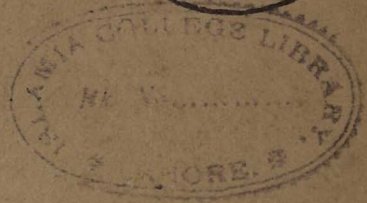
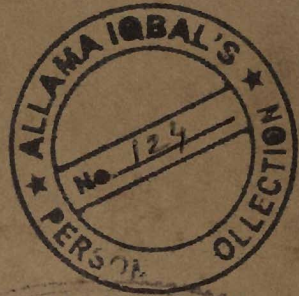


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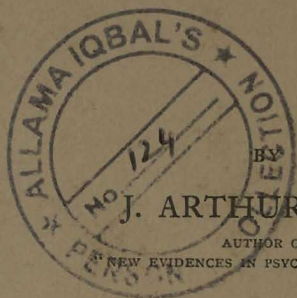


RELIGION AND
MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

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RELIGION AND MODERN PSYCHOLOGY,

*A Study of Present Tendencies, particularly
the religious implications of the scientific belief
in survival; with a Discussion on Mysticism*



J. ARTHUR HILL

AUTHOR OF
"NEW EVIDENCES IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH"

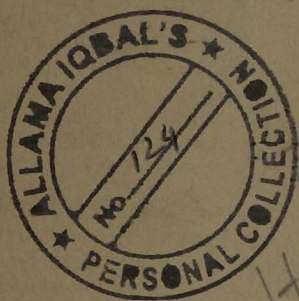


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"God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please—you can never have both. Between these, as a pendulum, man oscillates. He in whom the love of repose predominates will accept the first creed, the first philosophy, the first political party he meets—most likely his father's. He gets rest, commodity, and reputation; but he shuts the door of truth. He in whom the love of truth predominates will keep himself aloof from all moorings, and afloat. He will abstain from dogmatism, and recognise all the opposite negations, between which, as walls, his being is swung. He submits to the inconvenience of suspense and imperfect opinion, but he is a candidate for truth, as the other is not, and respects the highest law of his being."

EMERSON, *Intellect*.

"The religion which is to guide and fulfil the present and coming ages, whatever else it be, must be intellectual. The scientific mind must have a faith which is science. 'There are two things,' said Mahomet, 'which I abhor, the learned in his infidelities, and the fool in his devotions.' Our times are impatient of both, and specially of the last. Let us have nothing now which is not its own evidence. There is surely enough for the heart and imagination in the religion itself. Let us not be pestered with assertions and half-truths, with emotions and snuffle."

EMERSON, *Worship*.

"There is a famous and primitive saying of Bessing's that if the Almighty offered him the choice between the knowledge of all truth and the impulse to seek the truth, he would reverently select the second as a greater boon than the first; and this surely is the attitude which it should be the aim and end of education to make easy and natural—to be open-minded, to struggle against preconceptions, and to hold them in due subjection, to keep the avenues of intelligence free and unblocked, to take pains that the scales of the judgment shall be always even and fair, to welcome new truths when they have proved their title, despite the havoc they may make of old and cherished beliefs. These may sound like commonplace qualities well within every man's reach, but experience shows that in practice they are the rarest. The temper which I am endeavouring to describe is not in any sense one of intellectual detachment or indifference, nor has it anything in common with that chronic paralysis of the judgment which makes some men incapable of choosing between the right and wrong reason, or the better and the worse cause. It implies, on the contrary, an active and visible mental life, equipped against the fallacies of the market-place and the cave, animated by the will to believe and to act, but open always to the air of reason and the light of truth."

Mr ASQUITH, in his Rectorial Address
at Aberdeen, Oct. 25th, 1910.

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RELIGION AND MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER I

THE PRACTICAL TEMPER OF THE AGE

THERE is an old story of a mathematician who, from a sense of literary duty, compelled himself to read *Paradise Lost*. He stuck to it, and struggled gamely through; but he felt that it had been a sad waste of time. "After all," he said, "what does it *prove*?"

The modern mind is somewhat of the same way of thinking, if we substitute "practical result" for the mere "proof," in the chaste beauty of which the mathematician's soul delighted, to the exclusion of all other claims on his admiration. The chief feature of this modern mind is its intense practicality. The word "theoretical," indeed, is become almost a term of opprobrium, suggesting imaginative flights, unreality, and general moonshine. We are a utilitarian generation, with little respect for anything that does not pay dividends. Theories, it is supposed, butter no parsnips; and, failing to serve this important culinary purpose, we regard them

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with indifference or with frank contempt. To command our interest, a thing must have some close bearing on the actualities of our stressful daily life. Even "divine Philosophy" partakes of the general tendency, and begins to test the truth of a proposition by the way it "works."

For this temper of mind the great triumphs of applied science are largely responsible. Since the inauguration of the objective method of inquiry, natural forces have more and more come under the control of man. By observation, inference, and inventional ingenuity, he subdues Nature and makes her serve his ends. He captures the thunderbolt and sets it to drive tramcars; harnesses Niagara to run his mills and light his theatres. He performs such miracles in the way of locomotion and communication—railways, trams, tubes, automobiles, aeroplanes, telegraphs, telephones, radiographs—in preventing disease by hygiene and curing it by surgery without the pain of pre-anæsthetic days, in the manufacture of machinery which is almost uncanny in its approach to intelligence, in producing the multitude of comforts and pleasures which a high civilisation affords, that our whole attention is focussed on the obvious things of life—on the things that affect material well-being. And, side by side with this growth of science, and indeed bound up with it in its practical applications, is the growth of industrial conditions and consequent commercialisation of values. The purse is become

mightier than the sword. The Rothschilds can prevent or stop a war by refusing to float a loan. Feudal Japan, looking on trade as a disgrace, was a negligible quantity among the nations; but when she copied Western ways and took to shop-keeping, she sprang at once into a great Power. The strength of a nation is in its business men. Even the hoariest of our Universities—a “home of lost causes”—begins to waver about compulsory Greek. Culture is good, but a close acquaintance with tenses and accents of dead languages is of no great service in the opening of new markets. We admire the practical man who can *do* something. Mercury is become greater than Mars or Minerva; sits, indeed, in the seat of ægis-bearing Jove himself. Mr Harold Begbie describes his aristocratic fellow-passengers on the India boat, civil servants, engineers, province-governors and what not; but he points to the plebeian cotton-man from Manchester, and says to his neighbour: “There is the man who pays all of us our wages.” Cotton is king; or, shall we say, Cotton, Wool, and Coal are the reigning triumvirate? We live in Comte’s third stage, his “industrial régime,” though the piling up of armaments shows that we have considerable bits of his “Stage Two” still sticking to us. But, broadly speaking, militarism now takes second place. Commerce comes first. The most commercial nation is the most powerful.¹

¹ And perhaps the most religious in its humane effects; for, if Mr Norman Angell’s striking book (*The Great Illusion*) is

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This development has its parallel in religion. Here, also, the Western world has become practical. To some extent religion, as formerly understood, seems to be dying out altogether. There is a slackening of interest, and a feverish thirst for pleasure and excitement. A football match at the Crystal Palace will draw seventy thousand men to watch it. Music-halls flourish, paying good dividends; but the churches complain of lack of funds, and most of them seem to be suffering from a steady decrease in supporters and "attenders." Where religion does continue to flourish, it is by allying itself with the practical interests of life. Interest in speculative tenets, or even in tenets which have some bearing, but a remote one, on life, is being swamped by the multitudinous secular claims on attention, which result from the complexity of modern life. Religion must be practical if it is to survive. The practical side of religion is morality, social service, and the like.

correct in its inferences, it is the ramifications of commerce that will ultimately make war an absurdity and an impossibility. It is undeniable that commerce has a great influence in stimulating the virtues of *veracity* and *honesty*. Without confidence, industrial relations are impossible; and, though there are in an industrial society many temptations to sharp practice, it is certain that the conditions of such a society are on the whole strongly favourable to a high ideal of veracity and honesty. The most commercial people are the most reliable; "an Englishman's word is as good as his bond." The nations which are commercially weakest are those in which the individuals have least veracity and honesty, *e.g.* the Latin nations, Spain, South Italy, etc. The old moral judgment on business as degrading requires reversing. It is a potent moral force.

Other motive forces are impelling in the same direction even those thoughtful and conservative people who dread any degrading of religion into "mere morality," and who look back wistfully to old—and now impossible—forms of faith. Such minds are having it forced upon them that, whatever our differences in matters of belief, we are all agreed on the importance of character and conduct. And conduct is, in Arnold's famous phrase, at least three-fourths of life. All sects can join hands on moral issues and can worship Righteousness in perfect harmony. This fact, so startling a contrast to the facts of disunion and discord which history thrusts on our notice in the "fury of sect," is leading peaceable souls to lay less stress on the necessity of doctrinal belief, and to regard character as the chief concern—character as manifested by the individual's interrelations with his environment, by his reaction on the world of people and things about him. A Christian minister, perplexed and harassed by doubt, requested his people to grant him three months' leave of absence, in order that he might think out to a conclusion the questions that were troubling him. He returned to his congregation with the confession that all his beliefs had gone overboard, and that all he could now say he felt sure of was that "it is right to do right."

There is no doubt that the number of such is continually increasing. The unrest and the dissatisfaction with stereotyped creeds, which may be

observed in almost every religious community of any degree of vitality, is a prominent sign of the times; and many of these dissatisfied ones, weary of repeating formulas from which all life and meaning have evaporated, or feeling the dishonesty of acting as though they still held beliefs which they have long ago renounced, are becoming more and more anxious to elevate morality into a religion, and thereby to create a church which might be Catholic in fact as well as in name. Says Mr Birrell in *Obiter Dicta* :—

“Whatever mysteries might appertain to mind and matter, and notwithstanding grave doubts as to the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, it is bravery, truth, and honour, loyalty and hard work, each man at his post, that make this planet inhabitable.”

This moralism is inevitably thinning the ranks of the members of organised churches which make belief the condition of membership, regarding creed as more important than character. The tendency is particularly noticeable in the Free Churches, partly because the statistics are more reliable, and partly because the creed-boundaries are narrower. For at least five years the membership of the Baptists, Congregationalists, Primitive Methodists, and Wesleyans has been steadily on the downgrade. For 1910, the Baptists report a decrease in church membership of 4000. The Wesleyans admit that the palmy days of Methodism seem over.¹

¹ Article, “Neap Tides in Wesleyan Methodism,” in *Yorkshire Observer*, 22nd April 1911.

The religious papers either helplessly bewail the loss, or impute it pharisaically to the irreligion of the people, or try to ignore it, ostrich-like. Each of these courses is suicidal. If organised churches are to save themselves from ruin, they must somehow sink speculative dogma to a subordinate place, and must be able to admit good men and women, irrespective of creed. Otherwise there will ultimately be more good men and women outside the churches than there are in—if it is not so already—and then these churches will seem rather an absurdity, and at least a negligible quantity from a practical point of view.

This practical attitude towards subtle metaphysical problems and towards equally difficult and perhaps insoluble questions as to the exact interpretation of this or that ancient text or creed, is a healthy sign. With the abandonment of unprofitable theological hairsplitting, and with emancipation from the gyves of dogma—whether of Aristotle or Paul, Aquinas or Calvin—it would seem that much energy may be set free to work in different and more practical ways. “Formerly,” it has been wittily said, “an epidemic sent people to the church to pray : now, it sends them to the *drains*.” The former course was the result of the dominion of priest and dogma ; the latter is the outcome of scientific knowledge and the application of that knowledge to the practical affairs of life. Boileau, speaking of the Jesuits, said that they were a people who “lengthen the creed and shorten the Decalogue.”

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The modern tendency is to do exactly the reverse in each case. Less trouble about creed, more care about right action. Who troubles now about *homomousion* and *homoiousion*, or about the question as to which were created first, the angels or the rest of the universe?—concerning which latter problem St Jerome and St Thomas Aquinas did battle without reaching any settlement. Practical matters are now the main thing. “What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

The oscillation between concrete and abstract interests is of course an age-long sort of affair. At all times the prophets proclaim—against the priests—the superiority of morals to speculation and formal observances, and they struggle against the dead weight of inertia of the spirit of the age—the mass of prejudice represented by those who hold by inherited beliefs and who think that conciliation of an angry God by incantations or other practices is more important than bothering prosaically about their fellow-creatures. There is thus a succession of pulses or waves. Judaism, rich in prophets, shows this well; Christianity, in Catholic times, shows an astonishingly long wave-trough or debasement; but the last few centuries have again brought practicality to the fore. Says Lecky:—

“If we examine the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries, we find it almost exclusively occupied with minute questions concerning the manner of the co-existence of the two natures in Christ. If we examine it in the

middle ages, we find it absorbed in ritualism and pilgrimages. If we examine it at the Reformation, we find it just emerging beneath the pressure of civilisation from this condition; yet still the main speculative test was the doctrine concerning the Sacrament, which had no relation to morals; and the main practical test, on the Continent at least, was the eating of meat on Fridays. In the present day, with the great body of laymen, such matters appear simply puerile, because they have no relation to morals."¹

The historian goes on to remark, quoting Bodin, that in 1539 the magistrates of Angers burnt alive those who were proved to have eaten meat on Friday, if they remained impenitent; if they repented, they were only hanged! Nowadays, *au contraire*, we care little about whether a man does or does not keep this or that observance, accept this or that creed. Our first question is: Can he be depended on for honesty in his dealings with us? And, as to the wider issues, does he do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly? In short, we are interested in the practical side of him, not the speculative.

¹ *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, i. pp. 309, 310.

CHAPTER II

MORALITY AS A RELIGION

VARIOUS forces, then, seem to be modifying the character of religion, in the direction of practicality. The part which is doctrinal, metaphysical, supernatural, is being disbelieved or ignored, and religion is becoming a matter of conduct and character. The tendency even inside the Churches is strong, for the best among their adherents are perceiving more vividly that it is these transcendental matters that have divided sect from sect, fostering much strife; and these sweeter and more Christ-like souls feel that the "religious differences" which have caused so much discord and bitterness cannot be otherwise than irreligious and wrong, hindering the advent of wider love and greater catholicity. For long it has been Church against Chapel, Chapel against Church, and clique against clique, even within both Church and Chapel. The teaching of the Founder is buried out of sight under the creedal and controversial rubbish-heap, and on all hands the unbeliever's ready sneer is heard, "Mark how these Christians love one

another!" It would be a joyful thing if we could see these animosities replaced, if not by universal brotherly love—which perhaps is not "practical politics" in a commercial and competitive civilisation—at least by a mutual toleration; and this perception brings about a growing desire for a moral religion which all might share.

Outside the Churches, the practical moral tendency is perhaps still stronger. It may be said almost without qualification that the trend of all altruistic thought and effort outside organised religion is in the direction of practical amelioration of conditions of life—towards lessening of suffering, increase of material well-being. True, the Socialist or Labour man often worships a rather unspiritual ideal, merely clamouring for more cakes and ale, to be paid for by lessening the grouse and champagne of the plutocrats. But, even so, the aim is good. To starving people, cakes—though not ale—are necessary. The Socialist of course mostly repudiates the title of "religious"; but, so far as he is altruistic, really seeking the good of others, and not actuated by hatred or jealousy of those who are better off than himself, he is certainly to be reckoned a religious force. On all sides, the set of the most earnest thought of the day is towards actuality, towards concrete things; and in religion this manifests itself as a desire, broadly speaking, to elevate morality and social service into a religion.

The motive power behind this tendency is for the

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most part good. It is a mass of feelings—commendable feelings—of desire for peace, sympathy with suffering, sense of mankind's solidarity and of the unworthiness of many of our present aims, and so on. At bottom, and at best, these feelings are closely akin to the highest spiritual state of which we can have any conception—a state in which Aspiration (which is Worship) conjoins with Christly Pity and unselfish Love. It may therefore seem that the whole tendency is the result of a new quickening of spiritual life in human souls; a further influx, as Swedenborg and Emerson would say, of the divine.

But it is possible for practicality to be overdone. Morality and social service, though good in their place, cannot take rank as a soul-satisfying religion, so long as human nature remains anything like what it is.

In the first place, mere morality is not *rational*. It can give no reason for its commands. Why should I do right, if I do not want to? The contemplation of the *Grand Être* and the saints of the Positivist calendar may supply emotion-stimulus to Mr Frederic Harrison and a few other superior minds, and it is admissible, even, that many people derive a similar kind of inspiration from the heroes of fiction—say from the good but rather priggish clerics of Miss Corelli. This kind of thing undoubtedly helps; contemplation of noble characters always helps; but it does not supply a reason. The "Moral Ideal" of the Ethical

Societies is still more ineffective, for it does not even rouse emotion. We cannot love abstractions.

Some reason or "sanction" is required. It is perhaps a childish or even a mean thing to require promises of reward and threats of punishment before we will try to "be good"; but, after all, what are we more than grown-up children? Why deny our nature? Why hesitate to admit that we cannot help wishing to be free from pain—to be "happy"? Let us be honest. Let us say frankly that we should like some reward for trying to "be good," and that *en revanche* we will pay a penalty when we sin. Constituted as we are, we can neither give satisfactory reasons for moral striving, nor get up sufficient emotional steam for such striving, unless such rewards and punishments are assumed. "*Ipsa sui pretium virtus sibi*, that virtue is her own reward, is but a cold principle, and not able to maintain our variable resolutions in a constant and settled way of goodness. . . . The life, therefore, and spirit of all our actions is the resurrection, and a stable apprehension that our ashes shall enjoy the fruit of our pious endeavours; without this, all religion is a fallacy" (Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, xlvii.). The argument was later elaborated by Paley, who made it the corner-stone of his moral philosophy.

And it is not entirely mere selfishness and demand for pay, as in the crude statement of good Sir Thomas. It may be for others rather than for ourselves that we demand continuance: others who

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seem to us to be unfairly dealt with at present. Or it may be a mere vaguely felt dissatisfaction with morality as a religion—a dissatisfaction made up of many factors. Probably all men, even in our busy and practical times, are impelled in some hour of stress or emotion—"a sunset-touch, a fancy from a flower-bell, someone's death, a chorus-ending from Euripides"—to address to the Universe, however inarticulately, many questions which ethics cannot answer. These questions were answered by the old religions. It was the feeling of their weight and poignancy that moved King Edwin's counsellor to the famous speech reported by Bede:—

"The present life of man, O king, seems to me, in comparison of that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm, but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space; but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If, therefore, this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed."—*Ecclesiastical History*, chap. xiii.

Evidently the old pagan had lost faith in the religion of his fathers, for the halls of Odin were real enough to the Norseman and the Dane, who feared no death in battle when the Valkyrie would

bear him straightway to the mead-drinking with Asgard's king. England was ready for a new religion. It was the time of twilight of the ancient gods. Christianity brought the acceptable beliefs. But now, in this busy twentieth century, Heaven and Hell have vanished in their turn, following the Valhalla of our Viking ancestors; and we are left—as Mr Kidd repeatedly informed us in *Social Evolution*—without rational sanction for morality, and without any reasonable Scheme of Things in general. Morality and unselfishness are theoretically seen to be eminently praiseworthy and desirable, yet in practice it does not pay to be righteous over-much. There is a legend of a Turkish atheist who permitted himself to be burnt rather than recant. What he saw as Truth he would not deny. He was noble, but illogical. Surely knowledge and virtue ought to be reconcilable. We await something that shall be to us what Paulinus' Christianity was to Edwin and his pagan folk.

The human mind cannot rest completely satisfied with the current, or perhaps with any, scientific synthesis as an explanation of the universe. By its own spontaneous activity it is impelled to push inquiry further back. Science stops at—or begins from—the primal nebula; but we ask: "Why the nebula? Why and whence its promise and potency? Whither is creation journeying? And, deepest mystery of all, what is this thing that I call 'I'?" To these questions science has no answer. The positivist tells us that there is no

answer; though how he knows that, is not quite clear. He certainly cannot prove it, and, proof apart, his intuitions have no superior warrant over those of his metaphysical opponent.

The agnostic is in a rather different position. He tells us that there may be, for anything he knows to the contrary, an answer to these questions, but that human faculties, in his opinion, are incapable of finding it. With this opinion there need be no quarrel. The chief objection to the average agnostic is that he is not an agnostic at all. He is too often a mere dogmatist—on the negative side—and falls far short of the wise teaching of one whom he usually holds up as a hero—the friend and *alter ego* of the famous creator of his label—and who admitted that the mind cannot rest in physical science :—

“After science has completed her mission upon earth,” says Tyndall, in *New Fragments of Science*, “the finite known will still be embraced by the infinite unknown. And this ‘boundless contiguity of shade,’ by which our knowledge is hemmed in, will always tempt the exercise of belief and imagination. The human mind, in its structural and poetic capacity, can never be prevented from building its castles—on the rock, or in the air, as the case may be—in this ultra-scientific region.”

And again, in another volume :—

“But while thus making the largest demands for freedom of investigation—while I consider science to be alike powerful as an instrument of intellectual culture, and as a ministrant to the material wants of man; if you ask me whether it has solved, or is likely in our day to solve, the problem of this universe, I must shake my

head in doubt. You remember the first Napoleon's question, when the *savants* who accompanied him to Egypt discussed in his presence the origin of the universe and solved it to their own apparent satisfaction. He looked aloft to the starry heavens, and said, 'It is all very well, gentlemen, but who made these?' That question still remains unanswered, and science makes no attempt to answer it. As far as I can see, there is no quality in the human intellect which is fit to be applied to the solution of the problem. It entirely transcends us. The phenomena of Matter and Force lie within our intellectual range, and as far as they reach we will at all hazards push our enquiries. But behind, and above, and around all, the real mystery of this universe remains unsolved, and, as far as we are concerned, is incapable of solution. Fashion this mystery as you like, with that I have nothing to do. But let your conception of it not be an unworthy one. Invest that conception with your highest and holiest thought, but let us be careful of pretending to know more about it than is given to man to know."

These are the words of an agnostic, and they are surely words of wisdom. But it is to be feared that many of those who take to themselves the agnostic label are far from coinciding with Tyndall's view. The true agnostic certainly says that he knows no answer to Napoleon's question, and perhaps he says, with Tyndall, that he does not think the faculties of man are capable of finding a universally satisfactory answer to it. But he recognises the existence of the *question*—recognises that the mind of man asks, cannot help asking, for an explanation of these problems which cry aloud for solution—and has nothing to say against hypothetical explanations, if they are fashioned

in harmony with high moral ideals and in such manner as not to run counter to facts. There is indeed much that is mysterious, says the true agnostic; but if you make your conception of it a worthy one, if you invest your explanatory theory with your highest and holiest thought, you may fashion that conception—that theory—as you will, for he has no further word to say. Such an agnostic may even believe in a God, though indeed he may avoid the word, on account of old anthropomorphisms which cling to it; but he will say, with Kant, that he *believes* only, and makes no pretence to *know*, having no respect for the so-called philosophical proofs. But many of our agnostics would not be thus tolerant. They would not allow the agnostic label to a man who believes in God. They seem to think that a contradiction is involved. If our rather dogmatically negative friends would read and digest the thoughts of those who have held the position of true agnosticism, they would learn that it does not require us to forbid the exercise of the mind in its structural capacity, so long as the results of such exercise are consistent with the body of organised knowledge known as science.

The majority of thinking people in the Christian countries are at present without a philosophy. The heavens are as brass. They look down impatiently on the "fool at his devotions," yet they feel the inadequacy of a materialistic science to satisfy the soul's demands. They have been driven from the

ancient moorings, and are adrift on dark and stormy waters, with no glimmer of friendly harbour-light in sight. Many of them wish, with an intense longing, that they could return to the faith in which they were nurtured; which was enough for pious parents and ancestors, and which ought surely to be enough for an unworthy descendant. When he once for all realises—as Romanes said—that he cannot accept the grand old faith without complete sacrifice of intellectual honesty and activity, and must therefore reluctantly continue to stand longingly without the pale, he experiences the keenest pang that his nature is capable of feeling. He looks on himself as a traitor to those of his own house; and the sting of pain is not greatly alleviated by the thought that in the nature of things it must be so. Old ways of thinking go, ancient creeds dissolve, the forms in which the religious idea clothes itself vary with each age. The old order changeth, giving place to new—and it is always the old that has our affection. But change is a law of the universe. The stream cannot stop. All things flow. The great world spins for ever down the ringing grooves of change. And religion, like everything else, must change its form from day to day, or at least from century to century.

The present time seems destined to bring to birth a special kind of change. It may be said that we are always more or less in a “transition stage”—for the condition is chronic,—but the present seems more transitional than usual. We live in an atmo-

sphere of curious expectancy. Men stand listening for the voice of the next Prophet. Some few of them, after relinquishing the old creeds, find temporary anchorage in the ethical society, which to most of us seems to supply extremely cold comfort. Yet the scientific man, says Emerson—and we are all scientific now—must have a faith which fits in with his science; and this does not seem to be possible in any of the “orthodox” sects of Christianity, in spite of the loud assertions (*e.g.*, Dr Fairbairn in *Fortnightly Review*, September 1909, p. 427) that “no truth which is an approved truth of Nature is opposed to Christianity.” Many able and good men are even coming to the conclusion not only that Christianity and science are irreconcilable, but even that *religion* and science are incompatible. They say, in effect, with Mr Mallock, that “religion cannot express itself in any form which knowledge can tolerate,” and though Mr Mallock goes on to say that he nevertheless “considers man to be only human by his reaching after religion,” it is regrettably evident, he thinks, that in the present state of knowledge we can hold no religious beliefs except irrational ones. The dilemma, if it be a real one, is no laughing matter. It gives us the choice between irrational religion on the one hand, and irreligious rationalism—involving philosophical pessimism and general hopelessness—on the other. The public mind hesitates, shying at the choice; and turns away to practical matters and virtual agnos-

ticism or materialism—with a vague feeling, nevertheless, that there is something wrong, and that a reconciliation of religion and knowledge ought to be possible, a reconciliation which should not only rationalise morality, but should also remove the coldness and bleakness of this latter by suffusing it with the emotional glow which is essential to anything worthy the name of religion.

CHAPTER III

A FUTURE LIFE

THERE are two ways by which the dilemma might conceivably be avoided, and religion made rational once more.

First, Theism. If we could be convinced that there is a real God, a powerful Being who is our Father, who loves us, and that the suffering we see around us is educative and beneficent, the thing would of course be done. We could jog along contented, leaving everything in our Father's hands. But, unfortunately, this is a conviction which we cannot reach. Kant showed in the *Kritik*, once for all, that though God may legitimately be believed in—as an hypothesis, even a necessary one—this existence cannot be proved. And, since Kant, the argument which Mill thought the best one, and the one which believers “would do well not to abandon” (the argument from design, namely), has received an all-shattering blow at the hands of the evolutionists, who have shown how the present order of things has come about through natural causes. God therefore merges into the abstraction “Nature,”

and theism evaporates into pantheism. Moreover, to our increasingly sensitive moral perceptions, the existence of a good and all-powerful God seems incompatible with the existence of a world so undeniably full of terrible suffering. There is not much evidence of a Father's love in the snap of the tiger, the ravages of disease, the grinding heel of poverty. Which of us could honestly prattle fluent platitudes about a good God to a slum dweller dying of consumption on his ragged mattress? We instinctively feel that it won't do. Even the religious man must surely feel his own faith shake at such sights:—

“God whose power made man and made man's wants,
and made, to meet those wants,
Heaven and earth which, through the body, prove
the spirit's ministrants,
Excellently all,—did He lack power or was the will
in fault
When He let blue heaven be shrouded o'er by
vapours of the vault,
Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at the first
infecting breath
Of the serpent pains which herald, swarming in, the
dragon death?”¹

There is no answer. J. S. Mill, like other bold and logical thinkers, suggested that God's goodness should be saved at the expense of His omnipotence. He would have made a better world if He could; did His best, but failed to eliminate pain. In later days, William James follows in the same direction. But the idea is unsatisfactory. For one thing, we have a deep-seated feeling that

¹ Browning, *La Saisiaz*.

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pain, though evil enough to us, is sometimes in a vague but certain fashion wholesome to character, and may therefore be purposed and beneficent. Consequently we cannot feel comfortable about settling matters hastily. But certainly the problem of evil and suffering is sufficiently all-pervading and sufficiently formidable to prevent any except the most thoughtlessly optimistic from sitting down contentedly with the simple old faith in a good and loving God who is at the same time omnipotent.

