WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

Born 7 April, 1780. Died 2 Oct., 1842.

THE LOOM OF GOD

GREAT LORD, who on the mighty loom
  Stretcheth of Life the unbroken thread,
  That binds the living to the dead
By an irrevocable doom.

Its frame o'erlaps the wide world's pale,
  O'ertops the towering firmament's
  Far pole ; beside its filaments
The star-beams seem a puny tale.

Who shall thy giant shuttle chart
  Flitting across the dim abyss ?
  Its whence and whither none may wis—
We only see the tiniest part.

The weft of Time, the warp of Space
  Sunders us each one, soul from soul,
  As mesh from mesh, yet in one whole
We all are woven by thy grace.

Each in its mystic pattern blends,
  Although unique in tint and tone,
  That pattern known to thee alone,
Subservient to thy secret ends.

But when it's from the loom set free
  In all its glory shines confessed,
  Our oneness will be manifest
Of each to each and all to thee !

CLOUDESLEY BRERETON.

ASPECTS OF MODERN UNITARIANISM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Foreword. 2. A progressive faith. 3. The seat of authority in the spirit of man. 4. Religious fellowship. 5. Open-mindedness: knowledge will not destroy faith. 6. Unitarianism, good tidings of great joy.

(1.) *Foreword.*

THE essays included in this volume are not and do not pretend to be a comprehensive statement of the Unitarian Faith of to-day. They deal with only a selection from many religious subjects on which Unitarianism has a distinctive message. It would have been possible to choose other subjects which almost rival them in importance, for instance, the Bible, Prayer, Sin, Forgiveness, Grace, and the Sacraments. The volume would have been expanded to more than twice its present size, if studies of these and other Aspects of Unitarianism had been undertaken. The reader will, however, find from the list of contents that many doctrines are treated, which could not be indicated in the brief titles. It should be added that restrictions of space were imposed

and that the writers do not regard these studies as complete.

Unitarianism not only permits but urges each man to search for the Truth of God and to rely upon his reason and conscience. "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"[1] asked Jesus of the men of his age. Consequently, no effort has been made to secure uniformity or agreement in the statements of the writers. It would be contrary to "our heritage of spiritual freedom" to make any such attempt. Beyond a rough outline, prepared by three of the writers, which in the true spirit of Unitarians has not been closely followed, no suggestion has been made as to the treatment of the subjects. Each writer has taken his own line and is alone responsible for his contribution. Yet the book is another illustration of the fact that when men are free to seek for God and truth, they show greater agreement in belief and spirit than can be found to-day in any of the creed-bound Churches.

(2.) *A progressive faith.*

It is hoped that the volume will demonstrate once and for all that Unitarianism is not an unprogressive creed, but a religion of the Open Road. The manner in which the outgrown statements of faith made by Unitarians a century ago are fre-

[1] Luke 12[57].

quently quoted as representative of the modern message is due either to inherited prejudice, unreasonable hostility or inadequate knowledge. The misrepresentations are sometimes so contrary to the truth that Unitarians may well be excused, if they occasionally suspect the sincerity of those who make them. Unfortunately, the men who are guilty of this misunderstanding and consequent misstatement are not limited to those who cling to the old theology and spurn the revelation of God to-day. Too often of late, broad men, when charged with holding Unitarian views, have given an account of doctrines no longer held, and then expressed their horror or regret that they should be charged with such heresies. Some of the New Theologians took that course fifteen years ago and others have followed in their wake. Let it be stated definitely, therefore, that it would be impossible to-day to find any Unitarian writer who makes a distinct cleavage between God and man, or holds the exploded Deistic idea that God is so transcendent to the world that little or no room is left for the immanence of his Divine Life. The old Unitarian fought valiantly and well against men who believed no less sincerely than he did that God and man belong to two distinct worlds. He has earned our lasting gratitude, for in maintaining that Jesus "was human as we are," he proclaimed "the dignity of man," and thus made a necessary contribution to the develop-

ment of theology. He was, however, the first to see the error of the common assumption in the controversies of a century ago that a vast gulf yawns between God and man, and he acknowledged it as soon as he became aware of it. It was Emerson, the son of Unitarian parents and for sometime a Unitarian minister, who wrote:—

> Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line
> Severing rightly his from thine,
> Which is human, which divine.[1]

For many decades now, the Unitarian, to avoid confusion, has laid the stress on the fact that *man is divine* rather than that Jesus is human. The Church has never authoritatively denied the humanity of Jesus, though it has overshadowed it with its doctrine of his Deity. But it has denied and still denies the divinity of man. The doctrine that the human and the divine differ in *substance* underlies the orthodox creeds. The "heresy" of the Unitarian is to be found in the strength of his affirmation that every human being is a son of God and can never be deprived of his birthright. He must affirm that, or surrender his deep conviction of the Universal Fatherhood of God.

(3.) *The seat of authority in the spirit of man.*

A comment is necessary on the order in which the essays appear. It will be observed

[1] Poem on "Worship."

that the chapter on "Man" is placed before that on "God." This arrangement is deliberate, the purpose of it being to illustrate that the Unitarian sets out in his search from what is known and from that proceeds in the order of thought to what is less known. "No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us: hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."[1] Dr. Martineau, who with Channing, Emerson, Parker, Thom, Armstrong and Drummond—to mention some who are no longer with us—has "been largely instrumental in bringing about a profound change in Unitarian theology,"[2] writes in his *Types of Ethical Theory*: "If you give priority to the study of nature and God, and resort to them as your nearest given objects, you are certain to regard them as the better known, and to carry the conceptions you gain about them into the remaining field as your interpreters and guides: you will explain the human mind by their analogy, and expect in it a mere extension of their being. If, on the other hand, you permit the human mind to take the lead of these objects in your inquiry, the order of inference will naturally be reversed: and with the feeling that it is the better known, you will rather

[1] I John 4^{12-13}.

[2] *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, by Drummond and Upton, vol. ii. p. 33.

believe what the soul says of them, than what they have to say about the soul."[1] Thus the Unitarian of to-day does not begin with the Idea of God or a doctrine about Christ, or a dogma concerning the Bible, or a theory of the Church, but with the study of the nature of Man. He is confident that the more he learns about man, the more he will know the spiritual truth about Nature, Christ, and God. He finds the seat of authority in the spirit of man, and the more he searches into his own being, the more he sees the wonder and wealth of that Divine Life which is in all and above all.

(4.) *Religious Fellowship.*

It is hoped that these essays will be of service to the Branches of the Women's League and the Laymen's League, to Senior Classes and other Societies connected with our churches. They furnish the material for conversation and joint study. Our movement has lost power and helpfulness through our recent disinclination to speak frankly with each other on the subject of religion. We hesitate to let our closest friends see the depth of our convictions, and we show great reserve on religious matters in our own households. This, no doubt, is due to our wholesome fear of cant and to our conviction that prayer at its highest is an inward movement of the soul to God. We rightly

[1] *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. i. p. 3.

distrust those who can speak with ease on any occasion concerning the deepest experiences of the soul, and lay bare to the public gaze the secrets which the heart learns in private communion with God. We dread to be artificial and insincere, and we shrink from methods which appear to turn faith into an exciting and popular pastime. But surely we lose a vast part of the help religion can bring us, if we hide the best side of our nature from those we love. Educated, as we have been, to have more religion in our souls than we manifest to the world, we have gone to the other extreme, laid ourselves open to the charge of being cold, and hidden, even from our children, the faith which has inspired and sustained us. We have let them go into the world without any definite instruction in the principles which have consciously and unconsciously shaped our lives, and they have often joined other communions or drifted with the mass of people away from social and organized religion altogether. We have no common rites, ceremonies or dogmas, which seem to make a simple beginning in fellowship for earnest souls in other Churches. Yet we have a spiritual faith which has taken the form of definite convictions in our minds and which can furnish the necessary means of communication with others who belong to the same home and the same Church. We must surrender our excessive individualism and make our faith a social force. We must abandon our re-

serve and speak with the frankness and openness to our friends and to each other concerning our message. If the newly-formed Leagues help to revive the enthusiasm and to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, characteristic of our forerunners, it will soon become evident that we have a living faith.

