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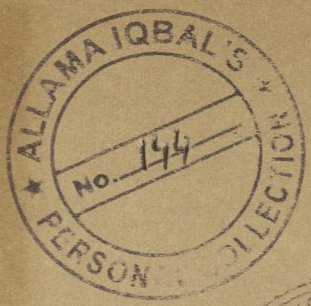

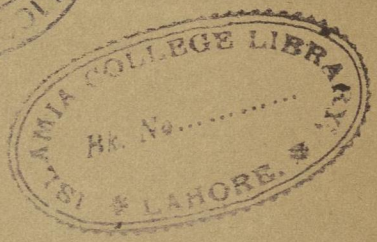

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A Brief Enquiry into the Grounds of Christian Conviction

BY

HERBERT H. FARMER, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "THINGS NOT SEEN"

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PREFACE

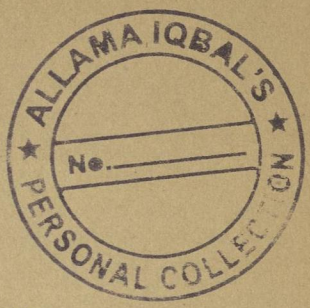
It will be apparent from the contents page and the size of this book that it is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the topics which are taken up. Many points which to the philosophically or theologically inclined will seem important and in need of fuller treatment are left undiscussed or only lightly touched upon. None the less, it is hoped that this will not detract from whatever value the book may possess; perhaps, indeed, it will add to it. For the aim is to present a point of view rather than the view, in all its detail, itself; a point of view which may help the reader to keep his mind steady amid the many conflicting currents of contemporary thought, and think out matters in the only way which is in the end profitable for any one, namely, for himself.

The book contains matter which has appeared in other forms elsewhere, but in its present shape it is new. Some of it appeared in articles in *The Student Movement* some years ago. The argument as a whole is a working-out of a line of thought I sketched in an article which was published in *The Modern Church-*

man in 1926, and is to form one of the essays in a composite work edited by Prof. VERNON BARTLET and shortly to be published by the S.C.M. I am indebted to Prof. Bartlet for his consent to my using some paragraphs from the article in question. I am also indebted to Messrs NISBET, the publishers of my book *Things Not Seen*, for permission to use matter from the first chapter, in which the pragmatic argument for the truth of religion was outlined from a more devotional angle.

I have to tender my thanks to Mr V. A. BURROWS for much help in preparing the typescript and reading the proofs.

HERBERT H. FARMER.



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PART I.

GROUNDS OF BELIEF IN GOD

CHAPTER I

THE ELEMENTS OF CONVICTION

EVERY religion which is a power in the lives of men—and it is only as a power in the lives of men that it is worth discussing—makes at least two claims.

First, it claims that the objects with which it concerns itself in its teaching and practice are real. The conviction that its activities are real transactions with a real world is part of the life-sustaining breath of religion. When a man begins in any degree to suspect that his religion is mere phantasy and illusion, immediately its hold on him begins to loosen, and it will not be long before it disappears from his life altogether.

Second, it claims that the reality with which it deals is in some sense unseen, supernatural and eternal. *Unseen*—that is to say, spiritual, falling to the side of mind rather than to that of matter, not to be handled, measured, weighed, discerned through the senses, like tables or chairs or other physical objects. *Supernatural*—that is to say, not merely capricious, uncontrolled by law or reason, uncanny, as the term is sometimes popularly used, but literally *super*natural, above nature, in the sense of

being that from which nature derives its existence and to which it is subordinate. For religion the physical world of nature could not exist without the spiritual world which lies behind it and gives it meaning and purpose. But the spiritual world might conceivably exist without the physical world of nature ; it is prior to it, its ground. It is above it, therefore, in the order of being, *super*natural. *Eternal*—that is to say, ultimate in the most absolute sense, abiding through all change. In religion men believe they are entering into relations with the reality of realities, from which there can be no appeal to anything beyond it ; the importance of it, therefore, to the religious mind is of the most solemn conceivable kind.

Needless to say, the religious person, speaking naturally and spontaneously, would not express these two claims in these terms. He would sum up the unseen, supernatural, and eternal reality with which he believes himself to deal in the pregnant term God, a term which probably he has never troubled to analyse very much ; and he would affirm, probably more by his acts than his words, that the God, so unreflectively apprehended, is real. But the claims would be implicitly present all the time ; for were they invalidated, he would be conscious, however dimly, that the heart of his religion had been profoundly affected, if not entirely plucked out.

If then a religion which is to be a power in the lives of men necessarily makes these two claims, we are confronted forthwith with one of the main reasons for the weakness of many people's religious life. That reason is the *sheer unreality* to them of the unseen, supernatural and eternal world with which religion concerns itself and which is summed up in the term God.

There are undoubtedly a number of people who have more or less dropped religion, or to whom, if they have not dropped it, it is a very unreal and uninspiring thing, because the word God, which religion continually forces them to use, does not seem to them to represent any living, positive reality in their lives. This is not always the reason they themselves give but at bottom it is the real reason. If they are pressed to be honest they will confess that they find it difficult to use the word God as anything more than a merely intellectual term, with which are associated a few vague and very transient feelings and a few even more vague theological definitions, such as that God is Creator or Infinite or Omnipotent or Eternal. As for any kind of living touch upon their spirits, of which they can say with the utmost conviction, "That is God," any kind of immediate, practical, daily dealing with Him, they would have to confess that nothing of the kind has ever come their way or, at any

rate, it has not come often enough for them to feel that God really is the transcendently important reality which religion always represents Him to be. The result is that they either give up religion in a kind of desperation of honesty, or they maintain it, and want perpetually to discuss it, with a miserable sense of unending frustration and disappointment.

Even those who feel that they are making something of religion have probably often enough wished that God and the unseen were more obvious and less liable to be obscured than they actually are. Indeed, few people are so spiritually minded as to be without at least occasional doubts whether in their religion they are dealing with a reality at all; at the very least they find themselves asking anxiously through what process of knowledge or experience a spiritual reality, if there be such a reality, can be indubitably apprehended by men. The fact that the question of Authority bulks so largely in religious discussion is in this connexion very significant.

How different in this respect is the world of colour and shape and number—so concrete, so vivid, so pungently and obviously real—with which we deal in our daily life and in our science and art. When here our thinking seems to be taking us out of our depth, and terms are getting hazy and ill-defined, we can always come back to the everyday world and, finding it as fresh as

ever, start again. Is there nothing in religion to which we can instantly come back when our thinking and discussion have merely served to confuse us; nothing in which we can immerse ourselves as in a bath of reality; nothing which coerces our spirits in the same way that, say, the scarlet of a geranium coerces our senses; nothing of which we are instantly constrained to say, "I cannot get away from this. This is God. Whatever else the term God means, it must mean at least this inescapable, coercive pungency, this fact"?

If all this be true, then it follows there can be few more important questions for religion, both from the point of view of strengthening the religious life in those who already have a religious life, and from the point of view of inducing it in those who have it not, than the question of how we may be assured that God, and the unseen world, with which religion claims to deal, are *real*. To give some suggestions towards the answering of this question is the purpose of this book.

The claim of religion that the world with which it deals is real and that the affirmations it makes about that world are true can only be judged on the grounds of a prior discussion of how the human mind knows anything to be real or true at all. There must be some consideration of general standards of reality and

truth. A preliminary agreement about such standards, if it can be reached, will save much argument at cross-purpose and will also protect the mind from the distortion of mere bias in a department of experience and thought where such distortion is all too common.

We take up first of all then the question how we know anything to be real or true.

We begin with a rather obvious fact, namely, that all experience comes to us through intercourse between our personalities and the world or environment in which we live. We know nothing of, we cannot even conceive, an experience in which either factor in that intercourse is absent. There must be objects experienc*ed* and a perceiving individual who experienc*es* those objects. Also it is clear that, generally speaking, the development of the individual and the enlargement of his experience come about because, for one reason or another, the individual falls into disharmony with his environment and seeks to adjust himself to it, or it to himself, until the disharmony is removed. Thus, without going into the nice points of the theory of evolution, we may suggest that in the first instance living creatures became less vegetative and more mobile largely through lack of food. They had to develop limbs and move elsewhere or perish. But though movement brought more food, it also brought new dangers of a sort other than starvation, dangers

which apart from movement would never have been encountered. And so new powers had to be developed to meet these new dangers, as, for example, a new power of long-distance vision. Yet, again, a faculty of keener vision opened up a still larger world, demanding still further powers to cope with it. Thus to man the eye has revealed the world of colour and beauty, and this world, so revealed, has evoked from him all those wants and aptitudes which we sum up under the name "the æsthetic sense." That the process stops short at different places with different species of creatures does not affect the fact that this is what the process is. Harmonisation of the self with the environment by avoiding destructive forces and using beneficent ones, by developing new powers or re-applying old ones, is the characteristic of life all through, from the lowest and most primitive up to the highest and most complex form which we know in man.

Now the distinction which we are considering, the distinction between truth and falsity, fact and fiction, goes back to this duality in experience, this prior and more fundamental distinction between the experiencing creature and the experienced environment. It would, indeed, be possible to define a live creature, as distinct from a dead one, as a thing to which the *truth* about its world is important, and this

would be to repeat what has just been said in another form. A dead thing is not aware of its surroundings at all. It remains where it is unless some mechanical force plays upon it and moves it, and then it moves strictly in proportion to that mechanical force. It has no interest in what happens. It is inert, unresponsive, malleable, dead. But a live thing shows itself to be alive by being *alive to* the changes in its surroundings and behaving accordingly. Place a ball on the billiard table and it stays exactly where it is put until somebody knocks it down a pocket with a cue. Place a mouse on the same table and it runs hither and thither of its own accord until, in spite of obstacles, it finds a pocket down which to disappear. In other words, the truth about pockets is meaningless to the ball, but to the mouse it is the most important thing in the world.

This distinction between truth and falsity runs through the whole of life and conditions it at every point, because life is all the time an adjustment to a world. The rat which seizes what it thinks to be sugar and finds to its cost that it is arsenic and the man who seizes what he thinks to be pleasure and finds to his cost that it involves disaster are subject to the same law, namely, that a living being must discover what is true and what false and live accordingly, otherwise sooner or later it will be

overwhelmed and perish, or, at the very least, it will lead an unhappy and frustrated life. And the living creature in its own way is aware that this is so and lives accordingly. For corresponding to the demand of the environment that the living creature should adjust itself to it, there is within the living creature the instinct[1] to seek and achieve that adjustment. It is a mutual intercourse the whole time—the facts challenging the creature, and the creature, urged on by instincts of self-preservation and self-development within him, seeking to meet that challenge. The two things are really inseparable. The distinction between fact and fiction, truth and falsity, though it refers primarily to the external world, only has meaning in relation to a vital impulse within the living creature to live in the light of that distinction. Through this vital impulse acting in relation to that distinction development takes place. In its efforts to adjust itself to the truth the live being realises itself and unfolds its latent powers.

There is then this continuous interplay, or tension, between ourselves and the universe in which we live. On the one hand there is the given truth or fact "hitting" us, so to say, and demanding the adjustment of ourselves to it; on the other hand there is the whole impulse

[1] We are using the term "instinct" here in its popular sense, and not in the technical sense used by psychologists.

of life within us, eager to make the adjustment, believing it can make the adjustment, and evolving its highest powers by so doing.

Now, corresponding with these two aspects of the relationship there are always two elements in our apprehension of what is real or true.

There is first an element of *coercion*. This corresponds to what has just been called the truth or fact "hitting" us and demanding an adjustment from us. Our environment is given, is what it is, independently of our desires and ambitions. In harmony with this our minds seem to be so built that a fact or truth has somehow to give us the impression of standing in its own right and shining in its own light, whatever our feelings may be, before it can fully convince us. We immediately become more or less uneasy and suspicious if this coercive grip of what claims to be true is lacking, if we have to "work ourselves up" to believe it; certainly we do not feel any very strong impulse to adjust ourselves to a truth or fact unless it does so lay hold of us by its own inherent compelling power. So we speak of cogent proofs or brute facts or irresistible impressions, each of these phrases expressing our sense of being coerced by a world which is given and to which we must adjust ourselves. In the same way we are aware within our own minds of a profound difference between the

processes of free imagination and the processes of logical thought. Without discussing whether imagination is ever an organ of truth, and what the relation of imagination to logical thinking is in the ultimate unity of the mind, there is no question that the experience in the one case "feels" entirely different from the experience in the other, and the difference is closely related to this sense of coerciveness. In imagination or phantasy-thinking the mind feels free, within limits, to range where it will; but in ratiocination, or the logical prosecution of premisses and their implications, the mind is conscious of being under duress, very painfully so at times. Each step forward must be cogent or the truth will probably be missed. So we speak of being convinced or convicted by an argument; we are coerced by it in spite of our inclinations.

The second element in our apprehension of truth and reality may be called the "*pragmatic*" or "practical" element. It corresponds to the other factor in the tension between ourselves and our world of which we have spoken, namely, the life impulse within us, which is all the time eager to match itself with, and adjust itself to, the coerciveness of facts. It is not easy to draw out and state this pragmatic element in our attitude to reality, but it is there all the time. Deep within the normally constituted mind is the conviction, or faith,

that truth is good for man to know, that a man gains in well-being by knowing the truth. Man finds it very difficult, if not impossible, to believe, at any rate for any length of time, that there can be a permanent disharmony between his highest development, his essential well-being, and the facts of the world in which he lives. Our minds are so made—and after all we must in the end accept our minds—that we cannot but believe that the Universe in which we find ourselves is somehow in its real nature a suitable stage for the fullest realisation of ourselves. Hence, no matter how coercive a fact or truth may seem to be, if it appears also to be absolutely destructive of our own well-being, we are instantly thrown in greater or less degree into an attitude of scepticism about it, and we feel either that the fact is not really what it seems to be, or that there is that in ourselves which can meet it and rise superior to its challenge.

That there is this element of pragmatism or practical faith in our attitude to truth, this element of scepticism as to whether apparent truths and facts too destructive of ourselves can really be such, seems undeniable. It is interesting to note in this connexion that those philosophers who have propounded a pessimistic view of life have never had much following. Mankind has never been able to take them quite seriously, and it is merely begging the

question to put that down to the stupidity or cowardice of mankind. It is at least a possible alternative that mankind's consistent refusal to accept as true doctrines which seem to condemn him to an everlasting discord with his world springs far more from his reason and intuitive insight than from a merely sentimental and cowardly reluctance to face uncomfortable facts. For one thing, reason is that in man which seeks to unify experience and to discover an orderly world, and it is probably, therefore, in part a rational impulse which lies behind man's reluctance to accept any view of himself which makes him a permanent misfit in the heart of the Universe. And for another thing, the whole evolution of life has depended on a fundamental optimism or faith in living creatures that they are equal to their world, and in man that fundamental optimism becomes more or less conscious of itself. Despair is psychologically the end of the life impulse and the end of evolution. And if it be said that this fundamental optimism of all living creatures is merely a trick of nature to keep them going, one can only here express a profound suspicion of theories, so common in these days, which can only give a rational account of nature by calling her a clever liar.

Are there any other elements to be discerned in the processes leading to full conviction? Many would probably include a third element

in addition to the two already mentioned. They would ask, does not *reflexion* enter in very deeply? It certainly very often does. Trained and cultured minds especially are not fully satisfied unless their beliefs have been reflectively submitted to the criticism of reason, and unless they harmonise with other knowledge and, in general, help to give them a satisfying philosophy of life taken as a whole. This reflective element in conviction we might be inclined to set alongside of, and on a level with, the other two elements already dealt with. That procedure will indeed be followed in this book. We shall deal throughout with the coercive, pragmatic and reflective elements in religious convictions. But this is mainly for convenience of exposition. It is not difficult to see that reflexion, on analysis, proves to be, not a third element in conviction, but a peculiar combination of the other two. Men reflect because they feel they must have reason and intellect satisfied as well as heart and conscience and the other needs of their complex nature; so far reflexion is pragmatic in origin and intention and the satisfaction of reason is a pragmatic satisfaction. Yet the mark of rational processes is their coerciveness; reason is not satisfied unless each step follows the other in inevitable sequence. Thus the coercive element appears in the midst of the pragmatic.

This intermingling is, indeed, characteristic

of the whole process of conviction as it actually occurs in our experience. The analysis of the process we have given suffers from the inevitable defect of all analysis, namely, that it simplifies and divides unduly what is in reality a very complex and continuous process. In actual life our convictions are, as it were, deposited out of a stream of experience in which at any given moment the inescapable compulsions of truth and the experimental ventures of pragmatic activity are in continual interplay with one another. There are some truths which are so coercive in themselves that we cannot even suspend judgment in regard to them. There are others which carry an enormous coercive power, but which are challenged by other truths and facts carrying a similar coercive power. There are others again which exercise little constraint in themselves but acquire a great deal after many years of experience and reflexion and interplay with other truths.

None the less, the analysis we have given remains valid and important. Let us recapitulate it. Starting from the fact that all experience is the product of an intercourse or tension between the living creature and its environment, we have seen that into all our final convictions of truth and reality there always enter two factors, one coercive, the other pragmatic. On the one hand we feel

uneasy about the truth of a belief which merely satisfies our desires and has not the element of irresistible cogency in it. On the other hand we feel uneasy about the truth of a belief which, while it appears to convince the mind, leaves, after proper experiment of it, the whole personality deeply dissatisfied. Reasoned reflexion, too, we have said, requires to be satisfied, though this factor is really only a combination of the other two. If, however—to state the same thing more positively—a belief satisfies all three criteria; if it (1) shines in its own light with a certain inherent coerciveness, (2) satisfies us and helps us in the practical task of dealing with our world, and (3) meets the demands of reason by revealing on reflexion the further coerciveness of rational consistency and harmony with other knowledge and experience—then we have in regard to it as full an assurance of truth as it is ever possible for us to have.

We now turn to the question of the reality of God and of that unseen spiritual world with which religion concerns itself. Our affirmation is that here neither the coercive, nor the pragmatic element, nor the combination of these two in reflexion is lacking; rather all are present to a degree which should satisfy any mind not initially prejudiced against religious belief.

CHAPTER II

THE COERCIVE ELEMENT IN BELIEF IN GOD

THAT there is at work in religion something powerfully coercive becomes clear as soon as the facts are examined.

There are indeed critics of religion who seem entirely to overlook this. Thus a theory of the origin of religion very commonly put forward is that it is merely something which the human mind has elaborated to help it in the struggle of life. We shall consider this theory in the next section, but the point now is that it quite overlooks something in religion which seems continually to coerce man in a direction contrary to all his natural instincts and desires. Only a superficial examination of the facts, or an examination conducted not primarily in the interests of truth but in the interests of theory, could lead men to speak of religion as though it were merely a refuge, merely a product of the phantasy-thinking whereby weak creatures create for themselves the comfortable paradise of a fool. Religion is, and always has been, a most pungent stimulus to activity. It has again and again urged men into situations which by no stretch of

imagination could be called comforting or comfortable. No matter how the stinging coerciveness of religion in human life may be explained, it is there, and a theory which overlooks it and dwells only on the comforting or pragmatic side of religion is hardly worth consideration.

Popular usage is in closer touch with facts than this. We are accustomed to say that a man regards an object or follows a line of conduct very religiously, or that he makes a god or a religion of such and such a thing, when we intend to indicate that his attitude is peculiarly undeviating and steadfast in regard to it. More is meant than that the object in question is highly valued, though that is involved. What is meant is rather that there has entered into the valuation a peculiar added element, which can only be described as an element of obstinacy or *absoluteness;* an element which makes it impossible to induce disloyalty to the valuation in question by appeals to the ordinary motives which usually determine men's conduct. To put it colloquially, and we are here arguing from the colloquial, the practical man knows that when he is dealing with an attitude which he dubs "making a religion of a thing," he is confronting an exceedingly "tough proposition"; he knows that he is confronting a principle of conduct which is likely to be proof against a whole armoury of ordinary inducements and threats.

This popular usage of the term religion is in harmony with some of the most striking facts of the historical manifestations of religion. The idea of sacrifice, the idea, that is, of annulling natural instincts and desires, has always had a central place in the religious life of mankind all down the ages. It is a commonplace, too, which everybody knows, though not everybody realises its significance, that historically the religious motive, wherever it has occurred in genuine form, has always been one of the most ruthless and invincible of all the motives which have governed human conduct. The hardest thing to stamp out, as many tyrants have learnt to their cost, is a religion, and that must be because in religion there enters the human mind a coercion more cogent than even powerful impulses like sex or hunger or fear. Wherever religion has occurred in any sincere form it has always produced the spirit, and often the actuality, of martyrdom. It has always produced the attitude of mind which will even give up life itself rather than be disloyal to what is apprehended as the demands of God.

Beyond all question there is something tremendously coercive lying at the heart of religion. What is it?

In asking this question we are really asking what has been the original, living, coercive touch of God upon the lives of men

and women all down the ages to the present day, and it is not unimportant to realise that this is so. It connects with what was referred to at the beginning of the last chapter, namely, the sheer unreality of God in many people's lives. One reason for that unreality is that this question of what is the original, living, coercive touch of God on the heart of man has never been properly dealt with in their thought and experience. The result is they continually start off with entirely wrong ideas of the manner in which God comes to them and touches their lives. They look for Him in the wrong place and so miss Him.

Thus, for example, it is very commonly assumed that religion cannot honestly begin unless the existence of God is proved in a way which will put it beyond any kind of intellectual criticism. Yet one might as well say that art must begin in proving the existence of beauty, or music in proving the existence of sound, or love in proving the existence of the one loved. We can go astray by dwelling exclusively on what is called intellectual honesty. There are other forms of honesty as well, such as taking our experience as it comes to us in a simple and unsophisticated way. Religion begins, not in proving God, but in identifying Him, in thrilling to His living touch, just as art begins in being laid hold of by the appeal

of beautiful things; and in religion, as in art, the first essential is an experimental loyalty to the "thrill," to the spontaneous intuition, of the heart.

But even when people are willing to grant this they often still fail to identify God in their lives because they have entirely wrong ideas about God and their minds in consequence are fogged by wrong expectancies. Such wrong expectancies are usually traceable to vague theological ideas derived mainly from the Creeds. It is curious how folk insist on approaching religion from the theological end, which is almost as foolish as trying to approach a rose from the angle of the theory of relativity. They start from dogmas and definitions and purely intellectual descriptions of God. Thus God is usually conceived primarily as the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Eternal, and so on: then the attempt is made to work up such definitions into a living, gripping experience of the divine. The attempt fails, of course. No man in any department of life can turn mere definitions into living experiences. A man may study the psychology of falling in love, and know all the scientific processes involved, but only falling in love can reveal the reality of it, and make him other than a second-hand and unreliable thinker about the subject. Similarly the science of optics cannot generate the experience of light; it is itself

generated by it. In exactly the same way, religion as a vital force cannot spring from theological or philosophical notions. Theology is a consequence of religion, not a cause of it. There must be something deeper, more immediate, more coercive, something as real as light or falling in love, if God is to be a vital and transfiguring and permanent experience in a man's life.

We ask again then, not merely as an interesting scientific enquiry, but as something which intimately touches the springs of spiritual experience in ourselves, what is the original coercive touch of God on the human spirit? To answer this we need not do more than interrogate our own experience.

Some years ago there was given to the world the story of Captain Oates. In order to save the lives of his companions by relieving them of the necessity of carrying his helpless, frost-bitten body over the antarctic wastes, Oates rose one night when the others were sleeping, strode out of the tent into the blizzard, and was seen no more. This was calm, unadulterated self-immolation, with no hot emotion, no public applause, no ecstatic vision to urge him on: there was just something within the Captain's soul which pointed that way of certain death, and there was the quiet bowing of his spirit to it. There was a similar incident about the same time in a great wreck. A young un-

married Salvation Army officer, in order to allow a married man to join his wife and children in the already overcrowded boat, slipped quietly overboard into the icy sea and disappeared. There are many other similar incidents of which one can think.

Now the vital question is this: What is the instant and instinctive response of our spirits to incidents such as these, when we think about them seriously and with imagination? It is not a matter of working ourselves up to feel something, any more than we have to work ourselves up to feel the beauty of a rose. It is merely a matter of being a normal, unsophisticated human being. Is it admiration we feel? We admire a ballet-dancer, the technic of a great violinist, the forehand drive of a champion tennis-player. Is that all we accord to Captain Oates? It is not all. Does there not enter in something else, something which we can only call *reverence;* a sense of something infinitely worth while and *sacred;* a paradoxical feeling that these men, even the young Salvation Army officer of but twenty or so years of age, in the very act of destroying their life had sublimely fulfilled it?

