

# THE BUDDHA AND THE CHRIST

CANON B. H. STREETER

These Lectures are not an academic treatise on Comparative Religion. They are an exploration, from the standpoint of modern thought, of the character of the Unseen Power behind the Universe, and an attempt to work out a practical philosophy of life. The first Lecture restates, with further developments, the position set out in the author's book *Reality*, that Science and Religion are two parallel avenues to a knowledge of Ultimate Reality. But if that position is sound, it is still not legitimate to identify the word religion with the Christian religion. The subsequent lectures, therefore, carry forward the enquiry by a survey of the two greatest of the great religions, Buddhism and Christianity, and a consideration of the practical problems of Pain, Conduct, and Immortality.

The discussion of Buddhism is largely based on an effort of the author, on recent visits to China and Japan, to attain, by contact with persons brought up in the Buddhist tradition, a sympathetic understanding of what that religion means to those who actually profess it.

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By CANON STREETER

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# THE BUDDHA AND THE CHRIST

AN EXPLORATION OF  
THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE  
AND OF THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE

The Hampton Lectures for 1932

BY

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TO  
MY FRIENDS  
IN CHINA AND JAPAN

*In piam memoriam Johannis Bampton*

The Bampton Lectureship was founded under the Will (dated 1750) of John Bampton, Prebendary of Salisbury. The Lectures are delivered in alternate years, on eight Sundays in Term, when they take the place of the Sermon preached before the University of Oxford in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin. The Bampton Lecturer is appointed by the Heads of the Oxford Colleges, and no person may hold the office more than once.

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## INTRODUCTION

THESE Lectures are not, in their primary intention, a study in Comparative Religion. Rather their aim is to explore the question whether—and, if so, to what extent and in what way—materials afforded by such comparative study throw light on the character of the Unseen Power behind the Universe, and so can provide the basis of a working philosophy for everyday life. For that purpose the thing that matters is, not what religions teach, but how much of it is true.

The first Lecture is a restatement, with some further developments, of the position set out in the author's book, *Reality*, that Science and Religion are two parallel avenues to a knowledge of Ultimate Reality. But if that position is sound, it is still not legitimate to assume that, in this context, "religion" and "the Christian religion" are terms identical. Accordingly, in the three following Lectures, I endeavour to attain a kind of "bird's-eye view" of the origin, development, and dominant conceptions of the two greatest of the historic religions, Buddhism and Christianity—selecting from the immense field to be surveyed those points only which seem speci-

ally relevant to the main purpose in view. Lecture 5 is, in effect, an attempt to isolate the phenomenon religion from the alien elements which, in the historic religions, are often found in combination with it. In the three concluding Lectures the investigation is concentrated on to the practical problems of Pain, Conduct, and Immortality.

My interest in Comparative Religion dates from a stay of some five months in India and Ceylon in 1913; I did not, however, realise the importance of the types of Buddhism which prevail in China and Japan until a visit to those countries in 1929. In that year I attended the meeting at Kyoto of the Institute of Pacific Relations, and had the honour of an invitation to lecture at the Imperial University of Tokyo. In China I took part in conferences at Kuling and Shanghai, and gave lectures (with discussions) to students in Peiping and Canton. Thus I enjoyed opportunities, not open to the ordinary tourist, of seeing something of the result of the impingement on these immemorial civilisations of the intellectual life of the West, and of the effect of this on the religious and moral situation.

My attention was also attracted to certain features in Buddhism which, though they had their historic roots in China, seem to have reached the climax of their development in Japan. Accordingly, on my appointment as Bampton Lecturer, I conceived the idea of visiting Japan once more—in the hope that

(by observing the worship in the temples and by discussion and contact with persons brought up in Buddhist traditions) I might attain to a more sympathetic understanding than I could derive from books alone of the living meaning of Buddhism for those who actually profess it, or to whom it is an ancestral inheritance. The sacred literature of Buddhism is of such enormous volume that a life-time would not suffice for a proper study of it—and even after a life-time of study, the student would be likely, unless he had personal contact with the living tradition, to lose his way in the mass of commentary and detail, and so miss the essential spirit. The inner quality of a religion is known only to those who are, or who once were, its adherents; and even they can only communicate a little of it in words.

I was allowed by the Queen's College to take by instalments a "sabbatical year" which was due to me; so I spent the autumn of 1931 in Japan. Besides the opportunities which this sojourn afforded for the investigation of Buddhism, it has been of value in the preparation of these Lectures in another way. Invitations were courteously extended to me to lecture—mostly on aspects of the Philosophy of Religion—in the Imperial Universities of Tokyo and of the provincial capitals, Sapporo, Sendai, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka, in the principal Government College at Yamaguchi, also in the Doshisha University at Kyoto, as well as in other flourishing institutions

of Christian foundation. This experience proved to be a valuable intellectual discipline for myself. For to be obliged to develop an argument before an audience, which is familiar with the most recent science and philosophy of the West but inherits a tradition quite different from one's own in ethics and religion, is a great aid towards the attainment of that most difficult thing—an objective view of one's own religion, and of its place in a philosophical survey of Religion in general.

The subject indicated in the, perhaps too ambitious-sounding, title and subtitle of this course of Lectures is so vast in extent that apologies for inadequacy of treatment would be merely absurd. But a lecturer who is limited to eight lectures is in a privileged position; it is not expected that he attempt to be exhaustive, it is merely hoped that he may be at times suggestive. All that is asked of him is to let down an occasional bucket into the well of truth and pour out what comes up. It is, however, reasonable to demand that he should not repeat what he has said elsewhere in print. Some of the questions discussed in these Lectures I had already treated in *Reality*, or in my Essays in the book, *Adventure*. Where this is the case, I have, so far as the subject admitted of it, deliberately aimed at avoiding repetition; I have tried to select different aspects of the questions discussed, in such a way that *either* these Lectures *or* the two earlier books, whichever may

be read first, should be able to stand as a supplement or sequel to the other.

It is impossible to name here all those to whose kindness I am indebted—for invitations to lecture, hospitality, introductions, and making easy the travelling arrangements of my three months in Japan; nor can I express individually to Buddhist priests and authorities on Buddhism my warm appreciation of their courteous response to requests for interviews and information. Two names, however, I cannot leave unmentioned: that of Professor Masaharu Anesaki of the Imperial University of Tokyo; and that of the Rev. W. H. Murray Walton, who acted as what in theatrical circles would be called my “manager”.

To several Oxford friends I would express my thanks—to Mr. O. S. Franks of Queen’s, Dr. A. S. Russell of Christ Church, and the Rev. W. E. Soot-hill of Trinity, Professor of Chinese, for criticism and advice on the Lectures when in the MS. stage; to the Rev. J. S. Bezzant of Exeter College, and Col. A. S. L. Farquharson of University College, for numerous valuable suggestions, and for the very great labour bestowed by them on reading the proofs; also to my colleague Canon A. L. Lilley of Hereford for his careful reading of the proofs in their final stage. For the Index I am indebted to Mrs. C. W. Sowby.

B. H. STREETER

THE QUEEN’S COLLEGE, OXFORD

*26th September 1932*

**LECTURE 1**  
**SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

# SCIENCE AND RELIGION

## SYNOPSIS

### COSMIC DEFEATISM

Disillusionment is the dominant note in modern literature. This is due, partly to the psychologically devitalising effect of a philosophy of life, akin to that of Epicurus, partly to the intellectual nihilism arising from the latest developments in scientific theory.

Scientific Materialism has been refuted by the advance of science itself; but this does not necessarily mean the return of religion, and certainly does not mean the rehabilitation of traditional theology.

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF SCIENCE

(1) The word "explanation" as used in science is precisely related to the *scientific* (not to the popular) concepts of "mechanism" and "law". The chief implements with which science works are *measurement* and *experiment*.

(2) The sciences arrange themselves in a hierarchy—psychology, biology, chemistry, and physics—in which each member endeavours to explain the phenomena in its own field of observation in terms of the science next below it.

But chemico-physical explanation does not account for all the phenomena studied in biology and psychology. This suggests the possibility that *mechanical* explanation may be related to *complete* explanation much as is an ordnance map in two dimensions to a "relief map" in three dimensions.

Nevertheless, the ideal goal of science is to explain everything in terms of laws of physics, expressible in the form of mathematical equations.

(3) Assume this ideal goal to be attained; then it should be possible to include in a single text-book a comprehensive knowledge of the whole physical Universe. Such "knowledge", however, is an *abstraction*; it can only be, as it were, the bare and boiled skeleton of Reality itself.



(4) This analogy of the skeleton is much too concrete; for the old common-sense conceptions of space, time, matter, energy, causation, mechanism, and law have been completely transformed in the abstract notions with which modern Relativity-Physics is compelled to work. Most of these notions are so abstract that they cannot really be expressed in words at all, but only in the symbolism of the new Higher Mathematics.

#### MEASUREMENT, MECHANISM, AND MIND

Science operates by measurement. But mind, the thing which does the measuring, cannot itself be measured. Also, without mind there could be no science; for science depends on the existence of a power which (a) discriminates between the true and the false, (b) decides that truth is worth while pursuing. This fact has a bearing on the validity of other valuations made by mind.

Behaviourism—its merit and its fallacy.

Scientific explanation is related to Reality as a map to a landscape, or as the lines on a gramophone record to the music as heard.

#### THE PHENOMENON RELIGION

Following up the above analogies, we ask, Is there any way by which we can see the landscape, or hear the tune?

The Great Religions are for this purpose the most significant of all *objectifications* of race-experience. For psychological and other reasons the philosopher should expect to find here materials which, properly used, will afford knowledge of aspects of Reality which necessarily lie outside the range of scientific knowledge—but which, since Reality is one, must supplement, not contradict, that knowledge.

To test this hypothesis, it will suffice to concentrate on a comparative study of two of the world-religions, Buddhism and Christianity.

#### A WORLD NEED

Science has armed man with immense power; but it cannot determine whether he will use this power for constructive or for destructive ends. What man will do with power, depends on what he *wants* to do. This religion can determine—but only if it be believed true. Hence the investigation of truth in religion is to-day a world need.

## LECTURE 1

### SCIENCE AND RELIGION

For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.—JAMES iv. 14.

#### COSMIC DEFEATISM

THE *intelligentsia* still saith in its heart, There is no God: but the voice in which it speaks has lost the note of triumph. Who to-day would echo Swinburne's words to Newman and Carlyle?

High souls that hate us; for our hopes are higher  
And higher than yours the goal of our desire,  
Though high your ends be as your hearts are great.

. . . . .

Last prophets of past kind, who fill the dome  
Of great dead gods with wrath and wail, nor hear  
Time's word and man's: "Go honoured hence, go home,  
Night's childless children; here your hour is done;  
Pass with the stars, and leave us with the sun".

"Leave us with the sun!" That sun has risen now—and by its midday glare is seen, around the precarious oasis on which man crouches, an endless stretch of desert, gazing on which high hopes will

wither and high desires seem vain. In the result, the practical philosophy of life preached by the novelists and essayists, who are to our age its priests and prophets, is a return to Epicurus—to the philosophy of Epicurus informed by the science of Freud.

“Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.” Wisdom this, perhaps; yet to recite it as a grace-before-meat at the banquet of life is to steal their finer flavour from the viands, the aroma from the wine. To eat and drink because you want to is one thing; it is quite another to do so because there is nothing else worth while. Salt the meat with ironic wit, make gay the feast with sparkling epigram, disillusionment will still devitalise. Disillusionment, however manfully held at arm’s length, or however gracefully confessed, kills the zest of living. Hence in modern letters that persistent undertone which reverberates to the ancient wail, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”.

Till almost yesterday there appeared yet to be one base for hope that stood unshakable, one source of light indubitably authentic. Science has of all things in modern culture been the most successful and the most sincere; it is the most coherent and the most massive intellectual achievement of human civilisation. Science has for its life-breath the belief in Truth—pursued, not for the sake of any practical uses it may have, but for its own sake. And now science itself stands gasping, like a hunter whose

ardour in the chase has brought him to the edge of a precipice. Not by any alien power, but by its own zeal and its own success, science has been brought up short—gazing astonished over emptiness, asking perplexedly the cynic's question, *What is truth?*

I do not delude myself with the idea that I am one of the select few who really comprehend the work of Einstein; nor can I pretend to a competent appreciation of the theories and experiments which have changed the atom from a ball of solid substance into a system of electric points or waves. But those who are expert in these fields assure us that the conceptions of time and space, matter and energy, which till recently were shared by science and common sense, have gone—and with them the old confidence in the fundamental character of the Truth which science seeks, and of the knowledge it attains. It is not the theologian or the philosopher, it is the mathematician and the astronomer, who tell us that in the last resort the knowledge which science gives us is not knowledge of Reality. It is a pattern drawn on the surface of the Unknown; not Truth itself, but an outline shadow cast by a Something which, so far as science and its methods are concerned, must for ever remain a mystery inscrutable.

The "pattern", of course, is not an arbitrary tracing. It is suggested and checked by experiment; and it enables the scientist to predict. Therefore it

must have *some* point-to-point correspondence with *something* in the actual "structure" of Reality. It is a representation, valid for certain purposes, of some quality or aspect of that which has real existence. In that limited sense, but only so, can it be styled a "knowledge of Reality".<sup>1</sup>

Materialism, dramatically enough, has been wounded in the house of its friends—but, among philosophers of repute, its friends were few. For half a century philosophers have been saying to scientists, "Materialism may explain matter, but it won't explain mind"; to-day, the scientist is saying to the philosopher, "There is no such thing as matter; there is only what we may perhaps venture to call 'electric rhythms', provided we insist that 'rhythm' is a metaphor, and 'electricity' a name for the unknown." To the plain man matter is something solid; and solidity is the essence of reality. But a solidity that was bullet-proof to the arguments of philosophy has been riddled through and through by experimental results with which radio-activity, brilliantly utilised, has armed the physicist. Dr. Johnson was thought to display robust good sense when he refuted Berkeley's "ingenious sophistry to prove the

<sup>1</sup> So far as concerns the nature and limitations of scientific knowledge, there is no substantial difference in the conclusions set out by Sir Arthur Eddington and by Mr. Bertrand Russell in their respective works, *The Nature of the Physical World* and *The Analysis of Matter* (published 1929 and 1927). In regard to the possibility of a valid apprehension of Reality being reached by way of religious intuition, they hold opposite views; but they do this on other than scientific grounds.

non-existence of matter” by “striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone”. As a refutation of Rutherford, that kick would be unimpressive.

By this unexpected conclusion of recent scientific research different minds are differently affected. It is agreed by all that the Scientific Materialism of the Victorian age is intellectually bankrupt; but, apart from this, the conclusion holds out ambiguous possibilities. To some it appears to reopen a closed door, through which religion may return to reoccupy its ancient throne. To others it seems rather to compel a kind of intellectual nihilism. Hence the world-view, or lack of one, of Mr. Aldous Huxley; hence, too, the heroic attempts of Mr. Bertrand Russell to build up, admittedly on a foundation of shifting sand, a working philosophy of life and conduct.

I call in evidence Mr. Russell’s latest book, *The Scientific Outlook* (p. 98 f.):

I think the universe is all spots and jumps, without unity, without continuity, without coherence or orderliness or any of the other properties that governesses love. Indeed, there is little but prejudice and habit to be said for the view that there is a world at all.

This shattering conclusion stated, Mr. Russell goes on to deplore a resultant change in the attitude towards religion taken up by various eminent scientists:

Physicists have recently advanced opinions which should have led them to agree with the foregoing remarks: but they

have been so pained by the conclusions to which logic would have led them that they have been abandoning logic for theology in shoals. Every day some new physicist publishes a new pious volume to conceal from himself and others the fact that, in his scientific capacity, he has plunged the world into unreason and unreality.

Does the logic of modern physics point to a universe "without unity, without continuity, without coherence", or even to a doubt whether "there is a world at all"? If so, cannot Mr. Russell be persuaded to think more gently of fellow-scientists whom he detects abandoning this logic—even if theology be the horrible alternative?

But perhaps Mr. Russell's intellectual nihilism derives not from strict logic, but from the uncriticised assumption with which he starts, that science is the only valid instrument of knowledge. If that assumption is open to question, even the despised theologian may crave leave to state a case.

Speaking, however, as a student of theology, I should wish to associate myself with a protest, made by Mr. Russell elsewhere in the same book, against the notion that recent scientific thinking tends towards the intellectual rehabilitation of traditional theology. It does not. So far as religion is concerned, the importance of the altered outlook of the physicists is mainly psychological. Most of the major issues involved in the relation of religion to modern thought are unaffected by the stress now laid on the

been observed. The chief importance of experiment is that it perpetually checks *a priori* deduction by the evidence of observed fact; but here too the value of the test depends on accuracy of observation. Perfect accuracy, however, is only to be obtained where exact measurement is possible. It follows that the validity of scientific explanation varies with the degree to which the facts to be explained admit of exact measurement. It varies, therefore, immensely with different branches of science. The validity of scientific explanation is at its maximum in physics, where everything, except at the sub-atomic level, can be accurately measured; it is at its minimum in psychology, where only phenomena of minor importance have so far proved capable of measurement.

(2) The sciences arrange themselves in a natural hierarchy—each endeavouring to explain the facts and laws in its own field in terms of those of the science next below it. Thus the psychologist aspires, where possible, to explain the facts and laws of psychology in terms of those of physiology. The physiologist seeks an explanation of the laws of the living organism in terms of chemistry; the chemist in his turn seeks explanations in terms of physics. The physicist, who stands at the end of the series, makes it his aim to state the laws of physics in the form of mathematical equations.

Up to date the biological sciences have not yet



succeeded in finding chemical or physical explanations of all the phenomena of the animal organism; still less has psychology succeeded in reducing all the operations of the human mind to the concept of law, or in explaining them in terms of mechanical reflexes. Many biologists, and a still larger proportion of psychologists, do not believe that the phenomena with which they deal will turn out to be *completely* explicable in terms of mechanism and law. A mechanical explanation is analytical; it explains a thing in terms of the parts of which it is composed. But in the biological sciences, and still more in psychology, an explanation would seem to be incomplete unless it is synthetic as well as analytic; unless, that is, it accounts also for that quality of "wholeness" which is the notable characteristic of the structure and functioning of the biological organism or of the psychologically healthy personality.

But if something more than mechanism is required for a complete explanation of the facts studied by the psychologist and the biologist, it is antecedently probable that the same "something" is also present (though on a scale insignificant enough to escape observation) in the facts studied by the physicist and chemist. Yet this "something" cannot be represented by the classical methods—mechanical and mathematical—of scientific explanation. The point may be illustrated by an

analogy. In an ordnance map the differences in the altitudes of hills and valleys are represented by contour lines on a flat surface; in what is known as a "relief map" we have a three-dimensional model of the surface of a district in which the hills and valleys are represented in the solid. But we do not say that, where there are hills and deep valleys, the ordnance map is incorrect, but merely that it gives a less complete representation of the facts than the relief map. Again, where the ground is dead level, there is no difference between the representation in the ordnance map and that in the relief map. Now if mechanical explanation is comparable to the lines on a flat contour map, then in sciences like physics or chemistry (which in the analogy correspond to the level ground) there will be no appreciable difference between an explanation which is merely mechanical and one which is more complete. There are those who suspect that the atom is really an organism; but, even were this proved, it would for most purposes be simpler to treat it as a mechanism. In sciences like biology and psychology, the mechanical explanation is not actually incorrect, it is merely incomplete; and just in these fields the difference between the more and the less complete explanation is of serious moment.

Nevertheless, it is still the aim of the biological researcher to push explanation in mechanical terms to the utmost limit. If it should appear that the

phenomena we call "life" and "consciousness", are not ultimately explicable by the concepts of mechanism and law, then it will follow that there are things in the Universe which cannot be scientifically explained, in the *classical* scientific sense of the word "explain"—in the sense, that is, in which that word is used in chemistry and physics. The attempt, however, to explain the phenomena of the living organism in terms of mechanism and law has proved so fruitful of discovery in the past that it cannot, and should not, be abandoned. A well-known worker in this field once said to me that, although he did not himself believe that mechanical explanations were complete, he was none the less compelled to seek for such explanations by the exigencies of practical research. For to say that life is a mysterious entity, not explicable in terms mechanical, is to say something which, though probably true, estops research. But to ask what mechanism will explain this or that phenomenon in a living organism, is to ask a question which may suggest hypotheses that can be tested by experiment; and this leads to an advance of knowledge. Subject, therefore, to the reservations indicated above, we may define the ideal goal of science as the attempt to explain all phenomena in terms of laws of physics capable of being stated in the form of mathematical equations.

(3) Thirty years ago the more optimistic of the younger scientists believed that this goal might be

attained, at any rate approximately, within their own lifetime. As a matter of fact, in the biological sciences especially, subsequent discovery has shown the phenomena to be far more intricate and complicated than was then supposed. Thus, in spite of the great advances made, the goal appears actually more distant. Nevertheless its attainment is still the aim of scientific research. It is, therefore, a legitimate question to ask, What, supposing it to be attained, would be the position of scientific knowledge?

In that event it would be possible to produce a text-book which should present a systematic explanation of the whole Physical Universe in the form of a series of mathematical equations with brief accompanying letterpress. It might require a person of the intellectual calibre of an Einstein to prepare the text-book; and there might not be more than five hundred people in the world capable of understanding it. As a result, partly of the process of simplification and co-ordination which had made the production of the text-book possible, and partly of the compactness of mathematical notation, the book would be quite a short one—probably no more than a pamphlet. And from this pamphlet those five hundred persons, who were capable of reading it with intelligence, could get a complete scientific comprehension of the whole Physical Universe. Moreover, it might well be that one of the elect five hundred, a man of exceptional ability, was a con-

genital invalid who had never been outside the house in which he was born. Yet it would be possible for this person to *know the Universe*. The fact that such a situation is theoretically possible forces us to raise the question, What in this case would be meant by "knowing"? It would look as if the knowledge of the Universe, which is the goal of science, is related to concrete Reality much as a human skeleton is related to the living man. The man cannot exist without a skeleton; but the skeleton would have neither meaning nor existence without the man. In the case of Physics, this abstract character of scientific knowledge is fairly obvious. But, as we have seen, the aim of the other sciences is to explain the phenomena they study in terms of physics; just in so far then as they succeed in their avowed aim, they too are reaching out after a knowledge which is progressively more an abstraction from Reality. Something has been left out at every stage. We can understand the skeleton, but only because the man is dead and the last vestige of flesh and muscle has been carefully boiled off.

(4) This analogy of the skeleton is much too concrete. That is a new fact forced upon the world's attention by the scientific discoveries of the present century. It may still be the goal of science to explain all things in terms of physics; but in the nineteenth century this meant that complicated phenomena could be explained in terms of simpler ones. In those

happy days such explanation made difficult things seem easy. That is no longer the case.

Philosophers, no doubt, would bother their heads about the meaning of words like space and time, or cause and effect; yet to the scientist, as to the plain man, these were then perfectly straightforward conceptions. But the "space-time" of Einstein and his followers is a conception which corresponds to nothing at all of which the human mind can form a picture. It can only be represented by mathematical equations, of a kind which carry meaning only to masters of flights of mathematical abstraction which had not yet been invented when I was at school.

Matter, again, in those days seemed a very simple thing. It consisted of atoms: and the atom was a piece of solid substance, like an infinitesimal pellet of shot. This substantiality has vanished; so much so that the conception of energy has become more fundamental to physics than that of matter. And if we ask what energy is, we are straitly charged to avoid thinking of it as "force"; that is, as something comparable to what we experience in pushing or pulling; that would be an illegitimate and misleading anthropomorphism. Energy may be potential or kinetic; but these conceptions are so abstract that, though we can represent them in equations, we must not attempt to imagine them in thought. Still more abstract and difficult to imagine is the

conception of "action", regarded by some physicists as more fundamental than energy.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, when matter has ceased to be a solid something which persists in time and moves in space, when energy is no longer "force" which pulls or pushes through a distance, there has gone also the old simplicity of the concept of *mechanism* in relation to cause and effect. In the last century mechanism meant something which could be represented, however roughly, by a "model". In the biological sciences the "model" is still useful; in advanced physics it is being recognised as far too crude a tool; by some workers, especially on the Continent, it is even denounced as an impediment to research. Consider the implications of this incidental remark by Prof. Lindemann (*op. cit.* p. 9), the italics are mine:

This calculus, perfected by Dirac, whilst involving considerable mathematical difficulties and *renouncing any hope of being able to visualise reality*, forms a wonderfully complete and coherent system enabling one to *codify existing knowledge* and *predict*, within limits, phenomena not yet observed.

Lastly, the conception of law is undergoing a chameleon-like change. A favourite *cliché* of the last century was the phrase "the necessary and eternal Laws of Nature"; and of these the law of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. A. Lindemann, *The Physical Significance of the Quantum Theory*, p. 21. (Oxford, 1932.)

gravitation was the typical example. This has now been found to be invalid, although as an approximate generalisation it is good enough for all ordinary, and for most extraordinary, purposes. The question is raised whether there are any such things as necessary and eternal Laws of Nature; or whether, if there are such, any of them have as yet been discovered. In human affairs generalisations based on "statistical averages" are often useful. The fact, for example, that in any year the number of persons who post letters improperly addressed is approximately uniform, enables the Post Office authorities to calculate beforehand the extra staff required to cope with them. But, though the total of such letters is uniform, the individuals who post them are not the same, nor the causes identical which make them misdirect their letters. It is difficult, therefore, to think of the uniformity in the annual totals as having a character of necessity. Some of the accepted Laws of Nature (most of those, for example, which concern the behaviour of gases) are admittedly observed uniformities of this kind; they are recognised to be the expression of "statistical averages". But, in calculations of statistical averages, the larger the numbers the greater the degree of uniformity. When, therefore, the numbers are as colossal as in all investigations where the unit individual is an entity as minute as a molecule, atom, or electron, a "statistical average" would be likely



to work out as a uniformity indistinguishable from that resulting from a necessary law. For this reason the suspicion has arisen that most, if not all, of the hitherto ascertained Laws of Nature may be no more than generalisations based on "statistical averages", that is, they are founded not on necessity, but merely on "probability", in the mathematical sense of that word. They no longer have the glamorous status of "laws that never shall be broken".

Prof. Lindemann (*op. cit.* p. 23)—for the technical reason that at the sub-atomic level the act of measurement appears *necessarily* to change the state of the thing measured—goes so far as to say:

It would seem therefore that physical knowledge is confined to knowledge of the statistical type, and that in the last resort one can never expect to do more than predict the probability of the occurrence of an event of high energy in a given place.

In the case of the established Laws of Nature the degree of probability is so high that they may be treated as necessary laws for all practical, and most theoretical, purposes. But debate has arisen as to the bearing on the problem of Determinism and Free Will of what is known in atomic physics as the Principle of Indeterminacy. On this point Mr. Bertrand Russell and Sir Arthur Eddington are found in opposite camps. I am unable to accept, without qualification, the position advocated by either of them; but I am not confident enough that

I understand the technical questions involved to wish to print an alternative view.<sup>1</sup>

We see, then, that all the fundamental conceptions of science have lost that clear-cut realistic character which in the last century made scientific explanation and scientific knowledge seem to the ordinary mind so simple, satisfactory, and conclusive. The meaning of the words time, space, matter, energy, mechanism, and law, as used in modern physics, has become quite different from the meaning of those words in everyday life. And the meaning is different because the concepts to be expressed *are not really capable of being expressed in words at all*. They can only be expressed in mathematical symbols so complex and abstract that to get any glimmering of their meaning one must have considerable proficiency in advanced mathematics.

#### MEASUREMENT, MECHANISM, AND MIND

At what point then, we ask, does this highly abstract scheme of thought touch the concrete world revealed to us by the five senses? The answer is not in doubt. The point of contact between the abstract world of the physicist and the concrete world of everyday experience is the fact of *measurement*. The equations of the physicist are based on experiment; but the information yielded by experi-

<sup>1</sup> On the *general* problem of free-will, my views, for what they are worth, are expressed in *Reality*, pp. 75 ff., 273 f.

ment concerns not things themselves but measurements of things, such as their velocity, position, and what, in ordinary language, we call their size and weight. What the physicist deals with is the "pointer readings on the scale", to adopt Eddington's phrase, which record these measurements; he does not deal with the things themselves. It follows that, if there is anything in the Universe which is not susceptible to measurement, or if in things which can be measured there are aspects or qualities not susceptible to measurement, these non-measurables must necessarily be ignored by physics.

Yet there exists at least one thing which cannot be measured, and that is the mind that does the measuring. True, Experimental Psychology attempts to apply measurement to mental processes. I have no doubt that an apparatus will soon be devised by which could be accurately measured the amount of nervous energy which I am using up in delivering this lecture. But what matters about this lecture is, not the amount of nervous energy it represents, but whether what I am saying is sense or nonsense; and that is something which no machine could measure. The discrimination between sense and nonsense, that is, between the true and the false, is not a thing susceptible of measurement; yet apart from this discrimination science would be futile. Indeed what is science except a training and a technique for applying more and more successfully this power of

discrimination between the true and the false? Science, therefore, depends for its existence on there being something in Reality, which, being incapable of measurement, is incapable of being dealt with by the methods of mathematical physics.

Now the distinction between the true and the false is of two-fold aspect; it can be regarded from the standpoint either of fact or of value. Whether Newton's theory of gravitation or that of Einstein is the more correct is, what we commonly call a matter of *fact* (though, if we ask what the word "fact" means in a case like this, we shall find we have raised a difficult question). But the question whether and why it is worth anybody's while to bother his head at all about theories of gravitation is a matter of *value*. Now science exists because there are a certain number of people in the world who think that truth is of supreme value and that its discovery is therefore worth while; indeed science actually exists only because there has been a long succession of men so convinced of the value of truth as to be ready, for its sake, to live laborious lives in poverty and obscurity and, if necessary, to face martyrdom. Science, therefore, depends for its existence, not only on the existence of something which can *discriminate* truth, but on the fact that creatures who exhibit this capacity also *value* truth—valuing it, in some cases, so highly as to make desire for its attainment the dominant motive of a life. But this valuing is another thing

which cannot be measured, and therefore cannot be apprehended by the methods of mathematical physics.

Science, then, exists because of the prior existence of an element in Reality that functions in two ways which elude the method of science to explain—it discriminates between the false and the true, and it passionately values the true. This element we call “mind”; but if we study mind as an empirical phenomenon, we find that its activity in discriminating between alternatives, and in attaching to one of them a passionate value, is by no means confined to the distinction between true and false. Mind empirically studied is always to be found discriminating—between right and wrong, between noble and mean, between beautiful and ugly. It is commonly said of these distinctions that they differ fundamentally from that between true and false since for them there is lacking any objective test that the distinction has been correctly made. But, outside the field of physical science, it is often hard to find such a test even for the distinction between true and false. And it has only been after centuries of trial and error that mankind has succeeded in finding in the sphere of science criteria of truth universally acceptable to the select group of persons commonly regarded as competent to judge; indeed the history of science has been largely that of the development of a technique of objectivity in such judgement.

Primitive science is more subjective than primitive morals; indeed, at the present day the number of people alive who think that the world is flat is larger than the number who think it is right to murder or steal. It would seem rash, then, to assert *a priori* that no objective value at all can be attributed to discriminations made by mind, except in the one case of the distinction between true and false.

We may now reconsider the postulate that the goal of science is explanation in terms of the mechanical and mathematical abstractions of physics. Many biologists protest vehemently against the adequacy of these categories when applied to the biological sciences. *Per contra* the Behaviourist school of psychology, led by Professor J. B. Watson, has made a desperate effort to stretch them so as to cover all the phenomena of mental activity. Thought is quaintly described as “sub-vocal language”, and is said to be a form of reflex action—external stimuli to the organism, as a result of long habituation, affecting the movements of the larynx in a way which varies minutely according to the stimulus.

To most of us the conclusion that thought is merely a pattern in reflex action would seem to constitute a logical *reductio ad absurdum* sufficiently grotesque to prove the falsity of the premisses with which the behaviourist starts. Yet the “whole-hog” behaviourist does not merit the scorn with which

in some quarters his conclusions have been received. He is, in the sphere of science, what some conscientious theorists are in the sphere of politics; he is one of those people who insist on working out abstract principles to their logical end, regardless of the growing evidence that they are not wide enough to cover the facts of life. If the conclusions of the behaviourist are wrong, it is not because they are unscientific, but because they are too scientific. The behaviourist attempt to explain the operations of the human mind in mechanical terms is one that *ought* to have been made. If the conclusions which it reaches are absurd, the fault is in the premiss with which it starts, viz. that scientific explanation, in the classical sense of the words, is an exhaustive explanation at the stage of biological development at which consciousness has arisen. A study of the behaviourists makes one feel with Lotze:

How absolutely universal is the extent, and at the same time how completely subordinate the significance, of the mission which mechanism has to fulfil in the structure of the world (*Microcosmus*, p. xiv.).

But the border line between psychology and biology is a narrow one. If the study of the human mind reveals any phenomena which cannot be completely explained without calling in teleological conceptions like purpose or value, then there is evidence that Reality includes such phenomena. In that case there is no reason why the biologist should feel

called upon to strive conscientiously to explain away the apparent evidence for teleology in the fields which he studies. Nor, again, is it necessary for the physicist to go out of his way to deny *a priori* the possibility of its existence even in his field; though here the insufficiency, if it exists, of mechanical explanation is so small as to be at present unobservable.

It does not follow that the scientist should abandon the effort to explain in terms of mechanism and mathematical physics. That, as was pointed out above, would be to estop research. All that follows is that he will recognise that the final results of scientific analysis represent *an abstract scheme from which certain aspects of existence are necessarily excluded*. The picture of the physical Universe which it is the goal of science to give us is, to return to our analogy, related to Reality much as an ordnance map is related to the country it represents. The map is absolutely correct; and, to one planning a motor tour, it is indispensable. From it we derive the kind of knowledge that is power. I can sit in my room in Oxford and plan in detail a motor tour through Japan—but the map is not Japan, and it is precisely the beauty of the landscape and other things in Japan which no map can represent that alone would make the motor-tour worth while.

Another, and perhaps better, analogy for the relation between scientific explanation and ultimate



Reality has been used by Mr. Bertrand Russell—the relation between the lines on a gramophone record and the tune which the listeners hear.<sup>1</sup> A person born deaf, if sufficiently intelligent, might possibly suspect that the lines had some kind of meaning; but of that meaning in terms of music he could have no idea at all. In Mr. Russell's view, we are all stone-deaf; for to him science is the one avenue we have to knowledge. What science shows us is no more than the lines on the record; but we must be content with that, and resign ourselves to let the music be unheard.

Here I cross swords with Mr. Russell. If science is the only valid way to knowledge, how do we know that the knowledge it gives is of this limited and abstract kind? If my eyes are colour-blind, *they* cannot inform me of that fact; I must learn it from some other source. It has not been by scientific method alone, but by reflection on that method and results reached thereby, that its limitations have been discovered. The human mind *knows* the limitation of scientific explanation; but, if the scientist has achieved that knowledge, he has done so by a way of knowing other than that of scientific method. The kind of reflection which has revealed the limitation of science is of the kind we call philosophic rather than scientific. Philosophic reflection, therefore, is a way of knowing alternative to the scientific;

<sup>1</sup> *The A.B.C. of Relativity*, p. 226 ff. (Kegan Paul, 1925.)

and it is one which is valid, at least up to the point of being able to detect the abstract, and therefore limited, character of scientific knowledge.

### THE PHENOMENON RELIGION

The question, then, arises: Must philosophic reflection stop when it has discovered the limitations of science, or can it venture to explore the territory outside those limits? In the past, philosophy has not shrunk from making the attempt; but with results which the world at large finds disappointing. Hence the credit of philosophy, as compared with science, has in popular esteem fallen low. I venture to submit that for this loss of prestige philosophy has largely itself to blame, in that it has not made either enough use, or the right use, of the materials with which religion can abundantly supply it. This, no doubt, is partly the fault of the theologians, who have served up these materials at the table of philosophy in a form difficult of digestion to a fastidious stomach. I would, however, venture to suggest to the present generation of philosophers that the materials provided by religion are now readily accessible, partly on account of the progress made in the study of Comparative Religion, but even more because an historical and psychological (as distinct from a dogmatic and scholastic) interpretation of the origin, institutions, and sacred books of Christianity has by now had time to affect the thought and

practice of the living Christian community. The latter point is important, because the inner spirit of a religion, and therefore its real significance, can hardly be caught apart from contact with persons to whom it is alive; but so long as the spokesmen of religion were living and thinking in an intellectual world that had vanished years ago, it was as hard for the philosopher as for the plain man to understand what they were really talking about. That, at least, is the excuse I would proffer in condonation of the ineptitudes talked about religion by some distinguished writers, who seem to identify religion with the religious instruction given in Victorian nurseries.

No theory of the Universe can be satisfactory which does not adequately account for the phenomenon of life, especially in that richest form which finds expression in human personality. Hence the importance of that study of consciousness with which philosophy has always been concerned. But, as modern psychology has shown, there is far more in the psychic life of the individual than the manifest content of consciousness. Now the content of the mentality of an individual, so far as it is fully conscious, can be made more or less accessible to study by means of introspection, by which a phenomenon actually subjective is treated as objective. But the subconscious life can only be studied in so far as it has objectified itself in some external way, for

example, in act, word, or gesture; and these often only obscurely symbolise the inward thing they express. Again, the life and experience of the individual is but a small fragment of the life and experience of the race. For thought, will, and desire (conscious or subconscious) are not standardised substances which differ only quantitatively for different people. They are ever-changing modes of reaction to ever-changing circumstances, and they vary qualitatively with the character of each such reaction. Desire, for example, varies qualitatively, with the thing desired, with the moods of hope or disappointment, and with the extent to which it is shared by others; and the inner life of him who desires is qualitatively altered by failure or success. Since no two individuals have identical experience, no two can have an identical inner life; and since new events demand new reactions, experience is never static. For the philosopher, then, the study of *race-experience* is vital; but where shall he find the subjective experience of innumerable minds given him in a form that admits of study? Clearly, he can do this only if there are available *objectifications* of this experience. And such there are. In a language, in a literature, in a national art, in social customs and institutions, in the historic religions, we see what are in effect objectifications of race consciousness reflecting on race experience. And what is here embodied is not merely an expression

of the individual and corporate experience of average humanity, but also that extension of experience and enhanced power of interpreting it which appertains to what we call genius. By studying these objectifications in the right way we can gain understanding—not directly, but indirectly—of the inner quality of the experience which produced them. But nowhere do we find objectified such a wealth, depth, and range of intuition, experience, and reflection on experience, as in the great World Religions. Accordingly, it is here first that we should look, if we want to see *writ large* the content of personal life at its maximum both of elevation and intensity.

If science were the only way of knowledge, Mr. Russell would be right. But is it the only way? To return to his analogy of the gramophone record, have we not ears as well as eyes? By the eye we see the lines upon the record, by the ear we hear the music which gives purpose and meaning to the lines. Just so, I would suggest that, while science is the eye which reveals to us an abstract pattern of Reality, religion is the ear by which we hear the music. But we hear it dimly, for our ears are clogged with wax.

Sight and sound are incommensurable; yet the physical world which impinges on the eye is not other than that which impinges on the ear. Similarly, science and religion are incommensurable; yet the

Reality which each aspires to interpret is the same. If in any age the interpretations which they give are irreconcilable with one another, one or both of the interpretations must contain some element of error. In the past science has been frequently entangled with materialism, religion with superstition. Wherever this prevails, conflict between them is inevitable. Science is the great disinfectant of human thought. It is the enemy of superstition; just for that reason it has been an ally of religion, even when it seemed to be actively attacking it. For superstition, by posing as the friend of religion, can secretly devour its vital substance. Superstition can so misinform and misdirect the energies of religion that, instead of being an inspiration, it becomes an obstacle to human progress.

Here an objection will be raised: Am I not too lightly assuming religion to be an avenue to a knowledge of Reality parallel to that which science affords? Surely that requires more proof. I admit the objection; and, at this stage, I am unable to meet it. Religion in its occurrence in human history is like a precious metal rarely to be found in the pure state. Most commonly it is found mixed with magic, disguised in mythology, or confused with metaphysics. We must first try to smelt out the pure ore. Till that is done, there is no real meaning in the question, whether, or in what way, religion can afford a knowledge of Reality parallel to that which science offers.

But it may be that, in proportion as we learn to ask the question rightly, the answer will become self-evident.

At first sight our enquiry might seem to call for an examination of all the religions which have ever swayed the heart of man, or at least of all those which we are accustomed to denominate "Higher Religions". That would be a task far too extensive for this course of lectures, as well as beyond the compass of the lecturer's capacities. For the purpose in hand, however, it will suffice to consider two religions, Buddhism and Christianity. The religious history of man has flowed down two main streams, of which one has its spring in India, the other in Palestine. Buddhism is related to Hinduism much in the same way as Christianity is related to Judaism; Mohammedanism is directly descended from both Christianity and Judaism. Thus if an examination of the two traditions which look back to the Buddha and the Christ fails to bring out the nature of religion, it will be in vain to look elsewhere.

#### A WORLD NEED

But, emphatically, it is not to an academic study in Comparative Religion that I am inviting your attention. The aim of this investigation is practical. I examine these religions for the sake of any light which they may throw on the meaning and purpose of human life. I cross-examine them to see whether

we can get here some truth which science cannot explore, some power or guidance which philosophy has failed to find.