(5.) *Open-mindedness: knowledge will not destroy faith.*

A distinguishing characteristic of the Unitarian is his open-mindedness. He is not afraid that the advance of knowledge or any fresh discovery will shatter his faith. His creed has undergone change with the growing apprehension of God's world, and he is confident from his experience in the past that increased knowledge of truth will give him a richer and fuller religion. The dualism embodied in the contrasts between "science and religion," "experience and faith," "principle and creed," does not exist for him. Every discovery in the world of nature by science is only a new revelation of God, and nothing in the faith of the Unitarian prevents him from giving it an immediate and frank reception. Certain treatises,[1] published lately, have revealed that

[1] See especially *A Not Impossible Religion* by Silvanus Thompson, and *The Spirit of Christianity* by Frederic Seebohm.

scientists, philosophers and other thinkers have been ignorant of the sympathy which exists between their own best aspirations and this faith of the Modern Unitarian. Because of his openness to new influences, his readiness to accept truth from science, history, philosophy and psychology and his insistence on being mentally alert on matters of religion, he has sometimes been charged with being too intellectual. Intimate acquaintance with his method, however, reveals that he applies a moral prior to a metaphysical test. He asks first whether any doctrine accords with the righteousness, mercy and Fatherhood of God. His pleading against doctrines which diminish the sense of responsibility such as Original Sin and Vicarious Punishment, has been more passionate than his criticism of dogmas which have little bearing on conduct, such as those of the Trinity and the Procession of the Holy Ghost. His method of approach has been largely ethical, but his intense belief in the Oneness of God and of the universe has led him to the conviction that anything which is morally good will finally be proved to be intellectually true and vice versa.

(6.) *Unitarianism, good tidings of great joy.*

The Gospel of Unitarianism *does help*. It is a joy-giving, health-bestowing and saving religion. It bids men look up and not down, for-

ward and not backward and lend a hand. It is a religion to live by and to die by and it produces happiness of temperament amid the ordinary concerns of life and serenity amid its ills and storms.

To the Unitarian the present life appears as a good and beautiful gift, as an inestimable blessing, for which he cannot be too grateful to the Infinite Spirit and Power who loved him into conscious existence. His faith is marked by trust and optimism which carry him safely through the dark places of experience where men often stumble and fall. Right in the forefront of his beliefs, he places the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and tests the validity of creeds, both ancient and modern, by that standard.[1] It may be that a man is attracted to this gospel through the sunny nature of his temperament, but certain it is that as this religion takes a deeper hold upon

[1] Dr. Mellone writes in the *Hibbert Journal*, April 1922, p. 423: "The very essence of the Unitarian gospel, the foundation on which the whole structure is built, the binding force which alone gives it whatever cohesion it possesses, is the Fatherhood of God. The Fatherhood of God: not as an object of lip-service, not as a comfortable generalization to be listened to, or a vague theme of merely emotional assent; but as a great Ideal, whose meaning demands realization alike in personal, social, national and international life; carrying with it, spiritually and even logically, the Divine Sonship and the Brotherhood of Man—and this, once more, not merely as a Truth to be assented to, but as an Ideal to be realized, a task to be achieved."

his nature, he faces the world with greater courage and cheer and goodwill. To him the universe seems essentially friendly and God infinitely loving: and he never whines at existence or asks, when calamity overtakes him, "Why did God permit this?"

The attitude of the American Unitarian preacher, Dr. Edward Everett Hale, "the strength and symmetry of whose character needs no emphasis," is typical. Concerning his religious experiences he wrote as follows, in reply to Dr. Starbuck's inquiry by circular,[1] "I always knew God loved me and I was always grateful to him for the world he placed me in. I always liked to tell him so, and was always glad to receive his suggestions to me. . . . To live with all my might seemed to me easy: to learn where there was so much to learn seemed pleasant and almost of course: to lend a hand, if one had a chance, natural: and if one did this, why, he enjoyed life because he could not help it, and without proving to himself that he ought to enjoy it. . . . A child who is early taught that he is God's child, that he may live and move and have his being in God, and that he has, therefore, infinite strength at hand for the conquering of any difficulty, will take life more easily, and will probably make more of it, than one who is told that he is born the

[1] *Psychology of Religion*, Starbuck, pp. 305,306. Quoted by Wm. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 82, 83.

child of wrath and wholly incapable of good." Dr. Starbuck comments, "In this description Dr. Hale undoubtedly holds up an ideal that is well worth striving after, namely, to make the most out of life with the least waste of energy."

The Unitarian is not, however, blind to the reality of the problem of evil. He is profoundly conscious of the glaring contrast between *what is* and *what ought to be*. He has always been at least as zealous for social reform as for the success of his denomination and he is quite content to abide by the witness of others to his public service.[1] He feels the need of further progress and of continued efforts for the redemption of the world. He holds that human life should be interpreted by what it promises and by what it may attain, and that the endeavour should always be made to shape it according to that "gleaming ideal which is the everlasting real."[2] He regards salvation as a process and not an accomplished

[1] Dr. Diggle, who was later Bishop of Carlisle, wrote in *The Churchman*, 1899: "The homes of Unitarians, whether rich or poor, are generally homes of singular refinement and of active interest in intellectual movements. Their generosity and charitable benevolence are proverbial." Dr. Selbie in his volume on *Nonconformity* in the *Home University Library*, wrote: "They (the Unitarians) have rendered very great service to the cause of the Free Churches by their zeal for education and social reform, and by their steady advocacy of freedom of theological thought," p. 247.

[2] See Martineau, *Study of Religion*, vol. i. p. 12.

fact, a movement of man towards God in response to God's movement towards man.

He is conscious of the difficulties which beset faith, and hears the cry which escapes from the man who is bruised and broken in the struggle of life. He realizes the pathos which underlies the words recently penned by Dr. Gore, "I have always felt deeply, being by disposition pessimistic, the arguments against the love of God. I have always thought that the only very difficult dogma of the Church was the dogma that God is love."[1] These are sad words and they express a thought which has recently been in many a stricken human heart. The Unitarian does not under-estimate the difficulty thus raised. He does not, in face of the obvious sin and suffering, the calamities and wars of the world, adopt an attitude of easygoing indifference, but he still holds on to his belief that God is loving and kind, long-suffering and merciful. He has confidence in the divine order and purpose, and faith in the vastness of human potentiality. He agrees with the assertion, which, strangely enough, was made by that prince among pessimists, Schopenhauer, "There is nothing more certain than the general truth that it is the grievous *sin of the world* which has produced the grievous *suffering of the world*."[2] He holds that, as John Stuart Mill said, "All the

[1] *Belief in God*, p. 11.

[2] *Studies in Pessimism*, trans. by Bailey Saunders, p. 24.

great sources of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them entirely, conquerable by human care and effort."[1] That fact helps him to hope that the kingdom of God may come and that, if not perfection, at least a vast measure of salvation is attainable in this world. Emerson said, "The world is enlarged for us not by new objects, but by finding more affinities and possibilities in those we now have."

> We men of earth have here the stuff
> Of Paradise! We have enough!
> We need no other things to build
> The stairs into the Unfulfilled—
> No other ivory for the doors,
> No other marble for the floors,
> No other cedar for the beam
> And dome of man's immortal dream.
> Here on the paths of every day—
> Here on our common human way
> Is all the busy gods would take
> To build a heaven, to mould and make
> New Edens. Ours the stuff sublime
> To build eternity in time.

The Unitarian knows that the story of his faith in modern times is an unbroken record of the removal from religion of all those creeds and dogmas which are based on fear and which bring gloom to the human heart. His religion is the good tidings

[1] Quoted F. S. Marvin, *Progress and History*, p. 20.

of great joy, and he looks on the universe in the same spirit as Jesus beheld the lilies of Galilee. Life is good. God is good—altogether good. "The laws of Nature," said a Unitarian preacher, "are not whims of an arbitrary Creator, they are the thoughts of an Eternal mind; and when we know that the order of the universe is the very expression of a Divine Necessity, we dare not ask that any ordination should be modified to secure some personal desire."[1] "The causality of the world," wrote Dr. Martineau, "is at the disposal of the all-holy Will: and whether within us or without us, in the distant stellar spaces or in the self-conscious life of the tempted or aspiring mind, we are in one divine embrace—God over all, blessed for ever."[2] The world process is the story of redemption. History is the gradual unfolding of the divine in man, despite his many lapses and the set-backs to his progress. "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God,"[3] but we have the firstfruits of the Spirit. We have a magnificent inheritance in the world about us, which it is our duty to explore and cultivate: and we have in our spirits a latent glory, which it should be our endeavour to develop and make manifest. "God," it has been said, "has made large endowments in the

[1] Frank Walters, *"The Light of Life"* p. 294.
[2] *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 75.
[3] St. Paul. Romans 8[19]*f.*

soul of man and expects large returns in the service of man."

> This world's no blot for us,
> Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good.[1]

We may, therefore, "trust God, *see* all, nor be afraid."

If there is in the world any more heartening and more encouraging faith than this, we do not know of it. It gives the cheerful outlook, the conquering mood and faith in God.

[1] *Fra Lippo Lippi.*

CHAPTER II

THE UNITARIAN HERITAGE

1. The religion of authority. 2. The religion of spiritual freedom. 3. The seat of authority. 4. The eternal gospel.

IT is well known that we are in the midst of a vast movement of change in religious thought and life, a movement of mingled construction and destruction, whose beginnings, if we can date them at all, are from the Reformation, and whose end no man living can foresee.