Theism, then, fails. There is no hope of rescue from pessimism in that direction. Revelation, special inspiration of the Scriptures—these also are dead and done for. No man of any scholarship now believes in the inerrancy of the Sacred Books. They are classed with the Vedas, the Avesta, and the Koran; better in degree, but similar in kind. And, anyhow, the attempt to prove God by reference to the Scriptures is a palpable *petitio principii*. It assumes that there is a God, whose Word they are. And this, of course, is the very point requiring to be proved.

There remains the question of a future life. The whole thing now turns on this. If there is no survival, no rational scheme of things is possible. The present state of the world gives no cause for satisfaction. There is a terrible amount of suffering—undeserved suffering, so far as we can see—in the living creation around us. If there is no individual continuation after bodily death, the constitution of things seems unjust to a large proportion of

the inhabitants of the planet. What, in this case, is the *sense* of it all? A time will come when the earth, cold and dead as the moon already is, will spin its way through lonely space, with the ashes of millions of human beings on its surface, but without a trace of sentiency. Has all that human struggle and sweat and suffering been for nothing, then? For *nothing*? If so, how much better would it have been if man had never been at all! This, surely, is the last verge of pessimism. It is a condemnation of the world-process as a gigantic cruelty. If this process has been created and directed by intelligence, that intelligence, if all-powerful, is immoral. The causing of useless pain is the very depth of wickedness. If this is what the Cosmic Power does, we cannot call it good, and consequently cannot worship it. *That*, at least—we say with Mill¹—it shall not force us to do. In short, if there is no future state; if there is no continuation of consciousness which shall admit of a levelling-up of merit and reward, demerit and punishment; if there is to be no Future which shall somehow make this Present comprehensible by fitting it into a whole as the first act fits into a drama; if this is so, then atheism follows, or, what is worse than atheism, the belief that, though there is no God, there is a very real Devil.

But there is still this saving possibility of survival. If it could be satisfactorily shown that the human soul lives on, past the wrench of

¹ *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, ch. vii.

bodily death, the way to rational optimism would again be opened to us. It would then be possible to surmise, with the genial Autocrat, that our existence here is a kind of school education, the seemingly harsh discipline of which will be explained when we get into one of the upper classes.¹ If we could be assured of this, we could do without further, or ultimate, world-explanations; the next step at least would be made clear, and we could wait for further light until that next step should have been taken. Even theism becomes of secondary account; though a future life again makes a good God possible. What, then, can we say about this question of a possible continuance of life beyond the grave? Is the problem really, as Huxley thought, outside the limits of philosophical inquiry? For, if it should turn out to be amenable to scientific treatment, it may be possible to make an attempt at a religious synthesis on a scientific basis—a “faith which is science,” in Emerson’s phrase—with the help of the results obtained by investigation.

And I believe that this is veritably so. I believe that the question of whether or not human personality survives the death of the body is now likely to be settled in the affirmative by strictly scientific methods. Science is pushing its investigations into the *terra incognita* on the other side Jordan, and is finding human intelligence still active on that further shore—and, what is more,

¹ Letter to Mr Kimball, in *Life and Letters*, by Morse.

able and willing to communicate with us. This seems a reckless and even absurd thing to say. No one can be more aware of this than I, who in the days of my ignorance have scoffed at "spiritualism" as much as most people. And, even now, I am no spiritualist, in any usual sense of the word. There seems to me to be a great deal of fraud and folly in that movement, and I do not wish to sail under its flag. The problem to be attacked is so tremendously difficult, and is so complicated with disturbing factors (the agency of the incarnate subliminal, chiefly), that I distrust those who arrive at a solution too speedily. But the spiritualists have pointed the way to us, and I thank them accordingly. They have found real facts, whatever the interpretation; and to them belongs the credit of being discoverers and pioneers in the occupation and exploration of this new world which science now hopes some day to map out. Since the time of Bacon, science has given us a new earth; she is now about to give us a new heaven.

But, be it noted, I am not contending that a belief in a future state, even if the "rewards and punishments" be assumed, will necessarily cause anyone to be religious and good. I am concerned only with the *rationality* of things. Belief is less operative on conduct than is commonly supposed. Opinions have little to do with actions, unless they are so vividly realised as to rouse strong emotion. I was once present at a discussion on theological

matters, between two acquaintances of mine whose opinions greatly differed. One of them was an amiable and admirable lady, a thoroughly good soul, somewhat of a thinker, and sadly "unsound" in matters of doctrine. The other belonged to the stronger sex, was a Churchman—or at least considered himself so because he went to church regularly and had been properly baptized and confirmed—and was possessed of a mind which often astonished me by its magnificent inactivity. The discussion reached the subject of Hell. The lady signified her disbelief in everlasting flames, with a vigour which would have greatly pained good Jonathan Edwards, who got much joy out of the doctrine. "But," objected the Churchman, "if we don't believe in hell, what is to prevent us from doing wrong?"

It was a crude way of putting it, and his point was nullified by the very facts of the situation; for his own moral life was on a much lower plane than that of his unbelieving antagonist. But he could have quoted great names in his support, if he had only known. Pascal, for example, could not understand men who, in spite of complete agnosticism, still had a standard of good, and tried to live up to it.¹ He made the mistake of looking on men as purely rational creatures. It is not intellectual opinions, or even implanted and therefore only semi-intellectual beliefs, that move the

¹ *Blaise Pascal : a Study in Religious Psychology*, by Humfrey R. Jordan, p. 234.

world. The morality of the Dark Ages was not remarkably good, although this period was the most universally unquestioning and fully believing period in the history of Christianity. Says Spencer :—

“Much astonishment may, indeed, reasonably be felt at the ineffectiveness of threats and promises of supposed supernatural origin. European history, dyed through and through with crime, seems to imply that fear of hell and hope of heaven have had small effects on men. Even at the present moment, the absolute opposition between the doctrine of forgiveness preached by a hundred thousand European priests, and the actions of European soldiers and colonists who outdo the law of blood revenge among savages, and massacre a village in retaliation for a single death, shows that two thousand years of Christian culture have changed the primitive barbarian very little. . . . At any rate, it is clear that, with men as they have been and are, the ultimate reasons for good conduct are too remote and shadowy to be operative.”¹

It is true that the (assumed) belief in the Christian eschatology seems to have had little moral power, though it is possible that the lack has been due partly to the belief being less strong than we suppose, and little feeling being roused by it. But where it *was* strong, the feeling (fear of hell) undoubtedly was proportionally vivid. That it did not make good men, as we understand “good,” was due to the moral ideas of the time. The New Testament idea of virtue is love, charity, philanthropy; but, for example, the cardinal religious virtue of the fourth and fifth centuries was chastity.

¹ *Autobiography*, ii, pp. 467, 468.

Consequently, those who vividly realised the hell in which they believed, did not become loving and philanthropic; on the contrary, they fled from society into desert or monastery—breaking the heart of many a loving mother or wife—in order to mortify the flesh. It seems, then, that the hell-belief was not as entirely inoperative as Spencer indicates; though it must be admitted that, where it was operative, it did not conduce to what we consider goodness.¹

But it is only on exceptional and somewhat unbalanced souls that these other-world beliefs act so strongly as to rouse much driving force of emotion. With the average man, their presence or absence is ethically negligible, or nearly so. There is no impossibility or even any intrinsic strangeness in an atheist loving his fellow-man better than does the most vigorous Primitive Methodist. Edna Lyall, herself a good Christian, portrayed an atheistic saint in Luke Raeburn; and the fact that the original of the fictitious Raeburn was so widely thought to be Charles Bradlaugh, is significant testimony to the latter's character. The lives of men like Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Sidgwick, and hosts of less-known men, are a standing disproof of the doctrine that morality must vanish along with belief in *post-mortem* rewards and punishments. "I have known,"

¹ For some harrowing examples of soul-saving at the expense of relatives' pain, see Lecky's *History of European Morals*, ii. p. 52 (Watts' 1911 edition).

says Tyndall, "some of the most pronounced among those who have been called atheists and materialists, not only in life, but in death—seen them approaching with open eyes the inexorable goal, with no dread of a 'hangman's whip,' with no hope of a heavenly crown, and still as mindful of their duties and as faithful in the discharge of them as if their eternal future depended upon their latest deed" (*Fragments of Science*).

Similarly, Professor Lake, in *The Guardian*, 26th August 1910, points to the "fact that many of those who lead the best lives do so in spite of the fact that they have no feeling for religion whatever; and, on the other hand, many of those who claim the widest experience of religious life are guilty of moral falls which their non-religious brethren avoid."

The obvious and by this time threadbare reply to this kind of statement is, that the non-religious but nevertheless good man is good because of his ancestry and the general atmosphere in which he was reared. He may not be a Christian, but if his parents or his grandparents, or his environment, had not been Christian, he himself would not and could not have been good. So runs the argument, for example, of a *Guardian* correspondent replying to Professor Lake (9th September 1910). When non-religious people are good (says this writer) it is "either the result of a healthy early training received from pious parents and teachers," or their thoughts and practices have been "moulded and

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fixed by public opinion, which, in this country at least, is in large measure the creation of religion."

True; but is there not a possible "healthy early training" by "pious parents and teachers" in religions *other than Christianity*? Is there no morality among Buddhists and Mohammedans? Can it be denied that in some things the morality of these people is higher than our own, as in the attitude of the Moslem to drunkenness?¹ These questions can only be answered in one way; and the answers upset the whole argument of those who seek to tie morality to Christian belief. If "Christian" be given up, and the statement watered down to the contention that there can be no morality without some form of religion, the position is perhaps saved, but in a way which would be distasteful to the *Guardian* correspondent. Buddhism is a religion: but it has no God and no personal immortality; yet there are many Buddhists who are good men. I suppose the *Guardian* correspondent wishes there weren't!—for it spoils his argument if he is arguing for Christianity. Indeed, his own argument may be turned against him with terrible effect by an agnostic "moral-instruction" man; for if character is so dependent on "training," "public opinion," etc., it is implicitly admitted that it is not much influenced by belief. But, as already said, the best reply is the plain fact

¹ Was St Anthony himself more in love with chastity than the Japanese girl who preferred death to dishonour? (Yoshio Markino, *A Japanese Artist in London*, p. 73).

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that high morality may exist apart from anything, past or present, that the orthodox Christian would call religious belief. Character is not determined by creed. It is a growth that is the result of many complex causes. Individually, goodness is perhaps more intimately associated with *imagination* than with anything else; for the first requisite of good character is sympathy, the power of putting yourself in the other man's place, of seeing things from an outside point of view. This involves imagination. Jesus had it pre-eminently. He sympathised with the suffering not only of the bereaved, the blind, the sick, but also with the erring. "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone."

Sympathy and imagination, then, have more to do with character in action than intellectual beliefs. Belief in survival will not necessarily make people good. But it will *tend* to improve their conduct, in so far as it affects it at all—at least, it will if the future life is conceived of as evolutionary and not fixed and static. But, what is our main point, it makes a rational Scheme of Things possible. And it must be individual continuation. Any absorption into the "pan-psyche," any Drop-slipping-into-the-shining-sea, is an extinction of personality, however we may juggle with terms. We must remain ourselves, as Peer Gynt was so anxious to do, with memories intact. Christianity at its best sees this, and insists on personality. In a recent notable utterance of one of its ablest clerical exponents, there were some striking remarks on this

point; remarks, however, which would hardly be passed unchallenged by a vigorous heresy-hunter. Says the Bishop of London (Dr Winnington Ingram) in a Saturday-afternoon sermon preached at St Lawrence, Jewry :—

“Is there anything definite about death in the Bible? I believe there is. I think if you follow me, you will find there are six things revealed to us about life after death. The first is that the man is the same man. Instead of death being the end of him, he is exactly the same five minutes after death as five minutes before death, except having gone through one more experience in life. In the second place the character grows after death; there is progress. As it grows in life so it grows after death. A third thing is, we have memory. ‘Son, remember,’ that is what was said to Dives in the other world. Memory for places and people. We shall remember everything after death, and we must pray in this world that our memory may be blessed after death. Then, fifthly, when we die as Christians we are to be with Christ. ‘To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.’ ‘It is better to depart and be with Christ.’

“And with memory there will be recognition: we shall know one another. Husband and wife, parents and children. Sixthly, we shall still take great interest in the world we have left. Moses and Elias in the Transfiguration followed with the keenest interest the concerns of this world, and surely we shall not lose sight of the dear ones left behind.”

This is very good, but we may suspect that the Bishop’s goodness of heart leads him to forget or to suppress the texts about everlasting damnation in Matt. xxv. 41 and elsewhere. Probably he selects what appeals to him, and disregards the rest, as do most of us. The interesting thing to note is that his future life is very like the future

life of the spiritualists, and is not a static kind—"as the tree falls, so shall it lie," etc.—as painted by orthodox theology. True, Catholic theology admits progress for souls in purgatory. But it excludes it for those in hell. And certainly the recognised Protestant theologians have excluded after-death progress altogether; their abolishment of purgatory being one of the principal mistakes of the Reformation. (The doctrine of purgatory had grown up in early mediæval times, as a kind of softening of the intolerable conception of an eternal hell. Its obvious financial advantages to the Church, however, led to still more intolerable abuses, and it is not surprising that the Reformers swept it away.)

What, then, can be advanced from the side of reason, in support of this idea of a future life, which I provisionally believe in, and which would solve so many difficulties? Metaphysics is obsolete, in the ontological sense. The question must be decided at the bar of science. What, then, does science say? What hard facts can be adduced in favour of continued personal existence after death? For they must be hard *facts*, not theological jugglery with words, or selected quotations from ancient books which would equally well provide quotations to prove the opposite doctrine.

CHAPTER IV

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

"I will ask and have an answer,—with no favour, with no fear,—
From myself. How much, how little, do I inwardly believe
True that controverted doctrine? Is it fact to which I cleave,
Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my lips
Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and declare the soul's eclipse
Not the soul's extinction? take his 'I believe and I declare—
Certain am I—from this life I pass into a better' . . . ?"

BROWNING, *La Saisiaz*.

It is impossible to give here more than a hasty sketch of the evidence on which science is beginning to tolerate a theory of individual survival; but a sketch at least must be given. For fuller details, the special literature of the subject must be consulted. The best books are Myers's *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (Longmans), Sir Oliver Lodge's *Survival of Man* (Methuen), and the cautious though perhaps not quite unbiassed works of the late Frank Podmore—chiefly his *History of Modern Spiritualism*, *The Naturalisation of the Supernatural*, and *The Newer Spiritualism*. I have given, in my *New Evidences in Psychical Research* (Rider & Son), a description of a few sittings with mediums, with summaries of recent S.P.R. results, and a general discussion

of the various explanatory theories; but it is impossible to treat the whole subject in a small book, and the larger works must be studied by those who wish to form well-grounded opinions.

The first thing to be established by the Society for Psychical Research was telepathy. It was found by experiment that it was necessary in certain cases to assume a connection between one mind and another, of a kind apparently not involving the known methods and channels of communication. For instance, an experimenter (called the "agent") concentrating his mind on the idea of a triangle or other geometrical figure, or on some object such as a tea-pot or a selected playing-card, succeeded in causing the image of the object to arise in the mind of the "percipient," who was sitting in passive mood, waiting for ideas to float into the receptive consciousness. Precautions against involuntary whispering, reflections in mirrors, etc., and other normal modes of transmission were of course taken, when the agent and percipient were in the same room; but any such normal explanation is quite ruled out by the success of experiments conducted over great distances. Miss Miles and Miss Ramsden obtained successful results over distances varying from twenty to four hundred miles. It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that it is no question here of professional "mediums." The experimenters have been truth-seeking researchers, and the two last-mentioned ladies are members of the S.P.R., and people of position.

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In these experiments there is, of course, a mixture of success and failure, and it is difficult to tabulate results. Also it often happens that an incident which must be counted as a failure may nevertheless suggest that it is at least a partial success—as when an agent thinks of a church, and the percipient says “cathedral.” Perhaps the best form of experiment is with playing-cards. By adopting this method, the odds against chance coincidence can be mathematically determined. If a card be drawn at random, and the pack shuffled between each experiment, there ought to be one success in fifty-two trials, if there is no element concerned except chance. In a fairly long series, it is possible to show with some approach to conclusiveness (with a good percipient) that chance is not an adequate explanation. In a series conducted by Sir Oliver Lodge the odds were ten millions to one against the result being due to chance.

From experimental telepathy we pass to the spontaneous examples. To give a crude example: a near relative of mine was sitting in church, in a cheerful frame of mind and thinking of nothing in particular, when she suddenly felt a wave of depression, tears came to her eyes, and she turned to her husband and whispered: “Aunt S. is dead.” She had not been thinking of her aunt, and she had no reason to expect her death; yet it turned out that the aunt had died almost at the very minute of the experience. The distance between the supposed agent and the percipient was about

a hundred miles. In another case known to me, a well-known member of Parliament, after getting up in the morning well and cheerful, experienced about eleven o'clock a peculiar gloom of spirit, along with a strong conviction that something was wrong in connection with the lady to whom he was soon to be married. The depression at length became unbearable, and he telegraphed to ask if anything was wrong—a thing he had never done before. As a matter of fact, the lady had been out riding, had been thrown from her horse, had sustained slight concussion, and had been unconscious for some hours. The telepathic message was presumably from the mind of the lady's sister, who was with her and was naturally much upset; though it is possible that a person whom we call unconscious may nevertheless be conscious in some inner way, and may be able to send these super-sensory communications—in which case the agent may have been the unconscious lady herself. Indeed, there is reason to suppose something of the kind. Apparitions which are veridical ("truth-telling," *i.e.* bringing knowledge not hitherto possessed by the percipient) often seem to occur at a time when the supposed agent is asleep or unconscious.

In this last case the distance between the two people was about a hundred and fifty miles. The incident was unique in the man's experience, and he had no reason for anxiety. The case does not amount to proof, but it may serve as an illustra-

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tion, and it would be dangerous to dismiss it altogether as due to chance. We have many similar cases which reach a higher evidential standard; I quote these two mainly because they have not hitherto appeared in print.

Now, how does this transmission of thought come about? It is of course fashionable to discuss telepathy as a kind of wireless telegraphy, and "quite simple." I have been astonished, and almost alarmed, by the easy way in which people are accepting telepathy as a fact, not because of any evidence they are acquainted with, but because of its apparent similarity to wireless telegraphy. As a matter of fact, the similarity is apparent rather than real. In wireless telegraphy we can follow the steps of the process; we know how waves or pulses are set up in the ether, and how the receiver at the other end is affected by them. But in telepathy we know nothing of the kind. It is easy to talk about "brain-waves," but no such waves are known. We are absolutely in the dark as to the physical basis of telepathy, if it has one. If it has not, if it is a super-sensible process, as Mr Gerald Balfour believes, it proves that mind is not entirely dependent on brain, but has a separate existence and activity. Its after-death continuance is therefore possible.

Passing to another kind of phenomenon, we find that a sitter with a medium (trance or clairvoyant) will often have his relatives named, messages sent to the living ones, and all kinds of true and

characteristic remarks made about old times, by a *soi-disant* departed friend, who is trying to prove his identity, and of whose existence the medium—so far as is ascertainable—has never known. This happens even when sitters go under false names, to mediums in distant cities. Says the late Professor James :—

“In the trances of this medium (Mrs Piper) I cannot resist the conviction that knowledge appears which she has never gained by the ordinary waking use of her eyes and ears and wits. What the source of this knowledge may be I know not, and have not the glimmer of an explanatory suggestion to make ; but from admitting the fact of such knowledge I can see no escape.”—*Proceedings, Society for Psychical Research*, vol. xii. pp. 5, 6.

The orthodox psychical-research supposition is that the knowledge is transmitted from the mind of the sitter, if it is in the possession of the latter. But, going a step farther, we find that in some of these sittings true things are said—and things characteristic of the alleged spirit—which *the sitter does not know*, but which are verified by reference to some distant person. Telepathy from the sitter is thus ruled out. Finally we arrive at the famous “cross-correspondences” in which the same message is given through several different sensitives, or a message is split up “on the other side” and sent piecemeal through different mediums, the sense being unperceived until the Research Officer of the S.P.R. joins together the various pieces, as one fits in the sections of a jig-saw puzzle. These cross-correspondences indicate will, initiative, and

intelligence, and thus carry forward the evidence a considerable step farther than the mere display of somehow supernormally acquired knowledge by a single medium; for in this latter case we may assume a fishing up of clusters of dead memories in a cosmic reservoir, these memories being no longer real personalities, any more than the clusters of molecules which still form the body of a dead person (and are sufficient to identify him by) *are* that person. This supposition of gradual disintegration of memories, parallel with the bodily decomposition, has been held by some psychical researchers, and is a legitimate hypothesis; but the cross-correspondences, by indicating intelligence, initiative, and will, suggest the full personality of the deceased person, rather than any mere decaying group of memories destitute of personality or self-consciousness.

This is the most important line of evidence, but there is strong corroboration from other sides, such as veridical apparitions and other spontaneous phenomena. The summing up of the whole matter is that those who have studied the evidence with the most scrupulous care—as, for instance, Sir Oliver Lodge, F. W. H. Myers, and Richard Hodgson—have come to the conclusion that things certainly happen which recognised scientific theories will not cover, and that some of these happenings are best explained by the hypothesis of the continued existence and agency of disembodied minds.

I am not concerned to defend the position—if

there is one—of the spiritualist. I am not a spiritualist. But I think there is more sense even in its absurd extremes than in the absurder extremes of the opposite camp. What is required in spiritualism is merely a more rigorous application of scientific method. Spiritualists, once convinced, are apt to accept all phenomena at their face value. They must be more critical—must learn to judge each case on its own merits. But their principles are right, and that is the main thing. They observe, experiment, and infer, instead of reposing blind faith in other authorities. These are the principles which we wish to inculcate and emphasise. As Myers well puts it, paralleling the “cardinal theological virtues” of faith, hope, and charity:—

“We must maintain, in old theological language, that *the intellectual virtues have now become necessary to salvation*. Curiosity, candour, care;—these are the intellectual virtues;—disinterested curiosity, unselfish candour, unremitting care. These virtues have grown up outside the ecclesiastical pale; Science, not Religion, has fostered them;—nay, Religion has held them scarcely consistent with that pious spirit which hopes to learn by humility and obedience the secrets of an unseen world. Here surely our new ideals suggest not opposition but fusion. To us as truly as to monk or anchorite the spiritual world is an intimate, an interpenetrating reality. But its very reality suggests the need of analysis, the risk of misinterpretation; the very fact that we have outgrown our sacerdotal swaddling-clothes bids us learn to walk warily among pitfalls which call for all the precautions which systematic reason can devise.

“Upon a new scheme of beliefs, attractive to the popular mind as the scheme which I prefigure, a swarm

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of follies and credulities must inevitably perch and settle. Yet let those who mock at the weaknesses of 'modern Spiritualism' ask themselves to what extent either orthodox religion or official science has been at pains to guard the popular mind against losing balance upon contact with new facts, profoundly but obscurely significant. Have the people's religious instructors trained them to investigate for themselves? Have their scientific instructors condescended to investigate for them? Who should teach them to apply to their 'inspirational speakers' any test more searching than they have been accustomed to apply to the sermons of priest or bishop? What scientific manual has told them enough of the hidden powers within them to prevent them from ascribing to spiritual agency whatever mental action their ordinary consciousness may fail to recognise as its own?

"The rank and file of spiritists have simply transferred to certain new dogmas—for most of which they at least have some comprehensible evidence—the uncritical faith which they were actually commended for bestowing on certain old dogmas,—for many of which the evidence was at least beyond their comprehension. In such a case ridicule is no remedy. The remedy lies, as I have said, in inculcating the intellectual virtues;—in teaching the mass of mankind that the maxims of the modern *savant* are at least as necessary to salvation as the maxims of the mediæval saint."—*Proceedings, Society for Psychical Research*, xv. p. 124; also *Human Personality*, ii. pp. 304, 305.

Many spiritualists do, of course, live up to these intellectual virtues which psychical research inculcates; but there is an inevitable tendency to *slacken* in our critical demands, when once personal conviction is attained. We must keep the standard of evidence high, must examine each piece of new evidence on its own merits, for the benefit of those who, not having gone through our own course of

education in these matters, have not yet reached our own position ; and, still more, for the benefit of those who are too apt to sit down in lethargic belief and to accept anything that squares with that belief, without inquiry or criticism. "Prove all things" may be a counsel of perfection, but it is a good ideal to aim at. It will not result in the amassing of much creedal stock, but it will assure us against hoarding rubbish. Therefore let us be vigorous in our application of the intellectual virtues of candour and care, as well as of the other member of the trinity (curiosity), with which we are, most of us, already sufficiently endowed.

CHAPTER V

HISTORY OF THE BELIEF IN SURVIVAL

"If a man die, shall he live again?" is a question that probably has agitated the minds of thinkers since the dawn of human reason, and we consequently have no historical evidence as to origins. It is likely, however—if we may judge from the beliefs of people of low stages now or recently existing—that there was some belief in a life after death at a very early period. The everyday phenomena of dreams would be enough to suggest it. The dreamer sees people who are dead; and how could he do this if they are not somehow still alive? Also, during sleep he goes and does things elsewhere—chases buffalo, kills his enemy. From this it is only a step to the belief that, when a man dies, something which had left him during sleep but returned when he woke, has now left his body altogether. And then there are the phenomena of trance, which further support the idea of the body not being the whole man. "The Khond priest authenticates his claim to office by remaining from one to fourteen days in a languid dreamy state,

caused by one of his souls being away in the divine presence."¹ "The Turanian shaman lies in lethargy while his soul departs to bring hidden wisdom from the land of spirits."² Perhaps these medicine-men are sometimes lazy but artful individuals, who claim occult powers in order to avoid work; but this can hardly apply to poor Hermotimos, "whose prophetic soul went out from time to time to visit distant regions," till at last his wife, becoming somewhat impatient of these absences, "burnt the lifeless body on the funeral pile, and when the poor soul came back, there was no longer a dwelling for it to animate."³ It can hardly be doubted that there would be a certain amount of abnormality of this kind; trance, epileptiform seizures, and what not, as well as unconsciousness due to wounds—a blow on the head knocking the soul temporarily out of the body—and these phenomena would corroborate those of ordinary sleep, suggesting that some part of the person "went away," though enough of him remained to keep his heart and lungs more or less going, and thus to prevent him from being quite dead.

From this there would grow up a crude metaphysical psychology. Man would be divided into parts, differing in number according to the views of the primitive psychologist, viz. the medicine-man or priest. The Fijians distinguish between a man's "dark spirit" or shadow, which goes to

¹ Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, p. 396.

² *Loc. cit.*

³ *Loc. cit.*

Hades, and his "light spirit," or reflection in water or a mirror, which stays near where he dies. The Egyptians distinguished between *ba*, *akh*, *ka*, *khaba* (soul, mind, existence, shade), and Rabbinical tradition recognises "bodily, spiritual, and celestial souls," imperfectly corresponding to the Greek *psyche*, *pneuma*, *nous*. Even as early as Homer, there was a distinction between the *eidolon* and the real spirit, for though the *eidolon* of Herakles was in Hades, the real Herakles was present with the gods.¹ A later Roman poet psychologises thus: "The earth conceals the flesh: the shade flits round the tomb; the underworld receives the image; the spirit seeks the stars."² It is impossible to form any equated classification of these various conceptions. Later on, when a more definite boundary-line was drawn between what we call objective and subjective, this savage psychology would become simplified, and one body and one soul would suffice at least for the psychology of the "plain man."

As reason developed, and as it occupied itself more and more with outward things, the subjective element dropped into the background, and dreams (formerly as "real" as waking experience) became "unreal." As a natural consequence of experience unconnected with the external world being regarded

¹ The earliest Babylonian ideas seem to have been similar.

² "Bis duo sunt homini, manes, caro, spiritus, umbra:
Quatuor hæc loci bis duo suscipiunt.
Terra tegit carmen, tumulum circumvolat umbra,
Manes Orcus habet, spiritus astra petit."

OVID.

as unreal, the external world became regarded as the only thing that *was* real; and the belief in a surviving soul became moribund. "How dieth the wise man? As the fool." "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." In spite of chap. iii. 21 and xii. 1, 7, 14, etc., the Preacher is mostly a pessimist and materialist; and he probably voices the Jewish belief over a long stretch of time. Sheol was as vague a place as the early Greek Hades, a place in which dim shadows flitted aimlessly about, pale *eidola* of their former selves, half-conscious or unconscious. "The dead know not anything." There was no general conception of a continuation of full life, still less of a life on a still richer and higher plane of experience than the earthly one. Achilles would "rather till the ground than live in pale Elysium," and Virgil draws a similar picture in the sixth *Æneid*, in spite of the higher conceptions which Socrates and Plato had reached, as shown in the *Apology* and the *Phædo*.