At the present moment the world has a greater need of religion than of science. We are tired of hearing that our Western civilisation is on the downgrade; that, though intellectually the race is adult, morally we are children—children armed in the nursery with loaded revolvers, and likely to suffer the inevitable fate of such. We are weary of being told this; but our weariness does not make the fact less true. And just here, when we most need it, science cannot help. I quote Professor Julian Huxley—a witness whose name and lineage guarantee the absence of apologetic prejudice:

Science is without a scale of values: the only value it recognises is that of truth and knowledge. This neutrality of science in regard to emotions and moral and aesthetic values means that, while in its own sphere of knowledge it is supreme, in other spheres it is only a method or a tool. What man shall do with the new facts, the new ideas, the new opportunities of control which science is showering upon him does not depend upon science, but upon what man wants to do with them; and this in turn depends upon his scale of values. It is here that religion can become the dominant factor. For what religion can do is to set up a scale of values for conduct, and to provide emotional or spiritual driving force to help in getting them realised in practice.<sup>1</sup>

But religion can do the work required only if it is

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Religion* (broadcasted lectures by various persons), p. 18 f. (Gerald Howe, London; Scribner, N.Y., 1931.)



believed true. The world cannot be saved by a "Grand Perhaps". Therefore the quest for religious truth is the great adventure for which humanity now calls. In a world which is like to perish for lack of a religion, the churches are perishing for lack of men to undertake this quest. There will be in this audience some of the younger generation who have heard, or who will some day hear, the call to dedicate their lives to that adventure. To them I say: Listen; but also count the cost. You will find yourself unpopular with certain sections of the religious Press—that is an affliction not difficult to grin and bear. You may have painful interviews with persons in authority or members of your congregation—interviews not less distressing because they are obviously as painful to them as to yourself. You may be kept exiled, as friends of mine have been, in a remote country vicarage during the best years of your life, as "a dangerous person". But if, as the years go on, the gleam you saw in youth becomes ever clearer, and you feel able to hand on to others who are groping in the darkness the light that you have gained, these things will seem to you of small account. Yet remember that your search for truth will not be genuine unless from the first you face clearly the possibility that it may lead you to a contrary conclusion. You take the hazard that one day you may come to think that the light you saw in youth was just a will-o'-the-wisp; that all your thought and

work has led you down a blind alley; that the mystery of the Universe is guarded in a keep which will capitulate to no man's siege. ' .

Yet, say I, face, and take, that risk.

Not hear? . . . Names in my ears,  
Of all the lost adventurers, my peers,—  
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,  
And such was fortunate, yet each of old  
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides—met  
To view the last of me, a living frame  
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame  
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet  
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set  
And blew, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came"

**LECTURE 2**

**THE BUDDHA AND THE CHRIST**

## THE BUDDHA AND THE CHRIST

### SYNOPSIS

To consider side by side the Buddha and the Christ is to embark on a study in contrasts.

#### THE INDIAN AND HEBREW WORLD-VIEWS

The contrasts are rooted in those that differentiate the Indian and Hebrew world-views—between polytheism and monotheism, between philosophy and picture-thinking, between belief in the Absolute and in a “living” God, between Karma and purpose, between the doctrine that the phenomenal world is *maya* (illusion) and that it is a world which God saw to be good.

The lack of interest in history, which is one result of the doctrine of *maya*, makes doubtful, within wide limits, the determination of dates and stages in the development of early Indian and Buddhist history and literature.

The Creation story of Genesis is a prose lyric, designedly composed as a defiant protest against the Babylonian Epic of Creation.

To its affirmation of the value of the phenomenal world, in contradistinction to the doctrines of the Absolute and *maya*, is largely due the fundamental difference between the outlook of Europe and the Ancient East. This may partly account for the otherwise astonishing fact that modern science arose in Europe and not in those much older established civilisations.

#### SAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA

Gautama, more commonly known as Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism was born about 560 B.C.; but his experience of disillusionment makes him seem in some ways more of “a modern” than Jesus.

Cautious conjecture, working on facts supplied by tradition, may reconstruct something of the inward struggle which caused him to

renounce home and throne, and which ultimately led to his "Enlightenment" under the Bo-tree, followed by the "Great Temptation".

The "Four Noble Truths"; the agnosticism of the Buddha; the meaning of Nirvana.

The Buddha was not indifferent to moral evil; yet to him the supreme problem was that of Pain, and his teaching is at bottom an attempt to find a *practical* solution of that problem, while taking for granted the Hindu doctrine of Karma.

#### SAKYAMUNI AND JESUS

Jesus had at first hand experience of things like poverty and oppression which could be known to a prince like the Buddha only by sympathy. Yet the experience of a disillusioned prince would have been familiar to him from the book of Ecclesiastes.

Some remarks on Christ's attitude to the book of Job; to the doctrine of "merit"; on repression *versus* enthusiasm in ethics; and on the relative importance of the problems of sin and of pain.

#### RESEMBLANCE BEHIND CONTRAST

The moral teaching of the Buddha has a remarkable resemblance to that of the Sermon on the Mount. The difference between them is mainly due to the Buddha's acceptance of the doctrines of Karma and *maya*. That is to say, the Buddha differs from Christ by reason of what he inherited. He ceases to differ where he is original: where the Buddha is most himself, there he is most like Christ.

## LECTURE 2

### THE BUDDHA AND THE CHRIST

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . .  
When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God  
shouted for joy?—JOB xxxviii. 4, 7.

All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it; the eye  
is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.—  
ECCLESIASTES i. 8.

CHRIST was a carpenter, the Buddha was a prince; they experienced life from different angles. The Buddha was a philosopher; Jesus had the mind of a poet. They thought and spoke in different modes. Each for the sake of miserable humanity made the supreme sacrifice—the Christ in submitting to death, the Buddha by consenting to live.

#### THE INDIAN AND HEBREW WORLD-VIEWS

The contrast is no less striking between the two spiritual race-inheritances which in these two lives find respectively their most sublime expression. In India there has always flourished a polytheism as luxuriant as the native jungle; to the Israelite the first commandment was, “The Lord our God, the

Lord is one". No race has, as the Indian, over so long a period of time, concentrated the thought of its best minds on metaphysical speculation; no race that has profoundly influenced human culture has shown less interest in metaphysics than the ancient Jew. In the whole of the Bible there is only one passage which clearly shows a definitely philosophic interest, the prologue of the fourth Gospel; and this was written in Ephesus,<sup>1</sup> the birthplace of Greek philosophy, with the express intention of commending Christianity to the Greek mind. In all countries where philosophy has once awakened, the antinomies of the One and the Many, the Eternal and the Transient, the Real and the Phenomenal have been the subject for discussion. But nowhere as in India has the idea of the impermanence of the transient and the unreality of the phenomenal entered so deeply into the national soul, and become, even for the uneducated, an unconscious pre-supposition of a practical philosophy for everyday life.

One result of this has been that the Hindu has shown less interest in history than any other civilised people. Even the bare chronological outline of Indian history, prior to the Mohammedan invasion, is obscure, and has mainly to be inferred from out-

<sup>1</sup> Heraclitus was born here. Thales taught a little earlier, in the adjacent city of Miletus; but he has less real claim to be the "father of European philosophy".

side sources. Still more obscure is the dating of the older literature of India. This makes precarious any too precise determination of the exact stage which the philosophical movement had reached in the lifetime of the Buddha. Moreover, both Buddhist sects and modern experts differ enormously in their views as to the philosophical positions actually adopted by the Buddha himself.

For this reason, and also because the main stream of the philosophical movement in India has many cross-eddies and undercurrents, any brief generalisation in regard to Indian thought in the time of the Buddha is open to criticism. With this reservation, it is permissible, for the purpose of the present investigation, to select three doctrines as characteristic of the typically Indian outlook.<sup>1</sup>

(1) The Real is the unchanging. All that appertains to the sphere of the phenomenal, all things material, all the ordinary activities of daily life, belong to the border-line between the existent and the non-existent; they are essentially *maya*, or illusion.

(2) History, the field of fact and change, belongs to the realm of *maya*. And it is an illusion everlastingly recurrent. The Universe in which we live is only one in an infinite series of universes; worlds wax and wane, are born and perish, in endlessly

<sup>1</sup> For a "minority report" in Indian philosophy, see the remarks on Ramanuja (p. 159).



recurrent cycles. There is no beginning and no end—simply change without purpose, and movement without a goal.

(3) Through this eternal cycle runs the law of “Karma”, the law by which, in an endless series of reincarnations, the soul reaps what it has sown in one life in the form either of misery or of blessing in a future rebirth.

Against the background of this philosophy a gospel of deliverance must of logical necessity become the proclamation of a way of salvation that will enable the individual to cut through the mesh of illusion, and thus effect an escape from the miseries of this world of impermanence and purposeless change. Further, if haply that be possible, it must help him to break the iron chain which necessitates rebirth, so that, this present life ended, he may swoon away into the eternal peace of the Reality which is hidden behind the veil of *maya*.

Very different was the outlook on the Universe, on life, and on human values, into which the Christ was born. Of the spiritual inheritance into which he entered the chief vehicle was that library of a thousand years of Hebrew thought and experience which we call the Old Testament. Here, instead of gods many, benevolent or malevolent according to circumstances or moods, there is the one God whose fundamental characteristic is perfect righteousness. Instead of a metaphysical Absolute, of which

neither character nor action can be predicated, there is the "living God", always thought of as creating, as purposing, and as intensely concerned, not only with the actions, but with the inward characters, of individuals and of peoples.<sup>1</sup>

Tedious controversy about questions raised by Geology, Darwin, or the Higher Criticism have obscured the meaning and intention of the description of creation with which the Old Testament begins. In the book of Genesis documents of earlier and later date are woven together so as to form a continuous narrative. The opening chapter belongs to the later stratum and appears to date from the Babylonian exile. The raw materials of its story of creation are derived from a cycle of legend of which the most elaborate version is given in the Babylonian Epic of Creation graven on clay tablets found in the ruins of Nineveh. The Babylonian script and tongue had been the medium of international communication in Palestine itself long before the Israelites settled in the land—of that the Tell el-Amarna tablets are evidence. Thus, when Nebuchadnezzar, many centuries later, captured Jerusalem and transported to Mesopotamia the flower of the Jewish nation, this was merely a movement from the circumference to the centre of Babylonian culture. To

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew would have been revolted by the idea, not unfrequent in Indian literature, that Creation was a "jest" or "game" of one of the High Gods. The Dance of Siva symbolises the dissolution of a world from a not dissimilar motive.

understand the real purport of the creation myth with which Genesis begins, we must read it as a hymn of battle, comparable, though in prose form, to Luther's *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*; we must read it as a defiant protest against the implications, national and religious, of that Babylonian epic. The Jewish exiles, crushed by the military might of the great World Empire of that day, dazzled by the magnificence of the largest metropolis yet seen by man, gaze on the towering temple with its stately ritual of sacrifice and praise to Marduk, the all-conquering deity who slew the primaeval dragon and of her sundered corpse made heaven and earth. Perplexed, fascinated, and revolted by this astounding medley of civilisation and brutality, magnificence and superstition, they ask the meaning of it all. Then, in the visions of the night, in a hovel in some Babylonian slum, there comes to one of them the unshakable assurance that in this mighty empire the wisdom of the wise is perverted and absurd. There is put into his mouth a new song; to the Epic of Creation in praise of Marduk's might he can oppose that Canticle of the Lord with which Genesis begins.

In its majestic rhythm—in conscious contrast to the crowded and tumultuous picture in the Babylonian epic of gods wailing or triumphant—creation by the mere word of the One God, known in His absolute righteousness to the Hebrew alone, is simply

asserted. And there is more than this. From at least as early as the time of Zoroaster there has been in the thought of Central Asia that strain of metaphysical and moral dualism of which a thousand years later Manichaeism is the fully developed expression. To this the Jew opposes the recurrent affirmation, "God saw that it was good". Yet again, in a land where human life was little recked of, the value of human personality is proclaimed, when of the Power that had created all things it is written, "in the image of God made He man".

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept; when we remembered thee, O Sion.

As for our harps, we hanged them up: upon the trees that are therein.

For they that led us away captive required of us then a song, and melody, in our heaviness: Sing us one of the songs of Sion.

How shall we sing the Lord's song: in a strange land?

There was one among the captives who did sing, and in new words, the Lord's song. "In the beginning God . . . and God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." And as he wrote it down, he seemed to catch a faint and far-off echo from that *primaeval* day, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy".

Thus the Bible opens with the exultant assertion of a view of creation which contradicts what for

Indian metaphysics is a fundamental postulate. To the Hebrew, the world of phenomena, so far from being illusion, is the field of values. And from this diversity in the thought of the Indian and the Jew flows a correlated diversity in their fundamental conceptions of the goal of religion. To the Indian this is the attainment of peace; to the Jew it is the realisation of value.

The question has been asked, Why did modern science arise in Europe, and that so soon after its emergence from a long period of barbarism, instead of among the highly gifted peoples of Asia with their immemorial and unbroken tradition of keen intellectual life? An explanation is offered by Professor Whitehead in his *Science and the Modern World*. Mediaeval scholasticism, he thinks, with its interpretation of Hebrew monotheism in the terms of the rationalism of Greek thought, had burnt into the mind of Europe the conviction that God was rational, and that therefore the world which He created must be explicable. To my mind this explanation only goes part of the way. More important, I would suggest, is the result on the European mind of the Hebrew assertion, "God saw that it was good", in contradistinction to the doctrine of *maya*, which the spread of Buddhism caused to become a prevalent philosophy not only in India, but also, though to a less extent, in China and Japan.

To this day in Japan a Buddhist lecturer will use

this analogy: "I hold up to my eye a crystal ball; in its transparency I see nothing. Crack the ball and there is something I can see. That is a parable of creation: the visible, the knowable, is the result of some injury to the Absolute". A more frequent illustration compares the Absolute to the water of the ocean, perfectly calm, undividedly one; the wind blows, and on the surface there are waves; so individual persons or things, like waves, are not really separate existences, they are but transient disturbances of the One.<sup>1</sup> Now science is wholly concerned with the world of phenomena. In Europe it seemed worth while to try to explain phenomena, which were the work of a rational Creator who deemed His creation good; in the East it was not worth while to devote one's life effort to explaining the details of an illusion whose existence is due merely to some unfortunate disturbance causing a temporary ripple on the surface of the eternal calm.

In the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism—as developed in *The Awakening of Faith* by Asvagosha about the first century A.D.—*ignorance* appears

<sup>1</sup> To a Japanese priest, who made use of the second of the above illustrations, I put the difficulty: The wind is outside the ocean it disturbs, but by definition the Absolute is all-inclusive; what, then, can originate a disturbance of its calm? He said there could be nothing outside the Absolute; but there might have been in the Absolute itself "the seeds of desire" [meaning the "desire" which in Buddhist theory leads to the will-to-live and hence to birth and rebirth] which through some movement came to germinate, and thus led to creation. I pointed out that this potentiality of disturbance involved the admission of imperfection in the Absolute. He admitted this, but seemed to think it did not matter much as only the surface of the Absolute was affected.

first; ignorance starts the world-process, then “subjectivity” is evolved, which in its turn caused particularisation to take place.

All things, simply on account of our confused subjectivity, appear under the forms of individuation. If we could overcome our confused subjectivity, the signs of individuation would disappear, and there would be no trace of a world of individual and isolated objects.

So again:

We come to the conclusion that all things and conditions in the phenomenal world, hypostatized and established only through ignorance (*avidya*) and subjectivity (*smṛti*) on the part of all beings, have no more reality than the images in a mirror. They evolve simply from the ideality of a particularising mind. When the mind is disturbed, the multiplicity of things is produced; but when the mind is quieted, the multiplicity of things disappears.

By ego-consciousness (*manovijñāna*) we mean that all ignorant minds through their succession-consciousness cling to the conception of *I* and *not-I* [*i.e.* a separate objective world] and misapprehend the nature of the six objects of sense.<sup>1</sup>

The contrast between the Biblical hymn of creation, and the Indian philosophy of *māyā*, explains also the difference in the stress laid respectively by Hinduism and Judaism—and by their descendants Buddhism and Christianity—on the relative importance of action and meditation. To the Hebrew creation is not an accident, but an act. Life, there-

<sup>1</sup> *The Awakening of Faith*, ed. D. T. Suzuki, pp. 56 and 77. (Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago, 1900.)

fore, in the phenomenal world, is neither an illusion to be pierced, nor a misfortune to be retrieved. From the standpoint of God, life on earth has a purpose; from the standpoint of man it is an opportunity—of fulfilling that purpose, or, contrariwise, of failing to do so. A man's discernment of that purpose will be blurred unless illuminated by prayer and meditation; but the act is what matters most. Indeed, it is implied that the moral insight, which is a necessary condition of interpreting the purpose of God, is withheld from those who decline to do His will (John vii. 17).

#### SAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA

The name Buddha, like the name Christ, is a title; but unlike the title Christ, or Messiah, it is not confined to one individual; for in the unnumbered cycles of Universes, there have been, are, and will be unnumbered Buddhas. By most Buddhists, however, the historical founder of Buddhism is regarded as the supreme Buddha of the present world-æon in this present Universe. And all other Buddhas in other ages, or other universes, are conceived of as identical with him in nature, if not also metaphysically one with him. In the East he is rarely, if ever, designated by the family name Gautama, used by some Western scholars. Most frequently he is spoken of as Sakyamuni, or the sage of the tribe of Sakya; in Japan this is commonly shortened to Shaka.



Sakyamuni the Buddha was born five and a half centuries before Christ; yet there is much in his outlook upon life which is curiously modern. In certain respects it is distinctly more "modern" than that of Jesus—a fact which may be noted without necessarily drawing the conclusion that it is therefore more profound. The modernity of his outlook was the direct result of personal experience.

Here a *caveat* must be entered. If I attempt to trace a relation between the teaching and the inward experience of a stupendous personality—or rather what little we can guess of that experience—it must be with an all-important reservation. Experience does not consist in the number of things that a man has either done or suffered—any more than knowledge of a subject consists in the number of books a man has read about it. Knowledge and experience, in any valuable sense of those words, depend on the extent to which a man has reflected upon things suffered, done, or read, and found meaning in them. In the man of genius this capacity—possessed by most of us to a limited extent—of using his own necessarily limited personal experience as a window through which to look into the wider experience of the race, is at its maximum. Shakespeare had read somewhat, had done somewhat, and had felt much; but it was not the number of things that he had read, done, or felt, but his capacity of making this knowledge and experience the key to a sympathetic

appreciation and an imaginative comprehension of the experience of other men that made him "the circumnavigator of the human soul". Only if we bear in mind this capacity, is it profitable to look to the personal experience of the Buddha or the Christ for an explanation in part of their outlook on the Universe.

Sakyamuni was the eldest and only son of a ruling prince. He was heir to a throne—not perhaps an important one, but still a throne. He had tasted the cup which only those can drink who are born to, or who early achieve, wealth, rank, and opportunity beyond their fellows. He had tasted also the fruits of the intellectual life. He came of a race which more than any other, the Greeks not excepted, revelled in philosophical discussion; and though later he came to depreciate the value of metaphysical speculation, he was, it would seem, adept in that art.

By the age of twenty-nine, though possessed of all the good things that life could offer, he became oppressed with a conviction of the futility of human life. But the disillusionment which came over him was not that of the exhausted debauchee, but of the idealist faced by the hard facts of life. It sprang, not alone from the emptiness of the life he was himself living, but also from his sympathetic appreciation of the reign of misery outside his own experience. Tradition records that his actual decision to leave all, in order to seek some remedy for human

ills, was precipitated by the sight, first of a man worn out by age, then of another broken by disease, followed by the spectacle of a beggar's decaying corpse. It was the realisation of the suffering of other men that spurred him to action and renunciation.

A thing which almost held him back, "the bond most difficult to break", was affection for his newborn son. And his resolve to break this bond, and leave home for ever—which to us seems a renunciation of more than dubious morality—did not entail any material hardship to his wife and child. There was no danger that the only grandson and heir of a reigning monarch and his lady-mother would want for anything that human care could supply.

For six years after his flight from home he strove to find the secret of escape from the misery and futility of life. First he sought it by the way of philosophic enquiry. When this failed, he tried the way of self-torturing asceticism recommended by the idealist teachers of his day. And this too failed. Then, after an interval of absolute despair, one day, as in intense meditation he sat under the Bo-tree, there came the Great Illumination. He saw in a flash the secret of existence. He grasped the *cause* of all life's misery; and with knowledge of the cause went understanding of the one sure way of complete deliverance. At that moment he became a Buddha, that is, one who has attained complete enlightenment.

When this knowledge had arisen within me, my heart and mind were freed from the drug of lust, from the drug of rebirth, from the drug of ignorance. In me, thus freed, arose knowledge and freedom, and I knew that rebirth was at an end, and that the goal had been reached.<sup>1</sup>

This Illumination brought with it the assurance that the Enlightenment he had attained was not merely the means to deliverance but was itself the goal. By it the fetters of Karma were broken and, freed from the law of rebirth, it was in his power then and there to enter Nirvana and its eternal peace. There followed the Great Temptation. Immediately, says the legend, he was assailed by the whisperings of the Prince of Evil. Why should he not at once and without delay avail himself of this hard-won power and knowledge? Why should he not accept the Nirvana that was his? What held him back? Only compassion—the strongest and deepest element in his human character. Compassion urged him to consent to live—live out the allotted span of human life, enduring toil and trial. Thus, and thus only, would it be possible to hand on, to some few at least of suffering humanity, the secret of the great deliverance which he had himself surprised. For the space of a month he wrestled with the temptation, and in the end compassion won.

Thus it was that Buddhism sprang from his con-

<sup>1</sup> This quotation from *Maha-saccaka Sutta*, or *The Discourses of Gotama*, I owe to K. J. Saunders, *Gotama Buddha*, p. 25. ("The Heritage of India Series", 1922. Association Press, Calcutta; Oxf. Univ. Press, London.)

sent to live, as Christianity from that of Christ to die.

■ The secret of the Universe thus realised was stated by the Buddha (doubtless for the sake of being easily memorised) in what he called the Four Noble Truths. Of these the first three are to some extent theoretical, the fourth is practical.

The Noble Truth of Suffering:

Birth is suffering; death is suffering; presence of the hated is suffering; age is suffering; sickness is suffering; absence of the loved is suffering; to wish and not to get is suffering: briefly, the fivefold nature by which beings cling to existence is suffering.

The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering:

Desire (lit. thirst) is the cause; it leads from birth to birth, bringing with it delight and longing, seeking its gratification here and there—namely, desire for sensual pleasure, desire for existence, desire for prosperity.

The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering:

Suffering ceases with the cessation of this desire—a cessation consisting in the absence of every passion—with the abandoning of desire, with the doing away with it, with deliverance from it, with the destruction of desire.

The fourth of the Noble Truths, that “of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering”, is unexpectedly practical and ethical. It is known as the Holy Eightfold Path, and consists in:

Right belief, right feeling, right speech, right action, right mode of livelihood, right effort, right recollectedness, right meditation.

The bare recital of the Four Noble Truths makes it evident that the starting point of Sakyamuni's philosophy of life is the fact of disillusionment. That is one way in which he is more "modern" than the Christ. Another characteristic shared by him and our modern *intelligentsia* is his agnosticism—practical if not also theoretical—in regard both to metaphysical speculation and to traditional religion. Among historical students of Buddhism, as also between rival sects of Buddhists, there has been much dispute as to the extent of this agnosticism. There seems, however, no doubt that, whatever may have been his own opinion as to the validity of metaphysic as a form of knowledge, he strongly discouraged his disciples from pursuing such studies or entangling themselves in the metaphysical discussion which was the supreme interest of the religious intellectuals of the day. In regard to the gods of the Hindu Pantheon, his attitude was probably not unlike that of Epicurus. He accepted, or at least did not think it worth while to deny, the belief that these existed. What he was concerned to stress was the futility of sacrifice, ceremony, and prayer. The gods themselves, like men, are subject to the wheel of Karma and rebirth, and are impotent to give mankind the only help that can be of any profit. Knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, persistence along the Eightfold Noble Path, is the only way to deliverance. And one who has reached

deliverance along this road, and has become a Buddha, stands higher than the highest of the gods. He is, as they are not, freed from the tyranny of desire and the necessity of rebirth; he has achieved Nirvana.

And what is Nirvana? Is it extinction, or is it identity with the Absolute? On this point Buddhist sects give varying answers and modern experts disagree. Sakyamuni himself declined to say—perhaps because he deprecated speculation on the matter, perhaps because it seemed futile to attempt to express the inexpressible. On the whole it seems the more probable view that Nirvana consists in realised identity with the Absolute and the peace ineffable which comes therewith.

To the Buddha the supreme problem was the problem of pain. To Christ, on the other hand, this problem and its solution was bound up with that of moral evil. And though to Christ the word “sin” evidently did not mean what St. Augustine and Calvin have since taught Western Christianity to mean by it, it would seem that to him the problem of moral evil was prior to that of pain. In this respect again the outlook of the Buddha is temperamentally more “modern”—a fact to be noted without prejudice to the question whether his view is the more profound.

But the Buddha and the Christ are at one in this, that their attitude alike to suffering and to sin is

wholly practical. Their primary aim is not explanation but deliverance.

Once some disciples were enquiring, Is the Universe eternal or not eternal? Is the universe finite or infinite? The Buddha is said to have replied:

These questions are not calculated to profit, they are not concerned with the Dharma, they do not redound to the elements of right conduct, nor to detachment, nor to purification from lusts, nor to quietude, nor to tranquillisation of heart, nor to real knowledge, nor to the insight of the higher stages of the Path, nor to Nirvana. Therefore is it that I express no opinion upon them.

He goes on to explain what it is that he does teach:

What pain is, what the origin of pain is, what the cessation of pain is, and the method by which one may reach the cessation of pain.<sup>1</sup>

But though to the Buddha the supreme problem is pain, it would not be true to say that he was indifferent to moral evil. To him, as the above quotation shows, "right conduct" and "purification from lusts" are both a necessary means to, and a result of, that discipline of the will by which alone can be won escape from rebirth, and therefore the final "cessation from pain". Thus the practical solution—and he was only concerned with practical solutions—of the problem of moral evil is, on his theory, *incidental* to the practical solution of the problem

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Potthapada-Sutta by D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, p. 125. (Luzac, 1927.)



of pain. But though the solution is incidental, the problem *is* solved—or at least it would be solved by the instructed disciple, provided he had the will-power to persist, perhaps through several incarnations, in living up to the principles which the Buddha taught.

### SAKYAMUNI AND JESUS

Concerning the inward experience of Jesus, tradition is dumb. We are only told that, at about the age of thirty, as he rose from the waters of Baptism on the banks of Jordan, he saw the vision, and heard the heavenly voice, "Thou art my beloved Son",<sup>1</sup> which assured him that he was called to be Christ; and that this was followed by a period of Temptation. The exact significance of the unique relation to God and man implied by the title Christ, or Son of God, is too large a question to discuss here.<sup>2</sup> But it is worth while to explore the possibility of reaching, by reasonable conjecture, points of contrast or resemblance between the experience of Jesus and that of Sakyamuni, so far as this is not directly involved in the answer given to that question.

So far as personal experience is conditioned by external circumstance, the Buddha and the Christ

<sup>1</sup> We should not have supposed from the version of the story in Mark, the earliest of the Gospels, that the vision was seen, or the voice heard, by any but Christ himself.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of different aspects of this question I may refer to my essays in *Foundations and Reality*.

would seem to be each the complement of the other. Jesus lived in daily contact with things which to a prince like Sakyamuni could only be known through the capacity of sympathetic interpretation of the experience of others; he and his had knowledge at first hand of the ills of poverty, and not least of "the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely". Roman rule over subject races was harsh as well as haughty; less tyrannical and corrupt under Tiberius than under the Republic, it was still tyrannical and corrupt. And it was resented more than the earlier tyrannies of Babylonian and Persian satraps by reason of the very virtues of the Roman; for tyranny is most felt where it is most efficient.

On the other hand, of the disillusionment that follows a surfeit of life's good things, which the Buddha felt so keenly, Christ had no first-hand experience. Yet the possibility of disillusionment was not outside the range of his sympathy and understanding. His sayings evidence a comprehensive knowledge of the literature of the Old Testament, and he read this neither with the eye of a modern critic, nor yet as the Scribes; he read it with intuitive understanding of human character, as Shakespeare read in Plutarch the lives of Greek and Roman statesmen. He must have meditated upon the two books Ecclesiastes and Job, which discuss from such diverse points of view that problem of evil which forms the root perplexity of existence.

Ecclesiastes was accepted as the work of Solomon; and no Jew, concerned as Jesus was to sound the meaning of human life, could ignore the reflections on this theme of one reputed to be the wisest of mankind. But at times, when we read Ecclesiastes, we seem to be gazing, as through an open window, into the Buddha's very soul:

I builded me houses; I planted vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards . . . I gathered me silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, concubines very many. . . . And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them: . . . Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun (Eccl. ii. 4 ff.).

Solomon, like the Buddha, was a prince to whose lot had fallen, not merely the wealth and rank and luxury of princely life, but a mastery of the wisdom of his age; and, like the Buddha, he had found this, too, fail him in his need:

I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart hath had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow (i. 16 ff.).

There is even a possible reference to that cosmic weariness which results from the doctrine of the never-endingly repeated cycles of creation which, in its Greek form, may have been accepted by the Alexandrian Jew who, in the character of Solomon, wrote this dramatic monologue—but, of course, without the idea of Karma.

That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there a thing whereof men say, See, this is new? it hath been already, in the ages which were before us (i. 9-10).

Is it fanciful to suggest that it was not without a half reference to this testament of Solomon that Christ added one more count to the tale of vanities—saying of the lilies, “the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven”, that “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”?

In the book of Job, Jesus will have found discussed an aspect of the problem of evil which lay outside the philosophic and ethical purview of the Buddha—the problem, why in this world merit and reward are not more nearly commensurate? Why so often do we see the righteous suffer, while the wicked flourish like a green bay-tree? For the Buddha, this problem did not exist; or rather, it was completely solved by the doctrine of Karma, which solves it by the simple method of denying its exist-

ence. For, according to this doctrine, there is no such thing as *innocent* suffering, since all suffering in this life is punishment justly earned by misdeeds in a previous incarnation; and, similarly, all present happiness is the reward of previous, though forgotten, merit. Of course, if this doctrine is true, the problem is solved. If not, we have an example of the way in which the acceptance of a belief traditional to his countrymen artificially narrowed the range of sympathy and thought of India's greatest prophet.

Jesus takes occasion (cf. p. 212) to deny the theory, upheld by Job's friends, that in this world misfortune is proportionate to desert; and he frequently asserts that God will vindicate His faithful servants. But on the actual problem discussed in the book of Job he says little or nothing. The reason of this avoidance, I suggest, is his concern to destroy the conception of "merit", as held by the Pharisees who were the most actively religious party among the Jews. The existence of suffering is the supreme challenge to Theism, but to stress the problem of the suffering of *the righteous as such*, is tacitly to assume that righteousness is a meritorious achievement of the individual, for which he *deserves* reward. Christ will not tolerate the idea of "merit" in this sense:

So . . . when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do (Luke xvii. 10).

Again, he was not concerned to administer cosmic consolation to persons who conceived themselves to be righteous. Rather, he taught, the mere fact that man supposes he has achieved righteousness, means that he has missed the way to it—like the Pharisee who boasted (no doubt with truth) that he was “not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican”.

In his valuation of “merit”, Christ is more “modern” than the Buddhist. The educationalist and the criminologist of to-day—knowing something of the influence on character of heredity and environment, and of the possibility of psychological mishap in infancy—is impatient with the Pharisee; and, in the hope to make men better, is often inclined to echo that word of Christ, “Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more”.

Christ is “modern”, too, in that he aims at producing the good life, not by mere repression or suppression of the bad, but by enkindling enthusiasm for the good.

For Christ there was no necessary conflict between wisdom and passion; rather he knew the passions that are themselves wise, and he rose to the conception of a God passionate like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Love and pity, he said, are the wise passions, the passions felt by God; but before he told this to men wisdom was a chance thing, for men did not know how to experience life so that they would gain wisdom as a plant draws light and heat from the sun. They knew, perhaps, that love and pity were

good; but they did not know that they were wise and the source of wisdom. They saw that the passions bring joy and sorrow, and no man can tell which they will bring; but they supposed that wisdom must bring joy, or at least the absence of sorrow; and so they divorced it from the passions. But when Christ said—Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted—he proclaimed that wisdom does not imply joy or the absence of sorrow. It is born of the sorrow of those who have opened their hearts to love and pity. What matters to us, he taught, is not whether we are joyful or sorrowful, but the quality of our joy and sorrow, the quality of our passions. Before him men had found quality only in joy; and the wise man was he who escaped sorrow, even he who refused passionate joy lest it should turn to sorrow. But those who would escape sorrow by such a refusal do not know the meaning even of joy, do not know that a high passionate joy is of the same nature as a high passionate sorrow. They are kindred in their quality and in the wisdom which they bring; for both are gifts from God.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of human life, as it presented itself to the Buddha's mind, would have seemed to Christ unduly simplified. The Babylonian exile, followed by centuries of oppression by foreign powers, had made suffering for the Jew a problem of national experience, as well as of individual, to an extent unparalleled elsewhere in human history. Christ speaks of pain much less than does the Buddha, but he knew more about it. And for him there was a graver problem. The history of his people, as interpreted

<sup>1</sup> A. Clutton-Brock, *Studies in Christianity*, pp. 147-148. (Constable, London, and Dutton, N.Y., 1918.)

by a long line of prophets, had concentrated attention, again to an extent unique in human history, on the problem of moral evil, both in the individual and in social life. And from "the signs of the times", the same lesson could be read—from the corruption of the ruling priesthood, the narrow blindness of the zealously religious, and daily observation how that

Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn.

To the Buddha, we have seen, the problem of moral evil was incidental to the problem of pain: immoral action tends to increase the will to live, therefore the overcoming of evil impulses in the soul is a precondition of deliverance from pain. It was impossible for a Jew either to explain suffering by means of Karma, or to think of sin as something incidental. Thus to Christ the problem of evil had been posed on a larger scale than to the Buddha; and, paradoxically enough, it was a problem made at once more difficult and more hopeful of solution because it had been written, "God saw that it was good".

#### RESEMBLANCE BEHIND CONTRAST

It is remarkable that the Buddha's Eightfold Path, considered as a series of ethical precepts, resembles the Sermon on the Mount more than does any other moral system. Such differences as there are between the moral teaching of the Buddha and



the Christ are directly related to, and are logically necessitated by, their contrasted views of the nature of ultimate Reality.

Why, then, we may ask, do those modern intellectuals who share both the pessimism and the agnosticism of the Buddha deduce from them an ethic of such a very different character? To this question the theoretical answer is clear: they do not share the Buddha's acceptance of the Law of Karma. It is possible for a modern agnostic to eat and drink, in the belief that to-morrow he dies; it is also possible for him to contemplate suicide as a way of escape, should life's evils become too acute. To a believer in Karma death is no escape; it is only a preliminary to a new series of rebirths—perhaps in Hell, for an aeon, perhaps on earth as an animal, as a woman, as a pariah, or as a man whose life is more crowded with disappointment and disaster than that from which death seemed a refuge. If death is no escape from human misery, but merely a portal to rebirth, something must be found to break the chain of cause and effect which makes that rebirth necessary. This, to the Buddha, can be done by the eradication of "desire", that is, of the will-to-live, which is the primal cause of birth and continued rebirth; and it can be done in no other way. To this end a man must realise that his individual self belongs, like other phenomenal objects, to the realm of *maya*. And he must know the individual self to be illusion, not

merely with the pure intellect, but also with that deeper realisation which can be achieved only by a long discipline of negating every personal desire.

With this same belief in Karma are logically connected the differences between the precepts of the Eightfold Path and the teaching of Christ. In Buddhist ethics the supreme virtues have always been compassion and self-control, more especially shown in the conquest of anger and lust. But detachment is no less fundamental; for the aim is the eradication of all desire—desire of things good as well as evil. Hence the Buddhist may not let pity pass the border-line which separates it from love; to love is to readmit desire, it is to jeopardise the tranquillity which is the goal, for the attainment of which the ethical discipline exists. At the lower stages of the upward climb, the love of wife, or child, or friend is good; but it must be shunned by him who would attain Nirvana at this life's end, or after only a few more rebirths. The need of detachment explains the inclusion in the Eightfold Path of Right Meditation. Undoubtedly this refers to some variety of the technical discipline known as Yoga, the aim of which is to disengage the mind from all consciousness of temporal things and focus it on Absolute Existence.

Thus the Buddha's acceptance of the belief in Karma explains the difference of his ethics, alike from those of Christ, and from the Epicureanism

which is taken for granted by so many moderns. But suppose the Buddha had not believed in Karma? In that case his teaching must have moved nearer, either to the teaching of Christ, or to that of Epicurus. In which of these directions would it have moved? That question he himself answered, not by word but by deed, at the Great Temptation, when he renounced Nirvana and chose a life of sacrifice and labour, in hope thereby to bring to suffering humanity his message of salvation.

For the philosophy of religion it is of the first importance to realise that the barrier which separates the Buddha from Christ is due, in the last resort, more to the intellectual theories which he inherited than to disagreement in the findings of his own very original moral insight. Where the Buddha was most himself, there he was most like Christ.

Yet in the result the divergence is one that matters; for it has not been without practical consequences, ethical and psychological, that the Buddhist bows before a figure that sits rapt in eternal meditation, the Christian before one that hangs bleeding from a cross.

## TABLE OF DATES ,

B.C.	
*1003	David makes Jerusalem his capital.
*780-700	Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah prophecy.
586	Jerusalem desolated; Jews exiled to Babylon.
*563-483	Life of the Buddha.
552-480	Life of Confucius.
*540-475	Xenophanes and Heraclitus, Greek philosophers.
520	Temple of Jerusalem, rebuilding begun.
427-347	Life of Plato.
384-322	Life of Aristotle.
372	Mencius, Chinese philosopher, born.
307	Epicurus in Athens.
*304	Beginnings of Stoicism.
55	Lucretius, Roman Epicurean poet.
A.D.	
30	The Crucifixion of Christ.
50-62	Writing of the Epistles of St. Paul.
*61	Buddhism comes to China.
64	Nero persecutes Christians in Rome.
*65-105	Writing of the Gospels.
70	Temple of Jerusalem destroyed by the Romans.
204-270	Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist.
325	Council of Nicaea, called by Constantine.
354-430	St. Augustine, the greatest Latin Father.
410	Sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth.
451	The Council of Chalcedon.
506	Christianity (Nestorian mission) in China.
538	Buddhism at the court of Japan.
596	Christianity brought to the English.
622	Mohammed's Flight to Mecca.
1182-1226	St. Francis of Assisi.
1224-1274	Thomas Aquinas, the great schoolman.
1517	Luther starts the Reformation.
1534	Ignatius Loyola founds the Jesuit Order.
1543	Copernicus' theory of Astronomy published.
1868	The New Era in Japan.
1906	The dethronement of the Confucian Classics in China.

\* The asterisk denotes that the date is approximate.

**LECTURE 3**  
**EVOLVING BUDDHISM**

## EVOLVING BUDDHISM

### SYNOPSIS

The last lecture was a study in contrasts; this will be a study in resemblances; for, in their historic developments, Buddhism and Christianity have tended to converge.

#### DIVISIONS IN BUDDHISM

Like Christianity, Buddhism virtually died out in the land of its origin; it was split up into sects; it absorbed from its environment popular superstitions; it became preoccupied with metaphysical speculation.

The great cleavage is between the Hinayana (or Southern Buddhism) of Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, and the Mahayana (or Northern Buddhism), which is best seen in China and Japan.

The Hinayana scriptures (in Pali) are the main source for our knowledge of the historic Sakyamuni. The Mahayana writings (in Sanskrit and Chinese) represent a development which is specially important for our present study of religion as *an objectification of race-experience*.

#### MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

(1) The centre of interest becomes less the teaching of the historic Sakyamuni than the meaning of his person. From reflection on this there arises the equation, Buddhahood = the Absolute = Nirvana.

(2) Mahayana is the "broad-way" which offers ultimate salvation to all living things.

(3) An important development was the belief in a series of Bodhisattvas, or Divine Saviours. This belief facilitated the absorption of local deities into Buddhism—most notably in the case of Kwannon, the Madonna of the East.

(4) Even more notable is the figure of Amida, or Amitabha, the Buddhist Redeemer. By his self-sacrificing labours Amida has won

so great a store of "merit" that he can save all who with true faith call upon his name. These after death he welcomes into his "Western Paradise".

(5) In Mahayana little is heard of the Four Noble Truths, but much of the Five Precepts.

(6) The development of a ceremonial, having a striking similarity to the Catholic. The feeling for the beauty of Nature. Festivals: funerals; pilgrimages.

(7) The doctrine of Hell, and of "Masses" for the dead.

(8) Buddhist tolerance; spells and magic; monasteries. Two incidents illustrative of the popular religion.

### THE SCHOOL OF ZEN

Whereas Shin Buddhism teaches justification by *faith alone* (in Amida), Zen stresses *works*—effort, meditation, discipline. Its aim is to help the individual to attain "Enlightenment", which is conceived of as an experience of sudden "conversion"—only of an intellectual kind, rather than primarily moral or emotional.

### AMIDA BUDDHA

To the majority of Buddhists in Japan, and probably also in China, salvation is by mere faith in the saving power of Amida.

It is a debated question whether this type of Buddhism has been influenced by Christianity in its Nestorian form, or by Hindu *bhakti*.

Amida and Christ. The marriage of priests. The influence of the Confucian ethics on the Buddhist is comparable to that of Stoic ethics and Roman Law on the Christian.

### A BUDDHIST COUNTER-REFORMATION

There is now in progress an awakening and reform of Buddhism in Japan. This, like the Counter-Reformation in the Roman Church begun by the Jesuits in the sixteenth century, is the result of the influence of Protestant Christianity.

The religious revival is bringing Buddhism nearer to Christianity; this fact is of high importance, if, in our search for the essential content of religion, we ask what is the goal towards which it is evolving.

### LECTURE 3

## EVOLVING BUDDHISM

Thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made; for never wouldest thou have made anything, if thou hadst hated it. And how could any thing have endured, if it had not been thy will? or been preserved, if not called by thee? But thou sparest all: for they are thine, O Lord, thou lover of souls.—THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON, xi. 24-26.

