists as a genuine impulse, in individuals or in societies, it cannot help reacting profoundly upon moral conduct. Indeed, if we look historically at the development of conduct, we find that the great moral reformers have been men

of religious genius; that Buddha, Jesus Christ, Saint Francis, were, first, religious teachers, and, secondly, only teachers of morals. Indeed, a profound ethical intuition would seem necessarily to depend on a profound religious insight. For the best man is he who loves good for its own sake, and pursues it in a reasonable way. But to pursue it reasonably is to pursue it with an intelligence of its place in the universe, and not merely an intelligence, but a passionate apprehension. So that moral genius depends upon religious genius, and therefore, since it must be affected by anything that affects religion, will be affected by the deliverances of science about the world.

From this analysis, imperfect as it is, it would seem to follow that, though it be true that the great mass of conduct is based rather upon habits than upon conviction, yet even these habits grew up in connection with religion, and perhaps cannot subsist indefinitely without a new religious baptism; and that the great reformations in morals have been originated by men of religious genius, upon the stream of which they have, as it were, been floated. Afterwards, no doubt, they are left high and dry, like sea-weed on the rocks; but, then, like it, they are deprived of their proper element. Only the flooding of the tide can restore them to their true and native life, lift and expand and set them to sparkle and gleam with a thousand colours, or, it may be, sweep them away and plant new seeds, to produce in their time a new and radiant foliage. We can and we do, most of us, for the most part, act without religion; but such action is the action of machines. Religion is the spirit and the life; and in that sense, a very profound one, religion may be said to be the basis of conduct.

Thus, briefly, of the relation of religion to conduct; I turn now to consider its relation to art. And here I may be met, at the outset, by the contention that there is no such relation at all. For artists, or at least modern artists, are urgent in their repudiation of the dependence of their art upon anything but itself; and I presume that, so far as their own inspiration is concerned, they are right. Art is now very largely a not too sincere hobby of

the rich, a matter of drawing-room decoration, of fashion, of conversation over tea, or, what is really most important, of pecuniary speculation. In the best cases, where the artist at least is genuine, it is a creation of beautiful things for the love of beauty, without reference to any view of life as a whole, or any place to be filled by its products in the corporate activities of society. And it is thus, perhaps, that artists at all times have most commonly regarded their art. But there have been exceptions. There have been, it seems, men who have been profoundly inspired by the view of art first formulated, so far as I know, by Aristotle: that beauty is the end set before herself by Nature, an end which she realises so far as the limitations of matter permit, but which it is reserved for the artist to bring to full perfection, his work being thus the fulfilment of her ideal. And if in this view Nature be conceived as herself the minister of God, art will become a religious activity—as indicated, for example, in the following lines of Michael Angelo:

So, all the lovely things we find on earth
 Resemble, for the soul that rightly sees,
 That Source of bliss divine which gave us birth:
 Nor have we first-fruits or remembrances
 Of heaven elsewhere.¹

I have thought it worth while to refer, in passing, to this conception of art; but I do not wish to lay undue stress upon it. It is, perhaps, exceptional for an artist to pursue art in a religious spirit. What, however, is true and important is that, in the two greatest periods of European art, the Greek and the Italian, art was used and inspired by religion. And it would, I think, be unhistorical to deny that the perfection it attained in those periods was connected with the definite purpose, the limitations, the unity of aim, imposed by the end to which it was made subservient. However that may be, there can be no doubt that, for the votary who is sensitive both to religion and art, both gain indefinitely by their association with one another. For him,

¹ Sonnet 54 in Symonds' translation.

Without art religion is dumb; and without religion art, if it is not insignificant, lacks at least the highest significance of which it is capable.

It may be worth while, in illustration of this point, to remind the reader of the various ways in which art has been made, and perhaps might be made again, contributory to religion. First, as architecture, it has raised the material habitation of the Divine, and in doing so has reflected, I think, by a perhaps unconscious symbolism, the forms in which that Divine has been conceived. Surely, at least, one might question whether the difference between a classical temple and a Gothic church is to be attributed only to a difference of climate, or of technical skill and tradition. It would be a curiously happy chance, if it were merely chance, that made the house destined for the abode of one of the bright Olympians a palace of gleaming marble set on a hill by the sea, perfect in form, brilliant in colour, a jewel to reflect the sun and the sky, a harp for the winds to play upon, an incarnation of the spirit of the open air, of the daylight and of the blue heaven; while, for the mysterious Jehovah and the God-Man His Son, there rose into grey and weeping skies huge emblems of the cross, crowned with towers aspiring to a heaven unexplored, and arched over huge spaces where the eye is lost in the gloom, Where form is dissolved in vagueness, and the white light of day, rejected in its purity, is permitted to pass only upon condition that it depicts in sombre colours the pageant of the life of the soul. That architecture has, whether by chance or no, a symbolic value, as well as one purely and simply aesthetic, will not, I think, be disputed by those who are sensitive to such impressions; and, so regarded, architecture has been, and might be again, one of the chief expressions of religion.

But not the only one; for, within the temple or the church, art, in its greatest period, was used to illustrate the legends and the ideals of the faith. Such illustration ranged from the crudest story-telling, devoid of all aesthetic significance, to works in which symbolism was amalgamated inseparably with artistic beauty. In the Greek temple was throned the statue of the god, the per-

fection, on the one hand, of form, of handling, of surface, of all that which to the artist makes art; and, on the other, what for the layman will always and rightly be more important, a symbol at once of the physical ideal of the human form, and of that particular aspect of the life of man of which the deity represented was the type. And so, again, in the Christian Church were expressed, in colour and form, not only aesthetic beauty, but those various phases of the spiritual life of which the Christian religion takes account, the ideal of redemption by suffering, of maternity, of asceticism, of charity, expressed in and through the legends of the founder of the religion and of the saints. In this way religion became articulate. No longer a mere matter of feeling, it confronted man as an object, and only so, perhaps, can it reach its full development. Protestantism, in purifying its inner life, has gone far towards destroying its outward form. But without expression, and expression in choice and deliberate form, religious, like other feeling, tends to become stagnant, sour, and corrupt. It needs the open air, it needs communion and interchange; and this it can only receive in the finest form through the mediation of art.

But it is perhaps in ritual that that mediation reaches its highest power. Ritual is, or should be, a product of two of the greatest arts, literature and music, with the assistance, perhaps, of an element of drama. No emotion so poignant and profound can, I think, be produced, no "purgation" so sanctifying be effected, by any other means at our disposal. The effect even of a ritual which we do not understand, or with which we are not, intellectually, in touch, may be immense upon a sensitive spirit. How much more that of one which should really and adequately express our conviction and feeling about life and the world! For those who can accept the Christian view, the Christian ritual must be their most precious possession; but for those who cannot—and they are; as I believe, an increasing number of not the least religious souls—their lack of intellectual assent to the faith weakens or even nullifies the effect of the symbol. And if, as I think will be the case, the men in whom the religious instinct

is strongest move farther and farther from the Christian postulates, a ritual which shall express their new attitude will become, perhaps is already, one of the chief spiritual needs. But a ritual cannot be invented; antiquity appears to be of the essence of its power—though, to be sure, rituals must have had a beginning!—and, as experiment shows, it is difficult to take seriously any new attempt in this direction. Perhaps, therefore, there "is a better prospect for the modern world in the development of art towards religion than in that of religion towards art. Something of this kind, it is clear, was the idea of Wagner. And without raising here what may be a point of somewhat acrimonious dispute, whether any of his operas can appropriately be called religious, there can be no doubt that there might be a music-drama that would be such, if the man who conceived it were himself religious. The drama of Æschylus is, of course, a convincing historical example; and so is such a medieval play as "Everyman." Such drama, I cannot but think, is the highest form of aesthetic production. And, while nothing can be further from my purpose than to enter upon the not very fruitful controversy as to the proper function of art, I may perhaps be permitted to record my own feeling that never have its wonderful resources, especially in the region of music, been more wantonly squandered than in this generation; and that only their deliberate dedication to what, say what men may, is at bottom always their most serious pre-occupation, so soon as they have any spiritual pre-occupations at all—I mean the significance of their life in the whole scheme of the world—nothing but such a dedication will rescue art from triviality, or restore life to the dignity of which it is capable.

Such, then, in brief are what I conceive to be the relations of religion to the other ideal activities of men—to science, conduct, and art. And of these, I have suggested, the most important is the relation to science, because upon science depends logically not the existence, but the content of religion. For religion, in the view I have put forward, is concerned with the place of our ideals in the structure of the universe. And that place it cannot

itself determine; it must wait for the determination of the intellect. But on that point the intellect has as yet been unable with certainty to determine anything; and consequently religion tends to assume different characters, according to the way in which different people tend to estimate the situation under the influence of their temperamental or intellectual bias. The advent of positive and conclusive knowledge would put an end to such differences; and, however improbable it may now seem that such knowledge should ever be attainable, it would be a foolish credulity to deny the possibility or to discourage the quest of it.

Religion so conceived is, of course, a very different thing from that which purports to offer a special revelation of truth on the very points which I am assuming to be still unknown. Many religious people, caring more for their religion than for the truth, will no doubt continue to believe that there is such a revelation. But, though they will have more assurance, and it may be more people, they will not necessarily have more religion—and they may easily have less—than those who candidly recognise the claims of intellect. Their road through life will be simpler, but their knowledge of the land will be more limited, and their range of emotion proportionately restricted. Religion is not a creed, it is a growing experience; and the experience is necessarily narrowed by anything that narrows the intellectual horizon.

If I may conclude with a parable, we are all travellers through an unknown country. The majority, I think, at all times journey with their eyes on the ground, following the track of necessity and custom in which their feet were* set from the beginning, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but at most backward or forward, and learning nothing, nor caring to learn, about the country through which they pass, whether it is mountainous or level, fed with rivers or dry, inhabited or solitary, lit by sun or moon or glimmering stars. These are the men without religion, those who plod in blinkers, as secure and unperplexed as it is possible for men to be when at any moment the ground beneath their feet may open and swallow them up.

.Others there are—those who believe in some revealed religion—whose eyes are directed not down, but straight before them, following a "beam of light that springs from a sun still below the horizon, but one, as they believe, which is about, to rise. So dazzling is this beam that the land all about it appears to be shrouded in thick darkness. Only in the path of the light is anything to be seen, where it illumines a mountain-top, gleams on a far river, or gilds what perhaps may be the distant sea. Thither the travellers hasten, without fear or doubt, counting as nothing the hardships of the road in their certainty of the consummation.

But, again, there are others who see no such light to follow, but who yet refuse to walk in the beaten track. Desiring, not merely to pass through, but to explore the strange land, they look freely above, beneath, around them, in an uncertain glimmer of starlight often obscured by clouds. All about them are dangers which they note but cannot gauge, formless terrors, inexplicable sounds, stirrings, ambushes, contacts. But also, here and there, are suggestions of unutterable promise—an unexpected clearing in a wood, a footprint or a sign left by some friendly traveller gone before, pale flowers beside a brook, the note of a nightingale, a peak of snow like a cloud in the sky, the rising of a new star, and always the tremulous hope, "In the east is there not a crystal gleam? does not a violet lustre begin to burn upon the grey? does not the planet hanging there throb more passionate and pale? The sun we saw set, will he not rise again?"

These latter it is who have the religion of agnosticism; by which I mean, not a conviction that knowledge is impossible, but an uncertainty as to what may be its deliverance—an uncertainty, not of indifference, but of sensitive, passionate desire. Only the advent of knowledge can put an end to that uncertainty, can dash or confirm the audacities of hope, dissipate or establish the forebodings of fear. One way or other by knowledge the character of religion will be determined. But, in either case, religion will still be possible, and, for those who possess the instinct, necessary. What depends upon knowledge is not reli-

gion; it is approbation or condemnation of the world. That issue we cannot shirk; we can only settle it, if at all, by science; and the attempt to find in revelation a short-cut to the solution does but divert our efforts from the only fruitful method of inquiry.

CHAPTER IV

FAITH

IN the preceding chapters I have attempted to state my view as to the relation of religion to knowledge. Religion, I have said, does not give us truth. And as this statement to some of my readers may have seemed paradoxical, I propose here further to explain what, in my opinion, is the relation of religion, and in particular of what is sometimes called "faith," to knowledge.

My point, perhaps, may be put most clearly thus: If a man says "Religion gives me truth," I would reply, "Then why not call it knowledge?" For truth, though it be truth about God, is still truth; and truth that is known is part of knowledge. But there is only one method of knowledge, viz., experience, and legitimate inference from experience. Theology, therefore, if it is a branch of knowledge, must differ from other branches, not in its method, but in its object. If we know the truth about God, that truth is scientific, in the broad and proper sense of the term. It is arrived at by a method which can be explained and criticised, and it is subject to constant revision as experience develops and intellectual capacity increases.

This much, I dare say, would be admitted, perhaps even eagerly asserted, by many theologians. My next point takes me into a more difficult region. What, I would ask, is the kind of experience on which knowledge about God and other objects of religious belief can claim to be based?

There would seem to be two possible answers, not incompatible with one another. First, the experience may be historical.

It may depend on a record of the past. And such record is, of course, part of the theoretical basis of Christianity. On this point I have nothing to add to what I said in a previous chapter. Historical truth must be ascertained by historical methods. But it is my own personal opinion that such methods will never give us the kind of certainty which has hitherto attached in practice to religious beliefs; and that men will become increasingly unwilling and unable to base their scheme of life on data and inferences of that kind.