As a matter of fact, however, we know regrettably little about the beliefs of the people on these matters, in the later days of majestic Rome. We know all about what gods they worshipped, what sacrifices they offered, and we know that in a

general way the gods were interested in morality, and would punish offences in their own department. But as to whether the people had much sense of *sin*, and what they thought about the soul's fortunes in the future, we know next to nothing.

It has, however, been argued by Mr Andrew Lang that there was a considerable hell-belief, and a consequent spiritual terror. The famous poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, was written against religion, with the aim of freeing men's minds from the paralysing dread of future punishment. Apparently the torments of Sisyphus and Tantalus, though treated as old-wives' fables by Socrates and his friends, had remained and accreted in the minds of the people. In ancient funereal art, in Etruria and Attica, we see the semblances of the dead lying at endless feasts, or receiving sacrifices of food and wine (as in Egypt) from their descendants. But in the descriptions by Pausanias and others of certain old wall-paintings we hear of the torments of the wicked, of the demons that torture them, and, above all, of the great chief fiend, coloured like a carrion fly. "To judge from Lucretius, although so little remains to us of this creed, yet it had a very strong hold of the minds of people, in the century before Christ. Perhaps the belief was reinforced by the teaching of Socrates, who in the vision of Er, in the *Republic*, brings back, in a myth, the old popular faith in a Purgatorio, if not in an Inferno."¹

¹ Lang's *Letters on Literature*, p. 90.

There is probably something in this, though Mr Lang perhaps goes too far when he says that "it follows that the Romans, at least, must have been haunted by a constant dread of judgment to come, from which, but for the testimony of Lucretius and his manifest sincerity, we might have believed them free." It is dangerous to argue from such slender data. If there had been this degree of dread, we should hear more of ascetic practices for soul-saving, such as take a prominent place in Christian times. And it seems certain that no such teaching entered into the authoritative religion of the state. Cicero, in *De Senectute* and *Tusc. Quæst.*, considers two possible alternatives—extinction and a happy future life. If there had been much hell-belief, even among the plebs, the garrulous old senator would have been likely to mention it. Instead, he exactly echoes Plato and Socrates. Seneca does the same (*Consol. ad Polyb.*, xxvii.). It therefore seems improbable that there was any universal and vividly realised conception of after-death suffering among the Romans. This is the opinion of Gibbon, among others (*Decline and Fall*, xv.).¹

In the farther East the tendency seems to have been steadily towards extinction of personality. Theism was pantheism, and the human soul slips back into the Shining Sea, rejoins the primal Fire

¹ Jusserand holds that the *Celtic* races had a definite belief in a very full kind of future life (*History of the English People*), but the evidence does not seem very convincing.

of which it is an out-flung ray. This absorption is desired as well as believed in, and it is a moot point whether it is not the higher notion, morally speaking, because of its unselfish readiness to renounce; though it seems unsatisfactory by involving the giving up of a *rational* scheme of things. For, without personal continuity, and a squaring up of earthly wrongs, we cannot see how the whole thing can be just and reasonable.

With Christianity came in a more definite and more universal belief in survival of the full personality. True, Plato and others had taught it, in an academic way; but Jesus brought immortality to light in a more convincing fashion, by actual phenomenal evidence—evidence, at least, that was impressive. Whatever the actual bed-rock of fact was—and this we shall never know—it certainly was *believed* that Jesus, after being dead, reappeared, ate, walked, talked with, and was touched by His disciples; in short, was still alive, still Himself, though generally imperceptible to bodily senses. The belief has naturally faded with the rise of modern methods of thought, partly because the evidence is remote and is below our more critical standards, and partly because no such phenomena enter into the experience of the average human being. And, along with this fading, and following on the objective tendency towards a “naturalistic” and mechanical explanation of existence, the belief in survival generally has become more rare and more dim. When held, the belief is a matter of instinct,

as with Goethe; a feeling of the impossibility of our non-existence, because we feel so very much alive at present, and to some extent, perhaps, due to our inability to conceive of a universe which does not include ourselves as onlookers and factors.

Largely, also, it has been a matter of poetry. Dante and Milton have been more influential than thousands of theologians and preachers. It is one more proof of the small part that Reason plays in shaping opinion. A lady recently told me that Mr Joseph Hocking's *Zillah* did more to convince her of clairvoyance than anything she had ever read or experienced before. Yet this lady had had fairly good evidence of a psychical-research kind, in her own experience, through a psychic friend! Dramatic fiction, by appealing to the "feeling" side, can change the creedal attitude apparently more easily than does any amount of reasoning or even experience, if the latter is of prosaic kind. It is a "humblin' sicht," as the old lady said of her photograph. We are only partially rational creatures.

After Milton, the most potent force in shaping after-death beliefs was undoubtedly Emanuel Swedenborg. With him came in a new eschatology. Milton had foreshadowed it:—

"What if Earth

Be but t' shadow of Heaven, and things therein,

Each to the other like more than on earth is thought?"

but Swedenborg was the first to systematise the belief in an earth-like after-world. He started

from a basis of experience, and established a continuity between this world and the next. No doubt he hardly reached the conception of continuing progress, for the supporting doctrine of evolution had not yet arrived; he apparently had eternal hells, of various kinds, as Emerson regretfully points out ("Swedenborg: The Mystic" in *Essays on Representative Men*). But he certainly broke away from the static idea previously prevalent. He himself was a man of immense energy—his works constitute a library, and his other labours as mineralogist and assessor were no doubt considerable—and he would naturally be unable to tolerate the idea of a lazy heaven which is nothing but a long holiday, sprinkled with harp-playing and psalm-singing. Like Blasco in *The Spanish Gypsy*, he would think that

"solid men
Used to much business, might be ill at ease
Not liking play."

Anyhow, his "beyond" is a place of activity, not of quiescence.

The descendants of Swedenborg are the spiritualists; and, though I do not accept the label for myself, it seems to me that the spiritualist at his best has the strongest position of any religious thinker at present extant. All systems of thought must start from experience, and, to be useful, must keep pretty close to experience—not the experience of a mystic, which cannot be communicated, and must therefore fail to be influential except among

a limited number of impressionable people, but the experience which is objective and external, and which can become a universal possession, in greater or less degree. This spiritualism does. Intellectually, it bases its inferences on observed phenomena; phenomena daily observed—so it alleges—not phenomena which occurred two thousand years ago in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire, and then suddenly ceased, without even causing enough stir to be noted by any contemporary historian.¹ The spiritualists claim that their phenomena happen *now*, and can be observed by anyone who will take the trouble and have the necessary patience. As Sidgwick said, it is a scandal to science that these assertions should have been neglected, for the people who make them are not all of them hysterical and ignorant—they include Fellows of the Royal Society, doctors, business men, conjurers, and indeed all classes except the dogmatic people who know what can or cannot happen, without investigating.

As to the spiritualist's beliefs, they are an improvement on Swedenborg. They do not include his horrible hells with their material descriptions, though the *fact* of punishment for sins is insisted on no less strongly. Or, rather, instead of being punishment for *sins*, the after-death suffering is

¹ The passage in Josephus is a forgery. There are hardly a dozen allusions to Christianity in the pagan writers before Constantine (died 337 A.D.). The truth about Christian origins is thus rendered unattainable.

looked on more as a further disciplinary stage in the soul's culture. As O. W. Holmes put it, life is a school, and we move up from class to class; there still is discipline, and painful discipline, but it becomes less and less as we rise, our character becoming modified and adjusted to the scheme. The university undergraduate no longer needs the cane or birch of his younger days. Also he sees better, as he rises, the necessity and the sense of his earlier discipline, which at times had seemed incomprehensibly harsh and undeserved. So with the evolving spirit. Looking back, it will see the reasonableness of its disciplinary pains. And what of its ultimate destination?—it may be asked. The answer is that the question is uncalled for. It is enough for us to see the next step or the next few steps. Why push further? Ultimates and finalities are out of our reach. Perhaps we may hold as a pious opinion that in the end we may drop our personality and be received back into the Divine Glory, if that is any consolation to us. It seems to be so, to some folks. For me, it is unnecessary, if not unmeaning; and the most sensible spiritualist, as it seems to me, is he who declines to go beyond inferences from the phenomena—inferences which at least carry him over the gulf of death, and into a country much like the present one, though somewhat better.

Morally, of course, spiritualism has an equally strong case. It is greatly superior to any system which allows the future condition to depend on the

opinions, beliefs, or other separate psychological states (consciousness of being "saved," etc.) which people experience here. These latter systems give no moral stimulus. In fact, they operate the other way. If I know that I do not "believe," and shall consequently be damned whether my conduct is good or bad—as our old minister assured me—I may just as well have a roaring good time while I am here; and if I believed this, that is what I should tend to do. So far as I was logical and rational, I should consider nothing except my own gratification. And the "elect" would do the same, if they were logical, for they are elect anyhow.¹

And Evangelicalism is not much better than Calvinism in this respect. It allows salvation to depend on a psychological fact, a fact which is not under the control of the will. "Believe and be saved!" says Dr Torrey or Mr Evan Roberts. Have these people ever considered how they themselves would feel, if the same formula were presented for *their* acceptance, by a Mohammedan? For, to the latter, Dr Torrey and Mr Roberts are infidels. Yet they would doubtless reply to the missionary of Islam, either that they could not believe in Mahomet as the chief Prophet of God, or that they would not, because they knew better. The simple "could not" would be the truer answer, as every psychologist knows; but, even waiving this, it is clear that the Mohammedan and the non-

¹ This would be the *tendency*. I am not forgetting what I have already said about acts not being *entirely* "rational."

Christian of any kind can make the same reply to the Christian as our evangelists would make to the Moslem.

For me, personally, the true answer is certainly "cannot." I cannot believe that my eternal future—if I have one—is to depend entirely on what opinions I may hold concerning the reality or the interpretation of certain alleged facts of history. My inability to "believe" is a part of the total result of my character and experience, like the other parts. It is constitutional—is in my blood and my bones. I could easily adduce "reasons" why I should not believe, but I know well that this is the wrong way about, for I do not disbelieve because of the reasons, I hunt up the reasons because I disbelieve.

To return for a moment to the idea of continuity and similarity between the two worlds, which is so good a feature of modern spiritualism. The truth of this idea may be argued for in another way, as follows.

One of the chief lessons of history is humility. For a thousand years after the beginning of our era—and of course during all previous historical time, except perhaps for a few great minds—the general belief was that the earth is the centre and most important place in the universe. The sun, moon, and stars are there for man's convenience. From this conception followed a crowd of superstitions which occupy a conspicuous place in the belief of every early civilisation. The advance of

knowledge, however, has at every step run counter to this view, and has accordingly been distasteful to human egoism. Copernicus struck the first great blow at man's overweening conceit, by making the earth move round the sun, instead of being in stately repose, waited on by revolving "great lights"; and soon it was shown by modern astronomy that our world is but a speck of dust in the scale of creation. Said Tennyson, after looking through Lockyer's telescope at the star-cluster in Perseus: "One doesn't think much of the county families after that!" Astronomy enormously widened the universe, and lessened man's notion of his own relative size and importance. He thought he lived in a smallish house, specially built for him, and pretty well known to him except for a few odd corners; astronomy taught him that he occupies a few tiny rooms in the basement of a palace of unknown extent, built by an unknown architect for unknown purposes. Something is going on in the other rooms—possibly something much more important than anything we can conceive—but what it is we do not know, nor whether such beings as ourselves are anywhere else existent. Dr A. R. Wallace thinks not, and as far as physical structure goes he is probably right; but it is likely that there may be a whole hierarchy of unknown intelligences existing and working in those other rooms (planets, stars, etc.), though functioning through bodies very different from ours.

Then, once more with dignity-damaging effect,

came Darwin with his proof of biological evolution. Man is of one blood with all the living creatures of the earth; not a glorious separate creation, as the conceited egoists think, who wish to kick down the ladder by which they have climbed—to disown their poor relations, great-uncles and cousins once or twice removed, the anthropoid offshoots, namely, of the central stock which has produced man. This is perhaps natural vanity, but the natural man must be subdued. Science is bringing him to his senses; regenerating him; giving him grace—the desirable grace of humility. The lesson is hard to learn, as well as being distasteful. Formerly the pupils burnt the teachers, as the easiest way out of an unpleasant situation (Bruno, Vanini). Modern taste deprecates such measures, but has its own way of penalising, as Huxley and his cohorts knew. Still, there is an acceleration of pace, for the teacher is now recognised as such, almost as soon as he is dead. Darwin, the terror of religious apologists in 1860, was buried in Westminster Abbey only twenty-two years later.

And now comes the turn of the spiritual world. Physical science has altered the prevailing conception of the physical world; psychical science is altering the prevailing conceptions of the spiritual world. And, to the orthodox, the change is similarly disquieting. Instead of a sudden heaven of bliss eternal, immediately the saint's soul is out of his body, psychical facts as well as physical analogies are pointing to a less sudden transition

and to a continuance of evolution on the other side. We are none of us bad enough for hell, none of us good enough for heaven ; is it not then sensible to suppose, on ethical as well as on other grounds, that development will continue, and, with development, discipline ? It is an unpleasant thought, no doubt, to the " unco' guid " who think they deserve heaven straightway ; but their very thought proves their need of a lesson in modesty and humility :—

"No sudden heaven, nor sudden hell, for man,
But through the will of One who knows and rules—
And utter knowledge is but utter love—
Æonian Evolution, swift or slow,
Thro' all the Spheres—an ever opening height,
An ever lessening earth."

TENNYSON, *The Ring*.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE OF THE FUTURE LIFE

WHILE emphasising the necessity of caution and discrimination in dealing with the messages received from *soi-disant* spirits, it is nevertheless interesting to see what they have to say on the condition in which they find themselves, and on the question of the essentials in religion. Here of course we enter on perilous ground, for there is no certain method by which we can verify what we may be told. Also there are obvious reasons which forbid us to take as true, any messages concerning their condition, except in a symbolic sense. When a person dies, the matter of which his body is composed certainly breaks down into lower forms. It decays, disintegrates. His brain and sensory nerves are more or less rapidly converted into water vapour, hydrocarbon gases, phosphatic, nitrogenous, and silicic matter. If his individual consciousness somehow continues to exist, it seems certain that his forms of perception must be vastly different. He no longer has bodily eyes and ears; therefore we cannot suppose that he sees and hears

in the way that these words connote, though it may be—as some believe—that he possesses a refined counterpart of the material body, and that his methods of perception bear at least some resemblance to those with which we are at present familiar.

This is perhaps a reasonable speculation, as a help to the imagination, but it is certainly no more. Whatever be the truth of the matter, it is indubitable that the perceptions of the surviving spirit must be very different from ours. But it is equally obvious that if a hypothetical entity of this kind wishes to describe to us the state in which he finds himself, he will have to use our language, in order to be understood. The communications about spirits living in houses, attending lectures, reading and writing, and all the rest of it, do indeed seem crude and *bizarre*, not to say ludicrous. But they may be true enough, or at least as true as the conditions permit. The spirit puts his thought into his side of the “machine,” and the form in which it comes out on our side is necessarily determined by the machine and the general conditions governing this side. When the spirit thinks of certain features of his experience, and tries to communicate his thought, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the nearest approximation to that thought in our language of earth may be something like such a phrase as “living in houses,” etc.

It is not always the easiest matter in the world to translate into English the exact shade of mean-

ing expressed by idiomatic phrases in even such closely related and well-known languages as French and German. Lafcadio Hearn, after fourteen years' residence in Japan—with the advantage of a native wife,—came to the conclusion that a Westerner could *never* really understand Japanese thought and language, in consequence of their utter remoteness and dissimilarity from the psychical life and ways of the Occidental. How much more difficult must it be to give accurate or approximately accurate accounts of conditions on "the other side," the points of contact being infinitely fewer than between Britisher and Japanese, who do at least exist in the same world as each other. In what language can we imagine the released and returning prisoner of Plato's famous cave explaining to his still bound companions the sights which he had seen in the upper regions, where he came into touch with reality, and not merely with shadows on the walls of the cave, cast by invisible fires behind? To these prisoners, the shadows are the real things, for they are all that they have knowledge of; and the returned prisoner can do no more than tell his comrades that the shadows are not real, that Reality is somewhat similar, but fuller and more wonderful. And, as Plato remarks, he will probably be laughed at, and perhaps even killed.

The point is, however, that so far as he hopes to be understood, he must use the language of the fettered prisoners; indeed, until he has learnt

something of the new conditions, he will have no other vocabulary. On this analogy, it would seem that we need not be astonished to find a communicating spirit describing the conditions of his existence in very earthly and materialistic terminology. These descriptions may be symbolically true, though obviously false if taken literally. There is nothing new or outrageous in such a suggestion. Ordinary language is full of words which are now understood in a higher, more abstract sense than the one which they originally conveyed. "Spirit" was the escaping breath—*spiritus*, *spirari*, *πνεῦμα*, Sanscrit *phut*, "the sound of blowing"; but the abstract meaning is now so familiar to us that we are apt to forget the word's material origin. All abstract ideas are clothed in words which originally represented material things; first percepts, then concepts. Similarly, we must not be too ready to jeer at communications of the character mentioned, especially if there is any evidence for the identity of the communicator. We may speak of a "soul" without being thought to hold the opinion that the soul is material breath; and if language between living men may be interpreted symbolically, why not language which purports to represent the thought of a discarnate individual?—given, of course, sufficient evidence of identity to render the case worthy of serious consideration.

It is clear, from what has been said or indicated, that it will be very difficult to obtain

reliable information concerning the "other side." The limitations of our comprehension—owing to the narrowness of our experience—place almost insurmountable barriers in our way. We cannot form concepts except on bases or analogies of percepts; and we need not expect to receive much extension of knowledge by "communications." A child first learns to think of heaven as up in the sky, afterwards learning to purify his conception by lifting it out of the material and spatial categories. Mediumistic communications must be treated somewhat similarly.

As to verification, we can consult the controls of various mediums, comparing their statements, and this is about all we can do. Points on which they differ must be left as debatable, and the common body of teaching accepted as the probably true. We cannot expect that various controls will give identical accounts of their states, for states may vary—almost certainly do vary—as they do here; different travellers bring back different impressions of America, partly because some visit Alaska and others Florida or Brazil, and partly because their own temperaments differ from each other, their likes and dislikes being dissimilar. Consequently we must expect variations in the accounts of that bourne from which it was thought that no traveller returned, even if the returned traveller is quite genuinely what he proclaims himself to be.

But there is less contradiction than might have

been expected. Beneath surface variations, there is a deep consensus which is one of the most remarkable features of the phenomena, on any theory whatsoever. As Professor James has said, the majority of these messages appear as if written by the same hand. Through mediums of various times and places, and of various degrees of position and education—from illiterate charwomen up to Stainton Moses and Mr W. T. Stead, with Mrs Piper and Mrs Thompson on the way—there comes a body of teaching as to the conditions of the after-life, and as to the proper aims of this life, which is consistent and harmonious to a quite remarkable degree.

The first notable thing about this teaching is that it does not support the opinions of any Church or sect—or, at least, of any of the principal religious bodies. Neither Roman nor Anglican orthodoxy, neither Wesleyan nor Congregational nor Baptist nor Salvation Army orthodoxy, can claim it as an ally. Whether it comes through the mediumship of a High Church clergyman (whose own opinions conflict with those expressed in the script, as did Stainton Moses') or through a working woman who can neither read nor write, as in the case of a medium who has given me much evidential matter, the teaching is alike in its chief feature of non-agreement with orthodox theology. Above all things, the spirits seem to be nonconformists—even to the extent of declining to conform to the views of the Nonconformists! In fact, they object

to dogmas of any kind; and are thereby brought into opposition with orthodox Christianity, though not with the teaching of Jesus Himself, which is a very different affair. Like Him, they insist on character, and lay little stress on the importance of creed. A former Honorary Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research (Mr Piddington) remarks that "throughout spiritualistic trance-communications may be observed a uniformly latitudinarian strain; an emphatic protest against theological bigotry and dogmatism of all kinds, irrespective of any particular creed or sect" (*Proceedings, S.P.R.*, xvii. p. 262). It is also noticed by F. W. H. Myers, who remarks that "no one of the various conflicting Churches has been able to claim the general drift of automatic messages as making for its special tenets. The various controversialists, where they have been candid, have admitted moral elevation, but—from their various opposing points of view—have agreed in deploring theological laxity" (*Human Personality*, ii. p. 133). According to these messages, creed is of small account. Our aims in this our earthly pilgrimage should be inward holiness, charity, love and help for our fellow-traveller on life's way; aspiration towards the higher spiritual Powers, coupled with due humility. In so far as we succeed in such endeavour, the guerdon will be ours in the after-life; in so far as we fail, the corrective discipline will continue, until the dross "is purged and burnt away." Spirits of those whom we have loved and lost hover near

earth's confines, watching our poor efforts, helping where it may be possible. These succouring souls, their journey ended and their battle won—the earth stage at least—will meet us when the time comes for us to cross the gulf and join them on that farther shore.

That state, however, as we have already indicated, is far removed from Miltonic or Dantesque conceptions of heaven and hell. There is no sudden unalloyed bliss for the “good”—who, as Jesus said, are not completely good,—no everlasting torment in unquenchable fire for the wicked—who, similarly, are not unqualifiedly wicked. There is much of bad in the best of us, and much of good in the worst of us. But we shall go on trying to subdue the bad and encourage the good. The next life will be merely the next stage in this journey; the next stage in a journey towards an End which we cannot yet even dimly conceive; and it is still a state of learning and working and striving. But we are assured that pain as we know it cannot afflict us, that bodily weariness and suffering shall drop from us with the fleshly garment in which they inhere; that any suffering we may be called on to endure will be mostly in the nature of remorse for the evil done in the body. But for all, for good and bad, it will be a beneficent change; not necessarily an immediate improvement in happiness-conditions—though almost without exception it *will* be this—but certainly a promotion, by entrance into a higher class of the universal school.

This conception is to many people distasteful. It seems commonplace and materialistic, when compared with the gorgeous "beatific vision" of Dante's eternal Rose. And it is a *tiring* kind of thought. I have every sympathy with those who feel that eternal progress would be a weary business. I feel it to be so, myself; and I should dread the future if I thought it would be an exact repetition of moral striving such as we have had here, where the record of most of us is filled with miserable failures. But there are two things to consider on the other hand. One is that "eternal progress" includes the idea of time, which we may outgrow, and then our whole conception of existence will have to be remodelled in some way at present inconceivable, but which will involve the obliteration of what we mean by endless duration. The other is that, though we may feel tired now, and unwilling to renew the strife, we may feel better after death. We may feel refreshed and ready to start again, as we feel in a morning after a night's sleep, even though, the night before, we felt too weary ever to work again. After the sleep of death, we may be ready to start once more "on our adventure brave and new," to "strive and thrive—fight on, fare ever."¹ The Western mind, essentially active, cannot tolerate the idea of doing nothing. *Dolce far niente* is not *dolce*, except in hours of weariness. We want to be doing, learning, helping. Happiness is not happiness unless it leads forward to further

¹ Browning, *Rabbi ben Ezra*, and *Epilogue to Asolando*.

work. I think this is how we feel, in our best moments, though we all have periods—some of us frequently—when such an idea is too tiring to tolerate. It is largely a matter of temperament and individual circumstances. But, on the whole, the modern Western temper is decidedly against the static condition of the mediæval heaven, and in favour of some form of continued activity.

I do not argue for the absolute truth (whatever that may mean) of the spiritistic creed. The "spirits" may be liars (we know that the subliminal's moral notions seem to be different from ours), and the true explanation of the whole mass of phenomena may be some theory remote from the obvious one. If so, the spiritist may say there is deep immorality somewhere, Nature lying to us like this. But we must remember that Nature lies to our senses at every turn. We see the sun "rise" and "set," but it is we who move, not the sun. The whole universe lied to us about the plan of its construction, until Copernicus and Galileo came and saw through the deception. Nay, we ourselves lie to children when we say that heaven is up in the sky. But, in all these cases, the belief is perhaps the best for the moment, for the people concerned. Similarly, spiritualism may not be quite true, and may ultimately give place to a truer though less obvious theory. But, for the present, it seems to be a good hypothesis to work on. It is a scientific hypothesis, or at least is as scientific as any

that is possible. It is also morally helpful. And it harmonises things—makes a coherent scheme possible. And, as the facts stand and as our faculties are at present, it *looks* true. These considerations are an ample justification.

“God’s gift was that man should conceive of truth
And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
As midway help till he reach fact indeed.”¹

A physical science analogy may be cited in support. If it be objected that any inference to souls or spirits is metaphysical and therefore unscientific, we can reply that chemistry, which is certainly a science, is metaphysical also. The hypothesis of spirits is methodologically as justifiable as that of atoms. The atomic theory of Dalton—one of the great steps in the development of modern chemistry—is metaphysical, and is still useful, in spite of the still more metaphysical theory of the electrical constitution of matter. The atoms were, and are, useful as thought-images, as counters to reckon with; but no thinker ever supposed that they could possibly be directly experienced—seen, touched—or that they could be anything like what we imagine, even if they *could* be manifest to our senses. The smallest piece of matter that we can touch or see is a tiny particle, and we carry the process further, imagining the particle to be composed of many still tinier particles. But such an image is sure to be wrong. Suppose a Brobdingnagian examining our towns: the smallest

¹ Browning, *A Death in the Desert*.

particle that is visible to his big, blunt senses is, say, a house. If he evolved an atomic theory, he would imagine that houses are composed of a great number of bits, each of which is itself a miniature house. But he would be wrong, for bricks and stones are quite unlike the structure which they form. So with the atoms which constitute our smallest visible particle. We cannot conceive how they could be experienced by our senses; and, if they could, they would be different from the pictures which we mentally form. But the theory is useful, and may therefore be regarded as true. Similarly with the inference of spirits. We cannot perceive them, but the inference of their existence may be as true as the atomic or electronic theory.¹ If chemists had refused to entertain Dalton's theory because it is obviously false, metaphysically, the progress of chemistry would have been seriously hindered. If the theory we tentatively propose in explanation of some psychical phenomena be summarily rejected, it is possible that a new science, not yet satisfactorily named or delimited, will be hindered in like manner.

Nevertheless we prefer over-scepticism to over-belief. We want no return of witchcraft or other superstition. We stand for a method rather than for a doctrine. We want to extend careful observa-

¹ It may here be pointed out that we have no direct knowledge of the existence of our fellow-beings here on earth. We only derive sensations from certain lumps of matter, and make inferences about their "consciousnesses."

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tion and experiment. To quote Professor James once more :—

“I record my bare opinion here unsupported by the evidence, not, of course, in order to convert anyone to my view, but because I am persuaded that a serious study of these trance-phenomena is one of the greatest needs of psychology, and think that my personal confession may possibly draw a reader or two into a field which the *soi-disant* ‘scientist’ usually refuses to explore.”—*Principles of Psychology*, ii. p. 396.

CHAPTER VII

POPULAR SENTIMENT REGARDING IMMORTALITY

THE question, "Do you believe in a future life?" is fairly common, and the replies are affirmative, negative, or non-committal, according for the most part to the temperament and up-bringing of the answerer. Probably those who answer most readily are those who have given the least thought to the subject. A lady acquaintance of mine who persisted in discussing theology with me—much against my will—once asked me, with suspicion in her eye, whether I believed that Jesus was God. I replied that I had not studied the matter sufficiently to have any definite opinion. She rejoined with surprising tartness that, as for her, she had not studied it sufficiently to have any doubts. It struck me as one of the truest things the good lady had ever said. She had inherited her beliefs along with the colour of her eyes, and there was an end on 't.

The question just mentioned, concerning belief in immortality—or rather let us say, for the present, in survival of bodily death—is usually

futile, for the majority of people have no real belief either one way or the other; and, in order to avoid thinking about it, are apt to give the expected or conventional answer, like the man who of course expected to go to heaven when he died, but who in the same breath requested his interlocutor not to talk about such depressing subjects. Such people have no real individual conviction, and it is not much use asking about their belief.