This movement is not the work specially of any one of the various religious bodies as compared with others. It has had many simultaneous beginnings. No denomination, sect, or party, no single group of men, can claim as their own peculiar privilege to have originated it or to guide it. Even those religious communities who have been unconscious of this movement as concerning themselves, and some who have bitterly fought against it, have been deeply affected by it. They have moved like that party of explorers in the Arctic regions, who were travelling to the North over what seemed a limitless expanse of ice,

which, though they did not know it, was a vast icefloe, drifting slowly but irresistibly to the South, and carrying all on its surface with it. What more usually happens, however, is that a number of tendencies, which existed already in a half-conscious state, more or less suddenly become conscious of themselves collectively, and of their combined mission. As time has gone on, this has taken place in so many different religious bodies, and from so many different points of view, that there is an accumulated aggregate of unconcerted movements, all alike demanding religious reform and reconstruction.

(1.) *The Religion of Authority.*

Four centuries ago the Church Catholic had spread out her arms to clasp, if it might be, the entire world in her embrace. There was no part of human life from the cradle to the grave which she did not pretend to control and direct. Her power was the result of long ages of gradual growth, and it had taken a firm hold both of the heart and the intellect of man. The essential characteristic of the Church was the note of the Absolute and the Eternal sounding through her dogmas, her ordinances, her ritual. In this spirit she set herself to crush the slightest dissent from her doctrines, the least sign of resistance to her authority.

Then the spirit of the modernists of old time broke loose from the tombs their disciples had built for them: but, more than in an earlier age, it impelled them to destroy as it inspired them to create. Luther in Germany, and Calvin in Geneva, and Knox in Scotland, and the Sozzini in Italy, and others elsewhere arose and declared that there was no more help in the Saints, that the Pope was antichrist, and the Catholic Church full of corruption and wickedness. Such words were often uttered with wrath and bitterness, and to many a tender heart, many a pure conscience, seemed horrible blasphemies. But the abuses of the Papal system were many and were confessed; and the mind of man could not remain for ever in leading-strings to the Pope and his emissaries.

In place of the Church, the Reformers pointed to the Book. Here is the paradox of historic Protestantism. Assuming the Bible throughout not only contains, but is, the Word of God written, Protestantism initiated an era where in one generation creeds were produced which, in the voluminousness and minuteness of their dogmatism, exceeded all that the Ancient Church had done in the first three hundred years of its life. At the same time, Protestantism recognizes that the preservation of historic continuity and corporate unity may be too dearly bought; since all the historic abuses of ecclesiasticism may defend themselves under this plea.

(2.) *The Religion of Spiritual Freedom.*

In setting conscience free from servitude to the Church, Protestantism turned religion back on its sources in the soul. And in setting reason free to move in religious things within the limits of the Word, it forced to the front the further question of what those limits are, and prepared the way for another Reformation, quite equal in importance to the former one, though not attended with so many dramatic circumstances: a Reformation which has completely undermined the authority of the Bible as an infallible rule of faith and life.

If, then, there is no infallible Church to which to appeal in all matters of human controversy, if there is no infallible Book to guide us in all matters of belief and conduct and tell us with authoritative voice what we must believe and what we must do, what remains? Only this: as Dr. Martineau contended in his last great work, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, we must throw ourselves back upon the Reason and Conscience of Man as the only sure path to Truth and to God.

Unitarian thought has been deeply involved in this transforming change. Heretical opinion on the subject of the Trinity, in the various shapes which it took in the sixteenth century, simply represented a thoroughgoing appeal to the Bible as against ecclesiastical authority. The early Unitarians took their stand passionately on *the*

written word. Their conflict with their opponents was not over the authority but the interpretation of Scripture. Their antitrinitarianism and other apparent negations really rested upon and grew out of a great positive affirmation, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only infallible rule of faith and life; and therefore they rejected theological doctrines which they did not find in the Bible or which were inconsistent with the character of God as revealed therein. The Bible is still with us: no longer an infallible rule, but a unique instrument of religious instruction and inspiration, with the effective working value naturally belonging to a literature moulded by the powerful religious genius of Hebrew lawgivers and prophets and primitive Christian apostles. But we can no longer use the Bible as our forefathers did. It is not enough to say that if it was admissible for Luther or Calvin to examine the interpretation put by the Catholic Church upon the Bible, it is equally admissible for us to examine Luther's or Calvin's.

The late Charles Beard, in his Hibbert Lectures on *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, powerfully urged that we are but following Luther's example in testing religious ideas by the surest knowledge of our own day: "What if it turns out that his work was only half done, and could be no more than half done with the materials at his command? What if the Bible shows by its

history and structure that it is unfit to occupy that seat of authority from which, in its favour, he displaced the Church? The truth is, that one Reformation always carries in it the seed of another. There are two elements in religion, the permanent and the transient, the divine and the human—a duality which rests upon the fact that what is given by God can only be partially apprehended by man; and it is necessary, in order that the permanent should shine out in its pure and simple splendour, that the transient should gradually drop away." In like manner we may appeal to the founders of the Unitarian faith, when they took their stand passionately upon the written word, but read it with entire mental and spiritual independence in the light of Reason and Conscience alone. That is our spiritual heritage; but to-day it compels us to seek for the things of God not only within the pages even of the best and broadest of books.

(3.) *The Seat of Authority.*

The root of the matter is this. Formerly the sources of Religion were not only separated from human life, but regarded as being outside the utmost range of humanity, and were found in infallible persons and infallible books; but now, the sources of religion are sought for in human life itself. The presentation of religion is subject

to all the uncertainties that belong to life, with its multitudinous variety, its illimitable possibilities, its unscaled heights and unsounded depths. Here, in this manifold of human life, and here alone, are we to find our answer to the continual cry of the human heart—"Show us the Father!" For surely the desire of all the ages is concentrated in those words. We would see the Father at work; see in the blind struggles of men his eternal judgments, in man's persistent effort after wider truth his revealing wisdom, in man's ever-renewed devotion and loyalty to good his redeeming love. We would see him through our Humanity as Job saw him through the mighty and majestic order of nature: "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee!"

From every direction we come back to the same point. This world never did, anywhere or at any time, contain more of essential divinity, or of eternal meaning, than is embodied in what is seen every day. There, is life, and there, a step away, is death. There, is the only kind of beauty there ever was. There, is the old human struggle and its fruits together. There, is the text and the sermon, the real and the ideal, in one. Of the fibre of which these things consist is the material woven of all the finest meanings that ever were, or ever shall be, in this world. "While the earth remaineth," it is written, "summer and winter, heat and cold, seedtime and harvest, life and

death, shall not cease." And while Humanity remaineth, in this world or in any other, there will be the elemental endeavours and elemental trusts which are the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen—the material of Eternal Religion, the content of the Everlasting Gospel.

(4.) *The Eternal Gospel.*

It is possible to state this very simply. We are continually condemning humanity in its present condition; and when we examine the matter we find that our condemnation is made by reference to a standard, a vision, of what humanity ought to be. And that standard, we find, is one that humanity itself has furnished to us. It is shown to us in the life and spirit of men and women who have made pure and strong the waters of life.

We turn to the New Testament, the greatest record of human religious experience. What are the essential facts of its revelation ? In the New Testament this inner Ideal, which has countless forms—this devotion to something higher and wider than the personal self—appears in its supreme expression of an unconquerable Will to *save men from the evil that besets them.* This Will is treated as the absolutely and essentially divine factor in humanity; it is identified with God. The Son of Man lays down his life for this purpose

alone, and for this reason alone is called Christ. This is the ever-living, ever-growing Christ-spirit, which was, is, and will be, which in all ages entering into holy souls, makes them friends of God and prophets. If you will live from this inner impulse, this love for mankind, this enthusiasm of humanity, then the clue to the meaning of life is here in your hands, the beginning of infinite truth is here in your keeping.

If we let this be to us in very truth the Everlasting Gospel; if we make this the keynote of all our ministry to the world; then, no group of men ever had a grander opportunity for service than that which is opening round us to-day. In this age, when science is giving men insight into some of Nature's deepest secrets and increasing control over her forces; when psychology and history are giving us a better understanding of the conditions of mental and moral growth; when an immense expansion of social and political endeavour is taking place—at such a time the world needs, above all else, the inspiration which springs from this profound belief in men *not for what they are but for what they have it in them to become*—a faith which " thinks nobly of the soul," and sees that all our being is alive with real possibilities whose limits are never attained, and that man partly is but wholly hopes, desires, and struggles *to be*; a faith built, I repeat, on those elemental divine things whose unfolding possibil-

ities reveal to us God as the Source and End of our being.