I pass, therefore, to a position which seems to me to have more importance for the future. "Whatever," it may be said, "be the deliverance of history, there is, quite apart from that, in the direct experience of men, a perception of the Being we call God." Such a statement is one of the most interesting and important that could be made, if it be made sincerely. But it is pre-eminently one that ought to be challenged. And that, partly because of its importance; partly because of the indefiniteness that attaches to the word "God"; partly because of the probable complexity of the assertion that is in form so simple. For, if a man says, "I know God by direct experience," what is it he knows, and how? Has he had a "vision"? Possibly! Such visions do occur. But in themselves they prove nothing. Everything depends on whether or no there is any real object corresponding to them. And that is a matter for scientific inquiry. Probably, however, visions of this kind are not what is meant. When a man says he has a direct knowledge of God, he will probably mean that he has a sense, somehow, that there does exist a Being who is good, and loving, and powerful, and wise beyond all experience of ours. Such a sense, I suppose, many people do have, genuinely and constantly. And there is no reason *a priori* why it should not correspond to a reality. But, once more, whether it does correspond or no, is a matter for science. The sense in question, if it is to yield knowledge, must be analysed and tested by a very complicated and difficult process. And I cannot doubt that, were such an analysis to be made, the original and apparently simple impression would be found to include a number of

heterogeneous elements—elements of tradition, *elements of* desire, elements of inference. Thus, the man's idea of God will surely be derived, partly from the religion in which he has been brought up, partly from his own reflections upon life and the world; and, almost certainly, it will have been affected by his needs and desires, by what he profoundly wants to be true. And as soon as this analysis has been made, it will become clear that the single and apparently simple sense or impression which he calls his direct experience of God has no more validity as a deliverance of truth than the elements of which it is composed. If truth is to be elicited from it, the tradition must be sifted, the inferences tested; and above all, the element of desire ruled out as *prima facie* irrelevant; unless, indeed, and until it can be shown—as, for example, the new philosophy that calls itself "pragmatism" endeavours to show—that truth is in some way determined by our desires. In other words, any truth that finally emerges from the process will be scientific or philosophic truth; and if it is to be called religious, should be called so only with* relation to its objects, not to its method. And that is what I mean when I say that religion does not give us truth, but that truth is only given by science.

Now, I do not pretend to judge what may be the result of the kind of inquiries I have been suggesting above. It is by some such inquiries, in my opinion, that religious truth must be established, if it is to be established at all. But, meantime, it is, I think, true that religious questions are the kind of questions about which many serious and reflecting men do not, in fact, and will not, preserve an attitude merely of suspended judgment. Such men, I think, will prefer to describe their religious position as one of faith rather than of knowledge; and they will, perhaps, feel that it is foolish, and even presumptuous, to expect to attain to knowledge on such subjects, I have myself no sympathy with any attitude which limits *a priori* the possibilities of human endeavour. But, seeing that most men, for a long time, in proportion as they are candid, are likely to be intellectually agnostic on the most vital questions of religion, it seems to be important

to try to ascertain in what sense faith may be legitimate, and what may be the relation of such faith to knowledge.

To avoid, so far as possible, all ambiguity, I wish to make it clear at the outset that, in using the word "faith," I do not wish it to carry all the meanings that attach to it in common usage. The word, for instance, is often used to imply a faculty which has the power to communicate, not only knowledge, but the most certain knowledge to which we can attain. It is not, of course, in that sense that I use the term, as will be clear from the preceding pages. When I speak here of faith, I speak of an attitude which is not primarily intellectual at all, and which is quite compatible with—nay, which depends upon—intellectual agnosticism; for it presupposes that, in the region to which it applies, we do not know. The attitude I would describe is one of the emotions and the will—the laying hold, in the midst of ignorance, of a possibility that may be true, and directing our feeling and our conduct in accordance with it. In its broadest sense, I would say it is an emotional and volitional assumption that, somehow or other, in spite of appearances, things are all right. This general outline, of course, may be, and is, filled in by every and the most varied kind of content, according to the traditions in which men have been brought up, and the course and extent of their knowledge and experience. But very commonly it expresses itself in the form of what is called a "belief in God"; an attitude, however, which does not imply any very definite nor any very uniform conception of God, but is apt, rather, to manifest itself negatively in a kind of distress if the existence of God is denied. And the root of that distress is, *I* think, the suggested inference that things are all wrong and not all right; or, to vary the phrase, one may perhaps say that faith involves a volitional assumption that things, whatever appearances may suggest, are really "worth while."

Now, if we had positive and complete knowledge on this point of "worth-whileness"; if we knew, instead of merely conjecturing what may be, as we say, the "meaning" of life; if we could see Good and Evil in their true and ultimate proportions.

and finally sum tip and judge the world; there would be no room and no possibility for any attitude of faith. Instead, we should have knowledge. But, in fact, our position is very different from this. We know that there is Evil, we know that there is Good; in some moods we may imagine that there is nothing but Evil, or nothing but Good; but, in sober truth, we cannot reasonably and finally, on grounds of knowledge, form a judgment about the "worth-whileness" of life, because of the many important factors of which we are ignorant.

Thus, for example, many men feel, when it is put to them, that the question of the value of life depends very largely on the question whether individuals survive death; and, if they do, on the kind of life into which they pass. It is one kind of universe, they think, if death means annihilation; another kind if it means heaven or hell; another kind if it means a series of progressing lives, and so on.

Such possibilities, many people hold, are of vital importance to us; and these people are apt, in the absence of knowledge, to adopt towards them an attitude, not merely of agnosticism, but also of what I have called faith. They select, that is, among the possibilities, that one which seems to them to give value to life, and concentrate about it their practical and emotional life. The attitude they thus adopt is different in its origin and effect from an attitude based upon knowledge. It is more precarious, more adventurous, more exciting, more liable to ups and downs. But it may be equally and even more efficacious upon life; and it is not, as I shall try to show, necessarily to be condemned as illegitimate.

There are others, again, to whom the fate of individuals after death is either a matter of indifference, or, as they may hold, has been finally settled by science. On this subject, therefore, they will have no faith. But they will almost certainly have faith on some subject. Probably, for example, they may cling to the idea of "progress." And that, although arguments may be adduced in its favour, is a doctrine so far from being established that acceptance of it is, I think, commonly

the result rather of what I am calling faith than .of intellectual conviction.

Or, again, a man may be indifferent to the questions both of a survival of individuals after death and of the progress of the race, but may feel that the important point is the existence of God. People who feel this are, I suppose, commonly attached to one of the Churches. But there may be men not so attached to whom, nevertheless, a faith in God is the foundation of their life. It may be a personal God that they conceive; it may be a "tendency in the universe"; it may be something which they prefer to call "Earth" or "Nature"; it may be an "Absolute"; but, in any case, it is something not themselves and greater than themselves, something which, by its mere existence, makes everything supremely worth while, overrides and subsumes Evil, intensifies and universalises Good, and concentrates and satisfies in itself those ideal impulses that otherwise would be broken and wasted about an imperfect self.

The various attitudes towards life thus briefly indicated, different though they be, are, nevertheless, all examples of what I am calling faith. They all involve a volitional assumption, not based upon knowledge, as to the "worth-whileness" of the universe; and their differences are differences as to what it is that constitutes "worth-whileness." If men should ever come, by thought and experience, nearer to an agreement on this point, their faiths are likely to approximate more than they do at present. But, meantime, the point I wish to make is, that faith, in some form or other, seems to be an almost necessary condition, if not of life, yet of the most fruitful and noble life. Almost necessary, I say. For there is a kind of pessimism which is nobler than most optimism; which is, so to speak, active in its character; and implies rather a passionate love of Good than an impotent despair about Evil. But that is a rare condition. And most men, I think, are significant, and find and make life significant, in proportion to their faith. Of the practical value of such faith there can, I think, be no doubt. The only question is whether, from the

standpoint of knowledge, it is legitimate. For it must be remembered that the pursuit of truth is itself one of our highest practical activities; and that it must always be wrong to hamper or pervert that pursuit by a predetermination that certain beliefs shall not be assailed. Faith, in a word can only be legitimate so long as it occupies a region not yet conquered by knowledge, and so long as it holds itself ready in a moment to yield its place so soon as knowledge arrives. Faith should stand always with the dagger of science pointed at its breast. It need not fear. It has its resurrections. And it, too, must be ready, if it would save its life, to lose it. On that condition it may rightly and profitably take its place alongside of, and in anticipation of, knowledge. But, once that condition is neglected, once we begin to say "I believe though truth testify against me," once we echo Ter-tullian's *credo quia impossibile*, or, with Luther, in our zeal for what we suppose to be religion, assail reason with all the resources of passion and contempt—from that moment our attitude, instead of being legitimate and admirable, becomes one of the most disastrous and the most immoral which it is possible to assume.

Faith, then, in the sense in which I am using the term, is distinguished from knowledge, but it not necessarily opposed to it, though it may easily be misled into opposition. And, being distinguished from knowledge, the kind of support it gives is not, or should not be, intellectual certainty. On the contrary, faith would seem to be an expression of the imagination and the will, rather than of the intellect, though it be from the intellect that it takes its form. It is closer to music and poetry than to science. It is the operation of our passion and our desire, shaping in anticipation the forms and features of the unknown land which we are about to explore. I know no better metaphor for it than that—the passion in the explorer's heart, dictating the vision by which he is led. Because there is an horizon, because there is space, because there is the unknown, therefore there is faith. Columbus had faith. But what he discovered was not the world of his dream. Only, the dream helped him to discover it; and,

spiritually, we are all in his position. We are Columbuses setting forth on our voyage. We need our dream, but we need also our compass. And the confirmation or dissipation of the dream hangs upon reality. But while, in this sense, faith must wait upon truth, it is also true, in another sense, that truth waits upon faith. For the impulse to pursue truth is itself a form of faith.. We hope that truth is obtainable; we desire and will to attain it; we dream its attainment as we go in quest of it. And, but for that dream, and that hope, and that will, we should never start at all. Faith is the sense and the call of the open horizon. If we abstract it from the forms in which we clothe it, from the specific beliefs which are, as it were, its projection into the intelligence, it presents itself as the spring of our whole life, including our intellectual life. It is the impulse to grow and expand; and, just because it is that, it has itself no form, but may assume any form. It is a taper burning, now bright, now dim, and changing colour and substance with every change in the stuff it consumes. The frailest thing we know, it is also the least perishable; for it is a tongue of the central fire that burns at the heart of the world.

Religion and Immortality

PREFACE

OF the essays included in this volume, the first two have already appeared in the *Hibbert Journal*, and the last in the *Independent Review*. They are reprinted here by the kind permission of the editors of those publications. The third essay is the Ingersoll Lecture delivered at Harvard University in 1909, and has been previously published in America.

I

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

IN the course of the last half-century a change, curious and to some minds disconcerting, appears to have come over the leaders of freethought. They are, perhaps, not less, but more sceptical than they were; but they seem also to be more believing. They question things that an earlier generation never thought of challenging; but they affirm what it would have regarded as superstitions or dreams. George Meredith, for example, while rejecting God and Immortality, demands our worship for what he calls "Earth." Mr. Bernard Shaw, repudiating the whole of our morals and our science, announces a new religion of "Life-Force." Even Nietzsche, after denying all sense to the words "good" and "true," propounds in the end a new ethics, and a new cosmology. Our modern poets and prophets, it would seem, are at once sceptical and credulous. They have no sooner smashed the old idols than they set up new ones in their place. What are we to think of this attitude? What does it really mean?

An attempt to answer this question may perhaps throw some light upon that most vexed and most interesting of questions, the future of religion.

To some minds, as suggested above, and these not the least strong and sincere, the tendency we are noticing is simply disconcerting. They feel it to be a sign of weakness or of disingenuousness. They hold that a final position was conquered by human thought in the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; that the method and limits of our knowledge were then definitely fixed; and that to go back from, or to pretend to go beyond that position is a kind of feebleness or treachery. The attitude they adopt is, in short, that of Positivism; and they hold this to be also the attitude of science. That, however, I believe to be an error; and an error which it is important to expose. Positivism is not science, it is philosophy; and philosophy as little established as any other. It takes the existing limits of human experience, or those which are conventionally accepted as such, and dogmatizes that they are ultimate and final; it takes the postulates which science finds it convenient and useful to employ—those of cause and effect, of space and time, and of matter in space and time existing and moving independently of mind—and it dogmatizes that these are ultimate truths. Now, it only needs an extra dose of scepticism, or of imagination, to discredit all this. But to discredit it is not to discredit science, of which the results, not the hypotheses, are its title to our respect. Within the 'limits of its applicability, science works; but the limits are narrow; and the human spirit experiences or divines much that extends beyond them. What is more, even the subject-matter of science it apprehends in a way which is not that of science. While science is analysing and describing, it is feeling; while science is measuring, it is speculating; while science is observing, it is creating. That is no cause of quarrel with science; but it is cause of quarrel with Positivism, which is one method of speculation and feeling trying to smother all the others. Positivism claims to be reasonable, and so to have a right to coerce the Intellect. It is nothing of the kind, and it has

no such right; it is one of the religions of the world and, like other religions, it has its rivals.

To some minds this statement may seem paradoxical; but I have not advanced it as a paradox. I believe it to be true, if not a truism, and I will not labour it further. I shall suppose it to be granted; but then, granting it, there remains a position more carefully chosen and equally hostile to imaginative prospects. Our knowledge, it may be admitted, is but a flickering lamp sheltered by a paper shade from the winds of infinite space; the postulates on which science rests are tentative hypotheses, possibly untrue, certainly inadequate; our experience is limited by our senses and by the structure of our mind; and we have no philosophy that is demonstrably true. Granting all that, what ought, at any moment, to be our attitude toward the unknown; towards all that part of our experience which science has not ordered; towards what may lie behind and be presupposed in what we touch and see and hear? It ought, says this position, to be an attitude of pure agnosticism. We do not know, therefore we must not feel; we cannot prove, therefore we must not speculate. We must admit the great Beyond, and then leave it severely alone. There is no room in a true man's mind for feelings or conjectures, still less for great imaginative visions, cathedrals of the spirit throbbing with sound and intense with light. What we do not know, we do not know; that is the first and last word on the subject.