It is, however, somewhat different with their *sentiments* regarding survival. An inquiry into their wishes, or feelings, on the matter, will elude replies which have a good deal of psychological interest, and which, moreover, have rather far-reaching implications. Instead, therefore, of asking people whether they believe in continuance of personal life after bodily death, the thing to do is to ask them whether or not they *wish* for such continuance.

An inquiry of this kind was made some years ago, but did not receive the attention which its results deserved; chiefly, no doubt, because those results were not very pleasing to anybody in particular. They were, indeed, rather shocking. For it must regretfully be confessed that a large proportion of the people asked, manifested an unexpected indifference. They did not seem to care whether they "survived" or not. They were apparently making the most of this present world, and were leaving any possible other to take care

of itself. They did not "sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come": far from it.

"Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"

That was their philosophy. Indeed, some of them out-Omar'd Omar, for they confessed that, as to this question of a future life, they had never thought about it; but, now that the subject was brought before them, they thought they would rather like another life—"provided always," as the lawyers say, that it should be something like this one, but preferably rather better.

I confess to a certain friendliness towards these tough-minded fellows. I like the good brown earth and its wholesome solidity. Whitman's attitude, for instance, appeals to me intimately:—

"I think I could turn and live with the animals . . .
They do not sweat and whine about their condition;
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their
sins;
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to
God; . . .
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived
thousands of years ago;
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole
earth."

Undoubtedly this out-of-doors healthy-mindedness may be carried too far; for, as James says, it does not follow that the man who is always thumping his chest and feeling his biceps is really a bigger or better man than a puny Newton or epileptic St Paul; but it is refreshing as a contrast

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to the smug sanctimoniousness and excessive otherworldliness which have sometimes been associated with the name of religion.

It is interesting to note, in the case of these "toughs," how little real hold the eschatological conceptions in which they have been reared seem to have on their minds. Their notions, such as they are, are much more Swedenborgian than Calvinistic or Dantesque. And in this their instincts are right. For it is clear that if the next life were entirely different from this, it would be entirely inconceivable to us. We could not say anything true of it, except in negations. Our language would not apply to it. It would be just nothing. We must proceed from the known to the unknown, must interpret any future by our knowledge of past and present.¹ Seeing this—instinctively or rationally—these good folks are disposed to admit a certain likeness between this world and any possible next. Among them, however, are many varieties, all more or less humorous in an unconscious way. One man, for example, while admitting that the next world, if there is one, must be conceived as something like this one, nevertheless objects to the alleged evidence of psychical research, because the messages are so trivial—so human, so natural. In other words, he disbelieves in a *supernatural* "other side," yet complains because the evidence isn't supernatural enough!

¹ Aristotle, *Eth. Nich.*, 1. 3, 5.

Others dislike the evidence because some of it comes through dubious channels. Mediums are not necessarily saints, and there is a natural feeling of repugnance to the idea of "communications" by their aid. Mr Andrew Lang says: "My bias is a desire not to believe that the dead are in any way mixed up with sittings at so many dollars,"¹ and at first sight every one will be disposed to endorse the sentiment.

There are, however, several countervailing factors to be considered. Firstly, the popular notion that the medium can command or "call up" the spirit of a dead person, may be dismissed as quite unsupported by satisfactory evidence. A discarnate being, looking out for opportunities to communicate, sees something corresponding to a light in the murky world-atmosphere, wherever there is a person with the gifts which we vaguely call psychic. Descending to this light, he manages somehow to give his message, as into a telephone, or even by taking control of the vocal or writing muscles. Of the details of this process we know nothing, and can scarcely even guess; but the point to be noted is that there is no compulsion. The spirit comes and communicates by his own free will or not at all.

Further, this matter of the undesirable character of mediums has probably been exaggerated. Many of them are admirable people, whose characters would serve as useful models to ourselves. The fact that some of them have had no opportunities of education ought to be borne in mind when judging. To me

¹ *Proceedings, S.P.R.*, xv. p. 52.

the matter for surprise has often been that, taking into consideration their disadvantages, they should still be so worthy in the main things. They often have a natural nobility and unselfishness which more than compensate for intellectual lacks. Knowledge, after all, is only superficial—a veneer on character.

And then as to payment. This is perhaps regrettable, and may in some cases encourage fraud, conscious or subconscious. But, here again, are we quite fair and open-minded on the point? If these mediums have powers which we have not, what right have we to expect their exercise *gratis*? We pay the doctors, and even the clergymen, for their services. The labourer is worthy of his hire. And of course it must be remembered that there is a great deal of psychical-research evidence which is in no way connected with paid mediums.¹

In all this I am trying to procure a fair hearing for the evidence. The sentiment towards it, is important. If hostility, general or particular, is widely diffused, it follows that conviction based on scientific evidence for survival will win its way slowly, if it wins its way at all. People who do not want to believe, will not believe; and any attempt to influence them by evidence will be almost or entirely wasted. As Dr Schiller has said, you cannot even make a man see that $2+2=4$, if he refuses to add; and

¹ I do not wish to be understood as encouraging promiscuous experiments with the advertising variety of professional mediums, though I am quite convinced (by good evidence) of the genuineness of some even of these. It is best to stick to those of whom we know something, lest we encourage fraud,

it is much easier to remain blind to the complex evidence for survival, than it is to blink the piece of arithmetic just mentioned.

The idea of an attempt at finding out the state of people's wishes on the subject seems first to have occurred to Dr F. C. S. Schiller. He suggested to the Society for Psychical Research that it should make systematic inquiry. Dr Hodgson saw the importance of the question, and the American Branch undertook the inquiry. About 10,000 people were asked, and over 3000 answers were received. The questions were as follows :—

- I. Would you prefer (a) to live after "death" or (b) not?
- II. (a) If (a), do you desire a future life whatever the conditions might be?
(b) If not, what would have to be its character to make the prospect seem tolerable? Would you, *e.g.*, be content with a life more or less like your present life?
(c) Can you say what elements in life (if any) are felt by you to call for its perpetuity?
- III. Can you state *why* you feel in this way, as regards questions I. and II.?
- IV. Do you now feel the question of a future life to be of urgent importance to your mental comfort?
- V. Have your feelings on questions I., II., and IV. undergone change? If so, when and in what ways?
- VI. (a) Would you like to *know for certain* about the future life, or (b) would you prefer to leave it a *matter of faith*?

Spaces were left for name, age, nationality, sex, profession, and date. Collectors were instructed to

collect answers from educated adults as far as possible. It is probable that the answerers were not quite typical of the average mind, for they included a fair proportion—higher than the whole population would present—of people who were interested in psychical research. These latter may be regarded as almost certainly desirous of a future life, and therefore, on the whole, the *questionnaire* probably indicates a more extensively felt wish for survival than is actually the case.

This being so, it is more surprising than ever to find how comparatively low is the proportion of those who do desire a future life.

Question I. is difficult to deal with alone, for many answers were, naturally, conditional. A thinking person usually does not feel able to say whether or not he desires a future life, until the *kind* of life is specified. Most people would prefer a happy future life to annihilation, and annihilation to an unhappy one. A distinguished philosopher argued that *all* rational beings would think thus, and that therefore all the answers to the *questionnaire* would be the same. But he was wrong. "He had not made sufficient allowance for the ability of human psychology to overcome difficulties which, as stated abstractly, seem to logic sheer absurdities. And so it turns out that not only is a real desire for the heaven of what used to be thought orthodox decidedly rare, but that a good many actually have so strong an objection to it that they assert they would prefer annihilation. Moreover, 22 per

cent.—739 out of 3321—of the answers agree with Huxley and Milton's Satan in desiring a future life at all costs."¹ These 739 people probably are individuals who have had a happy life, and do not know how painful various kinds of suffering may be—not merely physical suffering, but also that which comes from baffled effort, baulked ambition, regrets, loneliness, disgust, despair of the humanity that is powerful, and sorrow for that which is crushed—the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world. These 739 good folks are surely lacking either in experience, or imagination, or both. As to those who do not desire the orthodox heaven, they might or might not desire a future life of another kind. Probably very few honest people capable of introspection would say that an eternity of psalm-singing and harp-playing would content them. The Western spirit is too active for such an ideal. It must be *doing* something, must be overcoming obstacles, striving, achieving.

To Question IV., *Do you now feel the question of a future life to be of urgent importance to your mental comfort?* there was a predominance of *noes*—1314 *yesses* out of 3321. Many of the *noes* were very decided; "*not at all*," "*not in the least*," "*never think about it*," being common phrases. And there is reason to believe that many of the *yesses* were from people who answered more or less thoughtlessly, because they vaguely felt that it would be very shocking to say they did not care. Some

¹ F. C. S. Schiller, *Proceedings, S.P.R.*, xvii. p. 426.

minds find it difficult to distinguish between what they do feel and what they think they ought to feel. Sixty per cent., then, and probably more, are not very seriously concerned about the matter. They are content to take things as they come. One world at a time. And this attitude is not to be hastily condemned, for we could not do our work efficiently here if our concern about the future were to become seriously distracting. Still, between serious distraction and reasonable interest there is a considerable step; and, as Dr Schiller remarks, the "frequency of utter absorption in worldly affairs gives one a sort of æsthetic shock."¹

Coming to Question VI.—perhaps the most vital one from the S.P.R. point of view—1706 voted for "knowledge," 749 for "faith," 415 for "ignorance," etc., while 178 were already certain that there is a future life, and 63 were certain that there is not! This certainly shows a majority in favour of "knowledge," but the answers to the other questions show that large deductions must be made. Many of the 1706 did not want a future life, and only sought knowledge on condition that it should turn out negative (225).² Others (123) only want to know on general grounds, or use phrases showing that their desire for knowledge is slight or doubtful; while 64 desire knowledge but believe it to be impossible.

After these and other adjustments, we find that

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 429.

² These are the ones who are suffering in *this* life, no doubt.

681 out of 3218, *i.e.* rather over 21 per cent., may be credited with a desire for scientific knowledge of the possibility of a future life. But even those figures, Dr Schiller thinks, probably exaggerate the importance of the desire. "For they doubtless include the votes of many whose desire to know, though real enough, is not very strong, and would not impel them to inconvenience themselves in order to satisfy it. And, moreover, I shall have to admit that there is a probability that the *questionnaire* has unduly selected those who desire to know, so that about one out of five indicates the *maximum*, but not the probable, strength of the desire."¹

This gives ground for moderate satisfaction, though not for jubilation, to those who see in psychical research a possible avenue to the knowledge in question. Probably the proportion will rise during the next few generations; for I believe that the lack of interest is due, more largely than the *questionnaire* showed, to disbelief in the possibility of knowledge—a particular instance of the general distrust and dislike of science. I well remember an old Sunday-school teacher who used to declaim most emphatically that it was *impossible* to measure the distance of the planets, sun, etc.—presumably because you can't walk to them with a yard-stick or a measuring-tape. No use appealing to this brother for help to endow an observatory! Peace be with him—he is dead

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

now, and I hope he has learnt enough to give up saying that anything is impossible, outside self-contradictory propositions. But the temper of mind for which he stands is not by any means obsolete. There is little real faith in science—little faith in the possibility of the extension of knowledge into places hitherto inaccessible; though the success of its application in the material domain, in marconigrams and aeroplanes, may perhaps help to bring about a better attitude towards its efforts in other directions.

CHAPTER VIII

EXAMPLES OF SENTIMENT REGARDING SURVIVAL

AFTER the foregoing chapter on the subject in general, it may be interesting to consider a few illustrative cases showing how the various types of mind regard the subject. The most striking thing is probably the extent of the diversity. In fact, the more a psychologist studies mental facts as near at hand as possible, the more he is struck with the differences among minds, not only in the domain under discussion at present, but in others as well. We are apt to think, somehow, that though our bodies are recognisably different from each other, our minds are all essentially alike or similar. As to this survival question, Dr Schiller remarks that "the answers exhibited an astounding variety of sentiment, far greater than anything we had expected, prepared though we were for a good deal. In reading them one could not help wondering how persons, whose sentiments were so radically different, yet managed to live together in the same world, and felt assured that a real and literal uniformity of belief, the idol to which bigots and

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fanatics have offered such inhuman sacrifices, was rendered impossible by the psychological constitution of human nature itself."¹

The following answer to the *questionnaire* seems to me a very typical specimen:—

- I. *Yes, if agreeable.*
- IIa. *Certainly not.* IIb. *Yes.* IIc. *Too complicated.*
- III. *Too lazy to think it out.*
- IV. *Not at all.*
- V. *Never thought about it.*
- VI. *Now that attention is called to it, would like to know.*

Remarks: *A stupid and useless inquiry.*

Racy and frank, certainly—two excellent qualities!

Another answerer, typical of many suffering mortals, says: "*My feelings fluctuate too much (to allow of definite answers); when I am ill or unhappy I long for annihilation, when I am stronger and happier I would prefer to live after death.*"

This represents my own position. At all times, I should prefer annihilation to a life such as I have had here; but I am fully aware that my life—fortunately for mankind—has not been a typical one. Though less full of suffering than some that I have known, it has nevertheless contained a much more than average amount (invalidism beginning at twenty-five, and still continuing after thirteen years), and my sentiments are influenced accordingly. At no time, therefore, do I experience any dread or

¹ *Proceedings, S.P.R.*, xvii. p. 436.

horror at the thought of annihilation ; and there are times when I hope and long for it as Myers did for its contrary.

“Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly
please.”¹

Was it not Victor Hugo who, with characteristic French love of life and hatred of dismal things, spoke of man as being “condemned to death, with a sort of indefinite reprieve” ? With me it is the other way round. I think man is condemned to life, which is commuted into death. If the latter is really death, really a cessation of individual consciousness, the commutation amounts to a free pardon ; though, as already indicated in Chapter III., the annihilation would leave somebody or something under the charge of cruelty and injustice. If a single human being suffers more than he deserves—and few would maintain that no such being exists, in spite of Job’s “comforters”—it is impossible to “justify the ways of God to men” on a this-life basis. Nevertheless I repeat that I do often long for extinction. In times of comparative well-being I have a mild desire for survival, if some such state as the one prevailing could be guaranteed ; but the desire for survival is never as strong in the good times, as the desire for annihilation is in the bad ones. Here I may perhaps add—though my own assertion is not evidence—that I am not a morbid or melancholy

¹ Spenser, *Faerie Queene*.

person. I maintain a steady level of cheerfulness, which my friends often remark on, envying me my calm and cheery temperament; and I keep myself busy with literary work, as antidote to possible brooding. Also I am blessed with a sense of humour which saves me from absurd and useless lamentation. My sentiments, then, are probably on the bright side; I think most people with my life would be much more given to the blues.

Perhaps one reason why I feel no distaste for extinction is the fact that extinction is very much preferable to the fate which my early religious teaching indicated would be mine. Oliver Wendell Holmes said he could never quite get from under the shadow of the old orthodox hell, and I am to some extent in similar case. As with the Autocrat, my reason rejects the idea; but it was so hammered into me in the defenceless period of my early youth, that I cannot *quite* get away from it. Mme. de Staël did not believe in ghosts, but she was afraid of them all the same—a bit of very true psychology. And perhaps there is just a glimmer of something which is not exactly belief, but which is a dim notion that, anything being possible, there is just an off-chance that the thing feared—ghosts or hell as the case may be—may turn out to be true. And certainly I was assured many thousands of times that if I would not or could not give my intellectual assent to evangelical doctrines, I should burn in hell for ever. Naturally, I prefer extinction to such a fate as that; and when I contemplate

even the possibility of such an existence, I long for the certainty of annihilation :—¹

"For I think," says Socrates, "that if any one, having selected a night, in which he slept so soundly as not to have had a dream, and having compared this night with all the other nights and days of his life, should be required on consideration to say how many days and nights he had passed better and more pleasantly than this night throughout his life, I think that not only a private person, but even the great king himself would find them easy to number in comparison with other days and nights. If, therefore, death is a thing of this kind, I say it is a gain; for thus all futurity appears to be nothing more than one night."—*Apology*.

If, then, I am charged with morbidity or one-sidedness, I shelter myself behind the great name of him who has been regarded as the wisest of mankind and as the very type of sanity and mental burliness. I might also quote Lucretius, who similarly was no weakling :—

"For as we knew no hurt of old, in ages when the Carthaginian thronged against us in war, and the world was shaken with the shock of fight, and dubious hung the empire over all things mortal by sea and land, even so careless, so unmoved, shall we remain, in days when we shall no more exist, when the bond of body and soul that makes our life is broken. Then naught shall move us, nor wake a single sense, not though earth with sea be mingled, and sea with sky."

Perhaps Lucretius was longing for the certainty

¹ Dr Johnson probably had this feeling, for he had a great fear of death. A few months before he died he said: "As I cannot be sure that I have fulfilled the conditions on which salvation is granted, I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned." Cf. the case of Cowper, also Christina Rossetti (see *Contemporary Review*, March 1911, article "Christina Rossetti," by Ford Madox Hueffer).

of extinction because of the sombre hell-teaching which Mr Lang thinks must have been prevalent. There is little or no evidence for any such teaching in the Roman religion of that day, though the supposition certainly would explain the eager longing of the poet whom some have placed above Virgil. But the longing, the life-weariness, may have been temperamental. We find the same thing in people who have no belief in hell, or who, believing in it, have no fear of it, believing themselves saved. It is curious, for example, to find this life-weariness in so robust and so successful a soul as Martin Luther. One would have expected to find him ready to live on indefinitely. Yet it is on record that he described himself as utterly weary of life; and when, dining one day with the Electress Dowager, she said to him: "Doctor, I wish that you may live forty years to come," he replied: "Madam, rather than live forty years more, I would give up my chance of Paradise."¹

Turning, however, from mere life-weariness to the sentiment regarding extinction or absorption at death rather than continued personal spiritual life, we are reminded of Shelley, concerning whom the greatest poet of the latter part of the nineteenth century writes as follows:—

"One thing prevents *Adonais* from being ideally perfect: its lack of Christian hope. Yet we remember well the writer of a popular memoir of Keats proposing as 'the best consolation for the mind pained by this

¹ James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 137, 138.

sad record' Shelley's inexpressibly sad exposition of Pantheistic immortality:

'He is a portion of that loveliness
Which once he made more lovely, etc.'

What utter desolation can it be that discerns comfort in this hope, whose wan countenance is as the countenance of a despair? Nay, was not indeed *wanhope* the Saxon for despair? What deepest depth of agony is it that finds consolation in this immortality: an immortality which thrusts you into death, the maw of Nature, that your dissolved elements may circulate through her veins."
—*Shelley*, pp. 62, 63.

Apparently Thompson had little or none of Shelley's life-weariness, but it is possible that the foregoing may exaggerate his clinging to personality, for it was written originally for the *Dublin Review* (Catholic), and Thompson might probably be apt to say what he knew he ought as a good Catholic to say, rather than what he honestly thought in his deepest self. A young poet is not the best hand at introspection.

But hear another poet—Swinburne in one of his finest productions, *The Garden of Proserpine*:—

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light;
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;

Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
 Nor days nor things diurnal;
 Only the sleep eternal
 In an eternal night."

On the other hand, another poet, John Addington Symonds, in his early days could not forgo his hopes of future life; he knew "we are not in the scale of saurians and mastodons. We cannot perish like them." But as he grew older and wiser, he lost this lust of personality, and was willing to let the poor self go; yes, more than willing, even anxious and hungering for such absorption. To Henry Sidgwick he wrote in 1887:—

"... Had you gained the proof [of survival, by psychical research methods] this result would have enormously aggravated the troubles of my life, by cutting off the possibility of resumption into the personal unconscious which our present incertitude leaves open to my sanguine hope."

"... Until that immortality of the individual is irrefragably demonstrated, the sweet, the immeasurably precious hope of ending with this life the ache and languor of existence, remains open to burdened human personalities."

Symonds hoped for extinction. Sidgwick apparently hoped for survival, though without much eagerness, and with very little belief. It seems to have been chiefly on ethical grounds that he endorsed Browning's position as stated in *La Saisiaz*:—

"God whose power made man and made man's wants,
 and made, to meet those wants,
 Heaven and earth which, through the body, prove
 the spirit's ministrants,
 Excellently all,—did He lack power or was the will
 in fault

When He let blue heaven be shrouded o'er by vapours
 of the vault,
 Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at the first
 infecting breath
 Of the serpent pains which herald, swarming in, the
 dragon death?

Only grant my soul may carry high through death
 her cup unspilled,
 Brimming though it be with knowledge, life's loss
 drop by drop distilled,
 I shall boast it mine—the balsam, bless each kindly
 wrench that wrung
 From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped the root
 whence pleasure sprung,
 Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and bruised the
 berry, left all grace
 Ashes in death's stern alembic, loosed elixir in its place!

So I hope—no more than hope, but hope—no less than
 hope, because
 I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent
 laws,
 How I may in any instance fix where change should
 meetly fall,
 Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them all:
 —Which again involves as utter change in life thus
 law-released,
 Whence the good of goodness vanished when the ill
 of evil ceased.
 Whereas, life and laws apparent reinstated,—all we
 know,
 All we know not,—O'er our heaven again cloud closes,
 until, lo—
 Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its
 gloom, compelled
 By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else
 beheld,
 I behold in life, so—hope!"

Browning's hope seems to have been based on, or rather to have been the outcome of, his robust optimism and will to live. He was blessed with splendid physical health, and hardly knew what it was to be ill; he had little or no struggle in the way of earning a living, for he was fortunately not dependent on his earnings. Consequently, he missed many experiences; experiences which we would all very gladly miss, of suffering and struggle, but which nevertheless bring their lesson. The man who has lived a smooth and easy life is like the child, playing happily, with unwrinkled brow, unconscious of large tracts of human experience. The Browning type of man always strikes me like that. He lives the life of thought and æsthetics, in a more or less languorous and Paterish or A. C. Bensonish "golden glow" of afternoon suns on lawns "seen from a college window" or from Casa Guidi, and has little conception of the *grim* side of life—the sweat and struggle of the huge majority of the human race. A politician, eldest son of a duke, speaking at a political meeting in St George's Hall, Bradford, not long ago, said: "Now let us consider the case of a poor man with, say, £5000 a year." Laughter and murmurs warned the noble Earl that he had blundered. "Well, say £2000," he amended: evidently this was the very squalidest degree of poverty that was conceivable to him. Then a man in the gallery shouted the adequate reply. "Why, mister," he said, "I've only eighteen bob a week!"

Some of our optimists are in the position of the Earl. Life to them is all beer and skittles. No wonder they want a continuance on the other side of death.¹ But with those who, like Sidgwick, have less robust health and have seen sorrow, and can better estimate the suffering out there in the world, the hope becomes more chastened; becomes indeed more of an intellectual affair, because without it the Scheme of Things seems so utterly wrong. And with men like Symonds, who have tasted the bitterness of thwarted ambitions and long ill-health, the hope of extinction often replaces the hope of survival. As already indicated, my own feelings are almost identical with Symonds's.

Feeling thus, I am naturally impelled to make out a case for the feeling, though somewhat amused by the perception that I am thus impelled. There is no necessity to show that our feelings are "right"; there is even a certain absurdity in it. We feel thus or thus, and no more is needed to be said. But the old habit of justifying ourselves is still strong upon us; we give "reasons" for our beliefs, pretending that the latter are based on the former, whereas it is the other way round—we find ourselves believing this or that, and then we hunt up plausible "reasons" to make the belief look

¹ *E.g.*, Myers says in a letter to his mother: "My own happiness has grown and deepened till one doubts whether it can be good for one to drink such deep and continuous draughts of it." No wonder he wanted to "survive."

respectable. And it is somewhat thus with feelings. But I cannot resist the temptation !

I consider, then, the hope of extinction a higher ethical feeling than the hope of personal immortality, not only because it is the result of a riper experience of life, but because it is less selfish. Roughly speaking, the best moral thought of the historical ages has agreed that unselfishness is the Ideal. Die to live ; renounce thyself. The saints—*e.g.* Francis—renounced the comforts of this world, taking poverty to be their bride, but they did it as a good investment. They expected, like Paul, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in heaven, in return for a few years' physical inconvenience here ; as the Apostles expected to sit on their twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, as payment for their short service here below. Similarly with the martyrs. It was selfishness, but of an enlightened and more far-seeing kind. They were willing to suffer in the immediate present, in order to gain a future of eternal happiness. Anybody would do it, if he believed in the happiness being a sure thing. The difficulty is to believe strongly enough that "the far-off interest of tears" will really be paid. It takes a strong faith to enable us to "reach a hand through Time" far enough to grasp the interest. The saints and martyrs could do it. They had faith. But they were making an investment. They were not *giving*. In other words, their actions were not unselfish.

In the case of Symonds, taking him as a type, the ethical attitude is nobler. He has overcome the lust of personality, is content to renounce *himself*. Ibsen, in *Peer Gynt*, is probably mainly satirising Norse weaknesses, but there are other interpretations, more or less intended; and the dismay of Peer, when the Button Moulder proposed to melt him up again in the casting-ladle, is a true presentment of the average Christian sentiment:—

“I won’t be deprived of one doit of my Self this casting-ladle business, this Gynt cessation—it stirs up my innermost soul in revolt.”

Is not Symonds’s attitude nobler and more truly Christian than this feverish clinging to self? But, on the other hand, it may be said that he was selfish also, because he wanted to get away from suffering. Well, perhaps so. But I think it is hardly possible to call that selfish, or to blame anyone for it. The positive hankering after happiness is surely a very different thing from the hope of being freed from a heavy burden. If both are selfish, it will at least be admitted that the latter is of a very pardonable kind.

Willingness to renounce personality, then, is noble, or at least is morally higher than the selfish grasp at continued happiness. But, I repeat, such extinction cannot be seen as right and just so long as the earth-life brings undeserved suffering to a single human soul. If we are to hold an optimistic and rational scheme of things, personal survival must be a part of it.

CHAPTER IX

MYSTICISM : CATHOLIC EXAMPLES

THUS far, though indeed arriving at the perception that intellectual opinion (creed) is less operative on character than has sometimes been thought, we have treated such opinion as at least an important feature. We have treated religion as an affair which it is desirable to rationalise. We have assumed, more or less, that our religious beliefs, and our general attitude towards life, must be approved by reason; must be capable of being shown to fit in, in an intellectual kind of way, with the body of our general knowledge; from which it follows that no religious scheme of things is possible without a scientifically grounded belief in a future life. And, from the typical modern point of view, this is the right way to look at it.

But there is another way of looking at it. There is another point of view, from which the prospect is very different. This point of view is occupied by the mystic, by the *converti*, the saint, the seer, the illuminated. Seen from this standpoint, religion is not an affair of intellect at all; it is an affair of *spiritual experience*. The soul's search

for God—if haply it may feel after Him and find Him—is a process quite different from the philosophical or scientific activity of the mind. Intellectual methods of obtaining truth are all very well, but there is another which yields far greater certainty, the method of the mystic, namely. We may have attained a rational basis for religion by finding scientific evidence for a future life, but we have got no further. We cannot even say that the new knowledge will necessarily make anyone any better. We can only say that we have provided a certain kind of intellectual satisfaction by showing that our moral notions of what “ought” to be, can be fitted into a rational scheme of things. But this, though an achievement, will not of itself regenerate the soul. Is any advance possible, by routes other than the intellectual? Can a plane be reached in which we can see as well as know? The mystic’s answer is an emphatic *yes*; and he further affirms that this great advance means a complete regeneration—a new birth into a higher state of being. To him, the wisdom of this world (scientific, intellectual) is but foolishness. He has seen and traversed a more excellent way. “The heart has its reasons which the intellect knows nothing of.”

And, as it happens, the rationality of mysticism—if the paradox be permitted—is now receiving much support from that same psychical research which, as we saw, is making religion again possible for the “intellectuals.” Mr Gladstone once remarked, on becoming an honorary member of the Society for

Psychical Research, that the work of the Society was "the most important work that is being done in the world—by far the most important"; and when we note how that work is from two sides opening a way into regions from which a chill and narrow materialism had all but excluded us, the eulogy may seem perhaps not too emphatic.

Psychical research is bringing to light many facts which compel us to assume the existence of an extensive mental region of which our ordinary waking consciousness knows nothing. We are like icebergs, which float with only one-twelfth of their bulk above water; the larger portion being hidden, invisible, unknown, except by inference. This subliminal (below the threshold) part of our minds seems to have many peculiar powers. Under certain vaguely known conditions it can obtain access to stores of natural knowledge which are not at the moment within range of the known senses—can see the death of a friend at a distance, or even the exact details of a future event. This subliminal region seems also to adjoin and communicate with some unknown Source of power as well as of knowledge, for the cures of our medical hypnotists and mental-therapeutists are inexplicable on ordinary physical lines.