There is a great scene in *Les Misérables* where Jean Valjean, the ex-criminal, having built up his life again into usefulness and honour, denounces himself for an undiscovered

crime in the public court, in order to save an innocent man from being condemned in his place. Hugo was master both of language and psychology. He says of those who witnessed the scene: "No one accounted for his feelings, no one said to himself that he saw a great light shining, but all were dazzled in their hearts. Through a sort of electric revelation the whole crowd understood the simple and magnificent story of a man who dies that another may live. All fell back, for there was that *divine* quality in the incident, which causes the multitudes to recoil." "That *divine* quality. . . ." Hugo suggests that everyone, even in the mob which gathers in a police court, felt the impact of something aweing, something to be reverenced, something *divine*, in so sublime a surrender to righteousness, though none would have expressed it in those terms. He is surely right. No normally constituted person can even merely read such a story and not experience the touch of something sacred, or feel that in such a terrific abnegation of himself before a moral ideal, involving the annihilation of everything else of value in life, the ordinary figure of a man enlarges to something almost supernaturally above itself, yet at the same time becomes its true self, that which it was always intended to be.

That divine quality,—our thesis is that

in incidents such as these and in this singular response of reverence which the normal mind makes to them is to be discerned, in vivid form, the general type of that original, coercive something which lies at the heart of man's experience of God. That this is so, that such incidents and our response to them bring us close to the centre of religion, is perhaps shown by the way in which we should instantly react to anyone who is disposed to be irreverent or jesting in regard to them. We should resent it, even as we should resent irreverent behaviour during the two minutes' silence on 11th November, when we celebrate the greatest sacrifice of life to duty the world has ever seen; and we should justify our resentment by saying that such things are too "sacred" to be treated in that way. The only appropriate word would be "*sacred.*" Now the "sacred" always has been and still is the central category of religion. And by it religion has always signified two things. First, it has signified by the word the impact of a higher world upon men's spirits, the impact of the divine. Second, it has signified by it a certain distinguishing quality of that higher divine world, namely, that it demands the utter surrender, if need be, of this life to itself. Hence it comes about that men often become most vividly aware of the sacred, and fall most deeply into the attitude of religious reverence, when someone like Captain Oates

lays down his life for no other reason than that so the absolute call of the highest is and so it must be obeyed.

But we must not confine the impact of the sacred to these examples, which are used merely as a means to call attention to a common fact which would otherwise be missed. We can bring it closer to ourselves.

Every one of us works to a scale of values of some sort, but the values are not all of the same kind. There are values which, though they play a large part in our lives, are merely personal expediences and preferences, such as the writer's profound abhorrence for ground rice pudding. But there are also values which have an indefeasible absoluteness about them, and which in their essential impact upon the mind claim to override all personal preferences and expediences whatsoever, even, at times, the very natural and powerful preference of remaining alive.[1] There is hardly a man of

[1] Difficulty is sometimes felt by those who are not familiar with the vocabulary of philosophical and theological writers over the term " value." As the term is used frequently in this book, perhaps a brief word of explanation may here be in place. The idea of " value " has no meaning apart from the idea of " purpose." A purpose of any sort, in order to exist at all, must have character or direction, and this character or direction is determined by the things it seeks to realise, the things it *values*. It is impossible to think of purpose without thinking of an attitude of valuing, and if purposes are real determinants of events, then attitudes of valuing are too. But an attitude of valuing cannot arise in a vacuum. It is an attitude towards real things or situations

whom it is not true to say that there are certain things, bestial things, cruel things, deeply dishonourable things, which rather than do, he would be willing to be torn limb from limb and

or persons, and to their real qualities or what are conceived to be their real qualities. When the attitude of valuing is examined it is found to take the two forms indicated above. Sometimes something is valued and declared to be good merely because it has the quality of pleasing or satisfying the person who is making the judgment, as when I say of a drink of water on a hot day "That's good," meaning simply that I personally like it. But at other times something is declared to be good because it is apprehended as having the quality of goodness universally and intrinsically for everybody, altogether apart from their personal predilections in the matter, as when I say that " self-sacrifice is good." Now in the view of the writer there are situations, characters, qualities which really have this attribute of goodness as objectively as they seem to have it, as objectively as matter has the quality of extension. In this sense values are real, and to live as though they were not real, or were other than they actually are, is to court disaster just as certainly as to live as though the force of gravity were not real or were other than it actually is. It is these objective values which have to our minds the quality of coerciveness or indefeasible absoluteness referred to in the text. Can we go behind this objective quality of goodness, or value, to something which is its source ? The religious mind does so, and says that its source is the character and purpose of God. Just as the quality of being valuable, being good, could have no meaning for us except in relation to our purpose, so it could have no objectivity, no reality except in relation to the divine purpose. The divine purpose, like every other purpose, has a specific quality or direction; it is the relation of things, persons, situations, to this character or direction of divine purpose which constitutes their goodness or badness. This brief statement assumes, of course, a great deal that the expert student of ethics and philosophy would want to discuss, but it is sufficient to indicate what is meant when we speak in the text of values and their reality.

annihilated, so far as this world is concerned, altogether. Even if one failed when the test came, the reality of the judgment, the endorsement of it by all that is within the soul, would be evidenced by the abiding remorse which would remain.

Or again and more positively, it is very much to be doubted whether there has ever been a man or woman, barring such possibly as have been handicapped by some morbidity of mind or body from their earliest years, who has not at some time or other had some kind of fore-glimpse of a perfect personal and social life, embodying the highest truth, beauty and goodness; who has not felt, too, the urge of something within him or her to give up the whole life, in an austere but glorious heroism, to the seeking of such an ideal. It is misleading, of course, to idealise ordinary human experience too much, but it is equally misleading not to idealise it enough. We affirm it as a fact that in his instinctive reverence to such acts as those of Captain Oates; in his own secret judgments upon himself; in the vague idealistic, heroic yearnings which continually flit across his spirit, and in other ways, there continually breaks into man's experience something absolutely imperative, something which in its essential nature is felt to demand the entire surrender, if need be, of all this present world and its many dear desirabilities; some-

thing which despite this terrific demand none the less evokes in man the profoundest reverence and desire of his spirit; something *sacred* as above defined.

What is this something? It is what man has nearly always instinctively and spontaneously taken it to be, namely, the touch of the spirit of God upon his heart. We confront here the root of religion as an abiding and living factor in life, the fundamental point where God enters human experience in a living and coercively real way. God comes in the call of things so sacred and absolute that they must not be put into the balance with anything else whatever. This is what lies behind the obstinacy and the capacity for martyrdom of religious people. This is what lies behind the fact that sacrifice runs like a red streak through all religion from its most primitive form upwards. The mother casting her babes to Moloch and Damien giving up all to tend the lepers stand in a direct line of succession with one another; they are both bowing their heads, the one primitively, fearfully, superstitiously, the other with the full light of knowledge which has come through Christ, to a haunting, divine presence in their hearts, which reveals itself only through its insistence on an absolute surrender of this life to itself.

We are, of course, fully aware that other

explanations of this impact of absolute values on the human spirit, the fact of which and the centrality of which in religion cannot be denied, are sometimes offered. Some consideration of these explanations will be undertaken in the next section. We are content here to do four things: first, to insist that there is a coercive element in religious experience; second, to point out what it fundamentally is; third, to identify it with something fairly universal in normal human experience; fourth, to affirm our conviction that what this coercive something seems to the religious mind with such immediate obviousness to be, it in fact is, namely, the voice of God and the living touch of His spirit upon man's. The complete grounds of our belief in God will not be manifest until the pragmatic element in religious experience has been considered and the other rival explanations dealt with. But this first position is essential to the main argument. We believe in God, in part at any rate, because we cannot help it, because something "hits" us immediately out of our world, something which, in its essential impact upon our spirit, comes as the call of God to us. If this immediate, coercive element were lacking, and men's belief in God were, as it is sometimes supposed to be, merely the product of a rational argument or of an unconscious seeking for a refuge from their fears, then religion would undoubtedly

be a very insecurely based and lifeless thing, and the actual facts of its history would be inexplicable.

It is not unimportant to realise that in this fundamental experience of God's coercive touch upon the spirit through the call of sacred values there are rooted many of the great religious conceptions of God and, therefore, many of the legitimate developments of theological thought. Religion in its developed monotheistic form has always tended to conceive God as personal, eternal, the creator and sustainer of the whole Universe. What is the religious root of these doctrines, the living experience which saves them from being mere doctrines and gives them vitality to survive all down the ages the assaults of scepticism and doubt? It is undoubtedly this fundamental apprehension of God of which we have been speaking, the apprehension of Him as an ultimate sacred purpose behind the world which breaks into our life through our sense of absolute values and demands our complete surrender to itself. Thus to the religious mind God must be in some sense personal, for only One who is in some sense personal could apprehend values and be purposive towards man in regard to them.[1] Again He must be all-powerful, in the

[1] An attempt has recently been made by Mr Julian Huxley in *Religion without Revelation* to retain the category of sacred value along with a strenuous denial of personality in God. It is

sense of being powerful enough to guarantee the triumph of spiritual values against all contingencies, which is all the religious mind needs to mean by all-power. The religious mind is only able to preserve its sense of sanity in its surrender of even life itself to absolute values because such values seem to carry with them an intimation of their own conservation and ultimate victory.[1] Again He must be in some sense the creator or ground of all things, for if He is to guarantee spiritual values against all contingencies He must be able to over-rule all things, which means that in the last resort all things must depend on Him. Thus what is first in the order of logic—God the ground of all things—is last in the

impossible here to criticise his position in detail. It is perhaps sufficient to say that the attempt fails for at least three reasons. First, it seems to assume without due consideration that the thought of personality in God is merely crude anthropomorphism. No attempt is made to deal with the many profoundly thoughtful treatments of the category of personality in relation to God which have from time to time been offered by highly trained philosophical minds. It is a gross and unjustifiable assumption, in view of the work of a man like, say, Lotze, not to mention more modern writers, to talk of the category of personality as though it were obviously a low category belonging to the more primitive stages of man's thought. Second, it does not seem to do justice to what appears actually to be given in man's sense of sacred value. Third, it does not deal with the enormous philosophical difficulty of accounting for a being like man, so eloquently described by Mr Huxley on page 356 of his book, in a Universe which is not in some sense (not necessarily a crude sense) personal in its ultimate ground.

[1] See p. 44.

order of developing religious thought. In the Old Testament a clear line of development is traceable in the thought of the Hebrews from the apprehension of the sacred law given by what was first considered to be a merely tribal deity to an apprehension of the same sacred law, now deepened and more spiritual, given by the Creator of all the ends of the earth.

That these thoughts about God are somehow implicit in man's instinctive reverence to the call of sacred values in his heart becomes clear if one tries to imagine what would be the result if they were definitely proved beyond a shadow of a doubt to be false. Suppose it came to be known in a quite final way that at the heart of the Universe there is not personal, holy purpose but a devil, or a stone. Well, it is not affirmed that men would cease to do heroic things. Doubtless they might find other reasons and motives for heroism. What is affirmed is that if men became profoundly and utterly certain that at the heart of the Universe there is a devil or a stone, their instinctive reverence and abasement at an action like that of Jean Valjean would take on a palpably different quality. It would no longer be a sense of the sacred as we now experience it and it would really merit a different name. It is not suggested that the ordinary man in his sense of the sacred is explicitly aware of all that really contributes to

its peculiar quality, any more than a man needs to be explicitly aware of all the gradations of colour and light and form which go to make the total impression of, say, a beautiful flower. But he would become aware of something having happened if any of the things which are actually contributing to the total impression were taken away. In a similar way we breathe the air but do not as a rule notice it until it is taken away and we have to struggle to live without it. We walk upon the hard ground but we do not notice it until it turns to bog. So in man's acknowledgement of sacred values he, so to say, unconsciously breathes the air, or treads upon the hard ground, of a personal, holy will behind the Universe, which guarantees the validity and triumph of these values. He is, we repeat, not necessarily explicitly aware of this, but if the implicit belief in God were taken away by a final proof he would instantly feel different; something would go from the essential tang and quality of his reverence for sacred things.[1]

[1] This was what was meant when it was said in the footnote on page 41 that Mr Julian Huxley does not seem to have done justice to what appears actually to be given in man's sense of the sacred. It is impossible, of course, to dogmatise about another man's experience, but one cannot help wondering whether Mr Huxley is able to retain a sense of the sacred along with a denial of theism only because anything in the nature of a *final* disproof of theism has never yet been made. It is not uncommon

The point can be put another way in connexion with what was said in the last chapter about the relation of a living being to its environ-

for men to raise theoretical doubts and scepticisms about the implicit presuppositions and foundations of an experience and yet the experience still continue, for the reason that the doubts and scepticisms are merely in the realm of theory and the experience is the reaction of their whole nature to the actual world. If the doubts and scepticisms ever passed from the realm of theory into the realm of really solid and indubitable fact then the experience would, as affirmed above, entirely change.

This indicates, too, what must be the first answer to any who would say that, whilst admitting the tremendous impressiveness of an act like that of Captain Oates or Jean Valjean, they do not see in it anything more than the sublimity of high morality. We must ask them in the first instance to interrogate their minds once more, and see whether that is really all that they mean by the term " sacred," which, we assume, they would spontaneously apply to such sacrifice. One way of testing this is, as indicated above, to try to imagine such acts on the background of a Universe which is known beyond all question to be unmoral, or hostile to, and in the end destructive of, the selfless character and its achievements. Would the reaction be the same, and if it is not the same, what does that imply as to the real, if latent, significance of the original judgment ? Each must answer for himself. The writer can only say that his reaction would not be the same. Such acts would still be recognised as heroic, perhaps under the circumstances even more heroic, but they would lose their present power to impress the mind as being essentially sane and a true fulfilment of the personality of those who do them. See the next paragraph in the text above. To put the point concretely: the surrender of life in early and immature manhood, in order, say, to save an old bed-ridden invalid from fire, could only be said to be sane and self-fulfilling in a Universe which values and asks for such a thing as the way, not of self-destruction, but of true self-development and of harmonious adjustment to itself. The sanity of self-sacrifice and its harmony with the eternal heart and purpose of things are recognised and acknowledged implicitly in the use of the term sacred in relation to it.

ment. When men deeply revere a supreme sacrifice like that of Captain Oates they implicity affirm its absolute sanity. It is not in man to revere wholeheartedly anything not sane. But the definition of sanity is that it is truthful dealing with the real world. From which it would seem to follow that reverence for the laying down of physical life for a spiritual value implies the admission that behind and beyond the merely physical environment there is a more ultimate spiritual environment to which such an action is a true adjustment. And men in their more absolute moral reverences dimly feel this to be so. To give up for the sake of goodness the only basis upon which any seeking of the good can be done, namely, life itself, can only be sane if the ultimate reality of the environment with which we have to deal is in some sort a victorious moral purpose, so that nothing is really lost by giving up life to it; but rather by that very act a deeper harmony with the environment is achieved.

It has been the business of the great prophets and religious thinkers to draw out this theology which is wrapped up in the ordinary man's sense of God and to relate it to the rest of experience; thus man's religion is made a deeper and more intelligent thing and a surer possession of his spirit. But all such explication of the primary experience of the sacred is

useless and unreal to anyone who has not had that primary experience, or, having had it, does not take it seriously or admit that it is the point where God impinges upon his spirit. We cannot go behind this primary datum any more than we can go behind our sensations as the primary experience we have of the physical world. But, given it, and given some sort of honest adjustment to it, the whole rich world of religious experience is open to us.

CHAPTER III

THE PRAGMATIC ELEMENT IN BELIEF IN GOD

We have seen that there is a deep-seated, if not always very explicit, conviction in men that the Universe in which they find themselves is a suitable place for the realisation of their highest well-being. This conviction, we said, is not a piece of gratuitous optimism, as it is sometimes represented to be, but is indissolubly bound up with the essential nature of life and experience. For life is at all points a process of self-maintenance and self-development in a challenging environment, and plainly the process would soon cease if there were not at the heart of it an optimism, or faith, that the challenge of the environment is not essentially too difficult to be met successfully. A creature must believe in itself or perish. To despair of the task is to be defeated by it, for despair means the drying up of the springs of activity. In man this fundamental optimism or faith appears as an incurable, if often unconscious, pragmatism in his judgments of truth, especially of such truth as purports to deal with the meaning and purpose of his life as a whole. Pessimistic philosophies, however cogent they may be

logically, never really convince him. They seem to him to be, if not illogical, then manifestly absurd.

This being so we are immediately impelled to ask how this pragmatic faith which is in man stands in relation to the actual facts. And the answer is that, apart from religion, it stands in a very insecure and unsatisfactory position; it is grievously challenged both by the external conditions of man's life and by the internal make-up of his mind. Apart from religion man would seem to be a grave and apparently permanent misfit in the heart of the world.

We shall consider first in what sense man is, apart from religion, a misfit in his world. Then we shall indicate how religion enters in and succours him in this situation.

It is important to make clear the precise sense in which man is a misfit in his world because there is an obvious sense in which all living creatures, by the essential conditions of their life, must continually fall for longer or shorter periods into disharmony with their environment. Only by such recurrent disharmony does life have any movement at all. If life with too hard a task would cease, equally much would it cease with no task at all. Perfect equilibrium with the environment would be hardly distinguishable in its stagnation and immobility from death. Even when creatures

are so perfectly adapted to their world that their existence has almost the precision and efficiency of a machine, *e.g.* bees or ants, the machine-like routine is only set in motion by the recurrence of certain biological needs such as hunger or sex, which the environment at the moment will not satisfy, unless the creature bestir itself to make it do so. There is, therefore, nothing specially significant in man being at one point or another imperfectly harmonised with his world. Where man's position becomes peculiarly significant is that his mind and the world in which he lives are such that the task of harmonising himself with it can be seen to be *permanently* beyond him, that is if we isolate him for a moment from that sphere of things to which religion introduces him. There is a something in the general constitution of man's mind and of his world, apart from religion, which subjects him, not only, like other animals, to recurrent and temporary needs and tasks, but also to something like a permanent defeat. The world and man appear to be essentially such that the former is radically unsuitable for the latter to achieve his highest well-being in it.

The peculiar thing about man is that he has, so to say, not known where to stop in the development of his powers. He has continually evolved new powers to deal with new situations, but, the situations once dealt with, these powers

have not ceased to develop at that point, as one might expect; they have evolved still further, with the peculiar result that they have continually thrown man into a conflict with his world far worse and far more permanent than the one with which they were originally called into being to deal. This extraordinary fact, which seems to be without parallel in the animal world, is often hidden from us because we are dazzled by the brilliant positive results of man's development. We contemplate man's marvellous mind, his memory, his imagination, his reasoning faculty, his sense of right and wrong, his art, music, science and invention, and in marvelling at this "success" we do not notice that it has been won by a process which has involved him in a far more radical and incurable "defeat." All his highest gifts and powers when they are examined seem to reveal at the heart of them a surd element for which apart from religion there is no solution. Had man been able to foresee whither his gifts were leading he might well have said of them what was said in ancient times of the Greeks, *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*

Consider, for example, man's transcendent capacities of memory and imagination. No words could exaggerate the usefulness of these powers in equipping man in many directions for dealing with his world. Memory is the basis of all systematic knowledge, and memory

and imagination together make possible that foresight and creativeness without which man with his puny physical equipment would never have survived, still less evolved into civilised life. Yet as every psychologist knows, indeed as every observer of himself and of others knows, memory and imagination, whilst they help man to manage his material environment, present him often with almost impossible tasks in the management of himself. Fear and worry attain a power and work effects in human life which are without parallel in the animal world, and they do this because man can remember and imagine in a way which animals cannot. Animals give very little sign, if any, of worrying about future contingencies or of fearing the consequences of past events, and they are as a result, so far as we can tell, free from those repressions and submerged memories and continual anxieties which work such havoc in human minds, and from which not even the most equably-minded amongst us is entirely free. The full force of this can probably only be felt by those who have made some practical study of the influence of repression and anxiety factors in bringing about greater or less degrees of mental and physical abnormality and ill-health in men and women. It seems no exaggeration to say that the vast majority of, and probably all, men tend to be more or less "off their centre," ill-adjusted internally

and externally, some of them a great deal more than others, because of some insistency of memory, working either subconsciously or through imagination, which the essential retentiveness of their minds makes it impossible for them to escape. And further, it is plain that if this be so, the solution of the difficulty cannot be found in any manipulation of man's material environment. Some internal adjustment must be made which enables a man, whilst retaining the great gifts of memory and imagination, to forget without unhealthy repression and to imagine without fear.

Or consider the consciousness of being "a self," which is a quality peculiar to man. It is this quality which lies at the root of that sense of personal and individual responsibility which is so essential to man's highest life; it also supplies him with some of the most indispensable categories of his thought, such as time, substance, cause. But one of the further effects of this consciousness of being an individualised self is to give a quite peculiar intensity to man's instinctive loves and affections. A parent's love for a child, or a husband's for a wife, is of course a very complex thing, but at the heart of it and giving it its peculiar human quality is a more or less conscious apprehension of the loved one as a distinct self or individuality capable of entering into peculiar "rapport" with the

self or individuality which loves. The relationship, being between "selves", is a unique relationship, as individual and unrepeatable as the two distinct individualities which enter into it. Hence if a man loses his wife or child he loses something which quite literally cannot be replaced. It is difficult to believe that an animal losing his mate could be conscious of irreparable loss in anything like the same degree, for not only is individuality not so highly developed, but the appreciation of it, the valuation of it, as involving "selfhood" is in the nature of the case impossible. What is the consequence of this to humanity? One consequence is that death becomes a far worse problem and affront than it ever is to the brutes. In other words, in proportion as human affection rises above mere animal instinct, bereavement becomes increasingly a fact to which it is difficult to make adjustment. And here again, as in the case of memory and imagination, if any adjustment is to be made, it cannot be made through altering the external facts; death is a permanent factor which cannot be altered or avoided. The adjustment must be made in the inner, invisible conditions of the mind. But how? The injunction of stoicism "to grin and bear it" is, of course, not even a solution of the problem on the practical side, for it is a good deal more easily said than done. It is certainly no

solution of the problem on the theoretical side. A man may conceivably succeed in grinning and bearing it, but the fact that it is a question of "grinning and bearing" shows that any truly harmonious adjustment has not really been made. The problem for theory is precisely that one of the highest products of man's evolution, namely, his consciousness of individual selfhood, has made him such a misfit in a world where bereavement is a permanent fact, that all he can do, apart from religion, is "to grin and bear it."

Or again, consider man's social life. The part that social co-operation has played in the evolution of man's highest powers has possibly been greater than that of any other single factor. It is not merely that by co-operation man was strengthened both for attack and defence on the cruder levels of the struggle for existence. The matter goes deeper than that. His whole magnificent mental equipment was only made possible by what the psychologists call "intersubjective intercourse," that is to say, by the fact that he was a social animal. Speech, free ideas, the conception of a common world of fact independent of our varying apprehensions of it, self-consciousness, conscience and the apprehension of right and wrong—these would have remained, at the most, merely latent powers had man, *per impossibile*, been a solitary animal.

Yet, here again, man's wonderful evolution has raised some insoluble problems. It has fitted him to his world in some directions, but it has apparently very profoundly "misfitted" him in others. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that nearly all the burdens and problems both of individuals and of society as a whole have one root, and that often the tap-root, in the perpetual conflict between the primal animal instincts on the one hand and the demands of social order or the demands of the higher mental powers, which have been developed under the stimulus and protection of the social order, on the other. It is a commonplace to say that man's scientific knowledge, a social product, has outrun his moral capacity to use it properly, but that is only one example of a certain general lop-sidedness in development which can enter into almost every relationship of life. The solution of the problem of a perfect adjustment between the individual and the society without which he could not exist seems, indeed, to be, apart from religion, as far off as it ever was. Social standards continually fall foul, not only of the egotism of the individual, but also of that rich "individuality" of the individual which society itself has stimulated into being. The result is a state of internal conflict and external mal-adjustment which probably none escape and by which many are plunged into varying degrees of

unhappiness and mental breakdown. The process might perhaps be compared to the boiling of a kettle. If it were not for the containing kettle (society) the water (the individual) would never come to the boil. Yet the consequence of coming to the boil is that it enters into conflict with the kettle and blows off the lid.

This permanent conflict between the individual and society becomes perhaps most manifest in conscience. Whatever else it is, conscience is certainly, in part, a social product and it finds the chief sphere of its judgments in social relationships. Apart from society man would never have a conscience and apart from conscience man could not long have a society; certainly he could never have a developing society. Conscience is at one and the same time that through which the standards of society speak to the egotism of the individual and that through which the higher insight of the individual speaks to society. In the exercise of both these functions there is inevitably conflict, internal and external, of a peculiarly intense kind, resulting far more often than is sometimes realised in a bitter sense of moral failure and remorse and self-disgust. Conscience, which as we have said, both in its source and in its judgments, cannot be divorced from social life, is for some people all the time and for most people at some period or other the centre of the bitterest and most

disabling and most insoluble conflicts which they undergo. And those who affirm that this is simply due to the magnification of moral failure into the bogey of sin by religious people merely reveal their ignorance both of genuine religion and of commonplace facts in abnormal psychology.

Here again, indeed, the evidence of modern pathological psychology is most impressive. No one can make a practical study of the science without realising with fresh force the sheer "dishevelment" of the average human personality and without feeling something akin to despair in face of the task of integrating the chaos of it into some sort of really profound and stable harmony with itself and with its world. And the main root of the trouble is again and again found to be in the relation of the individual to the society which has been and is the indispensable guardian and teacher and sustainer of his whole life.