For this attitude, or at least for many of those who represent it, I have a profound respect. Only a very strong and a very sincere man can accept and adhere to it with all its implications, intellectual and emotional. If it gives no light or inspiration, neither does it foster superstitions or dreams. It is a shining brazen rampart against the tides of human credulity. Nevertheless I hold that it is an attitude undesirable, if not impossible, not merely for the mass but for the chosen spirits of **mankind**. **And** for this reason. As I read Man he is a creature not **finished**, even approximately; not definitely and once for all fitted out with what we call human nature, with just these five senses we

possess, and just this form of intellect. He is a being in process of creating himself. What he is not is more important than what he is; his divinations and guesses than his certainties; his imaginations than his facts. For him to tie himself down to what he knows and to ignore what he does not know, would be to commit a kind of suicide. He would cease to grow and would ossify into his present monstrous and transitional shape; would become, at last, a mere shell, and an ugly shell at that, housing not the living thing that built it, but a corpse. He has in him a principle of growth, what I will call Imagination, since some word one must use. And by this he stretches feelers into the Dark, laying hold there of stuff, and building mythologies and poems, the palaces of splendid hopes and desires.

"What, then, do you suggest?" the reader may ask. "Do you suggest that everybody is to believe anything he likes about anything? Or anything that some Church tells him to believe?" No! These are exactly the positions I wish to avoid, arid to distinguish from my own. And, first, I would say that I do not think belief is the right word to apply to the attitude that I am describing. One believes what one knows; and in the region of which I am speaking one does not know; What I am driving at is rather a tentative apprehension, not caring much about the intellectual forms in which it finds expression, but caring very much about the substance with which it imagines it comes into contact. Its proper language, therefore, is not assertion but suggestion, not logic but passion, not prose but poetry. Poetry has been the raw material of all dogma; and such poetry is neither true nor false; it only becomes false or true, or both at once, at the moment when it is formulated as a creed. Whether such formulations have done more good than harm to the world, is a large historical question on which I do not here enter, I am not defending dogmas and creeds: I am defending mythology. Only what I mean by mythology is not mere fiction; it is a first apprehension of some Reality. You may call it a dream; but then, as the poet says—

The dream is an atmosphere;
 A scale still ascending to knit
 The clear to the loftier Clear.
 'Tis Reason herself, tiptoe
 At the ultimate bound of her wit,
 On the verges of Night and Day.

The dream is the thought in the ghost;
 The thought sent flying for food;
 Eyeless, but sprung of an aim
 -Supernal of Reason, to find
 The great Over-Reason we name
 Beneficence: mind seeking Mind.
 Dream of the blossom of Good,
 In its waver and current and curve.¹

This kind of "dream" it is, the *ὑπαρ*, that I am trying to indicate. Let me offer, as an example, the great lyric which closes Goethe's *Faust*.

Alles Vergangliche,
 1st nur ein Gleichniss;
 Das Unzulängliche,
 Hier wird's Ereigniss;
 Das Unbeschreibliche,
 Hier ist's gethan;
 Das Ewig-Weibliche
 Zieht uns hinan.

Is this fiction? Is it dogma? No! it is something more than the one, and less than the other. And the attitude of the poet's mind when he wrote it, and of the reader's when he reads it with understanding, is the one I am trying to describe. What am I to call it? Another phrase of Goethe's helps me. "Ich bleibe beim glaubigen Orden," "I adhere to the sect of the faithful." And that word "faith," for lack of a better, I shall adopt here, as I have adopted it elsewhere; only hoping that the reader will not insist that "faith" can only mean "believing what we

¹ From George Meredith's poem, "A Faith on Trial."

know to be untrue," and that he will endeavour to seize my idea rather than boggle at my terms.

I will say, then, returning to the point at which I started, that our modern freethinkers, as distinguished from those of fifty years ago, are constructing mythologies on a basis of faith. But, then, it may be said, if they want a faith at all, why do they not accept the old one, which has at least the advantage that it embodies centuries of experience, is steeped in centuries of emotion, and is furnished with a ritual centuries old? It may be replied that some of them do; for some of them are members of Christian Churches and are trying very sincerely to pour the new wine into the old bottles. I do not think however, that the attempt is likely to be successful: and it is important for my purpose that I should give my reasons for that opinion. The task is not an easy one, for Christianity, though definite in the sense that it is a creed, is necessarily indefinite in the sense that it is a faith. It is easy to formulate its dogmas; but it is not easy to say what people in general understand or have understood by it, or what kind of appeal it makes, or has made, to their emotions. Christianity, in fact, as a faith, is not one but many. So that it is hazardous, and to some may seem presumptuous, to say anything at all about it. Still, after all, the many faiths must be determined somehow by the one creed. If they are all alike Christian, they must have something in common; and it is that common something at which I am driving. Why do many freethinkers, I am asking, find that Christianity, in any of the forms it assumes, is an inadequate vehicle of their faith? Not merely, I should say, because Christianity is also a creed, and consequently makes upon the intelligence rigid demands for which it cannot supply credentials. Nor merely because it is full of contradictions, and creates more difficulties than it solves. All that might conceivably be tolerated now, as it has been tolerated by great minds in the past, if it were not that the Christian teaching, in many important respects, no longer helps but hinders us in expressing our view of the world and of society. Let us try to see how. Christianity tells us that the world was

created by an omnipotent and all-good God. I will not press the difficulty, so often urged and never answered, which arises from the admitted fact of Evil. But apart from this, the idea of creation has ceased to be credible; and, what is worse, has ceased to be interesting. It is the idea of process with which we are preoccupied. Is this process also a progress? If so, what are its laws? Whither does it tend? What is the relation of human life and human ideals to the universe? Is Man a temporary accident? Or is he, or something that is coming out of him, the goal and meaning of the Whole? These are the kind of questions we are asking. And Christianity has either no answer to give, or answers that are felt to be inadequate or absurd. But if that be so, Christianity cannot serve as an expression of our emotional reaction to the world. For such expression we have to turn elsewhere, and construct for ourselves, if we can, new myths.

Again, whatever the Power be that sustains the world, we cannot conceive it to be a person, even if we knew what a person meant. Still less can we identify it with the person of Jesus Christ; or feel that our attitude towards it has anything in common with the sentimental, almost erotic character of many Christian hymns.

Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly.

What! The Power that is supposed to have created the stars and the tiger, to be thus personified and thus addressed! Need I say any more on this subject? But can I say less?

Next, if we turn from cosmology to ethics, we are met with the same inadequacy. It is the essence of Christianity to dwell upon the idea of sin. In the original myth all men were damned because of Adam's sin. But I will not press that point; for I suppose most Christians now explain it away or set it aside. The fact, however, remains that the sense of sin is the centre of all Christian ethics. Now this, I believe, is an attitude becoming increasingly unreal to most serious men. They have, I suppose, many of them, a sense that they sin; but not that they are "miser-

able sinners." The general confession repeated every Sunday in our churches would seem, I believe, to most of the worshippers, if they really thought about it, quite absurdly untrue to their feeling. "There is no health in us." That, surely, is the last thing a healthy man or woman believes. And to repeat it every Sunday, with the knowledge that a week hence it will be repeated again, and be as much or as little true as before 1 There is surely something about all this that is quite out of focus. But it is something which must be admitted, I think, to be essential to Christianity. For Christianity insists upon the essential weakness of man. It allows him no strength save what is derived from somewhere else, from Jesus Christ. And here, again, is a point on which I must permit myself to speak frankly, though I hope not offensively. How many men are really aware of any such personal relation to Jesus Christ as the Christian religion presupposes? How many, if they told the honest truth, really hold him to be even the ideal man? I cannot accept the answer that that is merely because men are wicked. It is many, perhaps most, of the best men to whom this whole conception of "miserable sinners" redeemed by the intervention, in the past and in the present, of Jesus Christ, is simply without any meaning at all. They may admire Jesus Christ as a beautiful personality. But they can never feel Him to be a Power working mysteriously in them; at most they may feel Him an inspiration or an example, as other men also may be. The real moral attitude of such men finds no expression in the forms of Christianity. And, once more, if they are to have a mythology they must go elsewhere.

I have thus barely indicated some of the many considerations which make it difficult, if not impossible, for modern men feeling the need of a religion to accept Christianity. I have tried to show, in a word, that the bottle is old; and, as I have said, I do not believe that it can be stretched to hold the new wine. I am interested rather in the question, what the new wine is. What must be the content of any faith that is really to appeal to the best and the most intelligent modern men? This is a question upon which it would be impertinent to dogmatise; nor **could it**

be decided by any one mind, even the greatest, nor by a single generation. Perhaps, however, I may venture upon some tentative suggestions, with a view to concentrating reflection upon the problem. I do not try to impose upon the reader my own view. I ask him only to come along with me, agreeing where he may, dissenting where he must, as we feel together in the dark, along this new road one day to be trodden by thousands and by millions.

In the first place, then, if men are to have a faith which will help them at all, it must be one which brings them into some kind of friendly relation to the universe as, in the present condition of knowledge, they conceive it. They must feel, that is, that human life and human purposes are not merely indifferently produced by the cosmic process, and destined with equal indifference to disappear; but that they contribute to and express something of its essence, so that, it has a significance which somehow is in harmony with our ideals. I express myself purposely in very vague and general terms; but, nevertheless, I have already said something definite enough to rule out of the content of faith at least two important positions: one, that of pessimism, or the belief that the universe on the whole is bad, as judged by our standards; the other, that of indifferentism, that it has nothing to do with our valuations, except to produce them and to destroy them. Neither of these positions, I believe, in the present state of knowledge, can be either established or refuted. But the impulse of faith is, I think, not indeed, to deny them—that would be to dogmatise—but to leave them on one side, and to let the imagination play round a more positive and hopeful vision. How that vision may shape itself in detail I do not know; perhaps in many ways. But I am inclined to think it will tend rather to image the world dualistically, or pluralistically, than under the form of unity. And for this reason, that we seem to become increasingly conscious of Evil as a very real fact, and intolerant of the many religions and philosophies which try to explain it away as "mere appearance." The contest with Evil, we feel, is the essence of our moral life. But, then, on

the other hand, this contest, our faith must suggest, is relevant to world-issues and somehow essential to the Whole. In fighting for Good we are assisting something Real that is divine; in fighting against Evil we are resisting something real that is diabolic. That is the kind of mythology which seems likely to appeal to men; one which represents life as a fight, but a fight having cosmic significance, pointing to an end beyond but analogous to our best vision, an end which we are in process of discovering as we are in process of realising it. Any hints at what this end may be we shall thankfully receive; but we shall take them, if we are wise, as tentative and provisional, even though they be the utterance of genius, and shall guard ourselves against stereotyping prematurely the divine text.

Further, in this conflict, men, as I think and hope, will dwell less and less upon their weakness, and more and more upon their strength. So much has happened since first Christianity consecrated weakness and sin. We are no longer obsessed by the sense of supernatural beings among, below and above us, many or most of them malignant, all of them willing and able to defeat our surest expectations, and by sheer caprice of malice or favour interrupt, at any moment, by any kind of miracle, the normal course of things. We are no longer powerless in the face of Nature; we have learnt, and are continually learning, how to adapt her processes to our ends. But to say this is to say that science has an immense religious significance. It has taught us that not power but order is the essence of the world; that not caprice but reason is the attribute of the Divine; and that we ourselves must and can work out our own salvation without expecting or desiring supernatural intervention. It follows that to respect ourselves is a religious as well as a moral duty; or rather, to respect that in us which is fruitful, progressive, strong and wise. We have not, or ought not to have, any longer, time to consider whether we are "miserable sinners"; we ought to be too busy demonstrating in fact the contrary. The sense of original imperfection must indeed be always with us, for it is the obverse of the impulse to develop; but the

sense of original sin should disappear, for it is an assertion of our essential worthlessness.

But, then, on the other hand, there is a fact which we shall be too honest and sincere to blink. In this contest which we accept, towards this end which we divine, we are sacrificed by hundreds, thousands, millions. The evil against which we fight is always, on the face of it, conquering us. Many of us even do not know or guess against what or for what we are fighting. In any case, none of us enter into the promised land. This fact, it is true, for the mass of men at most moments does not present itself as a problem; they accept the struggle without reflection, and often enough enjoy it. But as soon as an ideal end is consciously conceived the question comes up, Have individuals any relation to that end except to fight for it? What would our faith of the future have to say on this point?