If, then, natural facts can be ascertained, and natural power acquired, by this subliminal part of the mind, why not transcendental facts and transcendental powers also? May not the hidden part of the mind be the more important? May we not

have been wrong in cultivating the normal consciousness to the exclusion of the subconscious powers? May not the Eastern Yogi, with his postures and his asceticism and his trances, have more right on his side than the Western man of science supposes? Evidently there is a real dilemma here. Hitherto Reason, the activity of the mind when it observes, classifies, analyses, and argues, has been our God; to it we have sworn fealty, to it we have felt that undivided allegiance is due. But now that very Reason, by the exercise of its theory-evolving power — in its endeavour to explain facts—has dethroned itself. It has been driven to assign to itself a subordinate part; has been forced to place the more wonderful powers of the mind in its subliminal levels. The supraliminal self has been differentiated from the other part, has been selected from the main body, and is, relatively to the whole, unimportant. It has been gradually adapted, by evolution, to meet the needs of its temporary earthly environment, and the truth which it can acquire is very limited in extent. It is the ripple on a wave, the foam on a curling breaker, brought into being by the exigencies of a moment, soon to fall back into the greater mass from which it was born—not to become non-existent, but to disappear; to retain its content, but to give up its form. Our total existence is cosmic; our conscious existence planetary:—

“Borné dans sa nature, infini dans ses vœux,
L'homme est un dieu tombé qui se souvient des cieux.”

The mystic, thinking somewhat thus, is contemptuous of mere reason. Like Wordsworth, he feels that "we are greater than we know." In his times of exaltation, he reaches a state of consciousness—is caught up into a third heaven—which is its own proof of its superiority to the normal state. With Emerson's seer, he says to the thinker, "All that you know, I see," and more too. He feels that he has somehow entered into possession of more being; has more fully realised his complete self; has even touched on Divinity; has "seen God." To this man, the dry "evidences of survival" are a weariness if not an abomination.

And not only psychical research, but also modern philosophy, is tending to produce a mental climate friendly to the mystical way of looking at things. The whole pragmatic movement represented by Peirce, Dewey, James, Schiller, Bergson, Papini, and others, is more or less favourable to the revival of the feeling side of religion, for it directs its main attack against closed systems, cut-and-dried explanations of the universe. It claims for philosophy a wider sweep; claims that Truth is not altogether an intellectual sort of affair, to be reached by mechanical adding, subtracting, or arguing (which is a kind of arithmetic of words, and out of which you get what you put in, no more, no less), but may also be a *mystical* sort of affair, reached by a change in the kind of consciousness experienced.

To many good folks, this kind of talk is hardly

comprehensible. They know but one kind of consciousness. The mystic understands it, and says that no language can adequately describe the essential superiority of the mystical over the everyday consciousness. Indeed, he is a little apt to develop spiritual pride, and to be supercilious and patronising towards those who have not "attained." Sometimes he sets up as a hierophant of mysteries, claiming the possession of absolute truth, like Mrs Eddy or—still more so—Eckartshausen, who, in *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary*, indulges in the most astonishing spiritual bounce, reminding us of the lunatic correspondents with whose lucubrations most public men and writers are familiar. One of these gentry recently informed me, with the most awe-inspiring solemnity, that he was the greatest genius the world has ever seen, and that he had the most astounding revelations to make. I did not reply. The gentleman did protest too much. I have since heard that he now has a male attendant.

But between the outrageous crank and the shrugging everyday-consciousness man in the street, there is a class which has a dim notion that there may be something in this different-consciousness idea. Many who have had no definitely mystical experiences, can nevertheless to some extent enter into the feeling of the poet when inspired, whether it be by the crimson blaring of the sunset shawms as heard by Francis Thompson, the nature-pageantry seen by Wordsworth or Goethe (*Tintern Abbey*, etc.; *Faust*, pt. i., l. 711), or the

pealing organ, the storied windows richly dight, the dim cathedral spaces, sung by the mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies himself. This kind of feeling, roused by Nature or by great poetry, is akin to the mystic consciousness, and may serve as a kind of half-way house. Many of us who have no mystical experiences of a religious kind, can enter at second hand and in smaller measure into the feelings of the poet, and can realise that here is a kind of consciousness which is very different from that in which a stock-exchange broker finds himself when calculating the probability or otherwise of a dividend on Grand Trunk Third Preference. And we feel that it is a more *desirable* kind of consciousness. We are consequently disposed to admit the possibility of this rapt feeling being carried further, to an unknown extent; and we can read pagan or Christian mystics, Plotinus or Saint John of the Cross, with sympathy and moderate understanding.

The mystical state, then, though incommunicable in its full intensity, may at least be *studied* from outside. We are not like blind men studying landscape from hearsay—as some mystics tell us—for we can at least see a little. And it is only from outside that we know *anything* of the mental phenomena of our fellow-beings; for, after all, we know nothing about another's mind except what we learn from sensory communications, whether that mind is describing its impressions of divine ecstasy or its impressions of a football match. We

apply ourselves, then, to the narratives of those who have had the kind of experience in question. William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*—the first two books to deal with the subject scientifically—are so well known that I will choose other sources for the majority of my illustrative cases. The following examples of mediæval mysticism are from Father Poulain's *Graces of Interior Prayer*, an erudite, readable, and fairly tolerant work, containing much interesting material.

"I used to have at times, as I have said, though it used to pass quickly away,—certain *commencements* of that which I am now going to describe . . . and sometimes even when I was reading,—*a feeling of the presence of God* would come over me unexpectedly so that I *could in no wise doubt, either that He was within me, or that I was wholly absorbed in Him*"¹ (p. 73).

¹ The deliberate "practice of the Presence of God" is employed by many Protestants also:—

"Set aside daily a period for really intense thinking into God, for deepening by definite mental practice your consciousness of union with God ; practise the realisation of the presence of God ; think yourself consciously into that presence in which you always are unconsciously. With very little practice it will become a thrilling reality to you. From that standpoint you are able to become for the time being a spectator of yourself. You will be able to say, 'My real self is one with God. God is the "power that worketh in me."' . . . When we can thus think ourselves into conscious union with the indwelling and all-surrounding Divine, if only for a short time, the whole being is flooded with an unshakable trust in Eternal goodness, fidelity, and love ; the illusions of fear, of sin, of pain, of weakness, pass away like a cloud. Moreover, at that moment the barrier between differing spheres and worlds melts away, and we penetrate into the thought-atmosphere of our loved ones in the spirit dimension, who are ever near us though unseen, and from these periods we go back to the stern necessary discipline of life filled with the assurance : 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until

This is a description of the early experiences of Saint Teresa (*Life*, chap. x.), whose writings are classics in mystical theology. The feelings described occurred when she was about twenty, before her definite conversion.

The following is an experience of the next stage higher, so to speak :—

"Once when B. Joseph was buried in these meditations, he stood at night at the window of the sacristy, and gazed at the rising moon and stars. And a great longing seized him that he might see Creation as it is in the eyes of God; so he said to the Creator: 'Oh dear Lord, Thou Creator of all things, although, so long as I remain here in Babylon, I can only see Thee dimly through a glass, yet wilt Thou give me such a knowledge of Thy creation, by which I may know and love Thee better.' And as he stood there praying, he was suddenly raised above himself in such a wonderful manner that he could not afterwards account for it, and the Lord revealed to him the whole beauty and glory of the firmament and of every created thing, so that his longing was fully satisfied. But afterwards, when he came to himself, the Prior could get nothing more out of him than that he had received such unspeakable rapture from his perfect knowledge of the creation, that it was beyond human understanding."—Poulain, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

The following seems to be an example of the beatific vision of Dante. It is natural that these transcendental experiences should confirm the prevalent theology. As we shall see later, the mystic sees the truth which he believes. If he is a trinitarian, he sees trinitarian mysteries; if he that day? What day? That happy day when through that which in our blindness we call death, the passage to the higher condition, the gate of life, we enter into light, and all 'shadows flee away.'"—Archdeacon Wilberforce, *The Hope of Glory*.

is a unitarian, he experiences contact with the One God, with just as much rapture as his fellow-ecstatic of a different doctrinal persuasion.

Says Blessed Angela of Foligno, speaking of raptures :—

“And this manifestation of God I have had more than a thousand times, and each time in a new and other and different manner from the time before. . . . It was also said unto me that the aforesaid unutterable manifestation of God *is the good which the Saints possess in life eternal,—nor is this good other than the aforesaid*, but there it is another kind of experience and only different from the aforesaid that the least saint who possesses least thereof in life eternal hath more than can be given unto any soul in this present life, before the death of the body” (*Visions and Instructions*, ch. xxvii).—Poulain, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

Another, similarly recalling the *Paradiso* :—

“I am often favoured with a very sublime prayer, in which I see the adorable Trinity by an intellectual vision. *I see in an inexplicable manner all that faith teaches us* concerning one God in Three Persons, and my soul is inundated with a torrent of delights, which makes all that is not God contemptible to me. . . . I have *no doubt* that the good that I enjoy is *God Himself*” (*Vie de la Mère Suzanne Lévêque*, of Les Filles de Notre Dame (1695–1760), by Dom Louis Lévêque (Lethielleux, 1893).—Poulain, p. 271.

This vision of the Blessed Trinity is fairly common. It was experienced by Jacob Boehme, also by St Ignatius, who saw how the “Second and Third Person were in the Father.” “My mind,” says Ignatius, “is so vividly enlightened, that long courses of study, so it seemed to me, could not have taught me as much. . . . I believed

that I had almost nothing more to learn on the subject of the Most Blessed Trinity" (*Vie*, by Bartoli, book v. ch. iv.).—Poulain, p. 271.

This great learning, however, remains in the dim background of the subconscious, and does not show in increased intellectual knowledge or power. Indeed, in spite of the energy and organising power of a few mystics like St Teresa and St Catherine of Siena, it seems that the majority of these people were feeble-minded. Blessed Mary of the Incarnation, Carmelite, was so favoured by the graces (as a religious might say), or was so nearly imbecile (as a physician might say), that she had next to no memory :—

"This attraction, which she had from the age of twenty-two, not only prevented her from reading, but also *from praying vocally*, having so little power in this respect that she could not say more than a single *Ave* without great difficulty. Walking out in the meadows with her, I have seen her begin to recite her rosary with her eldest daughter, and be unable to say the first *Ave* without at once going out of herself" (*Vie*, by André du Val, book ii. ch. xiii.).—Poulain, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

Examples of this kind can be culled to any extent from the lives of the saints. Father Poulain gives a good collection of samples from about fifty hagiologies. I quote from him lest it should be said that I draw from hostile sources. He is a member of the Society of Jesus, and his book has the *imprimatur* of the Roman authority.

CHAPTER X

MYSTICISM : PROTESTANT AND OTHER EXAMPLES

THESE experiences become less striking and less frequent after the Reformation. But they still occur. The following is an example.

Hannah Smith was brought up in a Quaker atmosphere, but was unable to work up the proper religious feeling. From sixteen to twenty-six her religion was "nothing but a religion of trying to feel." Then came the illumination or conversion :—

"Suddenly something happened to me. What it was or how it came I had no idea, but somehow an inner eye seemed to be opened in my soul, and I seemed to see that after all God was a fact—the bottom fact of all facts—and that the only thing to do was to find out all about Him. It was not a pious feeling such as I had been looking for, but it was a conviction—just such a conviction as comes to one when a mathematical problem is suddenly solved. One does not feel that it is solved, but one knows it, and there can be no further question."¹

¹ *My Spiritual Autobiography*, by Hannah Whitall Smith. New York: Fleming H. Revell & Co., 1908. Quoted in *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1909, p. 557, in an interesting article by George Hodges. Cf. Augustine's *Confessions*, bk. 8, chap. xii., for sudden vision and dispelling of all doubt. Also

Further study of the Bible resulted in another flash of revelation that God was somehow or other in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. "There need be no searchings within, or raking up of one's inward feelings to make things right with God. Christ had made them right, and we had nothing to do but to accept it all as a free gift from Him."

This is a fairly typical instance of modern Christian experience. Accounts of this kind could be multiplied indefinitely.

The experience, however, is not necessarily associated with the name of Christ. Striking examples could be quoted from the literature of Unitarianism. As, for instance:—

"I had a revelation last Friday evening. I was at Mary's, and happening to say something of the presence of spirits (of whom, I said, I was often dimly aware), Mr Putnam entered into an argument with me on spiritual matters. As I was speaking, the whole system rose up before me like a vague Destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of Something, I knew not what.

"I cannot tell you what this revelation was. I have not yet studied it enough. But I shall perfect it one day, and then you shall hear it and acknowledge its grandeur. It embraces all other systems."¹

Newman in the *Apologia*: "... I was then, and still am, more certain of my inward conversion than that I had hands and feet. My conversion was such that it made me rest in the thought of two and two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator."

¹ James Russell Lowell, by Ferris Greenslet, pp. 47, 48.

Lowell's mother—whose mind eventually became disordered—was of Orkney stock, and much given to dreaming and faerie-seeing. He often spoke of his being compounded of very dissimilar elements, one half mystic and the other half practical Yankee. "If I had lived as solitary as a hermit of the Thebais, I doubt not that I should have had as authentic interviews with the Evil One as they, and, without any disrespect to the saint, it would have taken very little to have made a Saint Francis of me. Indeed, during that part of my life which I lived most alone, I was never a single night unvisited by visions, and once I thought I had a personal revelation from God Himself."¹

This is Christian in form and atmosphere, as was inevitable in one of Lowell's upbringing, but it is Unitarian. It appears, however,—and this is one of the most important discoveries of comparative religion—that the essential features of this experience are not peculiar to Christianity. They are found in other religions: in Hinduism, Mohammedanism (Sufi sect, chiefly), Taoism, and probably every existing system of faith. As illustration, the Buddhistic parallel may be cited:—

(After Gotama's struggle towards attainment comes the ultimate ecstasy.) "This is uniformly described as a mental stage of exaltation, bliss, insight, altruism. The different Suttas emphasise different phases, different facets as it were, of this condition. But they regard it

¹ *James Russell Lowell*, by Ferris Greenslet, p. 163.

as one and the same upheaval of the whole mental and moral nature—will, emotion, and intellect being equally concerned. Thus one Sutta (the Maha-saccaka) lays stress on the four raptures, and the three forms of knowledge; another (the Dvedhâ-vitakka), on the certainty, the absence of doubt; another (the Bhayabherava), on the conquest over fear and agitation; another (the Ariya-pariyesanâ), on the bliss and security of the Nirvana to which he then attained. . . . And no one of all the experiences described in these accounts is, in the canonical books, confined to the Buddha. Each of them is related, in other passages, of one or other of the men and women who afterwards adopted the new teaching and fell under its influence. These conditions are constituent parts of the state of mind called Arahatsip. They all recur in the standard description, repeated in so many of the Dialogues, of the manner in which Arahatsip is reached. And the sum of them is, in this connection, called Nirvana, one of many epithets of Arahatsip."¹

Here we find the same peace, the same calm joy, that attends the Christian conversion of Hannah Smith; yet here is no propitiatory sacrifice, no Trinity—nay, even no God. The mystical state evidently does not depend necessarily on theistic belief. We may at this point begin to suspect that perhaps it is not necessarily connected with belief at all. And, when we look round for evidence on the point, the suspicion is confirmed.

The psychological state of the mystic arises in different people as the result of different causes. With Emerson it was aroused by Nature; and, though he uses theological terms, he is hardly to

¹ *Early Buddhism*, T. W. Rhys Davids, pp. 35 and foll.

be claimed as a believer, by any of the creedal churches:—

“Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. . . . Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.” (*Nature*.)¹

When we remember *Tintern Abbey* and how communion with Nature enabled Wordsworth to “see into the life of things,” we can understand how it was that J. S. Mill, after a period of typical depression and stress, attained salvation by reading the latter’s poetry. It helped him to feel the soul of Nature bathing and inspiring his own, as Emerson felt it. Tyndall, again, in *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, describes similar feelings experienced when among scenes in which it seemed “incongruous, if not profane,” to allow the scientific faculty to interfere “where silent worship seemed the reasonable service.” Yet Tyndall was not religious in the ordinary sense of the word. He was agnostic. Certainly no Christian church could claim him.

John Addington Symonds, already quoted as desiring annihilation at death, had a curious mystical experience (under chloroform), which

¹ Thoreau, in *Walden*, describes experiences similarly initiated (Riverside edition, p. 206).

resembled Hannah Smith's in being theistic, but differed from it and resembled Lowell's revelation and Emerson's Nature-feelings in being, so to speak, Unitarian :—

" . . . My soul became aware of God, who was manifestly dealing with me, handling me, so to speak, in an intense personal present reality. I felt Him streaming in like light upon me, and heard Him saying in no language, but as hands touch hands and communicate sensation, 'I led you, I guided you; you will never sin, and weep, and wail in madness any more.' . . . "

The experience was more or less obliterated by the exercise of Symonds's acute and sceptical waking mind, but it left an impression remarkable for such a mind as his. (See his vivid and lengthy description in H. F. Brown's *John Addington Symonds: A Biography*, p. 293.) Others can even "attain" through mathematics, which to most people is an exceptionally uninspiring region :—

"This condition of Inspiration, direct Intuition, or Enthusiasm,—some approach to what is meant by 'seeing God,'—is but transitory, and may be rare, but it can be induced by a great variety of instrument. A few attain it during the contemplation of law and order enshrined in a mathematical expression, or in some comprehensive philosophic formula; but to many the transfiguring and revealing experience is heralded by the song of birds, by sunshine upon grass, by the wind in tree-tops, or by the wild solitude of mountains."—Sir Oliver Lodge, *Man and the Universe*, p. 123.

This again reminds us of Wordsworth, who felt the presence "in the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air." The attitude is reverent and mystical, though pagan. It is not

necessarily bound up with any system of dogma or intellectual creed-formularies. Jefferies had the same feelings, and describes them in that remarkable rhapsody *The Story of My Heart*, pp. 8, 9, 45, 181, etc. William Sharp, also (*Memoir*, pp. 84, 93, 187, 227). Tennyson even induced a kind of trance state by repeating his own name—in which the bonds of personality were loosed, and certainty attained.¹

It may, however, be objected that these are unfair comparisons; that Christian experience, or at least religious experience of some kind, is different from experiences which are unconnected with sacred objects of belief. It is different in its connotations, of course. But it does not seem to be psychologically different in essence. If space allowed, it would be easy to quote examples leading so gradually from Catholic mysticism to purely pagan illuminations such as Whitman's—through Protestant orthodoxy, Wesleyan, Quaker, Independent, and other dissent, Unitarianism, agnosticism—it would be easy, I say, to move from one end to the other so gradually that it would be impossible to draw a line satisfactorily to divide the experiences into different psychological classes. They are obviously closely akin.

They occur, as already remarked, even outside religion. It has been related by many people (one example has already been quoted) that while under

¹ *Memoirs of Alfred Tennyson*, ii. p. 473. Cf. his *Ancient Sage*, in which he embodies the experience.

the influence of anæsthetics they have experienced something of the nature of a revelation. This revelation is remarkably like the feeling that is described by *converties* like Hannah Smith, by Emerson and Whitman, and by mystics of all kinds, Buddhist, pagan, or what not. Professor (now Sir William) Ramsay describes in interesting fashion his own experience when taking various drugs (chloroform, ether, or nitrous oxide, usually) for the sake of experiment:—

“An overwhelming impression forced itself upon me that the state in which I then was, was reality; that now I had reached the true solution of the secret of the universe, in understanding the secret of my own mind; that all outside objects were merely passing reflections on the eternal mirror of my mind; some more, some less transient. . . . The main and impressive fact for me was that *I* was self-existent, and that time and space were illusions. This was the real *Ego*, on whose surface ripples of incident arose, to fade and vanish like the waves on a pond. . . . Each time I am under the influence of an anæsthetic I am able to penetrate a little further into the unfathomable mystery. . . . All doubts vanish; I *know* the truth of Berkeley's theory of existence. . . .

“The recollection, which remains after return to the ordinary state of mind, of *having had* such Berkeleian views, is, perhaps naturally, not without some influence on the normal mind; and, as I have said, it appears to me not wholly absurd to reconsider the usual postulates of ‘common sense.’”¹

Here the certainty was great while the abnormal state lasted, and, though dimmed, it persisted to

¹ *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. ix. pp. 237 and 243.

some extent in the normal state of mind. In the next case we see it persisting in full force:—

"This has been my moral sustenance since I have known it. In my first printed mention of it" (*i.e.* the anæsthetic revelation) "I declared: 'The world is no more the alien terror that was taught me. Spurning the cloud-grimed and still sultry battlements whence so lately Jehovan thunders boomed, my gray gull lifts her wing against the nightfall, and takes the dim leagues with a fearless eye.' And now, after twenty-seven years of this experience, the wing is grayer, but the eye is fearless still, while I renew and doubly emphasise that declaration. I know—as having known—the meaning of existence; the sane centre of the universe—at once the wonder and the assurance of the soul—for which the speech of reason has as yet no name but the Anæsthetic Revelation."¹

Similar experiences are described by many others. Professor James speaks of himself as being overwhelmed by an "exciting sense of an intense metaphysical illumination. Truth lies open to the view in depth beneath depth of almost blinding evidence." This was under nitrous oxide. Dr Holmes had an almost identical experience. "The veil of eternity was lifted. The one great truth, that which underlies all human experience, and is the key to all the mysteries that philosophy has sought in vain to solve, flashed upon me in a sudden revelation. Henceforth all was clear: a few words had lifted my intelligence to the level of the knowledge of the cherubim. As my natural condition returned, I remembered my resolution,

¹ James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 396.—B. P. Blood quoted.

and staggering to my desk, I wrote, in ill-shaped, straggling characters, the all-embracing truth still glimmering in my consciousness. The words were there (children may smile; the wise will ponder): 'A strong smell of turpentine prevails throughout.'"¹

De Quincey, similarly, speaks of the "abyss of divine enjoyment" which he plunged into when under the influence of opium. The feeling, he says, is different from that of alcoholism: ". . . A man who is inebriated, or tending to inebriation, is, and feels that he is, in a condition which calls up into supremacy the merely human, too often the brutal, part of his nature: but the opium-eater (I speak of him who is not suffering from any disease, or other remote effects of opium) feels that the diviner part of his nature is paramount; that is, the moral affections are in a state of cloudless serenity; and over all is the great light of the majestic intellect."

Attempts have been made, as by Father Poulain in his already cited erudite work, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, p. 264, to prove that these states are generically distinct from the true mystic ecstasy. There are, of course, differences; but the differences seem superficial and the resemblances fundamental. Dr Holmes's was a real revelation while it lasted, and the fact that his conscious attempt to put it into words proved futile and absurd, has no bearing on its reality. He failed to bring the revelation

¹ Jastrow, *The Subconscious*, p. 251.

"through." Similarly, the mystic who in ecstasy comprehends the Blessed Trinity, admittedly is unable to "bring through" his comprehension and to clothe it in words. Naturally, the Jesuit Father, committed to the theology of his Church, must try to distinguish; for according to his view the mystic ecstasy is supernaturally caused (by God), while the other kinds are "natural." But I think that no psychologist who follows the evidence, uninfluenced by theological preconceptions, will see any necessity for such distinction.

Of course this view carries with it no anti-religious implications. It is rather the other way; for it allows of all Nature being regarded as divine—the living garment of God, as Goethe has it—whereas the Catholic rules God out of the "natural" phenomena, these apparently being beneath His notice. It allows of this "immanence," if we are theologically disposed.

CHAPTER XI

THE TEST OF MYSTICISM

THE consideration and quotation of these cases may seem to have led us from the point at issue. The apparent digression was, however, necessary; but we may now return.

It was alleged, against rationalistic explanations of the universe (*i.e.* philosophy), and against the aims of psychical research in particular, that religion is not an intellectual affair, but is a matter of spiritual experience. On investigation, however, we find that the spiritual experience which is relied on or pointed to is not a monopoly of any one religion, and even that something which is psychologically indistinguishable from it may be produced by natural scenery, by mathematical expressions, or by drugs. It appears, therefore, that the psychological state in itself is not in any special way deserving of admiration. It is evoked by various agencies, some of which—like the chloroform and nitrous oxide—have no exceptional sanctity. When evoked by these latter, we do not call the

state "religious," nor do we regard it as desirable—we, that is, who have not experienced it. Why, then, should the same or a similar state be regarded as specially sacred or exalted, when it happens to be associated with objects which traditionally do call for reverence? In other words, the mystical or "converted" state of mind, considered philosophically, is no warrant, in itself, that further truth has been attained. It is a form of exaltation, an abnormal psychological state, and that is all; it is not necessarily a result of a further penetration into the secret places of the universe—as Dr Bucke in *Cosmic Consciousness* endeavours to prove—and it must not be accepted off-hand at the valuation which its experiencers place upon it. The assurance which they feel is, no doubt, genuine enough, but this subjective certainty must not be allowed to influence us unduly. Professor Ramsay was immensely sure of the truth of Berkeleyanism when under chloroform—much surer than he was of the opposite opinion when normal—and it is also a noticeable fact that the chief feature of the typical crank is his intense cocksureness. The "British Israelite," for example, is ineffably convinced that we Britishers are descended from the Ten Lost Tribes, and it is a matter of honestly intense and enduring astonishment to him that other people cannot see it. No doubt Lord Kingsborough, who proved in nine bulky volumes that the descendants of the Tribes are the present Mexicans, would be equally astonished by the British Israelite's inability

to see *his* proof.¹ But these people do bring forward evidence of sorts, even if they misconstrue it. The inner-consciousness person rises superior to evidence, which is a mere affair of the lower intellect. Accordingly, Mrs Besant, in her usual *ex cathedrâ* manner and with her usual charm of literary style, assures us—among other things—that Jesus is again incarnated and is living in a body somewhere in “the mountains of Lebanon,” that Francis Bacon is also once more with us—in a Hungarian body,—that a new continent is going to appear in the Pacific Ocean, to serve as home for the “fifth race”;² while Dr Rudolph Steiner (the most able and influential theosophist after Mrs Besant) discourses *ore rotundo* on the History and Civilisation of the Submerged Continents of Atlantis and Lemuria, which history he transcribes from the “Akâshic Records.”³ I have no doubt about the sincerity of these people, but their Pope-like style seems to indicate a lack of humour and perspective. It does not seem to occur to them that they can be mistaken. And their revelations, after all, are not particularly original. Mr Rider Haggard or Miss Corelli could do much better.

Similarly with the various productions of auto-

¹ *Antiquities of Mexico*, 9 vols., London, 1831. The amiable William Whiston proved the *Tartars* to be the Tribes—in fact, they have been found nearly everywhere, from Lapland to Afghanistan, from China to Peru.

² *Bibby's Annual*, 1910.

³ *The Submerged Continents of Atlantis and Lemuria*, Theosophical Publishing Co., 1911.

matic faculty. The spiritualist too often accepts these as heaven-sent messages, just as the Roman Catholic mystic believes in the supernatural and, indeed, Divine causation of ecstasy. Both must be criticised and evaluated by reason. If a trance speech or an automatic script contains nothing that cannot be accounted for by normal causes, we must not assume anything further. We must not be led into supposing, from the mere fact of the product coming from no conscious part of the mind, that it comes from an external source. Even if it somewhat transcends the sensitive's normal powers in the way of expression, or—though this is more serious—contains facts which he or she does not consciously know, we must still be very wary. The subconscious memory probably contains many forgotten facts; and it is a good actor, as any hypnotic performer can show. It is therefore desirable to cultivate a robustly critical attitude towards these productions.

It is curious to note the amount of certainty and exaltation which sometimes accompanies these subliminal uprushes. For example, in the following case reported by Edward Carpenter in his *Art of Creation*, p. 17 :—

“An acquaintance of mine, who was accustomed to keep a pencil and paper by his bedside for such occasions, told me that he once woke in the night feeling himself drenched with a sense of seraphic joy and satisfaction, while at the same time a lovely stanza which he had just dreamed lingered in his mind. Quickly he wrote it down, and immediately fell asleep again. In the morning,

waking, after a while he bethought himself of the precious experience, and turning to look at the words, which he doubted not would make his name immortal, he read:—

‘Walker with one eye,
Walker with two,
Something to live for,
And nothing to do.’”