Or, again, consider man's superb intelligence. The value to man of his intelligence as an equipment for dealing with his immediate material environment needs no emphasis in these days of applied science; yet that intelligence continually confronts man with problems and evokes in him needs which go far beyond the immediate material environment. It impels him to postulate and to search for a unity in the whole scheme of created

things. By the essential nature of his mind man clamours for a reasonable meaning in the Universe; he is chilled and paralysed by the thought that the ultimate reality might be unintelligible chaos or purposeless waste. This is due not merely to feeling; it has to do with a purely intellectual need. Reason in man is the principle of unity, and it is baulked and frustrated if it does not find, or is not permitted to believe in, an answering unity in the whole Universe of which it finds itself a part. The question we have then to ask is whether this need of man's intelligence can find full satisfaction apart from something in the nature of religious faith.

Enough has now been said in explanation of the sense in which we affirm man to be a misfit in his world. We now ask how religion is related to this situation. In answer I may perhaps be permitted to quote some paragraphs written elsewhere in the work referred to in the preface.[1]

"The most significant fact about religion is, that it affirms that the environment with which man has to deal is bigger than this world in which for the time being he lives. The central assertion of religion, without which it would lose its meaning and its power, is that the seen world about us is not all; that there is an

[1] *Things not Seen*, p. 18.

unseen world, a supramundane spiritual reality, God, with Whom it is possible to be in living relationship, and with Whom it is necessary to be in living relationship in order to achieve well-being and to be satisfied. In other words, religion extends and enlarges the world with which we have to deal by adding to it a spiritual and divine overworld. We have then this significant situation. Here, on the one hand, is man, by his very nature restless, dissatisfied, at conflict with his environment and himself, his best powers continually stretching out like the filaments of a spider and either floating in a void whence there is no response, or else being snapped in twain on harsh, uncomprehending rock. There, on the other hand, is religion asserting that there is an environment larger than this world into contact with which men can at any time come. Here is man manifestly wanting a bigger world, and there is religion saying that there is a bigger world. Do not these two things fit together? They do. We have not got to the heart of religion until we understand that it is the movement of man's spirit into an environment which includes and is greater than this world, and which, therefore, is adequate, and brings harmony and satisfaction, to those powers which have outgrown this world altogether. 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth

out of the mouth of God.' 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.'

"In harmony with this, men have instinctively recognised that one test of the truth and value of any religion is the extent to which it does introduce man to a bigger world more congenial to his whole nature; the extent to which it, so to say, succours and harmonises his personality, and makes him cease to be the misfit which he otherwise must certainly be. Every religion, which has ever had any grip upon mankind, has gone some distance in thus succouring men and in giving them an environment bigger and more adequate to all their needs than this world."

The conviction underlying this essay is that only the religion which Jesus Christ gives to men can fully succour them in this way. More will be said on this in Chapter X. Meanwhile, it will be sufficient to illustrate briefly, from Christian belief, the way in which religion can do what is here claimed for it.

To take only those things which have been mentioned. Most people keep in check the fears and worries, which through imagination and memory might otherwise become too obsessive, by one or more of three methods. Either they repress, so far as they are able, the worrying idea; or they distract their minds from it; or they rest on a sort of

instinctively optimistic philosophy that they will muddle through somehow, and that everything will "come all right." Obviously, none of these methods, nor any combination of them, can make the personality permanently and steadily adequate to life. Repression has its own evil consequenees, if nothing worse than a headache or an irritable temper. Distraction is too fluctuating; no mind can keep itself in a permanent state of distraction. A merely instinctive philosophy, however optimistic, may carry a considerable distance, but it is too much at the mercy of other instinctive feelings and too little wrought out in the world of thought and fact to make the personality really poised and strong. Clearly, what is required is an explicit and living conviction, so meditated that directly the mind contemplates it and relates it to the facts it becomes possessed again by the sense of its truth, that behind all the challenges of life there is a divine purpose which is Love and not any other thing. To give just this conviction in just this way, so that, without burking any of the facts in repression or distraction or merely optimistic feeling, the personality is kept poised and strong and courageous, is, we believe, one of the supreme things Jesus Christ can do for men.

Again, it is very much to be doubted whether

there is any adequate relief for the dislocation which death causes in man's personal world, intensified as that world is in its instinctive loves and affections by self-consciousness—adequate in the sense not merely of tiding over the time of bitterest pangs, but of keeping the whole personality really harmonious and undefeated—except it be possible to move out into a larger world of spiritual realities, wherein human personality is known to be valued, as by human love, so even more by the divine Love, which will not let it go or allow it to be destroyed by a miserable physical irrelevance like a microbe or a bullet.

As for man's relation to society and to his conscience, it would take too long adequately to discuss religion, especially the Christian form of it, as a moral dynamic in men's lives. We can only assert, and claim to have the support of an enormous quantity of facts for the assertion, that in the conception of a God of Love and in a living relationship to Him men are brought to believe that self-realisation is through service to mankind and to live increasingly by the belief, in a way which would not be otherwise possible in anything like the same degree. Men may admire self-sacrifice and service as the ideals to which the individual ought to conform, but they only begin to seek such ideals with enthusiasm and to undertake the often laborious discipline

of controlling their egotistic impulses, when they see that such ideals are not merely imposed by society for its own ends, but are the expression of a higher spiritual reality which underlies both society and the individual and guarantees that the needs of both will ultimately be met in a single and abiding satisfaction.[1] And, further, when the conflict between the individual and the demand of society becomes spiritualised and internalised in conscience and in self-disgust—and, we repeat, this is far more common than many writers seem to realise, especially in adolescence—again it is religion, with its doctrine of divine forgiveness, which cleanses the personality of the perilous stuff which is in it and gives it a new internal harmony upon which to make a new start with some chance of success. Here again the evidence of the absolute necessity for some sort of religious apprehension of forgivenesss, if some common types of mental conflict are to be resolved, is to be found in its most impressive form in the case-

[1] Cf. the criticism of Durkheim in the next chapter. Durkheim's view is that religion is a device by which society imposes its ideals on the individual members of it. Our view grants that religion does bring about a harmony between society and individual which would not otherwise be possible, but we cannot regard it as a mere device. It brings about the harmony because it is *true*. If religion were essentially false it could not bring about in the long run anything but increasing discord. Cf. the discussion above of truth and falsity and their relationship to harmony and disharmony with the environment.

books of the psychologists. Not only do minds get thrown out of gear if true religion is lacking, but they cannot be restored again, nor set in the way of achieving a really full harmony and health of being, without true religion. It is by realising himself to be a citizen of a bigger world than this world that man's soul is restored and he is able to tread in the paths of righteousness.

Finally, with regard to man's intellectual need for a unity and a meaning in the universe. It would perhaps be too sweeping to say that religion alone can give man a satisfying sense of the unity of things. A strong case can, indeed, be made out, and has often been made out, for the view that there is no adequate basis for any belief in that unity of the world which the mind so imperiously demands, apart from something akin to religious faith. Certainly the scientist's belief in the rationality of the Universe, whilst not unsupported by evidence, goes much beyond the point to which the evidence at any one moment will take him. It involves an extension of the "seen" world by an "unseen" world of indefinite extent. But, however that may be, there is no doubt that belief in a divine Mind and Purpose behind all phenomena meets this intellectual need in a peculiarly satisfying way; and it is a legitimate part of the pragmatic argument for the validity

of religion that it does so. It is important to insist on this because religion is often represented as having to do merely with the emotional and volitional side of man's nature. This is not so. Not only has belief in God an immediate relation to the craving of man's mind for a unity in things, but also, on reflexion, it proves itself to be as stable an intellectual position as any other; many would say it proves itself more stable than any other. It makes sense of experience, unifies it. In support of this one can only refer to the rich and impressive literature on the philosophy of theism, though perhaps the chapter which immediately follows, and the later course of the argument, may afford some evidence of the weighty consistency of theistic faith, and therefore of the satisfaction it brings, not only to the emotional and conative side of man's nature, but also to his mind.

CHAPTER IV

THE REFLECTIVE ELEMENT IN BELIEF IN GOD

We now turn to consider the reflective element in belief in God. We saw that the fullest conviction which is possible to our minds arises when a belief (1) shines in its own light with a certain inherent coerciveness, (2) helps a man in the practical task of adjustment to his world, (3) satisfies his mind by revealing on reflexion the further coerciveness of rational consistency and harmony with the whole available body of knowledge and experience. Many people in their religious life remain satisfied with (1) and (2). Their religion seems true, and on the whole it works, and that is enough; they are either not conscious of an intellectual need requiring to be satisfied, or, if they are, they assume that it could be satisfied if the mental equipment and requisite knowledge were available. Such an attitude, provided it be part of a courageous and charitable faith, which does not dishonestly overlook, as though they were not there, the things in reason and life which challenge belief, nor yet denounce those who feel and urge their challenge, is, for those simple and practical people who can take it

up, right enough so far as it goes. We shall see indeed, when we come to consider some of the challenges to belief in God, that at certain points we are compelled to leave reason only partially satisfied and to be willing to proceed almost wholly on the basis of the first and second of the three elements mentioned above. Moreover, whilst the first and second of these elements can suffice to sustain a strong and sound religious experience, reflexion by itself cannot do so. It comes in as a further support, but it is not indispensable, nor by itself sufficient. None the less, most educated people do urgently require some sort of reflective satisfaction in respect of their religious beliefs, and, furthermore, to the degree in which they can get it, their beliefs are apt to become at once sounder and a surer possession of their spirits. Often it is only reflexion which can check merely superstitious or phantasy beliefs which to the believer seem both "coercive" and "helpful"; and it is only reflexion which in times of great stress can reveal to the believer where his real certainties lie, and what is the precise nature of the challenge they have to meet.

The supporting and reinforcement by rational reflexion of a belief in God, already arrived at through the sense of the sacred and through an experience of the practical consequence of such belief, can take one of three forms; these

forms converge to and merge with one another in various ways, but they can none the less be properly, if roughly, distinguished. First, such rational confirmation may take the form of arguments for the existence of God based on the observed facts of the Universe. Second, it may take the form of reflexion upon the religious experience itself which it is seeking to confirm and support. Third, it may take the form of negative criticism of other views of the Universe and of religious experience, showing their inadequacy in themselves and their inferiority to the account which religion itself gives of the Universe and of itself. Plainly these three lines of thought taken together, if they could be substantiated, would constitute a very strong rational case for that belief in God which is given to men in a living form in and through religion, and for affirming that such a belief so far from disturbing reason satisfies it in a very profound way.

It is contrary to the design of this brief essay to deal with all these three forms of rational confirmation of belief in God at length. Of the first two we shall confine ourselves to saying enough only to set them in clear relationship to the main movement of the argument. The third will be dealt with at greater length in the next section under the heading of Challenges to Belief in God.

(1) Arguments for the existence of God on the basis of observation of the natural order have always occupied a large place in philosophical theology, and they have been subjected at various times to much searching criticism. Such arguments have traditionally taken three forms. (*a*) First, it is argued, in varying phraseology, that logic and reason compel us to believe in a great Primary Cause behind all existences and events, a self-subsistent and sufficient Ground of all that happens, an Absolute sustaining the flux of interrelated causes and effects, an ultimate Fact behind which we cannot go, existing necessarily and in its own right and underlying all the merely contingent and derivative facts of the natural order, and so on. (*b*) Second, it is argued that the order and design of the Universe presuppose a Supreme Intelligence of some sort which has ordered and designed it. (*c*) Third, it is argued that the moral and rational constitution of man proves two things: first, that the ultimate principle of the Universe, from which man in the last resort derives his being, must be at least as moral and rational as man, for otherwise it would have produced out of itself something higher than itself; second, that inasmuch as man carries at the centre of his moral and rational being dreams of moral perfection and rational attainment not yet achieved, the ultimate principle of

the Universe from which he derives must be not merely *as* moral and rational as himself, but a good deal more so, for otherwise those dreams which are so central in his make-up have no relation to any abiding and important reality, and are inexplicable.

Now in considering these arguments it is important to keep the mind open to their limitations.

(*a*) It is clear that the first argument cannot be made to prove the existence of a Deity as He is conceived and experienced by religious people. Judging by the history of philosophy it would indeed appear to be orthodox metaphysics to affirm the necessity of a great self-subsistent Ground of all that is, but what the nature of that Ground is, is obviously left by this argument quite undetermined. It might, so far, be anything. Certainly it is not by this argument constituted a religious object—it does not yet carry the characteristic of divinity as such is apprehended by the religious mind. It might be a quite impersonal entity; indeed, it has often been so conceived. The most that can be concluded from this argument is the rather jejune statement that there must be an *adequate* Ground of all that is. What such adequacy involves can only be inferred from the actual constitution of things as we are able to observe

it. This leads to the second type of argument, which is precisely an attempt to infer the nature of the Primary Cause from the actual observable character of what it has caused. The order and design of the Universe are held to imply one who orders and designs.

(*b*) This is a very powerful argument to the ordinary mind, but it needs careful statement and it, too, has some obvious limitations. The danger is that we shall too hastily assume that anything which happens to suit human purposes and desires is valid evidence of a beneficent and contriving Agency behind events, and that unconsciously we shall involve ourselves in absurdities which, though perhaps not so crude, are in essence indistinguishable from the argument that God created the indiarubber tree in order to provide the modern age with motor-tyres. In these days and in the light of the doctrine of evolution, the argument from design must take a broader sweep. We have to take note of the fact that the world is a place where, as a matter of fact, an evolution of life has been possible. It is easy to imagine a slight change in the conditions which would have put an end to all evolution by annihilating life altogether. There has been a broad but close enough agreement between the condi-

tions and the thing conditioned to suggest something at work other than mere chance. Then we have to take note of the fact that life has evolved into a man, a being who has himself marched forward in the path of evolution precisely through the development in himself of rationality and the control of conduct by deliberate design. It is difficult to believe that a world which has thus produced rationality and design in the mind of man, and is suited to control by rationality and design, has not got rationality and design behind it, at any rate so far as its broader processes are concerned. This may leave room for quite a lot of accident and mere contingency in the detail. To believe in a broad sweep of purpose in evolution culminating in man, it is not necessary to believe that lambs were created for no other reason than to give man mutton-chops.

But even when the argument is carefully and broadly stated, it still has limitations from the point of view of religion. The difficulty is that we are apt to confuse the order and design which we have observed empirically in the world and the order and design which by the very constitution of our minds we seem impelled to expect in it. The order and design which we can actually observe is great, but it is small in comparison with the whole Universe, concerning vast tracts of which we

know nothing by empirical observation at all. We do as a matter of fact confidently believe that order and design run through the whole Universe; only on that belief is scientific observation possible; also the origin of the belief, as we have just seen, has got to be explained; yet the belief is not itself susceptible of scientific proof from observed facts. If we confine ourselves to actually observed facts, the most we can infer from them as to the nature of their cause is a character and power sufficient to have produced such order and design as we have actually observed. Beyond that in strict logic we are not entitled to go. Needless to say, this does not enable us to reach the Infinite and Holy Mind which religious faith worships. There have been men who have lost their belief in God, not gained it, through observing the Universe; what has impressed them has been the enormous difficulty of seeing all the observed facts as a coherent design, or even as anything approaching such. This may have been due in some measure to prejudice and misapprehension, but it at least provides a warning against using the argument from design too glibly, or thinking that it is possible immediately to pass from it to religious faith.

(*c*) The third argument has already been touched on in speaking of evolution. It is in

some ways the most powerful of all the arguments. The mind and personality of man are after all a very remarkable phenomenon in the midst of the Universe. To suppose that the ultimate reality from which that mind and personality have sprung is itself non-mental, or, being mental, is sub-rational or impersonal, is exceedingly difficult to believe, even though it is not guilty of definite logical fallacy. The cause must be adequate to the effect. Moreover, as was said above, when rationality has developed in man, it finds itself able in some degree to understand and control the Universe —a fact which is exceedingly difficult to understand if the Universe be not itself rational in its essential constitution. This, so far, is confirmation of the religious belief in a divine Reason behind the Universe, but it must be realised that it is only "so far." From the rationality of man and the imposing system of his scientific knowledge we may be driven to believe in the rational structure of the Universe and even in some sort of originative Reason, but we are still a long way from the Infinite and Holy Being whom religion worships, as a very superficial study of the history of philosophy would make clear. The same limitation applies to any argument from the fact that dreams and ideals of perfection seem to be an essential part of man's make-up. It is the argument of this book that man's dreams

of perfection and his conviction of the reality of God are closely bound up together, but the nexus between them is not one of logical inference. From the fact that man has dreams of perfection it is impossible to infer in strict logic a reality corresponding to his dreams, even though it may be admitted that such a reality is the best explanation of his having such dreams which can be given. Over all merely logical arguments from an effect to a cause there hangs the possibility of a plurality of causes. Unless the conviction of God is given in and through the moral life, it cannot be reached by logical inference from the fact of that moral life; the most that logic can do is to show that of all possible explanations on the whole the religious explanation is the most plausible one we have to hand.

Yet though these three arguments, severally or taken together, do not suffice in themselves to prove the reality of the divine Being which religion worships, that does not mean that they are valueless. Given a religious conviction they help to supply that support of it in reflexion which the thoughtful mind imperatively requires. It is an intellectual satisfaction and a legitimate confirmation of belief to find that the religious intuition, which has arisen from other sources, provides the mind with a

conception in terms of which much that our actual experience of the world reveals to us can be without difficulty construed. In the idea of God we have a conception which, one ventures to say, more than any other conception available, gives us a Supreme Ground of existence adequate to its observed order and design and to the facts of man's mind and moral sense.

(2) The second type of confirmation of belief in God consists in reflexion upon the facts of the religious experience itself and especially upon the facts set forth in the last chapter.

In the last chapter we saw that apart from religion man is an extraordinary mixture of brilliant "fittedness" and profound "misfittedness" to the world in which he lives. With religion, however, especially when it reaches its highest form in Christianity, this "misfittedness" of man is greatly reduced. That, at any rate, is the experience of the Christian man at his best; the real world, through his religion, becomes at all points more suitable to his inherent powers and constitution. He is made "more than conqueror." We are then faced with this situation. If we contemplate the Universe apart from what religion says about it, man appears to be a being who, despite his brilliant capacities, nay

indeed because of them, cannot fit into it. If, on the other hand, we conceive the Universe as including that unseen world of religion, this discord tends to disappear and man has a world congenial to his deepest instincts and his finest powers. Does not this situation constitute a reflective, confirming argument for the reality of that unseen world in which religion believes?

The extent to which it appears as a confirming argument will doubtless depend on the extent to which the fact of man's misfittedness in his world is felt to be a challenge which the reflective mind cannot ignore but must seek to meet and overcome. That it is some sort of problem to thought cannot well be denied. The mind is forced to ask itself what sort of rational account of human nature and of its relation to the world which produced it can be given in face of that nature's curiously mixed "fittedness" and "misfittedness." It is, after all, very difficult to believe that man is by his very constitution a permanent misfit in the heart of things. For if he is that, it is difficult to see any reason for his appearance on the scene at all and he is strangely and inexplicably at variance with the rest of the animal creation, which, in comparison, seems to be very well adapted to its world. Moreover, man is undoubtedly singularly well adapted to his world on his intellectual side. In his

science he instinctively assumes that behind all phenomena there is reason, that their intimate nature is rational; and the assumption is, judging by the successes of science, wonderfully justified. But it is difficult to suppose that the Universe is such that it is in harmony with man's reason and out of harmony with the rest of his being, especially with that most central aspect of it which is his conscience and his religion. Every analogy and probability points to man not being a misfit in the Universe. Yet that is what he appears to be.

There is, therefore, a real problem for the mind. Now if that belief in, and experience of, an unseen world, which is at the heart of religion, is found to remove the problem, then that is, so far, confirmatory evidence that the belief is sound. For it obviously leads one in reflexion to a more unified conception of reality. It is, however, possible, as we shall see in the next section, to admit that religion at its highest gives men both a more unified experience and a more unified conception of reality and yet to affirm, none the less, that it is at bottom illusion; and this even though the rejection of the religious view of the world leaves the insoluble problem of man's place in the order of evolution on our hands. This illustrates what we have said all through, that no argument *per se* can produce a conviction of the reality of the objects with which religion

deals. But, given through religious experience an initial conviction of the reality of these objects, then in the line of thought we have followed there is to be found a very powerful buttress of the conviction in reflective thought.

(3) The third type of reflective confirmation of belief in God comes through examining other views of the Universe and of religious experience which have at various times been propounded, and showing that they are both inadequate in themselves and inferior to the account which religion gives of the meaning of human life and of its own significance. This type of confirmation is amply illustrated in the course of the next section where we address ourselves to the subject of challenges to belief in God.

PART II.

CHALLENGES TO BELIEF IN GOD

CHAPTER V

CHALLENGES OF BIAS

MANY people find belief in God difficult because there is in their minds a bias which predisposes them against such a belief. Needless to say, the bias is not often a conscious one. Biases seldom are. The conclusion to which a bias impels usually seems reasonable enough in itself, and supporting arguments are soon found which make it seem more reasonable still. None the less the fact remains that the conclusion is come to primarily because of the bias and only very secondarily because of the arguments. The latter are found afterwards and often appear astonishingly unconvincing to anybody who has not the same bias to assist his convictions.

Now, of course, none of us is exempt from biases of various sorts. If we say to a man who is disinclined to believe in God that he has an unconscious bias against that belief, he is well within his rights to retort that we who are *not* disinclined have an unconscious bias *towards* it. There is only one way out of this difficulty, and that is for each to be as honest as he possibly can, and to consider in respect of

himself, as dispassionately as he is able, such evidence of mere bias as may be adduced. Part of the evidence of bias will be such weaknesses as examination reveals in the arguments which, as we have said, every bias seeks to bring forward in support of itself. These arguments must be considered on their merits; for an argument is not necessarily an invalid one because it has been found under the stimulus of an unconscious bias. I may call my neighbour a fool because I am jealous of him, but he may none the less really be a fool. But if the argument proves on examination to be inherently weak, and if, in addition, other evidence can be adduced of the likelihood of an unconscious bias having obscured the mind to that weakness, then the case is strong enough to make the person concerned, if he is intellectually sincere, sit down and reconsider the whole position.

The line of thought we are to follow in this and the succeeding chaper will illustrate and make clearer this point. We shall in this chapter show that there are various influences at work in these days which tend to produce in our minds an unconscious bias against belief in God. And then in the following chapter we shall examine some of the arguments and theories which are brought forward against belief in God and try to show their inherent weakness in comparison with the strength of

the contrary position. And we shall venture to suggest that at least in certain cases the failure to perceive the weakness of the arguments is not unconnected with a failure to perceive the strength of unconscious bias under the influence of which they have been sought out.

(*a*) *Bias arising from the modern comparative study of religions.*

In these days we have a great deal more knowledge of the religious history of mankind and of the various religious faiths which have held, or still hold, sway over mankind than was the case with our forefathers. The so-called comparative study of religions is simply a study of religion over the whole extent of human history, so far as that history is known. It is what the Germans call the "general history of religion." It is a comparatively modern enquiry, for only in recent times have the necessary data for its pursuit become, both through systematic and unsystematic research, available. Yet already it has contrived to have a considerable effect upon a section of the public mind, an effect not the less deep because it is often exceedingly vague and its real origin unknown. In producing this effect it has been aided, doubtless, by the many modern facilities, such as travel, the press,

popular handbooks, for getting to know in a more or less superficial way the manners, customs and beliefs of other lands. The effect in question is the creation of a bias or disposition away from all forms of religion and, therefore, from that belief which is central in all forms of religion, namely, belief in God.

The bias appears to arise in two ways. It may arise from the apprehension of a certain *quality* in the religious beliefs of mankind which the comparative study of religion seems to reveal. Or it may arise from the apprehension of their enormous *quantity*. Or it may arise, of course, from both of these together.

First, then, the apprehension of a certain quality in the religious beliefs of mankind. It is easy to derive from a superficial acquaintance with the general history of religion an obsessive sense of all the superstitions, cruelties, impurities, dishonesties conscious and unconscious, which have been mixed up with religion and with belief in God all down the ages, and still are undoubtedly mixed up with it even at the present day and in our own land. Such an impression can, and often does, help to create a feeling that religion in all its forms is false and dangerous and that, so far from there being a call to cultivate it in oneself, one can best contribute to the enlightenment of mankind by avoiding it altogether.