In the light of this sacred heritage of spiritual freedom, how may we deal with the Past ? There are some who love the Past, and who find in the traditions and practices of the historic Christian Churches a mine of wealth whence we may draw, not fetters for the spirit, but precious symbols of spiritual realities. No wise man will neglect the testimony and experience of the past. Consider the work of the great apostle of the nations, Paul of Tarsus. He took every account of the past; but how ? He read it in the light of his own life, and the life of his people. He mingled it with his own original dreams, experiences, reflections—passed it through the fire of his own personality; and then gave it forth. The ideal of true progressive thought makes a great demand upon us. We have to preach the truth as it is in ourselves; not breaking with the past, but showing that in ourselves its force has been regenerated, recreated, redirected, made fruitful for the life the world is living now.

This, then, is our gospel of Redemption, and, if you will, of Revolution: that there is, working in and inspiring all mankind, one and the same inexhaustible Divine Life: that the heavenly Father is ever present in the life of every one of us, unescapably present, awaiting complete recognition, realization, and expression, the very life of our

life, the light of all our seeing. Against him stands that hardening selfishness which, whether in personal life, in class life, or in national life, is the only real hell in the universe.

Men's ideas of what personality is are fragmentary and parsimonious. Human beings are immature; hence comes our contentment with these ideas, with all the trouble and torment they bring into personal experience, and all the confusion they work in social organization. They must give way to a wider, richer, and deeper ideal of what man is and what his life means, an ideal built on the faith that the common life seeking expression in all men is indivisible, all-inclusive, and divine. This is the essence of Christianity, the central meaning of those great words, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, whose meaning we are now called upon, as we have never been before, to show forth not only with our lips but in our lives. Our distinctive mission is to make good this faith, and show that it can be made good, without clothing it in rags of false history, bad theology, and obsolete metaphysics.

Chapter III

MAN

1. Man's origin and history. 2. Man's nature. 3. Man as mind. 4. Man as moral. 5. Man as divine. 6. Sin and self-transcendence. 7. Kinship with God. 8. The view of Christ and Paul.

(1.) *Man's origin and history.*

IN 1859 Darwin published his *Origin of Species* to substantiate, by the ordered collection of facts and experiments and by patient induction from them, that theory of the evolution of man from lower and more primitive forms, of which previous thought had furnished only more or less scattered glimpses and adumbrations. The equilibrium of Christendom, resting not upon the truth of God but upon dogma and authority, was shaken to its foundations, for the only possible reason that its foundations were shaky. Yet at a notable meeting of the British Association, Bishop Wilberforce thought it a pleasing refutation of Huxley to ask him whether it was on his father's or his mother's side he was descended from the monkey.

Recently Canon Barnes in the Abbey reaffirmed

the evolutionary view as against the alleged truth of the story of Genesis, and again a storm broke forth from the windy caves of the Churches. Sixty years of scientific study and intellectual enlightenment had brought no alteration in the orthodox Standards of theology. But it has confirmed the modestly phrased verdict of Darwin in the closing words of his *Descent of Man*, that "man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin."

Prof. J. Arthur Thomson in his *System of Animate Nature* (1920) marshals the accordant evidence of embryology, comparative anatomy, psychology, and geology, into an overwhelming testimony to the view that "man is solidary with the rest of Nature" (II. 551). "The record of the rocks discloses that as age succeeded age there was an emergence of nobler and nobler forms of life" (II. 369). So unambiguous indeed is the evidence of the vast majority of competent students that Thomson declares "There is no other scientific formulation (than that of Evolution) in the field."

Religion, of course, like philosophy, may take into its view, for a complete explanation of the universe, factors and forces which transcend the categories of science, but it dare not try to override science within its own domain. Its business is not to reject but to assimilate.

As a matter of fact enlightened religious thought has long incorporated the doctrine of Evolution

into its world-view, and found it of inestimable value in interpreting the origins and rich developments of the religious consciousness itself in history. It is only truth to say that the application of the concept of Evolution within the field of religious ideas and institutions has given a new outlook upon this aspect of the world, and added momentous confirmation of the validity of the religious life and its postulates.

Not only so, but the frank acceptance of the well attested verdict of science upon man's origin has thrown us back upon an analysis and exposition of the inherent values and truths of human nature in its highest development for insight into its rightful place and prerogatives in the universe. The characteristic glories of man, for which alone he commands homage and admiration, and which alone can justify his claims to an imperishable destiny, the capacities of mind and spirit revealed in reason, knowledge, will, æsthetic appreciation, these remain untouched and just what they are, whatever be our theory of origins.

The book of Genesis declares that God created man within twenty-four hours, between a rising and setting of the sun. Does the sense of our dignity and worth in the Divine plan suffer shock, if, as Prof. Keith suggests, man has been on the planet not six thousand but a million years, and two or three million have rolled by since the human type emerged from the anthropoid, or

eight hundred million since organisms first began to spread on our planet? After all what are the differences of these temporal magnitudes when measured against the background of an eternity? Mystery and miracle are not thus effaced, and human majesty is more securely founded on the boundlessly complex and amazingly devised or realized, co-operations of the whole process of Nature, struggling forward through unimaginable æons to man "the summit of things" than on a mere conjuring trick of hours or minutes.

What must be that only partially revealed Power behind and in a universe, which can draw the wonder of mind and soul from out the elements of melting heat and incandescent gas, or what that matter in which lies buried "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life"? If "we see through mould the rose unfold" then let us raise our notion of what mould implies and is capable of. Let us have Goethe's reverence for "things beneath us," and sing our *Gloria in excelsis* to the very dust. And when we have done it, let us ask, whence the tongue, the language, the music fit for the praise of him to whom, through everything from dust up to archangel, rises the endless Benedicite of all Creation?

(2.) *Man's nature.*

We turn then to an analysis and estimate of what man is, remembering always that as Oliver

Wendell Holmes remarked, the important thing is not so much where we are as the direction in which we are going.

Science silhouetted human insignificance against the background of immense magnitudes of time and space and energy. R. L. Stevenson gave us a scientific christening at the font of oceans in the vast temple of the material, with the formula "this hair-crowned bubble of dust, this inheritor of a few years and sorrows." "When I consider the heavens," said the Psalmist who lived with a toy-astronomy, "the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, What is man that thou art mindful of him?" How shall we put it when we realize we are in a world where we may be looking at stars not as they are to-night but as they were years ago, so long has it taken their light travelling at the rate of 186,000 miles a second to reach us, and in which a microscopic atom is itself a complex system of forces? The life of man is but a breath in the infinite respiration of the universe, and he himself a point in the immense spaces, having position but no magnitude, "a snowflake on the river, a moment white, then gone for ever."

True, so far as it goes, but we have forgotten something.

(3.) *Man as Mind.*

Man is not merely a material thing surrounded by continents of other material things. He is a

thing that thinks. Man is infinitely more and higher than a whole material universe because he has consciousness, knowledge, perception. He is lifted away into an order of being above mechanism, because he has feeling, will, and reason, whereas no machine can feel itself or reason about itself. He is "man, the master of things." This makes all the difference, and leaves the comparison of him with the merely physical world without a common measure or denominator. He is greater than all objects, because he has mind which in some sense can take all these into its sweep, and go out in conscious apprehension of all, greater than time and existence because he is "the spectator of all time and existence." I do not wish to pronounce on tendencies in current philosophy which I cannot wholly understand or follow, but whatever realism argues, it seems to remain essentially true that man's mind does not merely mirror an outside world but at least recreates and reconstructs it in perception and knowledge.

Let us keep within the domain of science and "common sense," and we have an external world, consisting of eddies and streams of waves or undulations, invisible, inaudible, and colourless. These affect our nerves and brain by setting up some chemical changes in them, and then—the incredible happens, and we look out upon a world of objects, full of form, colour, taste and music, the

whole arranged in a recognized order! Such is the subconscious work of the mind or conscious ego! In knowing or perceiving it does not mirror, it *makes* its own world, and that world only exists in relation to it. The only definition we can give to the material is that it is that unknown which determines mind thus to build up the rich and varied world of sense in harmony with its own rational nature, so that this world stands an ordered, intelligible whole in which reason discovers itself. Nature is a language which man can understand, a beauty which he can appreciate, a music which he can enjoy, as things intimately one and akin with his own inmost soul, *because* his spirit is one substance or essence with the Spirit of which nature is the manifestation or the correlative. As Emerson put it "man carries the world in his head"; "Nature is the incarnation of a thought, the world is mind precipitated." Hence those subtle voices in nature which have the power to unlock the secrets of our own heart and reveal us to ourselves. Hence, too, the sovereignty of mind over the material universe.

Pascal rightly said: "Man may be as frail as a reed, but he is a reed that thinks and so is greater than the unthinking universe by which he can be so easily crushed."

Nay, the spirit of man can fashion wings of the material and take flight upon them into a higher

realm; there with the subtle essences distilled from the senses it builds aerial empires of colour and sound and emotion, gorgeous palaces of imagination and dream, impalpable creations of music and harmony, in accord with the pure laws of a free spiritual architecture. What are religion and the arts of music, painting, and poetry, but the magical, wonderful efflorescence of these transcendent creative activities of the mind and spirit of man, moving about in worlds unrealized?