My last lecture was a study in contrasts; the present will be rather a study in resemblances. It is essential to recognise the immense difference between the Indian and Jewish outlook on the world, and of the individual experience of the Buddha and the Christ. But, having done this, it is no less essential to note the resemblances between Buddhism and Christianity in their later developments, and the remarkable tendency towards assimilation to one another seen in the history of these two religions. That this assimilation is due to mutual influence by actual contact is improbable. Just for that reason, it is a phenomenon of exceptional importance for our present investigation. Two religions, starting from widely different points, and developing on inde-



pendent lines, have tended to converge; the fact of such convergence, and the line of its direction, must throw light on the nature of the religious intuition—and thereby, it may be hoped, on the object of religious apprehension.

### DIVISIONS IN BUDDHISM

For the past thousand years Buddhism has been extinct in India, Christianity an exiguous sect in Palestine; it is not in their own country that prophets are most honoured. The number of different sects in Buddhism is not quite so large as those in Christianity; but more of them can claim a venerable antiquity. Tradition says that as many as eighteen sects were already recognised as orthodox by a General Council summoned by King Asoka, “the Constantine of Buddhism”, whose reign began 270 B.C. And this was two or three centuries before the rise of the new development known as Mahayana which led to a division so deep as almost to make of Buddhism two different religions—the Southern or Hinayana Buddhism, and the Northern or Mahayana. To the Hinayana belong all the sects of Ceylon, Burma, and Siam; the Mahayana, itself split into numerous sects, prevails in China, Korea, and Japan, and also in a far more corrupted form in Thibet. In Japan at the present day there are twelve recognised Buddhist sects and forty-nine sub-sects, all of the Mahayana school. It is, however, of interest to note

that, whereas the greater number of sects in Christianity are subsequent to the year, A.D. 1500, all the important sects in Buddhism were by that date already ancient.

Christianity, largely as a result of the policy of Roman Emperors who sought to obliterate the distinction between membership of the Church and of the State, caught up into itself and partially Christianised much of the polytheistic outlook and superstitious practice of Graeco-Roman paganism. Local deities became Christian saints; and saints took on the attributes of local deities. Temples became churches, the Christian priest a benevolent magician. Similar, but far more extensive, was the hospitality which Buddhism extended to the deities and superstitions of the races amongst which it spread. The Christian Church could never quite forget the Commandment, Thou shalt have none other gods but me. The Buddhist monk was rather impelled in a contrary direction by the doctrine of *hormon*, or accommodation—the doctrine that simple souls to whom metaphysic is a sealed book must have religion mediated to them in cruder forms.

Christ had not studied metaphysic; the Buddha had, but he abjured it as a danger. Nevertheless, as the two religions spread, among peoples nurtured respectively on Greek and Indian philosophy, it could not but happen that preoccupation in meta-

physic should return. Similarly, St. Francis of Assisi was so averse to the theological preoccupation of the churchmen of his time that he would hardly allow his followers a single book; yet the later Franciscans developed one of the great schools (the Scotist) of mediaeval scholasticism. The Gnostics—who emphasised a distinction between the esoteric knowledge, of which only the few were capable, and simple faith in rite and myth suitable to the uninstructed many—tried to introduce into Christianity something very like the Buddhist doctrine of *hormon*, but the Church rejected this. Yet a shadow of it remained in the theory of “economy” held by some of the Greek Fathers; and there are still quarters where the view prevails that it is better for the common people to believe too much than too little—even at the price of the encouragement of superstition.

Two scenes stand out vividly in my recollection: in the Chapelle du Saint-Sang at Bruges an endless file of country folk, each in turn kneeling in adoration to kiss a phial containing, as they believed, drops of the actual blood of Christ; at Kandy, the old capital of Ceylon, on Buddha’s birthday, a similar file kneeling in turn before the image on the chief altar in the Temple which gains its name and fame from a tooth of Sakyamuni which it claims to guard.

A scene like this brings home to one the fact that

even the Hinayana Buddhism of Ceylon, which in many respects is more primitive than the Mahayana, has travelled a long way from the original teaching of the founder. The Mahayana has gone further still; but some of these later developments are emphatically *not* in the direction of magnifying superstition, but of genuine religious advance.

The scriptures of Hinayana Buddhism, written in the Pali tongue,<sup>1</sup> are the main source available to the historical investigator who desires to get back to the historic figure of Sakyamuni and his authentic teaching. Mahayana Buddhism is important in an entirely different way. Historically it is important as being the religion of a far larger portion of the human race, and in particular as having profoundly influenced the civilisations of China and Japan—countries which have counted for more in the development of humanity than have those of the Hinayana allegiance.

Considered as an “objectification of race-experience”, the importance of Mahayana (for the quest indicated in the title of these lectures) lies in its rich independent development of religious and philosophical ideas, that is, just where it most differs alike from the Hinayana Buddhism and from the original

<sup>1</sup> Many of these have been edited in English, mainly through the lifelong enthusiasm of the late J. W. Rhys Davids and Mrs. Rhys Davids.

A number of selections (520 pages) from them is given by H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*. (Harvard, 1896.) For a short anthology of Buddhist hymns, see K. J. Saunders, *The Heart of Buddhism*. (Oxford, 1915.)

teaching of Sakyamuni himself. The Mahayana is in some respects an advance on the Hinayana, in spite of having to an even greater extent swept up into itself local cults with their accompanying superstitions. This has at times been done without disguise; thus in Japan a great expansion of Buddhism followed a vision, vouchsafed about the year A.D. 700 to a famous monk Gyogi, by the great Sun-goddess of Japan, telling him that she was identical with one of the great Buddhas of the Mahayana cult.

The rise of Mahayana is practically contemporary with that of Christianity; the Lotus sutra, perhaps the most widely read and influential of its scriptures, seems to have been composed sometime during the second century of the Christian era. This, and all the oldest Mahayana sutras, were written in Sanskrit; but they are read to-day, in Japan as well as in China, in classical Chinese.<sup>1</sup>

Mahayana Buddhism, in its passage from an Indian to a Chinese environment, and later on to a Japanese, did not remain unchanged. In both coun-

<sup>1</sup> An English translation by Prof. W. E. Soothill (with some abbreviation) of a Chinese version of the Lotus sutra made in the year A.D. 406, was published in 1930 by the Oxford University Press. This has an illuminating Introduction and reproductions of interesting Buddhist pictures. There is a version from the Sanskrit in *Sacred Books of the East* (ed. Max Müller). The other sutras most widely read in Japan are given in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xlix., part 2. Of the important metaphysical sutra, *The Awakening of Faith* by Asvaghosha (c. A.D. 50-200) there is an English translation by Prof. D. T. Suzuki (Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago, 1900). *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese*, by Samuel Beal (Trübner, 1871), gives selected Mahayana texts.

tries, besides assimilating much worthless material from the existing popular religions, it developed still further its own characteristic religious and philosophical ideas in ways that are of no small interest. The development on its higher side reached its climax in Japan; and in Japan at the present day Buddhism is a living force among the people to a greater extent than in most parts of China. Hence Japanese Buddhism is of special importance for our present investigation.

### MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

The origin of some of the sects of Buddhism, like that of some Christian sects in Europe, owed more to political or personal than to religious causes. In other cases they arose from differences in philosophical tenets too subtle for a crude Englishman to appreciate in their inward significance. But I may attempt an outline summary of certain doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism which lie behind the sectarian differences. Of course, any such outline must necessarily be an over-simplification; no attempt to summarise a philosophical and religious movement with so long a history and so vast a literature could be otherwise. But in a lecture which aims at bringing out resemblances and contrasts between Buddhism and Christianity, over-simplification may not be without a certain value, if it helps us to see under a stronger glare the salient features.

Hinayana Buddhism, it must be insisted, is very far from representing the actual teaching of the Buddha. The Pali Canon, which alone it recognises as authoritative, did not assume its present form till at least five centuries after his death; and this already contains some of the ideas which were further developed by the Mahayana way. Moreover, there exist treatises which bridge the gulf between the two systems. But in this lecture I am not concerned to trace the evolution of Mahayana out of Hinayana thought; I am only concerned with Mahayana as a fully developed system; and this system I shall compare, not with the Hinayana, nor with the actual teaching of the Buddha (so far as this is recoverable), but with parallel developments in the history of Christianity.

(1) Mahayana stands to primitive Buddhism in a relation not unlike that of the Gospel according to St. John to that according to St. Matthew. That is to say, the interest has shifted from the detailed teaching of the Founder to reflection on the meaning for religion of his life and person. But here, as so often when Buddhism and Christianity are studied side by side, we note that Buddhism has pushed much further a tendency common to both. In St. John we read, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; but we also read, "My Father is greater than I". For Mahayana thought, which had adopted a conception of the Absolute very like that pro-

pounded in England by F. H. Bradley,<sup>1</sup> the distinction between the Buddha and the Absolute disappeared—though for “Buddha ” one should rather say “Buddhahood”, meaning by that term the “enlightened” consciousness of the Buddha evacuated of the concept of individual personality.

Against the pantheistic background of Indian philosophy, the attempt of the saint has always been—by ascetic discipline, by the practice of Yoga-meditation, and by an intellectual grasp of the real meaning of the classic maxim, “Thou art That”—to realise the essential identity of the self with Brahma, the Ultimate Reality. One who has attained this realisation can say “I am He”, or “I am It”. This realisation is thus, in practice, a kind of objectively valid self-deification. The question whether Sakyamuni himself shared the metaphysical belief that lies behind this view is one on which experts are at variance. If so, he intentionally substituted discipline of the will by moral effort for ascetic practice and speculative reasoning as the means of attaining union with the Absolute. To his followers, however, in later generations, who undoubtedly accepted this type of metaphysic, it would seem obvious that Sakyamuni himself, at the moment of his Enlightenment, attained such union, and that this union would be even more complete when he left behind him his fleshly body and entered Nirvana.

<sup>1</sup> In *Appearance and Reality*, which was first published in 1893.



On this view the distinction between entering Nirvana and being identified with the Absolute disappears.

Strictly speaking, an abstract philosophical conception like this is not the same as deification, which is essentially a mythological concept. But in the picture-thinking of everyday thought this philosophic conception would naturally be equated with deification. This would naturally result in what in Christian theological discussion would be called an "Adoptionist view" of the person of Sakyamuni. But in the Absolute the time-process is transcended; there is no before and after. If, then, the Absolute and the realised Nirvana which is the essence of Buddhahood are identical, it is as true to say that the Absolute is identical with Buddhahood, as that Buddhahood is identical with the Absolute. If subject and predicate are interchangeable, they can be reversed. That is what the Mahayana did; and the reversal was the more possible because of a point in common between the ontological aspect of the conception of the Absolute and the psychological aspect of that of Nirvana. The equation, Nirvana = the Absolute, was made easier because both conceptions connoted Eternal Calm.

Strictly speaking, of course, terms like "subject", "predicate", and "equation" have no meaning in speaking of the Absolute. A hymn, sung to the Buddha by a Bodhisattva, reads:

When thou reviewest the world with thy wisdom and compassion, it is eternally like a dream, of which we cannot say whether it is permanent or is subject to destruction, as the categories of being and non-being are inapplicable to it. . . .

With thy wisdom and compassion, which really defy all qualification, thou comprehendest the ego-less nature of things and persons, and art eternally clean of the evil passions and of the hindrance of knowledge.

Thou dost not vanish in Nirvana, nor does Nirvana abide in thee; for it transcends the dualism of the enlightened and [un-]enlightenment as well as the alternatives of being and non-being.<sup>1</sup>

The affirmation that the Absolute is identical with Buddhahood reacted on the Mahayana view of the function of the historic person Sakyamuni. For stated in mythological terms it leads, not to an Incarnationist, but to what in Western theology would be called a Docetic view of the person of the historic Sakyamuni. What mattered for religion was the eternal Buddhahood; and since it seemed that in any individual man this must necessarily be almost as much veiled as revealed, Buddhism ceased to be supremely interested in the personality of its founder. Thus, while the Johannine theology personalised the Logos, Mahayana philosophy de-personalised the historic Buddha.

(2) This doctrine has a corollary, from which this

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the Lankavatara Sutra, by D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, p. 76. (Luzac, London, 1927.)

type of Buddhism derives its name. Mahayana means Large Waggon; Hinayana, or Little Waggon, is a depreciatory name affixed to the older doctrine by Mahayanists, but never used by the Southern Buddhists themselves. For the metaphor of a *waggon*, in which the believer is carried along the road to salvation, I will venture to substitute one more familiar in the religious usage of the West—the metaphor of the Broad and the Narrow Way. The Mahayana, then, will be the Broad Way that offers a salvation which ultimately, often after aeons of rebirths, will be accepted by all mankind, or rather by all beings.

As many beings as there are in this world of beings, comprehended under the term of beings (either born of eggs, or from the womb, or from moisture, or miraculously), with form or without form, with name or without name, or neither with nor without name, as far as any known world of beings is known, all these must be delivered by me in the perfect world of Nirvana.<sup>1</sup>

This doctrine of universal salvation derives from that of the identity of Buddhahood and the Absolute. Buddhahood is a thing which all men are potentially capable of realising; it is a thing which in the infinite series of universes myriads have actually realised. Buddhas innumerable have been, are, and will be. This is a further reason for the relatively small

<sup>1</sup> The Vagrakkhedika, or Diamond Cutter, Sutra, *Sacred Books of the East*, xlix., part 2, p. 113. (Oxford, 1894.)

attention devoted in the Mahayana way to the actual historic person of Sakyamuni. To the Indian what matters is metaphysical truth, not historic fact; history belongs to the sphere of *maya*. That is why the author of the Lotus Sutra feels not the slightest scruple in setting down as an historical scene the semi-celestial drama in which Sakyamuni, just before he leaves his earthly body, produces as his perfected and final teaching the Mahayana doctrine, and explains that his previous Hinayana teaching had been merely provisional and elementary.

(3) A new and important feature in Mahayana Buddhism is the figure of the Bodhisattva (in Japan, Bosatsu). The equation between Buddhahood and the Absolute discussed above ultimately derives from reflection on the meaning of Sakyamuni's inward experience of Enlightenment. The conception of the Bodhisattva is similarly related to the second stage in his experience—the Temptation, and his renunciation of the immediate enjoyment of Nirvana in order to preach the good news to miserable humanity. Just as reflection on the first stage led to belief in numberless Buddhas, so reflection on the second led to belief in numberless Bodhisattvas who, having reached the enlightenment which would have enabled them by entering Nirvana to end for themselves the cycle of rebirth, chose instead to be reborn to act as saviours to suffering mankind.

Inevitably, for everyday religion in the Mahayana Way, the Bodhisattva became of more importance than the Buddha. Moreover this conception provided a category for the ready absorption into Buddhism of local deities. Of this the most striking example is the figure, in China named Kwan-Yin, in Japan Kwannon, the Madonna of the East. In Buddhist theory a woman is as such disqualified from entering Nirvana; but by a good life she may be reborn a man, and so qualify for the attainment of that goal. Thus the Bodhisattva Kwannon is sometimes represented as a male; but more often theoretical considerations have been overruled by practical. Few religions are without some conspicuous female deity; and just as in Europe the figure of the Virgin replaced numerous local goddesses—and in replacing purified and humanised them—so in the East the Buddhist genius for compassion has turned, what often no doubt were unpromising local materials, into the benignant Goddess of Mercy. In China she is often sculptured as a Madonna with her child, in Japan without the child, but frequently with a “thousand” hands of help.

(4) An even more notable figure in Mahayana Buddhism is Amitabha or Amida. Aeons ago, says the legend, in some long defunct universe, a certain monk after a long series of rebirths had reached the height which would have entitled him to enter

Nirvana; instead of doing so he made certain solemn vows. The eighteenth,<sup>1</sup> sometimes called the Primal Vow of Amida, was that he would never enter Nirvana until—by enduring rebirth after rebirth, aeon after aeon, and by continual perseverance in self-discipline, labour, and meditation—he had acquired so great a superfluity of merit that it would make up for the deficiencies of all those who could never have attained salvation by their own efforts. All that was to be required of these is that they call upon his name in sincerity and faith.

All such, it is believed, will, when they die, be received, not into Nirvana itself, but into the “Western Paradise” of Amida. This is a land of everlasting bliss corresponding to the popular Christian view of Heaven; and Amida will defend all who once reach it from the possibility of any future rebirth. I quote from a Japanese tract:

It is said in the Sutra: Although the sins of the unenlightened be many, if these are contrasted with the Power of the Vow they are not as a millet seed to the ocean. . . . A stone is by nature heavy; if you precipitate it into the water, it inevitably sinks, (but) if you place it upon a ship, it assuredly floats. The sins of the unenlightened are heavy; . . . but if you place them on the ship of the Vow, they assuredly become light. The merit of living beings is full of leaks. Amida’s Land-of-reward has no leaks. With the merit which is full of

<sup>1</sup> This, the most important of the forty-eight vows, is not extant in the Sanskrit, but is found in the Chinese version (*Sacred Books of the East*, xlix., part 2, p. 73).

leaks, you cannot be born into the Land where there are no leaks.<sup>1</sup>

The description of this Land of Bliss, into which the true believer is reborn sitting cross-legged on the calix of a lotus, is given with a multiplication of gorgeous detail far more elaborate than that of the New Jerusalem in the Revelation of St. John.<sup>2</sup>

In the great majority of the Buddhist temples of Japan the image on the high altar represents not Sakyamuni, but Amida the Saviour—who had no historical existence, but is a personification of the spirit of saving renunciation expressed in Sakyamuni's great consent to live. To the student of the content of religious intuition, and of the history of its expression in philosophy and myth, there is no figure of greater interest than that of Amida.

(5) To Mahayana Buddhism the ultimate goal is still the escape from the necessity of rebirth into this vale of tears; but there is distinctly less emphasis on the misery of human life. It is significant that the Four Noble Truths, which to Sakyamuni were the starting-point of his message, are hardly ever mentioned in Mahayana teaching. Their place is taken by the Five Precepts. These occupy a place compar-

<sup>1</sup> I derive this, and the quotation on p. 107 below, from a reprint (kindly lent me by Lady Hosie) of a paper on the Shin sect read to the Asiatic Society of Japan, October 1855, by James Troup.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Sukhavati Sutra*, *Sacred Books of the East*, xlix., part 2, p. 33 ff.

able to that occupied by the Ten Commandments in ordinary Christian teaching. It is quite likely that Sakyamuni himself formulated the Five Precepts—not to kill, not to steal, not to be unchaste, not to lie, not to drink intoxicants. Like St. Francis, he founded not only an order of monks, but a kind of lay order. The Five Precepts, if formulated as such by him, look as if intended for guidance of disciples who were still living “in the world”. At any rate, the virtual substitution in the Mahayana of the Five Precepts for the Four Noble Truths means a movement away from the “other-worldliness” of original Buddhism.

(6) Mahayana early developed an elaborate and dignified ceremonial, which is to be seen at its best in Japan. The Japanese sense of decorum expresses itself in a reverence of demeanour that gives to a Buddhist service in one of the great temples a solemnity surpassing anything I have seen in the cathedrals of Europe which confess the Latin allegiance. The altar, the vestments, the chanting, the ascending incense, even the manual acts of the priest, have in the two religions a resemblance which makes it in no way surprising that the earliest Catholic missionaries found in Buddhism a fraudulent imitation of the monastery, the choir-office, and the Mass expressly devised by the Evil One to render the inhabitants of China and Japan immune to the teaching of the Roman Church.



In Japan the feeling for the beauty of Nature has a distinctively religious quality; in this respect Japan has much to teach the West. This feeling has expressed itself in Buddhism, not only in the architecture, but still more in the way in which the buildings, whether lacquered or of unpainted wood, are made, as it were, to grow out of natural surroundings of mountain, stream, or forest, on a site chosen with a unique instinct for beauty and appropriateness of placing and of colour.

In this connexion mention may be made of the importance in village life of the temple, and of the festivals connected with it. A boy, on the thirty-first day after birth (a girl on the thirty-third) is commonly taken to a temple and placed under the guardianship of a special deity selected by the parents. Again, most Japanese families have an ancestral connexion with some particular sect or temple, the priests of which have a prescriptive right to perform funeral rites for any of its members.

Almost every community has its own representative shrines, temples, or other sacred places [some of these are Shinto rather than Buddhist—B.H.S.], and these usually form spacious playgrounds for the children of the common people, where various forms of festive performance take place. These festivities are of nation-wide interest and especially are they alluring to young children. The psychological significance of these religious festivities is not difficult to see. They do not appeal to the child [primarily] as religiously

important incidents, but as acts in which the entire community participates.<sup>1</sup>

The institution of the pilgrimage is also one of great social importance. Pilgrimages may be made by solitary individuals, to acquire merit, to fulfil a vow, to expiate an offence. They are also made in companies, usually in joyful mood, consisting of groups connected by some local or family bond. The general "atmosphere" of the company, and the mixture of religion with holiday motive recalls the kind of pilgrimage of which we read in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In Japan this is a very living feature in the contemporary social life.

(7) A more sinister development in the Mahayana, as it travelled across China to Japan, was its increased emphasis on the Indian doctrine of Hell, and the institution of elaborate and costly temple services in relief of souls in torment. Hell is one of the grades in the wheel of Karma, rebirth into which is a necessary consequence of iniquity beyond a certain degree; whereas a lesser degree would merely entail rebirth as an animal or a woman. In so far as the sojourn of the soul in Hell has a duration which, though extending to ten thousand years or more, is limited, the Buddhist Hell is more nearly equivalent to the Western Purgatory. In the description and

<sup>1</sup> K. Kato, *The Psychology of Oriental Religious Experience: A Study of some typical experiences of Japanese converts to Christianity*. (G. Banta Pub. Co., Menasha, Wisconsin, 1915.)

graphic delineation of its various tortures the Chinese imagination has not fallen short of that of mediæval Europe. Along with the growing emphasis on this doctrine went a parallel development of belief in the efficacy of the Buddhist equivalent of Masses for the souls of the dead. And in China, as in some other countries, this development has tended more to the financial profit of the priesthood than to the moral elevation of the people.

(8) The spirit of kindly tolerance, which to the student of the acrimonious history of Western religion is one of the most attractive features in Buddhism, is a pearl which has been bought at perhaps too great a price. The failure of Buddhism to offer adequate resistance to the degrading influences of magical practice and polytheistic belief has been even more conspicuous than that of Mediaeval Latin or Greek Orthodox Christianity.

Even in a sacred classic of the early date and elevated quality of the Lotus Sutra there is an appendix, probably to be dated about A.D. 300, providing the faithful with a selection of magical spells. The spells here are all of a defensive and protective character. And both in China and Japan there are commonly on sale in the temples an assortment of spells available against different illnesses or demons, or valuable for securing some wished-for end, like the birth of a son, or success in a business venture. In China especially temples are much resorted to for

purposes of divination. But once magic is admitted, it can be used, like some other forms of armament, for offensive as well as for defensive warfare. And in China the temples also supply charms and magical devices, which have as their object the injury of an enemy. In Japan evil charms are not, I believe, purchasable in the temples; but they are sold elsewhere; and a religion which profits financially by the traffic in white magic has thrown away the weapons by which it might assail black.

In China and in Old Japan, even more than in mediaeval Europe, the monastery was the centre of religion. In Europe, though most monks were ignorant, and many corrupt, in a large number of monasteries there flourished the keen intellectual life which produced the scholastic philosophy and theology, and the devotional life which found expression in works like the *Imitatio Christi*; and much was done in the way of education and poor relief. In all these respects the Buddhist monastery has been a counterpart to the Christian; only in Europe religion had, in addition to the monastic system, the institution of the parish priest, nationally and internationally organised under bishops and Pope. This twofold system did much to keep in check in Europe the polytheistic tendency due to the survival among the uneducated of primitive types of religion. At any rate, it is the fact that to the populace, both in China and Japan, Buddhism is a form of polytheism,

humanised and partially moralised—to an extent which varies considerably in different places—by the benign influence of the spirit of Sakyamuni.

Two incidents may serve to illustrate the naïvety of the popular religious mind. The first is a pretty scene at the Temple of Kwannon, the Goddess of Mercy, attached to the Tendai sect of Buddhism in the Asakusa district of Tokyo. In Japan even superstitions are for the most part beautiful. I give it in the words of an eye-witness:

On October 11, 1929, I was at this temple, and found streams of women coming and going, all carrying *yellow* chrysanthemums. Each woman brought a few long-stalked flowers and laid them down on the great wooden treasury chest, and took up *another* bunch, brought by someone else, to carry home. I spoke to some of the women, asking what it meant, and they seemed quite pleased to explain. They said they would hang up the flowers at home, heads down, for a year, “so that the young people of the family may not die before the older ones”. At the end of a year the dried flowers are taken down and put into pillows, “to prevent catching cold”. And then they buy new flowers to take to the temple again. This observance comes every year on the 9th day of the 9th month, *Old Calendar*.

The second scene is in China. This also I derive from an eye-witness, though the quality of my memory does not guarantee what is here set down to be an exact reproduction of his actual words:

The drought had lasted many months; again and again every kind of ceremony and supplication at the temple had

been tried, and no rain came. At last the chief magistrate of the district, induced by popular pressure, carried out a solemn visitation of the temple. The images of the gods were brought out into the open, and were then scourged by police officers with the whips used for ordinary criminals. This done, the gods were left where they were, in order that they might themselves experience the scorching heat. Since they had been deaf to prayer, it was worth while to try what punishment would effect.

### THE SCHOOL OF ZEN

The deepest cleavage in Mahayana Buddhism has a notable correspondence with the Western controversy as to whether Justification is by Faith or by Works. This division appears in its sharpest form in the contrast between the two leading sects in Japan, named respectively Shin and Zen. Indeed, did they not share a common background of Mahayana philosophy, they might seem to be not two sects of one religion, but two distinct religions.

Zen is admittedly an aristocratic way of salvation; it is a religion for the few who are capable of resolute effort and prolonged self-discipline. Its method is primarily intense meditation; whereas that of Shin, which appeals to the many and the weak, is faith. But Zen, besides its monks, has its lay brothers. In Old Japan, Zen appealed specially to the Samurai and statesman class—largely because its discipline of meditation was held to build up a mental habit which gave poise and calmness in

battle or in practical affairs. And even to-day it is not without adherents of this type. It has left a deep mark on the national character, especially in regard to restraint in the expression of emotion, and in the allusive quality of Japanese art.

Zen is characterised by a peculiar discipline which originated in China, and which strikes the Western mind as extravagantly eccentric. Into the details of this I need not enter; what matters more is its aim. The aim of the Zen discipline is to produce in the aspirant a psychological crisis comparable to what is known in the West as "conversion", save that it appertains to the intellectual side of the self, rather than to the moral or emotional. Except a man be intellectually born again he cannot see Nirvana. But one who strives earnestly, even if he misses the experience in this life, will, by the Law of Karma, start with a better chance of attaining it in a future incarnation. Suddenly, it may be after ten or twenty years of meditation (under the eccentric discipline peculiar to this sect), there comes the flash of realisation; henceforth he is a new man, he *knows* the secret of the Universe. This flash of illumination, it is held by Zen, is the same experience as the Great Enlightenment which came to Sakyamuni under the Bo-tree. Only it is an experience which is essentially incommunicable. Sakyamuni himself, they teach, never attempted to put it into words; but once before a large gathering he held out a

flower, and kept silence. One of his disciples smiled; and by that smile the Buddha knew that he, and he alone, understood. And from him, through a succession of Masters, the Zen tradition has been handed down.

An experience that can only be attained after years of a peculiar discipline to which I have not submitted, and that, when attained, is essentially incommunicable, you will not expect me to expound. I have, however, read the classical treatise on the subject, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, by Professor D. T. Suzuki; and, when in Japan, I had the privilege of an interview with the author, and also with a Zen abbot. I carried away the impression that the experience probably includes two elements. First, the realisation that the secret of the Universe is within the self. Zen is "the seeing into one's own Nature". But by "Nature" is meant "Buddha-Nature", understood more particularly from the intellectual point of view; this intellectual Buddhahood is possessed by everyone of us, but owing to confusion of thought, or "ignorance", we fail to realise it in ourselves. Secondly, it is the attainment of a point of view which transcends the distinctions between things—and even the distinction between the Absolute, of which nothing but negatives and contradictions can be predicated, and the world of phenomena. It is to realise that when mind "discriminates" (*i.e.* perceives or thinks of as distinct).



there is manifoldness of things; but when it does not, it looks into the true state of things.

In the Diamond Cutter Sutra, which is much studied in the Zen sect, it is laid down that in the highest perfect knowledge possessed by the Buddha himself there is not a knowledge of things.<sup>1</sup>

Even the smallest thing is not known or perceived there, therefore it is called the highest perfect knowledge. Also, all is the same there, there is no difference there, and therefore it is called the highest perfect knowledge. Free from self, free from being, free from life, free from personality, that highest perfect knowledge is always the same, and thus known with all good things. And why? Because, what were preached as good things, good things indeed, O Subhuti, they were preached as no-things by the Tathagata [*i.e.* the Buddha], and therefore they are called good things.

The Lankavatara Sutra has a story of Ravana, an Indian king, who prayed for knowledge of the content of the inner experience of the Buddha. A marvellous vision was vouchsafed to him, of himself listening to countless Buddhas on countless jewelled mountains in countless countries. It vanished and he thought:

How is this? What means this? and by whom was it heard? What was it that was seen? and by whom was it seen? Where is the city? and where is the Buddha?

Where are those places, those jewel-shining Buddhas, those Sugatas? Is it a dream then? or a vision? or is it a castle conjured up by the Gandharvas?

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, xlix., part 2, p. 138 f.

Or is it dust in the eye, or a mirage, or the dream-child of a barren woman, or the smoke of a fire-wheel, that which I saw here?

Then Ravana reflected:

This is the nature as it is (*dharmata*) of all things objectified in and by the mind, and it is not comprehended by the ignorant, as they are confused by every form of discrimination.

There is neither the seer nor the seen, neither the speaker nor the spoken. The form and usage of the Buddhist works—they are nothing but discrimination.

Those who see things such as were seen before, do not see the Buddha; when discrimination is not aroused, then one indeed sees the Buddha; the Buddha is a Fully-enlightened One; when one sees him, it is in a world unmanifested.

The Lord of Lanka was then immediately awakened. Feeling a revulsion (*paravritti*) in his mind and realising that the world was nothing but his own mind, he got settled in the realm of non-discrimination; was inspired by a stock of his past good deeds; acquired the cleverness of understanding all the texts; obtained the faculty of seeing into things as they were; was no more dependent upon others; observed things excellently with his own wisdom; gained the insight that was not of discursive reasoning.<sup>1</sup>

To an Englishman, the idea could never occur that salvation from an eternity of miserable effort

<sup>1</sup> D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*, p. 72. (Routledge, 1930.)

could depend on a just apprehension of the relation of the Absolute and the phenomenal; to him salvation (if he bothers at all about such a thing) is a matter of the heart and the will. But in the Indian tradition, which Buddhism inherits, salvation by *knowledge* is taken for granted. The Buddhist monk has been taught to wrestle with "ignorance" as the mediaeval saint wrestled with sin. Thus the attainment of a quasi-intellectual insight, which reconciles philosophy and common sense and sees that the distinction between the Absolute (thought of as alone the real) and the Phenomenal (thought of as *maya*) is itself an illusion, can bring with it the emotional liberation which in the West accompanies a religious conversion.

I felt [wrote Koho, a Zen master, c. A.D. 1270, describing his illumination] as if this boundless space itself were broken up into pieces, and the great earth were altogether levelled away. I forgot myself, I forgot the world; it was like one mirror reflecting another.<sup>1</sup>

#### AMIDA BUDDHA

The Shin sect is by far the largest in Japan; and it is only one of several closely-related "Jodo" sects which between them include two-thirds of the adherents of Buddhism in that country. In all these sects Amida is the central object of devotion, the meaning of salvation is to enter after death his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, p. 237 f.

Western Paradise, the one sufficient means thereto is *faith* in the grace of Amida, and the saving expression of this faith is the repetition of the formula, *Namu Amida Butsu*, "Hail, Amida Buddha". The highest act of piety is to repeat this formula (often shortened to *Namu Amida*) several hundred times a day. In private devotion it is whispered by the individual, counting the repetitions on a rosary; publicly it is chanted by priests, in procession, or assembled in the choir. The historic Sakyamuni has for this sect of Buddhism almost ceased to count, except that by many of its adherents he is regarded as the latest incarnation of Amida.<sup>1</sup>

The attempt has been made to establish a historical connexion, by way of Nestorian Christianity, between this emphasis on faith and St. Paul's doctrine of Justification by Faith.<sup>2</sup> To this view there are three main objections: (1) Greek and Eastern Christianity has practically ignored this doctrine of St. Paul. It was partially revived in the West by St. Augustine; but not till Luther did it become a central doctrine in popular preaching. (2) "Justification" for St. Paul or Luther is a term which has a particular reference to deliverance from sin conceived as a bondage of the will; the deliverance

<sup>1</sup> For Chinese Buddhism no statistics are available, and there are not the same lines of demarcation between sects. I am, however, under the impression that Amitabha (as he is more often called in China) is not a less important figure in China than in Japan.

<sup>2</sup> So Arthur Lloyd in his *The Creed of Half Japan*.

offered by the cult of Amida is deliverance, not from the bondage of the will, but from the future rebirths in a world of suffering which sin would otherwise entail. Those who have been "justified by faith" in the Pauline or Lutheran sense have experienced an inner change which makes it possible to say to them "sin shall have no more dominion over you". The salvation which Amida holds out to all who trust in his compassion is a salvation after death into his Paradise, independently of outward deeds or inward state. Professor M. Anesaki quotes<sup>1</sup> from a treatise by Honen, A.D. 1175, the founder of Jodo:

There shall be no distinction, no regard to male or female, good or bad, exalted or lowly; none shall fail to be in His Land of Purity after having called, with complete desire, on Amita. Just as a bulky boulder may pass over the sea, if loaded on a ship, and accomplish a voyage of myriads of leagues without sinking; so we, though our sin be heavy as stone, are borne on the ship of Amita's primeval vow, and cross to the other shore without sinking in the sea of repeated births and deaths. [Amita is an alternative spelling of Amida.]

(3) It has been pointed out by various scholars that the kind of religious relation of the believer to the deity implied in the Amida cult is virtually identical with that known in India as *bhakti* (see p. 159 ff.). Between Hindu *bhakti* and *faith*, in the mystical

<sup>1</sup> *History of Japanese Religion*, p. 174. (Kegan Paul, 1930.)

sense in which that word is used in the Epistle to the Romans, there is undoubtedly an analogy. But as Buddhism is of Indian origin, and as devotion to Amida is distinctly nearer to the Hindu *bhakti* than it is to the Pauline *pistis*, it seems gratuitous to postulate a directly Christian influence.

Amida is frequently styled, The All-Father. For popular devotion he is a personal god, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven—not once for all to suffer and to die, but, again and again, through many aeons, to meditate and endure.

Set side by side the myth of Amida and the fact of Christ, as the New Testament interprets it. What is the relation between these two? Is it allowable, musing on such a theme, to quote lines written with another import?

I lived with visions for my company  
 Instead of men and women, years ago,  
 And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know  
 A sweeter music than they played to me. . . .  
     Then THOU didst come—to be,  
 Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,  
 Their songs, their splendours (better, yet the same,  
 As river-water hallowed into fonts),  
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame  
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants:  
 Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

It is of interest to note that in Japan as in Europe the doctrine of Salvation by Faith led to the removal of the prohibition of marriage of priests. The logic of this removal is brought out in the following

dialogue, which I give from the Shin tract, already quoted. A certain prince who was the lay disciple and political patron of Genku Daishi, more commonly known as Honen, the founder of Jodo, said one day:

“You, Daishi, observe the Prohibitions while calling Buddha to remembrance. Your disciple eats (*i.e.* I eat) flesh and lives with a wife. Is there no distinction of excellent and base in this?” The Daishi replied: “All equally call Buddha to remembrance. What fault is there in this?” The other said: “Your disciple has (*i.e.* I have) a daughter; let your chief follower condescend to become my son-in-law, and thus remove all doubt for future ages in the Empire”.

Genku’s “chief follower” at the time was Shinran, and he, after some hesitation, consented to marry the lady. Shinran subsequently felt impelled to push the doctrine of Jodo to further lengths than his master, and thus came to be the founder of the daughter sect of Shin about the year A.D. 1207. Till this time all Buddhist priests in Japan, as elsewhere, had been celibate monks; and in other sects they remained so, *in theory*, till recent times. Now, however, in all but two sects, marriage of priests is legally recognised. In many temples the office of priest is hereditary.

It must not be supposed that in Amida-Buddhism the doctrine of Salvation by Faith has been pushed to the point of antinomianism. On the contrary, the people are taught (*e.g.* in the tract just quoted) to

practise the everyday moralities, according to the "Five Relations" laid down by Confucius.

This brings me to a new point. The relatively little stress laid in Buddhism on everyday ethics, among such practical and ethically-minded people as the Chinese and Japanese, is explained by the immense prestige enjoyed in both countries by the ethic of Confucius. The mystical other-worldliness of Buddhism was in a sense complementary to—was, perhaps, almost welcomed as a reaction against—the sober, this-worldly teaching of Confucius. Here again there are analogies in the West. The attempt to systematise the moral teaching of the New Testament for purposes of instruction and discipline, more especially through the work of Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century, led to a large infiltration into Christianity of Stoic ethics. But into the ethical outlook of Europe two other elements have entered, the Roman Law which, as codified by Justinian, was itself already largely influenced by both Stoic and Christian ideas, and the knightly code of honour—which owed more to the Goth and the Gaul than to the Roman or the Greek. Japan has owed even more than Europe to the knightly code, to the Bushido of the Samurai; but the place of the Roman Law has been taken by Confucius and Mencius. The Confucian ethic, like the Stoic, is based on dignity and self-respect pushed to the extreme; but, unlike the Stoic ethic and the



Roman Law, it thinks in terms, not of general principles, but of personal relations—prince and subject, husband and wife, parent and child, brother and brother, friend and friend. That, incidentally, is one main cause of the present situation in China. A Chinese may be a man of strict morality within the Five Relations, yet he may be gravely lacking in the virtues which are necessary for the good ordering of a modern industrial democratic state.

#### A BUDDHIST COUNTER-REFORMATION

Buddhism in Japan reached its lowest ebb in the early nineteenth century. The name priest had become a byword for laziness and moral corruption. But of recent years there has been going on a conservative reformation—in some ways analogous to the Counter-Reformation in the Roman Church. Indeed, this Buddhist Counter-Reformation is due to the self-same cause—the example and the stimulus of Protestant Christianity. The moral and religious energy liberated by the life-work of Luther and Calvin led, under Jesuit initiative, to a conservative reform of abuses, and a fresh outburst of zeal within the Roman Church. Just so the activity of the modern missionary has caused a revival within Buddhism. In this the Shin sect is taking the lead.

All over Japan Christian institutions are being reproduced under Buddhist auspices. Buddhists have started Sunday Schools, Young Men's Associa-

tions, Women's Associations, schools for the blind, crèches, orphanages, and other forms of social welfare work. Temples, which forty years ago were in a state of dirt and disrepair, are to-day well kept and spotlessly clean. Buddhist Universities and middle schools have been founded in which candidates for the priesthood are given a good education on modern lines. Sermons are preached inculcating an ethic almost Christian, and often quoting Christian texts. Popular hymns are being composed; Christian hymns are re-written:

Buddha loves me, this I know,  
For the Sutras tell me so.

Even more significant, in Buddhist exhortation the Christian word "love" is replacing the older Buddhist word "pity" as the name of the chief of virtues. It is notable, however, that though rivalry with Christianity is a main source of this revival, active hostility to Christianity by Buddhist priests is comparatively rare. Buddhism is traditionally tolerant; but in this case the tolerance is surely an evidence that the revival is inspired by genuine religious aspiration, and not merely by the desire to bolster up the vested interests of a threatened cult. Buddhism is coming to life again—by being Christianised from within, and that spontaneously. That is a fact of moment, if, in our search for the essential content of religion, we ask what is the goal towards which it is evolving.

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**LECTURE 4**

**EVOLVING CHRISTIANITY**

## EVOLVING CHRISTIANITY

### SYNOPSIS

#### AUTHENTIC DEVELOPMENT

If the idea of verbal inspiration be discarded, it is possible to view Christianity as a single stream of religious development from Abraham to the present day.

The Bible and the Buddhist Sutras compared and contrasted.

The history of Christianity is not that of a philosophical system, but of the life and corporate intuition of a religious community having certain persistent characteristics. Of these the most notable has been its continuous power of assimilating the most valuable elements in its cultural environment.

The power to learn is bound up with the power, where necessary, to unlearn.

#### THE LORD THY GOD

The word "idolatry" is applied by the Jew and the Mohammedan to the Christian, and by the Christian to most other religions. It evidently requires analysis.

Some mental image of the Divine is necessary. Graven images are objectionable, if and when their use tends to keep the mental image of God entertained by the average worshipper at a lower level than it might otherwise reach.

St. Paul's conception of Christ as "the image of the unseen God" is an advance on the Old Testament.

#### THEOLOGISING—BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN

But can we justify intellectually the conception implied in the words, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father"?

The Buddhist explains his very similar belief in Amida as *homon* or "accommodation", that is, as a means of conveying to simple folk, by means of metaphor or myth, ideas which only a philosopher can

really understand. Christianity deliberately declined to adopt this attitude.

The tedious controversies of the earlier centuries of Christianity arose because the Christian theologian was trying to solve a problem, which was incapable of solution with the intellectual apparatus provided for him by Greek philosophy.

The distinction between Reason and Revelation worked out by Aquinas was a recognition of this fact.

Until the rediscovery of the historic Jesus by modern criticism his true character was veiled by theological speculation.

#### THE DIVINE COMPASSION

The cult of the Virgin Mary may be largely explained as an effort to reintroduce religious values which, in the mediaeval picture of the Christ, had become hopelessly obscured.

#### THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

The true significance of the English Reformation has been overlooked, owing to the predominantly controversial discussion of it by English theologians. Its principles are comparable to those underlying the development of the British Constitution. It implies an attitude towards logic and towards life fundamentally different from that both of Continental Reformers and of the Roman Church. Its method was empirical, not scholastic. Its essence is to be found, not in the Articles of Religion, but in the practical and devotional interpretation of belief implied in the Book of Common Prayer.

So far as the circumstances and mentality of the age allowed it, the meaning of the English Reformation was set out by Hooker. But the full meaning of any vital movement can never be appreciated by contemporaries.

#### THE MODERN THEOLOGIAN

The task of the modern theologian is that of Hooker, with a difference. He should aim at producing, not a "systematic theology", but a "philosophy of religion".

## LECTURE 4

### EVOLVING CHRISTIANITY

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.—JOHN xvi. 12, 13.

#### AUTHENTIC DEVELOPMENT

IN the review of Buddhism attempted in the last two lectures, we began by looking back behind the historic founder, Sakyamuni, to earlier Indian thought, and concluded by taking into consideration the living religious movement of the present day. It would seem natural to apply the same procedure to a survey of historical Christianity.

To do this we must divest our minds of a prejudice arising from the custom of attaching to particular documents, like the books of the Bible, or to the achievement of particular epochs, such as the decisions of General Councils, the rigid and final authority of an all but verbal inspiration.

In no department of human culture has the march of history been a steady advance along a straight road through level and undefended country. The

ground is sometimes easy, sometimes difficult; progress is at times rapid, but there are long halts, and not infrequently a temporary retreat. That is why some persons, some ideas, some periods, stand out as being of quite exceptional importance; they are significant in a way which is perhaps best expressed by the word "classical"; they not merely register a past advance, they inspire and give direction to the movements of the future. In the evolution of religion this phenomenon occurs on an especially striking scale; the great man, the great writing, the great epoch of the past, have in this sphere an importance relatively enormously greater than they have in politics, literature, or art. To recognise this fact, is to ascribe special *authority* to certain persons, writings, or epochs; it is quite another matter to ascribe to them the authority of revelation, in the scholastic sense in which the terms authority and revelation are used in orthodox theology. Here, as so often, orthodoxy affirms something which is spiritually true in a way which makes it intellectually false.

But, if I were to ask you to envisage the development of Christianity as a single religious movement from Abraham to this present hour, I could claim high support for such a view. Abraham, rightly or wrongly, is by the writers of the New Testament regarded as the founder of their religion; to them the appearance of Christ is not its beginning but its climactic point. And if I decline to regard this re-



ligious development as finished, I am in accord with St. Paul and St. John, who taught that the Divine Spirit is always guiding men to truth, and to whom the fullness of the Christian revelation awaits the consummation of the ages.

A critical and scientific survey of the development of ideas and institutions in the Jewish and Christian tradition can be attained far more exact and reliable than anything which, owing to the characteristically Indian indifference to history, is possible to the student of the parallel development in Hinduism and Buddhism. Before the reign of David, who consolidated the Hebrew kingdom some thousand years before the Christian era, it may be at times difficult to discriminate with any precision between history and legend. But from that time on, the character of the documents, checked by certain dates given in Assyrian inscriptions, makes it possible to determine, at least approximately, a general chronology for the Old Testament period. For continuing this, Greek and Roman sources, in combination with documents of Christian origin, provide abundant material.

Curiously enough it is to conflicts which threatened the very existence of the early Church that we owe the most valuable part of the evidence for this period. The earliest Christian documents are the letters of the Apostle Paul, and of these the longer and more important would not have been written

but for controversies which within twenty years of its foundation threatened to split the Church. Again, it was the necessity of defending itself from the Gnostic and Marcionite propaganda that forced the Church, within 150 years of the Crucifixion, to select as authentic four Gospels, the Acts, and (with local hesitations as to a few of them) the other books of the New Testament; and to attribute to them a canonical authority of the kind already assigned by the Jews to the Old Testament. For such a purpose only documents believed to be ancient and apostolic could be selected; and once regarded as inspired their text could not be modified. Thus the historian of early Christianity is fortunately situated as compared with the historian of Buddhism, whose position is much what that of the Church historian would be if he had to derive his knowledge of the life and teaching of Christ from the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries and from the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts.

The compactness, it may incidentally be noted, of the New Testament, and the relatively popular and easily intelligible character of its contents, form one of the greatest assets, if I may use the word in this connexion, of the Christian religion. The Sacred Books of Buddhism run into thousands; it has been calculated that in all they are about 700 times the length of the whole Bible. But the authority ascribed to these books is comparable rather to that ascribed to the Fathers in Catholic circles—though some few

of the Sutras, like certain patristic works, enjoy an outstanding popularity and prestige. In Japan the Nichiren sect is exceptional in the more than scriptural dignity it attributes to the Lotus Sutra; otherwise Buddhism has no Bible. Here it differs from Mohammedanism, which assigns to the Koran a degree of sanctity and infallibility beyond anything the most exigent Fundamentalist claims for the Christian Bible.

The history of Christianity in its millennial development is not that of the fortunes of a system of philosophy or of a series of systems. It is the record of the life and corporate intuition of a religious community notable in three ways. (1) Its life has been one of unending struggle, within quite as much as without—between higher and lower, between ideal and achievement, between advance and retrogression. “Not peace, but a sword” has been its motto—where possible, “the sword of the spirit”. (2) The community has been the nursery, at varying intervals, of a long succession of individuals of outstanding spiritual insight or moral force. (3) It has shown an extraordinary power of selecting from its environment, and assimilating into its own life and thought, elements of alien origin, without thereby losing its own fundamental character. This power of assimilation continues to characterise it, in its vigorous reactions to the scientific and social movements of the present day.

A hundred years ago the pulpit in which I stand was occupied by John Henry Newman. It is appropriate, then, that I should reinforce my last point by a quotation, the sheer eloquence of which will excuse its length, and even the touch of arrogance which punctuates its cadences.

The phenomenon, admitted on all hands, is this: That a great portion of what is generally received as Christian truth is, in its rudiments or in its separate parts, to be found in heathen philosophies and religions. . . . Mr. Milman argues from it, "These things are in heathenism, therefore they are not Christian"; we, on the contrary, prefer to say, "These things are in Christianity, therefore they are not heathen". That is, we prefer to say, and we think that Scripture bears us out in saying, that from the beginning the Moral Governor of the world has scattered the seeds of truth far and wide over its extent; that these have variously taken root, and grown up as in the wilderness, wild plants indeed but living . . .

What man is amid the brute creation, such is the Church among the schools of the world; and as Adam gave names to the animals about him, so has the Church from the first looked round upon the earth, noting and visiting the doctrines she found there. She began in Chaldea, and then sojourned among the Canaanites, and went down into Egypt, and thence passed into Arabia, till she rested in her own land. Next she encountered the merchants of Tyre, and the wisdom of the East country, and the luxury of Sheba. Then she was carried away to Babylon, and wandered to the schools of Greece. And wherever she went, in trouble or in triumph, still she was a living spirit, the mind and voice of the Most High; "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both

hearing them and asking them questions"; claiming to herself what they said rightly, correcting their errors, supplying their defects, completing their beginnings, expanding their surmises, and thus gradually by means of them enlarging the range and refining the sense of her own teaching. So far, then, from her creed being of doubtful credit because it resembles foreign theologies, we even hold that one special way in which Providence has imparted divine knowledge to us has been by enabling her to draw and collect it together out of the world and, in this sense, as in others, to "suck the milk of the Gentiles and to suck the breast of kings".<sup>1</sup>

What Newman here says of the "foreign theologies" of olden time may be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the results of modern Psychology and Sociology as well as to studies like Historical Criticism and Comparative Religion. To live is to learn, and, in an individual or in a society, the surest test of vitality is the capacity to go on learning. To ignore the past is to forfeit experience; to ignore the present is to make default to the future. A community, moreover, has the advantage that it can include within itself, and thereby synthesise, the vision of some individuals whose gaze is backward, and of those others whose eyes are turned ahead. But in possessing the liberty and diversity which makes this possible the Church which Newman joined is, I would venture to suggest, less fortunately situated than the Church he left.

But, it is sometimes forgotten, no one can learn

<sup>1</sup> *Essays Critical and Historical*, p. 231 f. (Pickering, 1872.)

who is not also ready to unlearn. The new is not always true, nor is what is out of fashion always false; yet for the community, as for the individual, the first step on the road of advance is to recognise and confess error—whether moral or intellectual. The Church from its beginnings in Ur of the Chaldees to the present day has never for long—at least some part of it has never—ceased both to learn and to unlearn, in the moral as well as in the intellectual sphere. Unfortunately, except in certain creative epochs, this double process has been slower than it need have been, because, under the influence of a wrong conception of revelation, even the leaders have disguised from themselves the real nature both of what was happening, and of what needed to be made to happen, and have been frightened of unlearning too much.

The result of the refusal to unlearn may be seen most clearly if we turn to India—the home of the second great tradition of the world's religion. In India, as nowhere else except in ancient Palestine, the religious quest has attracted the sincere and concentrated energy of the highest minds; and it has done so for upwards of three thousand years. Why is it, then, that the vast masses of the Indian people are sunk in trivial and debasing superstition? Why is the Hindu temple more often an example of moral corruption than an inspiration to noble living? India has not lacked a long succession of men of insight,

who have seen new visions of truth and goodness. What India *has* lacked has been men of the spirit of Elijah, Judas Maccabeus, or Luther. It is not enough to proclaim the truth, unless the rank growth of superstition be also cleared away. Sow wheat among the thorns, and they spring up and choke the good seed.

### THE LORD THY GOD

Within the period covered by the writings of the Old Testament there is an astounding advance. A naïve anthropomorphism becomes a spiritual monotheism; a deity who can be heard “walking in the garden in the cool of the day” becomes “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy”—of whom it is written:

I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Is. lvii. 15).

The triumphant War-God acclaimed in the Song of Deborah come to be He to whom is addressed a Psalm which Christ himself might have dictated, “The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing”.

“Thou shalt have none other Gods but Me.” For this principle Elijah fought—and won. Consequential on this victory is the denomination of other religions as idolatrous, which has been so conspicuous in Jewish and Christian tradition. This attitude is one for which, to the spirit of modern liberalism, in the light of the study of Comparative

Religion, apology seems needed. The word idolatry is one which the Christian applies to the religion of the Greek and the Hindu; and it is one which is applied with no less emphasis to the religion of the Christian himself by the Mohammedan and the Jew, by reason of the place which Christianity accords to Christ. The term idolatry is evidently one that requires analysis.

I ask, then, what is idolatry? and why is it objectionable? Man, if he is to worship at all, cannot dispense with some kind of concept or mental image of the Being whom he reveres; but it matters vastly whether this be a worthy or unworthy concept. Idolatry, then, I would submit, does not consist in the mere making of a graven image. What matters is the image in the mind of the worshipper. Unless in that mental image the divine is thought of as something higher than the highest which the worshipper in his most exalted moments can imagine, that worshipper commits idolatry. At certain stages of human culture a picture or a carved image may assist the average man to frame a mental image of higher quality than otherwise he could reach. At the stage of civilisation which Japan had reached before the introduction of Buddhism, it is probable that this was actually the effect of the introduction, in A.D. 538, from China and Korea of images of the Buddha, and of Kwannon the goddess of Mercy. The introduction into England some sixty years later



of images of the Christ and the Madonna doubtless had a similar influence on our Saxon ancestors. In that rude age it was inevitable that such images should be regarded as much more than mere symbols. It was inevitable, but in that age all but harmless, that the divinity should be thought of as being in some sense actually present in the image. In Japan it is still a common practice, when a new image has been made for a domestic shrine, to place it for a hundred days beside the image of the Buddha on the High Altar of a temple in order to "get the spirit into it". As education spreads, the superstitious element in such a belief becomes obvious and, for that reason, baleful. At the present stage of popular education it has become, even for the less educated, a baleful superstition, for it tends to hold down the popular conception of the Divine at a level lower than that to which, by rudimentary religious teaching, it could easily be lifted.

A half-belief in mascots, and similar petty superstitions, seems able to survive even in this England of the twentieth century; but not the kind of superstition which can make into an actual object of worship a symbol like the Crucifix. And there are many persons who by such a symbol are helped to raise their thought and aspirations to the invisible which the image symbolises. But this principle of the usefulness of symbol cannot be extended to cover more than a very few of the images actually

used in the historic religions. Envisage side by side the representations in art of pairs of figures most often and most conspicuously offered to the imagination of the worshipper in those three of the five Higher Religions which tolerate images at all. Christ on the Cross, and the Madonna with her Child; the Buddha deep in eternal meditation, and Kwannon of the "thousand" helping hands; from these it is a sharp descent to Krishna peeping at the bathing milkmaids, and Kali dancing in her necklace of skulls.

A picture or graven image may easily degrade, or fail sufficiently to elevate, the worshipper's mental image of the Divine; but there is a contrary danger. Without some *objective* presentation of the conception of the Divine, the word God is a blank cheque, which the individual worshipper must fill in from the content of his own small personal experience and his own exiguous ideals. This objectivity is restored if, with the Apostle Paul, we look on Christ as "the image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15).

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv. 6).

Therefore the conception, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" is a notable advance on the religious message of the Old Testament.

I submit that, when once the real meaning of this conception is brought home to a man, it becomes

*for him* inwardly idolatrous deliberately to accept any *inferior* "image" of the Divine.

#### THEOLOGISING—BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN

But, we are compelled to ask, is this conception metaphysically defensible? or is it merely a sublime metaphor, of the kind which a Buddhist would call *hormon*? Is the belief that Christ is "the only begotten Son of God", though obviously in form a metaphor, a valid representation of the ultimately Real? Is the living "light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ" a sample, or merely a symbol, of the Life Divine? The answer to this question will depend much less on what we think of Christ than on how we envisage the nature of the ultimately Real. We must decline to start the enquiry by taking for granted a philosophy like Materialism on the one hand, or metaphysical Absolutism on the other, which rules out in advance the possibility that religious intuition may be one avenue to the apprehension of Reality. For this particular belief affords what is really the test case of the validity of the findings of that intuition.

The fact that the Amida-Buddhism, of which I spoke in my last lecture, presents us with a belief so closely parallel is evidence to the findings of the religious intuition along a quite different line of development. The concurrence of the two streams at this point is all-important. The intellectual

problems, however, which the belief raises—which in the Christian tradition led after centuries of controversy to the formal definitions of the doctrine of the Incarnation, and its corollary the Trinity, were not seriously felt in Buddhism.

There sticks in my memory a remark made at a meeting of a theological discussion-society by Dr. H. Scott Holland, sometime Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. Someone had been enlarging on the intimate connexion of the words in the Creed, “of one substance with the Father” with “the obsolete substance-philosophy of the Greek world”. Scott Holland replied: “The Nicene fathers were not interested in the philosophy of *οὐσία*; all they wanted was to say ‘is’, and the word *homoousion* seemed to affirm that the divinity was *real*”. I incline to think that in this he was at least two-thirds right. To us moderns it is obvious, and it must have been equally obvious to the better educated of the Nicenes, that some elements in the Creed are of the nature of what Plato would have called “myth”. Phrases like “came down from heaven”, “sitteth on the right hand of God”, are picture-thinking; they no more belong to the language of history than to that of science.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the religious instinct

<sup>1</sup> There is a good deal to be said for also treating the words, “born of the Virgin Mary”, as *hormon*. This part of the Gospel narrative may well represent an attempt of the mythopoeic tendency in popular tradition to envisage in story form an idea substantially the same as that which St. John endeavours to render metaphysically by the philosophical concept of the Logos.

of the Church could not tolerate the idea that the core of the Creed was "myth" in the Platonic, much less in the modern popular, use of that term; they could not think of it as *hormon* in the Buddhist sense. Therefore they fell back on the word *homoousion* in order to assert that the words "Son of God"—the anthropomorphic metaphor of the New Testament—stood for something which was metaphysically true.

So far as I have ascertained—and I have put the question to Japanese and other friends likely to be informed on such a point—no systematic attempt has been made to think out a theology of the person of Amida, at any rate none comparable to that made in the Christian tradition in regard to the person of Christ. The reason for this is, I believe, simple. It would be only the intellectuals among the monks who would feel the need, and undertake the task, of producing such a system; but these would accept the Absolutist tradition of Mahayana philosophy. They would, therefore, regard the story of Amida as being, in the last resort, of the nature of *hormon*—that is, as an expression in mythological form of truth which only so could be made vivid to the minds of the generality of man. Thus in Japan or China the type of monk who, in the Christian tradition, would have been either a theologian or a heresiarch, adopts a benevolently patronising view of the popular belief much as does a modern philosopher

like Benedetto Croce to the Roman Catholicism in which he was brought up.

In Buddhism we see flowing side by side two parallel streams. There is the stream of acute philosophic discussion out of which come Sutras like the Diamond Cutter and the Awakening of Faith; there is the stream of religious development expressed in the myth of Amida, in the symbolism of the Lotus Sutra, and in the cultus. These two streams are artificially connected by the conception of *hormon*; myth and rite, that is, are defended as "accommodation" useful to bring to the popular mind, not the truth glimpsed by the philosophic few, but as much of truth as it can comprehend. This easy bridge was impossible to the Christian thinker when asked "to give a reason for the hope" that was in him to the philosophically-minded Greek. The thing he had to explain belonged to the sphere of empiric fact, it had happened under Pontius Pilate; and to him the sphere of empiric fact was not *maya* but the creation of a God who saw that it was good. The intellectual weapons that lay to hand had been forged in the workshop of Greek metaphysical discussion. Fundamentally they were not very different from those which the Buddhist derived from the armoury of Indian thought; and—the point is one I stress—they were totally inadequate to the task required of them.

The history of Christian theology is in the main

the history of an *unsuccessful* attempt to express, in terms of an intellectualist philosophy, the belief, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". I do not propose to enforce this statement by dragging you through the details of five centuries of controversy. The point at issue was really simple. In the Graeco-Roman world-view there were ready to hand two alternative categories, under either of which was possible a rationalisation of the belief that would have been acceptable to the thought of that age: viz., the categories of apotheosis and theophany. The notion that apotheosis, or deification, might be the posthumous reward of heroic character and achievement was universal. Deities like Hercules or Theseus were believed to have once been men; and Roman Emperors after death were regularly admitted to the Pantheon. Alternatively, there was the conception of theophany. In Greek and Roman legend the temporary assumption of human form by one of the immortal gods is a favourite theme. With an immanentist philosophy the concept of theophany can easily be expressed in philosophic form. Thus in Indian religion an important part is played by the conception of the Avatar, a word which is usually mistranslated "Incarnation".

Inevitably in the Early Church some tended to interpret the Gospel story in terms of theophany, others in terms of apotheosis; or, to use the technical language of dogmatics, some Christian thinkers

gravitated towards a Docetic conception of the Person of Christ, others towards an Adoptionist. Neither of these alternatives could satisfy the religious instinct of the Church, and neither could be plausibly maintained without evacuating of meaning some obvious element in the New Testament representation. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) accepted a formula which purported to be a synthesis of the two interpretations. This formula, "One person in two natures, perfect God and perfect man", to the modern mind appears to be mainly a verbal achievement. But the conclusion reached is not therefore to be deprecated; for the matter to be dealt with was one which baffled intellectualisation in terms of Greek philosophy.

Already, before Chalcedon, the Western half of the Roman Empire had fallen to the Vandal and the Goth. In the Greek-speaking residue there was continued the unprofitable effort to refine and to define; the West sank into barbarism. Slowly, after centuries of darkness, a new civilisation began to emerge; and in the thirteenth century this gave birth to a new theology. The new scholastic theology, which found its classical expression in Aquinas, differed from the old in being more deliberately systematic and therefore more consciously intellectualised. But from the very clarity of its intellectual vision it ceased to be mainly or purely intellectualist. Up to the time of Albertus Magnus, the master



of Aquinas, it had been the general belief of Christian theologians that the doctrines of Christianity could be based on, or at any rate proved by, reason. The typical attitude was quite the reverse of *credo quia impossibile*. To the Fathers reason meant philosophic argumentation of a Platonic or Aristotelian character. To Aquinas it was luminously clear that the central beliefs of Christianity could *not* be justified by reason in this sense. That is the point of his distinction between Natural and Revealed Religion. Some beliefs, the existence and the unity of God, for example, could be proved by reason—after all, Aristotle had done so before the Birth of Christ. But other beliefs, in particular the Incarnation and the Trinity, are beyond human reasoning, and therefore can only be known by Divine revelation. And for Aquinas the ground of this revelation was to be sought in the Scriptures.

In later Greek theology—the main conclusions of which were accepted in the West—the attempted balance of the Chalcedonian synthesis was further tilted to the Docetic side. In spite of the verbal safeguards of the dogmatic tradition, Christ came in practice to be regarded almost like the Avatar of Indian religion, that is to say, not as a really human person but as a divinity disguised in flesh. To the theologians it seemed that to God all things are possible—except to be made man. Thus until the dawn of the modern historical study of the New

Testament the real humanity of Jesus was in practice explained away, or smothered under dogmatic technicalities. But to-day the veil in this "temple made with hands" has been rent from top to bottom; and we see once more the human Christ.

### THE DIVINE COMPASSION

For the imagination of the Middle Ages, the face of Christ was veiled, not only by the intellectualism of the theologian, but even more by the picture of the *Dies Irae* of which he is the centre. The dreadful imagery of the Last Judgement and the torments of Hell could not but to a large extent negate the deepest elements in the character and teaching of the historic Jesus. Here we have a partial explanation of Mariolatry, and *in that context* its justification. The virtual deification of Mary both compensated for the suppression of an element of value in the Adoptionist interpretation of the Person of Christ; and gave to the message of the Divine parenthood (fatally obscured when the Avenging Christ was regarded as the image of the Father) an alternative practical expression in the veneration of the Mother of God.

In the Public Gallery at Brussels is a large picture, painted by Rubens in 1633 for a Franciscan church at Ghent, which gives vivid representation to the doctrine that "Christ is the King of Justice, Mary is the Queen of Mercy". Our Lord, his right hand

armed with pronged and three-forked lightnings, is sweeping down to judge the world—depicted as a globe crowded with flaming cities and wailing men and women. Over the world bends St. Francis, clasping it in protecting arms, whilst Mary with an appealing gesture clutches at the arm of the Christ to stay his fury.

Such a picture sets the student of religion thinking. Looking at it, he has travelled a long way from the New Testament. Equally, if he stands before the altar of Amida, he has travelled a long way from primitive Buddhism. But there is this point of contact. In both cases he sees the religious instinct of a community asserting, somehow and somewhere, on the one hand against the intellectualism of the schools, on the other against the pictures of Hell, the reality of the Divine Compassion.

### THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

The Reformation—I think von Harnack was the first to stress the fact—was a moral and ecclesiastical revolution; intellectually it changed little. Calvin was the last, and not the least, of the great scholastics; and Melancthon, the theologian of the Lutheran churches, was also in the scholastic tradition. This judgement is true; but it leaves out England. Even the greatest Germans at times misunderstand things English. And in this particular case they would merely be misled by a study of

English divines—who have usually been too busy defending the position of the Church of England to have the time to spare for understanding it. That is a pity, for at the Reformation the English, under the cover of preserving traditional forms, blundered unconsciously into a revolution in theological thinking more drastic and more original than anything done by the Continental Reformers. Being, however, a revolution in method rather than in conclusions, its importance has been overlooked. It is my own belief that further advance in theological thinking will best be reached by an attempt to apply this method—this time not blindly, but with definite intention and clear consciousness of its nature—to the problems of the present age. For that reason, not because the method is of English origin or is characteristic of the Church of which I am myself a member, I crave leave to elaborate the theme.

The Reformation in England can be understood only if it is seen as the earliest institutional expression of the moral and intellectual attitude which later on produced the British Constitution, and that of the British Empire. The average Englishman, compared with the average Frenchman, Italian, or Russian, not only seems to be slow-witted, but is so. But things which are hidden from the wise and understanding are sometimes revealed to babes. And it would appear that as early as the sixteenth century the English had found out that the laws

of life, if such there be, are not the laws of logic. That is not the fault of logic; it arises from the fact that logic has to start from premisses, and premisses must be expressed in words and definitions.<sup>1</sup> But, outside the exact sciences, a word or a definition may correspond to the thing it stands for little more than does a label to the parcel it identifies. To live by logic is like playing billiards on board a channel steamer on a choppy day; the better the aim the more certain a miss. The grandest of all follies is to imagine that any words we use or any definitions we can frame about God and His dealings with man can have that kind of equivalence to the reality which alone could make them premisses for valid logical deduction. That is the error which vitiates scholasticism, apart from this fatal weakness one of the greatest efforts of the intellect of man.

Theology, it would seem to follow, is the one intellectual discipline which should most distrust the deductive method; yet it is the one that has longest clung to it.

But what other method can it use? The answer to this question depends on the answer given to another question, Is action or thought the more characteristic expression of religion? If action is considered the more primary, it is evident that

<sup>1</sup> I speak, of course, of Deductive Logic. Inductive Logic is innocuous—for no one ever uses it. Science is inductive; but Mill's Methods are not in practice used by the scientist, who works by "flair" and experiment.

a measure of practical religious revival and reform must always precede a revision of theology. In this field the solution of intellectual problems cannot be separated from that of practical problems. Now, to solve a difficult practical problem the best way, in everyday life, is to get a few sensible and honest men to talk it over in the light of all the available facts. It is the English belief that, if this is done, they will probably come to see what is the sensible and right course. It is not believed that a decision so reached will necessarily be right; but it is believed that a decision reached by strict logical deductions from abstract general principles will almost certainly be wrong. If we examine the implications of this method, it will appear that everything depends on the persons concerned being capable of mutual co-operation, and also on their being "sensible" and "honest" in the sense in which those words are understood by the community. This means that faith is put in the judgement of living persons provided, first, that they are felt to be representative of the higher corporate spirit of the community; secondly, that they have carefully considered the relevant facts. The method is, therefore, a kind of empiricism, but of a communal rather than an individual character.

In England the reform of the Mediaeval Church was envisaged as being primarily a practical problem; it was natural, therefore, to attempt the reform

by the empirical method described above. The period was one of intense national self-realisation; thus, while on the Continent of Europe religion intellectually looked backwards, and made its choice between two scholasticisms, that of Rome or that of the Reformers, England dared to be herself.

The unintelligently intellectual are in the habit of sneering at the "Elizabethan settlement", because the XXXIX Articles lack the scholastic consistency which it was the real merit of this settlement to despise. The XXXIX Articles were not meant to state religion in intellectual terms; they were meant to save religion from the people who thought this could be done.

Sir [said Dr. Johnson], predestination was a part of the clamour of the times, so it is mentioned in our articles, but with as little positiveness as could be.

The Articles had a further purpose, that of preserving as wide a range of religious freedom as was possible in the political circumstances and with the religious prejudices of the time.

To find religion the Elizabethans sent men to the Bible, interpreted, devotionally rather than theologically, by the Book of Common Prayer. And if, from the purely religious standpoint, the various liturgies of Christendom be compared with the Book of Common Prayer, and the poets with Shakespeare, I am bold to affirm that in this epoch the religious

genius of England found a not less worthy expression than its poetic. And it found expression, as religion must, in a form which in essence is aesthetic rather than philosophic; for in the Prayer Book the language is great literature, and the rites implied have the character of great art.

Consider, again, what is the most fundamental difference between mediaeval and modern thought. It is the difference between the deductive *a priori* method and the inductive experimental. In England the Reformation was carried through on inductive and experimental lines. But if religion is life, its essence will be expressed in action rather than in abstract thought; and from this it is a necessary conclusion that reflection on the meaning of a reform will follow, not precede, it. If one must do the will of God in order to know the truth of the doctrine, a religious revival must come before a revised theology. Here again I am bold to affirm that the constructive empiricism of the religious reform in England was a greater achievement than the philosophy of empiricism proclaimed by Bacon, which was for centuries the admiration of Europe; and here again the religious empiricism came first.

Of course I am not suggesting that the principles which I have endeavoured to make explicit were realised at the time. The men who make history never know what they are making. In this sphere explanation is only possible after the event. Such an



explanation was attempted by Richard Hooker, a great thinker and master of a great Elizabethan style. Hooker was too near the event to see *all* its meaning; and if he had seen it, he would have found it impossible to justify to the mind of that age. But Hooker saw clearly that, if religion is life, theology must have the kind of relation to history and empiric fact which necessitates the tempering of abstract theory by considerations of common sense. He defended the Elizabethan Reformation partly by such considerations, partly by pointing to the Christian Fathers of the first four centuries. In effect this led to a revival of interest in England in the Greek interpretation of Christianity as distinguished from the Latin and Augustinian. It also meant that Anglican theology purported to be an appeal from the logically compact scholasticism of Rome or Calvin to the unsystematised and inchoate theology of the Fathers of the first four centuries. Under the circumstances this was the best thing that could happen. In that age progress was only possible under cover of an appeal to the past. Liberty of thought, even if its desirability had been recognised, could not have been openly asserted; but the appeal to an authority so vague and indeterminate was, in practice, the vindication of liberty, or at least of as much liberty as the age could profitably use. The time was not ripe to build a new theology. Hooker did what was then most needed; he provided an intellectual

standpoint, valid for his own and many later generations, which made it easy to do two things: to breathe the fresh air of the Bible read in the vulgar tongue, and to participate in a corporate religious life under the free and sober guidance of the devotion of the ages representatively summed up in the Book of Common Prayer.

### THE MODERN THEOLOGIAN

The giant stride of advancing knowledge has left far behind all the theologies of the Reformation period. Indeed, intellectually these are more completely bankrupt than the scholasticism of Aquinas. Precisely for that reason this is a day of promise and of hope; for only the admitted bankruptcy of ancient systems makes possible a fresh start. And the bankruptcy is not confined to systems theological. Scientific Materialism, Idealism, Absolutism, Pragmatism, and the rest are in no different case. But religion is alive. We live in a time of religious longing—a longing which would become a revival were it not made furtive and ineffective by the lack of clear intellectual guidance. With every advance in secular knowledge, it only becomes more clear that in the Bible, above all in the Four Gospels, there is something “which the world cannot give”.

The task of the modern theologian is to do for these times what Hooker did for his. Only he will aim at something more like a philosophy of

religion than a "systematic theology". He will seek first to interpret the meaning, still struggling for expression, of living religious movements—not only of the past but also of to-day. With mind thus illuminated and refreshed, he may hope to discern a philosophic standpoint which will make it possible for the modern man, with full intellectual sincerity, to breathe once more the tonic air of those ancient scriptures, and to share in the richness of a corporate life which still, as all along the ages, "is looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith".

**LECTURE 5**

**MAGIC, PHILOSOPHY, AND RELIGION**

# MAGIC, PHILOSOPHY, AND RELIGION

## SYNOPSIS

### MAGIC AND RELIGION

Magic is found in the beginnings of Science, Art, and Religion alike. The attempt to rid religion of the magical element began with four Hebrew prophets (780–700 B.C.); in this matter science has followed the lead of religion.

About 525 B.C. Confucius, the Buddha, and the Greek Xenophanes protested against the evils of contemporary religion in the name of reason and morality. The Hebrew prophets had done so in the name of religion itself.

In these writings religion appears as something different in kind from primitive religion—being the very antithesis of magic. Magic aims at coercing the unseen powers to do man's will. Religion, as defined by Micah, is the reverse of this; it is the bringing of man's will into harmony with that of God, and is therefore primarily ethical.

Does "Walk humbly with thy God" imply servitude, or that loyalty in service which is "perfect freedom"?

The logic of Christ's teaching on prayer.

Magic, attacked first by Hebrew religion, then by Greek philosophy, has finally succumbed to applied science.

### INTELLECT, FEELING, AND WILL

The ethical element in the religion of the Hebrew prophets made it primarily an appeal to the will. Neo-Platonism (which influenced Christianity especially through St. Augustine) and the philosophic mysticism of Buddhism both start off from the intellectual approach to religion. In Hindu *bhakti*, in Amida-Buddhism, and in the Hebrew Psalter, the predominant element is feeling.

Intellect, feeling, and will are not separable "faculties"; every conscious act involves all three. It is fallacious, therefore, to find religion solely in any one of these activities.

The bearing on this point of Christ's teaching as to the nature of religion.

To love God is difficult without some mental image of Him as vividly personal. But it makes all the difference whether the "image" selected be that of Krishna or of Christ.

### THE ABSOLUTE

The capacity of words to represent things varies enormously with the thing. It is at its maximum in a science like chemistry, at its minimum when the "thing" is the totality of existence.

The meaning of abstraction illustrated. A hundred yards' race may be represented *abstractly* by a mathematical equation; *artistically* by a description, picture, or song.

The conception of the Absolute is based on the principle, deduced from the law of contradiction, that abstract self-consistency must be a quality of Reality. But there must be in Reality an element which cannot be represented abstractly; this element is "artistically", so to speak, represented by the word "God".

Various attempts have been made to give a more concrete content to the term "the Absolute", *e.g.* by Plotinus, Hegel, and Zen Buddhism.

Fallacy in the contention that, since in the Absolute the distinction between good and evil is transcended, the moral law has no meaning for God. The moral law draws its meaning from the fact that it is the expression of love. If any activity at all can exist within Ultimate Reality, then love can. (This is the point of St. Augustine's theory of the Trinity.)

The Buddhist thinker, who denies to the Absolute not only activity but even "existence", is alone logical; but by his logic he demonstrates the fallacy of relying entirely on the method of abstraction.

There is an analogy between the use of abstraction in mathematical physics and in absolutist philosophy. In each case the use is justified, provided it is not assumed that the essence of Reality can be so known. If that assumption be not made, "values" can be validly derived from other sources, more especially from religion.

### THE IMAGE OF GOD

Parable of the sparks. Can Reality be less than the greatest of its children? Can God be inferior to Christ?

Assuming that Life, or Consciousness, is truly representative of the "stuff" of Ultimate Reality, it is a reasonable inference that quality is real, so that value is not an illusion.

The beauty of Nature may express something of the quality of Reality.

Quality of another kind is supremely expressed in the personality of Christ. Here we find the will-to-good, or love, in a form so absolute that Christ *can* be in this respect the "image" of an Infinite Love.

It follows that, unless the creator be less than the created, God is Love.

#### FIVE RELIGIONS

Hinduism and Judaism are strictly national. The only "world-religions" are Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity. Christianity is a *via media* between the fundamental ideas in the other two, or rather it is a synthesis of them.

The essential element in the conceptions of the Supreme Being held respectively by these religions are Peace, Power, Purpose. To these are logically correlated three conceptions of man—as being a *part*, a *slave*, or a *son*, of God.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

#### THE GOSPEL PORTRAIT

## LECTURE 5

### MAGIC, PHILOSOPHY, AND RELIGION

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?—JOB xi. 7-8.

#### MAGIC AND RELIGION

IN beginnings there is magic; in Science, in Art, and in Religion.

Go back a very few centuries and you find, even in Europe, the Astrologist and Alchemist—the great-grandfathers of the Astronomy and Chemistry we boast of. Astrology and Alchemy were mainly magic, systematised and interpreted with the help of myth. But in the bushel of magic were two grains of science; and from those grains of mustard seed have grown two great trees.

In art you must go further back than in science to discover magic. But go right to the beginning and you find it. The purpose, so the anthropologists insist, of the marvellous drawings of mammoth, boar, and bison in caves of the Palaeolithic Age was “sympathetic magic”. The aim of the artist was not “art



for art's sake"; what he intended was, by a magic inherent in the picture, to assist the securing of a good bag in the tribal hunting grounds. But through and above the magical motive we can detect the artist's eye and the artist's joy.

In religion you need not to go back at all; there are plenty of places where magic and religion can be found together at the present day. Yet you may go back nearly 3000 years and find that already there are *some* men whose chief aim in life is to rid the religion of their people of magic, and of all rites and ceremonies of magic intent. In the religion of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah there is simply no room for magic; and they flourished in Palestine more than 700 years before the birth of Christ. In the attempt to get rid of the element of magic, religion was ahead of science.

Among uncivilised people all thinking is done in pictures; philosophy is represented by myth. But there is as yet no real distinction between the activities to which in their later and developed forms we give the names of science, art, religion, philosophy, and magic. With the progress of civilisation differentiation goes on; indeed, that progress is itself largely the result of this differentiation. The process has been a gradual one, and is not yet everywhere complete. In Indian and Chinese medicine, science and magic are still combined; while the idea that certain symbols and images, whether manipulated

by sorcerer or revered by priest, can possess mysterious powers is a survival of the magical function originally assigned to art. It would, however, be outside the purpose of this lecture to trace the emancipation of science and art from conceptions which, as we now see it, belong to magic. But it is relevant to that purpose to discuss the emergence of religion from the undifferentiated complex of primitive human mentality.

Rome early learnt the art of utilising the superstition of the populace as an instrument of rule. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum* is a Roman's expression of a most un-Roman sentiment. The revolt against the cruelties, the immoralities, and the puerilities of primitive religion began long before Lucretius, and elsewhere than at Rome. There had been a moment—about 525 B.C.—when all over the world the conscience of civilised humanity awoke, and the revolt expressed itself constructively in the work of men of genius. Confucius in China, the Buddha in India, Xenophanes among the Greeks of Ionia were contemporary. Each of them in his own way condemns the trivialities and worse of popular religion in the name of morality and reason.

These names all represent, in different degrees, the protest of the philosopher against the things that priest and temple stood for. Herein their protest differs essentially from one made two centuries

earlier by the Hebrew prophets. These also denounced the iniquities and futilities of priest and temple; but it was in the name, not of reason, but of religion itself—for to them the righteous and the reasonable were what the one true God really requires. Thus the emergence in history of the Hebrew prophets provides a criterion of distinction between the kind of religion which had already become an obstacle to human progress, and that which was capable of being its further inspiration.

The difference between Astronomy and Astrology, and that between Chemistry and Alchemy, is a difference not in degree but in kind; it is the difference between a steel blade and a heap of iron ore. The very names of these sciences proclaim that the higher form has been differentiated out from the lower; but in the process their fundamental character has been changed. Similarly, the difference between the religion of an Isaiah and that of an African medicine-man is a difference in kind. But unfortunately in the English language, and indeed in most other languages, the one word "religion" must be used to describe two things so very different. This ambiguity of the word "religion" has been a source of endless confusion in the minds, not only of the general public, but even of scientific writers on Anthropology and Religion.

The grand point at issue is most clearly stated in a passage of the prophet Micah. First, in a rhetorical

question he brings out the prevalent popular conception:

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah vi. 6 ff.)

Then comes the answer:

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Religion here achieves an expression which is primarily ethical. And though, to do justly and to love mercy may not be the absolute climax of this ethical expression, it is on the high road that will lead there.

“To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” The exact shade of meaning which some of these words bore to the mind of the prophet himself may admit of dispute; but, on any showing, they herald the end of the magical strain in religion. Magic has been defined by anthropologists as the attempt to subject the higher powers to man’s coercive control—to avert their malice where malignant, to assure their aid where kindly, to bind by spell or bend by offering. A similar motive is implied in most early religious observances. But the God before

whom the Hebrew Prophet bows can neither be coerced by spell nor bribed by sacrifice. Nowhere more clearly is religion differentiated from magic than in these words of Micah, with their emphatic proclamation that its aim is the bringing of the will of man into harmony with that of God—not *vice versa*. But that aim would be absurd unless the will of God had first been realised as righteous.

The injunction, Walk humbly with thy God, is one that raises an important question. Is the humility required of man the cringing subjection of the slave? Or is it that glowing loyalty in service to the highest which is "perfect freedom"? St. Paul, in his own inner life, had had experience of both these alternatives. He points the contrast between them by a double metaphor—emancipation followed by adoption—vividly luminous in a slave-holding society. On the one hand there is *subjection* to the Law, on the other, servitude is changed into sonship by "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father". St. Paul speaks as one of the "twice-born" who have passed, by the way of inward crisis, out of bondage into freedom, from death to life. But between these two extremes in religious attitude there is an infinite series of gradations. It is clear, for example, that the author of Psalm cxix. did not feel the Law, and religion under it, as servitude.

Lord, what love have I unto thy law: all the day long is my study in it. . . . Thy word is a lantern unto my feet: and

a light unto my paths. I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed: to keep thy righteous judgements.

A similar "once-born" type of experience is represented in the New Testament by the epistle of James. When Luther described this as a "right strawy epistle", he merely showed how limited in its insight even genius can be by temperament and range of personal experience.

With Christ the teaching of the prophets and psalmists reaches its climax; the true nature of righteousness (whether in God or man) is disclosed as the expression of that will-to-good which he styled love. Logically this entails a change in the conception of prayer. So long as God is thought of as less than absolute benevolence, there must be in prayer, if not the magical intention to coerce, yet the kindred desire to cajole. This ceases when man is taught:

When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

But until and unless the worshipper can say, Our Father, he cannot reasonably pray, Thy will be done. Indeed, it is psychologically impossible for him to do so. That is why Christ emphasised the need of "faith"—by which he meant, not acceptance of credal formulas, but an attitude of fundamental trust.

Prayer then (so far as it is concerned with the self) becomes a means to the realisation of a relation of man to the Unseen, from out of which grows a confidence in the love of God and in His readiness to guide and strengthen that can lay aside all anxiety for the morrow, brave its worst possibilities, and react aright to all contingencies—a stage of religious maturity which I make no pretence to have myself reached.

Popular Christianity has in few things risen to the level of Christ's teaching. It is, however, remarkable that all through the ages the leaders of Christian thought have taught an exalted conception of prayer. And even in the darkest periods their influence has kept within narrow limits the reintroduction into religion of magical or semi-magical ideas.