Yet it should not be difficult to see that the matter is not so simple as that, and that so to think is to substitute for reflexion a mere impressionistic prejudice. There are two things to be said. First, assuming for the moment that in religion man is apprehending and dealing with a real though unseen world, there is no reason to expect that in so doing he should be exempt from that frailty and ignorance and sin which have affected his apprehension of, and dealing with, any other sphere of reality. It would be absurd to give up one's belief in the validity of all science because of the rubbish which at different times has been spoken, and still is occasionally spoken, by scientists, and the same applies to religion—even if it be true, as we shall see, that owing to the peculiar sphere with which religion deals it is quite specially liable to corruption and error. As Principal Oman has suggested in remarks which we roughly paraphrase, it ought to be possible to distinguish religion as such from bigotry and cruelty, just as it is possible to distinguish government as such from graft and wire-pulling. We may, if we choose, call both St Francis and the Grand Inquisitor religious persons, but we should realise that that is to do something strictly comparable to and just as shallow as mentioning Abraham Lincoln and Boss Croker in the same breath as politicians. "It is most necessary," continues Dr Oman, "to

remind ourselves that it is the same human nature, with all its errors and imperfections, with which we have to deal in religion as in all else; and that, therefore, there is bad religion as there is bad business or bad science or bad politics or bad morals."[1]

The second thing is this. The fact that religion throughout the history of mankind has been associated with so much that is admittedly deplorable in human life, may be in a way a credit to religion, and may indicate its real value and power, rather than the reverse. It may mean that religion by its essential nature is something which, whenever it occurs in a sincere form, enters into and draws upon all the complex phenomena of human life and human nature, determining them in a certain direction, but being necessarily and in a degree itself determined by them. After all nobody would suppose that superstition, falsehood, cruelty, and all the rest, would disappear from human life with the disappearance of religion; these are, alas, as we have said, persistent, though we hope decreasing, elements in human life. If that be so, our task is to try to separate out the essential and simple religious fact from those instincts, superstitions, cruelties and falsehoods which are already there in human nature and into

[1] *Science, Religion and Reality*, Essay on the Sphere of Religion, p. 267.

which it has often entered and given a religious colouring and sanction. To be sure, in order to be quite satisfied, we should need to be able to think that religion has acted on the whole as an elevating influence on this "drossy" human nature from which it has sprung and which in the nature of the case it could never entirely transcend; but a very strong case for affirming that that has been so can undoubtedly be made out. We have ourselves tried in the first section of this book to discover what the essential and central religious fact is; it is to be found, we said, in man's often dim apprehension of an absolute, coercive imperative in his soul to surrender all to a Higher Will. That is the *form* of it; for its *content* it draws of necessity upon the actual stuff of human nature, raw or developed, in the midst of which it appears, though in drawing upon it it also uplifts and ennobles it. Thus we saw that the superstitious cruelty of mothers casting their babes to Moloch, and the sublime love of a Father Damien giving his life to the lepers at the call of Christ, may be different contents given to the same essential divine touch upon the life. Similarly, when the rack was used in the name of religion that was in an age when it was also used in the name of justice and of other things. It was a quite commonplace factor in human life and not in the least

peculiar to religion. All we need to assure ourselves is that there was that in religion which in its own time and in its own way would help to raise not only itself, but in some degree every activity of the race, above such things.

But second, a bias against religion may arise from an apprehension of the enormous *quantity* of religious beliefs which historically have held sway over mankind. It seems at first sight an astonishing and perturbing thing that such beliefs should be as kaleidoscopically various as they actually appear to be. The list of all the religions of mankind is a very long one, and, though it may be classified into groups, the variety of conviction about the unseen reality with which they all claim to deal is still challenging enough. The mind almost inevitably begins to ask whether, in a sphere where belief is so individual and various, any sound basis for belief can really be found, and whether that which cannot produce a greater unanimity as to itself can be a reality at all. Or if it does not ask such an explicit question as that it is insensibly predisposed by such a chaos of conflicting voices to save itself trouble by discarding belief altogether.

Yet here again the danger is that we submit to what is merely an impressionistic bias. It is not in the least logical to infer from the

enormous variety of religious experience and belief the unreality of the unseen world with which such experience and belief claim to deal. The variety may be due to, and in our view is due to, other causes. Thus it may be, and doubtless is in part, due to the fact that the moving out of man's mind into an environment of unseen realities is a comparatively late event in his evolution, so that, despite the antiquity of religion, man is still only groping about in that environment. He knows it and is adapted to it a good deal less than the physical environment which has been part of his world from the very beginning. It is to be expected that man should be more confused and liable to difference and error in judgment in dealing with invisible and intangible objects than in dealing with his sensations and perceptions, for the latter represent an earlier element in his awareness of his world.

But further, the variety of man's religious experience is due to the peculiar nature of the objects with which such experience deals. It is important to realise that even men's apprehensions of the physical world are in actual experience intensely various and individual. Every man sees the physical world through the capacities, the meanings and values, the memories and aspirations and associations, of his own individuality and personal history.

Two men may look at even so simple an object as an orange and yet not have the same experience. Not only may one be colour blind or looking at the thing from a quite different angle and so may receive a quite different sense impression, but also the orange may in each case be "complicated," to use a technical psychological term, by different kinds of "primary" and "secondary" meanings as well as explicit associations. In one man the orange may evoke a faint feeling of nausea, in the other a desire for it and a vague unformulated judgment that it is good to eat. To one man it may "mean" a business association on the fruit market, to the other a hygienic association in reference to vitamins and influenza and so on. Physical science tries to abstract from all this rich "complication" of individual impression and meaning and to conceive an ultimate, residual orange common to everybody's experience. In a measure it succeeds, but only, be it noted, by evacuating the orange of the concrete colour and meaning which it has in actual experience; it conceives it to be a collection of electrons and vibrations. Some scientists then tend, quite unwarrantably, to assume that the "common" orange thus reached by abstraction from actual experience is the "real" orange. Now religion, as we have seen, is moving all the time in the sphere of personal values and meanings, and that

means that it is working in the very sphere which is partly responsible for that variety in personal experience from which science, in its endeavour to conceive a physical world common to all, tries to escape. Moreover, the meanings and values with which religion deals are of such an absolute nature that they tend of necessity to enter into and express themselves through every aspect of the individual's personal life. Religion's proper sphere, therefore, is all the time in the most individual and various side of human experience. Whence it is altogether to be expected, first, that men's religious experiences should display an infinitely greater variety than their experiences of the physical world, various as these latter in actual fact often are; and second, that the building-up of a common knowledge of God should be an infinitely longer and more difficult process than the building-up of a common knowledge of the physical world. In other words the variety of religious belief is due, not to the fact that we are in a phantasy world where each is permitted to think what he likes, but to the complex, personal character of the objects with which religion deals. Given the reality of the sphere of religion it is what one would expect. This does not mean that we need despair of ever attaining to some sort of unanimity in religious belief, but it will be a different sort of unanimity from that of

science, and it will be attained in a different way. It will be a unanimity in the midst of a great variety and divergence of personal interpretation and method of expression, and it will be reached not by being deliberately aimed at for its own sake, but by being, so to say, discovered at the end of the internal and personal evolution of each individual spirit.

(*b*) *Bias arising out of the obsessive place of the physical in human experience and modern science.*

It is possible to detect a more or less deep-seated prior scepticism in most modern people's minds about the reality of an invisible, spiritual world. An outer barrier of scepticism seems to be offered to affirmations about unseen realities which is not offered to affirmations about physical things, a barrier of which the individual himself is often unconscious. An example of this is to be seen in the fact that most people are much more ready to accept the existence of an invisible entity like the ether than they are to accept the existence of invisible entity like, say, the Holy Spirit. Doubtless the evidence in each case is not on the same plane, but it is not difficult to detect in one's mind a greater willingness to accept a quasi-physical object like the ether altogether apart from evidence. There is no question that we tend to invest with a superior reality

anything which we can see and touch, or which can be immediately related to what we can see and touch, and to regard as comparatively shadowy and unreal anything which we cannot.

This initial sceptical bias of men's minds seems to lie somewhere behind many, if not most, of the attacks upon the reality of the objects with which religion concerns itself. A careful analysis of such attacks usually reveals that the authors of them have started with the assumption, often without being in the least aware that they are so doing, that there cannot be, or that there is not likely to be, any such thing as an unseen spiritual world. Unconsciously they have made up their minds about that in advance, and, having made up their minds about it, they then, in effect, say: Since we know that there is not, or is not likely to be, any such being as God, we must find some other explanation of the religious man's belief than that which he himself offers, namely, that God has met him in his own heart. So you get a theory elaborated like Durkheim's which says that the religious man's sense of God is merely the disguised pressure of society upon him, or like Leuba's which says that it is merely nature's way of giving men an emotional stimulus to make them more adequate to life. We shall consider these theories more fully in the next chapter, for they are in varying form

common in these days, and shall see their inherent inadequacy. Meanwhile the point is that such theories only seem as plausible as they do to their authors because the latter have made up their minds in advance that religion is illusory and that, therefore, some other explanation by hook or by crook must be found. There is in fact a very subtle fallacy in their reasoning as was pointed out by R. H. Hutton[1] in his criticism of Feuerbach over half a century ago. What these thinkers really say is this: If religion be an illusion, what is the best explanation we can offer of its hold upon mankind? The fallacy then consists in regarding the explanation they offer of religion, *if* it be an illusion, as somehow itself a proof and confirmation that it is one. That religion might be due to a cause other than the reality of God is, of course, a possibility, but a suggestion as to what such other cause might conceivably be is still only a suggestion. It must be examined on its merits and must not be allowed to borrow a cogency and a weight which does not really belong to it from mere bias, from an undiscussed assumption that only the seen is real and that religion's own explanation of itself is, therefore, necessarily and *ab initio*, quite wrong.

No better example of this type of argument we are criticising can be offered than the work

[1] *Theological Essays*, p. 28.

of Feuerbach who, though he wrote so many years ago, is still in some ways the most candid and thoroughgoing of those who reject out of hand the claim of religion to deal with reality. The *apparent* argument is that, since men's conceptions of God can be shown to vary in accordance with their varying emotions and fortunes and ideals, it follows that God is merely a shadowy projection of men's own selves, like a reflexion in a mirror which slavishly follows every posture and antic of its beholder. But the *real* argument, or the assumption rather, without which the apparent argument would lose a good deal of whatever plausibility it possesses, is the highly questionable philosophical one that only that which is capable of generating a sensation is real, whence it follows that God, who is by definition invisible and intangible, cannot be real. This is the position from which Feuerbach really starts. Starting thus, the immense variety of religious conceptions and their apparent dependence upon personal idiosyncrasy, appears as a support to the position; but had he started in a contrary assumption such variety would only have appeared as a difficulty susceptible of another explanation equally plausible.

The same thing can be detected in Durkheim.[1] It seems clear that for him also the view that

[1] *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.*

religious experience is what it seems to the religious mind to be, namely, a dealing, however mixed with error and superstition, with a suprasensible reality, is *ruled out in advance* as unworthy of a scientist's consideration. The ideal, the apprehension of which Durkheim rightly sees lies very near the heart of religion, is defined as "something added to the real;" so also the sacred is "a property attributed to things which they have not got." If then it be asked what is the real to which religion thus adds illusory qualities, the answer is quite clearly indicated. The real is that which is "empirically determinable," that which "depends upon conditions which observation can touch." In other words the fundamental premiss is the same as Feuerbach's, namely, that the ultimate test of reality is capacity to produce sense-experience. Ideals are, on this basis, merely by-products of man's peculiar psychological constitution, which finds that with their assistance it can deal best with sense-experience and the needs which arise thence. The real world is the world which can be seen and manipulated, the sum of "the objects of everyday experience", and religious ideas are merely the distorted reflexion of that real world in the peculiar mirror of man's mind, the distortion being completely explicable by empirically determinable laws of, so to say, psychological refraction.

What then lies behind this prior scepticism about the unseen, which we have exemplified in the authors just quoted and seems to be more or less present in very many modern minds? Two reasons at least may be suggested.

The first is the one which has already been mentioned in another connexion, namely, the order of the evolution of man's needs and powers. Man was physical long before he was spiritual and his basic needs, without the satisfaction of which he cannot live at all, are still mainly of a physical kind. One thinker has indeed gone so far as to affirm that the human mind has been so profoundly influenced and shaped by its primary physical environment that in all our thinking we must continually remind ourselves of its resultant limitations as an instrument of knowledge. Physical things seem more real because they have been real to us longer and because both their use and their danger to us are in many ways of a more immediate and stinging kind.

The second reason is the history of modern science. The challenge which the actual *content* of modern science offers to belief in God we shall consider in a later chapter; here we are referring to the way in which its history may have affected the average modern mind. The point is that the great and spectacular advances of modern science

have all been almost without exception in the realm of physical science. We are accustomed to say this is a scientific age, and we admonish ourselves to take up a scientific attitude to things. But what do we mean by that? If we mean simply that we must be sincere and cautious and experimental, and not allow prejudice to conquer logic, no objection can be taken to that. Doubtless we do mean that, but do not our minds also immediately tend, at the mere mention of science, to fly off to bunsens and balances and retorts, or electric light, wireless, high explosive, or bacteria under a microscope, or if we are very well informed to ether and electrons, to Einstein, Michelson-Morley experiments, and *even* Sir Oliver Lodge? We say *even* Sir Oliver Lodge because, very significantly, the scientific eyebrow in these days has been observed to raise itself a little at mention of him. Why? Well, he believes in invisible spirits; he says too that he has arrived at the belief by scientific enquiry. But how can that be truly scientific? Invisible spirits! The point is that the strides which modern physical science by its methods of measurement has made have been so enormous, so spectacular, so revolutionary in their effects upon man's life and his conceptions of the Universe, that, aided by the racial bias above referred to, the physical has gained an alto-

gether disproportionate place in men's minds. By a quite natural, though not in the least rational, process of thought, people think of physical science as science *par excellence* and of the scientific attitude as one which will be exceedingly reluctant to admit as real anything which cannot be proved and investigated by the ruler, the balance or the bunsen flame. In scientific circles, psychology was for a long time refused the name of science because it dealt with realities which in the main could not be measured and experimented with in the laboratory. In exactly the same spirit people like Feuerbach and others feel that to admit God as a reality is to be *in limine* unscientific; and if a great scientist like Lodge falls to talking about "angels" instead of confining himself strictly to "angles," it is regarded as due to a deplorable lapse from scientific grace.

And yet, as against all this, a few minutes' even casual reflexion might reveal how much of the everyday texture of human life is made up of things not to be seen or handled, or otherwise apprehended through the senses. A relation of love or hate between two human beings, for example, cannot be reduced to things merely physical; it is related to things physical, and an old-fashioned and out-of-date materialist might say that it is merely a by-product of things physical, but its full

reality as a factor in human experience is certainly not to be expressed in physical terms. The same applies to those principles of justice by which the order and stability of human society are maintained. In the last resort they are quite invisible and imponderable. Yet they are real enough to require, not only the daily adjustment of all men and women to them, but also the perpetual activity of a whole vast profession for their administration. Again, conscience is an invisible and imponderable entity. There is not even a physical organ corresponding to it which we can observe, Yet it can control and inhibit with a coerciveness which a man sometimes can hardly resist, the most violent physical needs and appetites. Of course, a materialist may affirm that conscience is only a product of a certain configuration of brain particles and nerve paths. We do not wish to beg that question, but the point we make here is that it is not as a configuration of brain particles and nerve paths that conscience enters the ordinary man's experience. It enters it as something quite invisible, yet at the same time coercively real, and he has no difficulty about it until for some reason or other some doubt as to its reality is raised. Then he may find satisfaction in a materialist doctrine, not noticing, we may point out incidentally, that no one, least of all him-

self, has ever seen the brain particles whose evolutions are supposed to lie beneath his moral judgments. The materialist doctrine seems to satisfy because it talks of things like atoms or electrons, which, whilst they are just as invisible as the conscience they are invoked to explain, can none the less be vaguely imagined after the analogy of physical things.[1] Thus the bias of the mind of which we have spoken is revealed again; of two invisibles the mind invests with superior reality that which can be described analogically with physical things.

[1] Modern physicists have broken loose from this bondage to material analogies and insist that their theories, if they are not to be misunderstood, must be regarded as the purest symbolism. See, *e.g.*, A. S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, pp. xvi ff. Prof. Eddington confesses that, even so, whenever he thinks of an electron there rises to his mind the picture of a "hard, red, tiny ball." This in a mind so highly trained in abstract thinking is some support of the suggestion that there is in the more average mind a strong tendency, not only to picture everything by physical analogies, but also to believe more readily in the reality of things which can be so pictured.

CHAPTER VI

CHALLENGES OF THEORY

We have suggested that there is probably behind most theories of religion or of the Universe which seek to dispense with the reality of God some degree of unconscious bias. It would, however, be manifestly unfair not to consider such theories on their own merits. If they prove after such consideration to be inadequate, then we may perhaps regard that as some confirmation of the suggestion that there has been an unconscious bias at work veiling the inadequacy of the theories from the minds of those who propound them. But the theories must be judged for what they are in themselves, especially as they are often presented with a high degree of plausibility and are widely current in these days.

We shall consider three such challenges of theory.

(1) The first concerns what we have called the coercive element in the religious man's apprehension of God.

We saw that the religious man apprehends God primarily through his sense of the call of

absolute values; he affirms that the divine spiritual purpose behind life touches his heart in an imperative demand to surrender life itself, if need be, in the pursuit of what is good. Such a demand he feels he cannot escape and with it he dare not trifle. Of it he naturally uses the supreme category of religion—it is *sacred*, it is the touch of God.

Now there is a theory—its most noted exponent is the Frenchman Durkheim, referred to above—that whilst doubtless the religious man *thinks* that through his sense of sacred values he is in touch with God, that he is not really so. He is really only in touch with the human society in which he lives. What seems the voice of God is in reality only the voice of society heavily disguised.

The argument appears to be that society cannot exist without imposing upon its members ideals for their conduct. "A society can neither create nor recreate itself without at the same time creating an ideal." Conscience, therefore, is simply the collective voice of society, as it seeks to preserve and develop itself, speaking from within the individual. What, then, is religion? Religion is the reinforcement of the individual will by the impact of social forces upon him, that he may the better serve social ideals. In morals society holds up its exacting ideals to the individual, in religion, through the idea of God and through the common worship

of God, it gives him the necessary spiritual vitality to pursue those ideals. Religious ideas and religious exercises are, in fact, just a method of quickening a man's powers and enhancing his personality by soaking him in social stimuli of a peculiarly coercive kind. In thus presenting the idea of God to its members society is *splendide mendax*, but is perfectly justified by the magnificent social results which follow.

The answer to this ingenious theory is that it is not in the least adequate either to the facts of religious and moral experience as these have been known by countless generations of men and women, or to the facts of history. It is, indeed, not to be denied that society has all along been an important factor in the evolution of religion, but to say that it has been, and is, an important factor is not to say that it is the only factor; still less is it to say that somehow religion and social pressure are one and the same thing in different forms.

In the first place, if it be said that the idea of God is merely a disguise which social ideals adopt in order the more effectively to dominate men's lives, then obviously the disguise itself still requires explanation. Even if we grant that the individual will requires reinforcement of some sort in order to seek social ideals, we have still to ask why that reinforcement was found in the idea of God rather than in any-

thing else, and by what process, conscious or unconscious, it was so found. The whole theory obviously presupposes that there is already present in the mind of man some sort of apprehension of God and some sort of disposition to be impressed by Him, otherwise the disguise would entirely fail of its purpose. If a disguise, why a religious disguise?

Again, there is this curious fact to be noted that, if this theory be true and if its sponsors succeed in getting all men to accept its truth, then that means sooner or later the disappearance of religion from human life; for it is certain that men will not continue to be religious when they discover that the central category of religion, God, is a piece of rank deception. So that this odd position would develop, that society having evolved religion in order to preserve itself has now produced a Durkheim in order to undo its work. And how does Durkheim know that in his theory, seemingly so scientific, he is not himself also being imposed upon by some deluding social pressure outside himself? The fact is, so soon as big and permanent factors in life, like the idea of God, are attributed to unconscious processes which have no necessary concern with the truth of what they produce, every sure foundation for thought begins to rock and slip away. Man's whole life becomes

beset with horrid, spectral threats and possibilities of illusion. We may ask how do theorists of this type conceive science, in the name of which they thus write and speak? If religion is a beneficent illusion, why not science itself? Durkheim apparently is willing to go a long way in conceding that science rests upon merely collective opinion, but he very significantly avoids the word illusion or the suggestion that science is merely a biologically useful addition to the real. To do that would be to vitiate his whole position, for objectivity, as he knows, is the very life-blood of science. But then so it is also of religion. To refer them both to social pressure and yet to deny to religion what is conceded to science, namely, a core of real truth in its central categories and beliefs, reveals a very inadequately explored philosophical position and something of that bias to which reference has already been made.

Again, the exponents of such theories as these must explain how it comes about that society should be better able to survive and develop by persuading its members to believe what is not true—to believe that there is a God when there is no such thing. For it must be noted that religious belief has not been an incidental and evanescent phenomenon in human life; it has persisted and still persists, and it is not in the least confined

to low and primitive types. Lies are not usually of much survival value; indeed, if they are persisted in over long periods they are usually the exact opposite. Those who talk about "beneficent illusions"[1] need to ask themselves what exactly is their conception of truth and of man's evolution in the midst of an environment, which, quite plainly, demands above all else that it should be apprehended for what it is. Looking at the matter from a slightly different angle one is impressed by the oddity of the fact that men should have been made more honourable and true by religion, as undoubtedly they have been, when religion itself is fundamentally an untruth. Society we are to suppose somehow makes the demand for truth more coercive in men's souls by telling them a lie.

Another difficulty concerns the aesthetic sense and its relation to the apprehension of God. The beauty of nature has played a large part in man's religious life, especially in its higher developments, and to many the pursuit of beauty is one of the "sacred"

[1] Durkheim repudiates the suggestion that his theory reduces religion to mere illusion, since it grants that in religion man is dealing with the great reality of society. But that there is an objective reality of some sort involved merely concedes that religion is not a complete hallucination. If the religious man conceives himself to be dealing with God when he is really dealing with society, that is an illusion according to the strictest definition of the term, and a very serious illusion too.

imperatives of life. It is, to say the least, a little difficult to see how beauty as a revelation to the religious mind of the divine is to be reduced to a form of social pressure. What for example is the precise social utility of a man stopping on a hill-top to admire, with awe-struck and worshipful soul, the beauty of a sunset. In what way is society endeavouring "to create or recreate itself" by impelling him to such a procedure?

But the most damaging indictment of the theory is that it does not fit the actual facts of man's moral and religious history. Under the influence of religion man's moral insight has more than once climbed to a height so transcendently beyond normal social standards that it is impossible not to suspect that religion contains in it a principle of moral growth and development which is quite peculiar to itself. Society's ideals and religious ideals have not as a matter of fact always advanced *pari passu* or even with only a small gap between them. On the contrary, the disproportion between them has sometimes been so great that the theory that they are both ultimately effects of the same cause is evacuated of much of its plausibility. The outstanding example of this, and one example only in the whole history of the world would be sufficient to prove the point, is the Hebrew prophets up to and including Jesus Christ. For the purposes of this argument

we count Jesus among the prophets. It is not to be denied that the ethical insight of the Hebrew prophets and of Jesus was bound up with their consciousness of God in the most intimate way conceivable, nor is it to be denied that both the insight and the religious life which nourished that insight were so enormously in advance of the standards of contemporary society as to give the impression at times of working in an entirely different sphere of experience. If this is granted then, according to the theory under discussion, we have to suppose that a society whose average religious and moral level is (say) 10 can produce an individual whose religious and moral level is (say) 100, entirely out of itself and without any other factor outside itself coming into operation. We have to suppose, for example, that an intensely nationalistic and exclusive society such as the Jews were in the time of Jesus, for its own purposes of "construction and reconstruction," contrives to disguise and present itself to one individual within it as a divine Father of all the children of men, and in and through the disguise to impress upon that individual an ethic of love to enemies and service to mankind which has been ever since as far beyond the current standards of morality as anything could well be; having achieved this miracle for its own purposes, we are to suppose the society in question promptly slays

the prodigy it has produced. This is, to say the least, a very mysterious proceeding and the only way of explaining it on Durkheim's theory would be either to repudiate the prophets as moral and religious freaks, a hindrance to the true evolution of society, or to attribute to society an unconscious insight into its own requirements and a secret capacity for achieving those requirements of a kind which it is quite impossible to analyse and trace. Both alternatives are a confession of the bankruptcy of the theory, and show that to attribute both religion and morals to the working of society is to make one of those plausible generalisations which carry the mind over a gap merely by using a familiar word.

It may perhaps be said that to explain the evolution of religion by referring it to the operation of a holy, divine Spirit on the human mind is also to cover a gap by a word. The answer to this is a simple denial. Our quarrel with the theory we are criticising is that it can point to no force or process in society which looks in the least degree capable of producing (by deception) the transcendent religious-moral life of an Isaiah or a Jesus, that there is a gap between cause and alleged effect which makes the theory as an explanation very nearly useless. But to introduce the working of God's holy Spirit upon men's minds is to introduce a factor which, while not denying

the influence of society in the evolution of religion, is adequate to its effect and has the additional merit of not turning the religious experience of people like the prophets into rank illusion. Of course, even if we grant that the divine Spirit, if He exists, is a more adequate explanation of the experience of the prophets and of Jesus than Durkheim's self-disguising society, the question still remains, does He exist? On what ground may we assert God to be the actual cause, even if we grant He would be an adequate one? To answer that is the purpose of this whole enquiry. Our argument is that it is precisely this adequacy to the actual facts of man's moral and spiritual experience *along with other things* which shows that God is a real factor in human experience.