It must be admitted, I think, that many men, and those perhaps the most strenuous and serious, are either averse from considering this question at all, or inclined to answer it offhand in the sceptical sense. And there are good reasons for their attitude. The strongest, perhaps, is that it seems to them morally ignoble to make the desirability or obligation of taking part in the battle dependent upon the soldier's participation in the victory. They do not want that issue raised for fear it should weaken men. This is a position which deserves respect; but it may be pointed out that it is one which has already assumed that the answer to the question must be discouraging; that individuals have, as a matter of obvious fact, no cosmic significance save as means to something or some one else. Now this is a dogma, and one that must be confronted with two questions. First, is it true? That question either cannot be answered at all; in which case there is no room for a dogma, but at most for an attitude of faith. Or it can only be answered by science; and in that case the only method to pursue is that which is being pursued, in the face of much discouragement from men of science, by the Society for Psychical Research. In fact, however, it will be generally admitted that we do not as yet know anything on the

subject, and many people will add that we never shall know. If that be so, the matter is one, like everything connected with the unknown, which may be a proper object of faith* And that brings us to our second question: In default of knowledge, how might a faith of the future properly and fruitfully regard the relation of the individual to death? That is a question very hard to answer, for it seems clear that different men have very different feelings about it. There are some, like Comte for example, or Harriet Martineau, who feel life to be much more, not less, sublime and significant because they believe in the extinction of individuals at death. To this number, it would seem, George Meredith belongs. All interest, even, in the question he regards as a sign of weakness and egotism, and urges us again and again to identify ourselves with "Earth," and cease to look for any future save that of the race. On the other hand, there are men, like Frederic Myers, to whom the whole significance of the world depends upon personal immortality; who find life full of worth if individual souls survive death, and quite without worth if they do not. Such men, in default of knowledge, will require and may legitimately have faith. And their mythology, I think, will have as its essence the idea that the potentialities which men have not been able to realise here they will have a chance of realising elsewhere and elsewhen. As to the nature in detail of that elsewhere and elsewhen they will, if they are wise, not be over-curious. The traditional conception of heaven and hell, with all that has come of it, is a warning against the attempt to convert faith into a dogma, and to develop the dogma in detail. All that men of this temperament really walk is the scope of a horizon, and for that it is enough to imagine that what we know as life is not the beginning and end of all experience, and that our efforts have reverberations more remote and issues more sublime than can be apprehended by our direct experience. Such an attitude, I think, is not really open to the objection often taken against the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, that it withdraws interest from life and work here to dreams of another world. Properly taken,

it would rather add significance and importance to every interest here, because by our conduct we should conceive ourselves to be making or marring not* only our transitory welfare, not that, equally transitory, of future individuals, but that of a life indefinitely extended both in duration and in range of experience. It might, indeed, be urged that only some such faith is likely to be able, in the long run, to stand the strain of life, and inspire men to achieve the best that is in them. But I do not press that point, in view of the diversities of human feeling. Some, no doubt, will continue to be inspired by Comte or by Meredith; others by Browning or Myers; or, let me rather say, by Goethe. For he, my safest and surest example of what I mean by Faith, while deprecating all undue preoccupation with the idea of another life, and insisting on the duty of disinterested activity in this one, yet needed and professed a faith in the continuance of life after death. "When a man is as old as I am," he said to Eckermann, "he is bound occasionally to think about death. In my case this thought leaves me in perfect peace, for I have a firm conviction that our spirit is a being indestructible by nature. It works on from eternity to eternity; it is like the sun which only seems to set, but in truth never sets but shines on unceasingly' Elsewhere he elaborates a whole mythology on the subject. But Faith, as I have said, is best expressed in poetry. And I will rather quote, in conclusion, that lyric from the closing scene of *Faust* which sums up Goethe's whole moral and religious position as he built it up in an experience of eighty years. It is the chorus sung by the spirits who receive the soul of Faust after his long pilgrimage.

Gerettet ist das edle Glied
Der Geisterwelt vom Bo sen:
Wer inner strebend sich bemliht,
Den können wir erlosen;
Und hat an ihm die Liebe gar
Von oben Theil genommen,
Begegnet ihm die selige Schaar
Mit herzlichem Willkommen.

These, then, are the suggestions I venture to put forward as to what may be the content of a reasonable faith. They are few and meagre; but it is more likely, I think, that I have said too much than too little. For, if I am right, it is poets and musicians, not philosophers and theologians, who alone can give to such apprehensions an expression that is at once adequate and elastic. All I have wished to do is to indicate the channel within which the sacred stream may flow. That channel, in my view, is determined by the limits of positive knowledge, and will be narrowed as they are enlarged. For faith, as I conceive it, is not an antagonist of knowledge; it is at once its supplement and its inspiration. In a state in which there should be perfect knowledge and perfect experience, there would be no room for faith; so that in so far as faith works for knowledge it may be said to work for its own destruction. It represents, to my mind, our first excursions into the Unknown, an airy citadel rising there as a symbol of occupation. Without it I doubt whether knowledge has ever advanced or ever will advance. Would there, for example, have been chemistry if there had not been alchemy? Or astronomy if there had not been astrology? Would there now be sociology if there were not a "Faith" in progress? On the other hand, the history of religion shows that faith hardening into dogma becomes the enemy of knowledge. So, it may be observed, does the knowledge of to-day to the knowledge of to-morrow. But that is no reason for abandoning either faith or knowledge. It is a reason for trying the harder to pursue both in the right spirit. This paper I might call an essay towards the proper holding of faith. I claim no finality for it. I only hope to have put a position that may provoke some fruitful reflection and discussion.

II

OPTIMISM AND IMMORTALITY

WALKING in the spring along the coasts of Cornwall and meditating the subject of this paper, on a green cliff overhanging the sea I came upon a flock of young lambs. Nothing can be imagined more beautiful; nothing, as I thought, more touching. The gay innocence of these young creatures, their movements of instinctive delight, their bleating, leaping, nuzzling, sucking, under the blue sky, testified to a confidence in the benevolence of the world into which they had been born, as characteristic of Nature as it is paradoxical to reason. For the universe they trusted so naively, what had it really prepared for them? The butcher's knife or, at best, a slow transformation into mere sheep—stupid, unimaginative, burdened with the weight of years and wool—such creatures as the ewes who watched with a grave, unintelligent disapproval the mad gambols of their disquieting offspring.

The scene was typical; and as I watched it I considered with astonishment the course of Nature—how in every kind, from the lowest up to man, generation after generation flings its children into the world; how these take up existence without misgiving or fear; and whatever disillusionment they may experience, are never for an instant deterred from handing on the questionable gift of life to others, who receive it as blindly and trustingly as they had done themselves.

It is this attitude of unquestioning confidence in life that I wish to indicate by the word "optimism." In animals it appears to be instinctive; and commonly it is so in men. For we, too, even those of us who profess to be philosophers, are under the dominion of something that is not reason, something which impels us by sheer force to affirm existence, over-rides the intellect if it protests, and urges us to live, and to beget life, even though we be convinced that to do so is immoral or absurd. Nay, for the most part, it would, I believe, be true to say that

the reason itself, even when it has thought itself most free, has been really a slave to this dominant instinct, and in constructing its systems has been content to assume without proof its main conclusion that the life we live is somehow worth the living;

If that be so, it might seem superfluous to raise the question I am propounding, and inquire into the basis of an optimism which, it may be said, is part of our constitution. But we must not exaggerate the case. Men do, it is true, for the most part, instinctively accept existence; even in their reflection they do tend to assume at the dictation of Nature an axiom which it might be hard for reason to demonstrate; even when they deny *it*, they are very apt to act none the less as if it were true. But, in spite of all this, reason has its place. It demands that conduct shall harmonise with conviction; it demands that conviction shall be rational; and in spite of failure after failure, it will never cease from the endeavour to make it so. And if those who listen to reason are few, if the course of the world is mainly and palpably controlled by what are sometimes called the "life-promoting instincts," yet there have been times in the history of mankind, nay, there have been whole eras, in which these instincts themselves have drooped and flagged under the sense of disillusionment, in which the question as to the worth of life has been nakedly and honestly asked, and in which no answer, or a negative one, has been forthcoming. Nature, I think, cannot hope permanently to burke inquiry. Already four hundred millions adhere, at least nominally, to a creed whose ideal is the annihilation of the will to live. And if we are inclined to dismiss the Buddhist religion as a mere symptom of the decadence of the East, we may remember with profit the extraordinary, and to us, as I think, instructive crisis through which our own West passed at the beginning of the Christian era. At that time civilisation had, as it seemed, exhausted its impulse. The stream of history, immense in its breadth, grew slacker and slacker in its flow. The huge machine moved with reluctant weariness. Habit, no longer passion, was the motive force, and it was a force that grew daily weaker. Not one man or two, here **and**

there, but many men everywhere, were asking that fatal and terrible question—Why? the question that, once it makes itself heard, shatters like a trump of doom the society that cannot give it an answer. Roman society had no answer; and if the West was redeemed, it was only by an influx of barbarians whose brutal passion for life was unable even to understand the question asked by the great civilisation they destroyed. The appeal to reason was checkmated by emotion; and under the dominion of fear and desire grew up the Christian scheme which for centuries dominated the human mind. But Reason, in spite of all, will not, I believe, permit herself permanently to be silenced. Even now, are there not signs that she is beginning to assert herself? Under the surface of our astonishing activity in the twentieth century, are there not symptoms similar to those which accompanied the downfall of Rome—the decline of religion, the bankruptcy of philosophy, the inroads of pessimism, and the recrudescence of superstition? The question I am asking may, I think, turn out to be one not merely of speculative but of practical importance; it may embody a challenge of intellect to life too urgent to be diverted by sophistry, too vigorous to be shouted down by mobs. However that may be, it is a question, I think, not unworthy the consideration of philosophers; and perhaps I need make no further excuse for inviting the attention of my readers to it. I will proceed, therefore, without more ado, to state more precisely what it is that I propose to discuss.

In using the word "optimism," what I have in view is not a reasoned conviction, but an attitude towards life; the attitude which, as I think, is natural to men, and which is specially characteristic of the West, and among Westerns, more particularly the Anglo-Saxons. This attitude is unreflective, and is indicated not so much by expressed opinions as by high spirits and natural impulses. It is the attitude of "going-ahead/" of assuming that things are "worth while," of ambition, enthusiasm, enterprise, confidence, verve. It prompts to action; not, however, merely from a sense of duty (though that may be present), but primarily from a delighted confidence that the action is

going to lead somehow to results that are supremely good. Difficulty and hardship it takes in the spirit, not of the Stoic, but of the adventurer; they, it feels, are not of the essence of things; they are mere negative obstacles; the real thing is benevolent, life-furthering, good. The earth is one which is adapted to our desires, and our desires may be trusted, both as to the nature of the object they seek, and as to its attainability by effort. A belief in all this, not necessarily formulated, but felt, is what I wish to indicate by the word "optimism." And my question is—What hypotheses ought we logically to be able to accept if we are to justify optimism to our reason? I do not ask whether the hypotheses are true; I ask merely what they are. And if this seems to be an inversion of the proper order of inquiry, I can only reply that it is the order which strikes me as natural; and that I find it hard to take a serious interest in any philosophic inquiry until I have grasped the bearing of the inquiry upon life.

I ask, then, what general view of the universe ought, if men were logical, to underlie the optimism they express in their temperament and their conduct? It must, I think, be one of two views. Either we must hold that the world is eternally perfect, or we must hold that it is a process towards some attainable good end. The first hypothesis is the one I propose to examine first. It is one that has always been a favourite with philosophers, and, for that matter, with poets.

I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself, and knows itself divine.

So speaks Shelley's Apollo; and so, I suppose, might speak the Substance of Spinoza, or the Absolute of Hegel. The world, as a whole, being good, all parts of it also are somehow good, and all activities, and even all evils—

All partial evil universal good,

as Pope, very accurately from his standpoint, remarks. We may therefore, it seems, on this hypothesis, trust without fear the

instinct that bids us co-operate with Nature, Our optimism is a reflection of that of the Eternal Being, and is justified from His point of view, if not from ours.

This philosophy, in its various forms, is to many minds exceedingly alluring. Men do, when they reflect, most keenly desire a world that shall be eternally good, and turn with longing to those who profess to give it them. But, honestly, can we think that such a world is the world of which we have experience ? Evil, surely, is too patent and palpable; persists too obstinately in the face of all assertions of eternal good. And, what is more, by the existence of evil our whole activity is conditioned. We act always towards ends in time; and these, however diverse, may be seen, I think, when we consider, to be all included under one. It is our object, somehow or other, in great things or small, by long reaches or short, for ourselves or for others, to destroy or diminish evil, and to create or increase good. If, then, it were really true, and we believed it to be true, that everything somehow is eternally good, we should, I think, for the most part feel that the root of our activity was cut away. This, I know, is a conclusion denied by those who maintain the position I am considering. For though they hold that evil is not real, they give it a place as Appearance; and against this Appearance, they urge, we may still contend. But can we? And even ought we to? For the existence of this Appearance must somehow be essential to the eternal perfection. If it be not, there is something in perfection which is not perfect; if it be, to destroy it would be to destroy the perfection.. So that, on this view, it would seem, not only must the attempt to get rid of evil be vain, it must even be impious; for its only result, if it could be successful, would be to diminish good. "Ah, but," I shall be told, "although it be true that the way in which we conceive of our activity is absurd, yet the activity in itself is right. For really it is the Absolute that is acting in us; and our notion that we are achieving an end is merely his device to keep us in play." We then, it would seem, are dupes of the Eternal Being. And this may be all very well so long as the dupery

is successful But what 'when our philosophy has exposed it? Shall we continue to acquiesce? Not, I think, willingly, and with our reason, though no doubt we may be compelled by the force of instinct. "But," it will be urged, "this Eternal Being is good; we are bound therefore to approve its activity; and therefore our own, which is a part of its." To this I can only reply that for my own part I do not see in what intelligible sense a Being can be good of whose existence evil, whether it be called apparent or real, is an essential constituent. The Substance, or the Absolute, for aught I can see, might just as well be called the Devil as God; and a belief in It seems to me necessarily to preclude any justification of our activity in time. The doctrine that evil is appearance and ends illusory must, I believe, or at least ought to lead to pessimism. Or does any one really hold that if you could convince an ordinary man that the evil he eschews, and (I suppose) equally the good he pursues, is only apparent, and that the point of his activity is not, as he supposes, the attainment of certain temporal ends, but the maintenance of the eternal life of a Being to whom the appearance of the Evil which he believes himself to be diminishing is as essential as that of the Good he believes himself to be increasing—does any one hold that such a doctrine could seem to him comforting or inspiring? that he would be inclined to worship such a Being as God? and be satisfied to-transfer his allegiance from the temporal issues he has found so dear, to the eternal Fact which renders those issues absurd? For my own part, I do not believe either that he would, or that he ought to. On the contrary, I believe that he would experience a sense of weary disillusionment; that the suggested optimism would turn into its opposite; and that the Absolute, if it wished to keep the world going in the old style, would have to invent some new trick less patent to philosophy. That, at least, is how the matter presents itself to me; and though I do not suppose I have convinced any one who was not convinced before, I should probably advance no further by labouring the point

I turn, then, from the hypothesis that the world is eternally

good, to the more natural one that it is a mixture of Evil and Good, both of which are real. This view has at least the advantage that it gives us a real antagonist; the end we propose—the diminution of Evil and the increase of Good—is not stultified by our primary assumption; and we may pass on to the question—What further assumptions are necessary if our intuitive optimism is to be justified?