The first grand assault on magic and magical religion was made, we have seen, by the Hebrew prophets, and in the name of religion. The next, with weapons more acute but with less vigour in pressing home the attack, came from Greek Philosophy. But the death-blow to magical conceptions awaited the development of modern science. Science has two very different aspects. Pure science, like religion, is on the part of man a surrender; it is the attempt to make man's thinking about things conform to the reality of the things themselves; it is an act of worship—the worship of Truth. But "applied science" has a very different aim. It attempts, and with no

small success, to make things conform to man's will; it aspires to harness Nature. Like the magician of old, it seeks, by means of a knowledge recondite to the many, to coerce unseen powers which threaten man or may be made to serve his material needs. But, unlike the magician, the scientist is usually able "to deliver the goods". Thus the unhappy magician has lost his job, displaced by his young competitor, the expert in applied science.<sup>1</sup>

### INTELLECT, FEELING, AND WILL

Conclusions of no small importance for our quest emerge from a study of the varying importance assigned in the great religions to the functions of intellect, feeling, and will.

Already before the great period of Greek history religion in its traditional forms had ceased to be an inspiration to progress—in Ionia earlier than in Athens. The higher minds turned to philosophy. Philosophy was at first merely critical of religion and was not clearly distinguished from physics and astronomy; but in Plato it began to assume some of the characteristics of religion. To him the transcendent reality which he named, The Idea of the Good, was not merely the category of categories in a

<sup>1</sup> I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness, in the preceding section, to two books, quite short, but important, books: A. L. Lilley, *Prayer in Christian Theology: a survey of some moments and masters of the Christian life from Clement of Alexandria to Fénelon* (Student Christian Movement, 1925); and W. L. Sperry, *The Paradox of Religion* (The Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1927).



logic which was also a metaphysic; it was *all but* That to which the soul must cry, Holy, Holy, Holy. Even Aristotle holds that the urge to creation is the desire of all things for God—a religious conception rather than a philosophical. This development reached its climax in the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus. Philosophy became an endeavour, by the path of intellectual insight, to reach a supra-intellectual apprehension of Reality. It was fired by something very like what Spinoza was later on to call the *amor intellectualis dei*. This kind of Platonism profoundly impressed St. Augustine (who probably knew it in a Latin version of Plotinus); and through him, and the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, it exercised a great influence on the Catholic mystics and theologians of the Middle Ages.

In Buddhism, under the double influence of Indian metaphysic and the practice of *yoga* meditation, there arose a similar philosophic development. This differed from the Platonic mainly in its affective undertone, determined by its quest for a peace that passeth understanding, rather than for a value transcending alike the beautiful and the good. But alongside of this religion of intellectual “vision”, there grew up a more popular cultus; of this in Southern Buddhism the deified Sakyamuni was the centre, in Northern Buddhism the mythical figure of Amida. This clearly is the result of an acute reaction of the religious sense of the larger community against

the over-intellectualistic mysticism of the more philosophic monks. But this reaction, be it noted, is not in character ethical ; it is in no respect a movement in the direction towards which Micah had pointed. It is rather an attempt to express a different element in religion, which is neither intellectual nor ethical, but belongs to the sphere of feeling.

Historically, we have seen, the cult of Amida seems to be related to, and to be the expression within Buddhism of, the movement in Indian religion known as *bhakti*. The common English rendering of the word *bhakti* is "loving devotion"; but this rendering misses the "energetic", the almost dancing, quality of the original—that quality which in the eighteenth century they termed "enthusiasm". The characteristic expression of *bhakti* is the hymn. Hymns are mostly addressed either to Siva or to Krishna—Krishna being regarded as an *avatar* (that is, a doctetic incarnation) of Vishnu. In the *bhakti* schools, according to sect, either Vishnu or Siva is worshipped as the supreme deity. The beginnings of *bhakti* go behind the Gita (which some date before 200 B.C., others A.D. 200); but it was a thousand years before the growth of this movement led to an intellectual revolt against the dominance of the pantheistic Absolutism of the classical Indian tradition. In this revolt the leading name is that of Ramanuja (A.D. 1100)—who produced what may be called the great "minority report" in the history of Indian philo-

sophy. In spite of him, however, the classical tradition, as systematised by Sankara, is still the reigning power.

Select passages can be quoted from *bhakti* hymns which seem like the expression of a religious spirit all but Christian in tone. Such a selection, made for the purpose of illustrating points of contact between *bhakti* and the doctrine of grace in Lutheran Christianity, may be found in Prof. R. Otto's *India's Religion of Grace*.<sup>1</sup> But in this literature *taken as a whole* the ethical element is relatively subordinate. I quote a typical piece by Kabir (fourteenth century A.D.):

My spirit is sore grieved in Thy absence; come to me, O my Beloved!

I am ashamed in my inmost being when people say I am Thy bride, for have I touched Thy heart with mine?

Vain is my life! I have no taste for food: my eyes get no slumber. I am restless within doors and without.

As water to the thirsty, so is the sight of the Lover to the bride:

Who will tell my Beloved that I am wasting away in His absence, I am pining for the assurance that He is mine?

I am dying for sight of my Lord! <sup>2</sup>

At times the expression of joy and of the love of the soul for the Divine degenerates to a voluptuously erotic level.

<sup>1</sup> Trans. by F. H. Foster. (Student Christian Movement, 1930.)

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by permission from a version by C. Modak in *Temple Bells*, p. 116, ed. A. J. Appasamy. (Association Press, Calcutta, 1930.)

The *bhakti* tone in religion is also to be found in the Old Testament; it is particularly conspicuous in the Psalter. I quote the Prayer Book version:

O God, thou art my God: early will I seek thee (lxiii. 1).

Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks: so longeth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God (xlii. 1, 2).

In the Old Testament and, I believe, in most Buddhist hymns, the feeling expressed is predominantly gratitude for deliverance, or sheer joy in the glory of the Beloved. Amida is loved as the One who waits in Paradise holding out hands of welcome to the worn and weary; he is adored in beauty in his nimbus of sunset glory. So the Hebrew poet sings:

O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready: I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have (cviii. 1).

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion: then were we like them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter: and our tongue with joy (cxxvi. 1-2).

We have noted three different types of religion, or of accent of emphasis in religion. In the Hebrew prophets the ethical emphasis, with its stress on the will, is the most conspicuous. The Neo-Platonist and the Buddhist philosopher seek rather a mystical apprehension of the Divine by means of intellectual

contemplation. In some of the Psalms, in Hindu *bhakti*, and in Amida-Buddhism, the element of feeling or "enthusiasm" is predominant.

But intellect, feeling, and will are not three separable entities; every conscious act of a personal agent involves the concurrence of all three. Even the "pure thinking" of the mathematician or philosopher demands *interest*, which is a form of feeling, as well as concentrated *attention*, which is a function of will. No doubt in different situations, and in respect of different fields of action, there is a very great difference in the demand made on these different aspects in the activity of personality. This justifies our speaking of will, thought, and feeling as if they were distinct, but only so long as we never forget that in the last result their separation is an abstraction. It is of interest to note that historically three streams of emphasis, corresponding to this threefold distinction in personal activity, become evident in a survey of the trends in the higher religions. But since personality is one, and will, thought, and feeling taken by themselves are abstractions, all attempts to find the essence of religion in any one of these will necessarily mislead.

We may now ask, Where stands, in this regard, the conception of religion implied in the teaching of Christ?

When asked, What commandment is the first of all? Jesus replied:

The first is, Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Mark xii. 29-31).

When two texts are quoted as summing up the essence of religion, they are clearly to be interpreted with their maximal implications. If this be done, we note three things. First, there is the intellectual affirmation of monotheism: "the Lord is one". Secondly, an attitude towards Him is inculcated akin to that classified above as the "enthusiastic": "thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God". But it is emphasised that the love required is not mere feeling, it is an expression of the personality as a whole including thought and will, "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"; and it is to issue in action, "with all thy strength". Thirdly, the direction of this action is given an ethical character by the addition of a second "enthusiasm", "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is an "enthusiasm" which inspires to the fulfilment of all detailed ethical obligations (see p. 247 f.).

The Sermon on the Mount may be read as Christ's commentary on the two commandments, Love God, Love thy neighbour. As interpreted by him these might be restated: "Be done with fear, for God is your father: be done with hate, for His sons are your brothers". But he sees two attitudes as limiting

conditions to God's acceptance of men as his sons. One is the soul-shrivelling egoism of a continual grievance, or of the obsession of revenge, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses". The second is what I may call the "ethical Narcissism" of the self-consciously virtuous man who prides himself that he is "not as other men" and "despises others". The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is Christ's rendering of the injunction, Walk humbly with thy God. Modern psychology is here on the side of Christ. Most of us are self-deceivers as well as sinners. Salvation dawns when we begin to find ourselves out. That is the difference between the Christian and the Buddhist; each has seen through a fraud—but to the Buddhist the fraud is the Universe, to the Christian it is himself.

There is high nobility in Stoic and Confucian teachings, which has made them, through the centuries, the inspiration of countless heroic souls. But to turn from the ideal of coldly virtuous self-command and self-sufficiency and listen to the Orpheus-lute of Christ is to pass out of a frozen palace into the sunshine on the fields in spring.

Through the ages men had been over-awed by the figment of the cold, wise man who withdraws himself from human emotions and becomes like God, knowing, but not feeling, good and evil. But the cold, wise man, like the cold, wise God, has never existed; sanity itself comes of warmth not of

coldness, and coldness is a symptom of insanity. It is not God, but the lunatic imagining himself to be God, who looks on the world with an imperturbable calm. No man who is or tries to be cold ever is wise. Catch him off his guard and you will find that he is the slave of some secret absurdity begotten of his own egotism.<sup>1</sup>

The love towards God, that for Christ is the heart of religion, is impossible to anyone who conceives Reality as an impersonal Absolute. Indeed, I have often wondered how it was possible towards even a personal Being as august and exalted as the God of later Jewish monotheism. Yet beyond doubt some of the Psalmists did attain it. But this was psychologically easier to the ancient Jew than to a modern Unitarian Theist, for two reasons. First, although God was regarded as the God of the whole world, He yet remained in an exclusive sense "the Shepherd of Israel"—a God to whom the house of Judah had a peculiar and intimate relation. Secondly, the Jew had not as yet come to use habitually the abstract conceptualised mode of thinking which the modern world inherits from the Greek; in everyday life he still thought more or less in pictures, so that, although he believed that God was an invisible omnipresent spirit, he could still imaginatively picture Him in a more or less anthropomorphic way.

<sup>1</sup> A. Clutton-Brock, *Studies in Christianity*, p. 146. (Constable, London; Dutton, N.Y.)



It is, I believe, largely owing to the difficulty of forming such an imaginative picture that in the modern world the idea of love on the part of man towards God appeals to fewer people than of old. That attitude towards the Divine to express which I have, for want of a better, used the adjective "enthusiastic", is not possible unless the Divine be conceived of as fully and richly personal. But it is no longer natural for the ordinary man or woman of to-day to envisage God in anything like an anthropomorphic way. Many will say that they can conceive God as a principle, but not as a person. And they are right in so far that intellectually—and also, I would maintain, religiously—God must be thought of as being something more than, and other than, what we usually mean by the word "personal". For intellectual and religious, as well as for psychological reasons, it is necessary to think of the Divine under both personal and non-personal categories. Religion, if it is to reach its highest expression, must begin by affirming that God is ineffable, transcendent, "other", to use a now fashionable word. It must do more than say "no man hath seen God at any time"; it must cry aloud, "No man hath truly conceived God at any time". But it must not stop there, it must go on and point men to some personalised "image of the invisible God".

Hinduism offers a variety of such personalisations, of which the most popular are Krishna and Rama

(avatars of Vishnu), Siva (in his various theophanies), and "Mother" Kali. In Mahayana Buddhism it is Amida who most conspicuously provides this personalised image of the Divine. Christianity has Christ. The legends of the gods of India display a strange mixture of the elevated and the gross, of puerility and insight; unfortunately, it is not the best that are the best known. No one familiar with the representations in image or picture which abound in the temples, can fail to see how much the ennobling power and moral inspiration of a religion must vary according as its personalised image of the Ultimate Divine reflects the face of the Krishna of the Purana tales, or that of the Christ of the Gospels.

We have come back, along a different line of argument, to the necessity of facing up to the question of the meaning and validity of the conception of Christ, as the portrait in time of the very essence of the Divine Eternal. The actual words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father", were probably not uttered by the Master himself. But they represent an interpretation of the meaning of the Master's life and person, by a community spiritually interpenetrated by his personality, which sums up the reflexion and experience of what may well be regarded as *the* classical period in the religious history of man. Is that interpretation legitimate? Is the proposition, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father", one which the religious man can accept as *true*? That is

the supreme question for religion; and, I am bold to say, for philosophy as well.

By saying that, however, I have, perhaps too rashly, committed myself to an attempt to evaluate the philosophical conception of the Absolute. I venture on such a task only because I am aware that nobody who is familiar with the vast literature of the subject will expect of me in this place more than, at best, a few fortunately chosen suggestions as to the right angle of approach.

### THE ABSOLUTE

The capacity of language to represent things varies enormously with the things. It is at its maximum in a science like chemistry. A word like "sodium" stands for an entity which can be clearly defined in thought, and can be materially isolated in fact. The sounded word "sodium" is in itself something totally different from the material element which is isolated in the laboratory; it is "a symbol", that is, a conventional representation of the physical element, accepted by chemists in order that they may be able to communicate to one another facts or ideas about it. Now in chemistry the correspondence between the symbol and the element it stands for is of such a character that confusion or misunderstanding is virtually impossible. In most departments of life such exactness of correspondence between word and thing is unattainable. Hence in everyday life, whenever explan-

ation is difficult from the lack of words exactly corresponding to the things to be discussed, recourse is had to metaphor and analogy. In psychology, sociology, ethics, and philosophy, most of the words in use originated as metaphors and analogies, but have since passed from a picturesque to a conceptual meaning, which has come to be defined more or less exactly by conventional usage. They are thus symbolic, but in a looser and vaguer sense. If, for example, I speak of "breadth of outlook", the word "breadth" was originally a picturesque analogy from spatial measurement, but by conventional usage it has acquired a conceptualised sense of ethical quality. Symbolic, in a more abstruse way, is the technical usage of the words matter, energy, mechanism, cause, and effect, as names of the incredibly abstract conceptions in advanced physics to which (cf. p. 18) these words are now applied. Recent developments in mathematical technique, along with extended possibilities of experimental control, have made it possible for the physicist by means of such symbols to operate securely with conceptions of this degree of abstractness. But where mathematical technique is inapplicable, and where experimental control is impossible, any reasoning is highly precarious which entails the use of words which are the symbols of conceptions unimaginably abstract. Such a symbol is the term "the Absolute". This term is not only in origin a metaphor drawn from the abstract idea

of relation (which is itself the conceptualisation of an analogy derived from concrete observation), it is also an attempt to represent in a single concept the totality of existence—including the person who conceives the concept.

The gulf between the word and the thing it symbolises is at its maximum whenever we attempt to speak of Ultimate Reality. Some name It "God", others "the Absolute", others "the Unknowable"; and it matters supremely for our practical outlook on life which of these words we regard as the more appropriate. But though each of these symbols has a meaning which clearly distinguishes it from the other, none of them can possibly have anything at all like that precise relation to the THING, which the word "sodium" has to the element so named.

The conception of Ultimate Reality as "the Absolute" received its classical expression for English philosophy in the nineteenth century in F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*. Apart, however, from his theory of "degrees of reality" (in effect, a repudiation of the doctrine of *maya*) his general position does not greatly differ from the prevalent Absolutism which Mahayana Buddhism derived from Indian philosophy. The main question I wish to raise here is, whether the method of abstraction used in this philosophy is not one which must of necessity preclude the possibility of reaching an adequate knowledge of Reality, and so decide

beforehand that such knowledge as *can* be reached by this method will be of a very limited and jejune character.

In my first lecture I showed how recent developments in Relativity-Physics suggest the view that the kind of knowledge attained by the methods of mathematical physics is related to Reality much as the lines on the gramophone record are related to the music of the tune. Nobody calls in question either the usefulness or (subject to the above reservation) the truth of scientific knowledge. What I wish now to argue is, that the concept of the Absolute is similarly, up to a point, both useful and true; but that it is related to Reality very much as are the mathematical equations of the physicist. And the relation is similar, because in both cases the results are achieved by an intellectual abstraction.

An abstraction may represent an aspect of the truth which for most purposes is not specially important. As an illustration of this we may take the Hundred Yards race in the 'Varsity Sports. This may truthfully be represented as a problem in Mechanics, concerned with the time required for the propulsion of four bodies of varying weights over a given distance by forces of varying extent. Let the time taken by the winner be denoted by  $t$ , his weight by  $w$ , and the amount of propulsive force which (in view of his skill, state of health, etc.) he is able to exert by  $f$ . Then (ignoring minor complications) the problem

which the race solves may be represented by the equation:

$$t = \frac{w}{f}.$$

By the result of the race,  $t$  is exactly determined; and, since  $w$  is known,  $f$  can also be determined.

Now an inter-university race is a problem in mechanics; and the above equation correctly represents this fact. But if what the equation represents were the whole truth about it, no one would think the race worth running at all. Other aspects of the truth about it, which are not included in the mathematical equation, will be found in the effusions of the sporting Press. The representations of the event here given are not, like the equation, scientific in form; they aspire (with indifferent success) to be of the kind which we classify under the head of Art. They aim at helping the reader to realise imaginatively the meaning of the event, or of aspects of it which are rich in emotional or other significance. A good prose description of a race, or a picture or song inspired by it, may achieve the right to be styled a work of art. But even an artistic representation, though richer in content than a mathematical equation, is still far from being the equivalent of the full concrete reality of the event.

Thus there are three things involved. There is the event in its actual reality, and there are two aspects of it; of which the one is represented by the abstract

mathematical equation, the other by the attempt, artistic in method, to seize and portray something of its general meaning. Of these two representations, the one that is in form mathematical has the advantage of objectivity; given that the measurements are accurate, there is no room for difference of opinion in regard to the result. The other is subjective. It is an inescapable fact that, once we get outside the range of the measurable, all knowledge is liable to be vitiated, more or less, by this subjective element. You cannot get away from the fact that one man has eyes to see, another has not—and who is to judge between them? Yet, but for the things which can only be so seen (and which therefore may be wrongly seen), many things which can be mathematically represented, and so objectively known, would never have come into existence—all events, for example, which are brought about by the phenomenon we call life, and by its manifestations in thought, will, or desire.

Now in science the principle of abstraction is applied to the understanding of events and details within the sphere of what can be empirically observed. The absolutist philosopher, I suggest, is attempting, *mutatis mutandis*, to apply the same principle to the understanding of Reality as a whole.

The absolutist philosopher starts with the assumption that truth cannot be self-contradictory. The one thing, therefore, that can be predicated of



Reality (and that *a priori*) is abstract self-consistency.<sup>1</sup> In all ordinary experience the detection of distinctions is fundamental; but the philosopher finds on analysis that in all the distinctions of phenomenal experience there is an element of the self-contradictory. For this reason he is driven to regard that phenomenal experience as belonging to the field of Appearance. The Reality, which lies behind Appearance, must transcend all these distinctions. Nothing in the field of phenomenal experience is what it is *per se*, but only *in its relation* to something else. The phenomenal is saturated with relativity. But Reality must transcend the merely relative, and must therefore be conceived as the Absolute.

A philosophical conception so reached can hardly not be an abstraction. And it is, I maintain, an abstraction about as true and quite as jejune, considered as a representation of Reality, as is the mathematical equation considered as a representation of a hundred yards race. And just as we require the artist to tell us things about the race which the equation cannot give, so we must go to religion to find out things about Reality which cannot be given by the abstractive method of the absolutist. The religious conception of God (if I may press the analogy) will correspond rather to a picture or a song inspired by the race; and just as pictures or songs differ enorm-

<sup>1</sup> For a forcible development of this argument, see F. H. Bradley, *op. cit.* chap. xiii.

ously in value, so do the conceptions of God apprehended in different religions, and even by different prophets or saints within the same religion. But the Reality, which is diversely symbolised by the words "God" or "the Absolute" must be rich enough to include within it the positive content of both these words, *and more also*.

Philosophers in the absolutist tradition have endeavoured in various ways to redeem the conception of the Absolute from the "thinness" and abstractness which, from its origin, is logically inherent in it. Plotinus insists, "All that is here is also there"—that is, in the Absolute nothing is lost which exists in the phenomenal world. Hegel, with similar intent, elaborated a conception of the "concrete universal". Zen Buddhism (cf. p. 100), unless I quite misapprehend it, is yet another way of facing up to this same problem; and it lays great stress on the fact that "enlightenment" results in a practical reconciliation of philosophy and common sense. Zen acknowledges openly the extent to which, if we are to reach a valid conception of Reality, the logical abstraction that constitutes the theoretic basis of Absolutism must be supplemented by other ways of apprehension. What I plead for is the Zen insistence on the limits of metaphysical logic, combined with a recognition of religion, in its highest form, as an alternative way to the apprehension of the Real.

In the Absolute—it is a commonplace of Indian philosophy to argue—all human distinctions are transcended; therefore the distinction between good and evil belongs only to the world of Appearance, the moral law can have no meaning for God. In this the fallacy is not far to seek. Inside the room in which I write I see distinctions of light and shade. Both these have their origin in the sunlight out of doors, apart from which there would be mere invisibility within. May I, then, argue that in the sunlight itself the distinction between light and shade is transcended, and that therefore what is outside is not of the nature of light?

Of course, if by the “moral law” you mean the Ten Commandments, it is transcended. “Honour thy father and thy mother”, and such-like rules, become merely irrelevant when one thinks of God. It is quite otherwise if, as St. Paul points out (cf. p. 247), “love is the fulfilling of the law”, and therefore the meaning in the law is not the rule *qua* rule, but the *love* of which, under the social conditions of human life, it is a necessary expression. It may be objected that love implies the distinction between subject and object; but so, I reply, does every other activity. To conceive Reality as an undifferentiated unity is virtually to conceive it as static and as dead. How, then, does the activity of the phenomenal derive from it? It is no sufficient answer to say, with the Buddhist, that it arises from “ignorance”, and

is therefore *maya*. Within Reality there must somehow be existential differentiation. The doctrine of the Trinity, as it was worked out by St. Augustine, is an attempt—the merits or otherwise of which I do not propose to discuss here—to state this. By him the Life Divine is envisaged as an eternal activity of love between the “Persons” within the One Godhead—into the stream of which man also can, as it were, be swept up.

The thoroughgoing absolutism of the Buddhist thinker is ready to deny to Reality all activity; he *wants* to do so, for in its unfathomable calm is to be found Nirvana. He will even deny to It existence, for in the Absolute the distinction between existence and non-existence is transcended. As the Japanese proverb ironically puts it<sup>1</sup>: “Not to know is to be a Buddha; not to see is Paradise”. As Behaviourism is the only psychology logically open to the Materialist; so Buddhist Absolutism is more logical than English. In strict logic the Buddhist is right. He is right in the same sense as is the man who—on the ground that any other representation of it is a-logical and subjectively symbolic—describes the hundred yards race by the equation  $t = \frac{w}{f}$ .

I tried in my first lecture to show why the abstract knowledge of Reality attainable by the methods of

<sup>1</sup> This is included in the collection given by Lafcadio Hearn, *In Ghostly Japan*, p. 1907. (Kegan Paul, 1907.)

science may, or rather must, be supplemented by a study of the materials provided by the historic religions. I submit that the situation is much the same as regards the abstract knowledge of Reality attainable by the methods of Absolutist philosophy.

The law of contradiction (and the conceptualised ratiocination which goes with it) is to the philosopher what measurement is to the scientist—a necessary instrument, and one on which, within the limits to which it is applicable, he can completely rely. But it does not follow that he must never step outside the limits within which this instrument is applicable. In science, much the most valuable results of the new psychology have been achieved outside the limits of the measurable; why should not the same hold good in philosophy in regard to the laws of conceptualised ratiocination?

The concern to find real worth in the phenomenal world, which is part of the heritage of the West, causes Bradley to develop the theory of “the presence of Reality among its appearances in different degrees and with diverse values”.<sup>1</sup> In this way he manages to open a back-door, as it were, through which can be smuggled in all those values which are

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 551. We may compare the almost Neo-Platonic words of St. Augustine: “And I beheld all the things that are less than (*infra*) thee, and I saw that they are neither wholly real nor wholly unreal (*nec omnino esse nec omnino non esse*); they are real in so far as they came from Thee, they are unreal because they are not what Thou art. For that alone is truly real which abides unchanged.” *Confessions*, vii. 11.

excluded by the stricter absolutism of the Buddhist philosopher. But if the preceding argument is valid, there is no need for this. Let them enter by the broad portal of a study of the material provided for philosophic reflection by the historic religions.

Here, as we saw, no phenomenon is more striking than the intuitive corporate apprehension, active along converging lines, which sees in the grander aspects of human personality a mirror of the Divine—and in Christ the highest expression of that grandeur.

#### THE IMAGE OF GOD

Once, as I passed in the train by night through a large manufacturing town, I found myself fascinated by the sight of the sparks shot up against the darkness from factory chimneys. Then it came to me, This is a parable. These sparks are to me evidence of titanic furnaces hidden from my sight. They are more than evidence; they are, as it were, tiny samples, from which I can deduce something of the very nature of the hidden fire. Just so the great personalities of our race show us something of the nature of the Reality hidden behind the material Universe. Like sparks from an unseen furnace there have flashed up the soul of Shakespeare, of Michelangelo, the minds of Newton, Darwin, Einstein. And among the sparks is one like the Morning Star—the personality of Jesus Christ.

Assume, for the moment, that such personalities

have a relation to the Reality from which they spring comparable to that of sparks shot up into the darkness from the factory furnace. Let us ask, What is the nature of the Reality which shoots up into existence personalities like these? And, especially, what signifies that spark with a brightness like the Morning Star? Let us make an assumption—it is not a paradoxical one. The furnace is not smaller and feebler than the spark. Can Reality be less than the greatest of Its children? Can the heart of the Universe be baser than that to which it has given birth? Jesus Christ existed. It is a rational inference to say, “God cannot be inferior to Christ”.

The view that Life, or that Consciousness, is the very “stuff” of which Ultimate Reality is made, or, at any rate, that it is more truly representative of that “stuff” than abstract conceptions like energy or matter, is one that has behind it a considerable weight of philosophical opinion. To attempt to state the case for that view in half-a-dozen sentences, or indeed in half-a-dozen lectures, would simply be to mis-state it. Suffice to recall the point already made (cf. p. 12 ff.) that life, even at the subconscious level, has so far resisted explanation in purely mechanical and mathematical terms; while the attempt so to explain life at the level of human consciousness leads to absurdities.

But two considerations must be stressed:

(1) If Reality is alive and conscious, it is presum-

ably so in a fuller and richer way than are any of us feeble creatures. Nevertheless, the fact is one which from the very nature of thought itself would of necessity slip through the meshes of the net of the reasoning process—as that process is, and must be, employed either by the scientist or by the absolutist metaphysician.

(2) Wherever there is life, or at any rate conscious life, it is accompanied by a mode of apprehension which is different, not in degree but in kind, from the perception of mathematical or logical coherence. This is the discrimination between the desired and the undesired. It will be convenient to speak of this as being distinctively an apprehension of quality; though I have no wish to deny that there is a sense in which the word “quality” is applicable to mathematical or logical constructions. In the higher ranges of conscious experience—with the appearance of what philosophers like to call “self-consciousness”<sup>1</sup>—this qualitative apprehension of the desirable or undesirable is further differentiated. It becomes an

<sup>1</sup> In every-day usage the word “self-conscious” implies an unhealthy tendency to introspection or an under-developed capacity of real interest in things outside the ego. But philosophers commonly use “self-consciousness” as the name of consciousness at the human, as distinct from the animal, stage of its development. The word, I think, is unfortunately chosen. No doubt human consciousness implies a clearer awareness of the distinction between the self and the non-self, and the possibility of looking upon the self as an object; but a more important thing is that it makes possible a clearer apprehension of things as distinct from one another. It makes them objects of interest *in themselves*, not merely as things to be eaten, attacked, or escaped. From this possibility of being interested in things in themselves, Science, Art, and Philosophy have developed.



apprehension of the difference, not only between the pleasant and the painful, but also between the beautiful and the ugly, and between the good and the evil. As consciousness becomes capable of more subtle apprehensions, each of these types of difference is developed into further differentiation.

It is a legitimate inference that quality is apprehended as such by the Supreme Consciousness, and is therefore real. Our values, then, dimly and imperfectly apprehended though they be, are not illusion.

It will, then, be a reasonable surmise that something of the inner quality of Reality is expressed in the beauty of Nature—in the starry heavens at night, the sunset, the mountains, the lilies of the field. It has been the function of the apostolic succession of the poets and painters, gradually through the ages, to open the eyes of purblind humanity to a deeper appreciation of this beauty—which, on the above hypothesis, is one element in “the glory of God”.

But whatever may be held in regard to this surmise, a quite different quality in Reality will be illuminated, if we can accept the statement, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father”. No reputable theologian has ever supposed this statement to imply that the whole of what is meant by the word “God” was, or could be, manifested in the personality of the historic Jesus. Nevertheless the notion that adequate expression can be given, even to a single aspect of

the qualitative character of the Infinite, by means of a single human personality, seems incredible. To this objection there is only one reply, *It is incredible; but in fact it did occur.* I crave leave to repeat an illustration which I have already used elsewhere in print:

Suppose a child, fresh from a geography lesson, were to ask its father, "Is God larger than Mount Everest?" The father might attempt the difficult task of explaining, in language intelligible to the child mind, that God is a spirit, and therefore cannot be thought of in terms of space but only in terms of quality. Suppose the child went on to ask, "Is God cleverer than Einstein?"—the father would laugh. But suppose the child were next to ask, "Is God better than Jesus?"—the father would stop to think. Then, if he were quite candid, he would say (not to the child, but to himself), "Theoretically I *ought* to be able to say that God is infinitely better than any man—but in my heart of hearts the real question is, *Is God as good as Jesus?*"

Why is it that, whereas in the sphere of the pure intellect it would be grotesque to suggest any kind of equation between the Infinite and any finite personality, it is not absurd to ask the question, *Is God as good as Christ?*

The life of Christ in thought, word, and deed is the expression of a single principle; it is an expression pure and undiluted of that creative will-to-good which he himself called by the name "love".

There are those who argue the existence of minor flaws in the character of Christ. The point is one I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Here I need only say that, even if the argument be admitted, it does not affect the foregoing conclusion. Spots on the sun do not turn it into a moon. Let us grant that, if such flaws exist, the perfect life of the Infinite Being must be qualitatively higher than the life revealed in Christ—what follows? If God is better than Jesus—then God be praised the more. On the other hand, if we hold that God is less good than Jesus, we are left face to face with the grave intellectual difficulty that the creature, in at least one respect, is greater than the Creator.

The love, the will-to-good, exhibited in the life of Christ has an absolute quality. It is a direction of the whole personal life, of a kind which makes irrelevant the ordinary distinctions known to ethics; it has no need, it has no room, for the rules and regulations which we call moral, and which are necessarily relative to human circumstances. Jesus Christ is the one person in human history who truly exemplifies the meaning of St. Augustine's epigram, *ama et fac quod vis*. This is just the kind of love that could exist in God; for it is something which transcends the distinction of good and evil on the plane of law or morals, as does the open sunshine the distinction between lights and shades within a room.

<sup>1</sup> See the essay, "Finality in Religion", in *Adventure*, p. 152 ff.

But of love on this scale and of this character there is something else which must be said. It cannot be a quality in any life unless it is also *the* quality of that life; for it is a quality which, if there at all, must necessarily be the directive principle of all activity. In God, then, either this quality does not exist at all, or, to use St. John's expression, God is Love.

### FIVE RELIGIONS

Let us now essay a bird's-eye view of the great historic religions. Two of these have limitations which disqualify them from being entitled "world-religions". Hinduism, or Brahmanism as it is sometimes called, is strictly national. You cannot become a Hindu; you must be born one, and born a member of a particular caste; you cannot (except in some future reincarnation) rise into a higher caste or fall into a lower. If anyone forfeits his caste by some misconduct which does not admit of being atoned for, such as marriage outside the caste, he drops out of the system altogether. Judaism also, though it is not in theory closed to persons who are not of Hebrew blood, has in practice become a matter of nationality.

Lineally descended from these two national religions, there are the three religions which alone claim to be universal, which ask the allegiance of man as man, independently of race or country—Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. It is

noteworthy that Christianity stands midway between Buddhism and Mohammedanism, not merely in point of antiquity, but in its philosophical conception of God, in its ethical standpoint, in its tradition of worship. Christianity is a *via media*, but not in the sense of being a compromise; it is rather a synthesis of the richer elements in the other two.

To point the comparison and contrast between the differing conceptions of Ultimate Being, reached respectively in the three world-religions, we may select three words, Peace, Power, and Purpose. For Buddhism, "God" is the Peace of the Eternal Ocean, ruffled, but only on the surface, by the calm compassion of the Bodhisattva. For Mohammedanism, God is Power unlimited, power which will often express itself in acts of mercy, but always of Its own arbitrary choice. For Christianity, God is the creative Purpose whose name and quality is Love.

Logically correlated to these three conceptions of the Infinite are three correspondingly different conceptions of the nature and value of the finite human person. To the Buddhist, man is a part of God, a tossed and troubled wave yet not other than the Ocean Itself; to the Mohammedan, man is God's slave, a property over whom his rights are absolute; to the Christian, man is God's child, with a personality derived from God and dependent on God, but yet akin to God, and with a potentiality of growing to be qualitatively more and more like to God.

Therefore in the view of Christ—though not of all Christian theologians—God's relations with man can never be arbitrary or merely coercive; they must be in some sort comparable to the relations which exist between human persons, when these are at their highest and their best.

Here we are brought up short. Affirm theism of any kind, uphold any philosophy which asserts meaning in the Universe—at once you are face to face with the shattering fact of Evil. On this rock philosophies innumerable have made shipwreck. But what of the wisdom stored in the treasuries of Religion? Search here should repay the trouble. For the illumination of the Buddha flashed out from the experience of pain, and the work of Jesus was finished on a cross.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

##### THE GOSPEL PORTRAIT

AN old Japanese woman told a missionary that she would like to become a Christian, but was held back by the difficulty that, without an image before her, she felt sure she could not pray. She voiced a natural human craving. Yet the contemplation, in the act of prayer, of a carved or painted image—even though it be the Crucifix—can do little more than help to focus the attention, and recall to memory ideas already grasped by the worshipper. Religious advance depends on *growing* under-

standing; and this means a constant enrichment of the content of the mental image previously entertained of the Divine. A material image is static; to inspire advance an image with dynamic quality would seem to be required. This the Gospels will provide—but only if rightly used.

To the historian, the Gospels are documents to be approached by the critical methods applied by modern scholarship to the scientific study of all ancient writings; his endeavour is to determine, as precisely as possible, how far the sayings and incidents recorded are original, or have been modified or added to in early tradition. But the student of the philosophy of religion, once he is satisfied that there is in the Gospels a substantial historical nucleus, will miss half their meaning, and their value for his special quest, unless he reads them in a way that is equally possible to simple minds.

The Gospels should, in the first instance, be approached as portraits of the Master—taken from four somewhat different points of view. The merit of a portrait depends, not on exactness of representation in matters of detail, but on the truth and effectiveness with which the artist has caught and conveys the inner spirit of his subject. But these particular portraits demand for their understanding an insight and a receptivity other, and more, than merely aesthetic. “Thou hast the words of eternal life”; these words must be pondered, and applied to daily needs and happenings. Christ is portrayed as teaching the true meaning of Reality, and also as embodying it—as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If, then, there is (as I have argued) any reason to think of Reality as being essentially Life directed by Love, the attempt to follow Christ will be a condition of progress in understanding both him and IT; and profundity of understanding will vary according as the inner life is or is not becoming “conformed to the image of His son”. In the collocation of the words, The knowledge and love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, there is an internal logic. Love of Christ cannot but issue in action, action alters character, thence arises fresh insight; from this in turn comes more love, issuing in new action and in further insight—and so on, by the way, as it were, of a continuous spiral ascent. Thus vision is transmuted into power—the “power to become the sons of God”.

**LECTURE 6**

**PAIN**



# PAIN

## SYNOPSIS

### THE BUDDHIST AND THE BIBLICAL APPROACH

Buddhism started from the problem of Pain. A solution of this was the essence of the gospel preached by Sakyamuni. But his solution is valid only if the doctrines of Karma and Maya be accepted without question.

Reasons why this problem is felt in the West to-day more acutely than by our grandfathers.

There runs all through the Bible a "debate" on the problem of pain, in the course of which a whole series of solutions is propounded and criticised.

The Bible is not a book, but a library. Yet, taken as a whole, it has a kind of epic unity, deriving from the intention to "assert eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men".

### GROUP RESPONSIBILITY

Among primitive peoples, it is natural to regard the family or tribe as the unit of moral responsibility. This view is implied in the stories of Achan and of the atonement to the Gibeonites. The Hebrew, at that stage of culture, was able to explain calamity as a *just* penalty for wrongdoing. The same view underlies the statement in the Second Commandment about the "iniquities of the fathers". But is this justice?

### THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALISM

The idea that the individual is the unit of moral responsibility is voiced by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Ezekiel affirms an exact correspondence, in which virtue is rewarded by prosperity, and vice is punished by adversity.

The book of Job is a criticism of this position; which is

that adopted by Job's friends but repudiated by the Voice from Heaven.

#### THE IDEA OF DISCIPLINE

The attempt to explain calamity in terms of penalty having failed, two alternative explanations are outlined.

First, in Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus the idea is mooted that suffering may have an educational value. A similar suggestion is made by the Chinese philosopher, Mencius.

(In the Psalms, the problem is approached practically, rather than speculatively.)

#### THE MARTYR WAY

A second alternative is outlined in Isaiah liii. Here the idea of the creative moral power of martyrdom is expressed in analogies drawn from the temple sacrifices. Discussion of the relation of this prophecy to the historic Jesus.

#### THE FUTURE LIFE

In the later books of the Old Testament there dawns the hope of immortality. How far is it legitimate to bring this conception to bear upon the problem of pain?

#### THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

Christ repudiates the idea that conspicuous suffering is to be interpreted as a penalty, whether for ancestral or personal guilt.

Christ's doctrine of Providence does not promise exemption from suffering. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

He interprets the sufferings of the Messiah in terms derived from Isaiah liii.

#### THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

To elucidate the meaning of the death of Christ by analogies drawn from the sacrificial system of the Jewish Temple is to us to explain *ignotum per ignotius*, for it requires an effort of the historical imagination to recover the inner meaning which such rites conveyed to contemporaries.

Certain passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the writings of St. Paul, show the meaning attached to this act of Christ by the more reflective Christians.

An error of the theologians.

## MADE PERFECT

The suggestion in the Epistle to the Hebrews that Christ himself was made perfect by suffering.

## DOES SUFFERING ENNOBLE?

The natural animal reaction to suffering is resentment, depression, and degeneration. But there is open to man a supra-animal reaction to it, which can cause it to have the reverse effect.

Illustrations of this—the soldier, the heroic invalid, Milton on his blindness.

## EVIL REAL

The conception of Satan, though mythological in form, serves to affirm the important principle that evil is too real a thing to be explained away. The mere existence of evil is a challenge to us to resist it—with the conviction that God is on our side.

## THE SUFFERING OF GOD

The most characteristic contribution of Christianity to the problem of pain is the idea that God in Christ shares in the suffering of the world, and battles with the wrong.

Discussion of some philosophical and theological objections to this view.

Death is swallowed up in victory; but the victory is won at the cost of pain to God.

## LECTURE 6

### PAIN

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.—JOHN xvi. 33.

#### THE BUDDHIST AND THE BIBLICAL APPROACH

To the Buddha the supreme problem posed by the Universe and by human life lay in the fact of pain; that is why in some ways he strikes us as so modern. And to him, as we saw in an earlier lecture, pain was less a theoretical than a practical problem. In a world whose actuality is illusion, and whose creation was an accident, the presence of evil requires no explanation; what it requires is remedy. Of this practical problem he had a practical solution; but here he is very un-modern. A long discipline of meditation and of selfless good works, he taught, will slowly win emancipation from the tyranny of desire—desire alike of good or of evil. This will bring with it, for most men only after a long series of rebirths, a further emancipation—from the Law of Karma, and thus from the necessity of any more rebirths.

The sincere and instructed Buddhist—and such persons, among Buddhists as among Christians, have always been a minority—who attempts to follow this discipline of life will usually travel a long way towards the attainment of inward peace, towards a foretaste even in this world of the condition “where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest”. Yet few are likely to take up the cross of such a discipline without first being intellectually convinced of the truth of the two doctrines of Karma and Maya. It is notable that, while the Buddha constantly deprecated metaphysical speculation, he was so much a child of India that he took for granted, as something not in need of proof, these two characteristically Indian doctrines. But to the Western mind neither of them seems antecedently probable, or, at the least, to be accepted without elaborate justification.

A thing, however, for which the Western mind of to-day is no more ready, is to start with the characteristic assumptions, of a directly contrary character, made by Hebrew thought: “In the beginning God created . . . and God saw that it was good”. A hundred years ago most people in this country *were* prepared to make these assumptions, God exists, and God is good. That is no longer the case. For this there are two main reasons. First, the progress of science has made possible to the plain man a way of conceiving of the world which

does not postulate the existence of an Intelligence as cause. That this alternative conception is intellectually valid, I do not believe; that it is widely entertained, no one will gainsay. Secondly, during the last hundred years or so the general level of moral sensibility has been raised. We are more acutely conscious than were our great-grandfathers of the burden of the world's pain; therefore, the problem of reconciling the existence of evil with the rule of a Deity, all-good and at the same time all-powerful and all-wise—a problem always recognised by the few—now haunts the imagination of the many also.

I am not about to embark on a philosophical discussion<sup>1</sup> of this problem. No theory of knowledge has satisfactorily explained the fact of error; and no theory of good, the fact of evil. Yet knowledge exists, and good exists. It is the *major* problem of philosophy, I would urge, to explain their existence; it is a *minor* problem to explain their frequent failure to exist. My aim in this lecture is to present a brief survey of the main stages in that attempt to find a solution to the problem of pain, continued over nearly a thousand years, of which the Bible is the record. This long "debate", as I may almost call it, constitutes the most continuous effort heretofore made by the human mind to solve

<sup>1</sup> For a philosophical discussion of it see F. R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology*, vol. ii., chap. vii. (Cambridge University Press, 1930.)

the problem—with results rich in concentrated experience.