(2) The second challenging theory concerns what we have called the pragmatic element in religious experience.

This theory seeks to explain away the religious man's sense of being helped and succoured by God. The argument is usually psychological, and, though it is presented in various ways, it usually approximates roughly to the following line of thought. Men, it is said, find life hard and difficult in various ways. Life contradicts their hearts' desires, bludgeons them, is too strong for them. The

only way they can keep themselves going and save their sanity is to escape to a world of phantasy. They rest, for example, in the thought of a Father God, One who helps and strengthens, and will, in the end, fulfil all their hearts' desires. This thought it is conceded does help them, but none the less it is only a thought. There is no reality corresponding to it. God is a mere projection of man's travailing, half-defeated soul.

The theory is not unlike the one we have just considered. That theory said that, in order to make us better members of itself, society presents itself to us in the guise of God. This one says that in order to make ourselves happy and more equal to life we engender in ourselves the idea of God. This second theory, however, has one great advantage over the first; it claims to give a much more precise account of the psychological mechanism through which the mind reaches the idea of God under the compulsion of its need. In Durkheim's theory the process whereby the *vox populi* reaches the individual as the *vox dei* is left almost entirely unexplained. But the theory under discussion seeks to confirm itself by pointing to mental processes with which modern psychological research has made the popular mind almost too familiar.

Certainly it is undeniable that phantasy think-

ing is a common enough way of occasionally escaping from, and so getting more comfortably through, a harsh world ; it is equally undeniable that such thinking quite often enters into men's religious life. It is not difficult to see that *given a mind disposed to this kind of thing* there might be producd in it by a phantasy process a fairly lively sense of God as Father, especially as in the type of mind in question infantile attitudes to father and mother and their protective function almost certainly subconsciously survive. But the fact that we can see how such processes might enter into religion, and in some cases give to it whatever liveliness it possesses, is no warrant for saying that they lie behind and are sufficient to explain the whole religious life of mankind. Various considerations make such a generalisation absurd.

First, and perhaps most important, the theory leaves out of account the coercive element in religious experience. Religion has never been merely a refuge to the human spirit. The element of refuge is undoubtedly in it, but it has always been, and still is, one of the most pungent stimuli to energetic and often dangerous and adventurous activity known to history. It is exceedingly difficult to see why, if God be merely a comfortable phantasy which our unconscious processes hypnotise us into regarding as real, religion should have produced

so many martyrs. If the motive behind religion is merely to comfort ourselves, how does it come about that when a truly religious mind is faced with the alternative of being disloyal to God or suffering enormous loss and pain, it so often chooses the latter? Few people have suffered so much persecution as religious people. Is it not then a curious psychological mechanism which, in order to comfort a man in face of the inevitable ills of life, presents him with a phantasy of such a nature that it will probably land him in other and worse ills, and at the same time forbid him to do anything except endure them? It may, of course, be replied that the martyrs only went through martyrdom because they believed the suffering was nothing in comparison with the glorious reward which was believed to follow. That is doubtless true of some, but to say that every brave loyalty in the midst of suffering, which but for religion would have been avoided, has had that as its motive is absurd. There must be factors at work other than a mere phantasy escape from reality.

But the theory breaks down even from the point of view of the psychology of phantasy on which it supposes itself to be based. It is one of the findings of psychology that phantasy thinking can never be more than a quite temporary make-shift for dealing with life. In the end it does not really equip the personality

for its tasks; rather it undermines it and breaks it up. In short, phantasy thinking, though it has its place in normal mental life, is, if it goes beyond a certain narrow limit, quite definitely a mental disease, leading to internal stress and external maladjustment to the environment. Psychiatrists know only too well the urgency, as well as the difficulty, of getting neurotic people to substitute what is called in psychological jargon the "reality-principle" for the "pleasure-principle." It is, of course, open to anyone to say if he likes that religion is merely a neurosis, but he cannot consistently say at the same time that it holds its central place in human life because it quickens and helps men through life, for that is exactly what a neurosis does not in the end do. There is, in fact, a dilemma awaiting all who approach religion from this angle. Those who start by granting that religion invigorates human personality and makes it more adequate to life cannot, if they wish to remain psychologically consistent, proceed straightway to an explanation of it which reduces it to a phantasy neurosis. On the other hand those who start with the conception of religion as a neurosis cannot easily explain its central and permanent place in human life, and the undoubted fact that it is continually found in conjunction with the greatest possible vigour and poise of mind and adequacy to life.

But the really final criticism of this type of theory is that the psychological origins of an idea cannot by themselves determine the truth, or falsity, of the idea itself. That can only be determined on other grounds. A simple example can make this clear. The writer was once unfortunate enough to have a quarrel with a man in the presence of a third. He told the man that he was a bumptious fool and to this the retort was given that such a rude thing was only said out of envy. Whereat the third party intervened in a rather devastating way. He said, "you are both right." "You," he said to the writer, "spoke out of envy." "And you," he said turning to the other, "have been a bumptious fool." In other words the psychological motive of speech did not affect the truth of what was spoken. What was uttered out of envy happened none the less to hit the mark. So it is with religion. It is not denied that the challenges and troubles of life play a large part in giving liveliness to the idea of God and particularly to the idea of Him as a refuge and a help. Indeed, that this is so was the whole argument of Chapter III. But taken by itself such a fact neither proves nor disproves the reality of God. The idea of God, "projected" by our travailing spirits (if indeed it be thus simply "projected"), may or may not "hit" some reality corresponding to it. Whether it does or does not can only

be determined by much wider considerations than the psychological processes involved, though these latter cannot be ignored altogether; such wider considerations it is the purpose of this book in some measure to supply.

(3) The third challenge of theory connects with the reflective element in religious experience, and it comes from science. We have already spoken of the way in which the history of science tends to produce a materialistic bias in men's minds; what we now consider is a certain demurrer to religious faith which the *content* of science seems to raise.

Science seems to present us with a picture of the Universe in which there is no room for that spontaneity and freedom of personal purpose which for religion, with its emphasis upon sacred values and the seeking of sacred values, are quite central.[1] Science is intent upon finding rigid uniformities in which effects are brought about by the events which lie behind them in time, and not by the attraction of values which lie as yet unrealised in the future. Over vast areas of its work it rules out notions of value and purpose, and even when it admits them, as, for example, in the biological sciences, it is with obvious reluctance and discomfort, and often with the avowed intention

[1] See page 141.

of getting rid of them as soon as possible. Science, for the most part, wants to measure and weigh, and discover precise mathematical equations and exact predictabilities; its ideal is to be able to see the end from the beginning, with no margin left for the surprises of spontaneity. No intelligent person can work for long in the domain of science, especially natural science, without becoming at least dimly aware of the challenge which it seems to offer, not only to the religious faith of mankind, but also to some of the simplest presuppositions of men's daily life. Every one of us in ordinary life lives in a world which is soaked through and through with the idea of purpose and with the sense of freedom. Yet when we turn scientist it seems we have to drop both these things and accustom ourselves to a system of mechanical rigidities, rigidities which we straightway forget when we come back again to the world of men and women and children and flowers and sports and business and religion, and acts like those of Captain Oates or Jean Valjean. It is when we bring the latter into relation with the science of psychology that the difficulty becomes most acute. We read our psychology books with their talk of complexes and fixations and all the rest; yet we still reverence the sacrifice of Captain Oates as something divine. Which is right, the psychology books or our hearts?

Suppose the psychology books are right. Then we must derive Oates' sacrifice from Oates' internal mental conditions, his sentiments, complexes and the rest, perhaps even from the state of his glands. Is there any reverence left now? A voice within whispers despite the solemn psychological authorities, "rubbish!" Yet psychology is a true science, so far as it goes. But then that is the whole question—how far does it go? How far does any science go? There are three things which can be said within the brief limits allowed by the compass of this book.

The first concerns the method of science. A great deal of critical work has been done of recent years upon science considered as a method of approach to reality. It has come to be seen by many of the scientists themselves that, so soon as the science goes beyond being merely descriptive, it immediately becomes abstract. That is to say, it tends, in the theories it propounds, to get away from the richness and variety of actual experience and to present instead a bare framework, a dry colourless skeleton without flesh. A skull is an abstraction from the head, being, in a sense, drawn from it; and skulls are much more alike than the faces by which they were once clothed. From the varying colours and contours and expressions of individual faces the more "universal" skull is abstracted. Simi-

larly, science tends to attain its universal laws by abstracting from the full breadth of human experience. Space does not permit us to trace the history of modern science, but if it were possible to do so, it would become clear that it is to a quite surprising degree the history of the gradual domination of men's minds by quantitative concepts and ideals. So far as these ideals have been attained, it has been by the simple process of leaving out anything which did not fit them, and concentrating attention upon the strictly quantitative and measurable aspects of human experience. Now there was nothing necessarily wrong with this method, so far. Abstraction is very useful. All specialisation is, in a sense, abstraction. The mistake was this. Having for a long period restricted themselves to the things which could be measured and quantitatively treated, and having gained great success in this sphere by such treatment of it, the scientists turned back to the non-quantitative departments of human experience which they had previously ignored, and said that there also, if they had full knowledge, it would be possible to reduce all events to exact quantities and to predict in advance everything that happens with all the certainty of a mathematical equation. Now this was a tremendous leap. It was faith, and a very flimsily based faith, for it was founded upon the huge

assumption that the quantitative aspect of experience is in the last resort the only reality. But though faith, it was often announced as reasoned knowledge, and so science and a particularly rigid determinism tended to become identified with one another.

Scientists to-day are beginning to realise the irrationality of this procedure. Indeed, the severest critics of quantitative scientific methods as a guide to the ultimate constitution of reality have of recent years been some of the leading scientists themselves. Some have even gone so far as to say that every scientific theory is merely a symbolic picture, convenient so far as it goes, but not necessarily representing in the remotest degree the final reality of the world in which we live. One writer has called scientific theories "useful fictions." That is almost certainly going too far, but the fact still remains that there is nothing in quantitative science, properly understood, which can raise anything like a final demurrer to an interpretation of the Universe in religious terms. Its method is too restricted and its conclusions too hypothetical for that.

The second point concerns the science of psychology and, in a lesser degree, the sciences of history and economics. These sciences, if they are to exist as sciences at all, seem to presuppose a deterministic view of human conduct and therefore to shut out

the religious conception of value and all that it implies. Without rigid and predictable uniformities, it is said, a science of human behaviour is impossible. How can there be psychological and economic laws if there is in human personality anywhere an element of responsible and free seeking of values? The answer is not really far to seek.

Let us suppose for the sake of argument there are 500 personalities each confronted with the same situation x, as, for example, the Greeks under Leonidas at Thermopylæ. Then although each may decide for himself, that does not preclude them from all deciding in the same way, in which case there is something like the beginnings of a uniformity; none the less despite the uniformity, the choice in each case may be a genuine piece of self-direction. It is obvious that there must be wide areas of human conduct in which there will be a more or less detailed and complete uniformity, for the simple reason that in many respects the world with which we all have to deal and the powers with which we have to deal with it are the same; and, in consequence, the course which wisdom dictates to the average human intelligence will be the same also. However free we are, our freedom is always limited by the actual facts of the situation in which we find ourselves. We are not free, for example, to jump over St Paul's Cathedral, or to put our hands in the

fire and not be burnt, or to think that 2 and 2 equals 5. Hence in respect of situations which are roughly the same, and there are a great many of them, and given a normal personality, within broad limits the resulting conduct will be predictable, not, to be sure with the precision of mathematics, but with sufficient probability and accuracy to make the judgment not altogether worthless as a guide for conduct. No competent psychologist or economist has ever supposed that, in respect of the more intimate and personal aspects of human conduct, he could do more than indicate a probability or a tendency. Psychological laws are seldom more than suggestions of broad tendency in human behaviour, in view of certain broad facts of human life and human nature. Anything in the way of detailed determination in advance of what a man will say or do or think in any given situation is for ever impossible in the nature of the case.

Another important point, bearing on the same thing, is this, that if we hold that a personality can act as a free creative agent, that does not mean that we believe that he always does so. In other words human conduct is not always free, any more than it is always determined. Thus there is the fact of habit. Owing to habit most men live for long periods at a stretch without ever needing to deliberate and make a personal choice. Certain situations

are constantly recurring and conduct in respect of them is for all practical purposes predetermined. This holds good both for the higher and lower levels of conduct. A thoroughly good character is built up on certain habitual moral reactions, and a thoroughly bad character on certain habitual immoral reactions. Obviously progress in either direction is only possible because actions thus become habituated, and so attention is released for other things. Just at what point an action originally free becomes so habituated as to pass beyond the control of the personality it is impossible to say, but it is undeniable that there may be such a point. The important thing, however, is that the necessary building of all ordered existence upon a broad foundation of habit gives plenty of scope for a careful and scientific study of history and psychology and economics, without in any way infringing the truth that in moments of moral choice the individual may exert his power of free personal direction and confound all the scientific prophets. And when the creative moral choice has been made, there will still be something for the psychologist to do, namely, to enquire into all the factors in the personal life which went to the making of it, to try to enter into the agent's point of view just prior to the choice, and by intelligent imagination and sympathy to make it in some sense his own.

We must be careful, however, to see that this does not plunge us into the illusion which Bergson pointed out. Suppose we are considering a decision like that of Jean Valjean, the decision of a man to confess to a crime and so save an innocent person from imprisonment. We know, as a matter of historic fact, that he has made the decision, confessed, and gone to prison. That is settled, once and for all. We now make a psychological study of the man's mind, and try to describe every pulse of thought and feeling which took place just prior to the decision being made. We give the fullest account we can, and we know that somehow out of all that personal life which we have thus inadequately analysed the decision, as a matter of fact, emerged. Then, if we are not careful, our minds do a subtle little twist. Knowing that the decision in question *did* emerge, we imagine that as we, as it were, stand in the conditions of the man's mind just prior to the decision, we can foresee and foretell the decision on the basis of those conditions. But really we only foresee and foretell it on the basis of *what has previously transpired in fact;* there has been no real prediction, and there could be none.

It is perhaps not unnecessary to add that a belief in the possibility of free and responsible acts of choice, and therefore in the centrality

of value and the seeking of value in human life, does not involve an abrogation of the law of cause and effect. Nothing can happen without a sufficient reason for it happening. The question is merely whether the only conceivable kind of sufficient reason is one which can be expressed in formulæ of a quantitative and rigidly predictable type. A scientist may, if he be so inclined, hope and believe that in the end he will be able to reduce everything to causal equivalents of that type, but it is only a hope and belief after all. The facts themselves point to there being somewhere in mind a causal factor which is in some sense original, spontaneous, self-directed. We have to say "in some sense" because the fact that it is original renders it indefinable. But the indefinable is not the unreal; on the contrary, it is the things which are, in a sense, most real which cannot be defined. In the view of many psychologists it is not possible even to begin the study of psychology without assuming some such original and active "subjects" of experience differing radically from the objects which they apprehend and which they are able in their science to subsume under quantitative formulæ.

The third thing to be said concerning the challenge of science is this. Not only is there nothing in science which *finally* contradicts religious faith, but also there are tendencies

to be detected in its thought in these days which are in support of it. The criticism of scientific method, which has been undertaken of recent years, has led to an overhauling of the whole theory of knowledge and of the relation of the mind to the reality out of which it has sprung and which it tries to understand. The result has been a marked tendency in scientific and philosophic thought to install mind as the dominant factor in reality. It is impossible to substantiate this statement in detail here. But it is undoubtedly so. To give life and mind a dominant place in the interpretation of the world is, of course, still to be a long way off from religious faith in general, and even farther off from Christian faith in particular, but there is no question that it is to move a good deal nearer to these positions than the older scientific and philosophic theories which endeavoured to banish life and mind from among the ultimates of the Universe altogether.

CHAPTER VII

CHALLENGES OF FACT

By challenges of fact as distinct from those of theory we mean such demurrers to belief in God as are raised by experiences which are common to all men and women and which do not require any reflective elaboration for their challenge to be very keenly felt. That there are such challenges needs no pointing out. Our thesis throughout this book is that it is reasonable to believe that within and behind the Universe there is a divine Holy Purpose which we must serve; or, to put it more abstractly, that ultimate reality is personal and good. Standing over against such a belief and challenging it, there is the reality, or the apparent reality, of evil. No justification of religious belief can be complete without some dealing with this challenge. Just because religion is fundamentally an intuition, supported by experience and reflexion, that behind *everything* is holy purpose, it must not overlook the challenge of *anything*, whatever it may be, which seems at first sight to give the lie to such a conviction.

The challenge of evil meets us in two ways.

There is the challenge of physical evil or pain, and the challenge of moral evil or sin. In actual experience these two seldom occur in isolation from one another, but for purposes of reflexion it is convenient to consider them apart. But before we consider them it is highly important to be quite clear once again what, in actual religious experience, the fundamental ground of belief in God is.

The position we have taken up is that it is primarily by the sheer coercion of our own deepest nature that we believe in a spiritual purpose behind life akin to ourselves, and speaking to us through our sense of the sacred. Such a conviction is living and strong in proportion to the amount of vivid immediacy there is in it, in proportion to its capacity, especially on high and serious occasions such as have been instanced in earlier chapters, to shine in its own light. In other words, belief in God, if it is properly based, ought always to have an inherent vitality in it apart from and in spite of anything which may seem to raise a demurrer to it. It follows from this that a religious faith ought not to be surrendered merely because it cannot shed a "hundred per cent." illumination on every dark mystery presented to it, or because it cannot offer a theory of the Universe completely harmonious with all the indubitable facts. On the contrary, part of

the meaning of the word faith in this connection is precisely that it is an attitude to life which is able to carry a considerable load of theoretical agnosticism without danger of collapse. It is very easy to put the onus of proof in the wrong place in respect of the challenges of evil. It is very easy to assume that it is the religious man's job to show *in detail* that this is the best of all possible worlds. The religious man believes it is the best of all possible worlds,[1] but it is not for him to demonstrate it, because, if he is wise, he will never pretend to reach the conclusion by demonstration himself. The onus is upon his critics. It is they who must show that there is final and irrefutable evidence that religious faith is all wrong. As Professor James Ward said, "the only justification of the ways of God to men we are called upon to attempt is to require those who say that they are not justifiable to prove their indictment." If they cannot prove their indictment, religious faith, having other foundations, is entitled to stand.

In accordance with this the argument of this chapter is simply that neither the fact of pain nor the fact of sin can be shown to be finally incompatible with the idea of a divine Holy Purpose; that, therefore, neither is adequate to overthrow a properly based belief in such a

[1] Barring, of course, the discords introduced by man's sin. But it is not unreasonable to hold that a world which allows man to introduce discords into it is better than one which does not.

Purpose. And the main reason to be urged why this is so is that there is in respect of both pain and sin, and of their place in human life, a very wide margin of ignorance, and a very large scope for misconception — so wide a margin and so large a scope that, even if we could discern no good in the facts of pain and sin at all (which as we shall see is far from being the case) it would still be impossible to affirm with reason that the challenge which they admittedly offer to theistic faith is in any sense finally destructive of it.

(1) Let us consider first *the fact of pain.*

(*a*) The first thing to be noted here is the essentially private character of pain. By this is meant the fact that everybody suffers his own pain and not that of someone else; as felt pain, it is his own private experience. I can sympathise with my neighbour's pain, but I cannot make it, except in a very remote and metaphorical way, my own. This privacy of pain is part of the essential privacy of all human experience and of the intimate personal history of each individual soul, and it carries with it some not unimportant consequences for the question we are now discussing, the question of the relation of the fact of pain to theistic belief.

It means, in the first place, that no one is in a position to evaluate in any kind of final way

the relation of pain to the purpose which may be behind the Universe. Just because it is so private we are compelled to be agnostic in regard to it. This is manifestly so in relation to another person's pain. My neighbour's cancer and the pain resulting therefrom are evil things and I do right to relieve them. But so far as they remain unrelieved, I am not in a position to say that they are as unrelievedly dark in fact as they appear to the observer to be, still less am I in a position to say that they will not prove entirely worth while in the larger context of my neighbour's whole spiritual history when that is completed. And that history can only be experienced as completed by him and not by me. I should need to be he, with all his past experiences, his present capacities and his future destiny, even to catch a glimpse of good in the pain at the moment of the pain's occurrence; and I should need to live his whole life to all eternity to be able to see it completely justified as an element in God's providential dealing with him. Even in respect of our own pain, we are often compelled to be similarly agnostic as to the way in which it may ultimately prove to be worth while; none the less, in the intimacies of our own experience, we can often detect gleams of light which are necessarily unobservable to others and which, if these occurred in some other sufferer, would be equally un-

observable to us. Both by the essential privacy of experience and by the fact that we can only observe a small portion of history at any one time, we are compelled to be extremely agnostic in regard to pain. The same applies even more to the pain of animals, which weighs heavily on some folk. It is impossible to share the intimate experience of a dog; it is difficult even to understand why such a creature as a dog should exist at all; it is therefore rational to refuse to make any final judgment as to the place in the ultimate working out of God's purposes of any pain it may endure.

In the second place, the privacy of pain warns us not to think of the "quantity" of pain in the world in a wrong way and so to have our minds stunned and intimidated in a quite unnecessary way. When we think of the vast numbers of people in the world who are suffering pain at any one time we must not imagine that that means there is a correspondingly vast quantity, or intensity, of actually felt pain. For the privacy of pain entails that it is impossible to sum different people's pains together and draw out a total. Each suffers his own pain and his alone, and there is not, strictly speaking, more pain in the world when two people are suffering than when only one is. There is no such thing as pain in general. It is some relief to

the mind to realise this. It is not suggested, however, that numbers are irrelevant to the question, though it is arguable that the Universe would be revealed in quite as odious a light by being cruel to one person as by being cruel to several. The real challenge in the vast numbers who suffer is in the suggestion they inevitably convey to the mind that the possibility, nay, the certainty of pain is not incidental and occasional, but wrought into the essential texture of life so that it meets us at every turn. The world appears to have been designed on lines which make pain inevitable for all, so that whilst it is true and important to realise that there is no more pain than one individual can suffer, there is always a great deal of pain which no one individual can escape. A moment's thought, however, might suggest that it is precisely the universality of pain which, taken along with its privacy, offers at least the possibility of a way out. It enables us to suggest, as we do suggest, that the pain of the world is connected with its design as a school for every personality who is born into it ; at the same time it is kept within fairly manageable limits by its privacy, no man being called upon to suffer and to transmute into personal worth more than his own suffering.

Similar considerations are not out of place in relation to such gigantic calamities as earthquakes, famines, floods, which are so apt to

intimidate, in a specially shattering way, some people's religious faith. It would be wrong to speak lightly of such things, and shallow to suggest there is no mystery in them, but we must at all costs keep reason uppermost and refuse to allow it to be overawed by mere feeling. After all, if five thousand people die in an earthquake in one hour at one place, that is not worse than five thousand people dying in their beds in one hour all over the world, which is something which takes place every day. And even in an earthquake each man's pain and death are his own private experience and not to be added on to those of others to form a frightful total of felt pain and dissolution. This, to be sure, does not solve the problem of such things as earthquakes, but it helps to keep it in its proper proportions. The problem of pain is not really intensified by the fact that it is sometimes presented to us in the lurid light, and with the magnified and grotesque shadows, of wholesale calamity.

(*b*) This leads to the second thing to be noted in respect of pain. It is the enormous uncertainty which death introduces into the problem. This has been hinted at already, but it is worth while bringing it clearly before the mind. Because what lies beyond it is entirely unknown, death is a standing rebuke to any denial of theism which would seek to

base itself on the fact of pain alone. For no sane view of life would deny that pain can serve a most useful purpose, as is pointed out below; and so long as death is not finally known to be the end, it is impossible to know finally that even that pain which looks at present to be meaningless and sterile will not be justified by fuller knowledge and experience beyond the grave. And death is *not* finally known to be the end, despite certain dogmatic scientists who affirm it is. Here we may return for a moment to the question of earthquakes and such like calamities. Probably we feel that, even when allowance has been made for what was said above, the real challenge of such happenings has still to be met. That real challenge is in the suggestion which they inevitably convey of something in nature pitilessly destructive of, and indifferent to, the lives and aspirations of men. Yet this after all is only a suggestion. Death, we repeat, is *not* finally known to be the end, and so long as that is so, it cannot, whether it comes in a wholesale or a more individual way, finally impugn faith in a good purpose being worked out in life. It may be said that also death is not finally known to be *not* the end. That is so, but the point of this paragraph remains, that death is such an unknown factor that neither it, nor any form or quantity of pain, no matter in how dark a guise they may

appear, can be used as an argument which would seek to prove finally that the religious view of life is false. Pain and death may look incompatible with theistic faith, especially when we are feeling dispirited, but we are not here discussing looks; we are concerned with the possibility of a final demonstration.