Thus we escape from the low false measure of insignificance, and find in ourselves a centrality round which the circumambient universe revolves, on which it hangs. And we catch the purport of that motto which Sir William Hamilton, the noted Scottish thinker, set to his philosophy "On earth there is nothing great but man, in man there is nothing great but mind."

(4.) *Man as Moral.*

Man is, however, not only a conscious thinking and knowing being, but a free moral agent. This also gives him a dignity and value outsoaring all the dimensions and powers of the vastest material and mechanical system. In virtue of his reason and will he is free, and as such has an authority and rule over the world. By Freedom, however, is not meant arbitrariness or caprice, but the

capacity of choice, and the capability of being determined by moral and spiritual motives from within instead of by physical forces from without. This, too, discloses his citizenship of a higher kingdom than nature, his place in a nobler order of being than the natural.

There is no syllogism along which thought can move logically and consistently from a world of unadulterate matter and mechanism to one of spirit and freedom, without break. If such a development be admitted to have taken place in time, it can only be because the world was never mere matter and mechanism, but held in it elements of another origin, potentialities of another order; because mechanism and matter are just lower forms, imperfect expressions, of a transcendent Reality, which, more fully manifested and unfolded, is seen to be in its nature Spirit or Spiritual. Man represents a fresh stage in the self-expression of Spirit, a new epoch in its action.

Organic evolution is the long process of the liberation of pent-up Spirit, as the movement of the hands of a clock is the release of the energy stored in the spring. Man as a free, moral, self-determining or spiritually motived agent cannot find the whole story of his origin in meteoric flame-storm or in the flashing jewellery of mud; he is an ambassador sent out from an invisible order and element of Spirit, of which mud and flame were the first crude deposits. With Bergson we regard

matter as a devolution from Life, an abstraction from Spirit, and man as spiritual emerges on an eminence in the range of existence which far transcends it. As the fœtus grows wonderfully in the mother's womb by drawing in vitality and the potentiality of an amazing intellectual and moral development through its attachments to those confining tissues of a parent organism in whose higher centres are all that makes personality, so man grows and is developed in this dark womb of things, narrowly environed; but that environment is only part of a transcendent Whole which is also intensely spirit and personality, whatever more.

In virtue of this endowment of freedom and will humanity has the prerogative and status of conscious communion with the Spirit of the universe and becomes a co-worker with God. He can co-operate intelligently in furthering the Divine plan, whose law and direction he may learn by use of his intelligence. He is one with God not only in substance and by virtue of his origin but can be one with him in will and life and purpose, so inaugurating a fresh era of co-operative evolution. This, we believe, to be God's idea for man, namely, to bring him into copartnership with himself in working out the final end, the redemption of all things, and in actualizing the æsthetic, moral, social, and spiritual possibilities of a wondrous nature and world.

(5.) *Man as Divine.*

The privilege which God for ever confers on man is to enter into a free, deliberate, conscious covenant and fellowship with himself. This is the glory of life and its crown; this the ineffable harmony to which the immemorial discord unrest and hunger of man's religious nature point. "Thou hast made us for thyself, and we can find no rest, until we rest in thee," said Augustine. That is the perennial note of the human heart, springing up like the song of the lark in the cage, calling to the lyric light and blue of heaven which is its native element.

"All his glory and beauty are from within; and there he delighteth himself. Thou hast not here an abiding city and this is not thy place of rest. In heaven ought to be thy home and all earthly things are to be looked upon as it were by the way." (*Imitation of Christ,* Bk. I, ch. i.)

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." (*Rev.* 3^{20}.)

These rude upstanding altars, grown over with moss and grass of old time, these minarets of mosques, and pinnacles of temples, and towers and spires of churches, scattered across the earth, are but the hieroglyphics in which humanity has writ and rewrit for ever the epic story of its agelong quest of the Infinite and Divine. History is a

palimpsest scored over with the records of the manifold enterprises of man's mind and hand, but beneath them all stands engraven in indelible figures that spiritual Odyssey of the heart, through whose much suffering and wandering from rise to set of suns the race has sought its native home beyond the horizons, in God.

Man is the prodigal son, and the world with its wonders going out and in, at dusk and dawn, in autumns and springs, with its music and laughter and tears, is his swine-trough, from which he turns unsatisfied to the great white road which winds out of the valley over the shoulders of the phantom-hills on to the City of God, which hath foundations, where is the hearth, the hand, the face, he seeks, the voice whose immemorial echoes strange and sweet enter and disturb his earthly dreams.

Man is God-haunted, God-hunted, God-captivated. It is the universal law of affinity, which draws together things which belong to one another, molecule to molecule, mind to mind, soul to its kindred soul, and makes common natures, separated even to the utmost poles, beat in tune. Divinity and humanity are of one essence, interlocked like positive and negative, inseparable, in one electric fact. To divide the substance or separate the attributes, would be to cut off Divinity from its expression and humanity from its source and its inmost truth and life. As the

water that hurries along the channels of the streams, dancing among the stones and plunging over the falls of rock, is one with the water of the lake away up among the shaggy strengths of the hills from which they get their flow, so the life of man is one element with the life of God from which it comes, and of which it is the overflow. In its troubled career the stream gets mixed with the silt and gravel, or coloured by the moss-hags through which it flows, yet the original water of the lake is in it; so too, man's life takes up the sins and passions and impurities of the world, but still the pure clear essence and current of divinity is in it, in it as that idealism which is the very soul of our soul and life of our life, our truest self.

(6.) *Sin and self-transcendence.*

Let us look at man in the mirror of his own thought.

He is a thing of contrasts and contradictions admittedly. Prof. Cairns, of Aberdeen, has pointed out that the poets working at white heat on the substance of human life produce not comedies but tragedies like Prometheus, Œdipus, Hamlet, and Faust. Carlyle pictures our race hasting stormfully across this narrow isthmus of Time out of the Unknown into the Unknown. R. L. Stevenson speaks of man as "this hair-crowned bubble of dust, this inheritor of a few years and sorrows." No other has in deft

miniature so silhouetted the waesome weirdness, the gargoylish grotesqueness, the infallible failure, and the colossal contradiction of human nature framed in the amazing mystery of things. Swinburne rises from his contemplation of life to let loose mænadic winds and sweep his insurrection against the gods in far-flung lines of multitudinous music. And we catch H. G. Wells sitting singing incantations by the sputtering Altar Fire in the human heart, forlorn though not forsworn. "Our whole estate" it has been said "is somewhat damnable" and orthodox theology has never lacked the inspiration to paint inimitably the blackness of the human heart.

But, is that all? Verily, no. If man has fallen, he has never since ceased from the effort of trying to pick himself up. "We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better." *That* is the significant illuminating fact. Our race never takes its fall lying down; it has survived not by its disease, but by its health; marched forward not on its sin, but on its soul; not on its vices, but on its virtues, which are more inveterate and stronger.

"Human sense is feeble," writes Prof. Raleigh, "human reason, whimsical and vain, human life, short and troubled. But every now and then in the long history there is a rift in the cloud or a new prospect gained by climbing. These are the great ages of the world." That's it—the new achievements, the new views, the fresh hopes!

Are these to be left out when you speak of man—his great ages, his glorious moods? Look at the feet of clay, but see also the head of gold and the heart of fire! There is not only Nero and Borgia and the Profiteers, but Plato, Buddha, St. Francis, Christ—aye, bring him in too ere you make the pile complete, the most utterly and essentially human of us all.

We want to see the *whole* man, as Channing saw him: "I must reverence human nature. . . . I know its history, I shut my eyes on none of its weaknesses and crimes and despotisms. But I bless it for its kind affections, its strong and tender love, and honour it for its struggles against oppression, for its growth and progress under the weight of so many chains and prejudices, for its achievements in Science and Art, and still more for its examples of heroic and saintly virtue. These are the marks of a divine origin and the pledges of a celestial inheritance."

And the very fact that we all admire the good we cannot imitate, love the heroic we cannot reach, shows that the heroic and good are in the truest sense our inmost selves. For we are, at heart, that which we admire, love, worship; what we hate and despise is what we feel to be alien to our nature even when we do it.

This, I repeat, is the revealing fact—man's idealism, his self-transcendence. When we look at history in the long view, what do we see but

humanity ever on the march, the great caravan of being, moving through the wilderness, the fire, the flood, ever onward and upward, with the mystic Ark of the covenant before its eyes, and the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night guiding it toward the Land of Promise. Man's best wages have ever been "the Wages of going on."

> With futile hands we seek to gain
> Our inaccessible desire,
> Diviner summits to attain
> With faith that sinks and feet that tire;
> But nought shall conquer or control
> The heavenward hunger of the soul.