This reminds us of Dr Holmes’s “strong smell of turpentine” just quoted. The “seraphic” feeling is no certificate of the value of the revelation. The subliminal, as Myers has said, is part rubbish-heap and part king’s treasury. We may credit it with having something to do with the inspirations of genius—with the picture which a Rafael sees in his mind’s eye before it is painted, with the line which a Shelley or Keats hears before it is written—but it is also the source of much balderdash. And the feeling may be the same in each case. Haydon had the feelings of genius, without power of production; probably one of the greatest tragedies of life, leading logically to suicide in front of a picture, as it did with him.

The religious experience is always held up as a kind of proof of the doctrine. It is so for the mystic himself, but it ought not to be so for anyone else. We ought to stand on our own experience. We may believe that a mystic has had experiences of a kind different from our own, but we must not uncritically accept his explanation of them. Mystical experiences come to men of all creeds and of no creed. One more example may be given, to prove

that they are not necessarily religious, as the word is commonly understood, Nietzsche, the modern Antichrist, the all-shatterer, had his revelation like the mystics. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was mostly written in the open air, among mountain solitudes, in a state of inspiration :—

“The condition can only be described by the notion of revelation, in the sense that suddenly, with unspeakable sureness and subtlety, something becomes visible, audible, which stirs and upheaves you from your inmost depths. You hear—you do not seek; you take without asking who gives; a thought flashes upon you like a lightning-stroke, inevitable, allowing no hesitation as to form—I have never had any choice.”

And Miss Maud Joynt, herself disagreeing profoundly with the Nietzschean philosophy, admits that “it is impossible to read the book without feeling this note of genuine inspiration, coming from a source deeper than mere intellectual belief or ratiocination” (*The Quest*, April 1911).

Subjective certainty, subjective feeling of any kind, is, then, no warrant of the actual truth of any proposition. Professor James admits and indeed affirms this, but nevertheless holds that ecstasy or mystical states in general do probably indicate a real vision, a real extension of a kind of cognition. It seems to me rather perilous to admit this without careful moral distinction. Mystical religious states often seem analogous to anæsthetic or even alcoholic drunkenness, or to hallucination, and are therefore to be deprecated. They bring new *experience*, but is it a kind of experience

that it is desirable to encourage? Do they bring airs from heaven, or blasts from — well, from the “astral confusion-plane,” at least? What reagent can we employ as the test? How are we to decide?

As already remarked, we live in a practical age, not only as to material welfare, but also in philosophy and religion. Accordingly, let us test the mystical state by pragmatic methods. What are its fruits? Are they mostly evil, as Dr Schiller—reviewing Professor James’s *Varieties*—seems to think.¹ Are people better, as it is usual among the religious to suppose, after these regenerating and at-one-ing experiences? Do their interrelations with their environment show improvement? The answers to these questions will not influence the mystic directly, but they will influence our attitude towards mysticism in general, and, the mystic consciousness and temperament being (like all others) more or less susceptible to encouragement or disapproval, the attitude of the outsider is not an altogether negligible quantity.

But the test is difficult of application. Data are needed which have not yet been collected. Dr Starbuck’s *Psychology of Religion* indicates the kind of statistics required. We want biographies of converted or “illuminated” individuals—full biographies, from birth to death—in order that we may judge the effect of the conversion. Failing this, it would be interesting and instructive to

¹ *Proceedings, S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. p. 410.

have the opinions of careful and unprejudiced observers (if such there be) as to the cases known to them. Let them size up their friends and acquaintances, sorting out the "once-born" from the "twice-born," and let us be told how they compare. And, demanding this, I suppose I must practise what I preach, and must give the results of my own observations.

I must premise, however, that my acquaintance is not large enough to supply data for reliable generalisation, and that I therefore draw no general conclusions. I merely state the results of limited observations, and am prepared to see those results overbalanced by the observations of others whose surroundings are different. This said, I go on to affirm that the definitely twice-born people known to me are not eminently admirable characters. The obvious retort, of course, is that my opinion is due to my own unregenerateness; the sinner does not appreciate the saint; a hero is not heroic to his valet, not because the hero is not a hero, but because the valet is a valet; and so on. But it is not merely a matter of subjective likes and dislikes. It is a matter of objective fact. I find that the twice-born are less honest in fulfilling business obligations, less reliable in carrying out promises, in telling the scrupulous truth, in punctilious justice in the minor matters of life, than the once-born. It so happens that I count among my friends several vigorous anti-religionists. Their views vary from a rampant Haeckelianism

to a more philosophical agnosticism of Huxleyan or Spencerian type. I dissent from their opinions at many points, and am not prepared to assert that these good fellows are exceptionally mellow in nature. They are rather inconsiderate and unsympathetic. They are a trifle too assertive and combative; as ready to smell religion—in order to worry it—as ever inquisitor was to smell heresy. But, as counterbalance and indeed overbalance to these defects, I affirm their exceptional honesty and trustworthiness. A promise is to them a sacred thing. Make an appointment with one of them, and you know that he will punctually be there, though the heavens fall and he has to scramble over the débris. They are as reliable as the force of gravitation, both in their honest lives, their respect for promises, and their careful veracity. They even return borrowed books—which several clerics known to me never do; at least, they never return mine without being “dunned” for them. In these aspects (and surely they are very important ones) these once-born individuals are among the most admirable of men.

Turn now to the other side of the shield: consider the converted. Among these brethren I find great respectability, great regard for externals, careful avoiding—as the Apostle taught—of the *appearance* of evil, much emotion at revivals and prayer-meetings, much quoting of Scripture—and much spiritual pride. But exceptional honesty, veracity, and consideration for others, I do not find.

I do not wish to suggest that they are swindlers, or even that they are much worse than the once-born friends just mentioned; though if I limit myself to the contention that they are no better, I think I am treating them with much generosity. I am not thinking of definite crimes against the law, or even of the major sins; but rather of the many little meannesses which in themselves do not seem much, considered singly, but which in the aggregate make up a considerable mass, suggesting a smaller amount of sainthood than the brother would be disposed to claim. For example, a twice-born individual of my acquaintance will slink into a tram-car in front of a queue of women and children (who remain waiting in the rain) if he can escape the conductor's eye. I do not think that this is due altogether to conscious and deliberate selfishness: it seems more likely that the man is so deeply immersed in religious contemplation that he fails to notice the queue, or at least does not remember that he ought to take his turn at the end of it.

Similarly with the great saints: piety often seems to swamp their sympathies. Says Mr A. C. Benson in the *Church Family Newspaper*:—

“I was much interested, in reading St Augustine's *Confessions* lately, to recognise how small a part, after his conversion, any inspirations for the welfare of humanity seem to play in his mind, compared with the consciousness of his own personal relation with God. It was this which gave him his exuberant sense of joy and peace, and his impulse was rather the impulse of

sharing a wonderful and beautiful secret with others than an immediate desire for their welfare, forced out of him, so to speak, by his own exultation, rather than drawn out of him by compassion for the needs of others."

The lack of moral growth in Augustine, as compared with his abounding spiritual sentiment, is indeed very striking. The ecstasy removed him from mundane things. For example, his treatment of the mother of his child is hardly what one would have expected from a saint new-filled with the grace of God.

If it be urged that a saint is sometimes a good and ethically energetic person, such as St Teresa, we may admit that the great Spanish mystic was indeed a woman of intellect, will, and practical capacity. But her ideals were paltry. Professor James confessed that in reading her works his only feeling was pity that so much "vitality of soul should have found such poor employment."¹ She was volubly egotistic, always eagerly exploiting her own spiritual gifts and graces, like Madame Guyon. She was practical and business-like in matters of convent organisation, but "in the main her idea of religion seems to have been that of an endless amatory flirtation—if one may say so without irreverence—between the devotee and the Deity; and apart from helping younger nuns to go in this direction by the inspiration of her example and instruction, there is absolutely no human use in her, or sign of any general human interest."²

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 347.

² James, *op. cit.*, pp. 347-8.

Coming down to the most able and the most zealous post-Calvinistic theologian, we find indifference going over into ferocity, which nevertheless coexists with the usual mystic feelings. Jonathan Edwards had a "delightful conviction" of the arbitrary dealing out of salvation and damnation, as of a doctrine "exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet."¹ He had had a very definite conversion, and seems to have experienced continually "an inward sweet delight in God." Yet he could contemplate with gusto the idea of infants not a span long crawling about the floor of hell. His piety towards God was in direct ratio with his callousness to the sufferings of his fellow-men—such, at least, as were "predestined" to eternal torment. His book on *Original Sin* is, Lecky has said, "one of the most revolting books that have ever issued from the pen of man."

The treatment of poor old Etienne Pascal by his son and daughter is another case in point. Blaise and Jacqueline were so intent on saving their own souls by piety, that it did not seem to occur to them that they were lacking in filial obedience and love. Something of the same kind might be urged against even George Fox, who in search of salvation left his parents, as did Francis four hundred years earlier.²

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 330.

² St Louis of Gonzaga became so good a monk that he had difficulty in remembering the number of his brothers and sisters; and, at an earlier date, when a boy, he was so chaste that he did not like to be alone with his own mother! (James's *Varieties*, p. 352).

This exaggerated sense of sin, and urgent need of salvation, has much to answer for. It is usually looked on as evidence of the attainment of more delicate sensitivity and perception, and so no doubt it is; but it exfoliates in morbid growths. St Augustine encouraged it and gave it form by dividing the world into a city of God and a city of Satan: sainthood got differentiated from plain honest goodness of the good citizen, which became of little account. Piety became the ideal, until the natural culmination was reached, and righteousness to man became not merely of no value, but actually wrong, in so far as it interferes with the more important regeneration and at-one-ment with God. Even Bunyan says that conscience is a very different affair from the Spirit, this latter being the main thing. And we still read in the thirteenth of the Anglican Articles that, before justification, good works have the nature of sin. Mere righteousness is as filthy rags. The common human virtues are almost or quite despicable. St Francis robbed his father, but his saintliness overbalanced all mere *acts*. Cardinal Vaughan reached such a state of detachment from earthly ties, that the poet Aubrey de Vere once said to him: "I really believe that if someone told you your father, mother, and brothers had been burned to death, you would simply ring for the servant to clear away the ashes." And his father, Colonel Vaughan, said humorously on his deathbed: "Herbert is very distressed about me, but

if you tell him I am in a sweat of suffering, he will be a little consoled." Manning, who was much more human, said that Vaughan "was already a good Catholic, and only needed to sit at the feet of General Booth to be a good Christian." It is a pity that General Booth was not there to teach humanity to another good Catholic, the Blessed Angela of Foligno, who remarks as follows :—

"In that time and by God's will there died my mother, who was a great hindrance unto me in following the way of God : my husband died likewise, and in a short time there also died all my children. And because I had commenced to follow the aforesaid Way, and had prayed God that He would rid me of them, I had great consolation of their deaths, albeit I did also feel some grief."¹

It is worth mentioning here, that I have had recent and weighty confirmation of the opinion which these illustrations tend to support. A lady well known to me, a nurse who is also a good Wesleyan and a woman of wide experience in town mission work, reluctantly affirms that, as a rule, the more devout are the people she has to deal with, the less considerate they are for their fellow human

¹ *Visionum et Instructionum Liber*, cap. iv., Eng. trans., p. 5. I take it from Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*, p. 261. Miss Underhill's admirable book is one of the best in existence on this subject. It is extremely sympathetic, yet it is objective and sane. There is a quaint paragraph in Montaigne's *Essays* (bk. i., ch. xxxii.) concerning a case similar to Angela's. St Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, fearful lest his daughter should marry and be happy, "never ceased by vows, prayers, and orisons, humbly to beseech God to take her out of this world"; and when she died "he showed manifest tokens of singular gladnesse."

beings. And she means genuine devoutness, not hypocrisy. She finds that genuine piety, which is theoretically admirable and which we were taught to admire, is apt to obliterate human sympathy and interest. Like a long-sighted person, the saint overlooks the duties which lie nearest. He sees God, but is blind to man.¹

And yet, there is perhaps something to be said on the other side. These "professors," somewhat unlovely characters though they be, might have been worse if they had remained unregenerate. And it is therefore impossible to judge with any certainty whether or not their mystical conversion has been on the side of good. Similarly, though my once-born friends are admirable men, they *might* be still better if they could be converted. The pragmatic test—the judgment by fruits—consequently fails to yield very definite results; though, so far as they go, those results are in favour of the once-born.

It is possible, however, that further light may be thrown on the subject by a study of the psychology of religion, which is—as already said—just beginning to engage the attention of psychologists.

¹ Even the able and sympathetic Von Hügel implicitly admits the fact:—

"The Mystic finds his joy in the recollective movement and moments of the soul; and hence ever tends, *qua* Mystic, to ignore and neglect, or to over-minimise, the absolutely necessary contact of the mind and will with the things of sense. He will often write as though, could he but completely shut off his mind from all sense-perceptions—even of grand scenery, or noble works of art, or scenes of human devotedness, suffering, and peace,—it would be proportionately fuller of God."—*The Mystical Element of Religion*, ii. p. 284.

From this point of view there seem to be certain facts which are prominent and worth noting.

All the twice-born people known to me seem to have certain features which are common to them. They are emotional, not very intellectual or "rational,"—and consequently not much interested in philosophy or science, but inclined towards poetry or fiction.¹ And, last but most important, *they are extremely suggestible*. Probably almost all converted people would make good hypnotic subjects; while, conversely, the analytical mind which can prefer a text-book on logic to the most thrilling novel or even the highest poetry, will generally be unhyponotisable. A typically religious friend of mine was recently told by a doctor who examined him for insurance purposes that he "must not get excited." My friend immediately jumped to the conclusion that he must be suffering from dangerous heart-disease. He began to have pains in the left side, and for a week he was completely miserable. Then he plucked up courage to ask his own doctor to examine him; the result being that he was pronounced perfectly sound. The pains at once ceased, and he went on his way rejoicing. This was suggestion with a vengeance! On the other hand, the once-born people seem mostly impervious. They do not develop imaginary

¹ The saint has a Keltic temperament, so to speak. Renan, speaking of the Bolland collection of Lives of the Saints (25,000 of them), remarks that though there were thousands of Breton saints, there *were no Normans* (*Etudes d'histoire religieuse*, p. 307).

pains when told (jokingly in this instance) not to get excited. They feel no worse even when well-meaning friends inform them that they are "looking ill." *En revanche*, their insusceptibility to suggestion robs them of certain benefits. I myself have often wished to be hypnotised, knowing that if I could be influenced I could probably be cured of troublesome insomnia and other afflictions; but though I have submitted myself to the treatment of one of the most famous practitioners in England (a well-known West End medical hypnotic specialist), I have proved entirely refractory.

Now consider a number of emotional and suggestible people sitting in a Wesleyan chapel, listening to a practised revivalist. The auditors' continued passivity, the atmosphere of the place, the reiterated statements of the revivalist, the hush of intermittent silent prayer, the expectancy—for all know what is expected to happen—all these factors combine to produce typically good conditions for the appearance of suggestional phenomena. It is therefore not surprising that the phenomena appear. I have attended many revival services; I have watched successful hypnotic treatment, and I have submitted to treatment (unsuccessfully) myself; I am therefore able to compare the two. And it seems to me undeniable that the phenomenon of conversion is simply one of suggestion. Sometimes, no doubt, the converted one remains in a comparatively normal state; for suggestions often "take" without much physical

change being apparent. But I have often seen penitents who were clearly in an abnormal and apparently hypnotic condition ; their eyes dreamy or closed, their feet dragging as they walked up to the penitent form, or refusing their office altogether, and rendering assistance necessary.

This theory of conversion is supported by the fact that, with the decline of revival services, the phenomena of conversion seem to be becoming almost unknown. With the exception of bursts of activity of the Torrey-Alexander kind, revivals are going out of fashion. Perhaps the unconscious or subconscious common-sense of the people is coming to regard the conversion method as doubtfully good. This opinion will probably be endorsed by the psychology of the future ; or rather, the hypnotic method of regeneration will be used in a scientific and definite way, instead of by amateurs who are working more or less in the dark, handling potent forces of which they know little or nothing, and quite possibly giving to unbalanced minds a push in the direction of religious mania.

I have taken conversion as a type. It may, however, be urged that mystical states arise without the stimulus of revival services or even of preaching. It undoubtedly is so ; there is no need to deny the illumination of St Paul, Boehme, Pascal, Swedenborg, Jefferies, or any other great soul. But I hold that the psychological nature of the phenomenon is the same, or similar, in these cases also ; and that mystical states are in general

analogous to hypnosis, to drug anæsthesia, and even perhaps to drunkenness. I do not doubt that the psychological change often results in improved conduct, though it is not proved that this is usually permanent.¹ And sometimes the converted drunkard seems merely to change from alcoholic to religious intoxication, particularly in Wales. His wife and family, however, will benefit, for spiritual frenzies are cheaper than beer. So, after all, the conversion may be good for others, if not for the subject himself. Where the subject is a woman, it may work the other way; for her attendance at prayer-meetings may not improve her character as a housewife. The famous founder of the cult of the Sacred Heart (Margaret Marie Alacoque) "wasn't any use in the kitchen," and the good nuns were puzzled as to what to do with her. It is probably a sure instinct that is leading us to avoid the artificial production of such ecstasies, and to regard with less veneration than formerly such specimens as may from time to time appear spontaneously.

It is hardly necessary to say that I do not doubt the general reliability of the conversion-stories in, say, such books as Mr Harold Begbie's *Broken Earthenware* and *In the Hand of the Potter*. It can hardly be doubted that the Salvation Army

¹ The essential feature is a change in the dominant ideas, not necessarily an ethical improvement. Mr Begbie records a case in which overpowering hate made a drunkard sober. The Puncher's mighty longing to murder his wife destroyed his desire for alcohol (*Broken Earthenware*, p. 55).

and perhaps other organisations do great things in rescue work. But most of the rescues are effected without any mystical conversion, and I believe that such conversions as do occur are not necessarily connected with the specific theology with which they happen to be associated. They might have come about just the same if a Unitarian or a Buddhist had shown to the human wrecks concerned the loving sympathy, the encouragement and support, which they needed (and which General Booth himself regards as the first essential); for in almost every case the regeneration begins from within, with a sense of disgust at the life being led, and a wish to do better.¹ The cases are prepared; the hypnotic suggestion of the preacher or rescuer has little to do but pull the trigger. Still, it seems probable that the conversion-method may, in some cases, be the best way of administering the suggestion, for in many of these derelicts there is a background or subconscious area of dim recollections associated with Christianity, the result, no doubt, of early training in more or less religious surroundings; and this background may furnish the best means of approach to the man's foreground of consciousness.² And in such bad cases as some

¹ Cf. the "conversion" of Mr Bernard Shaw by Henry George's lecture. "From that hour I became a man with some business in the world" (*Review of Reviews*, May 1911, p. 349).

² As I write these lines, a Salvation Army contingent is holding a service outside. I can hear snatches of the captain's address. The only words that reach me clearly are, "the bottomless pit," often reiterated. Apparently he is following the usual terroristic method.

of those described by Mr Begbie, it is allowable to try any treatment that even faintly promises improved social conduct.

But this does not prove that these methods are advisable for all and sundry, or that no improvement on them is possible. As already said, the decline of revival services seems to indicate that the method is now distrusted. It is certainly liable to awaken that religious drunkenness in which the conscience is almost entirely drugged and silent. Jonathan Edwards's "sweet delight in God," off-set by his astonishing ferocity towards his non-Calvinist fellow-man, is paralleled by many a young lady Christian Endeavourer who goes piously to meetings and leaves her old mother to do the house-work. There is probably no hypocrisy in such cases—no clearly defined wish to sneak meanly out of distasteful duty in order to be religious in public—but the very absence of such consciousness shows the low moral level of the devotee. She thinks she does God service, when she ought to be ashamed of herself for breaking the fifth commandment, for neglecting the duty that lies nearest. For this kind of soul straight talks about humble duties are wholesomer than revival services which rouse conscience-obscuring religious ecstasies.

CHAPTER XII

MYSTICISM AND HEALTH

As to the relation of mystical states to bodily health, there has been some difference of opinion. Father Poulain (*op. cit.*, p. 173) concludes that "the divine ecstasy is far from being prejudicial to the health; but the limbs may feel a great fatigue from it at times." It is certainly true that many ecstasies have lived to a considerable age, but this does not prove the desirability of the experiences. Mrs Eddy, we may remember, lived to be eighty-nine, in spite of her abnormal seizures; yet these latter certainly would not be admitted by Father Poulain to be divine ecstasies.

Benedict XIV. maintained that fatigue indicates that the ecstasy is not divine, but purely the result of ill-health. "It is not possible to agree with him here. He does not rely upon the lives of the saints, but on the mere statement of the physician Zacchias" (Poulain, *loc. cit.*). Cases which support the opinion of Benedict's physician are, however, somewhat numerous, even in spite of the natural tendency to suppress details which would discredit

the religious significance of the phenomena. Dominic of Jesus-Mary Ruzzola, after his ecstasies, "experienced severe pains. His bruised limbs made it impossible for him to stand or move. He even vomited blood." The Ven. Mary of the Incarnation says: "As to my body, it emerged from this prayer *more enfeebled* than would have been the case after the most frightful austerities." As to Blessed Mary of the Incarnation (Carmelite) her biographer says: "God's onslaughts took her with yet greater impetuosity and with such a violent trembling that it made her bones crack, and wrung from her piercing cries as if she were being stabbed to the heart. . . . She expected that they would cause her death—so much so, that she once told M. Fontaine, her confessor at Pontoise, that on several hundred occasions she had gone to bed not expecting to live until the morning" (Poulain, *op. cit.*, p. 172). If this kind of thing is compatible with health, it seems necessary to define the term in a fashion different from anything that modern science would endorse.

If these ecstasies had not been professed "religious," they would have run some risk of being regarded as victims of "possession"—so near is the divine to the satanic. Some of the "seizures of Divine Love" are rather like those attributed to evil spirits and combated with exorcism and holy water. And there is any amount of phenomena which we cannot but call hallucinatory, though

Catholic writers still cling to their satanic character :—

“ . . . The Devil appeared under terrifying forms: armed men, negroes, terrible or repulsive animals, lions, tigers, wolves, wild boars, mastiffs, serpents, toads, spiders, etc. Some of these creatures seemed on the point of springing upon their victims, to bite or devour them. Examples: St Antony, St Guthlac (a Saxon hermit of the eighth century), St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, St Colette, St Philip Neri, St Margaret of Cortona, the Ven. Grace of Valencia (sixteenth century), Blessed John the Good, hermit (thirteenth century), etc.” —Poulain, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

St Alphonsus Rodriguez was much plagued by devils :—

“ At times he was present during their infernal conversations and heard them blaspheme God; or he was on the verge of death by choking, because they squeezed his throat. . . . They only left him in order to confer together about him, for he then saw how in the depths of hell they took counsel and consulted a vast number of devils.” —Poulain, *op. cit.*, p. 447.

This saint almost certainly suffered from hysterical contractions of the throat, a rather common symptom in neurotic patients. In the case of a “religious,” this would inevitably be construed into the clutch of a devil. As to the hallucinations of sense, these are fairly common, as we now know, even among sane people. We do not understand their causation, though we can produce them at will, hypnotically, in some susceptible subjects. Almost all we can say—and it must be admitted that it does not get us much “further”—is that hallucinations are akin to

dreams, and may be looked on as incursions of subliminal imagination into the normal consciousness. A friend of mine once dreamed that a man was standing by his bedside. He awoke and *saw the man*—saw him, as he was convinced, with his eyes, so clearly, indeed, that he put a leg out of bed and kicked at the apparition, which then vanished. There was nothing evidential or veridical about either the dream or the apparition; apparently my friend's sleeping consciousness had created its dream-image so vividly that it remained for a few seconds after the normal consciousness returned, as the brighter stars remain visible when the sun is rising, until they are outshone and obliterated in the full blaze of day.

But it will be objected that hallucinations occur in the midst of the waking state—that they are not invariably initiated during sleep. This is true enough. But I think that in many cases of hallucination there is a preceding period (perhaps quite short, or even momentary like a transitory epileptic attack) of a sleep-state or dreamy state, which favours the leaking of subliminal images into the field of waking consciousness. For it must be remembered that the subliminal may be always more or less at work concocting its romances, though these latter remain invisible in the blaze of full consciousness, as (to repeat the simile) the stars are invisible at noon, though they are there all the same. It will be remembered that Stevenson systematically dreamed his plots—

e.g., that of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Hallucinations, then, seem to be an incursion of the subliminal into the normal consciousness, an incursion which is favoured by a sleep or hypnotoid state.

Bearing this in mind, it is not to be wondered at that saints should have had frequent experiences of the kind. Passing a great deal of time in the hypnotoid state of orison or recollective prayer, it is natural that subliminal incursions should occur during these favouring states. These might take the form of apparitions of those beings with whom the mind was principally occupied—usually Jesus or the Virgin, as with St Francis in the thirteenth century, and the monks of Llanthony in the nineteenth. Or the Figure on the crucifix would smile, or bow, or open and close its eyes, or speak. For example, in Francis' case, the future saint, entering the almost ruinous and forsaken church of St Damiano, fell down in devout supplication before the crucifix, and "having been smitten by unwonted visitations, found himself another man than he who had gone in. . . . And whilst he was thus moved, straightway . . . the painted image of Christ crucified spoke to him from out its pictured lips. And, calling him by his name, 'Francis,' it said, 'go, repair my house, the which as thou seest is falling into decay.'"¹

How Francis left his luxurious life and devoted

¹ Thomas of Celano, *Legenda Secunda*; Bonaventura's *Life*, ch. ii. (*Little Flowers*, Dent's "Everyman," p. 311). See Miss Underhill's *Mysticism*, p. 218.

himself to the reanimation and restoration of the Church, is matter of history. We may call his experience a hallucination, but it undoubtedly had great results, as had Jeanne d'Arc's "voices" two centuries later. These results, however, do not authenticate the source of the message, which may be a subliminal command, running into the mould of the forms with which the normal consciousness is familiar.¹ Hallucinatory experiences demonstrably tend to take the form of the habitual ways of thinking: *e.g.*, apparitions of the Virgin, so common among Catholics, are practically unknown among Protestants, though these latter see Jesus.

It is unnecessary to labour the point about hallucinations, for they are undoubtedly common enough with almost all mystics. I do not affirm, however, that they are always morbid and pathological, or even that they are always subjective only. Sane people may have them, and they may be veridical, bringing information concerning events distant in place or time. But when there is none of this evidential quality, and particularly when the experience is a presentment of a frequently conceived object or thought—as, *e.g.*, when the companion of St Thomas Aquinas hears a voice from the crucifix say to the praying saint: "Thou

¹ Nor can the results be proved to be good, ultimately. As to the case of St Francis, it is arguable that monasticism was, on the whole, evil in its effect. The "tender-minded" people became celibate, and the replenishing of the world was left to the "toughs."

hast written well of Me, Thomas ; what recompense dost thou desire ?"—it is safest to attribute the phenomena to subliminal incursion, and to consider it as an entirely subjective affair.

Of course it is also to be borne in mind that the accounts of these hallucinations are probably untrustworthy. Often they are not written down until some admirer writes the life of the saint, and the biographer has to rely on his memory, or on hearsay, as in the case of Thomas of Celano and Bonaventura, when writing about Francis. And it may be that many experiences which are described as visions or voices were only vivid imaginations, and not apparent perceptions. The prophet's "Thus saith the Lord" does not usually mean that an audible voice gave the message ; similarly, many a saint who had an intuition or impression may have been represented as hearing an actual voice, through his own or his biographer's indiscriminating use of words.

To return to mysticism proper. The following is a good case illustrating the throes of mystical love :—

"On one occasion, speaking confidentially to a Canon Regular, to whom she revealed the innermost depths of her soul after the death of her brother, Fr. Fournier, she told him that since her profession until the time of her last election as Superior (for the space of over *thirty years*, that is to say), God had kindled in her soul such ardent and violent desires to die, so *that she might see Him* and be perfectly united to Him, that what she suffered during this whole time, in the space of a quarter of an hour, surpassed incomparably the torments of the

wheel, the fire, the gibbet, and all the pains that all men have ever felt; that she estimated that all pangs of the body and of the mind are but the shadows of those that she has suffered; that she did not believe that the pain of the damned could be greater than that which she endured in being *separated from God*; that her desires to see Him were almost continual, that she even felt them sometimes during sleep, so that day and night she suffered a cruel martyrdom. She wept almost continually, and being so hard pressed by love, she often uttered loud cries which on several occasions brought the religious who heard her into her room, they at first thinking that she had met with an accident. But they knew that these cries were due to her torments and the strong attractions that she had to *see God*. Her body suffered such violence from the vehemence of her desires that her arms and legs became as stiff as iron bars; she clenched her teeth and underwent strange convulsions, so that her body, succumbing under them, fell into weaknesses and languors which obliged her to throw herself upon the ground, being then, indeed, in the position to say to her sisters what the Bride in the Canticles said to her companions: 'Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples, because I languish with love.' Amidst her most violent desires to see God, she fell into transports that could not be explained, and she made use of exaggerated expressions by which to depict the greatness of her love. . . .