(*c*) The third thing to be noted is that whilst we must be content to remain very agnostic in regard to pain, both because of its essential privacy and because of the uncertainty introduced by the fact of death, none the less we must take care not to exaggerate the darkness which surrounds it. We saw in the last section, and the point will be further developed in the next, that a theistic faith, especially one of Christian type, can do much to transfigure pain at the moment of its occurrence. But, altogether apart from theistic faith, it is not difficult to see that in many ways life would be a poorer and a darker thing without pain.

Pain very often subserves the high, austere ideals of truth and goodness. It is the great teacher. It has been said that there is nothing so painful as a new idea; but it is also true that there is nothing so potentially full of ideas as a new pain. Pain indicates that there is something we have not yet learnt about the world in which we live, that there is some

obstacle to be overcome; it not only indicates it, it forces us to do something about it. In animals, strength and often beauty of body; in men, strength and beauty of soul are evoked by the necessity of overcoming obstacles. But there could be no obstacles without discomfort. Further, pain draws out men's sympathies with one another and calls forth the sacrifices which we recognise as amongst the most sacred things in life. To revert to the story of Captain Oates, that sublime deed would have been impossible had there not been such destructive things as blizzards and such painful ones as frostbite. It is at least quite as rational to regard the blizzard as somehow ultimately justified by the greatness of character to which it gave opportunity and of which therefore it was, in fact, a part cause, as to regard the greatness of character as somehow nullified and rendered meaningless by the apparently brute and impersonal force of the blizzard. Why pain should thus be, in so many instances, an essential condition of good, it is in the last resort impossible to say. There are laws of the Universe which we just have to accept. Nobody in the last resort can say why a combination of oxygen and hydrogen in certain proportions should produce a liquid with the properties of water and not something else. The fact that pain often brings good stands. Such a fact, taken along with the wide margin

for agnosticism which, as indicated above, must always remain, constitutes a strong case for refusing to let the fact of pain shake a theistic faith which has, if it be true to itself, strong foundations elsewhere.

(2) We now turn to *the fact of moral evil.*

This at first sight raises a much less serious difficulty for a belief in God as we have been endeavouring to expound it.

One of the central elements in all vital experience of God is, we have maintained, the coercive sense of certain sacred values, apprehended as demanding the absolute and unqualified allegiance of the soul. Now it is part of the peculiar quality of this experience that the "coerciveness" of God is always apprehended as standing over against the "freedom" of man. In this sense the word coercive may, if we are not careful, be misleading. God's touch compels the mind, convicts it, but does not, indeed cannot, ever take it an unwilling captive. It lies within the essential meaning of value as experienced in this connexion by the human spirit, that it is something which can only be rightly responded to in freedom, something indeed which can only have meaning at all to a being who is free. Thus it is that in every form of religion, even the most primitive, room has to be made for the phenomenon of the wicked or impious

man. Various explanations may be offered by theorists of such a disconcerting phenomenon, but in practice his impiety is always regarded as a matter of his own choice and responsibility. A man is able to disregard even God, and that is because God presents Himself primarily under the guise of value.

The thought of man as free is, therefore, really part of the very life-breath of vital religion in all its stages, however much religious theorists, both ancient and modern, may at times seem to deny it in the supposed interests of a doctrine of Providence. In this, religion is in harmony with human experience in other directions. In every department of life we assume that in some sense we are free, and as a rule it is only highly specialised reflexion and theory which ever raise doubt about it. Some consideration was given to such doubts in the last chapter. But freedom implies freedom to do wrong. Whence it follows that a wrong done cannot *per se* affront a belief in God which is religiously reached, for, as we have said, the religious man's sense of God is given in and through an experience of absolute value, or demand, which necessarily presupposes freedom. Nor can the pain which comes to the wrong-doer cause difficulty, for a Universe which is orderly and rational and which is the expression of Holy Purpose could not do any other than frustrate and pain

creatures who set themselves against that Purpose.

This familar argument, which sees in moral evil merely the consequence of the gift of freedom to man, is usually sufficient for the simple religious mind. It is sufficient because, as has been said, the sense of freedom to accept or reject higher values is part of the life-breath of the religious apprehension of God in all its forms. None the less, to the more restless mind, or the mind which has very deeply felt the weight of the world's evil upon it, it is not enough.

In the first place, the fact of freedom, even though regarded as a satisfying explanation of moral evil, itself raises a difficulty. In proportion as moral evil is keenly felt to be evil (and the effect of a religious apprehension of it is always to intensify the recoil of the soul from it) it becomes difficult to avoid asking whether the risk of such evil was really justifiable and worth while. Faith, in fact, staggers more than a little at the thought of a divine Purpose which could make a race free enough to bring about the abominations of corruption and sensualism and cruelty of which history, alas! is full; and in consequence a sceptical something within the soul sometimes takes the opportunity to suggest that by being religious we have gratuitously magnified the problem for ourselves, and that there is

behind the whole process no controlling good purpose at all. The difficulty can perhaps be realised in a more concrete way by projecting oneself into, say, the position of Lucrece after the outrage depicted in Shakespeare's poem. To say to her that the dreadful thing has happened because of God's wonderful gift of freedom to men would sound glib and yield but poor comfort. The natural retort would be to say that freedom at such a price is not worth while, and that no man ought to be so free that he can do that kind of thing.

Yet the natural retort in circumstances where the normal poise of the personality has been violently disturbed is not necessarily the right retort. For calmer thought, and altogether apart from the special light which we shall see Jesus Christ sheds upon this problem, the matter reduces itself in the end to the question whether on the whole it still seems true to our best moral judgment that a good personality is a thing of such transcendent value that it is worth, if not every risk, then at least a tremendously great one. A good personality which became good through exterior manipulation and not through its own self-direction would of course not be good; the very idea of goodness implies freedom and its risks. Are we really prepared to say, is anyone in a position to say, that for so high an end as the achievement of good personality there are risks

in freedom not worth taking? We have, in other words, to ask ourselves again whether our belief in God is so firmly based in our inner experience of His call to us to follow what is true and beautiful and good, that it can carry a considerable load of agnosticism and say "I do not know how exactly, nor can I prove it beyond a cavil or a doubt—but the making of good personalities, or rather the self-making of them in co-operation with God, is worth every risk. Nobody at any rate can prove it is not, and on occasion, especially at my moments of highest religious insight, I think I can see it is. Therefore my faith in God shall stand."

There is, however, another difficulty which at this point may be raised. Experience seems to suggest that the risks of freedom are not as a matter of fact evenly balanced between the possibility of good and the possibility of evil. From the beginning it seems easier to do wrong than to do right. And every wrong choice seems to injure in some degree the ultimate perfection which any individual can attain. Furthermore, there is the fatal facility of habit, the swift way in which a man's choices are caught up into deterministic forces and rivet chains on his own and other people's lives. One of the most terrible things in life is the sickening collapse of personality which can take place in men who persist in evil

courses. The whole spirit seems to become corrupt, all the higher faculties appear to dissolve away, and the possibility of reform seems to grow more and more remote. The facts at first sight suggest that the chances are weighted *against* the good personality ; and in some cases of disastrous wickedness the risk of freedom seems to have eventuated in well-nigh total disaster and loss. In proportion as a man has learnt to value personality, the actual history of some personalities will continually affront his faith in a Holy Purpose at work in the creation of man and the ordering of his life.

Yet here again we must be careful that first impressions do not make us feel we know more about the matter than we really do. Obviously, wrong choices must register themselves in some fashion in the soul of the wrong-doer, if there is to be a reliable order of moral fact and truth at all. There would be no moral order if a man's soul and character remained the same whether he acted well or ill. Oscar Wilde has a story of a man who lived the life of a sinner and retained the features of a saint. That is a horrible enough thought, but if a man could live the life of a sinner and retain the soul of a saint, that would be the extinction of the difference between good and evil altogether. Yet, however devastating in a moral universe the effects of persistent wrong-doing upon the

wrong-doer's soul must be, we are manifestly not in a position to say that the corruption which is wrought is ever complete and irremediable. In other words, there is, as before, room for considerable agnosticism. For in the first place the fact of death and the uncertainty which it introduces have again to be taken into account. It is possible that this life, which is the only one we can examine, is only a tiny fraction of the soul's total history. It may be that, if we could view the matter over the whole course of that history, we should see that the risks of freedom are not more, but less, heavily tilted towards evil than towards good. Prof. J. Arthur Thomson, speaking as a biologist and on the basis of certain biological experiments, once asserted that in all living creatures allowance must be made for all kinds of latent powers which are only awaiting a suitable environment in order to become active. "Should we not," he says, "be a little slower than we are in saying of some of our fellow-creatures (dwellers in darkness) that they have no this, no that? Perhaps what they lack is an appropriate liberating stimulus." Even the most corrupt sinner may have left within him, submerged and inhibited for the time being, a sort of spiritual *vis medicatrix naturæ* which only requires the appropriate stimulus to become active. And in the second place, not only may there be other opportunities than this life

through which "the appropriate liberating stimulus" may be found, but also there may very well be much greater moral resources in the Universe than those which man carries in his own meagre being. Indeed, it is precisely part of theistic faith that there are. If men are left unsuccoured amidst the corruption their own sin has brought about, then indeed a case might be made out that the risks of freedom were not worth taking. But who is in a position to affirm that they are so left? In the next section we shall see that Christianity has a bright and distinctive light to shed on this particular problem. But meanwhile and apart from that, our position is, as before, that the demurrer which moral evil seems to raise to theistic faith really cannot substantiate itself; the margin of ignorance is too wide. Such faith, therefore, having its own sources of certitude, and such sources being still unimpaired, is entitled to stand.

There is still another challenge which many feel the fact of moral evil offers to a belief in a Holy Purpose behind life. It concerns the effects of wrong-doing not upon the wrong-doer but upon other people. This is the age-long problem of the innocent suffering for the guilty. What is to be said about it?

First, that whatever be our first impressions, second thoughts show that the innocent suffering for the guilty does not *necessarily* contradict

the goodness of God. It only contradicts it on a certain view of what that goodness is. If, as many people seem unthinkingly to assume, distributive justice, in the sense of a nicely-adjusted scheme of rewards for piety and penalties for vice, is a rock-bottom principle of goodness, then it might be expected that such distributive justice would be manifest in all God's dealings with men; though, even so, it would be necessary to remember that in all probability this life only reveals to us a very small section of those dealings. Some of the older theologies did, indeed, explicitly look to the next life to redress the manifest injustices of this; the innocent sufferers, they suggested, would be recompensed, the prosperous wicked punished, and distributive justice satisfied. But we have to ask, is distributive justice a rock-bottom principle of goodness? Is that our truest conception of what the Holy Purpose, which meets us in our religious experience and which we call God, is aiming at in human life? Is that Holy Purpose, so to say, merely trying to turn life into an automatic sweet-machine wherein we place our moral pennies and draw an equivalent reward, users of bent coins being liable to prosecution and punishment?

This raises the whole question of what the character of God's goodness is, and the complete and satisfying answer to that cannot be given apart from some consideration of the

relation of Jesus Christ to theistic belief, which is the subject of the next section. But altogether apart from this, it is possible to see that those who believe in God are not necessarily called upon to believe that distributive justice must characterise all His dealings with men. For that would mean that God is conceived in terms lower than the highest moral experience of man. A noble mother, for example, suffering for her son's sin, would not understand what is meant, if it were said to her that it is immoral for her thus to suffer. For if that be so, then love itself is immoral, for it is not possible *on any other terms.* Furthermore, when we take our religious experience at its highest we find that one of the supreme ways in which the sacred purpose of God touches human hearts is in the call to share life with other people. As the history of religion shows, God's purpose presents itself to the religious mind ever more and more plainly as a purpose to create good personalities, not merely through fellowship with Himself, but also through fellowship with one another. But if this be so, the suffering of the innocent for the guilty becomes inevitable. For a fellowship of good personalities is only possible if the members of it are dependent upon one another, not merely on occasion and in respect of the consequences of their good acts, but all the time and in respect of

the consequences of their evil acts as well. And not only so, but in the highest reaches of moral experience the innocent suffering for the guilty does not remain merely a regrettable necessity of that mutual dependency without which fellowship would be unattainable; it becomes itself the chief factor in achieving that fellowship, the highest expression of fellowship that there is. We shall come back to this in the next section, when we speak of the Cross of Christ.

Our position is, therefore, that it is possible to see, even in our present limited experience, that the innocent suffering for the guilty is not an unrelievedly evil thing; rather that a world where we can both help and hinder, bless and injure one another, is a far better world than one where, like convicts, we did our tasks and received our rewards and penalties in horrible cellular isolation from one another. The former kind of world is indeed the sort of world that our religious experience with its call to sacrifice and sharing would lead us to expect.

Yet there is this also to be added, along the line of the whole argument of this chapter, that, even if we cannot see this very clearly, even if on occasion the weight of the world's undeserved suffering lies heavily upon us, we must keep our feelings in check and ask ourselves in a cool hour whether such suffering does

really finally contradict belief in a divine Holy Purpose. The margin of ignorance remains very wide. Such suffering raises a problem, but it is not a final disproof. A child with a deadly disease because of its father's sin is a terrible fact, a horrible discord, but it seems reasonable to wait until we are nearer the end of the cosmic symphony before we assert that it is a discord which never is, and never can be, resolved into a satisfying harmony; the more so, since as we have seen, it is possible at least to glimpse a prior necessity for the discord and the beginnings of its subsequent transfiguration into what is good.

PART III

JESUS CHRIST AND BELIEF IN GOD

CHAPTER VIII

THE PARTICULARISING OF GOD IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

It will help the passage of thought into this concluding section if we recapitulate the argument of the previous pages.

We started from the position that the question of how we may know God to be real must be approached through the wider question of how we may know anything to be real. We suggested that in any department of experience the highest conviction of the reality of any given object is a product of three factors, a coercive, a pragmatic, a reflective;[1] if one or other of these three factors is lacking, the conviction loses some of that peculiar fullness of certitude which it is impossible to describe in terms, but which is very satisfying to the mind which has it. This being so, we saw that the question of the reality of God is fundamentally whether that which comes to mankind in religious experience as God fulfils the three-fold condition of coercive force,

[1] We saw indeed that the reflective element is a combination of the other two, but the triple distinction is accurate enough for the present purpose. See above p. 24.

pragmatic justification and reflective consistency sufficiently to make it reasonable to accept it for what it appears to be and to cultivate relations with it.

In answering this question everything obviously depends upon how we conceive "that which comes to mankind in religious experience as God." Only an examination of religious experience over its whole breadth can decide this. Such an examination reveals that the reality with which religion claims to deal and which it calls God is usually conceived to be in some sense spiritual, supernatural, eternal and ultimate.[1] In primitive religion these essential qualities of the divine object may be vague and not yet released as free ideas from what is material, natural and temporal, but they are present and central even in primitive religion; if they were not it would be difficult to see how the higher stages of religious thought and experience could ever evolve out of the lower. How then does this spiritual, supernatural, ultimate Reality authenticate itself to us?

The argument has been, first, that it authenticates itself to us *coercively* through the sense of the sacred; we find ourselves pungently aware of a demand to surrender everything, even life itself, to something higher than life. Second, it authenticates itself *pragmatically* through the

[1] For the meaning of these terms, see p. 11.

fact that it provides an environment and an inner attitude to that environment without which we appear to be permanent and unhappy misfits in the midst of life. Third, it authenticates itself to us *in reflexion*, in that, first, no conclusive objections to it can be discovered; second, it itself sheds light upon and helps to make sense of experience; third, no explanation of its coercive impact and pragmatic usefulness in human life can be offered as adequate as that which religion itself offers, namely, that it is a spiritual reality which is surrounding, conditioning, breaking into men's lives.

Now hitherto the term God has been used in the very broad and generalised meaning indicated above, with the result that the discussion may on occasion have appeared more than a little abstract and remote from really living experience. Yet this has been inevitable. We have purposely taken, as it were, the greatest common measure of the term God, for our aim has been to justify religion in its central idea and motive as that central idea and motive have been manifested in its every form and at every stage of its development. Our thesis has been the quite general one that in religion, from its most primitive forms upwards, man has been really dealing with an unseen, supernatural, ultimate Purpose. But of course, no living religion has ever been content with such a vague generality as this

as a statement of its beliefs. Living religion always goes farther and particularises God; it affirms that God is real and that He is sacred purpose, but only in and through quite particular statements as to what His character is and what His purpose demands. It is a historical fact that no religion which has dissolved God out into merely pantheistic or philosophic generalities has ever maintained its hold on men. The reason for this is that religion is nothing if it is not practical contact with a real world, if it is not the highest expression of the biological impulse common to all living creatures to harmonise oneself with one's environment. Religion is not theory, but the art of life seeking an ever higher and better technic. But a man cannot seek to harmonise himself with his environment, he has no motive to, unless he apprehend that environment in some quite particular and definite way. Activity in the end is determined by particular situations, and only by generalities in so far as such generalities are felt to sum up particular situations. Religion, therefore, manifests itself historically in a great many precise statements about God, many of which are undoubtedly mutually contradictory and most of which are certainly mixed in varying degrees with error; none the less its general affirmation that there is a spiritual, eternal and supernatural reality to

make statements about remains absolutely true. That at any rate is the thesis of this book.

That religion lives by particular statements about God, and never by a mere general affirmation that there is God, and thus exposes itself to all kinds of error and half-truth which it might otherwise avoid, need not disturb us. It is part of the evidence that it is a living intercourse with a real world. We must apply the concept of evolution to religion as to other things and regard religion as a gradual exploration of, or (since we cannot shut out God's activity in the matter) education in, things unseen. Further, we must realise that the argument we have used to sustain the reality of the unseen is valid at all stages of apprehension of that reality. Even in and through a primitive religion, full of error as we in a later stage of religious evolution must believe it to be, God can come to the spirit of man with that coercive touch and pragmatic succour, and even reflective satisfaction, which are the sign that a reality is being revealed to, even though it is also being obscured by, man's imperfect powers of apprehension. It is not by knowing it perfectly but by living in it, and even by making gross mistakes about it, that the reality of any department of experience is tested and verified. And a man can only live in it at the stage of development where he is at the time.

Now the significance of all this for our present purpose is this: Though we have hitherto refrained as much as possible from the particular statements about the nature and purpose of God which religion has at various times made, we cannot do so any longer. The fullest conviction of the reality of God cannot be ours apart from the life of religion itself, and that life is impossible except on the basis of particular apprehensions of God which we can live by and test in the particular situations of daily life. It will be noticed that even in the generalised discussion of the previous pages we have been compelled at more than one point, in order even to make the argument plain, to introduce some quite particular conceptions of the nature and purpose of the unseen and eternal reality which we call God. Thus to a modern mind we could only make clear what is meant by the sense of the sacred by exemplifying it in its highest modern particularisation—the call to seek what is true and beautiful and good at all costs—rather than in such a primitive particularisation of it as the call to sacrifice the first-born, which we now reject. So also it was impossible to expound in a convincing way the power of religion to succour human personality, except by conceiving God in some degree in the very particular terms in which Jesus Christ thought of Him. And in the discussion of challenges to belief

in God, particularly in the discussion of the challenge of evil, we were compelled, in order to put the challenges in proper perspective, to make quite particular suggestions as to the character and purpose of God, as for example, that His purpose is to train us in character and fellowship.

It is indeed especially in relation to the last chapter that we must make particular statements about God if we are to indicate fully the foundations of our belief in Him. The main argument of that chapter was the negative one that the fact of evil is not adequate to overthrow theistic faith; we are too ignorant about it; therefore it is reasonable to hold to our theistic faith and remain agnostic as to how evil may ultimately prove to be not incompatible with it. Such a negative argument, though useful, as has been said, to reduce the challenge to its proper proportions, is not finally satisfactory to the religious mind, if only because religion does claim to succour the mind practically in face of evil. Religion must in some measure illumine the fact of evil positively and give practical victory over it if it is to sustain itself as a veritable dealing with reality. It must make more sense, practical and reflective, of life than anything else that offers itself to us. But obviously it cannot do that to the full, unless it descends to particular views as to the nature and purpose and methods of the divine reality

with which we have to deal. To a man with a cancer it is not satisfactory merely to say God is good. The goodness must be related to the intense particularity of the cancer. At the point where evil ceases to be a general conception and becomes a personal, practical, pungent fact, it becomes essential to define more precisely the goodness of God and the methods by which it is conceived to work.

Christianity, like other living religions, particularises God. It makes precise and definite statements about His nature and purpose, and such peculiar power as it has to succour and sustain belief in God in a living way, it has because of these statements, or rather because of the real experience of God to which, if they are taken seriously, they inevitably lead. Like other religions too, Christianity (it would be better to say, perhaps, Christians in the name of Christianity) has often particularised God in false and inadequate ways, but that is to be expected, and it does not matter, provided that the central teaching of Christianity is such that it insures in those who feel its truth and take it seriously a growth into ever fuller knowledge, and therefore into ever fuller certainty, of God. Now it is the great strength of Christianity, if it rightly understands itself, that its central teaching about God, whilst it is precise and particular enough to satisfy the demands of living religion, yet sets forth a *way* of life with

God, and a *way* of increasing knowledge of God, rather than a system of doctrine which must be accepted or rejected *en bloc* before the Christian life can begin. Of course, if this central affirmation of Christianity about God's nature and purpose be true, and really sets men in the way of increasing spiritual experience and knowledge, then it is to be expected that by now, after 2000 years of Christian experience, there should be accessible in appropriate places, such as hymns, devotional literature, creeds, theological works, a great many further statements about God, many of which will be profoundly true and of untold value to those who are exploring the same way. But it will not be necessary to accept, or even to understand, all these before there can begin the spiritual experience which lies behind them, and which the primary Christian doctrine of God opens to us.

What, then, is this central and primary Christian particularisation of God?

Christianity asserts, and the assertion makes it Christianity and not some other religion, that God came and comes into human life in a quite peculiar and unique way in Jesus Christ. It asserts that in Jesus God meets man in an adequacy and completeness of revelation of Himself which is without parallel in his experience anywhere else. It asserts that if we want to know what the transcen-

dent spiritual mind and purpose behind our lives, which we call God, are really like, and how He really deals with us, and what He really wants of us, we must go to Jesus. It follows from this that the way of obedience to God, the way, therefore, completely to fulfil ourselves and attain our highest blessedness, is simply the way of obedience to Christ. Look at Jesus, Christianity says, and you will see what God is like; obey Him, and you will obey God; centre your life in Him, and you centre your life where it, in its essential nature, is meant to be centred, in God. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is a tremendous affirmation and the question the mind immediately asks is—is it true? And how are we to know it to be true? It is the purpose of the concluding chapters to answer this question.

It might seem at first that to ask how we know these affirmations of Christianity about Christ to be true is to add to our enquiry into grounds of belief in God another topic altogether different, namely, an enquiry into grounds of belief in Christ. Yet this is not really so. The question of the grounds of our belief in Christ is an essential part of the question of the grounds of our belief in God. For if what Christianity says about Him is true, Christ affords the supreme instance of God's coming to us in life, and therefore the

supreme test and verification of what has been said as to the way in which His coming authenticates itself to our minds. As we have just said, living religious conviction of God comes, not through generalities, but through concrete particularities, so that all that has been said as to the coercive, practical and reflective elements in such conviction of God is from the Christian point of view most clearly realised and verified in and through Christ. Christ in short is the best illustration, and therefore the best verification, we can offer of the theory of religious conviction we have outlined.

But further, if what Christianity says of Christ is true, then He introduces us to the way of increasing experience and knowledge of God which, because they are increasing, will further confirm the belief in the reality of God which underlies the whole process. The more profound our knowledge in any sphere of experience is, the more absurd and impossible does any suggestion that the whole is illusion become to our minds. It is not much knowledge, but little, which is the soil of scepticism. We may sum the matter up by saying that whilst it is possible to have experience and conviction of God apart from Christ; and whilst it is necessary for there to be at least some disposition to such experience and conviction if Christ is to make

any appeal to the soul ; yet when Christ does make such an appeal He succours and strengthens and deepens that very belief in God to which He appeals, and puts it on an altogether different footing in the mind.

All this gives the line of our approach to the Christian affirmation about Christ. We ask how we may know that God unveils Himself to us in a quite unique way in Him, and the answer is that we know it, if at all, through the same process of mind as that through which we become aware of God in religious experience generally. It is through a process containing the same coercive, pragmatic and reflective elements. The difference that Christ makes to our belief in God is, therefore, not in the mental processes involved in our apprehension of Him. We bring to Christ the same mind as we use elsewhere. The difference is in the richer content He gives to the processes, and the fuller certitude of God which, as a consequence, results.

CHAPTER IX

THE COERCIVE ELEMENT IN CHRISTIAN CONVICTION ABOUT CHRIST

SOMEWHERE at the root of a living and developing apprehension of God in Christ there must be the coercive sense of the divine. There must be that in Christ which is able, in some degree, to call out the deepest and most reverent allegiance of the soul, to evoke in it that awed sense and perception of the divine, of the ultimately true and beautiful and good confronting it, the capacity for which is one of the original and sublimest gifts the human spirit has.