Self-transcendence—it is the law of life, the inevitable answer of the Divine within to the Divine above, as friend answers friend. "For I am not of those who deny that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, and that the King is also in his heaven." As Emerson insisted, "All spiritual being is in man," nay, is in each one of us to some degree, as the whole artist at the moment is in his work, big or little. "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God; the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God do enter into that man with justice."

(7.) *Kinship with God.*

This doctrine of the oneness in essence and being of human and divine, and of man's attainment to

unity with God in so far as he faithfully strives after, and loyally adheres to, his own native ideals of Beauty, Goodness, Truth and Love, is the basal doctrine of modern Unitarianism. It is also called the Immanence of God in Man, or the Incarnation. This doctrine puts Unitarianism at one with the whole Idealist movement in modern thought, and it is the ruling conception of the "Modernist" theology in the so-called "orthodox" Churches. It was affirmed over and over again at the famous Girton Conference of Modern Churchmen in 1921. "The leaders of the Conference," says the Editor of the *Modern Churchman*, "were agreed that the Deity of Jesus is to be seen in his perfect humanity."

Consequently they are logically driven to and frankly accept the conclusion that the difference between Christ and the rest of men is only one of degree, not of nature, since indeed the difference between God himself and man, is not one of nature or essence, and alienation from God through sin is also self-alienation. Sin is a violation not only of divine law, but also of the law of our own being. Orthodoxy went wrong, not in asserting the divinity of Christ, but in denying it of everybody else, and introducing the artifice of a Virgin-birth, the motive being to match the alleged difference in his nature by a supposed difference in his birth and origin. It was a clumsy device, without any convincing

historical evidence, only possible in a society accustomed to the idea of the miraculous in an arbitrary sense, and with a feeble notion of natural laws, and only likely in an age which could ascribe Virgin-birth to other men of great eminence in personality or power.

It is remarkable that enlightened thought in other Churches is in this vital region of theology moving to a conception of the relationship of God and Man, of human and divine, which is the very core of Unitarianism.

Let us not mistake the significance of the Virgin-birth doctrine, still held by most in other denominations, though quietly dropped by many. These give it up generally because honestly they have to confess the New Testament evidence for it is most precarious, self-contradictory, and conspicuously absent where we have a right to expect it, if it be as vital as the creeds of Christendom protest. The Unitarian is fervently opposed to it not on such grounds alone but on another. To him this dogma represents the cloven hoof of the unforgivable heresy against mankind. It is a coarse and primitive means of getting Deity into Christ, fit only for pagan mythology, resorted to because of a previous assumption that there is and can be no presence of Deity in normal humanity, and that their interpenetration must be an unnatural event. It gives Christ a hybrid nature in which it is impossible for normal members of the

race to share, a position which it may be said to be the whole object and constant purport of his teaching to deny, the whole mission of his life to abolish. If divinity depends on such miraculous birth, then none of us is or ever can be divine, and the goal of all religion is vain. When Paul talked of being requickened by the spirit, and Christ told Nicodemus he must be born anew, they did not mean either an entering into the mother's womb again still less into a Virgin's womb. That was on the face of it hopeless. The Fourth Gospel is there as a witness to Christ's teaching, that as he and the Father were one in a unity of life, will, and deed, so his disciples could become one with God and him—"That they all may be one,"—and this penetration of personality by the divine was not to be the result of hybrid physical rebirth, but of the unfolding of their true nature and destiny in spiritual experience. To live in the spirit, walk by the spirit, the higher element in all human nature, the loftier side of us, is to realize oneness with God and so to be divine. Divinity, indeed, can only be *known*, let alone attained, as the ideal inherent in humanity as such. To separate God and Man is to lose God and Man. They stand or fall together. And that is Unitarianism. So far from denying the divinity of Christ it interprets Christ as a witness to the divinity of man. Unless God and Man are of one genus, then the Christ of orthodoxy is a mon-

strosity—neither true God nor true man, a *reductio ad absurdum*!

(8.) *The view of Christ and Paul.*

It ought not to be necessary to insist that in this teaching theology is going back to Christ and to one phase of the doctrine of Paul, as well as of some of the early Christian Fathers.

Jesus taught that all men are children of the Father in heaven; that when the Prodigal Son came to *himself*, he said, "I will arise and go to my father"; according to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus proclaimed his oneness with the Father, a unity which, however, embraced all his disciples, as participants in the fellowship of the divine Life through himself; nay, even more glorious and grand, he proclaimed in the Gospels an identity between Deity and the humblest and most insignificant, such that the King on his throne of judgment could say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

It was this magnificent consciousness of the divine still resident even in the worst, like a jewel in the mud which gave him that generosity, chivalry, and quenchless hope in dealing with the prostitute and the sinner, which is the lustrous chrism of Christ, the superb humanity of the Master in which we see the flash of his divinity. He lived out the truth which Carlyle and many

another seer taught, that "the true Shekinah is man." "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God?" The great apostle caught this vision of his lord's. "In him we live and move and have our being." As certain of your own (Greek) poets have said, "we also are his offspring." Compare the epistle to the Romans: "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are sons of God." . . . "The spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God"; or the epistle to the Philippians: "that you may be blameless, harmless, the sons of God."

And what a Rembrandtesque picture Paul unveils of all creation groaning and travailing in pain together with mankind in its womb till at last the sons of God appear, and a higher order of freedom and divine fellowship is brought to birth.

> In completed man begins anew
> A tendency to God.

In him the agelong tendency burst from its sleep into consciousness and will.

The instinct and intuition of a deep-feeling, deep-seeing, simple religion has revealed the high secret of humanity, at which the philosopher has arrived by the laborious processes of thought, when in the words of Edward Caird he speaks his wisdom, after brooding on all the sin and ignorance, the sensuality and error of the race; "yet it is not for a moment to be supposed that he can escape from God or cease to live in him."

Prophet, philosopher, seer, and saint, have brought us into the presence of a thought which gleams with the potency of every human hope and aspiration, is radiant with a promise equal to all the wants of man. Humanity stands upon sonship, nearer to God than any priesthood can take it, and with direct access; man meets the Divine, the Divine meets man, in his soul; above him are only the heights of Perfection it is his inborn fate and privilege and power to scale; around him only brethren in the same world-wide divine community. Here is the germ and guarantee of all imaginable progress. This is the evangel of Unitarianism. Where is there to be found a bigger, brighter, braver? Pour with joy the sunlight and ichor of the Faith into the veins and arteries of our weary modern life, and it will begin to glow through its fleshly envelopes of pusillanimous pessimisms, dark decrepitudes, and putrifying sores, a splendid thing of spirit and fire and beauty! We have a mission—and a *message*, praise God!

Vague, confused, ill-written
full of clichés many incorrectly
used saying hardly anything
at all. Did he speak like this?

Chapter IV

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

1. The existence of God. 2. God is one. 3. God and human ideals. 4. The Fatherhood of God. 5. The Trinity. 6. Modernism and the Trinity.

(1.) *The Existence of God.*

IT may be said that in the last chapter on Man we have assumed without proof the reality of God. And that is true. In the sense in which we have conceived God there is no need of proof; in any other sense proof is impossible. It is a commonplace of religious teaching that belief in God is an act of faith, or as Professor William James put it a "will to believe." But if God be understood as that Infinite Being which all things finite imply and on which they depend, if he be thought of as the Soul of all souls, the living principle in us which originates, and answers to, our ideals of Truth, Beauty, Justice and Love, if he be regarded not only as transcendent over, but also as immanent in, the universe, just as my spirit transcends and yet animates my body, the source and centre of that unity which pervades its organs

and functions, then in self-conscious experience God will be rather a principle to be apprehended, a reality to be felt, than an idea to be proved or a belief to be willed.

Not that we would for a moment deny that intuition involves intellect, or that perception embodies reason; but intuition and perception are more immediate than intellect and reason, and these are developed out of the former at a later stage.

The proof of the reality and validity of all those great ideals which generate and sustain the higher activities of man's mind and soul, and give human life any spiritual meaning and worth it possesses, is not primarily a matter of logic and argument. Primarily it is a matter of experience and appreciation. Morality precedes ethics, the artistic life and sense precede æsthetics, the actual impulse to truth precedes logic and the theory of knowledge. The latter can only be derived from and must be based on the former.

The only "proof" of beauty is the inward sense of it; as the only proof of goodness is the good life, which is an indestructible activity of human nature. That man must think is the guarantee that truth is not a mere illusion. These ideals are not objects apart from the experience which seeks to attain them; their reality consists in the fact that they are the inseparable vitalizing principles of that experience, and to deny them consistently

would be to reduce human life to a state of paralysis or death. It is indeed impossible to deny them in any practical effective sense of the word. To live is to affirm them, to believe in them; they are the warp and woof of our being. As well stamp your foot in denial of the existence of energy!