And first, is it necessary to take any account of the result of our activity? Or is it enough to believe that there is a real conflict, the conflict being a sufficient end in itself? Some people, I think, especially among Anglo-Saxons, would be inclined, if they cared to entertain this latter question at all, to answer it in the affirmative. Those in whom the fighting instinct is strong love battle for its own sake; and if they persuade themselves they are fighting for the Good, they have, they feel, all that they need, without raising the question of the result. The question whether or how far Good is attainable—as well as the even more important one as to what things really are good—are apt to appear to them disturbing and vexatious; they are afraid that their efforts might be paralysed by such considerations; and perhaps "they are right. Nevertheless, whatever they might or might not admit, there must, I think, underlie their efforts, if their attitude is really optimistic, some assumption about the result of their work. They must believe, surely, in the first place, at least so much, that their efforts towards Good will tend, so far as they go, to produce Good, and not Evil. The contrary assumption clearly must lead straight to pessimism. Similarly, I think, they must believe that Good, not Evil, is, or at least may be, increasing in the long run. It would, of course, be possible, and *it* might even be noble, to fight on with the consciousness of a losing battle; and to do so in any particular case would be quite compatible with a general optimism about the world as a whole. But a belief that in the world, as a whole, Evil was triumphing—a belief in "conquering 111 and conquered Good"—must, I think, take the heart out of the fight even of the most robust; and though they might still

continue to contend, and might have our applause in doing so, their attitude would no longer be the optimist's we are considering. Nay, in the long run, I cannot but think, if such a conviction became general, even the Anglo-Saxon race would cease to contend out of sheer despair; and the West, like the East, would turn from the pursuit of life to the annihilation of the will to live. For take the most active, strenuous and unreflecting man at the season of failure or at the point of death; take him when he is comparatively un-preoccupied with the fun of the fight, with adapting means to ends, and planning or realising schemes; ask him to consider not merely himself but all with whom he has come into contact, and especially those whose dearest aims he has defeated; ask him to review not merely his own age but all the course of history back and forward, and to suppose that in all time past and in all time to come there never has been and there never will be any diminution of Evil or any increase of Good: nay, that the contrary has been the case; and that the only result of his own efforts, as of all others, has been to delay the inevitable and complete triumph of Bad—make him feel and understand such a supposition, and he will, I think, at once indignantly repudiate it as intolerable; or, if he could be persuaded to accept it, would miserably feel that the ground had been cut away beneath his feet, and that there remained no justification for his own or for any possible life. Out of habit and obstinacy he might continue to labour, but he would labour in the spirit of a pessimist, not in that of Mr. Kipling and Mr. Rhodes. He would not be a true Anglo-Saxon; he would be something very like what we love to conceive of the "decadent" East.

And not dissimilar, I think, would be the attitude of one who, while believing in the attainability of this or that particular Good, should be agnostic on the question of any ultimate triumph of Good on the whole. I am aware, of course, that most men pursue particular Goods without any conscious or habitual reference beyond them. But it is one thing not to have reflected on the possibility of an ultimate or general Good;

another, definitely to be sceptical about it. Such definite doubt, I think, must naturally lead to something more like pessimism than optimism. It need not check activity, though I think it would tend in that direction; but it would strike at the root of joy and faith. The position may be illustrated by the case of Huxley, a man, as I think, of singularly clear and noble ethical insight. He, if I understand him rightly, held that there is no reason to suppose that the Universe is constructed on the lines of Good, or that Good will ever, in any ultimate way, prevail over Bad. But, on the other hand, he held it to be proved by experience that it is possible, over a certain limited period of time, to increase Good and diminish Evil; and that this is a sufficient basis for action. So it is; but not for optimistic action. The attitude prompted by such a position is rather one of grim determination, devoid of enthusiasm, of delight, of confidence, of all that makes the morning of the world, and the song of the poet or the bird.

Contrast with this view—which I consider to be as noble as it is depressing—that of the men who in the eighteenth century formulated that doctrine of progress which is the real inspiration of our own time. As they saw it, the whole process of the world from the beginning, was one triumphant march to the goal of Good. To that end nature and man, conscious and unconscious efforts, passion, instinct, reason, all conspired. Blindly, for countless centuries, there had worked at the heart of things that which in these last generations had become conscious of itself—the reason of the whole universe seeking with joy its own perfection. This, surely, is the truly optimistic view; the intellectual position required by the Western world to justify, its instinctive pursuit of life; and it is the position adopted without reflection by the philosophers of the nineteenth century, from Kant and Hegel to many of our own contemporaries.

Yet this doctrine of progress, in the form in which it was originally announced, is already, I think, ceasing to hold the field. For this there are various reasons. Partly, I suppose, we see how little support it finds in known facts; how short

is the period and how small the area over which even what we call progress has prevailed; insomuch that we can hardly deny the dictum of Sir Henry Maine that progress, so far as our positive knowledge goes, must be regarded rather as an exception than as the rule. Partly, we see how doubtful is even such progress as we think we can recognise; how gains are counter-balanced by losses; and how hard it is to sum up the total result. If, for instance, we have gained in scientific knowledge and practical capacity, have we not lost in imagination, in nobility and spiritual force? Such considerations undoubtedly have damped our belief in progress. They affect, however, rather the fact than the conception, and it is with the latter that we are at present concerned. Is the conception of progress, in the form in which it has become popularised, sufficient to bear the weight of Western optimism? I doubt it; and for this reason. Progress, has been commonly conceived as progress not of the individual but of the race. The individual has been thrust into the background, under the influence of biology; and the world-process has come to be regarded as a movement towards the perfection not of All, but of some remote generation. The progress of humanity has extruded that of the individual, who has thus been reduced to a mere means towards an end in which he has no participation.

Such a conception, regarded as an ideal, has, I think, palpable defects. Humanity is made up of individuals; and what people call the progress of humanity implies, that of those individuals an indefinite number, who have the misfortune to be born earlier in time, come into existence, suffer, contend, aspire, struggle, acquiesce, experience, at the best, partial good, at the worst, unmitigated evil, and finally are extinguished, ignorant, blind, confused, as they were born, with no result for it all save that they have formed the stepping-stones for others who are to enjoy, for a brief time, the full illumination of Good at some date indefinitely remote.

So stated—and I have stated it, I think, not unfairly—the position ceases to be a possible basis for optimism. It may

indeed justify activity directed towards a positive end—though even that may be doubted, since it might, not unreasonably, be held to be better to aim rather at extinguishing existence than at perpetuating it on such miserable terms. But it can hardly justify the confidence and enthusiasm which is an essential characteristic of optimism. Unless, indeed, it be seriously maintained that for most people life on earth as we know it is so transcendently good that it deserves in itself, without reference to anything beyond, to be supported and perpetuated with delight. That is a view, I suppose, which may be held by some few fortunate and unimagative souls; but I cannot believe it would commend itself to an enlightened understanding. Too few of us, surely, attain the Good even of which we are capable; too many are capable of too little; and all are capable for so short a time. A Good so precarious, so capriciously distributed, in the course of a life so brief, has seldom, I think, seemed to men, when they have come to reflect, to be a Good very much worth the pursuit. On this point the experience of the East is instructive* Nothing is more striking than the transformation of those early Aryan warriors, who came down from the North like Greeks, active, aggressive, enthusiastic, into the race of mild Hindus, penetrated with the sense of nothingness, desiring only to be reabsorbed into the Universal whence they sprang, and enduring the while, with quiet contempt, the fatuous energies of men who still think it worth while to trade, to govern and to fight. We may attribute the change, if we will, to climate, institutions, and the like. But there is something behind all that—the permanent challenge of the reason to the instinct that affirms life—a challenge which the Indian met, and before which he succumbed—a challenge we too must meet, as it was met by Greeks and Romans, and to which we too must succumb, unless we have some better reply than that old saying, not of a Hindu, but of a Greek,—>

*πάντα γέλως καὶ πάντα κόνις καὶ πάντα τὸ μηδέν
πάντα γὰρ ἐξ ἀλόγων ἔστι τὰ γινόμενα.*

Western optimism, in my judgment, is doomed, unless we can believe that there is more significance in individual lives than appears upon the surface; that there is a destiny reserved for them more august than any to which they can attain in their life of threescore years and ten. On this point I can,, of course, only speak of my own conviction—the conviction that, at the bottom of every human soul, even of those that deny it, there lurks the insatiate hunger for eternity; that we desire, in Browning's phrase, something that will

make time break
And let us pent-up creatures through
Into eternity, our due;

and that nothing short of this will ever appear, in the long run, once men have begun to think and feel, to be a sufficient justification and apology for the life into which we are born.

I conceive, then, that a doctrine of progress which is to be a basis for optimism must comprise at least the possibility of a Good to be attained by individual souls after death. And this brings me to the point of view which, up to quite recent times, has been, in the West, the support on which men have relied, and the weakening of which is coincident with the inroads of pessimism—I mean the point of view of the Christian Church. The doctrine of the Church is, I think, in some of its aspects, the noblest and most satisfactory which men have ever devised for their comfort in their blind, enigmatic pilgrimage. This life, it recognises, is not all; beyond it lies eternity, an eternity either of Good or Evil; and which of these is to be the lot of the individual soul depends upon its conduct while on earth. It is free to choose either Good or Evil; and as it chooses, so will be its reward. I have called this doctrine noble, first, because of its recognition that the goal of ultimate satisfaction is eternal life in the contemplation of Good; secondly, because of its implicit assertion of the infinite distinction between Good and Evil.

But if the doctrine has its noble aspect, it has others which are

irrational, and even immoral, It depends, in the first place, in any sense in which we can accept it as satisfactory, upon the belief in free will. I am aware, of course, that it has been, and perhaps still is, held by many who do not accept that belief. But I cannot think that a doctrine will, in the long run, commend itself to the conscience of mankind, still less support an optimistic view of the world, which sends men to an eternal hell, not for any fault of their own, but because they have been once, for all created bad. Now, in our time a large and increasing number of people are determinists, if not fatalists; and a conjunction of that mode of thought with a belief in the Christian theology must, I think, inevitably lead directly to pessimism, as men become, if they do, more intelligent and more humane.

Leaving, however, this point—which might easily land me in a controversy in which I have no desire to be involved—there are few of us who, even if we accept the doctrine of free will, can believe in the righteousness of hell. This, I am aware, may be attributed to mere weakness. If, it may be said, we can deserve an eternal heaven, then surely we can also deserve an eternal hell; and with our modern squeamishness may be contrasted the splendid audacity of Dante, himself the tenderest as well as the sternest of men—

Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;
Fecemi la divina potestate,
La somma sapienza e il primo amore.

It must be remembered, however, that I am discussing the postulates of optimism; and with optimism I conceive the doctrine of hell to be incompatible; first, because, even on the vindictive theory, an eternal punishment is indefinitely excessive for a temporal offence; secondly, because, rightly or wrongly, we have come to demand that any heaven which we can hold to be good, must somehow or other be a heaven for all.

Such a demand may, of course, be represented as weak and sentimental; may be charged with ignoring the distinction between the good and the bad, I would suggest, however,

that the distinction between what we call good and bad people is neither so clear nor so fundamental as that between Good and Evil themselves. The best man is not so very good nor the worst so very bad, especially if we take into account all the circumstances and influences which may have helped the one and hindered the other. Is any man so bad as to deserve eternal hell; or, for that matter, so good as to deserve eternal heaven? Few, I think, would answer in the affirmative. And if we are to hold, as we must, I believe, if we are to be optimists, that there is some definite goal to be reached by all individuals in a temporal process, then the notion of a series of successive existences, in the course of which all are gradually purified and made fit for the heaven they are ultimately to attain, would seem to be the one least open to objection. It is also, I think, the one which is gradually popularising itself among those who, without being students of philosophy, feel an intimate interest in its problems, and are not satisfied with the Christian solution.

To sum up, then, my conclusions. The postulates of optimism, or some of them, at least, I conceive to be—

- (1) That the world is not eternally good, but embodies a real (not merely an apparent) process in time towards a good end.
- (2) That this end is one in which all individuals will somehow participate.
- (3) That therefore individual souls must be immortal, and must all of them ultimately reach heaven.

Now—these postulates, whether or no they may seem credible, are at any rate directly opposed to the modes of thought that have been or are officially accepted in Christendom. They are opposed to Christianity, for they deny hell.¹ They are opposed to the various philosophies of the Absolute, for they assert a real temporal process. They are opposed to current scientific

¹ I am aware, of course, that many modern people calling themselves Christians do not accept the doctrine of Hell; but it has been an essential doctrine of Christian theology at least from the time of Augustine,

preconceptions, for they assert a progress which is not of the species but of individuals. On the other hand, among the uneducated and the superstitious, and among those who are not associated by training or environment with any particular school of thought, they are, I think, beginning to commend themselves as satisfactory, if not as true. They are at the bottom, for instance, of the interest felt in what is called theosophy; they are at the bottom of spiritualism; they are at the bottom of Browning Societies; they are at the bottom of the Society for Psychical Research. If I am right in my notion that they appeal to the "life-affirming" instinct in man, and that nothing else, when we think the matter out, does so, then I think they have a future, if not in philosophy or science, then in religion or superstition. It is important, then, it seems to me, that they should be considered by both science and philosophy, if it is desirable that those who make it their business to think should have some voice in the formation of popular beliefs. Thus, for example, philosophy should devote a most serious consideration to that concept of the Absolute and the Eternal, which it has accepted, I cannot but think, so uncritically; and to the notion of a substantial person or soul, which is still involved in so much obscurity. And science, on the other hand, should lay aside its prejudices, and be ready to consider with an open mind all evidence, however tainted in its source, which may seem to bear on the question of survival after death. For these, I cannot but think, are the problems with which, more and more, men will begin to concern themselves when the present wave of unreflecting materialism has spent its force.