This may sound to some too sweeping. It might be suggested that it is possible and legitimate to accept the Christian view of Christ in the first instance merely on the authority of others, and without personally having this coercive sense of the divine in Him. In that case such personal conviction of its truth as might thereafter be achieved would come mainly through the pragmatic test of living as though it were true and finding that on the whole it justified itself. It cannot

be denied that this is theoretically possible, or that on occasion it may even have actually happened. But the position we are maintaining is not really impugned. For, in the first place, it is still true that if a merely pragmatic test of the Christian affirmation about Christ is ever to lead on to the fullest possible personal conviction, there must supervene within it somewhere, sooner or later, this coercive apprehension of which we are speaking. The fullest conviction is not possible otherwise. And in the second place, if some personal coercive sense of the divine in Christ is not come by fairly quickly, the pragmatic test is not in the least likely to succeed. Without such a coercive sense the experiment will be such a half-hearted affair that it will not be a proper test at all. After all, it is very difficult for a man to live as though something were true, if its inherent truthfulness does not already lay hold of him with some degree of intrinsic coercive power. This is especially so where the thing in question keeps demanding self-giving and sacrifice. The reason why many Christians are so unconvinced and unconvincing in their Christianity is precisely that they try to maintain a Christian conviction about Christ merely on the basis of a pragmatic test. Life seems to triumph over Christ at so many points that faith in Him on merely pragmatic grounds becomes a continuous effort, in the end too

burdensome to sustain. Christianity has survived and transformed the world not by men laboriously and experimentally sustaining faith in Jesus, but by Jesus' power coercively to sustain, in spite of all, man's faith in Himself. This does not mean that the fullest possible coercive impact of the divine in Jesus must come right at the beginning of Christian discipleship. This impact grows in intensity in and through the practice of the Christian life, but the Christian life has but a poor chance if it is not present in any degree at all.

This, apparently, is how Christianity started in the earliest days. Jesus was not introduced to His disciples as the Son of God. He met them first as Jesus of Nazareth; but the more they lived with Him, the more it laid hold of them, in spite of the terrific prejudice of their Jewish minds against such an idea, that in Him God had come into their lives in an utterly unprecedented way, that He was a way for God through to them, and for them through to God, such as they, or anybody else, most assuredly were not. Something like that has to be our experience, if the Christian conviction about Him is to become really ours. In some way or other, it must be possible for us to look at Jesus and, seeing Him, to find our spirits bowing with just exactly that awe and rever-

ence which are our instinctive response to the living touch of God, and are the only way we have of ever identifying the presence of God in our midst.

Is this possible? Here, for many, very real difficulties begin. Jesus, it is said, lived nearly two thousand years ago, in a world in many ways unlike our own. There is the mistiness of distance about Him and it is difficult to believe that, to find the way forward in all our distracting tasks, the first thing we must do is to go right away back into the past. Even if we go back, it is said, we can only get into touch with Jesus through written records, not immediately with Himself. And what of the records themselves? They are very scanty. Is it not a little unreal to ask us to look at Jesus in them and feel the impress of a divine presence? The first disciples were in a different position.

The answer to these difficulties is, first of all, to point out that there is a rather subtle fallacy wrapped up in them. The fallacy is this, that their force largely depends on the unconscious assumption that Jesus is only a very ordinary human figure after all. But that is precisely the question at issue, namely, whether He is only an ordinary human figure. The difficulties in question would certainly hold in respect of any *ordinary* historical figure in the past; is it certain that there is

not that in Jesus which can lay hold of us and impress us, despite the lapse of two thousand years, and despite the scantiness of the records? May not His power to do this be precisely part of the evidence that He does stand apart, that quite uniquely in Him God manifests Himself to mankind?

Let us assume for the moment that what Christianity asserts about Jesus is true, and that in His personality there is a complete and adequate unveiling of the divine nature and purpose. Let us assume that Christ's spiritual life was a perfect expression in history of that divine spiritual life in which everything in all ages lives and moves and has its being. What follows? This, that the lapse of time, and the changes which such lapse has brought about, make no difference to the abiding significance of Him. The more true and adequate and near to the mind of God a spiritual fact is, the more independent of time or change does it become. God is the same God through the ages, and man has to find his highest blessedness in relating himself to the unchanging truth of Him, whether he rides on mules or on aeroplanes, whether he lives in the year 1 or the year 2000. If Christ were only a partial vehicle of the truth, then the argument that the lapse of 2000 years has put Him out of date would have considerable force. But it is precisely the Christian

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assertion that He is not partially, but wholly, the vehicle of God's character and purpose. Therefore, it seems illogical to urge in advance against the truth of that assertion precisely that which, if the assertion were true, would be entirely irrelevant, namely, the lapse of time.

Again, if Christ is in fact what Christianity asserts Him to be—the unveiling of God's mind and heart—then He will, so to say, persist in human life as a kind of grain or pattern of it, and so will be observable in varying degrees by those who care to look for Him, even in these days and in the midst of this civilisation. This is not to be vaguely mystical. It follows, alike in logic and experience, if Christ is all that Christianity claims. It is not a question of making a supreme effort of mind and leaping right out of twentieth-century England over 2000 years into first-century Palestine, and sitting at the feet of One who, however delightful and impressive, is really alien to us. That is the kind of idea people have in their minds when they shrug their shoulders at the idea of looking at Jesus and feeling the touch of God in Him. It would be a right idea, if Jesus were but an ordinary historical individual with no unique significance. But Christianity, we repeat, says that He has such a significance; that He carries in Him the

divine character and purpose which is behind all history and all human life. And this means, if it be true, that He is a clear and focused revelation of that of which the whole of history, and the whole of life as we have to meet it to-day, are a clouded and diffused one. If we are fronting modern life in any sincerity of purpose at all, we must continually be getting blurred impressions of Jesus in one way or another, that is, if He be the full revelation of God's mind and purpose; for all life expresses God's mind and purpose. Wherefore to go and observe the figure of Christ in the Gospel stories is not to try to build up from the beginning, out of nothing, something which has no prior affinity to us. All sorts of vague impressions, fleeting glimpses of the highest and best way to meet life, half-solved problems waiting just for the solution He indicates, moral aspirations which we could not quite satisfy, will be waiting, as it were, in solution in our minds, and ready to concrete themselves like a crystal upon His figure, making it real and living. No one, for example, can study the problems of modern industry, or the history of their rise, or can come into personal contact with the difficulties in the way of their solution, without having his mind prepared, consciously or unconsciously, for the living discovery that Christ's spirit does somehow sum up the structure and grain of life, that He is the only sure way

through. Or, again, nobody can have thought seriously about the problem of pain and its relation to sin, without having his spirit prepared for the Cross of Jesus Christ, and for an irresistible conviction when he confronts it that it is the revelation of the heart of God and the true way of life. If Jesus be what Christianity claims Him to be, then our modern life will have helped to annihilate rather than accentuate the intervening two thousand years.[1]

Consider now the other difficulty—that of the scanty records we have of Christ's life. That too falls to the ground if Jesus be what Christianity claims Him to be. For in that case His relationship to every human mind and personality must be of a quite unique and peculiar kind. He must be the norm, the ideal, that completed and balanced maturity, which every human being by the essential law of his nature is striving, amidst so many frustrations and failures, to achieve. Obviously, there is something in every human personality which is governing its growth from its first conception, and determining that it shall grow into a man, with all a man's qualities, and not

[1] Thinking seriously about such things as industry or the problem of pain may, of course, come after the life of Christian discipleship has begun, in which case it serves to intensify whatever coercive sense of the divine in Christ may have been already present. But it may come before and serve to precipitate it.

into a baboon or a bird or a tiger. This hidden impulse, which carries the child through all the stages of childhood and fashions him into an adult man, with certain specific human needs, a certain specific normality which must be given its appropriate treatment or the whole personality is thrown out of gear and is unhappy—this is God's idea of what a man should be. It is hidden in the heart of every human organism, and is the most important thing in it. It is what may be called the entelechy of the organism — the governing idea of it, that which it was always meant to be. What then is the entelechy of the human organism, its governing idea? If Christianity be true, it is Christ. Christ is perfectly what we are meant to be. In other words, if Christianity be true, there is at the heart of every human being, more or less frustrated and dammed back, but restlessly pressing upward all the time to gain expression and achievement, a latent Christ, a Christ within. But consider what that means. It means that anything like a full-length portrait or biography of Jesus is not necessary. So long as there is enough for His personality to shine through, then the deepest instinct of our nature, the law of our whole being, does the rest. Something leaps out more than half-way to meet Him, seizes on Him through the scanty records, fills up the picture, and says "Yes!

this is perfect spirit, this is the living completion and fulfilment of every dim vision and motion towards the highest my soul has ever had. This is the wholly good, the utterly sacred in personal life; this is God meeting me, and drawing out of me the best that is in me and making me fit for Himself." Spirit answers Spirit, the Christ within greets the Christ without.[1]

What is the upshot of all this argument? The upshot is that the question whether Jesus can make upon us a coercive impression of the divine reduces itself to one of purely personal experiment. When we set on one side our *a priori* objections and difficulties, and make a serious and humble attempt to see Jesus as He is, does our spirit, or does it not, apprehend in Him an utter perfection of personal holiness? Does it, or does it not in fact happen that the more we study Him,

[1] There is, of course, lying behind this argument the assumption that the divine perfection is somehow the norm of human nature. Our perfection is realised when " we are perfect as He is perfect." This assumption is not capable of proof. It is given in the essential nature of religion. Without the belief, implicit at first and becoming more explicit as religion advances, that God's holiness and man's highest life or holiness are somehow coincident, religion could not have come into being in the form we actually know it. Behind all man's religious life there has been a groping after fellowship with God, after a harmonisation of himself with a higher world, and the groping implies the assumption that the highest human life and the higher world are in essential correspondence with one another. The assumption is not capable of proof, nor for the religious mind does it require it.

test Him, apply Him, the while growing in knowledge of our own evil hearts and darkened minds, the more the impression grows, sometimes focusing into a flash of intense and irresistible conviction, that in Him we confront the highest and holiest and most sacred in personal life that there is? The writer can only register his own experience that it does happen. The question then is what other means has he, or anybody else, of identifying God in the midst of life except just precisely that? It is precisely this impression of the sacred, of the absolutely good confronting us and calling us to an absolute surrender, which is the original and authentic touch of God upon the soul.

It must be insisted again, however, that in this experience of Christ the coercive and pragmatic elements in conviction cannot be separated from one another, just because in Christ our spirits are in living intercourse with a real world. The reading and study of the Gospel stories must always play an essential part in enabling Christ to make His coercive impact upon our minds, but that coercive impact can only reach its highest pitch when we bring to the Gospel stories minds which are continually being stimulated and illumined by the attempt to apply what we see in the Gospels to practical life.[1] Christ

[1] See again, footnote, p. 174.

has the power to shine through the Gospel stories and grip the human heart, but only if the human heart is at the moment taking a serious practical attitude to itself and to life; and as that serious practical attitude is persisted in, so Christ's shining through the Gospels becomes more convincing.

In other words, and this brings us back to the argument of this whole chapter, Christ makes His impact upon men's hearts through the Gospel stories because He is still in some sense the ultimate spiritual reality with which they are surrounded and with which they have to deal.

CHAPTER X

THE PRAGMATIC ELEMENT IN THE CHRISTIAN CONVICTION ABOUT CHRIST

It has always been one of the main affirmations of Christian apologetics that the distinctive Christian conviction about Christ verifies itself in practical experience. The appeal, therefore, has often been made to men at least to make the experiment of accepting Christ, even if it be at first only on the recommendation of those who have already done so and been satisfied with the result. This is a quite rational appeal, though, as has been pointed out, the experiment thus asked for is not likely to succeed, if it be merely experiment without some prior coercive sense of the truth being in Christ. This has not always been sufficiently realised. Too often men are invited to do some vague thing called "accepting Christ" without any serious attempt being made to enable them to see clearly, and be gripped by, the Christ they are called upon to accept. None the less, the fact that generations of men and women have claimed that their belief in the divinity of Christ, however that divinity may have been

conceived in theory, has been in their view increasingly verified in practice, is very significant and should be given due weight by all who are reasonable enough not to reject the Christian faith out of hand.

The subject of this chapter obviously connects with that of Chapter III, which was in some ways an anticipation of it. It was necessary thus in some measure to anticipate because, as was said above, religion must characterise God to have any meaning or power at all; it was, therefore, impossible to present the argument of Chapter III without introducing that Christian characterisation of God which to the writer is the most truthful and therefore the most persuasive he knows. It is important, however, to see the essential difference between, despite the similarity of, the argument of Chapter III and the line of thought we are about to pursue here. The argument of Chapter III was that, apart from religion, man is an extraordinary and unaccountable misfit in the midst of the world. His powers, developed in the effort to adapt himself to his environment, have in many directions thrown him permanently out of harmony with it. He has grown too big for his world. Now unless we are to be left with an insoluble problem on our hands, we are forced to expect and to suppose that this is only apparent, and that in reality the world

with which man has to deal is bigger and more suited to him than at first sight appears. This expectancy and supposition are met and sustained by the fact of religion. In religion man moves out into a larger world of unseen realities, and, in so doing, finds himself better able to be in harmony with his environment over its whole breadth, and so to be in harmony with himself. Unless we are willing to suppose that man is by his essential nature doomed to discord with himself and his world, this so far is proof of the truth of religion. The suggestion that man merely imagines this "unseen" extension of the world is negatived by the fact that it impresses itself upon him "coercively" in his sense of the sacred.

In Chapter III we discussed at some length some of the most impressive instances of man's "misfittedness" in his world. We indicated the problems and difficulties which seem inevitably to arise for man out of his otherwise so beneficent gifts of memory, imagination, self-consciousness, conscience, social life and intellect. In each case we saw that the problems and difficulties are such that they can only be solved by man relating himself to an ultimate unseen Purpose in harmony with the character of Jesus Christ. Only the thought of God as the Father whom Jesus knew can present man with an environment in which progressively fear is

exorcised, the sting of death removed, the surges of egotism subdued, the remorse of conscience assuaged, the claims of the intellect sufficiently satisfied.

It will be observed that this pragmatic argument, so far as it is valid, involves not only the reality of the unseen world with which religion in general deals, but also the truth of the specifically Christian characterisation of it. None the less, the main intention of the argument was to substantiate the former position only. The substantiation of the latter came in only incidentally. The contention, that the actual facts of man's nature demand some sort of "extension" of his world like that in which religion believes, remains valid altogether apart from Christianity; even though the latter, through the superior truthfulness (as we believe it to be) of its characterisation of the unseen, affords the best particular illustration we can offer of the general argument.

Now the argument of the present chapter differs from this in that what was formerly merely incidental and illustrative now becomes central and normative. That is to say, we are about to move now exclusively in the sphere of Christian experience and not to use Christian experience merely to expound something wider than itself, namely, religious experience in general. The significance of this

is that we have now to realise that, whilst there are certain general needs more or less common to all humanity which the truth as it is in Christ very impressively fits, as Chapter III indicated, yet there are also other needs which only declare themselves *within the Christian life itself;* furthermore, it is only within the Christian life that some at least of the more general needs above referred to reveal their real depth and urgency. This means that the full pragmatic verification of the Christian conviction about Christ is only possible to those who are already committing themselves to that way of life which such a conviction, if it is sincere, necessarily involves. It means, further, that we cannot expound the lines of such verification except by considerations drawn from a developed Christian experience, to which some may not yet have attained, and which to the non-Christian mind may seem quite unreal and unconvincing. In other words, the universality of our argument has now gone. We do not claim to substantiate, by a treatise, to all and sundry, the Christian conviction about Christ. The most we can hope to do is to show how, as a matter of fact, Christians have found their convictions pragmatically verified, and thus perhaps draw others to make the same experiment and achieve the same verification for themselves.

This restriction of the argument to the sphere of specifically Christian experience may seem a disadvantage, but it is inevitable in the nature of the case and, rightly understood, it bears witness to the fact that in Christian experience we are dealing with a real world. For it is precisely the mark of a real world that a man must live in it, and take his whole self into it, to know fully its reality. Moreover, as we saw above,[1] increasing knowledge of an environment always comes through the dual process of finding, through new needs, new powers, and through new powers, new needs. It is only in a world of abstractions that it is possible to get anything which approaches quite universal and cogent argument. But whatever Christianity is, it is not an abstraction; it is a way of life, which, like marriage or any other high and worthy thing, only reveals itself to those who go into it with sincere minds.

This suggests a further limitation, if it be a limitation, of the argument of this chapter, that in the nature of the case many pragmatic verifications of Christ, which Christians experience, are intensely personal and individual, springing out of their own peculiar situation and spiritual history. A deep personal conviction that Christ is the Way can only be achieved by journeying with Him along the way of one's own life, which

[1] Page 16.

in many respects will be peculiar to oneself; though, of course, it will be a considerable further help to conviction to know that others, in their way, are discovering the same thing. The most we can do in this chapter is to indicate certain broad ways in which Christ draws men into fuller knowledge of the unseen by evoking and satisfying needs, which otherwise they would not feel at all, or in anything like the same degree of intensity.

Before proceeding there is one further preliminary remark to be made. It will help to clarity if we remind ourselves once again that the processes leading to conviction are always in continual interplay with one another, and that the pragmatic and reflective elements in them cannot in practice be separated from one another any more than the pragmatic and coercive elements.[1] This is always so, but it is particularly so in this that we are now considering. The succour which Christian faith brings human personality is always partly a matter of a new vision of God and interpretation of life, falling to the side of reflexion, and partly a matter of active adjustment and conquest of one's world, falling to the side of the more purely practical. These two are, however, in closest interaction with one another; for without the new interpretation the practical

[1] See page 24.

adjustment would not be possible, and without the practical adjustment the interpretation would soon lose its power to convince. And for most people neither interpretation nor adjustment is possible without the other. The interpretation gives the heart to make the new adjustment, the new adjustment, proving successful, further confirms the interpretation. The reflective and the pragmatic thus interact. Thus Christ relieves the problem of suffering by offering an interpretation of suffering which both makes it seem more reasonable to the mind and also, the more it is faithfully lived by, gives the victory over it in a man's own heart and character, enabling him to transmute it into positive good. This last point, incidentally, will complete the argument of Chapter VII. In that chapter our main contention was the negative one that the fact of evil is not, rationally considered, sufficient finally to impugn theistic faith; it will now appear further that a Christian theistic faith sheds more positive light on evil and gives more practical victory over it than any other view.

We can perhaps best expound the pragmatic basis of the Christian conviction about Christ by imagining a man who has felt in Christ something of that coercive impact of the sacred of which we spoke in the last chapter and is willing to make the experiment of treating it

with serious loyalty in his life. What will this involve?

It will involve that, so far as the practical direction of his life is concerned, God and Christ will become interchangeable terms. Wanting to know the will of God he will focus his mind on Christ and seek by such means as are at his disposal—thought, study, prayer, consultation with fellow Christians, tentative experiment—to know, as the saying is, "what Christ would do." Wanting to pray to God, he will address himself to One who deals with men always as Christ dealt with them. Wanting to interpret a dark and tangled situation in life, he will conceive God's providence as seeking the ends and using the methods which Christ sought and used. And so on. It is, indeed, sometimes said that the specifically Christian way of life is merely to live at all points as though God were Father. That is, in a sense, true, but in practice the conception of Fatherhood, beautiful and enlightening as it is in many directions, often itself needs interpretation. In practice, the Christian finds himself thinking of the Father as the Father of Jesus Christ, the sort of Father whom Jesus Christ knew; and when he wants to know the sort of Father whom Jesus Christ knew, he is driven back to the sort of man that Jesus Christ was, driven back, in short, to that initial irresistible impression

that God is somehow directly revealed or mirrored in the personality of Jesus and not merely described by His words or communed with in His prayers. "He that hath seen Jesus hath seen the Father." If the Christian message has any distinctiveness at all, it is largely in offering to men in Jesus this concrete and apprehensible centre for all their thought about and communion with and service of God. And it offers it in spite of any intellectual difficulties which reflexion may discover in thus using Christ and God interchangeably. And in spite of such intellectual difficulties the practical Christian can accept it and live by it. We shall say something about these intellectual difficulties in the concluding chapter. Sometimes people say "I do not know to whom to pray, God or Christ." The answer is, "it doesn't matter, so far as the practical Christian life is concerned. The important thing is not your name for God but your knowledge of His character; and the way of fuller knowledge of His character and, therefore, of increasing communion with Him, is Christ."

Now, when a man begins thus to put Christ at the centre of his life, he finds that there are four main ways in which He pragmatically authenticates Himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life. All four ways are along the lines indicated above, namely, first the in-

tensification or creation of needs and problems and then the satisfying solution of them. It is important to insist once more on this point because one of two things often happens. Either people do not take Christ seriously enough to realise the new needs and problems which He inevitably raises, or, taking Him seriously, they are dismayed at these new needs and problems and give up. In both cases the deeper pragmatic verifications of Christ, which are only known by those who loyally persist, are missed.

(1) The first way concerns the difficulty of knowing what is the way of Christ in any given situation.

So soon as a man begins to study Christ seriously, and to make a serious effort to live according to His mind, he finds himself confronted with apparent problems and difficulties of conduct which otherwise would not arise, or, if they arose, would not arise with anything like the same intensity. The prolonged discussion of Christian ethics which has gone on all down the ages, the systems of Christian casuistry which have been written by professional Christian teachers, are evidence of this. Consider, for example, the perennial discussion of the Christian attitude to war, a discussion which became poignantly personal in the lives of many of the best and most loyal

Christians during the Great War, or of the practicability and range of application of the Sermon on the Mount as a whole. But apart from these instances the loyal Christian has only to live his own personal life a day or two in the workaday world to discover that, for him, life bristles with problems, which to those who are content to live on a more instinctive and conventional level never arise. Should he seek wealth, should he prosecute a defaulting clerk with wife and children, should he support the office sweepstake, how much should he spend on luxuries when others are starving, is he called upon to forgive the man who has injured him, and if so, what does forgiveness involve? And so on. It is not suggested that only Christians are aware of such problems, but it seems clear that Christians have more of them, and, if they are in earnest, they feel them with a greater and more inescapable intensity. A Christian who is serious cannot shelve these problems with a shrug of the shoulders. They challenge right at the beginning his belief that Christ is the Way. Even if he were at times inclined to shelve them, the world is continually insisting that he shall not do so. One of the most persistent attacks made on Christianity to-day is that the Christian ethic will not work; in other words, that Christ cannot pragmatically justify Himself.

It is obviously not possible here to deal singly with the problems mentioned above, or with the other problems of a similar nature which continually emerge in the life of Christian discipleship. But it is not only not possible; it is also not necessary. For the important thing we have to realise is precisely this, that whilst Christ can only authenticate Himself to us practically in so far as we wrestle with these problems, yet He does not authenticate Himself by providing us at every point with a complete solution of them. It is a cardinal error of many critics of Christianity, as well as of many who are not critics, not to realise this. We have to ask ourselves here the prior question, What is God seeking to do with men in this life? If, as we believe, He is seeking to educate them into the perfection of Christ, then plainly the most damaging thing, from that point of view, which He could give them would be a Christ who solves all their problems, removes all their difficulties and prevents all their mistakes; whereas the most helpful thing would be to give them a Christ who enables them to see what the real problems are and gives them in His own ideal character and life a fruitful and inspiring lead for their own personal tackling of them.

In practice it is not the people who wrestle earnestly and loyally with these problems, which Christ creates for them, who fall prey to

scepticism whether He is after all the Way; rather for such the conviction grows, sometimes by slow accumulations, sometimes by sudden increments, that He most assuredly is, that somehow life to its very core is running Christwards, is Christ-grained. This is not because they are presented with ready-made solutions, as has already been said, or are saved from making mistakes, or are relieved of the necessity of patiently groping forward to the ideal through exasperating, but inevitable, compromises. Indeed, it is often their failures and mistakes and compromises which help them to see more clearly the truthfulness of Christ and His adequacy to every situation. One thing especially often lays hold of the mind with irresistible clarity, and that is that, whatever else may be necessary to the solution of the horrible confusions of human life, it is quite indispensable that men should have much more of the Christlike spirit of self-forgetfulness and respect for one another. Thus, and in other ways, the conviction grows that Christ is the Way, and we repeat, it grows only out of the loyal tackling of the problems which Christ Himself creates. It is not otherwise attainable. It is like a diamond which is slowly fashioned in the darkness and pressures and heat of the earth. Or, to change the metaphor, we might liken this part of the pragmatic verification of Christianity to the progress of a vehicle which

climbs a steep path by the light of the flashes which the friction of its wheels strikes out of the rocks. The process of taking Christ into life creates an enormous friction which otherwise would be avoided; but the friction produces flashes of light which otherwise would never occur; and these continually reveal that the only road up and through is the one, rocky though it be, on which the feet have been set, namely, Christ.

(2) The second way of the pragmatic verification of Christ concerns not the difficulty of knowing what is the mind of Christ, but of incorporating it in one's life and character when it is known.