Now religion takes its place with the intellectual, moral, and æsthetic life, as a fundamental yet distinct expression of the total spiritual nature of man. In religion the soul of man is in quest of some immanent and transcendent Reality just as much as when it pursues truth and beauty. The only difference is that religion is a higher and fuller activity of the soul than any other, because it involves a synthesis of all the others; the object of its quest and the impulse behind the quest is a Reality in which these other ideals find their living unity. The object of religious craving and devotion is that Perfection of Being which gathers into itself, say rather into *himself*, final truth, unlimited goodness, and consummate beauty. I say *himself*, because the ideals we seek are above us not beneath us, and the Being in whom they are united and realized must be an essentially even if transcendently spiritual being; not a thing or a force, but a Spirit, a Life. We talk of goodness and beauty and truth as if they were abstract things existing of themselves apart, like the "Ideas" of Plato;

closer thought will suggest that this is impossible. There is no goodness apart from a goodwill or a good life, no beauty which is not something beautiful, no truth which is not true thinking. Values do not float in the air so to speak, they are incorporated in a concrete order which is real. The object of religious belief which is the synthesis of every active or conceivable ideal of spirit, must itself be a spiritual reality or life, in other words a Spirit.

When we appeal to the religious consciousness itself, it speaks with no uncertain sound, it does not falter in its deliverances. "In the centre of the great world-whirlwind," said Carlyle, "dwells and speaks God." But he only speaks in the world-whirlwind, because his still small voice is in the soul. The world without is relative in every colour and characteristic of it to some apprehension in the spirit within. The mind is not a flat mirror on which external things project themselves, but a mysterious deep in which they unfold themselves, which enfolds them, and goes into them with strange appreciation and joy. No sight, no light; no hearing, no sound. The articulate harmony of mind and the world grows out of a mysterious inarticulate unity deeper still. There is

> A motion and a spirit which impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

Out of this there rises in the soul of religious men an inward sense of God, more inescapable, powerful, and fundamental, than that of the earth or heaven or sea about us.

Christ's communion with God was deeper and more real than with the world around him. That is true also of the great prophets, seers and saints. The world paled into mere illusion beside the glory and reality of God to their souls. Said Augustine: "Thy God is unto thee, O my Soul, even the life of thy life." "O, my brothers," said Mazzini, "God lives in our conscience, in the conscience of humanity, in the universe around us." That is the cry of a man to whom God is revealed with an impression stronger than logic. "Vanity of Vanities," meditated Thomas à Kempis, "all is vanity except to love God and him only to serve." What is there in men who have never gone through the spiritual discipline necessary to purify the eye of the soul, who have never tried to fathom its deeper secrets, which gives them a right to pronounce against such utterances? Spiritual realities must be spiritually discerned, and men who have avoided the path of the religious life and lived in and by the world and its vulgar motives alone, lack the spiritual capacity which is necessary. Their judgment is out of court. As well tell a creative musician that there is no music in the yet unplumbed silence of things.

(2.) *God is One.*

What then has spiritual experience to say of the nature and constitution of Deity? It can obviously only support those determinations and attributes of Godhead which are spiritual. It cannot give us a calculus or an arithmetic of Deity. For these we must turn to the light which the history of world-religion and the general knowledge of the universe throw upon the God in whom all live and move and have their being. And it will be found, as might be expected from the necessary reactions of knowledge upon religion, that both lead to the belief in *one* God, who is in all and through all and over all. Science, at any rate, proceeds upon the assumption or faith that the universe is a continuous whole, a unity, and that to know the tiniest thing through and through would involve in the end a knowledge of the whole cosmos, to which it is related. There are philosophies in which it is maintained that the universe may not be one, that possibly it is developing towards unity, but meantime, at least, it is not related through and through, but consists of several independent systems, and that as a matter of fact science does not take us in principle beyond this thesis. The present writer is convinced that such a philosophy does not and cannot satisfy the mind, which will only find rest when all phenomena are traced to one unitary ground or principle.

The same movement in its religious aspect is to be seen in the gradual progress of the race on a world-scale from some form of Animism or worship of a multitude of spirits controlling the world, through polytheism or the worship of a few great gods on to monotheism or the worship of One God, infinite and eternal, the source and sustainer of all there is. There is little likelihood that man will ever permanently go back from monotheism to any earlier doctrine of a plurality of gods, finite and limited only to a less degree than ourselves. This double movement, intellectual and religious, seems to guarantee that it is in the principle of the unity of God that the cosmos will find its ultimate explanation. And this, Unitarianism frankly and fully accepts. "The Lord our God is one," said Christ. Such may be said to be the creed which dominates the modern spirit.

(3.) *God and human ideals.*

A still more important question, however, is "*What* is God?"

One way of answering it is that of Herbert Spencer, who declared in one breath that God is, and in the next that we cannot know what he is. God is the infinite, the unconditioned, beyond all the finite, to which all the finite points as a necessity, but as our knowledge is and can be only of what is finite, God will ever be the unknowable. It is a sufficient reply to this agnosticism

to say that it is self-contradictory. A God who is utterly unknowable would not be the Absolute but its opposite, that is to say, mere nothingness. By its own very meaning, the infinite is that which *includes* the finite, and of which the finite is but a partial and incomplete manifestation.

And such is the position which we have defended in the chapter on Man. There we maintained that the human is in essence one with the divine, and that so far as the human is true to its ideals it is the incarnation or revelation of the divine, in limited forms and up to the measure of human capacity. "If we interrogate religious experience as to the character of the Supreme Spirit," says Lily Dougall, "we find it has always claimed to possess the mutual understanding involved in kinship."

Thus we *can* apprehend and know God, but only to the extent to which he is revealed in nature and man; we can apprehend him only in terms of our human ideals. *Our* Deity on the other hand is never merely the man-God or the God-man; he is that, plus all those ranges and heights of divine being which rise beyond our present human experience and imagination. The worship of intelligent people is paid not only to the immanent Deity but to the transcendent Deity, not only to a God revealed, but to a God still but partially revealed. It is the little child's trust in and love of a father whom assuredly it

knows, but who at the same time far transcends its knowledge.

No religion can claim to have unveiled the whole glory of Deity or to have plucked the whole heart out of his mystery. Above that splendour and beauty which we see and love, rolls the darkness which tells us that we are blinded with excess of light, veiling ranges of Divinity which it hath not yet entered into the heart of man to conceive. If the soul of man is such that it is rightly jealous of giving its worship except to God alone, then the Unitarian is justified in that spiritual sensitiveness which makes him recoil from worshipping Christ, for though God can be seen incarnated in Christ, Christ cannot be equated with the infinite transcendent fullness of God.[1] The worship of Christ is still the worship of the creature, and there is no reason why, if admitted, it should not be extended to the saints and other men of a surpassing moral and spiritual genius, like a Buddha or a Socrates, or some other yet to be. That would be an expansion repellent to the orthodox Christian merely because he has not been brought up in it, and his mind is not adapted to it. The inner nature of the Buddhist would no doubt receive a similar jar if he were asked to worship Christ, or one of the Christian Saints or " Mary the Mother of God."

[1] This is the common and obvious mistake of the Anglican Modernists.

(4.) *The Fatherhood of God.*

Perfectly concordant with this vital recognition of the eternal transcendence of Deity, is our teaching that so far as the idea of Deity has any clear and definite content at all, this will be derived from human experience and the ideals to which it has given birth. God will be to us perfect Beauty, Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, and Love. He will be that which it is the chief glory of Christ, so to have apprehended and proclaimed that it has become the permanent possession of the religious consciousness of humanity—" Our Father." So simple, natural, intensely human, as the relationship thereby indicated is, and the attributes of God thereby symbolized are, there is no other language so adequate or so pregnant. That word stands for all that our race has groped after and sought for, all that religion means. In that conception the soul has found rest. It interprets all life and history and gathers into itself travail, discipline, illumination, progress, consolation, peace. It speaks where speech is inevitable, it is silent where silence is wise.

The mind will, of course, persistently explore the secrets of the divine order, and try to reach such definition of the ultimately indefinable, such clearness in the everlasting mysterious, as it can; but when the intellect falls back baffled and the heart sinks down overwhelmed religion will continue to find the sufficient sources of light and

love and trust in the Fatherhood of God, and turn to Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. All our efforts to grow in the knowledge of God will start from this, and come back to it. It takes in all the rest, the Beauty, the Goodness, the Justice, the Love, and meets our profoundest need. It is rest, but also inspiration; it is contentment, but also hope; it is confidence, and it is faith; it gives us peace at the heart of that ceaseless agitation without which there is stagnation, but no progress; it is at once a quiet consummation, and an endless battle cry, a glory and a dream. If men will only think and live and labour in the light of it, their activity will inevitably bring the redemption of the world, and its uplifting to that divine status which is its inheritance and its right, but which can only be maintained by a constant recollection of this status and a continual determination to realize it in the order of one's own life and in that of a world society.

In any case let it be admitted that in the Fatherhood of God we have all that need be regarded as essential to true religious life and fellowship, while it beautifully expresses the central article of Christ's creed, that of the filial kinship and communion of man with God in origin and in destiny too, if only we do not use our freedom to destroy our sonship.