III

IS IMMORTALITY DESIRABLE?

BEING THE INGERSOLL LECTURE DELIVERED AT HARVARD
UNIVERSITY IN 1909

IT is with a certain sense of temerity that I stand before you to-night, a sense inspired not only by the place and the audience, but by the subject on which I am to speak.

I am succeeding in a famous university many distinguished men; and for that my only apology is the invitation with which I was honoured. But also, I am to speak on the Immortality¹ of * Man; and in defence of that audacity what can I say? Surely, it may be thought, a man must be very bold or very shameless who is prepared to discourse on such a theme. For either, it would seem, he must profess to know what the wisest have admitted to be beyond their ken; or he must be a charlatan, ready to talk about matters of which he knows nothing. These are hard alternatives; but they do not, I hope, exhaust the possibilities. If I venture to address you on this great subject, it is precisely because I do not suppose you regard me as a preacher or a prophet. I am here, as I conceive, to make one speech in a debate which proceeds from century to century, which has been perpetually adjourned and never concluded. For the Immortality of Man is one of those great open questions which to my mind are, of all, the most worth discussing, even though they may never be resolved.

But, in saying that, I have already, no doubt, said what some

¹ I have used the word Immortality throughout this lecture to cover any prolongation of the life of the individual beyond death. The survival of death is not, of course, identical with, and does not imply, immortality, in the proper sense of the term. But if it were known that survival of death were a fact, the principal argument against immortality would disappear. For our only reason for supposing that we do not live for ever is our experience of death.

of you will dispute; for to some of you, in all probability, the question is not open, but closed. There may be those here who are convinced on grounds of revealed religion that Man is immortal. To these I do not speak, for anything I could say must be an irrelevance or an impertinence. There may be others who are equally assured, on grounds of science, that man is mortal. Against them I shall not argue at length to-day; but I must state briefly that I do not agree with them, and why.¹

The scientific denial of immortality is based upon the admitted fact of the connection between mind and brain; whence it is assumed that the death of the brain must involve the death of that, whatever it be, which has been called the soul. This may indeed be true; but it is not necessarily or obviously true; it does not follow logically from the fact of the connection.

¹ The dogmatic and, as I think, unscientific attitude of some men of science is illustrated by Prof. Munsterberg's little book, *The Eternal Life*. He says (p. 6), "Necessity moves the stars in the sky, and necessity moves the emotions in my mind. No miracle can break these laws, can push a single molecule from its path, or create a sensation in a mind, when the body does not work, when the brain no longer functions." I have dealt in the text with the point of the connection between mind and brain. But I have not there dealt with the point of heredity. There is evidence that mental as well as physical qualities are transmitted hereditarily. And if it could be demonstrated that the mental qualities of a person may be completely accounted for in that way, the hypothesis of a mental entity pre-existing independently of the body would become extremely improbable. On the other hand, (1) such complete demonstration does not exist. Heredity is a hypothesis which seems to account plausibly for some of the facts, but the limits of its applicability have yet to be determined. And (2) to rule out pre-existence would not be necessarily to rule out post-existence, though I think it would make it less probable. The point I wish to make is, that in the present state of our knowledge (or ignorance) on these subjects the hypotheses which science finds it convenient to use and test ought not to be set up to discredit any specific and independently verified facts which make *prima facie* against those hypotheses. And I regard the question of the survival of death, at present, as an open one, (1) because there are certain facts which seem possibly to point to survival, (2) because there is not, and probably cannot be, a demonstration of the contrary. The question of heredity in its bearing on pre-existence is discussed by Dr. McTaggart in *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 124 seq.

For, as William James has ably set forth in his lecture on "Human Immortality," that faith may imply not the production, but the transmission of mind by brain. The soul, as Plato thought, may be capable of existing without the body, though it be imprisoned in it as in a tomb. It looks out, we might suppose, through the windows of the senses; and its vision is obscured or distorted by every imperfection of the glass. "If a man is shut up in a house," Dr. McTaggart has remarked, "the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky. But," he wittily adds, "it would not be prudent to infer that if he walked out of the house he could not see the sky, because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it."¹ My point is, that the only fact we have is the connection, in our present experience, of body and mind. That the soul therefore dies with the brain is an inference, and quite possibly a mistaken one. If to some minds it seems inevitable, that may be as much due to a defect of their imagination as to a superiority of their judgment. To infer wisely in such matters, one must be a poet as well as a man of science; and for my own part I would rather trust the intuitions of Goethe² or of Browning than the ratio-

¹ McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 105 seq.

² The principal sayings of Goethe upon the subject of a life after death have been collected by Dr. Wilhelm Bode in a little book entitled *Meine Religion—Mem polkischer Glaube, von J. B. V. Goethe*. I translate here a few of the passages:—

"When a man is as old as I am, he is bound sometimes to think about death. This thought leaves me in perfect peace, for I have a firm conviction that our spirit is a being of indestructible nature; it works on from eternity to eternity; it is like the sun which, though it seems to set to our earthly eyes, does not really set but shines on perpetually. Do you think a coffin can impose upon me?

"No good man allows himself to be robbed of his belief in immortality* The continuance of personal life does not conflict at all with the observations I have been making for so many years past on the nature of Man and of all living creatures. On the contrary, it derives from them fresh confirmation."

"The conviction that our life continues springs for me from the conception of activity; for, if I work, without ceasing, to the end, Nature is

cination of Spencer or of Haeckel. For in making his hypotheses a man is determined, whether he knows it or no, by his habitual sense of what is possible; and in this curious universe so many things are possible which seem incredible to men who have never been astonished! Does it seem to you incredible that the body should be the habitation, not the creator of the soul; that this should continue to live when that has died? I can only reply in the words of your own poet:—

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal as every one is immortal?
I know it is wonderful—but my eyesight is equally wonderful, and
how I was conceived in my mother's womb is equally wonderful;
And passed from a babe, in the creeping trance of a couple of
summers and winters, to articulate and walk. All this is equally
wonderful.

bound to assign me another form of existence, when the present one no longer suffices for my spirit."

Perhaps I ought in candour, considering the subject and content of this lecture, to quote also the following:—

"I could not bear to renounce the happiness of believing in a future life; indeed, I could say, with Lorenzo di Medici, that they are dead even for this life who hope for no other; but such unintelligible matters lie too far away to be an object of daily reflection and confusing speculation. And further, if a man believes in survival, let him be happy in silence; he has no occasion to make a fuss about it. I observed, in connection with Tiedge's *Urania*, that saints, like nobles, are a kind of aristocracy. I found silly women who gave themselves airs because, with Tiedge, they believed in immortality; and I had to undergo a very obscure cross-examination on the subject. However, I annoyed them by saying: 'I have no objection to being blessed with another life after this one is over; only I do hope I shan't meet there any one who believed in it here. Otherwise I shall have a most unpleasant time. The saints will all flock round me and say: "Well, weren't we right? Didn't we tell you so? Isn't it just as we said?" And so one would be bored even in heaven 1*"

"A preoccupation with ideas of immortality is for the leisured classes and for women who have nothing to do. A sensible man, who wants to be something decent here, and so has to struggle, fight, and work, leaves the future life in peace and is active and useful in this one. Besides, thoughts about immortality are for people who haven't come off very well in the way of happiness here; and I imagine that if the good Tiedge had had better fortune he would have had better thoughts."

- And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each other, without ever seeing each other and never perhaps to see each other, is every bit as wonderful.
- And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as wonderful.
- And that I can remind you, and you can think them and know them to be true, is just as wonderful.
- And that the moon spins round the earth, and on with the earth, is equally wonderful;
- And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is equally wonderful.

I do not of course suggest that from the intuition of poets anything can be finally concluded about the Immortality of Man. But I urge that when we approach the subject it should be with our imagination alert; that our hypotheses should be framed under a compelling sense of our own limitations and the vastness of the universe; and that, if we approach the matter thus, the notion that something we may call a soul or self survives death will not seem to be ruled out by any of the known facts of our experience.

Thus much I have said merely to clear the ground for the point I propose to discuss. Considering it to be an open question whether or no immortality is a fact, I shall devote the rest of my time to the inquiry whether and in what sense it is desirable. In this inquiry I hope you will consider that I am addressing to you a series of questions; and though I shall not conceal my own opinions, it is not my object to impose them upon you. I have to deal with a number of different and mutually incompatible attitudes resulting from different experiences and temperaments. These I shall pass in review, distinguish, and criticise; and each of you, I assume, meantime will be considering within yourselves what your own position is towards each of them.

The attitudes in question may be broadly distinguished as three. There are those who do not think about immortality, those who fear it, and those who desire it.

1. The majority of people I should suppose belong to the

first class, except perhaps in certain crises of life. The normal attitude of men towards death seems to be one of inattention or evasion. They do not trouble about it; they do not want to trouble about it; and they resent it being called to their notice. And this, I believe, is as true of those who nominally accept Christianity as of those who reject any form of religion. On this point Frederic Myers used to tell a story which I have always thought very illuminating. In conversation after dinner he was pressing on his host the unwelcome question, what he thought would happen after death. After many evasions and much recalcitrancy the reluctant admission was extorted: "Of course, if you press me, I believe that we shall all enter into eternal bliss; but I wish you wouldn't talk about such disagreeable subjects." This, I believe, is typical of the normal mood of most men. They don't want to be worried; and though probably, if the question were pressed, they would object to the idea of extinction, they can hardly be said to desire immortality. Even at the point of death, it would seem, this attitude is often maintained. Thus Prof. Osier writes:—

"I have careful records of about five hundred death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concern us here. Ninety suffered bodily pain or distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no signs one way or the other; like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting."¹

2. It cannot, then, I think, be said that most men desire immortality; rather they are, in their normal mood, and even at the point of death, indifferent to the question. But most men, perhaps in some moods, and some men continually, do reflect upon the subject and have conscious and definite desires about it. Of these, however, not all desire immortality; and some are so far from desiring it that they passionately crave for extinction,

¹ *Science and Immortality*, p. 36.
John Chinaman

and would receive the news that they survive death not with exultation, but with despair. The two positions are to be distinguished. On the one hand, a man may simply have had enough of life without having any quarrel with it, and may prefer to the idea of continued existence that of oblivion and repose. Such, according to Metchnikoff,¹ would be the normal attitude of men if they were not actually cut off before the natural term of life, a term which he puts at well over a hundred years. And such seems, in fact, to be the attitude of some men even under present conditions. It is beautifully and classically expressed in the well-known epitaph written by the poet Landor for himself:—

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
Nature I loved and next to nature art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

On the other hand, there are those who not merely acquiesce in but desire extinction; and that because they believe, on philosophic or other grounds, that any possible life must be bad. These are the people called pessimists; they are more numerous than is often believed; and they are apt to be regarded by the plain man with a certain moral reprobation. That this should be so is an interesting testimony to the instinctive optimism of mankind. But the optimism, it will perhaps be agreed, is commonly less profound than the pessimism. Whatever may be the promise of life, it is, as we know it, to those who look at it fairly and straight, very terrible, unjust, and cruel. And if any conceivable subsequent life must be of the same character as this, no freer from limitation, no richer in hope, no fuller in achievement, then the pessimist has at any rate a strong *prima facie* case. And this brings us to the obvious point that the desirability of a future life must depend upon its character, just as does the desirability of this one. So that it is relevant to ask those who acquiesce in or desire extinction, whether or no

¹ See his book, *The Nature of Mm.*

there is some kind of life which, if offered to them securely, they would be willing to accept after death. „

3. Let us turn, then, to our third class, those who desire immortality, and ask them what it is they desire and whether it is really desirable. For a number of very different conceptions may be covered by the same phrase. And, first, there are those who simply do not want to die, and whose desire for immortality is merely the expression of this feeling. Old people, so far as I have observed, often cling in this way to life, more often, indeed, than the young. Yet if they could put it fairly to themselves, they would, I suppose, hardly say that they would wish to go on for ever in this life, with all their infirmities increasing upon them. Nothing surely is sadder, nothing meaner, than this desire to prolong life here at all costs. The sick, the infirm, the aged, that we care for them as we do may be creditable to our humanity. But that they desire to be cared for, instead of to depart, is that so creditable to theirs? I will go further, and say that to arrest any period of life, even the best, the most glorious youth, the most triumphant manhood, is what no reasonable man will rightly desire. To the values of life, at any rate as we know it now, the change we call growing older seems to be essential; and we cannot wisely wish to arrest that process anywhere this side of death. I shall suppose that you agree with that and pass on to another conception.

It may be held that life, as we know it, is so desirable that though it would not be a good thing to prolong it indefinitely, it would be a good thing to repeat it over and over again. That we may treat this notion fairly, I will ask you to suppose that in none of these repetitions is there any memory of the previous cycles; for every one, I expect, would agree that the repetition of a life, every episode of which is remembered to have occurred before, is a prospect of appalling tediousness. Supposing, however that memory were extinguished at each death, we have a position that may be worth examining. It is, as many of you will remember, the position of that remarkable man of genius, Nietzsche; and, if only for that reason, deserves a moment's

consideration. Not only did Nietzsche believe it on physical grounds to be true—on which point I leave him to the tender mercies of physicists,—but—and this is what interests us here—he welcomes it as the great redeeming hope. He christens it "eternal recurrence,"¹ and hails it in this passionate refrain:—

"Oh! How could I fail to be eager for eternity, and for the marriage ring of rings, the ring of recurrence ?

Never yet have I found the woman by whom I should like to have children, unless it be this woman I love; for I love thee, O eternity!