Here again there is a sharp contrast between the Buddhist and the Hebrew-Christian traditions. The Buddha started off from the problem of pain; he faced it boldly, and he produced a clear-cut and (if you accept his premises) a logically valid solution. To the Biblical writers, on the other hand, the nature of the problem itself was only gradually made clear. A series of solutions are put forward; and as each, in the face of criticism, is seen by the more morally sensitive minds to be inadequate, another is propounded. The method is evolutionary and experimental; and the conclusion gradually reached commends an attitude towards life which, if less logical than the Buddhist, is at least more valiant.

The Bible is not a book; it is a library. It is a collection of literature of very varying types, in which the earliest writings are separated from the latest by more than ten centuries. Nevertheless, there is a certain unity running through the whole of this literature, and also expressed in the selection and arrangement of the various books—with the result that the Bible can in a sense be viewed as a single book. There is an epic quality in its unfolding of the march of history; it has been named *Gesta Dei*, the Saga of the Lord. Milton had sensed this quality, and dares the hope to evoke the quintessence of its meaning:

That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

In his own theological purpose Milton may have had but small success; but he has grandly stated a purpose that runs through the Bible—to “assert eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men”.

### GROUP RESPONSIBILITY

Among primitive peoples the individual is merged in the family and in the tribe to a degree hardly to be realised by the modern Western mind. It was inevitable, therefore, that among the early Hebrews the problem of evil should first of all be clearly faced in its bearing on the great social calamities which for ever threatened them—“the pestilence, the famine, and the sword”. Of such calamities it was not hard to find an explanation which was satisfactory to the mentality of a society *at that stage*. The goodness that men ascribe to God cannot rise far above the goodness of which they have themselves experience in the characters of the men whom they admire. In a group of small tribes beset with enemies, the goodness most highly valued would be that of a fighting clan leader, quick of decision and severely impartial in the administration of the camp justice of a barbarous age. Justice, fiercely conceived, will be the predominant element in the conception of goodness ascribed to God; and God being just, calamity is



naturally explained as punishment for offences committed.

The explanation of calamity, such as drought, plague or military defeat, as being a penal infliction sent by God as the due punishment for certain particular offences is one that satisfies the moral sense at the stage of civilisation where the tribe or the family, rather than the individual, is regarded as the unit of moral responsibility. At the present day, in countries where the institution of the blood feud survives, when a member of one clan kills a member of another, it is held sufficient retaliation to kill any member of the offending clan; it matters little whether or no that member be the person who actually committed the original offence. Among civilised peoples this primitive mentality can reassert itself in time of war, when there are always to be found persons who regard it as just and proper to punish atrocities committed by individuals of the enemy nation by retaliation on some other members, however innocent, of that nation. The early Hebrew view is well illustrated by the vivid stories of Achan (Joshua vii.) and of the atonement to the Gibeonites (2 Sam. xxi. 1-14).

The Israelitish army receives a defeat before the walls of Ai. The explanation is given in a word of the Lord to Joshua: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them". Tribe by tribe, family by family, household

by household, the people are made to stand before the Lord, and the oracle reveals that a certain Achan had secreted for his own use some of the spoils of Jericho which had been devoted to the Lord. This was the sin which had merited the punishment of the whole people, though apparently it had been committed without the complicity of any of them. There remains to expiate the sin; and for this is required, not the death of Achan alone, but the utter destruction of him "and his sons and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his tent, and all that he had". Then the Lord delivers Ai into the hand of the people, now purged of their offence.

The conception that responsibility, and therefore punishment, attaches to the group rather than to the individual is equally implied in the explanation given of a three years' famine which took place in the reign of David. This was found, on enquiry of the Lord, to be a punishment for a breach, committed by David's predecessor Saul, of a solemn treaty made with the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites, being asked by David what they would accept by way of atonement, demand the lives of seven descendants of Saul. Accordingly seven of Saul's grandsons are handed over to them and put to death; "and after that God was entreated for the land".

Both these stories are presumably founded upon fact; but to us the most remarkable thing about them is that they are recounted as signal illustra-

tions of the vindication of Divine *justice*. And they *were* a vindication of righteousness valid for the moral consciousness of that age. In that respect they are comparable to the mediaeval doctrine of Hell, which was equally an attempt, satisfying to the mind of the time, "to justify the ways of God to men".

The doctrine of group responsibility underlies the statement in the Second Commandment, that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Now it is indisputably true that the iniquities of a ruler may bring misery upon his subjects, or those of a parent upon his children, unto the third and fourth generation, and even longer. This is undoubtedly a fact; but, once the stage of reflection is reached when the individual is recognised as the unit of moral responsibility, it is a fact which merely renders doubly acute that problem of Divine justice which, in an earlier age, it seemed to solve. The more definitely the individual emerges from the group, the less possible does it become to explain in terms of penalty the fact that the consequences of misdeeds are so often borne by persons wholly innocent of them.

#### THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALISM

It is characteristic of the Hebrew prophetic tradition that the recognition of individual responsibility seems to have arisen from the necessity of

enforcing on individuals the Divine requirement of righteousness. For a couple of generations before the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, prophet after prophet had proclaimed that, unless Judah repented of its iniquities, the Lord would punish the nation by a grand catastrophe. The blow had fallen; after an interval the remnant seemed to settle down, consoling themselves with the reflection that, as the misfortunes under which they suffered were a punishment for the misdeeds of their fathers, they need not trouble to be righteous over-much. This attitude calls out a protest from Jeremiah:

In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge (Jer. xxxi. 29 f.).

This passage of Jeremiah, germinating in the mind of Ezekiel, produced the first clear assertion in Hebrew literature of moral individualism. He quotes the same proverb, but develops in a new way the moral drawn from it by Jeremiah:

The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

For the space of a whole chapter (ch. xviii.) he elaborates this point with iterated exemplification.

In effect, he maintains that, at any rate so far as serious misfortune is concerned, the justice of God secures that there is in this world to every individual an exact correspondence between virtue and prosperity, and between vice and calamity.<sup>1</sup>

In so far as Ezekiel is asserting that moral responsibility is primarily an individual matter, this chapter marks an important advance in ethical reflection. But the conclusion which he draws is not one which is borne out by experience. There is not in this world, in the individual case, an exact correspondence between suffering and moral desert. If God is just, it would seem natural to expect that virtue should uniformly be rewarded by prosperity and iniquity by trouble; but in point of fact this does not happen. It was in order to criticise Ezekiel's doctrine that the book of Job was written.

In literary circles, even the most Baudelairean, a man may be detected reading the book of Job, although it is in the Bible, without loss of reputation; indeed, to confess ignorance of this book is not "the thing". It is with apology, then, that I recall its general purport; it is rather like offering to summarise the plot of *Hamlet*. The book of Job is a poetic drama, in which a traditional story is utilised to raise the discussion of large problems of human

<sup>1</sup> An equally emphatic statement of the correspondence between virtue and prosperity, vice and calamity, is to be found in Deuteronomy xxviii.; but here it is the nation, not the individual, that is contemplated.

destiny, much as Æschylus or Shelley use the myth of Prometheus, or Goethe the mediaeval tale of Faust. The book opens with a Prologue in Heaven. The Satan, along with other angelic beings, makes his appearance at a formal reception in the Divine Court:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Satan, be it noted, is here depicted, not, as in the later Jewish imagination, as the rebel enemy of the Lord, but as a kind of chief detective officer and public prosecutor in the Divine administration.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

In brief, it pays Job to be good. As against Ezekiel's theory, the point is shrewdly made. If the principle of the Divine government were such that virtue *always* got its due reward, there would be an end of disinterested goodness. Honesty, says the proverb, is the best policy; and, like most proverbs, it is on the whole more true than false. But if it

were the case that *always and without exception* honesty proved to be the most paying thing, then it would cease to have the intrinsic character of honesty; it would become merely policy.

Satan, accordingly, is allowed to test the disinterestedness of Job by a series of crushing misfortunes. Job loses all his possessions and all his children; nevertheless his reaction to this is the reverse of that which Satan foretold:

Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

At the next meeting of the Divine Court, Job's conduct is reported; and in the result Satan is allowed to test Job still further:

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat among the ashes.

Then Job's wife turns upon him, bidding him, Curse God and die. Job replies,

What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?

Then come three friends to visit him. At this point the prologue, which is in prose, ends, and the poetic dialogue begins. A debate develops between Job and his friends, carried on with a marvellous wealth of poetic imagery and illustrative thought.

The friends in various ways maintain the thesis, God is just; colossal misfortunes like these would not have come upon you unless you had committed some great, though secret, iniquity. Confess your sin. God is merciful as well as just; and it is possible he will then forgive and restore you. Job in reply continues to protest his innocence. At last the Lord Himself intervenes in the discussion. There comes a voice from Heaven, upholding the innocence of Job and rebuking the folly of his friends. Then follows a sublime description of the majesty and mystery, the beauty and immensity, of the created Universe. At first sight this might seem irrelevant; but it leaves upon Job's mind, and is meant to leave upon the mind of the reader, the impression—hinted rather than stated—that, somehow or other, the author of all this must be wise and good, although it is not given to the puny intellect of man to comprehend His ways.

The problem of suffering is not solved in the book of Job; nor is any pretence made that a solution of it can be reached by the mind of man. But the book marks the beginning of an effort of the highest spirits among the Hebrews to explain suffering in terms other than of penalty.

#### THE IDEA OF DISCIPLINE

The failure, demonstrated in the book of Job, of the attempt to account for suffering in terms of



penalty, led to the exploration of two other lines of explanation, each of which was destined to be taken up and further developed in the New Testament.

The first of these is briefly indicated in the book of Proverbs:

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his reproof. For whom the Lord loveth he reproveth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Proverbs iii. 11-12).

The modern recognition of the fact that the maxim "Spare the rod and spoil the child" gravely over-emphasises the value of severity in the training of the young, may obscure the extent of the new departure implied in the above explanation. The word punishment is ambiguous; and it makes a great difference whether you attempt to account for suffering in terms of punishment, in the retributory or vindictive sense of that word, or in the reformatory sense which is its main motive in educational discipline. The difficult question how far as a matter of fact, and under what limitations, suffering is or may be to the individual an educational discipline, I shall discuss later; in this place I will only insist that the attempt to solve the problem of pain on these lines is a new departure.

The idea is worked out more fully in Ecclesiasticus:

My son, if thou comest to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for trials. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and

make not haste in time of calamity. . . . Accept whatsoever is brought upon thee, and be long-suffering when thou passest into humiliation. For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of affliction (Ecc. ii. 1-2, 4-5).

It is of some interest to compare this with the similar conclusion arrived at by the Chinese philosopher Mencius (born 372 B.C.):

When Heaven is about to confer a great office on anyone, it first exercises his mind with suffering and his sinews and bones with toil; it exposes his body to hunger and subjects him to extreme poverty; and it confounds his undertakings. In all these ways it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature, and supplies his incompetencies.

From the book of Ecclesiastes I have already quoted enough (p. 63 f.) to bring out its all but Buddhist conception of the futility of life. But as the author practically makes no attempt to solve the problem raised, a discussion of his position would in the present lecture be irrelevant.

The contribution of the book of Psalms to the problem of evil is practical rather than theoretical. It is the poet's gift, not to advance argument, but, without this, to make others share his deepest intuitions:

I know, O Lord, that thy judgements are right: and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled (Ps. cxix. 75).

Think, too, of the verse—in the original obscure—so marvellously rendered in the Prayer Book version:

Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well: and the pools are filled with water (Ps. lxxxiv. 6).

Frequently, the thing conveyed is the conviction that wickedness will in the end be cast down, and that God will not desert the righteous:

Truly God is loving unto Israel: even unto such as are of a clean heart.

Nevertheless, my feet were almost gone: my treadings had well-nigh slipt.

And why? I was grieved at the wicked: I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity. . . .

I said, Then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed mine hands in innocency. . . .

Yea, and I had almost said even as they: but lo, then I should have condemned the generation of thy children (Ps. lxxiii. 1-3, 12, 14).

In moments of depression and world-despair this last verse has been the sheet anchor of many troubled souls. To abandon cosmic hope is to condemn the generation of God's children, it is to turn one's back on the great souls of the past. But with the reflection that we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses", courage is born again.

### THE MARTYR WAY

The second new line of attack on the problem of suffering is seen in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, a section of that book which dates from the Babylonian exile:

He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. . . .

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The prophet goes on to develop the metaphor drawn from the temple sacrifices. The metaphor was specially illuminating, at the time he wrote, because the traditional sacrifices could no longer be offered in the ruined Temple at Jerusalem; so that, for the expression of service to Jehovah, the continued martyrdom of loyalty to His name and law in the land of the oppressor was the only practicable substitute for the ritual offering:

When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin . . . and he bare the sin of many.

The traditional theology of the Church has seen in this chapter a picture, sketched out centuries before, of the career of the historic Jesus. Modern scholarship regards the passage as a fragment of a poem inspired by reflection on the problem of the suffering of the righteous. Some interpreters hold that it has reference to an individual, others refer it to the nation, or to the righteous nucleus of a nation which, though worshipping the true God and prac-

tising a high level of morality, was nevertheless crushed under the heel of the cruel and idolatrous Babylonian.

The ancient interpretation and the modern, each in its own way, is true. To the prophet, as to the poet, there comes at times the flash of inspiration which enables him to glimpse, and express in some individual figure, some eternal verity; and here the prophet's vision has seized upon and dramatically expressed, in the character of the Suffering Servant, an eternal principle of life. The principle is universal in its application; yet nowhere is it perfectly exemplified in concrete fact save in the life and death of Christ. This principle, for want of a better term, I may call "the martyr way". In all ages and in all places the progress of humanity has been won at the cost of the blood and tears—not of the wicked, but of the best. The blindness and depravity of man is such that a discoverer of new truth, or a champion of a higher righteousness, is commonly treated, not as the benefactor of his fellows, but as their enemy. Abuse, social ostracism, persecution, at times even death itself, are his reward. Posterity builds with enthusiasm monuments to the prophets whom its fathers stoned, to those who in their lifetime (or for much of it) were wounded for other men's transgressions and bruised for the iniquities of those whom they would illuminate or serve. In the field of scientific discovery or of political reform, quite as much

as in that of religion, the principle holds good, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church". And it applies, not only to the men of outstanding insight or heroism, whose names are written in the book of fame, but to the multitude of the unknown who face readily and cheerfully the labours and the sacrifices of everyday life, the burden of which falls most heavily on those who strive to do their duty faithfully and serve God in their generation.

### THE FUTURE LIFE

In the Old Testament very little is said about immortality. In the later books the idea begins to dawn of the possibility of life in a better world beyond the grave. To invoke this conception, it has been objected, is merely "to call in a new world to redress the balance of the old". And I would admit that, unless some evidence of divine Providence can be found in the ordering of life in this world, such invocation is hard to justify. But, if there be *some* evidence of this ordering, that fact in itself suggests the probability that life has a meaning and purpose extending beyond our little span of years. And if immortality is so much as barely probable, that probability is of the first importance in any consideration of the problem of suffering; for the meaning of an immortal life could hardly be made fully evident in our present earthly state. If this life is only the first act, so to speak, of the drama, it would be

absurd to expect that in it the whole plot should be revealed.

### THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

Ancient fallacies die hard, and, in spite of the protests of Ezekiel and Job, the notion that calamity is explicable in terms of penalty, either for ancestral or for personal guilt, was still alive in the time of Christ. On one occasion he went out of his way to repudiate the suggestion that exceptional misfortune is an evidence of, and punishment for, exceptional sin.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay (Luke xiii. 4 f.).

Again, when the alternative of ancestral or personal guilt is put to him as the explanation of a case of blindness, he replies, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents".

No one has ever affirmed so emphatically as Christ the care of God for the individual. "The very hairs of your head are numbered." Yet no one has more explicitly denied that this care is exhibited in a governance of the Universe which brings it about that good fortune and moral desert are related in a kind of debtor and creditor account:

He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt. v. 45).

A saying in St. John's Gospel sums up his message:

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (Jn. xvi. 33).

God's providence does not guarantee man calm, but strength to ride the storm.

It is clear that some time before the end, Jesus had faced the probability, if not the certainty, that rejection and death were the fate which awaited himself. And he seems to have interpreted the strange fact that the Messiah must submit to death in the light of what I have called "the martyr way" as adumbrated in Isaiah liii.:

Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? . . . Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be served but to serve (*διακονῆσαι*), and to give his life a ransom for many (Mk. x. 38 ff.).

The emphasis on the words "servant" and "serve" and the description of the death of the supreme Servant as a ransom for "many" seem to echo the language of this chapter of Isaiah. Again, in the verses preceding those last quoted, the kings of the Gentiles, who swagger and domineer, are contrasted with the Messiah, the Ideal King, who is to drink the cup of pain and be baptized with the baptism of blood. The suffering and death which he foresaw for himself Christ interpreted in terms of that self-offering to which already, as we have seen, Isaiah had applied language suggested by the temple sacrifices.



### THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

To us moderns the significance of this self-devotion of Christ is actually obscured by the very phrases in the New Testament which were intended to explain it. The analogy of sacrificial offerings, used to explain it to contemporaries, was then illuminating, whether these were of Jewish or Gentile birth; for everybody then attached some kind of meaning to, and saw some appropriateness in, this kind of religious rite. But for the last thousand years and more, not only in Europe and the New World but in the greater part of Asia, the majority of men have been out of contact with any living religion which enjoins such practices; thus it has become a matter for anthropological research and the comparative exegesis of ancient texts in unfamiliar tongues to determine their inner significance to those who practised them of old.

To our age, then, the analogy of the temple sacrifice obscures more than it illuminates. Even in the New Testament epoch there were some who felt this. The Epistle to the Hebrews comes near to suggesting that the sacrifices of the Jewish Temple were but a coarse and clumsy parody of the Divine meaning now at last clearly revealed in the act of Christ. If the author does not express himself as crudely as I have done, it is because reverence for the ancient scriptures precludes his so doing. To

him the old sacrifices were an allegory; but of their intrinsic futility he does not leave his view ambiguous.

It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. . . . In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. . . . He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second (Heb. x. 4-9).

“I come to do thy will, O God.” The significance and value of the death of Christ springs from its inner quality. It is the expression in external act of a freely chosen self-dedication, ungrudging and without reserve, to the highest service of God and man. The suffering incidental to such self-offering is morally creative.

St. Paul left behind him no treatise on Systematic Theology; his theological views we must collect from letters written, mostly in haste, to deal with practical emergencies. Not unnaturally, his *obiter dicta* on the meaning of the death of Christ seem not always consistent with one another. But some of them at any rate appear to imply a view substantially identical with that in the passage of Hebrews I have quoted. Notably in writing to the Colossians he attributes to the sufferings of those who labour in the Christian cause a function and value which, though insignificant compared with those of the suffering of Christ, are yet not of a different kind.

I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and make up on my part the *unpaid balance* [so the Greek words should be translated] of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church (Col. i. 24).

The idea is even thrown out that the suffering labours of missionary or martyr are actually a part of the redemptive suffering of Christ:

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. iv. 10-11).

Theologians have commonly imagined that they are under obligation to make a complete isolation of the sacrifice of Christ from the heroic self-offering of other noble souls; and this has vitiated most of the classical attempts to produce a doctrine of the Atonement. Just so a similar isolation of the divine sonship of Christ from the potentiality in other men "to become the sons of God" (John i. 12) has defeated the attempt to produce a satisfactory doctrine of the Incarnation. In the Catholic tradition the popular reaction against these two errors of the theologians has expressed itself, in the one case in the doctrine of the merits of the Saints, and in the other in a veneration of them, which, *in the popular religion*, is all but polytheistic. Protestantism will protest in vain against these developments so long

as it ignores the twofold error against which this hagiolatry is a reaction.

### MADE PERFECT

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes yet another contribution to the discussion of the problem of pain. The starting-point of his meditation has evidently been the passage in Proverbs which I have already quoted, "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. . . ." Such chastening, he argues, is

for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Heb. xii. 10-11).

What is, however, most remarkable is that he applies this principle to the case of Christ himself: It *became* God, he says, "in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). Elsewhere the author of the epistle speaks of Christ as being "without sin"; evidently, then, by "perfection" he means what we should call "maturity". A blossom may be faultless, but its "perfection", in this sense, only appears in the matured fruit. Yet even so no later Christian theologian would have dared to speak of Christ being "made perfect"; but here the statement is reiterated:

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. v. 7-9).

The allusion to Gethsemane—I think in St. Luke's version of the story<sup>1</sup>—is clear. And it is affirmed that Christ achieved the full moral maturity of his human character after, and as a result of, the experience of the Passion. That is, his sufferings are asserted to have had positive value, not merely in the results for others, but in their effect upon himself.

#### DOES SUFFERING ENNOBLE?

The problem of the Universe would be an easy one if we could accept outright the view that the *normal* consequence of suffering is elevation of character. But the facts of experience do not bear this out. Man is an animal; and at the animal level the normal reaction, physiological and mental, to suffering is resentment or depression, and, if it be long continued, degeneration. It is important, therefore, to note that it is nowhere suggested in the New Testament that there is value in suffering *as such*, apart

<sup>1</sup> Luke alone gives the "Agony and bloody Sweat". I regard as an error the omission in some MSS. of Luke xxii. 43-4; cf. the remarks in my book, *The Four Gospels*, p. 137 f.

from the way in which the sufferer reacts to it. The natural reaction to suffering is resentment, depression, and degeneration; and, at the animal level, these consequences are inevitable. But man is not merely animal; and there is open to him a supra-animal reaction to suffering; and exactly in proportion as man so reacts, does suffering become a means of moral advance.

There is one sphere in which in all ages and all countries what I have called the supra-animal reaction to suffering has been traditional; in the profession of the soldier. The soldier has always been taught to take it for granted that wounds, weariness, hardship, and often death, are the normal, and up to a point inevitable, conditions of loyal service to country or to prince. In that sphere, even before the dawn of civilisation, there had grown up a spiritual tradition, which has enabled quite ordinary men to endure wounds and hardships or to face death, with results to character the very opposite of the depression, resentment, and deterioration which, apart from this spirit, are the natural physiological and psychological consequences. The analogy between the soldier's profession and the Christian's service of Christ already appears in the New Testament: "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii. 3). Christianity immensely widened the field of heroic endurance; and then bade men meet suffering of whatever kind in the spirit in

which the soldier is trained to meet that incidental to his own profession.

The flying machine is heavier than air, and were Nature left alone, would fall to the ground; but incline the planes the right way and keep the engine going—it out-soars the clouds that veil the sun. Suffering is like this. Its natural effect is to embitter and to degrade, but rightly used it can be a means of spiritual ascent. This is not pious theory; it is a matter of observable fact. Look around on the men and women of your acquaintance and ask yourself who among them you feel and know to be *worth* most. You will find that, at some time or another in their lives, each of them has faced loss, difficulty, physical pain, or desolating disappointment—and has overcome. They have won through by meeting these things with courage and cheerfulness in a spirit of *acceptance*. Thereby they have turned what seemed poison into food. Power to do this is more than half the meaning of “the grace of God”.

The consciousness of heroic action is in itself a tonic to the mind, which nerves to the acceptance of loss or suffering that is incidental to effort in the cause of duty, or in the promotion of some worthy cause. Far more difficult to endure rightly is the kind of suffering which totally incapacitates for labour in any worthy cause, and even makes the sufferer a heavy burden on others who else might do the work. My own occupation brings me face to face

with cases of this kind less often than does that of a minister of religion in an ordinary parish. But from time to time it has come in my way to visit sick persons in such capacity. In so doing I have met with examples of crushing misfortune, or long-continued suffering, which have, I confess, been too hard for my philosophy. At the bed-side of a sufferer there is this difference between the physician and the minister of religion: the physician is expected (and is often able) to *do* something, the minister is expected to *say* something. But there are times when any words of consolation or of comfort seem futile to the point of being a mockery. In such circumstances it has sometimes, all of a sudden, come to me that no words of mine were needed; the one in front of me had *accepted* suffering, and had overcome. I had no message for him; he (or she) had one for me—the message of the *Imitatio Christi*, Carry thy cross; and it shall carry thee: *si crucem portas, portabit te.*

I think of Milton—acclaimed the second greatest in the great line of English poets, political secretary to Oliver Cromwell, master of controversy in the confutation of what he deemed the poisonous errors of the opponents of God's truth. Nobody now cares about his political services; no one would even dream of looking at his controversial writings; not many of his countrymen, I think, have ever read right through those majestically rolling epics which all extol. But



everyone knows—thousands have drunk inspiration from it—the sonnet “On his Blindness”, written when loss of sight had utterly disabled him for that active work and battling for the right which was his life’s ambition:

When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide,  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker . . .

We read on. Querulous lament changes into the quiet triumph of complete acceptance:

They also serve who only stand and wait.

### EVIL REAL

Considerations of the kind I have endeavoured to bring out, though they may lessen the stress, practical and intellectual, of the problem of pain, do not provide a complete solution of it. It is worth while, then, to remember that in the New Testament no pretence is made that, within the limits of the present world order, the problem either is or can be solved. In the centuries following the writing of the book of Job, the conception had been developed of Satan as the enemy of God and of God’s rule on earth; and pain (or at least some instances of pain), as well as sin, are ascribed to the direct action of Satan or his subordinates. In origin and in form the

conception is mythological, and opinions differ as to the best way of translating the conception from mythological into philosophical terms. But whatever may be thought on this point, it is clear that it is an assertion that evil is real. On the other hand, it as clearly affirms that evil, though real, is a thing which ought to be opposed, and which is actually in process of being overcome.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For by hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope . . .

And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good . . . (Rom. viii. 22-28).

God Himself is active in the struggle; and that fact carries with it assurance of ultimate victory.

For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. iv. 16-18).

### THE SUFFERING OF GOD

Thus the problem of pain is conceived dynamically—as one to be solved in terms, not of explana-

tion, but of battle and of hope. Such a solution will seem shallow and precarious unless related to a concept which is the most characteristic contribution to the problem made in the New Testament—the doctrine of divine participation in the world's pain.

Not as one blind and deaf to our beseeching,  
Neither forgetful that we are but dust,  
Not as from heavens too high for our up-reaching,  
Coldly sublime, intolerably just:—

Nay but Thou knewest us, Lord Christ, Thou knowest,  
Well Thou rememberest our feeble frame,  
Thou canst conceive our highest and our lowest,  
Pulses of nobleness and aches of shame.

Let us ask, then, what precisely are the implications as to the Divine contact with pain involved in the statement (by St. Paul) that we may see “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. To Greek philosophy, as to Indian, it was axiomatic that divinity is intrinsically incapable of pain, and the classical Christian theology inherited this axiom of the “impassibility” of God. But in the Old Testament we find the idea that God enters into the sufferings of His people: “In all their affliction he was afflicted . . . and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isai. lxiii. 9). The relation of God to the woes of the world is not that of a mere spectator. The New Testament goes further, and says that God *is* love. But that is not love which, in the presence of acute

suffering, can stand outside and aloof. The doctrine that Christ is the image of the unseen God, means that God does *not* stand outside.

As the flash of the volcano discloses for a few hours the elemental fires at the earth's centre, so the light on Calvary was the bursting forth through historical conditions of the very nature of the Everlasting. There was a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Under another metaphor, the same idea is expressed in the vivid image, in the book of Revelation, of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8).

The philosophical objection to ascribing pain to God is, I would argue, one more example of that fallacy of intellectual abstraction which I was bold to criticise in my last lecture. If God is Life, He cannot be immune from feeling. But we miss the emphasis of the New Testament if we push our reaction against the idea of the "impassibility" of God to the point of letting pain overshadow joy. The life of Christ shows forth the eternal quality of the Divine; nevertheless this is done under the conditions of time, and no one moment of the time series can sum up the whole. And if there is one moment more representative than another, that moment, in the New Testament view, is not that of the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou for-

<sup>1</sup> C. A. Dinsmore, *The Atonement in Literature and Life*, p. 232.

saken me", but that of Resurrection. The historic starting-point of Christianity was not the Cross, but the conviction that Christ had risen—a conviction, I would affirm, which in no way involves acceptance of belief in the resuscitation of the physical body of the Master (cf. p. 293). It was the conviction, "Death is swallowed up in victory". Were it possible to form an adjective capable of expressing this idea, then that adjective, rather than the classical "impassible", would be an appropriate one to predicate of God.

Death is swallowed up in victory; but the victory is at the cost of pain to God. Suffering is not explained; it is shared. And what is shared by God, man may be content to leave unexplained.

When I . . . turned from that world-appealing sight, Christ crucified for us, to look upon life's most perplexed and sorrowful contradictions, I was not met as in intercourse with my fellow-men by the cold platitudes that fall so lightly from the lips of those whose hearts have never known one real pang, nor whose lives one crushing blow. I was not told that all things were ordered for the best, nor assured that the overwhelming disparities of life were but apparent, but I was met from the eyes and brow of Him who was indeed acquainted with grief, by a look of solemn recognition, such as may pass between friends who have endured between them some strange and secret sorrow, *and are through it united in a bond that cannot be broken.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dora Greenwell, *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 14 f. (Strahan, London, 1871.)

**LECTURE 7**

**ACTION AND IDEAL**

## ACTION AND IDEAL

### SYNOPSIS

#### CONFUCIUS AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Reasons for the prestige until recently enjoyed in countries of advanced civilisation by formulations of ethics of immense antiquity. A new ethic must incorporate what is of value in the old, without its deficiencies and limitations.

#### THE COLLAPSE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

The revolt against Confucianism in China arose in the student class; the similar revolt against traditional ethics in England and America originated in literary circles in the great capitals.

In Europe in the Middle Ages, as in China, authority reigned in the sphere of science and philosophy as much as in religion and morals.

The revolt against authority, which in science and philosophy dates from the Renaissance, has, for the average man and woman, only recently invaded the sphere of ethics.

#### A WORKING MAXIM

Is there, we ask, any basic fact, that cannot be questioned by a reasonable man, which can be taken as a foundation on which to build a practical ethic?

There is the fact that every individual may, or rather *must*, make of his life something that is either on the whole constructive or on the whole destructive.

This suggests to us the maxim, "Live constructively". If it be objected that the word "constructive" lacks exact definition, it may be replied that the art of living is a practical art; in such an art it is practice, not definition, which "makes perfect".

## THE ART OF LIVING

Any practical art evolves a technique and certain principles which enable the individual to appropriate the experience of the successful artists of the past. This applies to the Art of Living—the more so since, this being a co-operative art, it is like a game which cannot be played at all except by people who know and observe the rules.

The rules require revising from time to time; but the revision must be in the right direction.

### GENERAL RULES

Well-chosen general rules are labour-saving devices; we cannot think out the fundamental principles of ethics afresh every time we speak or act.

They are also a necessary defence against momentary impulse.

### THE OLD LAW AND THE NEW

The negative stress in the Ten Commandments was criticised by Christ and by St. Paul.

The relation of the maxim, "Live constructively", to "Love thy neighbour as thyself".

The necessity in morality of some element of restriction.

### SELF-REALISATION OR SELF-SACRIFICE?

Whoever chooses to live the constructive life will run counter to the prejudices or interests of somebody, and will suffer for it. This raises the familiar question, Is the moral ideal self-realisation or self-sacrifice?

This antithetical statement of the problem confuses the real moral issues involved. Brief discussions of these issues.

### IN TUNE WITH THE INFINITE

The Power behind the Universe, whatever else it be, expresses itself in creation. If It is conscious, one who is living the constructive life is assuredly living "in tune with the Infinite". But this must be in small things as well as great.

### WORLD-AFFIRMING AND WORLD-DENYING ETHICS

Confucius, the Old Testament, the New Testament, Buddhism,



and Hinduism form a series in this regard—the New Testament occupying the middle position.

The original stress of New Testament ethics became seriously modified through contact with Gnostic and Manichæan ideas.

Through the centuries Christianity has gradually been sloughing off this influence and returning to its original spirit.

#### OUR LOST TRANQUILLITY

It is good that the leaders of the Churches should exhort to moral and practical endeavour—individual, social, and international. But in a machine-driving and machine-driven age a not less important task of religion is to lift men's minds above the stress and hustle of life, and point them to the peace which passeth understanding.

## LECTURE 7

### ACTION AND IDEAL

Come therefore and let us enjoy the good things that now are; and let us use the creation with all our souls as youth's possession.

Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and perfumes; and let no flower of spring pass us by;

Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered: let none of us go without his share of our proud revelry. . . .

Thus reasoned they, and they were led astray.—THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON ii. 6-9, 21, R.V.

### CONFUCIUS AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

TILL yesterday in China, and hardly less so in Japan, the moral law has been identified with the precepts of Confucius. In Europe and America men have admired the Sermon on the Mount, and have been influenced by it; but the code they have lived by has been the Ten Commandments, which every child has been brought up to regard as a summary definition of the sphere of moral obligation. Confucius was born in 552 B.C.: the Ten Commandments were put into writing some centuries earlier. It is, when one comes to think of it, an astounding fact

that the greatest civilisations which the world has seen should still consciously and explicitly find their ethical basis in these all but prehistoric formulations.

The thing has been possible because of the special nature of man and of morality, and the action, as between different human groups, of the biological law of Natural Selection. Man is an animal who cannot survive at all except by co-operative effort; but any co-operation, above the level of the sub-conscious operation of herd instinct, requires the acceptance by all parties of a recognised set of principles. Every game must have its rules. If in any tribe the principles or rules are well conceived, and are stated and enforced in a way which secures their general observance, that tribe has a decided advantage in the struggle for existence. The rules of conduct accepted by any tribe, even if their actual formulation is due to a particular sage or law-giver, are in the main the stereotyping of lines of behaviour which have commended themselves to the general sense of the community through centuries of experience of the rule-of-thumb type. Civilisation demands co-operative effort of a progressively more elaborate kind. Civilisation, then, cannot arise, much less endure, except among peoples who either produce or inherit an ethical code which makes continually possible both an extension and an intensification of social co-operation.

Two somewhat contrary conclusions follow. On the one hand it has become evident of late that civilisation cannot continue to advance, or even to endure, unless means are found for a much further extension and also intensification of the existing tradition of social co-operation in regard to the mutual relations of nations, of classes, and of the two sexes; and it is questioned whether the ethics either of Confucius or of the Ten Commandments lend themselves to this extension. On the other hand ethical codes which have made possible the civilisations of Europe, China, and Japan represent an original wisdom based on experience, which has been subjected to the test of further experience during the changes and chances of more than 2000 years. Civilisation may demand a new ethic; but it will not find it merely by turning its back on the wisdom and experience of the past. The new must incorporate all that is of value in the old, without its deficiencies or limitations. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mere revolt against an ancestral ethic is more likely to retard progress than to advance it. In every department of human activity there is need both for tradition and for experiment. A recent critic has remarked, in regard to literature, "The advantage of having a tradition is that standards are not lost, and, consequently, do not have to

be recovered".<sup>1</sup> The same thing holds in regard to morals, with the important difference that in this department a standard once lost is recovered with greater difficulty. It is in some ways worse to let down a standard than to "let down" a friend.

### THE COLLAPSE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

Under the old regime China was ruled by an aristocracy of scholars, the path to official positions being a series of competitive examinations in the Confucian Classics. In 1906 this system was abolished, and the avenue to office became a degree in some modern University. It happens that in Chinese the word used for "scholar" in the old sense is also applied to the candidate for an ordinary degree—and with the name has gone the prestige of its old associations. Hence the High School or University student, and the opinions which at the moment he adopts, count in modern China to an extent incredible in Europe. It matters, therefore, that the student class is definitely turning its back upon Confucius. China, they say, was once the foremost nation in the world; the rest of the world has moved onwards, China has stood still; China has been ruined by her worship of the past, and for that Confucius and his authoritarian ethic is mainly responsible. Communism, Nationalism, Humanism, and Christianity are

<sup>1</sup> *Tradition and Experiment in Present-Day Literature*, p. 168, by various authors. (Oxford University Press, 1929.)

competing for the place in the mind and heart of the younger generation from which Confucius has been ousted—with a success which in the case of each varies enormously from year to year.

In Europe and America the revolt against traditional ethics did not originate in the student world, but in literary circles in the great capitals. It is most conspicuously expressed in the denunciation of those two of the commandments which have to do with the Sabbath and with sex—as these have been interpreted in the Puritan tradition. On either of these topics the *obiter dicta* of statesmen, novelists, or film-stars seem always to be good “copy” for the popular Press. But the situation in the West resembles that in China in this respect, that what is challenged is less the detail of ethics than its basis in authority. It would seem that in morals, as elsewhere, authority has had its day.

In Europe in the Middle Ages, as in China under the spell of Confucius, authority reigned supreme—and in the sphere of science and philosophy quite as much as in that of religion and morals. The science and philosophy of the modern world had their origin in questioning and in revolt. Aristotle had said that heavy bodies fall to the ground more rapidly than light ones; it was a revolution when Galileo dared to question this, and from the leaning tower at Pisa to bring the dictum of authority to the test of experiment. That was the beginning—in

so far as any great movement of thought has a definite beginning—of modern science. Descartes did the same thing by philosophy when, attempting to doubt all things, he found there was one thing he could not doubt—his own existence, *cogito, ergo sum*. With this residuum of the undoubtable as his one sure foundation, he essayed to rebuild the edifice of philosophy.

Morality, however, down to the present day, has, for the average man and woman, rested in the main on authority; if not the authority of religion, at least that of accepted conventional standards. The philosophers, of course, have been busy during the last three hundred years seeking a basis in reason and experience for the principles of ethics; and as regards conceptions of political rights and duties, or the responsibility of the state for economic and social conditions, their theories have had enormous influence. But so far as individual ethics is concerned, in England, until quite recent years, the philosopher has addressed a small audience, and has made a singularly small impression on the authoritarian tradition. Indeed, for the great mass of the reading public authoritarianism in ethics was first seriously threatened by the vogue of Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. H. G. Wells. And now, ever since the post-war landslide, in half the most widely canvassed novels, plays, and popular essays it is not so much argued, as taken for granted, that all prin-

ciples of morality and all rules of conduct are not only to be questioned, but are highly questionable.

### A WORKING MAXIM

In such circumstances it would seem worth while to do in the sphere of morals what Descartes did in that of metaphysics—that is, to ask whether there be not some basic fact which it is impossible for a reasonable man to doubt, and then to ask how far this may be made a foundation on which to build a practical ethic. That is what I now propose to try. But if I mention the purpose of this lecture in the same breath with the name of Descartes, I must at once forestall the implied comparison with the vigorous assertion that I am neither professing to start out on a new excursion in the field of high philosophy, nor presuming to enunciate a theory of ethics in the academic sense. My aim is the humbler one of seeking a working principle, a maxim of a more or less rule-of-thumb quality, which may be of use to persons—like myself, and some of those I am addressing—who cannot without effort breathe for long in the rarified atmosphere of philosophic discussion. All of us have to live; all therefore want some clear, rough-and-ready principle by which to determine the practical choices and decisions which are presented day by day in ordinary life. Confessing this humble aim, I venture to crave from the professional philosopher some measure of indulgence—



even though it take the shape of an indulgent smile.

Seeking such a principle, I am hit in the face by the observation that it is open to every individual to make of his life, or hers, something which is either on the whole constructive, or on the whole destructive; to make of it something which will either enrich or impoverish humanity, or at least that little group of human beings with whom the individual is most directly brought in contact.

This observation is one which, once one perceives its implications in detail, does not admit of being seriously questioned. Of course, like every other proposition which anybody at any time has laid down, it is not proof against the armoury of the hyper-ingenious. All I claim for it is, that it has that kind of truth which is recognisable by all persons who are not too clever to be sensible. It is obvious, for example, that it is open to every individual to do the job which he is paid to do, either efficiently or inefficiently; and the broad fact that in the one case his action is in its general tendency constructive, and in the other destructive, is not open to question—even though the caviller may name certain jobs which would be better left undone, and which therefore (he might argue), if done at all, were better done inefficiently. Similarly, it is not questionable that by his or her action, or by words—indeed, even by the looks, which are the uncon-

scious expression of hidden thoughts and disposition—every individual is an influence tending either to keep up or to let down the general standard of taste, of honour, of veracity, of honesty, etc., in the group of persons among whom he moves. Again, it is not disputable that certain individuals are centres from whom emanates a spirit of goodwill and kindness, while others are equally centres of the opposite. Indeed we all know persons who, wherever they may be, become foci of cheerfulness and courage; and only too well do we know others who are power-houses for the diffusion of depression and discouragement.

In these ways, and in others too numerous to detail, the individual may make of his or her life something which is either creative or destructive. I said “may”; I ought to have said “must”. For, in default of suicide, the individual cannot cease to live; it follows that he cannot cease to act. Therefore, every day and all day he is continually being forced to choose in which way he will act. There is no escape from the alternative; the individual life must be *either* in the main constructive, *or* in the main destructive.

Most people, I imagine, if once they face up to this choice, would prefer that their lives should be constructive and creative rather than the opposite. This remark of course does not hold good of habitual criminals, sadists, and other mental defectives. For

the sociologist the existence of persons of this kind constitutes a standing problem; but I may be allowed to ignore the possibility of there being such in the audience which I have the honour to address.

At this point the objection may be raised that in using the word "constructive" I am assuming that the construction will be of something that is of value, but to determine whether an act is in this sense constructive is impossible without a prior standard of value.