This brings us face to face with the question whether Christ can supply moral power, whether the life centred in Christ does in fact tend to become a life harmonised with the lofty ideal of itself which it has accepted in Him. The problem of finding moral power is in some degree present in every life as we saw in Chapter III, but here again the first thing Christ does is to render the normal problem much more acute. For the sincere Christian has for the most part a higher ideal than others, and also he tends to take his moral tasks with a greater seriousness. If, as we have maintained all through, the truth of religion rests in part upon its power to

harmonise and give health to the human spirit, then not the least element in the pragmatic verification of Christ must be His power to solve this particularly acute problem which He creates in the soul. Critics of Christianity are themselves dimly aware of this point, for one of their constant criticisms is that the ideals of Christ are in fact too high for human nature ever to achieve. But here again, we must point out, the full force of such pragmatic verification as occurs will be felt, not by the outside critics, but by those who are loyally facing the problem in their own souls.

It would be outside the scope of this chapter to cite cases of individuals who have manifestly discovered in their own experience that there comes into a life lived in fellowship with God through Christ a new principle of moral growth. That there are a large number of such cases the writer profoundly believes. It is perhaps worth pointing out in this connexion that it is quite beside the point to cite instances of individuals who do not make profession of Christianity and yet are in character manifestly better than some who do, as though that disproved any unique moral creativeness in Christ. For manifestly the question whether there is in, say, Jones, a new principle of moral transformation is not to be determined by comparing his moral achievement with that of Brown. Obviously it can only be determined by observing the

inner moral movement and direction of Jones himself. Through heredity or environment or temperament or some other cause, Jones may have started lower down than Brown with whom he is thus unjustly compared; yet he may be moving upward and the other not. This brings us to the one important point which it is proposed to mention here in connexion with this question of the moral creativeness of Christ. It is that we shall go wrong if we expect Christ to work either in ourselves or in other people miraculously complete and sudden transformations of character into likeness to Himself.

The oft-quoted instances of sudden conversion usually consist in the cessation of merely negative sins; they do not consist in the instantaneous transformation of the life into positive Christlikeness; that still has to be achieved. And it is achieved gradually and amidst many failures. The life has to be lived in constant communion with God through Christ, and then, step by step and often with much travail, the crooked places are straightened, the dark places illumined, the chaos made orderly. And just because it is thus a gradual and persistent process rather than a cataclysmic transformation, it has a curious convincingness to those who experience it, and only to those who experience it. They feel that the thing is not merely

a matter of the uprush of obscure psychological forces, but rather that in Christ they are in touch with a real and permanent centre and source of moral health and power.

(3) The third way of the pragmatic verification of Christ is intimately connected with the second. It concerns the Christian's moral failures, which, in a process of gradual transformation of character, must occur with considerable, if decreasing, frequency.

We saw in Chapter III. that remorse of conscience is not necessarily a specifically religious phenomenon, but is fairly universal in all men and women. But here again one of the first effects of Christ is to intensify and give a new depth and poignancy to a common experience. By the searching ideals He holds up He reveals to those who take Him seriously moral defects and failures of which otherwise they would not be conscious, and to which, furthermore, by virtue of their discipleship they must give the most solemn attention. Obviously if Christ is to justify Himself pragmatically there must be that in Him which can deal adequately with this situation which He Himself creates in men's souls.

But what would be an adequate dealing with the situation? An adequate dealing with it must clearly do two things. First, it must take away the sting of remorse and the

paralysis of despair. But, second, it must do this in a way which does not obscure moral realities and thus hinder the all-important process of character transformation. In other words part of the pragmatic verification of Christ consists in experiencing through Him a forgiveness of sins of such a kind that, whilst allaying remorse, it keeps the soul dwelling in a world of moral realities and helps it to develop into the image of Christ. Now it is not proposed to expound here the Christian experience of forgiveness. That has been done often enough elsewhere. Suffice it to say that those who have seriously and consistently thought of, and prayed to, and communed with God in terms of the character of Christ have had the sort of experience above indicated, and have found this particular problem of their inner life adequately solved. More often than not this experience has been connected with the Cross of Christ. In the Cross has been discerned with irresistible clarity both the heinousness of sin and the wonder of a Love which forgives and endures sin's worst challenges without ceasing to be Love. Thus the inspiring gospel of a Love which will not let men go is combined with a moral realism which will not allow them to have any illusions about themselves.

It is worth pointing out in further exposition of this aspect of the pragmatic verification

of Christ, that the experience of forgiveness, when it comes naturally in the course of genuine Christian discipleship, in addition to removing the remorse and despair which would inhibit all moral progress, plays a large *positive* part in the creation of Christlike character. Thus, in the first place, a genuine experience of God's forgiveness inevitably tends to foster a forgiving and charitable spirit towards men—always one of the hardest things in Christian perfection to achieve. In the second place, it draws out profound feelings of love and gratitude in the soul, and harnesses them to the difficult task of moral achievement and moral witness in the world. In Matthew Arnold's words "the struggling stream of duty is reinforced by an immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion." That love is the fulfilling of the law is a psychological principle which anyone can verify for himself by observation. To love, hard things become easy, and it is not the least part of the consonance of Christ with the real needs of men that He brings a vision of God which not only resolves the inner strain of remorse and self-despair, but also draws out the one passion of the soul which has any chance of lifting it to the ideal which in Christ it has acknowledged for itself. Finally, a searching vision of one's moral weakness and failure along with a vision of a divine love which, none the less, loves a man

as he is, can play a large part in releasing the spirit from that posturing before itself and before men which is the cause of so much mental strain and breakdown. A man who sees himself as he really is, and yet is able to believe that none the less he can count for something in God's eyes, has no longer any need to play a part. He can take himself quite simply and be interested in other folk. He can give up the devastating business of trying all the time to be somebody in particular, yet without losing his essential self-respect. Thus he finds a peace which, as he experiences it, deeply confirms his conviction that in Christ a divine reality is succouring his inner life.

(4) The fourth element in the pragmatic verification of Christ concerns the problem of suffering.

Here again the first effect of Christian belief is often to accentuate the problem. To those who are seeking to interpret life in terms of divine Fatherhood the spectacle of human pain often brings, despite all the mitigations which calm reflexion can discover, a peculiarly intense dismay. To the burden which ordinary human sympathy imposes is added the burden of a perplexed faith and of that heightened sympathy with need which Christ develops in His disciples. Yet it is precisely this increased burden which leads to the discovery, other-

wise impossible, of the peculiar originality and adequacy of Christ in relation to the problem. For the mind is forced to ask again, what precisely is meant by divine Fatherhood, and asking, it soon becomes aware that it has not been interpreting it, still less living by it, strictly in terms of the revelation of Jesus Christ. It finds, too, that so soon as it does so strictly interpret it and live by it, the way through begins to appear.

The essential thing which Christ does here is to reveal God as Himself the supreme Sufferer in the midst of human life. This He does by His whole life, but chiefly by His Cross. If it be true, in any sense that really matters to the human heart, that "he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father," then it must be true most of all of the climax of His perfect life in just that particular sort of self-sacrificing suffering and death which we sum up in the phrase "the Cross." God must be acting and suffering and loving and bearing in the midst of human pain and need, even as Jesus acted and suffered and loved and bore in His life and in His death at Calvary. When once this thought is fully accepted two results follow.

First, the whole scene of human suffering, the divine Love being now in the midst of it, looks different. An analogy may help to make this clear. Conceive a child lying alone and in agony in a garret. There is no one at hand

to help; there never will be any one at hand to help. There is just agony, loneliness, lovelessness. So conceived, the thing is hideously chill and depressing. Now conceive a mother present, bending over the child, entering into its suffering so far as may be with it, surrounding it with an atmosphere of love, and receiving from it looks of love and gratitude in return. The picture has now become an entirely different thing. There is no less pain, no less poverty; yet taken as a whole the situation is now markedly less revolting and more satisfying; it may even seem positively beautiful and indefinably worth while. This is not mere sentiment, but a piece of everyday evidence that to the normal human spirit suffering begins at least to have the elements of redemption in it so soon as it is shared and accepted in love. If therefore we are permitted to see in the midst of all human suffering a divine, sharing Love, then by the same process of thought, though now in far higher degree seeing that the love in question is divine and eternal, we instantly see the whole thing in a different light and, despite the problems which remain, are reconciled to it.

But second, and more important, this vision of human suffering as fully accepted and shared in by the divine Love cannot carry full conviction except it lead on to a further and more practical consequence. The disciple of Christ

is aware of being called upon to actualise in himself the same sort of sharing and accepting love as he is bidden to discern in God. And if he accepts the call he finds that, in proportion as he fulfils it, two things happen. He finds that as he shares the suffering of others so they are put in the way of gaining the victory over it. But even more he finds that as he accepts his own suffering as an opportunity to share in the vast fellowship of human pain and to make some contribution with God to its redemption through patient love, he gains the victory over it in himself. It is often said that suffering develops character, and it is true. But it is most important for Christian apologetic to realise that it does not develop it automatically. It can injure character. It all depends on the way in which a man reacts to it. It is our contention that it is part of the pragmatic verification of Christ that He brings a vision of God and a way of reacting to suffering both in others and in ourselves which give the victory over it, and make it not a hindrance but a contribution to our highest spiritual welfare.

But this is a progressive discovery, and it is made only by those who loyally and practically follow Christ as the Way. To such there comes in the experience of victory being gained a deep conviction that in Christ reality is being veritably known.

CHAPTER XI

THE REFLECTIVE ELEMENT IN THE CHRISTIAN CONVICTION ABOUT CHRIST

THE way of Christian conviction outlined in the last two chapters probably covers fairly adequately the experience of most Christians, at any rate in respect of the everyday conduct of their lives. They feel in Christ the impact of the divine upon them and, making loyal experiment of the way of life thus indicated, they find on the whole their convictions progressively verified and deepened; and that is all they require. But, as we saw when considering belief in God generally, the need is usually felt by most educated people, and by some it is very deeply and permanently felt, for something further. They require in addition some sort of purely reflective confirmation of their belief in Christ. The words "purely reflective" are used because, as was indicated in the last chapter, reflective elements enter into even the most pragmatic tests of Christian conviction. We mean by "purely reflective" confirmation at least two things. First, we mean that the Christian conviction about Christ must not on examination reveal

within it stark and irresolvable irrationalities and contradictions. Second, we mean that it must be possible to relate such a conviction satisfactorily to the best knowledge of the time. No sensible person, of course, will demand that the Christian conviction about Christ should be entirely free from those intellectual difficulties and antinomies which always beset deep human experience ; but he will expect that it shall not be starkly irrational, and if his expectation is fulfilled his conviction about Christianity will be all the surer. Similarly, no sensible person will demand a completely dove-tailed and articulated system of thought which shall include all sound science, philosophy and Christian experience in a single system ; science and philosophy and Christian experience are still too incomplete, too developmental, for that. But he will expect to find some confirmatory lines of argument in these other systems of thought, so that at least the beginnings of a harmonious and rounded unity of experience can be glimpsed.

We will say a word on each of these two points, beginning with the second.

(1) It is not possible, of course, to enter into a discussion of all the points where science or philosophy on the one hand raises difficulty, or on the other supplies confirmation, for those who believe that God, the ultimate Ground of

all things, is a Being to be conceived after the pattern of Jesus Christ. A few were touched on in the section on "Challenges to Belief in God." Much is to be learnt in this connexion from a study of the history of science and philosophy. Again and again theories have been propounded which seemed to be required by the facts and which apparently contradicted the Christian view of God. But later discoveries and maturer reflexion have clearly shown either that the challenging theory was inadequate or wrong, or that what it seemed to contradict in contemporary Christian thought was not really an essential element in Christian faith and should be modified; or both these things have happened together. Difficulties there will always be, because human experience is always an incomplete and therefore partially disjointed thing; and the task of meeting the difficulties and setting Christian conviction generally in the context of other knowledge and experience will always demand the best powers of the best minds; certainly it cannot be undertaken in a few short paragraphs.

The writer is himself convinced that whilst the Christian conviction about Christ can never, any more than belief in God generally, be scientifically or philosophically demonstrated, yet it is at the present time not contrary to, and at certain points is supported by, sound scientific and philosophic thought.

One general reflexion in support of this contention will be given.

It has now become a strong though not unassailed position to maintain that religion and science represent two different but complementary methods of approach to reality, neither of which is to be completely subordinated to the other; rather each must be ready to learn from the other. They must build together that full-orbed view of the Universe which it is the aim of philosophy, as it ought to be the aim of science, to achieve. Now the mediating thought which makes it possible to view these two aspects of reality, the one revealed by science and the other by religion, in some sort of relation with one another, is a thought which has been worked out by some idealist philosophers from the angle largely of the theory of knowledge. It is the thought that values, just as much as electrons and vibrations, are part of the real world and are true determinants of events. It appears that neither sound science nor sound philosophy can dispense with the category of value; rather a belief in the reality of values seems the only thing which can on the one hand save human knowledge in every department from a sense of incurable subjectivism, and on the other hand do justice to the richness and variety of everyday human experience. Now this

centrality of the category of value obviously has considerable affinity with the Christian view of God. That view, we saw, started from the conviction that God confronts the human heart through the sense of absolute *value*, and it moves on to the conviction that He uniquely confronts us in the perfect values of the life and person of Jesus Christ. For the Christian, God is personal purpose creatively seeking the highest values and, in particular, the values revealed in the life of Jesus Christ. That to be sure is to go a good deal further than either philosophy or science, even when it admits the centrality of the category of value, needs go; but it is at least some confirmation to the reflective Christian mind thus to find that its conviction about God lies in the same direction as the conclusions of thinkers in other spheres, even though there is much adjustment still to be done before they can be brought into perspective with one another.

(2) The other requirement of the reflective mind, we said, is that the Christian conviction about Christ must not be inherently irrational and self-contradictory. It is not possible or necessary to take up every accusation of irrationality which has at various times been levelled against this conviction; many only require a little common-sense reflexion to

show their baselessness. Two only will be mentioned.

(*a*) First it is sometimes suggested that the idea that the Absolute and Eternal God can manifest Himself within the limitations of human history and a human personality is self-contradictory and absurd.

This raises deep philosophical problems in many directions, into which it is impossible to enter here. Everything seems to turn on what is meant by the word "manifest." If the assertion is that the Absolute and Eternal cannot *in any sense whatever* enter into the contingent and finite, then the answer is that that creates a far worse problem than any raised by the opposite view. For it leaves the Universe divided into two sections, the Eternal Absolute and the finite contingent, with an unbridgeable gulf between them. We can state the difficulty another way by asking what, on this view, are we to make of the creation and sustenance of the world. There is no question that, in some sense or other, the Absolute God came into time and space in the creation of the world. That may raise problems, but it is a fact. Similarly, to suppose that the Absolute came into time and space in Jesus may raise problems, but, in the light of the fact of creation, it cannot be set on one side as being *ab initio* irrational and absurd.

If then it is impossible to deny that the Absolute may enter into the limitations of the finite in some sense or other, the question remains, in what sense? This raises the whole question of the nature of religious experience. It is often supposed that in religious experience the spirit of man has, or claims to have, naked contact with the absolute metaphysical being of God, whatever that may be. Yet so far from that being so, religion, in most of its manifestations, is usually and confessedly sacramental; that is to say, it claims to have dealings with God in and through finite things which are not themselves God or which are not themselves exhaustive of His being. Religion appears to be fundamentally an intuition of a Personal Purpose, a certain divine Intention or Character, behind and within phenomena. It has to do with value and meaning and with a divine Will, which, whatever it may be in its absolute nature, may be known by the values it seeks and the meanings it reveals in human life. Religion does indeed deal with the Absolute Being, but primarily through its apprehension of His Character as absolutely good, and His Will as absolutely binding. Now, if it be said that God's absolute character and purpose cannot thus confront us through the finitude and relativity of the historical, through temporal and spatial facts, the answer is that that seems to deny what is really a very

commonplace, but highly important, faculty of the mind, the faculty of using symbols, of discerning the universal in the particular, of knowing through a finite and limited thing a far vaster and more important reality, which is somehow concentrated in and signified by it.

Many examples of the exercise of this faculty on different levels of experience readily occur to the mind. To the patriot a torn piece of silk, called the flag, carries an enormous significance which even the most eloquent and prolonged oratory could hardly express. The meaning of the flag is in the first instance attached to it arbitrarily and is learnt only by constant association; none the less, when once the meaning has become attached to it, the patriot's reaction to it affords a very impressive example of the exercise of the faculty of which we are speaking. There are, however, things in life which mediate a wider reality to the mind, not by arbitrary association, but intrinsically and, as it were, in their own right. An interesting example is afforded by the part that figures play in geometrical proofs. Through a quite particular triangle, drawn on a quite particular piece of paper, with a quite particular piece of pencil, having quite particular angles and sides of a quite particular length, a universal truth governing all triangles is discerned. In art the same faculty can be

observed at work. The great dramatist somehow focuses in the particular characters of the play—and they have to be very particularised to have any verisimilitude at all —the universal truths which govern all human character and destiny. A distinguished artist once expressed the point to the writer thus :— "If you paint a picture of, say, a twilight landscape, you are not to be content, if you are a real artist, with merely making a faithful copy of some one particular twilight landscape you may have seen, for a colour photographer could probably do that better. You show your art by condensing into your picture a perfect expression of the essential beauty of all twilight landscapes whatsoever, so that you can say with confidence 'there never will be a twilight landscape which will not have the quality of beauty which I have expressed in that picture.'" In art, in other words, the particular experience must carry the universal truth along with it. The same sort of thing can be discerned in the sphere of morals. To see one act of love, even of the most trivial kind, is to see once and for all the eternal value and obligation of all such acts.

Now it may very well be that the highest exercise of this faculty, and precisely that to which it is meant to lead up and for which it was originally given, is to discern in the

Carpenter of Nazareth nothing less than the infinite goodness and eternal purpose of God. To be sure, that a thing "may very well be" is no proof that it is, but that is not our argument. Our affirmation is that we do thus discern the goodness and purpose of God in the Carpenter of Nazareth, and we are meeting the objection of those who say that that in the nature of the case is impossible by pointing out that our minds seem to have the faculty of doing in other spheres that sort of thing.

(*b*) Second, difficulty is sometimes raised in respect of the finality which the Christian conviction about Christ necessarily ascribes to Him. It is felt that the notion of the finality of Christ for human life is contradicted by two things.

First, it is suggested, it is contradicted by the necessary "relativity" of Christ's life. Christ it is said was a Jew of the first century, largely determined in the categories of His thought, the problems of His conduct, the range of His experience, by the limitations of His own age. The world has progressed since then; the categories are gone, the problems are different, knowledge is infinitely more vast.

The answer to this is to insist once again on what has already been said. The finality

we claim for Christ is in respect of something which, whilst it expressed itself through the limitations of contemporary conditions, was, none the less, in its essential nature independent of contemporary conditions and universal in its significance and appeal. It was the finality of perfect character, perfect spiritual life. And, as we have just seen, the mind appears to have the faculty to discern such a universal and final significance in and through things which are particular and relative to the time and place in which they occur. There are, for example, works of art which are conceived in the terms of the age in which they were created, and yet which have to the sensitive mind a certain quality of absolute and final truthfulness and beauty.

Second, the finality of Jesus is sometimes thought to be contradicted by the universality of evolution in human history and human affairs. Everything, it is said, is developing, changing, unfolding. Why suppose that at the life and death of Jesus a stop occurred in God's unveiling of Himself to men? May there not be a further, richer revelation at some future time which shall make Jesus inferior and out of date? To set a finality thus in the midst of an evolving world is surely to seek to dwell in two disparate regions of thought at one and the same time.

The answer to this is that the conceptions of

finality and evolution are not really necessarily opposed to one another at all. They are only opposed to one another on a certain view of what evolution is.

If we regard evolution in all departments of life as a fundamentally blind process, brought about by the mechanical working of natural selection upon chance mutations, then indeed the notion of anything essentially final appearing in its midst is absurd. But if we recognise that there is some sort of directive purpose hidden within and working through evolution, and the religious person is bound to believe that, then that means that we have already recognised the presence of something final within evolution and playing a paramount, if hidden, part in its unfolding.[1] Now the question is whether this underlying directive purpose, which amidst all the changes of evolution persists unchanging, must of necessity remain hidden until the end of the process. May it not conceivably come to the surface, so to say, and at some given point uniquely reveal itself; nay, in certain circumstances, will it not be necessary for it to do so for the process of evolution to go on at all? Such circumstances would arise when the evolutionary process concerns for the first time a self-conscious, self-directing being like man, who can only evolve

[1] Cf. what was said above about the entelechy governing the growth of the individual, p. 175.

higher if he becomes consciously aware of the true end of his evolution and by the light of it works towards its realisation in every department of his life. Now it is the Christian belief that the underlying purpose of human history, the hitherto hidden end of human evolution, which is to make men into sons of God, has been laid bare in the person of Christ. Such a thing is not a hindrance to, or a denial of, the upward progress of man; rather it is the reverse, for man, being a free and self-conscious personality, can only progress by becoming aware of the end which he has to achieve, and by consciously co-operating with the divine purpose which brought him into being.

Of course, this argument would break down if a recognisably fuller revelation of God than Jesus Christ ever actually took place. But it has not taken place yet. Surely we are entitled to see some significance in the fact that 2000 years have passed, not only without a better than Jesus having been revealed, but also without any coming even near to Him in moral and spiritual stature. Significantly, too, those who have come nearest to Him have usually been those who have accepted Him as the Lord of their life. He has been, not a hindrance, but a uniquely creative moral and spiritual force in men's lives. Moreover, it seems clear that just where men fail to follow Him there their

troubles begin, their upward progress stops, and their life tumbles into ruin and confusion. Certainly it *looks* as though the underlying meaning and purpose of human evolution and history have come to the surface in Him.

We may permit ourselves a concluding word concerning the reflective element in our convictions about Christ. It is that we must realise the limits of reflexion and not make the mistake of thinking that the incomprehensible is the irrational, or the indefinable the unreal.

There will always be something which eludes our understanding in the thought of the Incarnation, in the conviction that God came to us thus uniquely in a human personality. It is extremely unlikely that we shall ever be able to comprehend how exactly it took place, even though we feel we are able to apprehend quite certainly the fact that it did so.

If the Christian conviction about Christ be true, then, in the first place, there is in the fact of Christ the enormous incomprehensibility of God. It is idle to imagine that we are ever going to comprehend the ultimate nature of God. We cannot fathom the mystery of our own being, still less that of the being of God. Yet we are quite sure of ourselves and of others, and there is no reason why we should not be quite sure of God in Christ. Then, again, if the Christian conviction be true, there is in

Christ the enormous incomprehensibility of the relation of a phenomenon "in time" to that which is "out of time." God, of course, we must conceive as "out of time" yet in Christ, the Christian doctrine is, He came "into time." But it is extremely difficult for the human mind to think in any but temporal terms, and the task of explicating in thought how the Eternal comes into time will probably ever be beyond us. Yet, as we have seen, there seems no reason why we should not be able to intuite quite correctly the presence of the Eternal in time. Then, again, if the Christian conviction be true there is in Christ the enormous incomprehensibility of the relation of a phenomenon "in space" to that which is "out of space." However we conceive the ultimate relation of Jesus to God, it must fundamentally be a purely spiritual relationship. God is purely spiritual purpose. Yet we are immersed in space, and we can only think comfortably in terms of space and of extended substance. All these considerations tend to show that the task of expounding the precise relationship of Jesus to the Godhead is beyond us, or at any rate, it is so far beyond us, that the vitality of our faith in Jesus as the Incarnation of God in human life cannot depend upon our being able to do it. The manner of the presence of God in human life will always be incomprehensible. But the manner being

incomprehensible does not mean that the fact is unrecognisable, or, in the light of all experience, unverifiable. It is not rational, therefore, to call upon a Christian to explain in precise terms the intimate relation of Jesus to the Godhead. There is no reason, however, why he should not use his mind on this subject so far as it will take him, but he had better be prepared to find that it will not take him very far.

To sum up. There is that within us which enables us to recognise when the perfection of personal holiness, which is the mark by which we identify the divine, is confronting us. We find it thus confronting us in Jesus Christ, and this brings to our conviction about Him that irresistible coerciveness which is necessary to all living belief. Supporting this primary impression there is the verification of it in practical life—in the increasing health of soul and power over our world which the acknowledgment of Jesus as worthy of our utmost reverence and obedience brings, and in the capacity of such an acknowledgment to unify our experience and to give us a credible and satisfying philosophy of life. Given the primary impresssion and given sufficient evidence of its verification in one's own life and the lives of others all down the ages to make it reasonable to trust it, then to hold back because the manner of the Incarnation

is not explicable in precise intellectual terms is absurd. It is always the deepest and most significant and most enriching things in life which are incomprehensible and indefinable. But, we repeat, the incomprehensible is not the irrational, and the indefinable is not the unreal.

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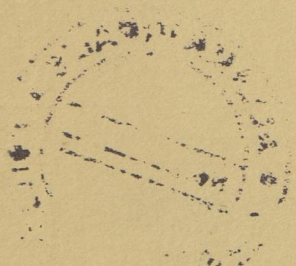

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