For I love thee, O eternity!"¹

Thus Nietzsche; but we, do we agree with him? Do we, too, love this eternity? The answer seems plain. So far as a man judges any life, his own or another's, to be valuable, here and now, in and for itself, apart from any consideration of immortality, he will reasonably desire that it should be repeated as often as possible, rather than occur once and never again; for the positive value he finds in it will be reproduced in each repetition. On the other hand, so far as he finds any life in itself not to be valuable, or that its value depends upon some other kind of immortality, the prospect held out by Nietzsche will leave him cold or fill him with dismay. This Nietzsche himself quite candidly recognizes.

"Alas!" he says, in another place—

"Alas, man recurrerth eternally! The small man recurrerth eternally!

Once I had seen both naked, the greatest man and the smallest man—all-too-like unto each other—all-too-human even the greatest man!

*

All-too-small the greatest one! That was my satiety of man*
And eternal recurrence even of the smallest one! That was my satiety of all existence.

Alas! loathing! loathing! loathing!"

¹ "Thus spake Zarathustra," Eng. trans. by A. Tilie, *Works*, vol. viii, p.341.

We may say, then, with Nietzsche's clear approval—and I am sure common sense agrees with him—that such an immortality is valuable only for valuable lives. And Nietzsche, I fear, would not admit value in the lives of any of us in this room; for the valuable men are the men yet to come, the Super-men. Still, we may, many of us, differing from Nietzsche, think our lives valuable, in and for themselves, and in that case we may reasonably desire the only immortality Nietzsche can promise us. On the other hand, there is no reason, that I have been able to discover, for accepting Nietzsche's cosmology. Quite other possibilities may, for aught we know, be open to us. And we may proceed to examine whether there are not conceptions of immortality which we should hold to be more desirable than this. Hitherto we have been dealing with the idea of prolongations or repetitions of life on earth. Let us now extend our imaginations to possibilities farther from our experience.

And first, let us take the Christian conception of immortality; and let us take it in its simple uncompromising form, the last judgment, and then heaven or hell for all eternity. I am aware, of course, that it is not in this form that many or most Christians now conceive the life after death. But the old and simple view is of philosophic as well as historic importance; and it is well worth considering here. Without discussing, at present, the exact nature of heaven and hell, and assuming the orthodox descriptions to be allegorical, let us suppose that by heaven we mean all that the noblest men would desire, and by hell all that the basest men would fear; and let us ask, Would an immortality involving both heaven and hell be more desirable than extinction? From the humanitarian point of view, which is now so prevalent, and with which I, at any rate, have no intention of quarrelling, I believe most men would reply that extinction would be better. Most good men who might with reason expect heaven would, I suspect, prefer to resign it if they can only have it on condition that others—no matter though they be the wicked—are enduring hell. This, to my mind, is a notable advance on the morality exhibited in the often quoted passage

of Tertullian.¹ But it must be remembered that spirits much nobler and profounder than he have accepted with solemn and deliberate approbation the doctrine of hell. Remember the astounding words of Dante, written over the gate of his Inferno: "It was justice that moved my High Maker; Divine Power made me, Wisdom Supreme, and Primal Love." Was Dante, then, less humane than smaller men of to-day? I doubt it; he had a deeper spring of tenderness as well as of sternness. But—and this is the point I want you to consider—he believed in retribution. That, I think, is the root of the Christian idea, so far as it does not spring from mere cupidity or cruelty. That the wicked should be punished and the good rewarded, that, it affirms, is, in itself, a positive good far greater than happiness or perfection. The view is by no means extinct; it underlies, I believe, most men's attitude towards punishment, in spite of the superficial prevalence of utilitarianism: it was passionately preached by Carlyle;² and I have myself heard a philosopher

¹ See Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. ii, J. 27 of Bury's edition. The passage is as follows:—

"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 in 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 tragedians, more tuneful in the expression, of their own sufferings; so many dancers——^M But here Gibbon cuts short the quotation, and there is no reason for me to prolong it.

² See *Latter-day Pamphlets. No. 2. Model Prisons.*

"And so you take criminal caitiffs, murderers, and the like, and hang them on gibbets *for an example to deter others.' Whereupon arise friends of humanity, and object. With very great reason, as I consider, if *your* hypothesis be correct. What right have you to hang any poor creature *for an example'? He can turn round upon you and say, 'Why make an "example" of me, a merely ill-situated, pitiable man? Have you no more respect for misfortune? Misfortune, I have been told, is sacred. And yet you hang me, now I am fallen into your hands; choke the life out of me, for an example 1 Again I ask, Why make an example of *me*, for your

(need I say he was a Scotchman ?) argue that a world containing crime is better than a world free from it, because the punishment of crime is so transcendent a Good. I leave it to your own reflections to what extent you share these views. For my own part, in my deliberate judgment, I regard them with something approaching horror. I do not hold that there is any value in punishment, except in so far as it improves the criminal or deters others from crime. Whether, and to what extent, the idea of hell has ever deterred from crime I do not now inquire. In any case, it is the idea not the fact, that has deterred; so that, from this point of view, the most that could be said to be desirable would be that the idea should be maintained, not that there should exist any corresponding fact. Even that much,

own convenience alone?'—All 'revenge' being out of the question, it seems to me the caitiff is unanswerable; and he and the philanthropic platforms have the logic all on their side.

"The one answer to him is: 'Caitiff, we hate thee; and discern for some six thousand years now, that we are called upon by the whole Universe to do it. Not with a diabolic, but with a divine hatred. God himself, we have always understood, "hates sin," with a most authentic, celestial, and eternal hatred. A hatred, a hostility inexorable, unappeasable, which blasts the scoundrel, and all scoundrels ultimately, into black annihilation and disappearance from the sum of things. The path of it as the path of a flaming sword: he that has eyes may see it, walking inexorable, divinely beautiful and divinely terrible, through the chaotic gulf of Human History, and everywhere burning, as with unquenchable fire, the false and death-worthy from the true and life-worthy; making all Human History, and the Biography of every man, a God's Cosmos in place of a Devil's Chaos. So is it, in the end; even so, to every man who is a man, and not a mutinous beast, and has eyes to see. To thee, caitiff, these things were and are, quite incredible; to us they are too awfully certain,—the Eternal Law of this Universe, whether thou and others will believe it or disbelieve. We, not to be partakers in thy destructive adventure of *defying* God and all the Universe, dare not allow thee to continue longer among us. As a palpable deserter from the ranks where all men, at their eternal peril, are bound to be: palpable deserter, taken with the red hand fighting thus against the whole Universe and its Laws, we—send thee back into the whole Universe, solemnly expel thee from our community; and will in the name of God, not with joy and exultation, but with sorrow stern as thy own, hang thee on Wednesday next, and so end.'"

however, I could not myself admit; for I believe the penalties of human law to be a surer deterrent, so far and so long as such deterrents are necessary at all. I do not think, therefore, that even the idea, much less the fact, of hell, has any justification from that point of view. And as to the improvement of the criminal, that is ruled out in the Christian hell, for it is precisely part of his punishment that he is, and knows himself to be, eternally wicked. I judge, then, and I expect that most of you agree with me, that if we desire immortality, it is not for the sake of retribution, regarded either as a good in itself or as a means to good; and that being so, the notion of hell, left stripped of that support, is so dreadful that we should prefer universal extinction to an immortality involving that.

If this contention be accepted, it is natural next to suggest that the immortality that is desirable would be some kind of heaven not conditioned by the existence of a hell. But in that case, what are we to mean by heaven? If I am not much mistaken, there are few intelligent people—probably there is no one in this audience—who look forward with real satisfaction to the traditional Christian heaven. It has always been extraordinarily difficult to picture a condition of perfect satisfaction and goodness. The "Paradiso" of Dante is indeed, for its superhuman beauty, an achievement one might have thought must be impossible to human genius. Yet do we feel exactly that we wish to enter it? And no one is likely, I think, in such a matter to surpass Dante. My conclusion is that the object of our desire is in fact unknown to us, and unimaginable save in the faintest and most symbolical adumbrations. Does it follow, then, that we have no interest in heaven? I do not think so. But rather, that by heaven we really mean the ultimate term of a process in which we are engaged, of the end of which we can only say that it is Good. I say "we"; and I say so because I think that there are many people who in this matter agree with me; otherwise I should hardly be speaking here. But at this point it may really be more modest to say "I" to tell you simply how I feel, and to ask you whether you feel the same.

I find, then, that, to me, in my present experience, the thing that at bottom matters most is the sense I have of something in me making for more life and better. All my pain is at last a feeling of the frustration of this; all my happiness a feeling of its satisfaction. I do not know what this is; I am not prepared to give a coherent account of it; I ought not, very likely, to call it "it," and to imply the category of substance. I will abandon, if necessary, under criticism, any particular terms in which I may try to describe it; I will abandon anything except Itself. For It is real. It governs all my experience, and determines all my judgments of value. If pleasure hampers it, I do not desire pleasure; if pain furthers it, I do desire pain. And what I feel in myself, I infer in others. If I may be allowed to use that ambiguous and question-begging word "soul," then I agree with the poet Browning that "little else is worth study save the development of a soul." This is to me the bottom fact of experience. And no one can go any further with me in my argument who does not find in my words an indication, however imperfect, of something which he knows, in his own life, to be real.

What, then, is it that this which I call the "soul" seeks? It seeks what is Good; but it does not know what is ultimate Good. As a seventeenth-century writer has well put it: "We love we know not what, and therefore everything allures us. As iron at a distance is drawn by the loadstone, there being some invisible communication between them, so is there in us a world of Love to somewhat, though we know not what in the world that should be. There are invisible ways of conveyance by which some great thing doth touch our souls, and by which we tend to it. Do you not feel yourself drawn by the expectation and desire of some great thing?"¹ This "great thing" it is our business to find out by experience. We do find many good things, but there are always other and better beyond. That is why it is hazardous to fix one's ideal, and say finally, "This or that would be heaven. For we may find, as the voyagers did in Browning's "Paracelsus," that the real heaven lies always beyond; beyond each

¹ Traherne, *Centuries of Meditation*, p. 3.

Good we may attain here; but also, which is my present point, beyond death. The whole strength of the case for immortality, as a thing to be desired, lies in the fact that no one in this life attains his ideal. The soul, even of the best and the most fortunate of us, does not achieve the Good of which she feels herself to be capable and in which alone she can rest. The potentiality is not fully realised. I do not infer from this that life has no value if the Beyond is cut off. That, I think, is contrary to most men's experience. The Goods we have here are real Goods, and we may find the Evil more than compensated by them. But what I do maintain is that life here would have indefinitely more value if we knew that beyond death we should pursue, and ultimately to a successful issue, the elusive ideal of which we are always in quest. The conception that death ends all does not empty life of its worth; but it destroys, in my judgment, its most precious element that which transfigures all the rest; it obliterates the gleam on the snow, the planet in the east; it shuts off the great adventure, the adventure beyond death.

Every one almost, I cannot help thinking, who feels at all on such matters, must feel with me on this point, if he could give his feelings full sway unchecked by his denials or his doubts. Every one not immediately in the grip of intolerable Evil, but looking back with impassioned contemplation on Good and Evil alike, must desire, I believe, to journey on in the quest of Good, whatever Evil he may encounter on the route. Americans at least, I like to suppose, will respond to their own poet when in the passion of his visionary voyage from West to East, from present to past and future, he calls on his soul to embark for an adventure more hazardous and more alluring—

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!
Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor 1
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking like
mere brutes?

Have we not darkened and dazed ourselves with books long enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul exploring, I with thee, and thou with me;
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!

O farther, farther sail!

O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?

O farther, farther, sail!

My contention, then, is that immortality is desirable, if immortality means a fortunate issue to the quest of our souls. But the use of the word soul reminds me of a whole series of ambiguities and confusions which I must not pass over in silence. The subject of the Ingersoll lecture is the "Immortality of Man," and "Man" might conceivably be taken to mean Humanity. Positivists hold that the only immortality which an individual can expect is the perpetuation of his influence and of his memory among future generations. This abiding memory and record Comte named "subjective immortality," and held out, as the great stimulus to good conduct, the prospect of admission into the company of positivist saints. A similar view is held by many men of more imagination and less pedantry than Comte. Thus George Meredith is constantly exhorting us to live in our offspring, physical or spiritual, and to dismiss from our minds as at once silly and base any desire for a continuance of personal life.¹ That this kind of immortality may really be, to some minds, desirable, I do not dispute; nor do I deny it a certain nobility. But it is not what men commonly have in mind, nor what I have had in mind, in considering this question. I have meant the perpetuation of one's "self" beyond death, the realisation of one's ideal in one's self, not in some other people to be possibly produced in some indefinite future.

But, then, what is this "self" of which I argue that it is desirable it shall be perpetuated? This is a very difficult question, on which

¹ See, e.g., his poems, *Earth and Man* and *A Faith on Trial*.

I can here only touch; but it may be worth while to distinguish two views. First, the soul or self may be regarded simply as a substance; and in postulating it as immortal we may mean merely that the substance is not destroyed by death. In this view no continuity of consciousness is assumed. It is held that we shall survive death but shall not be aware of it, just as there may lie behind our present lives a series of other lives of which we have no knowledge. The identity of the person, in this view, consists, not in his knowing himself to be the same person, but in his being so in fact. The whole series of his actions and feelings in one life are determined by those of a previous, and determine those of a subsequent life. Every lesson learned, every faculty acquired, every relation formed at any stage, is carried over into the next; so that, for example, the musical faculty of an infant prodigy might be the consequence of musical training in a previous life, and love at first sight the consequence of affections fostered in earlier incarnations. The question, then, for us to raise is, whether that kind of immortality would be desirable? Most people, I believe, would be inclined, to begin with, to answer in the negative. For, they might urge, it is to all intents and purposes exactly the same thing whether my present personality is determined completely by my ancestors and my environment, as it is on the positivist assumptions, or whether it is determined by some substance which you call "me," but of which I have not and never shall have any memory or care, and which again, in some future phase, will have no memory or care for the present "me."