I freely admit that I use the word constructive with the implication that the thing constructed is to be good; but I deny the necessity of prefacing my argument with an abstract definition of the good. In real life it is quite possible to become shallow by trying to be too profound. The art of living is a practical art, like medicine or architecture. A physician does not begin his studies by demanding an abstract definition of health, nor an architect by demanding one of beauty—though undoubtedly the one will fail unless he produce health, and the other unless he produce the beautiful. In a practical art the goodness or otherwise of an achievement can only be seen in the concrete instance. Successful achievement is won, partly by the study of good models without becoming enslaved to them, and partly from experience; in the last resort it is a matter of *flair*. The same thing holds in the sphere of morals. Principles have very little meaning apart

from their application in concrete experience. The moral teaching of Christ is so impressive, largely because the meaning of the principles he taught was illustrated by the actions he did; though it is well to remember that his recorded acts are a representative, not an exhaustive, illustration of his principles. To follow Christ does not demand an external imitation of his actions, but an original application of the principles exemplified in them to particular sets of circumstances *as each arises*. For the practical purpose I have in view in this lecture, an abstract definition of goodness is not required. In actual life people find out what is really good mainly by seeing it done, and by trying to do it themselves; for which reason everyone's notion of what is good ought *always to be growing*. Accordingly I make no apology for the use of the word "constructive". For our immediate purpose the word is all the better for not containing, or even implying, any precise definition of aim or of value. What a man wants to begin with, as a guide in the practical choices of life, is something which is nearer to being a slogan than a philosophic definition. The maxim, "Live constructively", will serve this purpose.

#### THE ART OF LIVING

Construction is never a matter of "good intentions" only. The art of living, like the art of architecture, must evolve a certain technique and certain

principles, the knowledge of which enables the individual to appropriate and utilise the experience of the more successful artists of the past. In the sphere of architecture the experience of the race and the experiments of men of genius will constantly modify and enrich the technique invented, or the principles enunciated, in previous ages. Similarly, in the art of living, humanity does not and ought not to stand still. But in the matter of experiment there cannot be quite the same freedom here. In the one case the material upon which the experimentation is made consists of inanimate objects like stone and iron and wood; in the other it consists of human personalities—other people's as well as my own.

Yet, in the art of living, fresh and startling departures from an accepted technique and principles are less likely than in the sphere of architecture or painting to turn out to be creative. Conduct is not a purely individual matter; indeed, it is mainly a matter of relations, harmonious or the contrary, with other free personalities. It follows that an individual cannot, without disaster, take upon himself the right to evolve a new technique and new principles of behaviour without first securing their acceptance by at any rate a substantial number in the community in which he lives. There are those who think that the game of cricket would be improved if some of the rules were altered; yet a cricket reformer would not be asked to play if he insisted that, when *he* was

bowling, but on no other occasion, the wicket should be increased in size. That is, in effect, what happens when an individual claims the right in his own interest to break an accepted principle of morality.

No one, I imagine, who looks at things as they are, is satisfied with the present situation in regard to the technique of the art of living as commonly practised, or the principles of morality as commonly understood, still less with the resultant of these on the state of the world as a whole. Here, as in all things human, progress will be brought about by the insight and enterprise of adventurous pioneers. But the insight must be sound and the enterprise rightly directed. There are plenty of people who have a sentimental desire that the world should become a better place, and that their own lives should be of a fine, honourable, and, if possible, beneficent character. Much smaller is the number of those who not only desire to make their lives creative but are definitely resolved to expend the thought and effort which are necessary if they are really to become so. There are many who are ready for adventure, in the sense of taking risks and pursuing novelties. Fewer by far are those who are prepared to give the amount of consideration required to discriminate among new ideas, as to which are likely to turn out constructive, or which are merely destructive, and then to select their risks on the principle of adventuring all for things that are worth it, and nothing for things that

are not. The call is for those who will "live dangerously"—for the sake of ends clearly apprehended as socially constructive.

### GENERAL RULES

We must now raise the question, What is the value of general rules in conduct? Constructive effort must be practical; but any kind of practical work involves rapid decisions on points of detail, and the number of detailed decisions which everyday life demands is so great that, without some labour-saving device to enable one to choose quickly, it would be impossible to get the day's work done. General rules of conduct are labour-saving devices of this kind. Everybody ought to think out for themselves the great aims of life, the fundamental direction of aspiration, and the main lines of the embodiment of aims and aspirations in practical conduct. But I cannot be re-thinking out these large issues every time I have to open my mouth to speak or move my limbs to act. The value of having general rules is that they save us the time and effort of going back to fundamentals every time we do anything at all.

No rule can ever be absolute in the sense of providing infallible guidance as to right action under all possible circumstances. Circumstances are much too complicated for that; and if you try to make a rule which will cover them all, it will become so

complicated that it will cease to be useful. Take, for example, the simple rule that one should always tell the truth. The prime requisite of successful co-operation among men is mutual confidence; untruthfulness, therefore, since it makes co-operation and mutual trust impossible or insecure, is socially destructive. But everybody has, sometime or other, debated the problem presented to the casuist by contingencies in which telling the truth may be productive of disaster. To quote the stock example: if I am standing at the junction of two roads, and a lunatic with a pistol asks me which road has been taken by a person whom he evidently intends to shoot, am I to tell the truth, in which case an innocent person will be murdered, or tell a lie and send the lunatic down the wrong road? On the principle that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, most of us, I imagine, would prefer to sacrifice the rule to the man rather than the man to the rule.

If, however, we once admit that a rule may have one exception, may it not have others? What then is the use of the rule? I should reply, first, that the rule, always tell the truth, is the expression, and under ordinary circumstances is an adequate expression, of the principle that lying is socially destructive—a principle of supreme value because without mutual confidence society must disintegrate. Secondly, the recognition of the rule as bind-



ing relieves the individual from the waste of time involved in constantly analysing the principles of ethics afresh to see if perchance some complication of moral principles may be involved in a practical decision, unless the circumstances are manifestly in the highest degree exceptional. If and when such circumstances occur, the individual ought to go back to fundamental principles. But he must remember that whenever the case is one in which considerations of self-interest or the urge of strong personal feeling are involved, it is unlikely that he will be morally or intellectually competent for an impartial re-examination of fundamental principles. He must either act in accordance with the hard-and-fast rule or be content to stand judgement for its violation.

Rules have another value. It is on stormy seas that we steer our barque; fears and allurements beat against it, gusts of emotion threaten to overturn it. Who but a self-deceiver will boast the unshakable stability of his own virtue or the invincible authority of his own higher choice and insight. Resolutions rightly made, principles intelligently adopted, are anchors which, on occasion, save the ship from being dashed against the rocks; and without them no wise mariner will put to sea. And, for this purpose, I define a principle as that which I accept in cold blood to stand by when the blood is hot.

### THE OLD LAW AND THE NEW

This brings me back to the Ten Commandments. Neither Christ nor St. Paul was content with the moral teaching of these. "It was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill; but I say unto you . . ." is a formula which Christ applies to more than one of the commandments. St. Paul spent much of his energies in affirming the position, at that time highly controversial, that the Gospel had abrogated the Law. In his Epistle to the Romans, the most elaborate exposition of this contention, he works out its application to the Decalogue:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Love (*ἀγάπη*) worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (xiii. 8-10).

There were those who said that the new morality of Christianity would destroy the old. To these St. Paul replies that anyone who loves his neighbour will as a matter of course avoid doing that neighbour harm. If you really love your neighbour, you do not murder him or rob him or run off with his wife—not because these things are forbidden to you by

the Ten Commandments, but because you do not wish to harm him. Nor must it be forgotten that "my neighbour" does not here mean a person of the same village or the same clan, but any human being whose interests are affected by my action.

In the emotional sense of the word "love" most of us love *some* of our neighbours, but not all. But the Greek word here translated by "love" has not the same emotional content as its English equivalent; its stress is rather on the idea of goodwill than of warm feeling. Love your neighbour is therefore nearer than would at first sight appear to the maxim, Live constructively. The two biddings are not quite the same; and I certainly do not wish to suggest that mine is superior. On the contrary, social advance has to do with persons; and so long as you use the word "love" you cannot forget this. You may forget it if you use the metaphor, *mechanical* in origin, implied in the word "constructive". The reason, however, why I have preferred the term "constructive" for the argument of this lecture, is that it can be used in a maxim that will hold good for persons who doubt or reject that conception of God as Love, which affords an intellectual basis for the richer and warmer maxim, Love your neighbour.

This explained, I wish to make a point which is in a sense the obverse of that made by St. Paul in the passage just quoted. When he says, Love is the fulfilling of the law, what he is concerned to argue

is that the new positive ethic includes the old negative ethic—and more also. What I now wish to urge is the obverse proposition, that any positive and constructive ethic must include some at least of the negative elements in the old ethics. In other words, although the mere avoidance of doing harm is miserable considered as an ethical ideal, nevertheless such avoidance is in fact a limiting condition of doing positive good. Merely to keep the Commandments is not to make one's life constructive; but merely to break them is pretty certain to make one's life destructive.

The place of negative prohibitions in positive and constructive ethic seems to me analogous to the rules of training for a boat race. The mere observance of negative prohibitions like, Thou shalt not smoke, Thou shalt not sit up late, Thou shalt not feed on chocolate-creams, never yet secured a crew its victory. That is effected by things that are positive—strength, weight, oarsmanship, *morale*. Nevertheless, the observance of such negative prohibitions is a limiting condition without which the positive qualities will be neutralised.

The necessary reverence due to negative restriction is nobly stated by Dr. Oman.<sup>1</sup>

Not only Kant's, but all moral laws are at bottom prohibitions. This may be their limitation, but it is also their

<sup>1</sup> J. Oman, *The Natural and the Supernatural*, p. 324. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1931.)

power. The spring of all man's progress and mastery has been the power to say no to the flux of impression and impulse. By itself, this would have meant nothing; with the will to live better, it was both power and guidance for what might be far beyond any possible conscious aim. As we advance, we see farther, yet we are also more conscious that it is not far. . . . It is the quality of ideals not to be final, so that what is absolute can never apply to any verdict of conscience, but only to conscientiousness in following the upward road, to always choosing what excels. But on that road warnings against bypaths are true direction. . . . Negative rule, as warning against departing from the positive way of high purpose, is constantly the only form of conscientiousness possible for us at any moment, for the good reason that we often never know more than the road which is not to be taken.

### SELF-REALISATION OR SELF-SACRIFICE?

Let us now envisage the case of an individual who has definitely chosen to make his life constructive and creative to the maximum of his power and opportunity. He has decided to go beyond the purely negative ethic of the Ten Commandments—or rather their modern equivalent in the generally accepted conventions and rules of conduct, on the observance of which average public opinion is prepared to insist. At once he will find that a new problem emerges. The world does not like people who try to make it a better place. Or rather it likes and admires them in theory, and from a distance; but unfortunately the prejudices, tastes, or conveniences, and not

infrequently the material interests, of someone or other must sooner or later be hurt by any creative thought, speech, or action. Hence humanity, now as of old, is busy making unpleasant the lives of the prophets that are with it, while celebrating the centenaries of their predecessors who are safely dead. To live constructively involves—to some men in small things, to others in large—unpopularity, hardship, and sacrifice. A live morality entails adventure; and adventure romantic and splendid as it may be in retrospect, always at the time involves considerable discomfort.

This brings us to the question popularly stated in the form, Is the moral ideal self-realisation or self-sacrifice? To the question so stated the right answer is, Neither. If living is an art, the antithesis self-realisation *versus* self-sacrifice is in two ways misleading. An artist is aware of a sharp distinction between good work and bad; he also recognises another distinction—that between work done for its own sake and work done for the sake of self-advertisement. Work done for the sake of self-advertisement—just in so far as it is done *solely* for that end—he declines to regard as art at all. Similarly, to practise the art of living constructively means to work with your eye primarily on the aim to be achieved, not on yourself as the achiever. Conduct is constructive if the end achieved is social well-being. The well-being of society includes that of its

individual members; my own well-being is, therefore, one element in the well-being of the society of which I am a member—and it is an element in regard to which I have a special responsibility. It is, for example, my duty to earn my own living and to care for my own health. But the duty to look after my own interests is qualified by the duty to view these interests as a member of a society in which the good of the whole must never be subordinated to that of any individual. I am to love my neighbour, not more than, but *as myself*. But as there are many neighbours but only one self, there will be occasions when it will be my duty to sacrifice this one self for the well-being of the many. Thus the antithesis self-realisation *versus* self-sacrifice states the problem wrongly; because, whichever of the two is preferred, the emphasis is laid on the ego. Considered merely as emotional dispositions egoism and altruism are on the same level. In practice egoism is both more common, and more likely to lead to socially destructive conduct. Society, therefore, does well to encourage the one and discourage the other; but in theory neither becomes moral until the emotional disposition is rationalised and directed towards constructive ends.

Considered from another aspect, a practical solution of the antithesis self-realisation *versus* self-sacrifice lies in the sphere of psychological fact. Action reacts upon the actor. No man who has made

a choice remains himself unaltered by the nature of the choice made. Personality never can stand still; but it can move in either of two directions—upwards or downwards. To act is also to grow; to act in one way is to enrich one's personality, to act in another way is to impoverish it. Inevitably, according to the quality of our acts and words, and, up to a point, even our thoughts, we become either stronger or weaker, either straighter or more crooked, either more kindly or more bitter, either nobler or meaner.

To answer, then, the question whether self-realisation or self-sacrifice is the preferable, we must ask another question. Does a man's life consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses, or in being the kind of man he is? If we decide that it consists in the number of things that he possesses, it may still hold good that honesty is the best policy, and that without at least some modicum of other virtues, the individual will become so unpopular that his life may be made a burden to him. Worldly prudence will still counsel a carefully calculated modicum of sacrifice of some immediate desires.

But if we think that personality is worth more than possessions or position, and that what matters most to the individual is what kind of man he is, then self-realisation will at times necessitate more than a modicum of self-sacrifice as the price of the attainment of some worthy end. Yet the self-sacrifice and the self-realisation are not antithetical, for



one cannot be had without the other. What really happens is that the self decides to jettison immediate or baser desires for the sake of nobler ends; but it is still for ends freely chosen by the self.

Sometimes situations arise in which, quite apart from base desires or immediate personal advantage, to choose seems difficult. But once a man has definitely resolved to make his life creative, careful consideration in the light of his opportunities and qualifications, his limitations and capacities, will usually dissipate the perplexity, so far as it arises merely from the complication of the circumstances or the difficulty of striking a balance between conflicting values. But when, perhaps after discussion with some friend, the issues become clear, the maxim, *Live constructively*, will provide a principle of decision.<sup>1</sup>

#### IN TUNE WITH THE INFINITE

I have sought to find a principle of ethical aim and decision whose validity does not depend on the acceptance of any particular religious or philosophic view of the nature of the Universe as a whole. But whatever else the Power behind the Universe may be, one thing is certain—it is creative. It has expressed itself in the creative evolution which has brought into existence all things that are. Whoever, then,

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the department of ethics, which deals with the relations of the sexes, I may refer to one of my essays in *Adventure*. (Macmillan, 1927.)

elects to live a life of which the maxim is to be constructive and creative, is living a life in harmony with that Power. If we think of that Power as conscious, if, that is, we call it God, only the more is one who is living the constructive life, living "in tune with the Infinite"; he is reproducing in his own small sphere the life divine; he is, as it were, lighting his tiny taper from the universal bonfire. There is a word of Christ's, "My father worketh hitherto and I work". The work which Christ did on earth was the work of one who in the highest degree lived constructively; and those who follow his example are in their little way sharing in the creative life of God.

Nor, so long as the thing done be that which the occasion requires, does it matter whether it seem large or small. The essence of an act lies neither in its scale, nor in the noise it makes, but in its quality. The unconscious egoism which always lies in wait for the idealist and reformer is apt to overlook this point, and to be impatient of the everyday and commonplace. But here the Christian is at home.

The Christian is life's true Utilitarian, conversant with life's homely trials, its obscure, unseen griefs; he is a wiper away of the tears that none other but he and God behold.<sup>1</sup>

#### WORLD-AFFIRMING AND WORLD-DENYING ETHICS

There has been much talk, not always very discriminating, on the distinction between a "world-

<sup>1</sup> D. Greenwell, *Liber Humanitatis*, p. 141. (Isbister, 1875.)

denying” and a “world-affirming” ethic. In this regard there is a notable difference between the ideals embodied in the Great Religions of the world. Confucius, the Old Testament, the New Testament, Buddhism, and Hinduism form a series. At the two ends of the series, at the furthest remove from one another, stand the courtly common sense of Confucius and the ascetic mysticism of the Hindu fakir. The New Testament occupies the middle position; half-way between it and Confucius is the Old Testament; Buddhism, “world-denying” though it is, was proclaimed by its founder to be a reaction against the extreme asceticism of the Hindu ideal, and it stands midway between this and the ideal of the New Testament.

The history, however, of Christianity has differed conspicuously from that of the other systems. Each of the other members of the above series has, so far as its ethical outlook is concerned, remained extraordinarily true to type. Christian ethics, though always theoretically referred to the New Testament as its norm, has had a much more varied history.

Jesus was born a Jew, and his ethical teaching represents the climax of the development which can be traced through the Old Testament and Apocrypha. He was altogether untouched by the Indian suspicion that creation is either an accident or a mistake, or at best a jest of the Divine. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.” He had the

Jewish belief in the value of life. The message of the New Testament is summed up by the saying in the Fourth Gospel, "I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly".

But at the beginning of the Christian era the civilisation of the Graeco-Roman Empire was decadent and despairing. As a result it was open to invasion by a wave of cosmic despair, the form of which was mainly determined by contemporary developments of the immemorial dualism of the religion of Zoroaster. Hence arose the Gnostic belief that matter is intrinsically evil, with its corollary that the body and all its instincts are irremediably bad, and that therefore extreme asceticism is the only path of salvation. Manichaeism represents the second great wave of this same attack. The leaders of the Church fought long and fought successfully against Gnosticism and Manichaeism in their *intellectual* presentation. But where ethics is concerned, it is peculiarly difficult to stand out against the *Zeitgeist*, and on the side of ethics the result reached was really a compromise between this *Zeitgeist* and the spirit of the New Testament.

The history of Christian ethics since the third century is the history of a gradual sloughing off of that aspect of its "world-denying" character which it derived from the Gnostic and the Manichee, and a slow return to an ethic more consonant with its Jewish origin.

I would invite your attention to the chief moments in this evolution. First, we have the hermit of the Egyptian desert, living a solitary life of extreme asceticism, in principle indistinguishable from that of the Hindu fakir. The next stage on is the monk; for the monk lives a social life, and that a life which, though primarily ascetic in its aim, yet tends to express itself in the practical service of mankind. This tendency grows; more and more as the centuries pass do we find the monk engaging in beneficent activities—such as education, the relief of distress, the reclaiming of waste land, missionary work.

In the thirteenth century St. Francis of Assisi proclaims a new ideal. He will have none of the cloister with its artificial austerities, but lives a life of poverty and renunciation in active benevolence among the poor—yet still with emphasis on the ascetic motive. Three hundred years later, with the Reformation, comes the Puritan. He sees the ideal of the religious life in a rigidly conscientious performance of duty as citizen and as parent in the ordinary natural relations of life; but he is still an ascetic in his attitude towards harmless pleasure and the minor graces of life, as well as in his view of the sexual instinct as such.

The rising power of the Jesuits marks a parallel movement within the Roman Church as revived by the Counter-Reformation. The Jesuit was the most formidable, because the most progressive,

enemy of Protestantism. He undergoes a severe training and is subject to a rigorous discipline; but the intention of this is not primarily ascetic, its object is to train an army for the Church's battles. One of the weapons with which he fought this battle was that system of casuistry which called forth the scorn of Pascal. The Jesuits were faced with the problem how to adapt to the needs of the ordinary man and woman living in the world an ethical system, which had been developed for the ascetic life of the cloister under the dominance of a view of the body and its instincts which was backed by the name of St. Augustine. It being impossible openly to repudiate the authority of the past, and especially of St. Augustine, they had recourse to those hair-splitting distinctions which have always been the refuge of the theologian or the lawyer in distress. Casuistry may not be a noble art; but wriggling, though undignified, is at times the only way to get out of a prison cell.

Looking back over this evolution of Christian ethics during 1500 years we trace a consistent line of direction: the maxim "take up thy cross and follow me", is being interpreted more and more in terms of practical service, less and less as a call to the ascetic life. The evolution reaches its climax in the active social Christianity of the modern world, which has left behind the element of asceticism still clinging to the older Puritanism, and affirms that

a primary duty of the Christian is to concern himself with the reform of ancient abuses, the betterment of conditions of life in this world for the down-trodden and oppressed, and the abolition of war.

There still are persons who hold and teach a type of Christianity which half justifies the cry, "Religion is the opiate of the people". But in the long evolution of any living organism there are to be found examples of the survival of the obsolescent and of actual degeneration. The Christian society is not immune from the operation of this law. The liberation of Christianity from the negative asceticism of the Gnostic and the Manichee, has been a gradual process; indeed some Christian bodies—and in all Churches some individuals—are still living and thinking at the level of one of the earlier stages of the development I have been tracing. But that development itself, I would insist, is not a movement away from the original spirit of the teaching of Christ; it is a return to, and revival of, that spirit—though with practical applications which necessarily differ with the changing external circumstances of a developing civilisation. The precept "Love thy neighbour as thyself", the aspiration for "Peace on earth, goodwill among men", are as appropriate to the twentieth century as to the first; the difference between those centuries is that many things, which then seemed the dream of the un-practical idealist, are to-day not outside the realm

of possible achievement—if only humanity could be made to rise to the opportunity offered to it by scientific method, material progress, and improved methods of education.

### OUR LOST TRANQUILLITY

In England and in America there is perhaps a danger that the leaders of some of the Churches may become too exclusively concentrated on moral and practical endeavour. Men cannot live without bread; and it is the business of the Christian to see that no man lacks it. But man cannot live by bread alone; and it is the business of religion to remind him of the fact. Moreover, in the West, amid the increasing hustle and rush of a machine-driving and machine-driven age, there is a need—and as time goes on the need becomes more urgent—of something, to quote the phrase of an American writer, that “will restore to humanity its lost tranquillity”, of the thing which our fathers knew as “the peace of God that passeth all understanding”.

Many are fain to follow Wordsworth’s guidance, and, feeling that

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers,

seek remedy and respite from life’s aridity in the contemplation of the beauty of Nature—not as the holiday of the sight-seer, but as a means of



communing with the "not ourselves", capable of bringing the soul into inner harmony with the Infinite. In Japan such communing is a notable feature in the national heritage common to all classes of the people; let us hope it be not lost in the struggle to adopt the material gains of the West. But the contemplation of Nature is not enough. It is through the inward spirit of man, when lifted above himself in contemplation of the highest, that the fullest and richest apprehension of the Divine is possible; and for this is needed the self-knowledge and confession of past failure which is a condition of that surrender to the highest known whence further knowledge comes. There is needed, too, the gathering together of those who are brothers in a common faith, in converse on spiritual things, in silent meditation, and in the realisation of brotherhood in some act of corporate worship.

The progress of science and invention, and the increase of material well-being which these make possible, may some day remove from this earth all grinding poverty, and make possible for all the leisure which once was the privilege of the few. A world-affirming religion must rejoice in, and do all it can to further, this advance. But in the last resort these things cannot satisfy. Unless religion give also something by the aid of which the mind can soar beyond and above this present world, the spirit of man will be still athirst.

**LECTURE 8**  
**IMMORTALITY**

# IMMORTALITY

## SYNOPSIS

### RELATIVITY OF BELIEF TO WORLD-VIEW

The views in regard to immortality entertained by the Buddhist, the early Christian, and the Victorian Materialist are correlated to the world-views of their respective epochs.

Can we find a conception of immortality which can be similarly correlated to the world-view of post-Einsteinian science and post-Bergsonian philosophy?

### PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND THE SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

It has become more possible of recent years to discuss the question of personal survival in a purely scientific spirit. But Psychical Research is hampered by the peculiar difficulty of finding evidence bearing on the questions it investigates of a kind that satisfies the tests which science demands in other fields.

The evidence, for example, for "levitation" and "materialisation" cannot be estimated apart from the study of hypnotic suggestion; nor that for spirit communication, apart from the fact of "telepathy" between the living.

Nevertheless, the evidence for super-normal phenomena is such as to suggest one of two conclusions; *either* there is communication (probably difficult and limited) with the departed, *or* there is in mind a range of capacity which is hardly explicable on any materialist theory of personality.

This may be related to psychological and other evidence difficult to reconcile with the view that mind is an "epiphenomenon". The familiar comparison of life to the flame of a candle is a dangerously misleading analogy. Flame is an accompaniment of disintegration, life is a principle of integration.

### REINCARNATION AND KARMA

These doctrines, as recently popularised in the West, assume a form different from the Buddhist, which views the prospect of reincarnation not with hope, but with dread.

An estimate of the strong and weak points in these doctrines in their Western guise.

Outline statement of the Buddhist conceptions of Reincarnation and Karma. The doctrines in their Buddhist presentation are still open to criticism, but from another angle.

Sakyamuni and the conceptions of Karma and Nirvana.

#### IMMORTALITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament conception is in form consciously poetic and symbolic; the "three-storey Universe" forms the frame-work of the picture, but is not its inner meaning.

Christ's view of the nature of the Future Life, and of the grounds for belief in it; his use of the symbol of the Messianic banquet.

St. Paul strongly repudiates a literal interpretation both of the Messianic banquet and of the Resurrection of the body.

The meaning of his conception of a "spiritual body". His paean of immortality.

#### IMMORTALITY IN THE MODERN WORLD-VIEW

Relativity-physics is obliged to express its apprehension of the nature of the material Universe in mathematical symbols, ordinary language not being sufficiently abstract. Religion, then, cannot expect that the aspect of Reality which it tries to interpret can be expressed otherwise than in symbol. But whereas the correspondence to Reality of the symbols used by science depends on correct measurement, and is therefore *quantitative*, the parallel correspondence in the case of religion depends on correct insight, and is therefore *qualitative*.

The qualitative can only be expressed by the methods of poetry and art. Hence the classic writings of all religions are poetical, their rites dramatic. But if the qualitative is real, an authentic "truth of quality" is expressible by these methods.

Chinese and Japanese theories of art, and of the conditions for its appreciation, help to the understanding of the meaning of the symbolism of the New Testament.

#### LIFE ETERNAL

A more concrete vision of immortality is suggested by two great ideas of St. John and St. Paul: "Eternal Life" is not something intrinsically other than the highest life experienced on earth, and "Love never faileth".

The Kingdom of Heaven as our Eternal Home.

## LECTURE 8

### IMMORTALITY

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.—1 COR. ii. 9.

#### RELATIVITY OF BELIEF TO WORLD-VIEW

THE conception of immortality entertained by an intelligent person must be relative to the "world-view" of the age in which he lives. No idea of a life other than the present can be unrelated to the currently accepted theory of the Universe and of the nature of the phenomenon of life itself. It would be hard to find four world-views more markedly contrasted with one another than those which form the respective backgrounds of Buddhism, of Primitive Christianity, of the "Scientific Materialism" of the Victorian Age, and of the modern world. There is the picture of an endless series of universes, having no beginning, no end, and no line of purposive development, which is the postulate of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. There is the Universe which had its beginning in 4004 B.C. and will shortly have its end in

a general conflagration, the compact "three-storey Universe", with earth as the ground floor, Heaven upstairs, and Hell in the dungeons below, which Christianity inherited from Jewish Apocalyptic. There is the closed mechanical system of interacting pellets of solid matter, as pictured by nineteenth century Materialism, in which conscious life can only be an epiphenomenal irrelevance. Lastly, there is the world-view—I should have said the world-views, for there are several—of post-Bergsonian philosophy and post-Einsteinian science, the outlines of which are still changing from day to day, and are synthesised in very different ways by different leaders of thought.

With each of the first two of these world-views is clearly correlated an historic conception of immortality. The Wheel of Karma, with the doctrine of reincarnation, is an integral part of the very structure of the Indian and Buddhist world-view. The belief in the Resurrection of the Body and the Last Judgement requires for its imaginative background the world-picture of Jewish Apocalyptic; and the New Testament teaching on immortality is in the main shaped by this latter phase of thought, though, as I shall show later, it struggles to get outside and beyond these limitations. Similarly correlated to the world-view of Scientific Materialism is the dogmatic denial of immortality; if consciousness is an epiphenomenon, life is the flame of a candle; when the

candle is blown out, the flame ceases to exist. But suppose consciousness is not an epiphenomenon; can we then find a conception of immortality capable of being correlated with the world-view of the twentieth century as those earlier conceptions were to earlier world-views? That is the essential problem to which I shall address myself, having first made some summary remarks on Psychical Research, Reincarnation and Karma, and the tenets of the New Testament.

### PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND THE SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

To Lucretius in ancient Rome the materialism of Epicurus, with its consequential denial of a future life, was a gospel of deliverance. It seemed like the daybreak of a happier age to have broken the manifold power of superstition based in the last resort on the fear of punishment after death—

*Aeternas quoniam poenas in morte timendum.*

In modern Europe multitudes, who had been terrorised in childhood by the pictures of Purgatory and Hell, derived a similar experience of liberation from the Scientific Materialism of the last century. To-day both the pictures which terrorised, and the Materialism which brought relief, are intellectually discredited. It is, therefore, more possible now than it was fifty years ago to discuss the question of

survival after death in an atmosphere relatively free from intense emotional partisanship. The attempt has even been made by persons trained in scientific method to apply this method to the investigation of the question of a future life, under the name of *Psychical Research*.

*Psychical Research* is, so it seems to me, a proper field for scientific investigation; but it is one in which it is quite peculiarly difficult to procure evidence which the scientific mind can accept with any confidence. This is largely because the phenomena to be observed so frequently occur in connexion with mediums and other persons of an abnormal psychology, or to normal persons under conditions of emotional tension. It is hard to estimate the significance, and even the genuineness, of phenomena which cannot be reproduced at will under laboratory conditions or studied by direct observation under ordinary circumstances. Moreover, leaving out of account cases of demonstrated fraud, allowance has to be made for unconscious deception arising from human vanity and also from the dramatising activity of the human imagination whenever it envisages in memory, or endeavours to describe, an exciting experience—tendencies which qualify the cogency of human evidence in matters other than psychical.

The student of *Psychical Research* is confronted with another difficulty. Suppose it be granted that discarnate spirits can communicate with earth by



means of mediums, automatic writing, etc., there is strong evidence that such methods also bring up into consciousness materials from the subconscious minds of the medium or other persons present. How then is one to distinguish, in any given case, between the authentic messages from the departed and the elements which derive from the subconscious minds of the medium or the sitters? That the difficulty is a real one is indicated by the actual character of so many of the descriptions of life in the Beyond that have been obtained by these means. Few that I have seen are of a character to inspire confidence that they are veridical. Too often the state of existence described is merely a sublimated counterpart of this present life, only with its worries and toils eliminated—a world in which you eat your dinner, but do not have to work for it.

The question of evidence is still further complicated by two phenomena, both at present imperfectly understood, viz. hypnotic suggestion and telepathy.

There is extraordinarily good evidence that the famous medium Home was seen lifted from the ground by unseen powers; and "levitation" of this kind is decently attested in the case of many of the Catholic saints. The possibility of a non-supernatural interpretation of the evidence is suggested by an experiment which was carried out some time ago in the presence of myself and a well-known scientist of this University. The subject was speci-

ally susceptible to suggestion from the physician on account of having received from him treatment, in which hypnotism played a part. He was told to close his eyes and that, when he opened them, he would see me float out of one window and come back through another window of the room we were in. It was what is called "a waking suggestion"; he was not put into a deep trance. He opened his eyes and gazed on me with an intent "far-off" look. Afterwards, on the conclusion of the experiment, he affirmed that he had actually seen me float out of the window and return. The physician said to him, "Don't you think you dreamed it?" He replied, in a tone of absolute conviction, "No, sir, I *see'd* 'im". The physician took steps to disabuse the man of this belief; had he encouraged him in it, I might now be in a position to produce sworn testimony by an eye-witness to the fact that I had been levitated. Levitation being a miracle often associated with sanctity, this might have been of service in certain quarters as a guarantee of the soundness of my theological opinions.

Suggestion is a phenomenon, the nature and extent of which is still obscure; but in the light of this experiment, I personally incline to interpret the evidence for the levitation of Home on the hypothesis that certain mediums have the power (possibly exercised unconsciously), in the silence and half-light of a spiritualistic *séance*, to induce in a group

of ardent disciples a slightly hypnoidal state in which they actually see events of a kind which they have previously been told are likely to occur.

Expectation may not create phenomena, but it will often transmute their meaning. We all know the truth of the epigram, "An accepted wit has merely to say 'Pass the mustard-pot' and everybody laughs". Preoccupation with a certain topic can act in the same way. It has happened to myself, after thinking a good deal about someone, suddenly to observe that person in the street when walking after dusk; and only when I had come within speaking distance, did I recognise that it was a complete stranger of about the same build and height. I had projected the details of an image in my own mind upon a physical reality sufficiently like it to be capable of supporting these details. A friend of mine once attended a spiritualist *séance* arranged by the late W. T. Stead. At a certain point of the proceedings he observed, protruded from behind a curtain, what, in the dim light, looked to him like some material object draped in silk. But several members of the *séance* saw a spirit. This I interpret as a similar case of the projection of an image in the mind upon a physical object actually present, with the result of transmuting its meaning and appearance. Such projection would undoubtedly be assisted if the persons present were in a more or less hypnoidal state. It is a mistake to suppose that a deep

hypnotic trance is necessary for what is called "suggestion" to operate; under certain circumstances a state very slightly hypnoidal is sufficient. If, as at a *séance*, you have several persons who are ardent believers, all in an attitude of expectancy, the influence of mass-psychology will increase the possibilities of suggestion, either from the medium or from one another.

Such considerations make it necessary to approach with extraordinary care any evidence for phenomena of the kind known as "materialisation". A skilful conjuror can take in the sharpest observers; professional conjurors, I have it on good authority, pride themselves on being able to take in even one another. Some cases of "materialisation", for which the evidence is strong, seem to go beyond the power of the most skilful conjuror. But the quiet and the dim light of a *séance* are circumstances favourable to inducing a slightly hypnoidal state; and it is not easy to eliminate the possibility that the onlookers may be, without knowing it, in a suggestible state. Among them there are always some convinced believers intensely expectant of the marvellous; thus the influence of individual suggestion, further enhanced by group-suggestion, might cause the less credulous of those present to project the content of these expectations upon physical phenomena produced by the art of the conjuror.

The investigation is further complicated by the

phenomenon known as telepathy—the discovery of which was itself a by-product of Psychical Research. A phenomenon is not explained by giving it a name, and the nature and range of telepathy is a matter which is still very obscure. I regard it, however, as established that certain persons at certain times have the power, in some way at present wholly mysterious, to tap, as it were, the contents of the minds (or more often, it would seem, of the subconscious minds) of other persons—whether actually present or at a distance. But the existence of such a thing as telepathy to a large extent discounts what would otherwise be presumptive evidence of communication with the departed. Apart from this, if a mother visited a medium totally unknown to her, and the medium's "control" showed intimate knowledge of details in the life of her dead son, the *prima facie* inference would be that the details were derived from the spirit of the son. To test the bearing of telepathy upon such an inference, an experiment was devised by the late Miss Lily Dougall of Cumnor. She and the lady who lived with her agreed to think and talk for some weeks about some characters in novels she had written twenty years before, with a view to imprinting these characters on their subconscious minds. They then visited a medium in London (one of half a dozen recommended to them by Sir Oliver Lodge) who after a while put them in communication with a

spirit, who could be identified by his remarks as being that of the hero of Miss Dougall's first novel. On the same occasion another spirit appeared to the medium's control, unnamed but stated, first to be a clergyman and, a little later, to be a canon. Personal features were described, which identified him with a canon of Westminster with whom they had lunched that day. At one point in the description the medium, touching each side of her face with her fingers to indicate the spot, said "He has just a touch of grey by the ears". The ladies on departing agreed they had not noticed this in the living person; but meeting him again a week later, they noticed that his hair was beginning to turn grey at the places indicated. Evidently the medium had mistaken for a spirit communication something which she had derived from the minds of one of the two ladies present; or rather from their subconscious minds, because they were not consciously aware of the grey hairs of the canon, and that particular character and novel was *not* one of those upon which they had decided to concentrate their thoughts.

Telepathy between the living would easily explain many of the cases where facts are revealed of which the medium could not possibly have knowledge obtained in the ordinary way. Nevertheless, well-authenticated cases have occurred, especially of the kind technically known as "cross-correspond-

ences", which strain the hypothesis of telepathy to the breaking point. We are left with a dilemma. Either we must accept them as evidence of communication with discarnate spirits, perhaps effecting such communication under considerable difficulties, or we must see in these facts evidence for a range of activity of consciousness, *apparently* unaccompanied by any material substratum, which it is difficult to explain on the view that consciousness is wholly dependent on its material basis in the brain.

I am impressed by the fact that a thinker like Dr. C. T. Broad of Cambridge, whose mental weakness (if any) consists in an hypertrophy of the purely critical faculty, feels, after studying the question with some thoroughness, that he can say:

The careful work of the Society for Psychical Research has elicited a mass of facts which may fairly be called "supernormal", in the sense that they cannot, if genuine, be explained on the usual assumptions of science and common sense about the nature and powers of the human mind. And I do assume that a great many of the facts that come up to the extremely high standard of evidence required by the Society are "genuine", in the sense that they have been correctly reported and that they are not simply due to fraud or self-deception.<sup>1</sup>

I am not at all impressed by his explanation of these phenomena as due to the persistence after death of

<sup>1</sup> *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, p. 514. (Kegan Paul, 1925.)

psychic elements of mind, capable of memory but in no way constituting a continued survival of the mind itself.

Evidence of, at any rate, a relative autonomy of consciousness may perhaps be derived from another quarter. The application of psychological methods to the cure of nervous diseases, and the study of cases of faith-healing, have shaken the plausibility of the assumption, common in the last century, that physical changes within the body can only be produced by physical means. There is no doubt that in certain cases physical changes are brought about by emotional states; and emotional states can be induced by the communication of ideas. Such ideas may be communicated by a letter or telegram, which can only convey emotional stimulus by means of the *meaning* of the words used; and the apprehension of meaning is a purely intellectual operation. Obscure and intricate as is the question of the relation of mind and body, it is hard to resist the evidence that changes can be initiated from either side; the mind is not purely passive. And that which can originate physical change must be much more than an epiphenomenon.

But apart from the all but dogmatic authority once attributed to the pronouncements of certain distinguished Victorians, there is no antecedent reason for supposing consciousness to be merely an epiphenomenon. From the physiological standpoint



mental activity is a particular instance of the phenomenon of life. Now life, whatever else it is, is a phenomenon of integration; it is 'active, selective, and self-propagative. It is something which, at any rate for a time and within certain limits, can resist the general tendency of things in the material world to "run down".

Some three years ago, a paper read before the British Association was the occasion of a newspaper correspondence on the subject of immortality. In the debate much play was made of the metaphor of the candle and the flame which, as I have already said, had a certain appropriateness in relation to the world-view of Victorian Materialism. The metaphor has from time immemorial been part of the stock in trade of essayists and poets, when voicing the vanity of human wishes or the futility of human existence. But none of the correspondents, so far as I am aware, pointed out that, scientifically considered, its use here is a glaring example of false analogy.

If, instead of a metaphor, you make it an argument, you succumb to a fallacy; for the relation of the life principle to the human brain and body is *totally unlike* the relation of the flame to the candle. The flame of a burning candle is a phenomenon which accompanies the dissipation of the substance of the candle; it is evidence of the passage of the material atoms which compose it from a more organ-

ised to a less organised state; it is a concomitant of a running-down of energy. The life principle, on the other hand, whether in man or animal, is a principle of integration. The animal organism is slowly built up, and it is retained in existence, by the life within it. The presence of life enables the organism to select the food requisite for building it up, and to reject what is not wanted. When life disappears, at once the physical body begins to decompose; but when the flame is blown out, the candle *ceases* to decompose. So far as it goes, then, the deduction to be drawn from the flame of the candle is precisely the reverse of that drawn from it by lugubrious moralisers.

A metaphor is never a good argument, but it may often act as a bad one. If you want a metaphor to express the relation of the life-principle to the body and the brain it has built up, you must choose one which suggests the idea of creative activity. Liken it, if you will, to a musician who has first to make his instrument and then to learn to play on it. His first attempt may be clumsy and the music poor; but with the experience and practice so gained, he may do something better next time. Considered as an analogy, that is much closer to the facts than that of the candle and the flame; and, so far as analogy is worth anything (and, if the "stuff" of Reality is akin to life, this is not a bad one), it points to an opposite conclusion in regard to immortality.

## REINCARNATION AND KARMA

Of recent years the idea of reincarnation has enjoyed considerable popularity in the West, but in a form which to a Buddhist philosopher would seem impossibly naïve. At first blush, the idea is attractive—but also open to criticism—in two ways:

(1) It presents a way of conceiving a future life which makes no demands upon the intellect or the imagination. All the difficult questions about matter and spirit, time and eternity, individual personality and the Infinite, are simply shelved. The future life differs from the present only as life in London from life in New York, or as life to-day from that of twenty years ago.

Even in the West there are persons who are little allured by the prospect of everlasting life on a planet where affairs are as ill-managed as on this; in the East it is taken for granted that reincarnation, though a fact, is a regrettable one, and is indeed the *primaeval* curse from which religion offers salvation. Moreover, in the Buddhist scheme of reincarnation, known as the wheel of Karma, the conception is complicated by not being confined to the terrestrial scene. Heaven and Hell are included, and it involves gods and demons as well as men and animals—and women, who in this regard stand midway between men and animals.

(2) Karma makes it easy to believe in the moral

governance of the Universe—easy, that is, to anyone who is content to think of absolute morality on the analogy of the penal system in human justice. It offers a simple explanation of the World's Pain. Suffering is a penalty for misdeeds in a previous incarnation. If you are born in a slum, that is because in an earlier phase you betrayed a friend; if your baby dies, it is because in some previous existence you oppressed the poor.