"Who then could adequately praise this great servant of God, who, desiring so vehemently to see and to *contemplate her Bridegroom's Face*, yet bore the pain of being deprived of Him with such a perfect submission to His holy will!"—*La Vie de la Mère Françoise Fournier*, an Ursuline of Angers, Paris, 1685 (born 1592, died 1675), quoted by Poulain, p. 148, *op. cit.*

Great servant of God! The modern ideal of great servanthship is very different, approximating more to the teaching of Christ. This catalepsy and

hysteria has no good in itself, and Mère Françoise's sufferings, which were probably exaggerated by herself, would not now be looked on as conferring special sanctity. In her day they did; and no doubt she found great pleasure in being looked on as a special example of admirable piety and a quite specially-dealt-with person. Suffering of itself we regard as of no value. St Simeon Stylites might have done much more good if he had been less ascetic and more concerned for other people in a practical sort of way. He sought his Lord up there on the pillar, but He is really down here among His people.

“The parish priest
Of austerity
Climbed up in a high church steeple,
To be nearer God
So that he might hand
His word down to the people.

And in sermon script
He daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven;
And he dropped it down
On the people's heads
Two times one day in seven.

In his age God said,
'Come down and die';
And he cried out from the steeple,
'Where art thou, Lord?'
And the Lord replied,
'Down here among My people.'”¹

¹ A. W. Momerie, *The Religion of the Future*, p. 44. Cf. Tennyson's *St Simeon Stylites*, and Leigh Hunt's *About Ben Adhem*.

In the following cases the ecstasies are practically imbeciles :—

"St Catherine of Ricci, having entered her convent at the age of thirteen, was subjected, during two or three years, to great humiliations on account of her extraordinary union with God. She was drawn to Him so powerfully that she seemed like a person half asleep, showing aptitude neither for the choir nor for manual labour, and appearing stupid at recreation. Nobody suspected the cause of this abstraction; she let herself be accused without making any defence, not knowing that she ought to have opened her heart at least to her Director. So that they treated her as if she were some gentle and harmless idiot who is allowed to be at large."—Poulain, *op. cit.*, pp. 180, 181, quoting the saint's *Life*, by Fr. Bayonne.

"St Philip Neri was often unable to say his Office unless he took alternate sentences with a companion. 'Otherwise,' says his historian, 'he experienced great difficulty. For the ecstasy seized him, and he lost himself in God' (Boland, May 26th, No. 183 of the second *Life*). St Joseph of Cupertino could not manage to say his Office." This latter saint was for more than thirty-five years excluded by his superiors from the ceremonies of the choir, from processions and the refectory, because he "upset the exercises by his raptures."—*Life*, by Bernino (Poulain, p. 181). St Ignatius was in similar case (Poulain, *loc. cit.*).

"When the soul comes out of a rapture that has overtaken her in the middle of a conversation or a prayer, it often happens that she continues the phrase where it was broken off. St Francis of Sales was doubtless acquainted with this fact; for one day, when Sister Anne Rosset had fallen into an ecstasy while conversing with him on divine love, he said to the Sisters: 'Note carefully what she says when she comes back to herself.' And, as a matter of fact, she then went on with the conversation that had been interrupted."—Poulain, p. 245; quoted from *Œuvres de Ste J. F. de Chantal*, vol. i. p. 979.

Similar facts are related of other saints, as in the *Life* of the Ven. Jeanne of the Cross.

It is noteworthy that this phenomenon has been observed in chloroform and ether anæsthesia. In one case a patient was told to count aloud until she lost consciousness: she reached 38, and when she recovered half-consciousness she went on counting from 39.

"Some saints used to utter a *cry* as the rapture seized them; this was the case with St Peter of Alcantara, for example, and St Joseph of Cupertino. The latter, when questioned on the subject, declared that his cry was a simple outburst of love."—*Vie*, by Bernino (Poulain, p. 245).

This is at least very suggestive of epilepsy.

When we contemplate this reverence for hysteria and emotion, and then look back at the sanity of the Greeks, when human bodies and minds reached perhaps the highest concurrent development that the world has yet seen, we are tempted to say that Christianity was a retrograde step. It altered the whole direction of the ideal life's aims. Instead of a sound mind in a sound body, it aimed at a pious soul in any sort of a body. Still, we must not judge hastily. In the radiant times of Greece, there were many dark places which we are apt to forget about. There was certainly very little sensitiveness to the sufferings of others. For example, there were *no hospitals*. Christianity developed this sensitiveness—at least, its Founder's teaching did—and though the ecclesiastical organisations failed to keep charity in the forefront, they did at least

keep alive the theoretical ideal which the Founder taught, and saved His doctrine from being swamped in other cults and beliefs, as would have been the case, *e.g.*, under Julian, if Christianity had not attained power under the fostering hands of Constantine.

Father Poulain (*op. cit.*, p. 261), comparing true ecstasy with Hélène Smith's trances, says that "the saints remember what they have seen, although they do not find adequate terms with which to describe it. Hélène Smith, on the contrary, loses all recollection of her visions." He goes on to say that, with the saints, "the intellect is enormously strengthened, certain of God's transcendent attributes, and even the Blessed Trinity seeming no longer mysterious." This is insufficient proof of the enormous "strengthening" of the intellect, unless indeed we admit (which Father Poulain would not) that nitrous oxide may have a similarly strengthening effect; for one of the most frequent results of partial anæsthesia is precisely this consciousness of greatly increased knowledge, as in the experiences of James, Holmes, and Sir William Ramsay. If the knowledge is real in the one case, there is no satisfactory reason for denying it in the other; if it is delusive in one, it may be delusive in the other. But the proper way to look at both is, I think, to refrain from asking futile questions about the reality of the supposed knowledge, and to be content to regard the psychological states as facts, without being in too great

a hurry to make metaphysical inferences from them. The Catholic Church accepted its saints' ecstasies at the saints' own valuation and interpretation, and consequently got into difficulties when psychology and comparative religion found similar states unconnected with the Church: the modern mystics are in the same danger, though of a less narrow kind. The subjective experiences of those who have attained what Dr Bucke calls cosmic consciousness are no safer data for inference than the ecstasies of the mediæval saints. The only inference that seems justifiable is the practical one that deliberate encouragement of mystical experiences is dangerous, ethically and socially. Speaking of the mystical sects of Islam, Margoliouth remarks that "the religious life as here described is clearly such as to unfit him who leads it for any other."¹ The statement would apply to other forms of mysticism, as well as to the Sufis.

¹ *Mohammedanism*, by D. S. Margoliouth, p. 209.



CHAPTER XIII

INTOLERANCE

ONE of the chief dangers of mysticism is its certainty. As we have seen in the examples quoted, mystical experiences bring a certitude which rational methods of inquiry can never attain. It is worth while, here, to cite a few passages specially bearing on this point from the *Cloud upon the Sanctuary*, by Eckartshausen—a mystical treatise which is greatly revered by the followers of the inner way.

"All that I am now saying is not hyperphysical extravagance; it is reality, absolute truth. . . ." (p. 5).

Speaking obscurely of a School, apparently a kind of Mahatma-body of illuminati scattered throughout the world, he says:—

"... All the mysteries of God and of nature are preserved in this School for the children of light. Perfect knowledge of God, of nature, and of humanity are the objects of instruction in this school. It is from her that all truths penetrate into the world, she is the school of the prophets, and of all who search for wisdom, and it is in this community alone that truth and the explanation of all mystery is to be found" (p. 15).

"... We assure you faithfully that we know *exactly* the innermost of religion and of the Holy Mysteries; and that we possess with absolute certainty all that has been surmised to be in the *Adytum*. . . . We understand the spirit and meaning of all symbols and all ceremony which have existed since the day of Creation to the present time, as well as the most interior truths of all the Holy Books, with the laws and customs of primitive people" (p. 37).

Evidently Eckartshausen would have been useful to the anthropologists, if he could have been induced to stoop to such beggarly elements. But he flew at bigger game:—

"We know of the existence of a bond which will unite us to the upper worlds, and reveal to us their sights and their sounds. All the marvels of nature are subordinate to our will by *its* being united with Divinity.

"We have mastered the science which draws directly from nature, whence there is no error, but truth and light only" (p. 38).

"Religion considered scientifically is the doctrine of the re-union of man separated from God to man re-united to God. Hence its sole object is to unite every human being to God, through which union alone can humanity attain its highest felicity both temporally and spiritually" (p. 43).

"Vain philosopher, bend thyself before the grand and Divine Mysteries that thou in thy wisdom canst not understand, and for the penetration of whose secrets the feeble light of human reason darkened by sense can give thee no measure!" (p. 76).

The remark of Carlyle to his Professor Teufelsdröckh comes inevitably to mind: "Beware of spiritual pride!" Eckartshausen has "got it bad." He goes on to develop a curious notion about

blood containing a corruptible and an incorruptible part. Speaking of Jesus Christ, he says :—

"But before that could be done" (general purification and regeneration) "and the inmost part of man, the divine in him, be once more penetrated and re-opened again, and the whole world be regenerated, it was requisite that this divine substance should incarnate in humanity" (divine substance="wisdom, or the Son of God") "and become human, and therein transmit the divine and regenerative force to humanity; it was necessary also that this divine human form should be killed, in order that the divine and incorruptible substance contained in the blood should penetrate into the recesses of the earth, and thenceforth work a gradual dissolution of corruptible matter, so that in due time a pure and regenerated earth will be presented to man. . . ." (p. 70).

"*This fact* is the first and most important revelation and it embraces all, and it has been carefully preserved from mouth to mouth among the chosen of God" (p. 71).

Of which "chosen," Eckartshausen has no doubt about being one.

It is true that there is no clear line to be drawn between sanity and insanity, but this kind of thing seems perilous stuff, to put it mildly. It bears all the marks of the full-blown crank, particularly the inner certainty or cocksureness. There is a story about St Philip Neri which is adaptable to this case. A nun in a convent not far from Rome had developed powers purporting to be prophetic and inspirational, and the abbess informed the Holy Father concerning them. The Pope consulted Philip, who undertook the investigation. Arriving at the convent all mud-bespattered, Philip stuck

out a leg and desired the nun to take off his boots. She, however, had been the object of much attention and respect, and was insulted by the request. She angrily refused. Philip got to the saddle without delay, and returned to Rome: "Give yourself no uneasiness, Holy Father, any longer: here is no miracle, for here is no humility."¹ To most of us, I think, Eckartshausen will seem to be similarly lacking in that desirable virtue.

This absolute certainty is bad in various ways. It is mistaken in itself, is an intellectual error, also a moral lapse, its victim thinking more highly of himself and his knowledge than he ought to think, exalting himself above others, and so on. It also has practical consequences which matter much more than mere speculative error or even minor moral lapses. History shows that when anyone is absolutely certain that he is right, he will seek to bend others to his own belief. Persecution is the inevitable sequel. If one of the certainties is that salvation is restricted to one section of mankind who hold certain opinions, an inquisition and pitiless extirpation of heretics is likely to follow, if the believers have temporal power, as it did follow in the Middle Ages. A genuine scepticism is the only safe basis of toleration. Shelley was rusticated for writing his pamphlet on the Necessity of Atheism: if instead of this firework he had written a Necessity of Uncertainty—as Mr Balfour has written in defence of philosophic doubt—he would

¹ Emerson, *Worship*.

perhaps still have been sent down, but he would certainly have had our sympathy.

Again, it seems to me that though in a sense the outer world is spiritually useful only as it can be treated as symbolic—as interpretable in terms of an *inner* world—there is a grave danger in dwelling too much on this side. For example, there is at present a school of thought—of which Dr K. C. Anderson may be regarded as a type and leader—which emphasises the unimportance of the historicity or non-historicity of Jesus.¹ The living Christ is the main thing—the regeneration of the soul, the development of the Christ-spirit within. This attitude may lead into perilous doings. If one external thing is unimportant, other things may catch the infection. If the alleged facts of Jesus's life may or may not be true, and it doesn't matter, where are we to stop sweeping away the importance of *other* alleged facts also? This endangers the whole fabric of Science. It is an intellectual laudanum, deadening external inquiry—a turning back to subjectivism, neglecting the external part of God's creation. Myers wisely lays great stress on the necessity of the "intellectual virtues." These must not be sacrificed. Curiosity, candour, and care—these are the intellectual virtues. They are recent products; they have grown up outside the theological

¹ Probably this school is partly an outcome of the ultra-critical attack on the historicity in such books as J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs*.

and even the "religious" camp, and have always been persecuted as irreligious, or at least looked at askance as doubtful. Nowadays, hardly anyone would overtly venture to discredit them, or to adopt towards knowledge-seeking the attitude of the famous Kadi whose magnificent reply to Sir A. Layard's request for statistical information is often quoted as a crystallisation of the very essence of anti-reasonableness.¹ But though no one dares to be overtly hostile to knowledge, there still survives a distrust of it. We have not yet learned to *have faith in it*. With faith in it, all things are possible. It is faith in the possibility of attainment that has built machines that fly, and instruments by which friends talk to us when they are hundreds of miles away. We must hang on to this faith with regard to the future. We must not allow it to be extinguished in a recrudescence of reason-despising mysticism.

To say this is not to despise or depreciate the work done by many great souls who followed the inner way. Eckart, Tauler, Suso, for example, engineered a useful reaction against the dry scholasticism of the Middle Ages; they "*seuls ont vu le néant de cette science de Dieu abstrait et desséchée.*"² On the whole, they are perhaps more human and admirable than the pure logic-machines—as, for instance, Calvin, of whom there is a

¹ James's *Principles of Psychology*, ii. p. 640. "Seek not after the things which concern thee not," etc.

² Renan, *Études d'histoire religieuse*, p. 327; chapter on "L'auteur de l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ."

dubious tradition that he was once seen to smile. But the tendency runs to extremes in both directions. Mysticism, tending to be concerned entirely with feeling, neglects a great human element—that of curiosity, thirst for knowledge, the desire which constrains man to penetrate the secret of things and to become, in Leibnitz' phrase, a mirror of the universe. The Ecclesiast would no longer say in our day that there is nothing new under the sun. He had felt, no doubt, all that the human heart can feel; but he had no suspicion of what it is permitted to man to know.¹ It is precisely this vanity-of-vanities feeling, this weariness and despair, that can be both cause and effect of a turning of the back on investigation of that which is. It is the last atheism. We must hold to faith in knowledge.

But it may cheerfully be admitted that the advance towards higher *moral* stages of life has not been primarily due to reason—nor to mysticism, we may add. It has rather been due to an impulse of conscience, along with an increase of sensitiveness and imagination, enabling mankind to realise more vividly the actually regrettable state of the world, and the vision of what it might be.

This is markedly shown in the history of religious doctrine. The great Fathers of the Church were by no means lacking in reasoning power or in intellectual energy. On the contrary, their reason-

¹ Renan, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

ings are so immensely lengthy and subtle that no one now reads them. But they had little sympathy or little imagination. It is impossible to believe that any tender-hearted human being could dwell on the details of everlasting punishment in the way that these ecclesiastics did. They seemed to revel in the very thought; getting pleasure out of it as the pagan spectators did when the blood flowed freely in gladiatorial combats. Says Lecky:—

“It would be difficult, and perhaps not altogether desirable, to attain in the present day to any realised conception of the doctrine of future punishment as it was taught by the early Fathers, and elaborated and developed by the mediæval priests. . . . It is sufficient to say that it was generally maintained that eternal damnation was the lot which the Almighty had reserved for an immense proportion of his creatures; and that that damnation consisted not simply of the privation of certain extraordinary blessings, but also of the endurance of the most excruciating agonies. Perhaps the most acute pain the human body can undergo is that of fire; and this, the early Fathers assure us, is the eternal destiny of the mass of mankind.”¹

The doctrine was stated with extreme literalness. If it was objected by pagans that a body could not remain for ever unconsumed, the Fathers instanced salamanders and asbestos, and fell back if necessary on the Divine Omnipotence, which was supposed to be continually exerted to prolong the tortures of the damned. Two ecclesiastics, and two only, demurred. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa diverged—somewhat hesitatingly—from the general opinion, inclining to a

¹ *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, i. 311.

figurative interpretation, and even to a belief in the ultimate salvation of all. These tender-minded Fathers stood alone in their opinions, and were regarded more or less as heretics; all the other patristic writers proclaimed the eternity of torments, describing them as being due to the action of a literal fire upon a sensitive body. Many infants, dying unbaptized, are among the lost (a belief for which Augustine is chiefly responsible, and which fits badly with the spirit of Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me"), and a later Protestant theologian alludes to the fact in graphic language, actually seeming to enjoy the idea. Indeed, it was expressly asserted by St Thomas Aquinas that the contemplation of the sufferings of the damned would be one of the elements in the happiness of the redeemed. Tertullian rhapsodises on the subject quite deliriously:—

"What shall be the magnitude of that scene? How shall I wonder? How shall I laugh? How shall I rejoice? How shall I triumph when I behold so many and such illustrious kings, who were said to have mounted into heaven, groaning with Jupiter their god in the lowest darkness of hell?"—*De Spectaculis*, cap. xxx. See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. xv., and Lecky's *Rationalism*, i., ch. iv.

To the modern mind, this gusto over suffering, and such horrible suffering, seems diabolical. The thought of such pain, even inflicted on our enemies, is intolerable. Charles Kingsley said he would be "ashamed to be happy for one moment" in any

heaven, if a lot of other human beings were condemned to "endless flame, agony and despair."¹ Others, less courageous, have bowed to authority, and have tried to think as little as possible about the unpleasant features; dismissing them, perhaps, as "a great mystery," to be accepted because at present beyond our comprehension.²

It is almost amusing to note the way in which some apologists tried to save the character of God. They admitted that eternal torment *seemed* cruel, but then, there might be State reasons which we do not see. Dr Gordon quotes a minister of the Church of Scotland as explaining certain moral

¹ *Charles Kingsley: His Letters, and Memories of His Life*, p. 178. Kingsley was as far above Newman in compassion and sheer human Christ-like love for his fellows, as he was below him in mere intellectual subtlety. Kingsley would have agreed with Burns, who wished the devil would "tak' a thought an' men'"—because he didn't like to think of his sufferings. Newman shows nothing but repulsion for the demons in *The Dream of Gerontius*, and evidently has, like Vaughan, little sympathy.

² Dante typifies the attitude. On the question of the justice of excluding the righteous heathen from heaven, he says (*De Monarchia*, ii. 8): "There are certain judgments of God to which human reason, albeit unable to attain of its proper strength, is nevertheless raised by dint of faith in what is said to us in the sacred writings; as, for instance, this: That no one, however perfect in the moral and intellectual virtues, both as to disposition and practice, may be saved without faith, if he have never heard aught of Christ. For human reason of itself cannot see that this is just, but helped by faith it may."

This is strongly reminiscent of the little girl who, unconsciously translating Dante into the vernacular, said that "Faith is the faculty by which we are enabled to believe what we know ain't so."

anomalies in the alleged actions of God in this fashion: "My friends, you must understand that the Almighty in His public and judicial capacity is obliged to do many things which in a personal and private capacity He would be ashamed to do."¹

The Fathers, however, with the exceptions mentioned, seemed to have no qualms. It is true that the early Christians were persecuted, and that persecution breeds vindictiveness; but it is hard to see how these early Fathers could combine worship of the ideals of Jesus with such callousness. We may perhaps suppose that they were men of such sluggish imagination that they utterly failed to realise the terrible things that they taught. But there is a difficulty in being thus charitable; for the Fathers showed great vigour and ingenuity in describing the torments in question. It seems more probable that the root of the matter lies in the fact that they were *selfish*, in the extended sense of the word—that they had little or no fellow-feeling, and cared little for the sufferings of those whom they disliked. This is, in fact, proved by the ingenuity of the mediæval ecclesiastics in devising methods of torture for heretics. In ancient Greece, torture was never employed except in cases of treason; in the best days of Rome it was confined to slaves; in mediæval Christianity it became a system, utilised by the clergy with diabolical barbarity. The varieties of torture

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, April 1911, p. 506. Quoted in a good article on "The Cross," by Mr Johnston Ross.

were many, and represented "a condition of thought in which men had pondered long and carefully on all the forms of human suffering, had compared and combined the different kinds of torture, till they had become the most consummate masters of their art, had expended on the subject all the resources of the utmost ingenuity, and had pursued it with the ardour of a passion" (Lecky, *op. cit.*, i. 329). These men were not lacking in intelligence or ingenuity; it would have been better for the heretics if they had had less. What they lacked was fellow-feeling, compassion. It may be argued that their actions followed logically from their beliefs, the extermination of heretics being a duty, if heresy by spreading would draw others into damnation; and that therefore it was a change in their beliefs, and emancipation from authority, that were required. This is true enough, but the other way of looking at it seems perhaps the deeper one, for torture was sometimes used in cases where it could not be justified by these considerations. The root of persecution was dogma, but it flourished in a soil of sheer callousness and indifference to suffering. If an increased sense of sympathy could have been implanted, authority and its terrible creedal teaching would speedily have been shaken off.

Development, then, is a matter of increased sensitiveness and imagination; increased power of putting self in the other's place; not entirely or even chiefly in increase of reasoning power or

intellectual activity of any kind. Calvin could reason well enough, but he caused Servetus to be burnt alive: Jonathan Edwards was one of the most rigorous logicians, but he contemplated without horror the idea of infants a span long crawling about the floor of hell.¹ It is sensitiveness and imagination that are required. When these increase, moral development is the result. The feeling of mankind's solidarity is fostered, a further approach made to the Eleventh Commandment, and there is a general feeling of a heave or push up over the dead self of the past to higher things.

How to foster and encourage this greater sensitiveness and imagination is the problem of the moral and religious instruction of the future. We do not yet see our way clearly, and these things are mostly a matter of guess and trial. But it is certain that dogma will no more be tolerated, unless indeed there is a great retrograde step. Perhaps the time will come when it will be thought more religious to read a novel embodying high ideals and presenting noble characters than to go to church and listen to creeds which tell us what will happen if we confound the Persons or divide the Substance, or even perfunctorily and cheerfully to mutter that we are miserable sinners, with no health in us. It is certainly a fact that never in the world's history has the moral sentiment been

¹ In the blood lust of persecution, even the faithful were not safe. "Kill them all," cried the inquisitor at Béziers; "God will know His own." And they did: Catholics and Albigenses were slaughtered together.

so widespread and so awake as it is to-day. Practical philanthropy is now recognised as a duty binding on those who have a sufficiency of this world's goods, and it is dispensed to a considerable extent without regard to the religious beliefs of the recipient. This is a great change from the Christian position of a few centuries ago, when it was accounted an eminently praiseworthy thing to bring a heretic to the stake. In our times, these "religious" differences are sinking out of sight, and philanthropy finds sufficient basis in the recognition of man's common humanity. This recognition is bringing many blessings in its turn, such as the foreshadowing of the limitation of armaments and possible universal peace, towards which the arbitration arrangement between the British Government and the United States—an arrangement being made as these words are written—will constitute no inconsiderable step. The times are full of hope. It is still "a sad world, my masters," in very many of its features; but when we cast our eyes back on the history of an infinitely sadder past, we are encouraged to hope for a continuing amelioration, partly as the result of extending knowledge (science), but still more as a consequence of the development of man's conscience and spiritual nature, which, quickened by the inbreathing of something divine, whatever we may call its name, is gradually rising above his merely selfish or individual existence, and is looking on his fellow-man as Brother—yea, as another

manifestation of his essential Self. Says Lord Morley :—

“There never was a time, there never was an age when, from the highest to the lowest, there was more common human-heartedness, more earnest desire to alleviate the lot of those who have to perform the hard services of the world and face its gusty insecurities; and never a time when people were more willing to make personal sacrifices. I know people who hate their own luxury; and if anybody, any statesman, would tell them how, by stripping themselves of this or that luxury, they would lighten the lot of those whose lot is hard, they would do it.”¹

And this human-heartedness has grown fastest in an age of science, largely because of wider and closer connections among mankind. Mediæval ideals of solitariness and piety did less for character in a thousand years than the modern ideals have done in three centuries. There is ground for much hope in this.

¹ Quoted in *Hibbert Journal*, April 1911. The writer, Rev. G. A. Johnston Ross, is pointing out, with misgivings, the modern tendency away from “the Cross” towards a regrettably cheerful kind of religion. Apparently Mr Ross is of the same mind as the old lady who could not get on happily without the doctrine of total depravity.

CHAPTER XIV

MYSTICISM AND THE SUBLIMINAL

It has been remarked by William James¹ that the most important contribution to modern psychology is the discovery in 1886 of the subconscious or subliminal self already alluded to. The current terminology, and perhaps any terminology at present possible, is beset with dangers, for the popular mind is apt to think that long words are scientific, however little they may mean, and to accept almost anything if it is referred to as a product of the "subliminal consciousness." Still, it is sufficiently established by hypnotic and other phenomena that, in some people at least, there is not only the ordinary field of normal consciousness, but also a mental region where consciousness is still extant and operative, though the person's ordinary waking mind knows nothing about it. Tell a good hypnotic subject that in half an hour's time he will take his boots off, wake him immediately after giving the order, and he will know nothing about what was said to him in the sleep; but at the end

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 233.

of the half-hour he will take his boots off. Asked why he did it, he will probably say he does not know, that he had an impulse to do it, etc. Something in him took the order, watched the time, and carried out instructions. This kind of experiment has been elaborated in various ingenious and complicated ways; and it is now quite certain that in some people there are or may be more than one stream or stratum of consciousness.

With such people it is frequently found that, by quieting the normal consciousness down into a passive state, another stratum can come to the top, and can, so to speak, be tapped. Or, to vary the metaphor, a set of muscles, as, *e.g.*, of the arm and hand, can be geared to the subliminal powerhouse instead of to that of the normal consciousness, and if the hand is placed on a planchette, or a pencil held in the fingers, automatic writing will be produced—writing of which the normal consciousness knows nothing until it reads it. There is nothing very startling about this, for we have an illustration of changed consciousness every night when we sleep. In automatic writing (the bulk of it, at least) the hand is dreaming on paper.

With most people, the product is fragmentary and silly; with others it is coherent and rational. In these latter cases it usually purports to come from "spirits," but this may be due to the spiritistic tradition, or to the almost inevitable inference that, as the writer's normal mind is not

concerned, some outside agency must be at work. It is a fact that the matter written often contains knowledge which the writer's normal consciousness could not have produced, and this sometimes does suggest external sources. But the subliminal memory must be assumed to contain much knowledge which we have "forgotten"—which has slipped down below the threshold—and it is difficult to fix the limits of this knowledge. Even if some outside source is sometimes indicated, it is probable that the automatist's mind, in its subliminal levels, is largely concerned. In most automatic productions it is unnecessary to assume the agency of any discarnate mind; though in the case of Stainton Moses' *Spirit Teachings* and Mr W. T. Stead's *After Death (Letters from Julia)* there are intrinsic or accompanying features—some evidential—which seem to render such agency probable. But these are only two cases out of a great mass of "automatic" literature.

It seems possible, therefore, that the mystic's "illumination" or revelation may be an inrush of consciousness from these trans-marginal regions. To the mystic it feels like a revelation from without, and he calls it union with the Divine; but this feeling may be as deceptive as automatic writing which claims to come from supernatural beings. The subliminal may be responsible for both. A movable threshold may produce a hysteric, a lunatic, a genius, a clairvoyant, or a saint.