This view is plausible and natural, but I think I dissent from it. I am inclined to agree with Dr. McTaggart,¹ when he argues that a survival of the substance of one's self would be desirable, even though it carried with it no consciousness of survival. It is, I think, a really consoling idea that our present capacities are determined by our previous actions, and that our present actions again will determine our future character. It seems to liberate us from the bonds of an external fate and make us the

¹ *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 127.

captains of our own destinies. If we have formed here a beautiful relation, it will not perish at death, but be perpetuated, albeit unconsciously, in some future life. If we have developed a faculty here, it will not be destroyed, but will be the starting-point of later developments. Again, if we suffer, as most people do, from imperfections and misfortunes, it would be consoling to believe that these were punishments of our own acts in the past, not mere effects of the acts of other people, or of an indifferent nature over which we have no control. The world, I think, on this hypothesis would at least seem juster than it does on the positivist view, and that in itself would be a great gain. I agree, therefore, with Dr. McTaggart that an immortality which should imply the continuance of a self-substance even without a self-consciousness, would be desirable. But I also hold that much more desirable would be an immortality which carried with it a continuance of consciousness. Let us now take that hypothesis and consider how much or how little is implied in such continuance.

To begin with, then, our present experience tells us that complete memory is not essential to continuity of consciousness. That content of our memory is, in fact, always changing. Some things drop out and others come in. Parts of our past may disappear, temporarily at least, from our consciousness, so that to be told of them is like being told of the experience of some other person. Again, every night, in sleep, there is a complete break in continuity. So that we may say that we should consider ourselves the same person after death if there were just enough continuity for us to know and judge that we, who are dead, are that same person who just now was alive. True, much more than this is implied in what most people who take any interest in the subject demand or hope from immortality. They hope, in particular, to meet again friends they have loved here; and there must be few people who, in the face of death, have not felt this desire. It is, of course, possible that this might occur, and I agree that it would be desirable. But even apart from that possibility I am quite clear that it would be desirable that this same person who now is should continue to exist after death,

and to know that he is the same person; and that this continued existence should involve the possibility of a development of latent faculties for Good up to that perfection after which, without being able fully to define it, we are always seeking. As to the whole content of what would be desirable, I should think it wise to reserve judgment till fuller experience and knowledge enlighten us.

In particular, I hesitate to dogmatise on one point which is raised by the philosophies and religions of mysticism. Is it conceivable that what would really be good would be that our self should somehow be taken up into a larger World-self? I use purposely the ambiguous phrase "taken up" because I wish further to distinguish. If it be meant that our self should be absorbed in another, so as to lose its identity and consciousness, then I cannot see in that anything good or desirable. But if it were possible to be included in a larger self without losing one's own self, so that one could say, "I am somehow that Self," then, for aught I know, that might be good and the best. But since most of us in the West would, I suppose, admit that such a condition is one of which we have not even a proximate experience, this notion can only remain for us a mere idea or possibility which we cannot begin to fill in with the imagination.

To sum up, then, the immortality which I hold to be desirable, and which I suggest to you as desirable, is one in which a continuity of experience analogous to that which we are aware of here is carried on into a life after death, the essence of that life being the continuous unfolding, no doubt through stress and conflict, of those potentialities of Good of which we are aware here as the most significant part of ourselves. I hold that the desirability of this is a matter of plain fact, and that in putting it forward I am giving no evidence of superstition, weakness, or egotism, but, on the contrary, am recognising the deepest element in human nature. Some of you, probably, will agree with this; others will strongly disagree; and to those who disagree I have no further arguments to address; we disagree invincibly and finally.

But there is one point on which I must touch in conclusion. For even those who agree with me on the question of desirability may still hold that it is of little use to put forward as desirable something which we cannot know to be true, or which, as they may hold, we know not to be true. It was with this point that I began, and with it I will finish. I must repeat, then, that it is mere dogmatism to assert that we do not survive death, and mere prejudice or inertia to assert that it is impossible to discover whether we do or no. We in the West have hardly even begun to inquire into the matter; and scientific method and critical faculty were never devoted to it, so far as I am aware, previous to the foundation, some quarter of a century ago, of the Society for Psychical Research. There are, and always have been, a number of alleged facts suggesting *prima facie* the survival of death. But these facts have always been exploited by superstition and credulity, or repudiated by the prejudices of enlightenment. They are now, at last, being systematically and deliberately explored by men and women of intelligence and good faith bent on ascertaining the truth. It would be premature to suggest that any truth on this subject has been ascertained; but it is my own opinion that the recent investigations conducted by the Society, and published in their *Proceedings*,¹ have made it incumbent upon students to take into serious account the hypothesis that persons survive death. The fact of survival, it is true,

¹ See *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Parts 53, 55, 57. Maclehose & Co., Glasgow. These volumes contain the record of a series of automatic writings purporting to be inspired by certain well-known men recently deceased. That they purport to be so inspired is, of course, in itself, no evidence that they are so. But the writings involve very curious and complicated correspondences between messages given independently to different automatists in different places. Such correspondences are conceivably explicable by a great extension of the hypothesis of telepathy; but there is an apparently deliberate effort to render that explanation as little plausible as possible. Altogether the writings present a very difficult and interesting problem in evidence as to which it would probably be premature at present to come to any final conclusion. But the hypothesis that the messages do really proceed from the persons from whom they profess to proceed must, I think, be seriously considered.

would not carry with it the proof of immortality in the strict sense of the term; but it would destroy the principal argument against it. Such inquiries, therefore, it might be supposed, and such results would excite a very widespread interest. Yet such is not the case; and I believe the reason to be that there is no general conviction that the question is one of immense importance to the value of life.¹ My contention is that it is; that there is a kind of immortality which, if it were a fact, would be a very desirable one. To ask the question, as I have been doing, whether you agree with me in this, to invite you to sift your feelings and to make yourselves clear as to what they really are, is therefore, in my opinion, a procedure which has a direct bearing upon the pursuit of positive knowledge. For unless you think it really important to know the truth, you will never pursue it, nor encourage those who do. You will content yourselves with a lazy acquiescence either in the dogmas of religion or in those of science, and will regard inquirers who take the question seriously either as harmless cranks or as disreputable charlatans. Many of them are, but some of them are not, and none of them need be from the nature of the topic. And in asking you to-night, as clearly as I can, the question, Do you want immortality, and in what form? I conceive myself to be doing something very practical. I am not merely asking you—though that in itself is important—to become clear with yourselves on a point of values; I am asking you further to take seriously a branch of scientific inquiry which may have results more important than any other that is being pursued in our time.

¹ See a paper by Dr. Schiller (*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Part 49) discussing the answers obtained to a "Questionnaire" regarding human sentiment as to a future life, which was undertaken a few years ago by Dr. Richard Hodgson and the American Branch of the S.P.R.

IV

EUTHANASIA: BEING LINES FROM THE NOTE-BOOK
OF AN ALPINIST

Sagt es Njemand, nur den Weisen,
 Weil die Menge gleich verhohnet,
 Das Lebend'ge will ich preisen
 Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.

GOETHE.

I. *In the Hut.*

I AM not in the habit of recording my impressions; and if I do so now, in a solitary hut among the mountains, it is not from idleness, or loneliness, or the love of introspection; it is because I am undergoing a strange experience. The door, at which I have beaten so long in vain, is swinging open, and giving me glimpses into that other world I have long divined but never been able to enter. My sensations and thoughts point beyond themselves. The boundary between perception and imagination, between thought and intuition, is blurred. Things are become symbols, ideas realities; and all forms of matter or mind are but a metaphor of the Truth I begin more directly to apprehend.

I noticed this first on my way up the valley. The sounds and scents, the colours and forms, were not only lovely, as always; they were significant of inward states. The bluebells hung their heads in adoration, the marguerites gazed upward rapt with joy; the blue gentian blazed from the rock a hymn of ecstasy; the rush of the stream was an apocalypse. Everything was pressing on, under the stress of desire, out of itself and up to something higher. The rock and the soil, by an inward need, broke into a wilderness of flowers; the water went up as vapour and put on the glory of light. The earth in all her myriad forms aspired into heaven, and with innumerable voices sang the joy of her deliverance. All I had ever thought or hoped unrolled before me as vision. My philosophy had taken form, and its

Utters from

John

Chinaman

o

form was the real world. Such was the symbol of the valley; but as I left it there came a change. The sun dropped behind the mountains, and my path led me out from the meadows and the pines into a waste of rocks. I was on the moraine, and then on the glacier. On either side jagged cliffs hung huge and formless. The dull roar of torrents, the tinkle of runnels in the ice, made the silence more intense and dreadful. The rose of evening died away in the east. It caught the snow a moment, then left it colder than before, pale green and ghostly white against the crescent moon. The crescent moon followed the sun down a primrose sky; and presently the world of stars looked down on the world of ice.

The hut was empty. I chopped some wood and made a fire, fetched water from the spring and cooked my evening meal. For an hour or more I have lain in the straw and tried to sleep; in vain! That door swings ajar; symbols besiege me and press for interpretation. The stars burn brighter and brighter; the torrents roar; and the glacier gleams, cold and white, coiled in the jaws of the abyss. It is the type of death, as the valley was of life. And it is to wrestle with death that I am here alone.

But I dare not face him yet; I recognise that I am afraid. Let me turn back then to life, and record, for my assurance, the truth my thought has long divined and vision to-day confirmed. Nothing exists but individuals in the making. All things live, yes, even those we call inanimate. A soul, or a myriad souls, inform the rocks and streams and winds. Innumerable centres of life leap in joy down the torrent; or it may be some diffused and elemental spirit single sustains that ever-flowing form. The sea is a passion, the air and the light a will and a desire. All things together, each in his kind, each in his rank, press upwards, moved by love, to a goal that is good. What that goal is, I do not too closely inquire; neither do I ask after the origin or meaning of the Whole. I cling to the fact I know, to movement and its cause; the fact I know from the soul of Man and infer in Nature. What He is, She is; and what He is, I know. He is discord straining to harmony, ignorance to knowledge, fear to courage,

hate and indifference to love. He is a system out of equilibrium, and therefore moving towards it; he is the fall of the stone, the fall of the stream, the orbit of the star, rendered in the truth of passion and desire. To apprehend Reality is the goal of his eternal quest. Eating, touching, seeing, hearing, thinking, imagining, are his progressive effort to seize that mystery. The alien thing that confronts him, and his impulse and need to find it akin, are the poles on which his universe is hung. They are the eyes of the Sphinx, into which I look and pass on, reading in their light the life of Man. Driven at first by instinct, he comes to understand himself by the illumination of brain and soul. Upon his night of primitive greed, lit by the stars of sense, rises in due course, the sun of thought and imagination. It shows us our world, but shows us also its boundaries. The horizons of birth and death shut us in. And even of the inter-space we are not free, for we are pent in our own faculties. Something these reveal, but most they hide. We have five senses, but we have no more; we have a brain, but its convolutions are numbered; we have a heart, but its beats are timed. Born into a shell, we grow till we reach its limits; the rest is retrocession or frustration. To shatter the shell is the destiny of life; but it can only be shattered by death. There is the paradox of our being. If death be death, life is not life; if life be life, death is not death. For either life is nothing, or it is the overcoming of death. That I know, and to that pass I am come. All I can do in this prison of the flesh, I have done; I have learnt what I can learn, and I have felt what I can feel. At every point my growing soul presses against her walls. And now at last they begin to crack. Beams of strange light shoot here and there across the darkness; liquid notes break upon the silence. I am ripe for my metamorphosis; and yet, oh shame! I know that I fear it. And before me lies the symbol of my fear, the space, the cold, the solitude, the uncommunicating Powers. Above me shine the eternal stars, whither I am bound. But my way is over the mountain. Have I the courage to climb ?

II. *On the Summit.*

Of all the dawns that I have watched in the mountains, never was one like that I saw to-day. I forgot the glacier, and was aware only of the stars. Through the chinks in my prison wall they blazed brighter and brighter, till where they shone it fell away, and I looked out on the Past. I knew myself to be more than myself, an epitome of the generations; and I travelled again, from the source, my life which is the life of Man. I was a shepherd pasturing flocks on star-lit plains of Asia; I was an Egyptian priest on his tower conning the oracles of the sky; I was a Greek sailor with Bootes and Orion for my guides; I was Endymion entranced on mountains of Arcady. I saw the star of Bethlehem and heard the angels sing; I spoke with Ptolemy, and watched the night with Galileo. A thousand times I had died, a thousand times been born. By those births and deaths my course was marked through the night of Time. But now I had come to the sunrise. The stars began to fade; and solemn and slow the flower of dawn unfolded crystal petals, budded a violet, and blossomed a rose. The mountains lit their altars of amaranthine fire; and into his palace thus prepared rolled the chariot of the god, to the sound of the marching music to which creation moves.

I could not see the god, but I heard the music; and hearing it, I overcame fear. I was on the ice-slope, hung between the abyss and the sky. The chips of ice rattled and clinked to measureless depths below, and my nerves and senses shivered to hear them as they fell. But the very stress of anguish set my spirit free. As with a knife, that passage cut her loose from the flesh. Earth to earth, dust to dust; let the body drop back to the pit. But the soul has wings; and on the summit mine spread hers. For there at last I fronted the sun and the new world. The other world has vanished away, I know not how or whither. Before me stretched an ocean, untravelled and unplumbed; and sheer from its waters rise afar cliffs of rosy snow. The wall between me and the future is down; the sun streams through, and in my

ears, more loud and more clear, sounds the marching music, to which I move, and with me all creation. Long I have known its echo, prisoned in imperishable verse by one who caught it while he was yet in the body. The call he heard I hear now; and in his words I interpret its meaning—

That Light whose smile kindles the universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of Being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and sky and tree
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

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