But on further reflection this solution of the problem seems too simple. It is not obvious how a penalty can be morally justified if the individual punished is entirely unaware of the actual offence for which it has been inflicted, it having been committed in a previous existence of which he has no recollection. Again, if sickness, poverty, and the like are penalties imposed by an unerring justice, must not any attempt to relieve pain or to ameliorate social conditions be an immoral interference with the Universal Justice? Worse still, the logic of the theory compels us to assert that the pains of a hero or martyr are a punishment for past misdeeds, and the crucifixion of Christ becomes evidence that in some earlier existence he must have been guilty of exceptional enormities. I am quite aware that replies are forthcoming to these objections; as, for example, that Christ was a Bodhisattva and therefore doesn't count. But every such reply introduces a fresh speculative elaboration which complicates the sim-

plicity that was the main attraction of the original hypothesis. Reincarnation may be a fact; but it is not one that solves the problem of evil.

In Buddhist philosophy the idea of reincarnation is presented in much more subtle forms. In regard to details there is much dispute between different thinkers and different sects; but, generally speaking, a starting-point for the discussion is the assumption of the non-reality of the phenomenal ego. The operation of Karma is conceived, not juristically as the punishment of a continuing ego, but naturistically in terms of a law of cause and effect, which is thought of almost as mechanistically as in physical science. On this view the essence of Karma is that action is inevitably followed by consequences; and if the action is wrong, the consequences will be painful. The evil deeds done by the empirical ego, which I miscall "Me", will be the antecedent cause of suffering, which will be experienced by another empirical self causally related to the former but not identical with it. There is continuity; but it is provided, not by a continuously existing self, but by the chain of Karma.

Even at this philosophical level, the conception of Karma seems open to criticism. Law, in the sense of the necessary sequence of cause and effect, is a conception absolutely different from that of law, as expressing justice, when applied to the relation of punishment to offence. The doctrine of Karma

seems to confuse the two. The operation of the law of cause and effect, as the modern agnostic clearly sees, is morally neutral. All action has inevitable consequences; and these consequences, when an act is evil, commonly cause suffering to someone—but more often than not to some innocent person. Again, although the consequences of any act ultimately extend to persons yet unborn, there is nothing in the mechanical sequence of cause and effect to make it reasonable to expect that the suffering of particular persons yet unborn will be related to the evil deeds of particular persons now alive in a way which has any correspondence with the relation of punishment and desert. That could only follow if the structure of the Universe were fundamentally moral—and this in two ways. First, it must be moral in the sense of being governed by a consciousness which regards righteousness as a supreme value, and individual persons as supreme ends. Secondly, it must either deliberately design, or continually over-rule, the chain of natural and physical consequence so as to make it conform to moral aims, in the juristic interpretation of the word moral. But these conditions are not fulfilled, if Reality be thought of as an Absolute above good and evil, and if individual personality be held to exist only in the sphere of the phenomenal, which is illusion.

How then are we to explain the fact that the doctrine of Karma was accepted, apparently with-

out question, by a man of the calibre of the Buddha? The reply I think is this. In the last resort the genius of the Buddha was religious; by the puerility of the religion of his age he was compelled to express his religious intuition in terms of philosophy—but of a philosophy almost equally unsuited for the task. Like Job he had an intuitive conviction that the Power behind all things is somehow good. With a different inheritance in religion and metaphysic he might have said, with Browning, “All’s love, yet all’s law”; as it was he did his best to say so—by adding the conception of Nirvana to that of Karma.

Nirvana, to the best of my knowledge, is a conception originated by Sakyamuni himself. There are schools of Buddhist thought which interpret the word to mean virtually, if not actually, extinction. A more prevalent, and I believe a more correct, view conceives it as a liberation of the real and eternal self from the empirical self entangled in the sphere of *maya*—the real self being thought of as identical with the Absolute. The storm is over; the tossed and troubled wave sinks back on the bosom of the unruffled ocean of Eternal Being.

I feel that the preceding paragraphs do scant justice to the subtlety and profundity of Buddhist philosophy; nor do I profess myself competent either to expound or to criticise it. All I am anxious to do is to make clear the relativity to ancient Indian thought of the philosophic doctrine of Karma in

historic Buddhism, and the width of the gulf between this and modern Western versions of it. Another such difference I have already alluded to. The modern version regards the idea of reincarnation with hope, the Buddhist with despair. The essence of the salvation which the Buddha offered was escape from the necessity of rebirth. This idea is found, too, in popular Buddhism, which in practice holds an animistic view of the soul and thinks of an identical and continuous ego as the subject of rebirth. It is conspicuous in Buddhism of the Jodo type; this teaches that to reach Nirvana requires a degree of resolution beyond the power of ordinary frailty; but to weak humanity Amida holds out a different salvation—the welcome of the soul of the believer into his “Western Paradise”, with the guarantee that he will never be forced to leave this heaven and be reborn again.

#### IMMORTALITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The psychologist and the student of psychical research attack the problem of personal survival by the empirical methods of science; the learned Buddhist does so by the abstract intellectual analysis of philosophy; the New Testament has recourse to the language of poetry, symbol, and myth.

The “three-storey Universe” with heavens above and a hell beneath, the resurrection of the body, and the Throne of Judgement, were conceptions



elaborated by Jewish Apocalyptic writers before the time of Christ. Literature of this kind was not only read in the early Church, but continued to be produced there—the most remarkable example being the book of the Revelation of St. John with which the Christian Bible ends.

The logical mind of Latin Christianity took the symbolism of the Apocalyptists *au pied de la lettre*, and then gradually worked it up into the coherent system of Heaven, (Purgatory) and Hell which till recently dominated European religious thought. The rediscovery of a series of lost Apocalypses has enabled modern scholarship to reach a scientific view of the evolution of this type of literature and trace historically the development of its various conceptions. This in turn has revolutionised the historical study of the New Testament itself. Personally, however, I am coming to think that modern critical scholarship has, though in a different way, fallen into an error analogous to that of Latin theology in over-estimating the extent to which the authors of these books themselves took literally the luxuriant imagery of their own descriptions. In Buddhist sacred literature, for example in the Lotus Sutra and that known as the Meditation of Amitayus (Amitayur-Dhyana),<sup>1</sup> there are scenes portrayed with an exuberance of imagery and a hyper-extravagancy of symbolism which make St. John's description of the

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xlix., part 2, p. 161 ff.

New Jerusalem seem by comparison sober prose. But few, I imagine, would maintain that the authors of the sutras took these descriptions quite literally. At any rate both these highly imaginative pictures, and metaphysical treatises of the most abstract character, were produced at the same period in the history of the same religion. In this connexion it is to be remarked that the Gospel attributed to St. John, which is the most philosophical book in the New Testament, and the book of Revelation, which is the most imaginatively symbolic, appear to have both originated at Ephesus at approximately the same date. Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic should be interpreted against the general background of Oriental religious literature, with its wholly un-Western conventions in regard to imaginative writing, and its tendency to revel in symbolic pictures.

These writers, I would suggest, whether Jewish or Buddhist, were trying to do what in the modern world has been attempted by means of music. If you ask what John meant by his vision of the Adoration of the Lamb, I would reply, Very much what Handel meant when he wrote the Hallelujah Chorus; and I doubt whether John troubled himself much more as to the exact counterpart in reality of his somewhat bizarre symbols than Handel did as to the philological origin of the word Hallelujah.

Music is an expression of actual experience, but in terms of pure emotion not of representation. So the myth [of

Heaven, Valhalla or the Isles of the Blest] is an expression of what is believed to be real, but not in terms of representation. It is art, not science; it is like music, an answer given by the mind to reality, an answer which does not reproduce reality but transmutes it into another form.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the clear distinction made by the modern mind between symbol and reality, or between myth and philosophy, was not made by the Apocalyptists themselves. It could not have been made by them; for such a distinction is only possible where conceptual thinking has been highly developed. It was made by Plato, and in regard to this actual subject; his intuition in the matter of immortality he consciously puts into symbolic form, in the vision of Ur, which he explicitly styles a "myth". But it was not possible for the Palestinian Jew, who, like the uneducated Indian of the present day, still thought in pictures.

Christ himself, I have already emphasised, had the poet's mind; he thought and spoke in parable and symbol. It is improbable that on astronomical grounds he would have felt the slightest objection to the "three-storey Universe", nor on physiological grounds to the resurrection of the body. It is, therefore, the more remarkable that he *did* object to the latter on purely religious grounds.

The Sadducees "which say there is no resurrec-

<sup>1</sup> A. Clutton-Brock in *Immortality*, ed. B. H. Streeter. (Macmillan, 1917.)

tion” hope to confute him by the problem of the woman who had had seven husbands: “In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife.” He replies: “Ye know not the scriptures nor the power of God”. That is, ye interpret scripture in an unduly literal sense, and ye limit the possibilities of the Universe to conditions which have come within the range of your experience. He goes on: “When they shall rise from the dead they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven”. In other words, the mode and the conditions of life in the Beyond are wholly disparate from those of our mundane experience.

Christ thinks, not abstractly, but concretely. He does not define religion as “belief in the conservation of value”; nor does he argue that living personality is more representative of the essential character of the Universe than the mathematical abstractions of a Rutherford or an Einstein. But he puts the same thing in a vivid metaphor—in a way, that is, which from the point of view of a qualitative understanding, is a more illuminating way—when he speaks of God as “your heavenly Father”, and tells men that they are His sons. He does not speak of a reign of universal law, which embraces the infinitely little as well as the infinitely great; he does say that not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and that the very hairs of your head

are numbered. That is to say, he sees this reign of law as an expression of a Universe of which conscious life is the essential element. Similarly, the argument from human personality to divine, which I endeavoured to present in an earlier lecture, he states concretely thus: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven . . ."

Starting from these premisses he sees human immortality as a necessary inference. The difficult example posed by the Sadducees, he meets with a text chosen from the law of Moses, for that was the one authority they recognised: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". Then he draws the inference: "He is not the God of the dead but of the living". If individual personality, he means, has value in the sight of God, that is sufficient guarantee of its survival; if a human parent would not willingly tolerate the extinction of a child, how much less your Father which is in heaven.

Jesus believed in immortality because he believed in God; to him the one belief was a necessary deduction from the other. It is notable, however, that when he wishes to speak of the life of the world to come, he invariably selects, from among a number of figures familiar to his contemporaries, that of the Messianic Feast.

They shall sit at meat (*ἀνακλιθήσονται*) with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. viii. 11).

Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God (Mark xiv. 25).

So the parable of the Great Supper is given as an answer to the exclamation, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke xiv. 15 ff.). This is also the probable reference, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, of the phrase "in Abraham's bosom". Just as at the Last Supper the beloved disciple, reclining next to Jesus at the table, is said to be "leaning on Jesus' bosom", so Lazarus, who on earth was a beggar, is pictured by contrast as occupying in the next life the seat of honour at the feast, next to Abraham and leaning on his bosom.

The constant choice by Christ of this particular image may have been due to two reasons. First, it suggests not merely joy, but joy in fellowship—in the great society of the loved and the revered who have gone before. So Milton thinks of Lycidas:

There entertain him all the saints above,  
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,  
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,  
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

Secondly, the metaphor of the banquet is in form so materialistic that a hearer would have to be exceptionally gross-minded to understand it quite literally.

It would seem, however, that there were people who *did* take the image literally. For St. Paul thinks it worth while to protest that "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. xiv. 17).

A more elaborate protest by St. Paul against a too literal interpretation of traditional Jewish pictures of the future life occurs in the passage from 1 Corinthians xv. read at the service for the Burial of the Dead. Here we have left behind the simple picture-thought of Palestine, and are in contact with the world of Greek philosophy. St. Paul is fighting a battle on two fronts. On the one hand there are at Corinth Christians of Jewish origin who look for a resurrection of this body of flesh and blood; on the other hand there are some who have inherited from Greek philosophy the belief that mind—in the sense of the faculty of theoretic speculation—is indestructible, but that the other elements in personality are of inferior value and will perish with the material body. To Aristotle the life of the gods is *θεωρία* or intellectual contemplation; and man partakes of the divine life just in so far as he is capable of this contemplation. To St. Paul "the fruits of the spirit", that is to say, the most characteristic results of participation in the Life Divine, are exhibited in love, joy, peace. But love is an activity only possible in a society of persons. To St. Paul, therefore, it is important to affirm an element

of truth in traditional Jewish mythology, and to assert that, in the life of the Beyond, individual personality, functioning in a society of other persons, will be conserved.

He will not therefore surrender the metaphor of the resurrection of the body, or rather the reality guarded by that metaphor. That is the point of his elaborate argument that there are many different kinds of bodies. But he is emphatic that the body of the next life will *not* be a body of flesh and blood; it will be a new kind of medium for the expression of individual personality, for which he invents the new name of "spiritual body".<sup>1</sup> Evidently he means much the same as Tennyson when he wrote:

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

St. Paul was born a poet; but he was trained to be a rabbi; later on, harassed by the care of all the churches, he was driven to become a controversialist. In his letters, now the poet, now the rabbi, and now the controversialist, holds the pen. In this chapter, once the controversialist has made his main point, the poet gets control—argument passes into anthem:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it

<sup>1</sup> This conception of St. Paul has an obvious relevance to the interpretation of the evidence for the Resurrection of Christ. For a discussion of this question I may refer to my essay, "The Historic Christ", in *Foundations*. (Macmillan, 1912.)



is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. . . .

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

### IMMORTALITY IN THE MODERN WORLD-VIEW

We may now approach the problem of a conception of immortality relative to the world-view of to-day. The difference between the world-view of Victorian science and that opened up by the discoveries of Einstein and Rutherford is the difference between the easily intelligible and the wholly inconceivable. I am told that the floor I stand on is not made of solid matter; it is a network of electric vortices. I am asked to think of things so obviously different from one another as space and time as a single continuum; and I am invited to regard space as *curved*. I struggle hard to take this in, only to be informed that this way of putting it is far too simple to express the actual facts. Mr. Bertrand Russell—who, when there are no parsons on the road to banter, loves a dig at well-known scientists—puts this with his usual *verve*:

Ordinary language is totally unsuited for expressing what physics really asserts, since the words of everyday life are not

sufficiently abstract. Only mathematics and mathematical logic can say as little as the physicist means to say. As soon as he translates his symbols into words, he inevitably says something much too concrete, and gives his readers a cheerful impression of something imaginable and intelligible, which is much more pleasant and everyday than what he is trying to convey.<sup>1</sup>

The conceptions used in modern relativity-physics are symbols, which are correlated in terms of measurement with the reality they represent, but which do not give us any conception, of a kind that the imagination can grasp, as to the nature of the reality which the symbols represent.

In the present age we are compelled to resort to a symbolism of this *recherché* character in order to express the relation of the system and laws formulated as scientific knowledge to facts of the kind that can be observed through the microscope and the telescope, or recorded on a photographic plate. In such an age, will any reasonable person ask for non-symbolic, matter-of-fact representation of life beyond the present? What he will, and should, demand, is a reasonable assurance that the symbols offered have a correlation to Reality *analogous* to the correlation that obtains in the sphere of science. We ask, then, for some rational principle for effecting such correlation. A principle presents itself at once if we accept the view, already advocated in these

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook*, p. 85. (Allen & Unwin, 1931.)

lectures, that the “stuff”, so to speak, of Reality is akin to what we experience as *life*—or rather to that richest expression of life which we know as conscious personality. Such conscious life expresses itself as—it would be simpler to say that it consists in—activation of the kind we label by words like purpose, apprehension of value, love. That is to say, it is an activation which cannot be represented except in qualitative terms. Accordingly, whereas in science measurement (or quantity) supplies the principle of correlation between symbol and reality, where conscious life is concerned the principle of correlation must be qualitative. But the qualitative can only be expressed by the methods of poetry and art.

In a letter from Cosima Wagner to Nietzsche occur the following sentences:

I have given much thought to questions of philosophy and art and have always endeavoured to find a satisfactory explanation for the fact that I am more powerfully affected by the latter. I had finally come to the conclusion that it was because art reflects creation in *her* creations, and that both are as enigmatic as life itself, so that the soul experiences a sense of relief when these two enigmas are brought into harmony. Philosophy, on the other hand, condemned to deal with interpretations, bears about the same relation to the primeval truths as Schopenhauer’s allegorical dream does to the dreams that come to us during a heavy sleep.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of this quotation consider the place

<sup>1</sup> *The Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence*, trans. by C. V. Kerr, p. 160. (Duckworth, 1922.)

occupied in all religions by art-forms like the psalm and hymn. Consider, again, the element of the poetical which characterises the classics of all the great religions. The supreme classic of Hindu religion is a poem—the Gita. The Lotus Sutra, which has a comparable position in Mahayana Buddhism, is an imaginative Apocalyptic drama—half in prose, half in poetry. A large part of the Hebrew Bible is poetry, a still larger is in an epic prose that is all but poetry. In the Gita, and in the Lotus, we see philosophy trying to express itself in art, but in so doing forced to soar beyond itself in the effort to “reflect creation”; in both of these history, as human life lived out in empiric fact, is ignored. Not least the Four Gospels have the same quality of great art, they are poems in prose; but what these try to make real to us is not philosophy, half-conscious of its own exhaustion, but a life richly personal lived out in empiric fact—a life the more enigmatic by reason of its intensity as life.

Quality is a thing which the logical intellect can only represent abstractly, which in this case means *misrepresent*. Whenever the qualitative is to be represented, the poverty of the abstracting intellect can and must be supplemented from the resources of music, poetry, and myth. Leslie Stephen once contended that Wordsworth’s poetry was great because his philosophy was sound; Matthew Arnold replied:

No, Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.<sup>1</sup>

Religion being essentially life, in perhaps its most intense form, finds expression in action, in thought, and in feeling. On the side of action this is seen in a certain quality and direction of conduct; on the side of thought, as well as on that of feeling, it has always tended to express itself in hymn, in myth, and in dramatic rite. All of these, like Wordsworth's poetry in Arnold's view, are ways of showing us joy, or it may be some other spiritual apprehension, *and rendering it so as to make us share it.*

In any age which is dominated by a mechanistic and materialistic world-view, it is inevitable that imaginatively science should be equated with fact, art with fiction, and that it should be taken for granted that what can be stated in prose is truth, while what can only be expressed in poetry is fancy. But we are now living in an age which recognises that matter and mechanism are abstractions of the intellect, and that life and consciousness are as real as matter, if not more so. It follows that art, poetry, music begin to acquire a new status. To understand Reality these must be studied alongside of science.

<sup>1</sup> I owe the quotation to Sir E. Chambers's lecture on Matthew Arnold. (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. xviii.)

This is a point of view which it would be easier to make clear to a Chinese or Japanese, than to an average English, audience. For China and Japan have known for centuries, what in the West is still a relatively new discovery, that the primary aim of art is not realistically correct representation but the communication of a spiritual apprehension. On this view it follows that alike for the creation and the appreciation of a work of art a certain quality of personality is required. The hand of the artist and the eye of the beholder are merely instruments by means of which there becomes possible intercommunication from the one to the other of the content of the soul. Well before the year A.D. 1100 a Chinese artist (Kuo Hsi) was already pointing out that whether the subject painted was animate or inanimate, what he named the *Chi-yun* or "vitality" of the picture was lent by the personality of the painter; an artist of noble character must impress his personality on his work. Technical skill alone could not give the refinement and grace implied by *Chi-yun*. He even concluded that technique was unnecessary, and a school arose which purposely discarded such. It should, however, be noted that this "modernist" experiment of the eleventh century, unlike some of more recent date, did not throw its emphasis on the idea of self-expression for its own sake. In the Chinese aesthetic theory what mattered most was the quality and depth of the self

to be expressed; the Chinese theory is the more profound.

Western art and Western aesthetic theory have learnt much of recent years, sitting at the feet of China and Japan. But they do not yet stress, as did Old Japan, the demand that great art makes of a preparatory effort on the part of the spectator to attune the mind to the comprehension of the finer flavour of the artist's message. There must be a tranquil mind and a reverent approach; one may no more *rush* into the presence of a great painting than into that of a great prince. And it will reveal its meaning only to a spiritual receptivity that can appreciate the unexpressed.<sup>1</sup>

Such an approach, I suggest, is a condition of appreciating the attempts made in the New Testament to seize and convey some idea of the nature and quality of life beyond the present. These, as I have shown, are essentially poetical in character. Religion is here using art-forms. I am not suggesting that the writers were always fully aware of what they were doing; but they *were* aware that they were not providing "a guide-book to the New Jerusalem". Now the objective value of what is written does not depend on the technical beauty of its poetic form, but as the Chinese would put it, on the "nobility of soul" of the writer. And we have

<sup>1</sup> On this see Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea*, ch. v., "Art Appreciation", p. 106. (Duffield, 1931.)

more than nobility of soul. We have an intense inner life lived in conscious contact with the Infinite Life, and therefore, unless such contact be illusion, capable of reflecting to men something of the qualitative apprehension of that Life. Hence neither the subjective meaning of what is written nor its objective value can be estimated apart from some measure of religious insight. There is an Eastern proverb, "Only a Buddha can fully comprehend a Buddha". It is as hard for one whose mind revolts against belief in God to catch the subjective meaning of the paeans of immortality in St. Paul or St. John as it is for an uncultivated Westerner to appreciate at once the full beauty of a Chinese painting. And I imagine that to comprehend fully the objective value of the intuitions they thus body forth one would have to be a mystic or a saint.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. xxi. 1-4).

The man who wrote this took for granted, like all



the people among whom he lived, the "three-storey Universe"; and that conception forms the background of his poetry. But he *knew* it to be poetry; and he *knew* that the vision told of a supra-sensible reality, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which hath not entered the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath revealed by His Spirit.

### LIFE ETERNAL

Another New Testament conception, that of Eternal Life, is of special interest in view of the increased metaphysical importance which philosophy, since Bergson, has been giving to the phenomenon of life. In the passages cited above from the words of Christ and St. Paul, the stress is laid on the unlikeness to earthly conditions of life in the Beyond and on the impossibility of framing a realistic picture of it. But in the conception of Eternal Life, mainly developed in the Fourth Gospel, something definite and positive is affirmed about the life of the world to come. Eternal Life is conceived as life having a certain intrinsic quality, but not as being different in kind from life of the richest qualitative content which can be experienced here on earth. Indeed, more often than not the adjective "eternal" is omitted: "All things were made by him . . . in him was life, and the life was the light of men". Life in this sense is necessarily eternal. It follows that to the man who is living at the highest level

of personal life on earth, death will mean a continuance and a further enrichment of that life; it will not mean an interruption or a fundamental change in the kind of life which he has already tasted.

Men of genius who have specialised in one department of human activity often under-estimate things outside that sphere, and, to be frank, I think it probable that the writer of the Fourth Gospel underestimated the values covered by the great words Science, Philosophy, Art. Also he wrote for the Greek-speaking world, a world in which there was no need to stress the value of philosophy and art, but in which there was great need to stress some other values. Thus he once defines life eternal as the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless he would, I think, have readily admitted the pursuit of truth and the creation and appreciation of beauty to be activities falling within the meaning of the term "the knowledge of God"—though a knowledge sought along pathways of which he himself had but limited experience. No one human being can have experience, at first hand and in the intensest form, of more than a small range of the total possibilities of personal life at its highest activation. But if personality is our most representative index to the nature of the Power behind the Universe, the principle holds good that wherever, and just in so far as, personal

life reaches its highest activation, there is participation in the life divine. Such participation, we should expect, will be greatly enhanced if the relation of the finite to the Infinite Life be consciously realised under the figure of a relation of personalities, such as is experienced between human persons at their highest moments. Clearly any such relation between the finite and the Infinite Life can only be described in metaphor; for this a word like "interpenetration" is perhaps the most illuminating to the modern man; in the language of mysticism, the word used is "union". By this participation in the Life Divine men enter into their inheritance; there is given them "power to become sons of God".

The word "sons" is in the plural. This is not an accident. To St. John no knowledge and love of God is genuine which does not express itself in love of man; and that is only possible in a society of persons. Life at its highest level can only be realised in a society of free persons among whom harmony reigns. That is why the primacy among the activities of personal life is assigned to love—above the adoration of beauty or the pursuit of truth. And if life in the Beyond is still in a society of persons, this primacy must endure.

So also St. Paul:

Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we

know in part and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

“Love never faileth”. Love, it follows, is the essence of Eternal Life; for here, and here alone, is something which will need no change at all to adapt it to the conditions of the life of the world to come.

Now we see through a glass, darkly: but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known.

But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Thus of Eternal Life we have a foretaste here and now—but not chiefly, if at all, in the mystic rapture of “the flight of the Alone to the Alone”. There awaits us complete realisation—but not in the everlasting calm of Nirvana, as

The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea.

On earth the Kingdom of God must be a society; in Heaven it will still be such—but instead of a kingdom it will be named a home.

## APPENDICES

### I

THE BUDDHIST SECTS OF JAPAN

### II

THE IDEA OF THE HOLY

## APPENDIX I

### THE BUDDHIST SECTS OF JAPAN

As part of the policy of “the closing of Japan”, initiated by Iemitsu Tokogawa in 1624, Christianity was forcibly suppressed. To further this, every Japanese family was compelled to register at some Buddhist temple, which meant that the funeral rites of members of that family were conducted by its priests. On the Westernisation of Japan the compulsion was removed; but for funeral purposes most families are still Buddhist, and the fees derived from this source are still a main source of revenue to the temples.

I am indebted to Miss A. C. Bosanquet for the statistics of temples and priests of the larger sects given on the following page—taken from a Buddhist Year-Book (1923), *Nihon no Genjō Kenkyū*, by R. Gotō.

The figures for other sects are much smaller. The total for thirteen sects is given as 71,927 temples and 51,268 priests. It will be noticed that the number of priests is much less than that of the temples, which seems strange, and indeed it is a fact that there are not nearly enough men to go round; but

Sect	Temples	Priests
Shin . . . . .	19,522	15,130
Zen, Sōtō . . . . .	14,220	9,734
Shingon . . . . .	12,547	7,999
Jōdō . . . . .	8,372	6,131
Zen, Rinzai . . . . .	6,124	4,612
Nichiren . . . . .	5,938	3,942
Tendai . . . . .	4,632	2,790

these figures no doubt include only the priests in full orders. Student priests (and the years of training are very long, far longer than among Christians) do a good deal of work and take charge of the smaller temples.

Of the Shin, Jodo, and Zen I have already given some account.

Shingon doctrine has in it elements of occultism, and it is thought to show traces of a Gnostic-Manichaean influence. The great cemetery on Mt. Koyasan, near Osaka (where is the tomb of the founder, Kobo Daishi A.D. 774–835), is almost the Westminster Abbey of Japan.

The Nichiren sect is peculiar to Japan. Its founder, the Savonarola of Japan (1222–1282), vigorously denounced the abuses of contemporary Buddhism and prophesied the Mongol Invasion of 1274. He condemned Shingon, and totally rejected the cult of Amida; he attempted to revive what he believed to be primitive Buddhism as expounded in the Lotus

Sutra. In the Nichiren sect the invocation of this Sutra, in the continuously repeated formula *Namu Myo-Horenge-kyo* (Hail to the Lotus of Perfect Truth) takes the place of the *Namu Amida Butsu* of the Jodo and Shin sects. It is the least philosophical of the sects; and in its relations to other sects displays a lack of the customary Buddhist tolerance. The founder is regarded by most of his followers as a Japanese reincarnation of the Buddha who appeared in India as Sakyamuni.

The Tendai has been described as "generalised Mahayana". It is the parent of many of the other sects, which have developed one-sidedly certain aspects of its teaching.

The oldest surviving Buddhist temple in Japan, founded A.D. 607, by Prince Shotoku—the Asoka of Japan—is Horyu-ji, near Nara. This is held by the Hosso, one of the smaller sects.

In conclusion I would refer the reader, who desires detailed information on the history and tenets of the Buddhist sects of Japan, to the fascinating survey of the subject by Prof. M. Anesaki in his *History of Japanese Religion*. (Kegan Paul, 1930.)



## APPENDIX II

### THE IDEA OF THE HOLY

It is the contention of Prof. Rudolf Otto, of Marburg, in his famous book, *The Idea of the Holy*,<sup>1</sup> that religion arises from the existence in the human mind of an *a priori* category (in the Kantian sense) of "the Holy", which reveals itself specifically in the apprehension of what he calls the "numinous". I imagine that he would himself regard his attempt to vindicate for "the Holy" the position of a Kantian *a priori* category as the main purpose of the book. In England, however, not many people feel at home among the Kantian categories; of those who do, few have sufficient confidence in Kant's delimitation of the categories, let alone of Prof. Otto's attempt to add to their number, to be content to make them a foundation on which to build an intellectual defence of religion. English theologians have been impressed, not by his philosophical, but by his historical and psychological, arguments for connecting the concept of "the Holy" with a peculiar quality in the feeling

<sup>1</sup> My quotations are from the English translation by J. W. Harvey. (Milford, 1923.)

of religious awe—that reaction of the soul to a *mysterium tremendum fascinans* which he aptly names “numinous”. I shall therefore confine my remarks to this point.

No one can fail to be both interested and instructed by the original and illuminating way in which Prof. Otto has developed his thesis as to the basic character of the “non-rational” element in religion. But if I stand out for the substitution of the word “supra-rational” for “non-rational”, I have behind me the weight of a great tradition, not only in philosophy but in religion. This is not just a matter of words. For, unless I am wholly mistaken, Prof. Otto is the victim of a confusion as to the precise nature of the “non-rational” element in religion—a confusion analogous to the error concerning the relation of religion and magic which I was at pains to combat in Lecture 5.

In the undifferentiated complex of primitive religious practice, magic and prayer are indistinguishable; and at times even in the Higher Religions the distinction continues to be blurred. Just so, in the emotional apprehension of the Divine, there is in the undifferentiated complex of primitive mentality an admixture of two attitudes, which intrinsically are as diverse from one another as are the respective intentions in magic and in Christian prayer; and this admixture survives to some extent in the Higher Religions. The “numinous”, as Otto defines it, is a

“portmanteau” conception. It includes, I readily admit, that element of religion which expresses itself in the Holy, Holy, Holy, of the Sanctus; it includes also the instinct which expresses itself in Devil worship, and it includes what (to borrow an expression from Principal Oman) may be called the merely “spooky”.

Two quotations will suffice to indicate the essential features of Otto’s conception of the numinous:

Its antecedent stage is “daemonic dread” (cf. the horror of Pan) with its queer perversion, a sort of abortive off-shoot, the “dread of ghosts”. It first begins to stir in the feeling of “something uncanny”, “eerie”, or “weird”. It is this feeling which, emerging in the mind of primeval man, forms the starting-point for the entire religious development in history (*The Idea of the Holy*, p. 15).

The noble religion of Moses marks the beginning of a process which from that point onward proceeds with ever-increasing momentum, by which “the numinous” is throughout rationalised and moralised, *i.e.* charged with ethical import, until it becomes “the holy” in the fullest sense of the word. The culmination of the process is found in the Prophets and in the Gospels. . . . But this moralising and rationalising process does not mean that the numinous itself has been overcome, but merely that its preponderance has been overcome. The numinous is at once the basis upon which and the setting within which the ethical and rational meaning is consummated (*op. cit.* pp. 77-8).

What I demur to here is the notion that “the idea of the holy”—or, as it may be alternatively ex-

pressed, "the experience of worship"—as found in the Higher Religions is properly explained as a "moralisation and rationalisation" of a single central element in primitive religious feeling. On the contrary, it is a development of *one* element among several in that complex—a development which culminates only when this is completely *liberated* from the alien and lower elements with which it was originally combined. "The lotus flower arises out of the mud", say the Japanese. But it does not spring from the mud; it springs from a lotus root which the mud hides. And there is plenty of anthropological evidence for the occurrence in primitive religion of lotus roots as well as mud.<sup>1</sup>

Consider first Otto's example of the numinous fear of ghosts. The ghosts that "walk" and inspire this fear are those of murderers or their victims, or the possessors of dark secrets. It is not aroused by appearances like those spoken of in Milton's lines:

Methought I saw my late espoused saint  
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave.

In other words, it is a fear of something sensed as "unholy". Again "panic fear" comes with a breakdown of the higher centres of control, and a consequent invasion of the self by its lower and irrational elements. We moderns explain it as a phenomenon

<sup>1</sup> See R. R. Marett, *Faith, Hope and Charity in Primitive Religion*. (Macmillan, 1932.)

of mob psychology; but no less to the ancients was it an invasion of the irrational, only this was by them sensed as the daemonic. These are not the roots out of which has grown the conception of the holy. The reaction of primitive man towards gods and towards devils is not identical; but so long as the gods have a character liable at times to daemonic outbursts, the emotional reaction towards god and devil cannot be clearly differentiated. Therefore that element in the "numinous", which I will venture to call (from the Greek word for holy) the "hagion", cannot as yet be separated out from elements to which words like "daemonic", "terrific", "spooky", "taboo", etc., are appropriate.

Just as the passage quoted from Micah in Lecture 5 (p. 153) is notable as the earliest clear statement of the *principle* which constitutes the profound gulf between prayer and magic, so the essential moment in the realisation of the distinction between the authentic Holy, and all the other things which are by Otto classed along with it as "numinous", is found in the inaugural Vision of Isaiah.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. . . . Then said I,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts (Isaiah vi. 1-3, 5).

This is one of the most "numinous" passages in the Old Testament; but in its feeling quality it differs, not in degree but in kind, from anything to which by any stretch of language could be applied adjectives like "uncanny", "eerie", or "daemonic". Otto, of course, is not blind to this difference. It is, indeed, this very difference which he tries to account for when he speaks of the "moralising and rationalising process" that the numinous has undergone in the religion of the prophets and of Christ. But the process is *not* one to which the words "moralisation" or "rationalisation" can be applied. It is flagrantly absurd to speak of a vision like this of Isaiah as a "rationalisation". It is not much less absurd to apply to it the word "moralisation". It implies, no doubt, in God a quality which has the same sort of relation to the moral as, in the sphere of aesthetics, the "sublime" has to the beautiful. But even this moral sublimity is not *asserted* of God, it is merely *felt as there*; it is the implied background against which the consciousness of "uncleanness" leaps into the foreground of the prophet's mind when face to face with such a vision. But much more than that is implied. God is emotionally realised as THAT which is unutterably *more* than anything man can conceive, and

yet as THAT in which all that we call moral, rational, beautiful has its source and meaning.<sup>1</sup>

I have no wish to assert that the description of the numinous as *mysterium tremendum fascinans* could not be applied to the Vision of Isaiah. My objection to it is that it was expressly framed by Otto in order that it might *also* include a great deal which the "hagion" implied in this Vision must necessarily *exclude*. The three Latin adjectives can at a pinch be "rationalised and moralised" so as to cover the authentic religious apprehension of the Holy; but in their collocation they suggest, and are meant to recall, conceptions which are intrinsically alien to it.

There is one criterion of any theory as to what constitutes the essence of religion which it is easy to apply: how does the theory fit in with the teaching of Christ? Now Otto is reduced to desperate straits when he tries to make his theory fit the teaching of the New Testament, and especially that of Christ. If the numinous is the "basis" even of the highest religion, it ought to appear conspicuously in the teaching of Christ. Instead, all that can be said for it (the italics are mine) is:

We can *sometimes* detect, *even* in the teaching of Jesus, notes *still* vibrating which *seem* to suggest a *trace* of that weird awe and shuddering dread before the mysteries of the

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Statement and Inference*, by J. Cook Wilson, ed. by A. S. L. Farquharson, p. 861 f. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926.)

transcendent of which we have already spoken. Such a passage is Matthew x. 28: "But rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (*op. cit.* p. 87).

Besides Matt. x. 28, the only saying of Jesus with numinous content which Otto adduces is Matt. xxi. 41. We look up Matt. xxi. 41. It is a saying *not* of Christ, but of the Pharisees!

Surely if "the numinous is at once the basis upon which, and the setting within which, the ethical and rational meaning [in the highest religion] is consummated", Otto should have found more of it in the teaching of Christ. Indeed, even in his one ewe-lamb of a saying, Matt. x. 28, the numinous element fades away, if there be quoted along with it the first half of the verse to which it is the rhetorical antithesis, and if it then be interpreted against the general background of Christ's teaching—and it is unsound exegesis to interpret a saying apart both from its immediate content and its relation to the speaker's thought in general.

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Elsewhere the burden of Christ's teaching is, Trust God, and so have altogether done with fear. Here he seems to add, "But if you *must* fear, fear God rather than man; for His power extends beyond this present life". On this—to me the natural—in-



terpretation, the numinous element in the saying simply disappears.

Since, however, Otto himself can only make this saying numinous by understanding the word "fear" as a correlate to the conception of the "wrath of God" in his peculiar interpretation of that phrase, I must proceed to indicate what that interpretation is.

In the first place, it is patent from many passages in the Old Testament that this "Wrath" has no concern whatever with moral qualities. There is something very baffling in the way in which it "is kindled" and manifested. It is, as has been well said, "like a hidden force of nature", like stored-up electricity, discharging itself upon any one who comes too near. It is "incalculable" and "arbitrary" (*op. cit.* p. 18).

There is a Japanese proverb, "Four things are terrible—earthquake, storm, fire, and the tyranny of a father". I grant there is something veritably numinous in the quality of the fear which is correlated to these four terrors; I grant also that a fear of this quality is a not inconspicuous element in the religion of the Old Testament, though not, I think, as conspicuous as Otto would argue.

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire;

but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice (1 Kings xix. 11-12).

This theophany to Elijah is surely one of the most numinous passages in the Bible. Yet, we are told, "the Lord was not in the earthquake", "not in the wind", "not in the fire". Such terrors are merely the external accompaniments of a theophany; God's essential presence is made known in "a still small voice" (*Heb.* "a sound of gentle stillness", R.V. marg.).

Least of all am I content to admit any element of the authentically "hagion" in that irrational terror which is provoked by "the tyranny of a father". This is in its quality certainly numinous; but it is not "hagion". There are psychologists who would make use of this particular fear-reaction to explain away all religion as illusion—as a projection of the "father-complex". This seems to me, on purely psychological grounds, to be going too far. A "complex" of whatever sort tends to influence and, as it were, colour our reaction to all kinds of persons and objects; but only in very extreme cases does it *create* the object. I do, however, believe that some of the unlovely elements in traditional religion are explicable as a warping, resulting from a "father-complex", of the proper psychological reaction to the Divine. I would attribute partly to this cause, partly to the influence of the Old Testament and of pre-Christian conceptions elsewhere derived, what

seem to me the sub-Christian elements which survive even in religious giants, like St. Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, not to mention moderns like Kierkegaard, the spiritual begetter of the Barthian movement. Facts are known about the early lives of some of these which give to the hypothesis of the existence of a "father-complex" in their case a high degree of probability.

Be this as it may, the main stress of Christ's teaching is its insistence that one must *not* so think of "our Heavenly Father"; of St. Paul's, that one must *not* so think of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and of St. John's, that it could be said by Christ, "He that hath seen *me* hath seen the Father".

Otto feels the difficulty involved in attributing "wrath" of this kind to the Deity. He tries to get out of the difficulty by calling it "the 'ideogram' of a unique emotional moment in religious experience". It is not to be understood as "natural" wrath, but as

an entirely non- or super-natural (*i.e.* numinous) quality. The rationalisation process takes place when it begins to be filled in with elements derived from the moral reason:—righteousness in requital, and punishment for moral transgression (*op. cit.* p. 19).

This appears to me to be ingenious nonsense. It is, however, mainly under the cover of the word "wrath", so interpreted, that Otto is able to discover

the numinous in St. Paul. Yet whatever else St. Paul thought about the "wrath" of God, he believed that the man who was "*justified*" by faith in Christ did not need to fear this wrath (unless of course he lapsed), for it would only be exhibited towards the wicked, unrepentant, and unbelieving. It would seem to follow that the more completely a man becomes a Christian, the less there will be of the numinous in his experience of God—a remarkable phenomenon if the numinous is in any sense the *basis* of religion.

The first Epistle of St. John might have been written expressly to confute Otto:

Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement; because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 John iv. 17, 18).

The same Epistle also has a bearing on the conception of the "wholly other", which Otto tells us is the essential meaning of the word "mysterium" as used in his numinous triad.

This is the message which we have heard from him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John i. 5).

God is "other", but not "*wholly* other"; that was the real point at issue between Athanasius and Arius. About the phrase the "wholly other"—with which some beside Otto are mistakenly anxious to "glorify

God"—there is an emotional Arianism, if not also an intellectual, alien to the genius of Christianity. The point of Christianity is that what we worship is not an *Unknown* God.

Otto has the hardihood to claim St. John for his view:

In John, Christianity absorbs  $\phi\omega\varsigma$  and  $\zeta\omega\eta$ , "light" and "life", into itself from the religions at rivalry with it; and justly so, for only in Christianity do they win home. But what is this "light" and this "life"? Not to *feel* what they are is to be made of wood, but none can express it. They are a sheer abounding overplus of the non-rational element in religion (*op. cit.* p. 95).

That St. John meant more by the words "light" and "life" than their bald dictionary meaning is obvious; but if what he wanted to convey by them was at all like the *mysterium tremendum fascinans* of Otto, he was singularly unfortunate in his choice of terms. Perhaps what he did mean may be inferred from another passage of the New Testament:

Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power eternal. Amen (1 Timothy vi. 15-16).

I would not have it supposed that I undervalue the positive contribution to the understanding of religion which Otto has made. It is precisely because the merits of his book have secured it so great an

influence that I have felt it incumbent on me to indicate the element of error in his theory which has caused that influence upon contemporary theology to be by no means wholly for good.

For the error is one which touches the heart of things. Worship, the recognition from the bottom of the soul of a supra-rational element in Reality, is of the essence of religion. But it is vital to *sense* this element as supra-rational, and not as sub-rational, as Divine and not daemonic. This *sursum corda* is voiced by Kant in the famous passage in which he speaks of the two things that never failed to stir in him the feeling of religious awe—the starry heavens above and the moral law within. It is expressed, and far more richly, in the *Te Deum* and the *Gloria in excelsis*. It is to hymns like these, not to a vague *mysterium tremendum fascinans*, half emergent from the dark daemonic murk of primaeval shudderings, that we must look to find the true meaning of the Idea of the Holy.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise,  
In all His words most wonderful,  
Most sure in all His ways.

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