In this connection it is significant to note that many of the mystics who have illuminations, also have the faculty of automatic writing, or at least produce writing which is only partially the outcome of conscious thinking. Madame Guyon, for example, says in her autobiography that when composing her works she would feel a sudden impulse to write, though with no consciousness of *what* she was going to write. The script was produced with great rapidity—a frequently noted phenomenon in automatic writing—and elaborate arguments with appropriate quotations came to her without reflection. She remarks, further: "I was myself surprised at the letters which Thou didst cause me to write, and in which I had no part save the actual movement of my hand; . . . everyone was astounded because I wrote with such great facility" (*Vie*, pt. ii., ch. ii.). "Before writing, I knew not what I was going to write. . . . Nothing of that which I wrote was in my mind; my mind, in fact, was so wholly at liberty that it seemed a blank. . . . I will add to all that I have been saying on my writings, that a considerable part of the book on 'Judges' was lost. Being asked to complete it, I rewrote the last portions. Long afterwards, when I was moving house, these were found in a place where no one could have imagined that they would be; and the old and new versions were found exactly alike—a circumstance which greatly astonished those persons of learning and merit who undertook its verification" (*Vie*, pt. ii., ch. xxi.; quoted, with

excellent comments, by Evelyn Underhill in *Mysticism*, pp. 354, 355).¹

Similarly with the work of Jacob Boehme :—

“It is clear from his own words concerning it, that his first book, the *Aurora*, produced after the great illumination which he received in the year 1610, was no deliberate composition, but an example of inspired or automatic script. This strange work, full of sayings of a deep yet dazzling darkness, was condemned by the local tribunal; and Boehme was forbidden to write more. For seven years he obeyed. Then “a new intuition from on high” seized him, and under the pressure of this subliminal impulse—which, characteristically, he feels as coming from without, not from within—he begins to write again.”²

Precisely the same thing is to be noted in the writings of St Teresa; while St Catherine of Siena dictated her great dialogue to her secretaries whilst in a state apparently of trance. Some modern mystics, it seems to me, make a mistake in labouring to establish a clear distinction between the great illuminati and the modern medium or inspirational speaker. They are of the same family, and the prejudice caused by the sordid associations of the word spiritualism ought not to blind us to its pedigree. If it be said that the present-day inspirational speakers and writers produce no works equal to those of the great mystics such as Boehme, it may be replied that this is by no means certain. There is an immense output of automatic script in

¹ Madame Guyon also showed some anæsthesia, which is a frequent hysterical symptom (*Vie*, pt. i., ch. x.).

² E. Underhill, *op. cit.*, pp. 355, 356. Reference to Boehme's works, vol. i. p. xiv., Eng. trans.

these days, and a considerable amount gets printed, often at the expense of the author, who is looked on as a harmless lunatic. It may be that in a century or so some of these productions may be rediscovered and found to contain great things which have escaped the notice of a generation unripe for their reception.¹

The mystic vision, then, may be said to be due to a more or less temporary lowering of the threshold, causing an uprush of subliminal perception, an incursion of a new form of experience. And it is not essentially absurd to suppose, though it is dangerous to press it beyond a supposition, that on the farther side of that "subliminal" we may be in touch with spiritual entities, of human nature or divine, or both. The subliminal may be the door through which God comes to see us: indeed, our souls may somehow be continuous with Him, as the pantheistic systems teach, supported by Paul's "In Him we live and move and have our being." The total soul of the universe may be likened to the water in a great reservoir: the individual human souls are the taps through which the water runs when the householder draws. They may number hundreds of thousands, and no two are exactly alike. If they were conscious, they would have no

¹ I fancy that the objection of some modern mystics to spiritualistic productions is their simplicity. The mystic is apt to yearn for obscurity and mysterious symbolism. This, anyhow, is true of the "occultist." Probably it is a survival of the child's love of "secrets." The "occultist" has not quite grown up.

means of knowing that the same source feeds them all. Probably they would think they originated the water themselves ; yet in reality they are only media, and their relation to the unknown source is the same. If one of these conscious taps could send its consciousness up the pipe to the reservoir, and could for a moment and partially share in the larger consciousness of the reservoir itself, it might correspond to the mystic consciousness. It would have attained a new kind of experience. But it might not do its work any the better, as a tap, though it might be useful in widening the minds of its brother-taps who, sunk in a short-sighted materialism, might be disposed to deny the existence of any form of consciousness except their own—any reservoir, in short.

From which parable it may be gathered that any deliberate cultivation of the mystic consciousness or of subliminal insurgences, is risky, and doubtfully wise. The Oriental Yogi probably does throw himself into abnormal states by posturing, fixed gazing, repeating mantras, and other devices for counteracting the pull of the phenomenal world and getting afloat on the subconscious. Similarly, Jacob Boehme was hypnotised by the dazzle of light on a burnished pewter platter, and Loyola by running waters. But deliberate cultivation of the mystical consciousness must be regarded with disfavour unless such cultivation can be shown to have some value for life. We are here on this earth-plane, and must live the earth-life. One

world at a time. It is better to do the duty that lies nearest—to *do* it—than to yearn for spiritual experiences, the desire for which, after all, is a kind of selfishness.¹ If such experiences come without seeking, well and good: the spirit bloweth where it listeth. But there is danger in seeking them. We may open the door, but we do not know what will enter—genius, sainthood, or lunacy. Those who know anything about occult societies, and the stories of certain people who have made moral shipwreck of their lives through this seeking, are well aware of some of the dangers in question.

There is no clear line between sanity and insanity, any more than there is between moral good and evil. The one shades into the other. But, however difficult it may be to describe sanity, one of its features at least is the power of adjusting oneself to one's environment, of managing one's own affairs so that the general ideal of well-being is not seriously violated. In other words, the centre of gravity must be in this life. It is our main affair at present, however it may be in the future; and we must make it our main business. Professor James somewhere likens the mind to a many-sided solid, resting on one of its sides. By emotional stress or other methods, the polyhedron may be heaved up until the centre of gravity falls outside its base, and it wobbles over and settles

¹ Balzac's *Quest of the Absolute* is a symbolic picture of the harm wrought by this long-sightedness which cannot see the near duties.

on another side. A new form of experience is achieved. But it is not necessarily a better one. If the polyhedron was useful in its former position, the change in its centre of gravity may have been pernicious. We know as yet so little about the mysterious subliminal levels and powers of the human mind, that it is risky to encourage them to invade the normal consciousness. This latter is certainly the latest development—the highest rung reached in the evolutionary ladder—and a negating of it may be a deliberate plunge backward into outgrown stages, a kind of spiritual suicide. As already said, the joy of it, the certainty, etc., is no certificate of its superiority. The unknowing joy and certainty of the gambolling child is not a higher state than the serious, and even sad, soul-mood of the grown man. And it is likely that this mystic joy may be exaggerated. When experienced, it is keen and strong, and the mystic lets us know about it. Of his reactions into depression, his periods of “dryness,” we probably hear less, for at these times he is suffering, and less exuberantly vocal.

Further, the more of this joy and certainty there is, the less moral sensitiveness for others there seems to be; and this condemns it. There may be exceptions, and I do not want to be unfair; but that is how it strikes me. For example:—

The aims of true mysticism “are wholly transcendental and spiritual. It is in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, rearranging, or improving anything in

the visible universe. The mystic brushes aside that universe even in its most supernormal manifestations. Though he does not, as his enemies declare, neglect his duties to the many, his heart is always set upon the changeless One."¹

But surely he does neglect his duty to the many, if he is not concerned with improving anything in the visible universe? Certainly there is a tendency to lotus-dreaming, to introverted vision, to complete preoccupation with the inner feelings. Miss Underhill truly remarks that Madame Guyon's account "is too often marred by a terrible and unctuous interest in the peculiar graces vouchsafed to her," and aptly describes her elsewhere as "basking like a pious tabby cat in the beams of the Uncreated Light."²

This is a kind of laziness and selfishness. Is it not the lesson of history that our duty is to cultivate the conscious part of us, the latest evolved, and to apply that cultivated consciousness to the service of our fellow-men?³

¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 96.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 220, 221, 296.

³ In an article on "The Sub-Conscious and the Super-Conscious," *Hibbert Journal*, April 1911, Professor Percy Gardner says that "ecstasy is a phenomenon infinitely more familiar to the medicine man of the savage, and to the ministers of the lower religions, than to man in his higher forms." When experienced now, it is a survival of lower primitive elements, not a dawning of new "cosmic consciousness." It is to be repressed, and the ethical consciousness cultivated.

CHAPTER XV

MYSTICISM AND HUMOUR

THE mystic has other limitations, besides that of intolerance. One of the prominent ones is the lack of a sense of humour. I am aware, of course, that examples will be quoted against me. To every rule there are exceptions. St Teresa and St Francis had a horror of solemnity, which they thought dangerously akin to hypocrisy; and the former composed rustic hymns and carols for the use of her spiritual daughters, in the dialect of Old Castile. There is also Captain Underhill of Dover, New Hampshire, who told Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts that "the Spirit had sent him into the witness of free grace while he was in the moderate enjoyment of the creature called tobacco"; which, though perhaps not intended to be exactly humorous, is certainly an indication of a kind of wholesome red-bloodedness which is akin to what we call a humorous mental constitution. I myself have seen at my old home these "smoking prayer meetings"—not of Ranters, but Congregationalists—each jovial saint with pipe in mouth, after due

performance of sincere and vigorous orisons. But these folks are not typical mystics. They smell too much of the good red earth. They are too this-worldly: the mystic is other-worldly.

Shakespeare classes the lunatic, the lover, and the poet under one heading, as being of imagination all compact.¹ Certainly, however it may be with lunatics and lovers, there is close kinship between poets and mystics. Both live in an inner kind of way, withdrawn more or less from the life of their fellows. Both are lacking in humour, as indeed any solitary-minded man is almost sure to be, for humour is a characteristic of the sociable being to whose interest nothing human is alien. Among the poets, the one who is most mystical—in a Nature-way rather than a doctrine-way—is also the one who happens to have given us the fullest account of the development of a poet's mind—the longest and most reliable autobiography. And it is undeniable that Wordsworth was as nearly destitute of a sense of humour as it is possible for a man to be. He was also rather lacking in human sympathy. His absorption in Nature alienated him from his kind. The old innkeeper calls him "a desolate-minded man, ye kna, a takin' his family out in a string and niver geein' the deeriest bit of notice to 'em; . . . it was potry as did it." Of course a certain degree of aloofness is inevitable in any thinker, whether poet or philosopher. Spencer had two ear-pads which he put on when he had

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

had enough of the conversation of those present, thus indicating that he preferred his own society. But the chilly *solemnity* of Wordsworth is a thing apart from his aloofness, and seems to have been deeply ingrained—as constitutional as his poetic genius. It is on record that Emerson's most intimate friends called him *Mr* Emerson; and it is difficult to imagine anyone calling the Lake Poet "William," still less a monosyllabic abbreviation; but we know that he did at times make efforts to be sociable, which Emerson did not. But, even at these times, Wordsworth failed to show even a gleam of humour. When Lamb, during a convivial evening, proceeded to "feel his bumps," the most that the patient could do was to say, "Really, really, my dear Charles!" in mild and almost lady-like expostulation. It would be interesting to know whether he managed to rise to the level of a joke on the one occasion when he got drunk; but history is silent on the point. Probably he did not. The fact that the lapse into inebriation was due to a too-copious honouring of the name of Milton—another almost humourless genius—is enough to suggest that Wordsworth's cast-iron solemnity was maintained under even these exceptional circumstances.

The characteristics of a poet are to some extent those of a musician. Both are living and working in a world remote from the world of logic and science, as is the mystic. And what will apply to one will apply to the other. We may therefore

surmise, perhaps, that the gift of humour, so conspicuously denied to Wordsworth, may also be to seek in the devotees of St Cecilia. Here I am on dangerous ground. One of my friends is a well-known musician, and he is also quite satisfactorily endowed with a sense of humour. I must therefore, perhaps, class him as an exception, combining in himself features rarely meeting in the same personality. In case he should argue the whole point and conquer me by superior knowledge of musicians in general, I will shelter myself behind the name of one who, though not an expert, knows more of music than I do, and who writes from a thoroughly sympathetic and almost envious point of view. Says Mr A. C. Benson, in an article, "The Musician," in the *English Review*, May 1911, p. 244:—

"Now I think it may well be that if any musician comes to read this he will be vexed with me for saying what is not true. And I do not mean that there are not exceptions. But it is mainly true; and if musicians are, as they are, the inheritors of a mysterious secret in which others can take no part, a province which none can invade, a region which the ignorant can pass through without even seeing what is going forward there, then they must be content that other men should have secret regions too, which the musician cannot enter. They must be content to be unaware of humour, which is really as near to tears as to laughter."

I think this certainly applies to mystically-minded people also, in a general sort of way. We feel that they are something short. The saints may laugh sometimes, but it is a feminine and

anæmic cachinnation, superficial and volatile, from the lips only, and emitted only at off-times, so to speak, in the play-intervals of the serious business of life, which is—as Ruysbroeck puts it—to love and endure God and be penetrated by His love. It is not a laugh of the whole man, like Teufelsdröckh's. The humour of the mystic, if he has any, is thin. He is an essentially solemn person. He may perhaps assure us that "Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less," but the trouble is that he cannot appreciate some of the things which give us pleasure, and consequently thinks we can give them up as easily as he could; or he condemns them as wrong, and solemnly rebukes our secular tastes. George Fox supplies an illustration. He describes a captain of horse who was very friendly towards him, offering him hospitality at Weymouth, and finally escorting him seven miles on his way :—

"The captain was the fattest, merriest man, the most cheerful, and the most given to laughter that ever I met with; insomuch that I was several times moved to speak in the dreadful power of the Lord to him; and yet it was become so customary to him that he would presently laugh at anything he saw. But I still admonished him to come to sobriety, sincerity, and the fear of the Lord. . . . He afterwards was convinced and became a serious and good man, and died in the truth."¹

Here was a triumph of Hebraism over Hellenism with a vengeance. The poor captain's offence was not that his mirth was ribald; if he had indulged

¹ *Fox's Journal*, p. 157 (Isbister's abridged edition, 1903).

in obscene jokes we should infallibly have been informed of it by the tender-minded Fox. No, it was the sheer jollity of the man, his exuberant healthy fun, that grated on the religious nerves of his solemn companion. Examples of this Wordsworth-like solemnity could be culled from almost every page of Fox's *Journal*. Here are two picked at random:—

“After that I went to another ancient priest at Man-setter, in Warwickshire, and reasoned with him about the ground of despair and temptations; he bade me take tobacco and sing psalms. Tobacco was a thing I did not love, and psalms I was not in a state to sing; I could not sing” (p. 6).

(This reminds us of the already-mentioned Ranter who entered into grace while in the moderate enjoyment of the creature called tobacco. Evidently this ancient priest thought that spiritual ills might sometimes be best alleviated by a judicious sedative and change of occupation; somewhat as Luther advised a student who was perplexed with fore-ordination and freewill to get well drunk.)

“After this, I met with a sort of people that held women have no souls (adding in a light manner) no more than a goose. But I reprov'd them, and told them that was not right; for Mary said: ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour’” (p. 10).

An *ipse dixit* which perhaps can hardly be looked on as evidence!

In thus quoting Fox I must guard against a

misapprehension. I am far from wishing to belittle him. No one who knows anything about Fox can for a moment doubt either his sincerity or his ability. Cromwell himself was impressed by him as a man of exceptional power. And, as William James truly remarks, it would be impossible to overpraise the Quaker religion which he founded. In a day of shams it was a religion of veracity and honesty; and through all its history the Society of Friends seems to me on the whole to have been by far the most admirable, the most influential for good, of all the religious sects of modern times. All that I wish to do in quoting Fox is to show his typical lack of humour. If he had had it, it is practically certain that it would have been a moral calamity to the race; for his work would not have been done. Desperate diseases need desperate remedies; and a man of granite seriousness and inflexibility was needed to make a stand against the inflowing irreligion of the Stuart times. We cannot wish him other than he was. But, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, we cannot regard him as an ideal man; for a man without a sense of humour seems lacking in one of the most wholesome attributes of human nature.¹

It is largely because of this wholesomeness and

¹ This being so, if I were an anthropomorphic theist I should credit God with a sense of humour, for He could not be inferior to His creatures. It would then be possible to argue that human sufferings may be a practical joke on the part of God. The idea does not seem to me quite absurd.

wholeness that Shakespeare is so great. He has an almost uncanny and superhuman power of seeing things from all possible points of view. His sympathies are universal. He loves a Falstaff as well as a simply serious Othello, an ultra-meditative Hamlet, or a practically good Henry V. Indeed, he loves the fat knight better than many of the more respectable characters. From the mystic's point of view, Shakespeare is no doubt too earthly and secular; and it is a fact that, if he has a blind spot at all, it is certainly on the mystical side, though it is dangerous to make such a charge against a man who could think the thoughts of Hamlet and of Prospero. Perhaps this leaning to earth rather than sky is only another proof of his wisdom; perhaps he saw that, though there is a real behind the phenomenal, it is dangerous and perhaps useless to try to reach it, our equipment at present being adapted to the world of appearance. He therefore kept close to actuality; presented mighty passions, the whole gamut of human emotions, but always manifested in concrete act which all human beings can understand.

And even his most red-blooded and earthy characters are not entirely sordid.¹ Falstaff was not all coarseness and cowardice and deceit. He drank an intolerable deal of sack, but he made a

¹ Iago is deliberately drawn as fiendish rather than sordid-human. And we need not hold Shakespeare responsible for *Titus Andronicus*.

good end, babbling of green fields.¹ As Mr Benson says in the article just quoted, humour can be as near tears as laughter. It is often so in Shakespeare; it is almost always so in Carlyle.

Talking of Shakespeare's secularity and humour, one is reminded of the fact that in 1604, when he was already a rich man, he sued Philip Rogers, in Stratford Court, for £1, 15s. 10d., being the price of malt delivered to him at different times. As Dowden remarks, Shakespeare evidently could estimate the precise value for this temporal life of £1, 15s. 10d., and in addition to this could bear down "with unfaltering insistence on the positive fact that the right place out of all the universe for the said £1, 15s. 10d. to occupy, lay in the pocket of William Shakespeare." And at this time he was engaged with the mighty tragedies of *King Lear* and *Othello*! For sane poise, and distribution of interests, this would be bad to beat. A lesser man, writing a smaller *King Lear*, would have had no spare energy to prosecute his debtor for the sum of £1, 15s. 10d.

¹ I prefer the best-known rendering, in spite of the attempted emendations.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

IF, then, the mystic has his limitations—a lack of humour, of tolerance, of perspective, against our lack of his vision and joy—he does not seem to be justified in putting on any airs of superiority. We are just quits. Nay, do we not in a way see over the top of him, for we perceive a certain humour in the very fact of his superior attitude towards us, as St Philip Neri probably did in the haughty manners of the offended nun whose saint-hood had developed complications of swelled head. However, we will be content with crying quits. The mystic has his experiences; we have ours. He says, perhaps, that his bring knowledge which we cannot attain to. Well and good: let him act out the knowledge, for from him to whom much is given, much is required. He says that he has greater happiness than we—though he perhaps also has greater depressions, which we hear less about;¹ and, if so, we bid him be thankful but not

¹ Bunyan, for instance, seems to have oscillated between "gloom and glory."

vainglorious. He lives his life, we ours. It takes all sorts to make a world. In the complete organism of humanity there are many functions, all presumably somehow right and necessary; to one man is allotted this, to another that. There are humorous and non-humorous, Barham and Wordsworth; tough-minded and tender-minded, pagan and saint, Haeckel and Marguerite-Marie, St Thomas and St John; as there are red and white corpuscles in our blood, both useful, both necessary, yet very different from each other. In the higher synthesis of the whole body they are seen to be equally right. So with different minds. Seen *sub specie æternitatis*—from the point of view of the whole—they may well be equally right, equally useful.

There is no such person as an ideal man, any more than there is such an animal as an ideal dog. There are mastiffs and greyhounds, Newfoundlands and fox-terriers, collies and schipperkes, all fulfilling their several functions; but no one of them is the "ideal dog," for each breed lacks something which another breed possesses. Similarly with human beings. We may have an almost ideal reasoner, say Locke, Hume, Mill, as we may have an ideally perfect mastiff; but he will be lacking in some other quality, as of æsthetic perceptivity, creative power, or active humanity. The hypothetically perfect artist, on the other hand, will be lacking in reasoning power and scientific curiosity. So with the moral or spiritual genius, whose energies run in his one special channel, leaving others empty. The

saint, as James said, often has an intellect like a pin's head, though we admire his superiority to the low aims of the ruck of mankind, and can indeed see many features in him which make us feel that he has something good which we have not got, though that good often seems to run into extravagances, as in asceticism of the violent kinds which favour hair shirts and spiked belts, and in excessive subjectivism and other-worldliness.

Professor Rauwenhoff, accordingly, divides the manifestations of religion into Intellectualism, Moralism, and Mysticism. This is dangerously suggestive of the old "faculty-psychology," but is nevertheless a handy way of envisaging the matter. These three psychological forms of religion are equally legitimate and necessary, but each requires the check of the other two, if they are not to degenerate each into some corruption special to the exclusive development of that particular form.¹ "Every good quality is noxious if unmixed," says Emerson.

The point is, for us once-borns, that religion is again possible, even though we have had no "experiences." Science, formerly landing us in materialism, has now pushed through that desiccated region, and has emerged into a wider landscape. Physics, by proving the atom to be no ultimate irreducible particle but a congeries of knots or strains or holes in the ether (which is, in

¹ L. W. E. Rauwenhoff's *Religionsphilosophie*, German trans., ed. 1894, pp. 109, 124; quoted in Baron von Hügel's *Mystical Element of Religion*, ii. p. 268. Cf. also p. 291.

its turn, we know not what), has utterly overthrown philosophic materialism, for we now see plainly that we do not know what matter is; while, on the other hand, the facts of psychical research point to survival of bodily death, and the existence of a spiritual world in which we even now live, though shut in by the swathings of our material bodies, from any but transient perception of it. Psychical research, as Myers was fond of saying, is "proving the preamble of all religions," for this spiritual world is the first necessity of religion. We may cheerfully admit that science can usually not bring us that sense of absolute certainty which the mystic attains by his visions, though in Myers's case the belief was nevertheless extremely strong—strong enough to carry him through illness and death with no quiver of doubt or fear—and his belief was entirely built on scientific evidence. But, even waiving this case and admitting our lower degree of certainty, we may have enough belief to live by. It is even possible, as Sidgwick thought and as Browning teaches in *La Saisiaz*, that certainty is not the best thing for us at present; that a trustful and reverent hope is better adapted to the growth of character than any complete subjective assurance. I am inclined to think that this is so.

And, as to this matter of belief in general, it seems to me that the bulk of the beliefs carried by the average religious man are really top-hamper. He sticks to them, or thinks he sticks to them, through natural conservatism or mental laziness. But he

does not really believe them. Ask him what he would stake on the truth of them—Kant's test—and he himself will be surprised with the smallness of the wager. Let him be honest, then, and let the dead-weight of rubbish go. It was alive once, but is dead now. We shall be all the more active without it.

The organised religions are behind, and not in advance of, the best conscience of the time—perhaps, indeed, the average conscience. It is the "burly slave," working rack and thumbscrew, not the priest, who decides on more humane methods:—

"'Tis a vile trick, foolish more than vile,
Should have been counted sin; I make it so:

At any rate no more of it for me—

Nay, for I break the torture-engine thus!'

Then did Religion start up, stare amain.

Look round for help and see none, smile and say,

'What, broken is the rack? Well done of thee!

Did I forget to abrogate its use?

Be the mistake in common with us both!

—One more fault our blind age shall answer for,

Down in my book denounced though it must be

Somewhere. Henceforth find truth by milder means!'"

BROWNING, *The Ring and the Book*, i. l. 998, *et seq.*

Similarly, even now, the general conscience has the truest insight. The authoritative, priestly system is being left behind. Dogma is being not so much disproved as outgrown. The *Zeitgeist* has set its face in another direction, and those who cling to dogmatic formulations will be left behind. This is inevitable. As soon as the life of a movement has died out and left its shell in the shape

of an institution, that institution blocks the way of progress. But ultimately it is absorbed or crushed or worked round. The Spirit moves on.

I am slipping into metaphysical language, which I have tried to avoid. But complete avoidance is almost impossible. If we are to get beyond a crude and patently inadequate materialism or a bleak and rather paralysing agnosticism, we must have some sort of philosophic scheme, beyond even the "survival" which has already enlarged our horizon. And, if this is so, it seems to me that the best empiricist philosophy is some such system as the modernised Platonism or Stoicism of Fechner, who, in spite of the recommendations of William James, has not yet received the attention which he deserves. According to him, the world is animated by a soul—an Anima Mundi—which bears the same relation to the physical planet that our souls bear to our bodies. To this Anima Mundi we individuals are related as our individual sensations and perceptions are related to our total mental content. The World-Soul inspires us all—lives, indeed, part of its life through us. We on our part may each be contributing to the working out of some plan of the World-Soul, of which we know no more than our blood corpuscles know of *our* plans. Other heavenly bodies have their World-Souls also, and all these spiritual existences, combined, make up part of the Being called God (and may be in their turn working out His plans, though without ability to apprehend them), as the

physical heavenly bodies make up the physical universe or part of it. This seems to me not absurd, as a speculation. But it does not seem very useful. It satisfies our craving for unity, but that is all. And I cannot say that I have any strong craving of the kind, though in this I may be exceptional. I have no great interest in such speculations, and I mention the matter merely in order to show the possibility of a metaphysic. But, as to theology, I cannot regard it as a profitable science, or even as a science at all, unless it can be converted into a theory for co-ordinating man's religious experiences, and as frankly open to modification as other scientific theories. As heretofore understood, it begins at the wrong end. Italy has excluded it from her universities—a significant sign of the times. It seems to me that if we give the name God to the spiritual Something which hypothetically underlies and energises through the material universe as my consciousness energises through my body; or if we are still more pantheistic, and add into "God" the material part as well, in the same way as "I" consist of body and mind; it seems to me, I say, as absurd for us to make any pronouncements about the attributes of that Being, as it would be for a phagocyte, floating in the serum of a capillary in my little toe, to attempt a similar pronouncement about the organism of which it forms a microscopical part. What can *it* know of my aims, my desires, my feelings? What

does *it* know of this book that I am writing, of the multitude of thoughts which occupy my consciousness in a single hour or even minute of my life, of the extent of my interests and powers, of my volitional activity in the moral world, of my emotions as I read Keats or Shakespeare, of my intellectual struggles as I read Hegel or Kant? What conception can it form about me? Its experience is so narrow, and so dissimilar from mine, that it can form none but mistaken notions of the whole in which it lives and moves and has its being. Equally futile is man's attempt at totality - explanations. He, compared with his Earth, is like a dust-speck on a globe fifty times the size of the dome of St Paul's; his Earth in its turn is but a grain in the solar system, which itself is but an isolated little bunch of atoms whirling round each other in the depths of illimitable space, like midges dancing in a horizon-less landscape. What then can that human dust-speck know of the whole, even the whole *material* universe, not to speak of the spiritual forces which are behind? As Teufelsdröckh says, the minnow may know well the crannies and pebbles of its little creek, but does the minnow understand the ocean tides and periodic currents, the trade-winds, and monsoons, and moon's eclipses, by all which the condition of its little creek is regulated? Such a minnow is man, his creek this planet Earth, or a small corner thereof.

Let us then above all things acquire the saving

grace of humility. Whether rationalist or mystic, let us keep in mind the absurdity of any attempt at totality-explanations, neat cut-and-dried systems of theology or philosophy, whether certified by reason or feeling. Let us leave the way open for the revelation to us of further truth; we know at least that the universe has continually become more wonderful and more awe-inspiring as our knowledge of it has grown, and this is sufficient basis for trust in the future. As already said, whoever made the universe may be supposed to be capable of looking properly after it. Anyway, *we* are not responsible. If we do the bit of work which lies nearest to us—do it as well as it is in us to do—we may safely leave the rest to God, or Fate, or Destiny, or whatever we like to call the ultimate Something which is unnameable, unknowable, and inconceivable. By help of the scientific evidence for survival, even the non-mystic may escape from materialism, and may once more see the world as a rational and ultimately satisfactory affair. This is a great advance on the position which science seemed to render unavoidable half a century ago. For the present, we may be well satisfied with the advance. It will be continued, but the new knowledge is enough to live by.

“Do thine own task, and be therewith content;
 What others do, that shalt thou fairly judge;
 Be sure that thou no brother mortal hate,
 And all beside leave to the Master Power.”

GOETHE, *Xenien*.

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PRINTED BY SKILL AND CO., LTD., EDINBURGH.