"God is Love," said St. John, and no metaphysical definition in any creed is either so wonderful or so vital as that. "Love, which is God himself," said St. Francis, and when we have said that, we have said the highest about God of which we are capable. Nothing else matters. As William Law once wrote to the young Wesley, "Religion is the most plain and simple thing in the world. . . . We love him because he first loved us." "The love of God," wrote Dr. Channing, "is the love of goodness; it is nothing less than this, and it can be nothing more," a "Goodness which is for ever fulfilling itself in the world," as Hegel finely put it.

The question of the personality of God is much discussed in philosophy these days. Carlyle's prophetic instinct was perhaps right when he exclaimed, "Personal, impersonal, who can speak of these things in the Eternal Being?" God may be super-personal—in Prof. Bergson's phrase a super-consciousness—as he is supernatural, because he transcends the finite and the human. The thing to remember is that if so, he must not be practically interpreted as less than personal. Godhead includes personality. It is personal in its relation to man, and so far as it can at present be revealed to man. As religion unveils the reality of the Divine and gives access to it, it is the personal aspect which comes to view, and is brought into active relationship with us. Practically, Mr. Clutton Brock is right in saying "As the most intense life we know is more person-

al than all other life, so God is more personal than we are because more intense than we are ourselves."

While we gladly acknowledge our immeasurable debt to the supreme spiritual illumination of Jesus, the truth demands recognition that the idea of the divine Fatherhood is one which sprang up very early and widely, though it has generally withered very quickly, on the common religious soil of human nature. Many a savage tribe and semi-civilized nation has worshipped the All-Father and received a far-off hint of the oneness of the ultimate source of all things. In Israel notably, under the discipline of history and the guidance of what we can only call religious genius or the special gift of God, and through the unquenchable martyr-witness of the great prophets of the nation, the conception of the righteousness, grace, mercy, providence, and love of God, yearning over his people as a father over his children, became an accepted and assured conviction. But with Christ the idea receives a loftier and richer content and a wider significance and applicability; simultaneously with its elevation and expansion, there comes that note of simple directness and immediacy in the relationship between man and God which was absent from official Judaism, though by no means inaudible in psalmist and prophet. Christ takes up that note, and fills the world with its deathless music. Priesthoods,

rites, sacraments, and creeds, may have their place and their function, but it is not to stand between the soul and its God, between men and their heavenly Father, nor to "mediate" between them.

The spirit of God in us constitutes our sonship to God. Purity, justice, love and sacrifice, are the avenues by which we come near to God, and there is no other approach which is not a blind alley, or a misleading bypath.

(5.) *The Trinity.*

In conclusion, we must refer to the doctrine of the Trinity so prominent in Christianity since the fourth century, when it was elaborated under the influence of Greek thought, and expressed in Greek and Roman terms which Jesus of Nazareth could not have understood, and whose meaning even yet is a subject of learned research. It is of vital importance to realize that there is no substantial evidence that Christ himself believed in a triune Godhead however it be understood. And the same may be said of St. Paul. Indeed, there are few things more unlikely than that any intelligent modern reader of the New Testament, even if we discard the labours of Christian critics on the text, would find the doctrine of the Trinity objectively taught in the Scriptures. It is really a later development of theology, read back into

the New Testament, and ought not to be made of the essence of orthodoxy by any Church which professes to hold its doctrine only on the certain warrant of holy scripture.

The religions of India, Greece, Egypt, and even of less civilized peoples give hints of trinities developed under one motive or another. For example, India has Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, a triple manifestation of the one ultimate Eternal Being; Greece has Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, representing the lordship of the three zones of all creation, heaven, earth and sea, and the underworld. Egypt from another motive, has Osiris, Isis, and Horus, representing in Godhead the constituents of the family unity of father, mother and child.

The Christian Trinity has had quite another derivation, due partly to that process of deification of heroes or profoundly great men in religion, which has parallels everywhere, and in a feebler form is to be seen in the canonizing of saints in certain sections of the Christian Church. Christ like Buddha, in spite of himself, came to be worshipped as a God. Still more slowly, and as a result partly of a rather prosaic and bored literalism of interpretation of language, the Holy Spirit at last emerged as a separate " person " in the Godhead. It seems somewhat amazing that any scholar knowing the various subtle processes working in this development, should regard it as

guaranteeing its own validity. Even to-day in the mind of the believer there is a constant oscillation of thought between the three " persons "; in the vital acts of religious worship and prayer, theology retires into the background, and the distinction of the persons gets lost, their attributes and functions become confounded.

Under the stress of necessity modern Christians have tried in various ways to give a philosophical interpretation and justification to their doctrine of the Trinity. We have little hesitation in characterizing these efforts as futile or irrelevant. To distinguish God, the world, and a relation of energy between them, may or may not be good philosophy, but at all events it is not the Christian Trinity, and is without any real or inward resemblance to it.

The contention that God cannot be a mere unit is right; the Godhead must have a social aspect. But to deduce from that an argument for the eternal pre-existence of Christ, or to find the perfect Society of the Godhead in the rather exiguous number of three persons is in both cases equally arbitrary. We must try to understand that Deity to all eternity has had a universe of worlds to love, and that he never existed merely by, in, and for himself, whatever that may mean, and at some point of time decided to create the universe. That is Deism, and as a theology it is officially dead, though its ghost survives very

actively in some of these quasi-philosophical arguments for the Trinity. Further, if the family represents intensively the most perfectly realized Society which we know, then the Godhead could never be a Society of beings in all respects equal; for such is not the relationship of members of a family, or indeed of any human society. We suggest that there is no reason for supposing the membership of a social Godhead to be on a dead level of equality, and it is against Scripture.

There is one other motive for the doctrine to which we must allude. It is urged that the second person of the Trinity introduces that element of humanity which our poor suffering and sinful souls long for in Deity. Browning has given passionate poetical expression to this need in his "Saul."

> 'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for!
> My flesh that I seek
> In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul it shall be
> A face like my face that receives thee, a man like to me
> Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever! A hand like this hand
> Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand.

The motive that drives us to seek for a face like our face in the Godhead, for the touch of humanity in Deity, is a profound one, ensuring consolation and encouragement amid our fights and failures.

But in the view of God which we uphold, a God who is not the far away Being drawing near only once in Christ, but a God who lives in, shares in, the lives of all his creatures, taking their experiences into his own heart, in that view there is a far richer and fuller provision for the eternal humanity of God, than in the orthodox doctrine of an incarnation limited to a few years only out of endless ages of widening experience.

(6.) *Modernism and the Trinity.*

The fact is that Christianity has never yet shaken off the belief that this earth of ours is the centre of all things. In this belief it was born and reared. Its theology has never given adequate intellectual response to the implications of modern astronomy which has opened out on the mind an infinite expanse of worlds in which ours is only one of many that may be inhabited by beings spiritually more developed than ourselves, and on which essentially the same plan of redemption and religious evolution had presumably to be wrought out. Orthodox Christianity has been utterly lacking in cosmic imagination on the scale demanded by the revelations of science.

If Jesus of Nazareth was the second person of the Trinity, in human flesh appearing, and the Holy Spirit a third, on what principle, rational or spiritual, are we to rule out the probability that

other persons of the Godhead likewise appeared in other worlds for their salvation, and that they are concerned with the divine plan of salvation for those worlds as Christ and the Holy Spirit are with this ?

To say that God has been pleased to reveal himself to us in a threefold aspect, assuming for the moment what, strictly, is not the case, is another thing from saying that this threefold aspect exhausts the phases of his infinite being. The former might be based on experience, the latter can only be based on dogma, presumption, or prejudice. The number three has become a fetish; personally I can see nothing in it of religious worth.

Prof. Adeney has said: " We do not know that there is only a threefoldness in the being of God. He has been pleased to reveal himself to us in this threefold way [*sic*]. What more there may be in the infinite mystery of his nature, we cannot tell. Awed and abashed before the mystery we can only confess our littleness and our ignorance. Historical revelation has brought us as far as perceiving a certain threefoldness, but for anything we know there may be a myriad-foldness and an infinite wealth of being entirely beyond our comprehension." Let it also be noted that Prof. Adeney in common with other Christian scholars like the Dean of Carlisle does *not* understand by the Trinity a Godhead made up of three

" persons " in the sense of self-conscious individuals. He observes that Christ and the apostles used no such expression, and that perhaps it would be well if we discarded the word " person " altogether when speaking of the Trinity, for when used of the Trinity it did not have the modern sense at all. " We must fall back," he says, " on mystery; there are distinctions, but they are ineffable distinctions." " It cannot be too emphatically asserted," writes the Dean of Carlisle, Dr. Rashdall, "that when traditionalists speak of the three ' Persons ' of the Trinity as three minds or centres of consciousness, and frankly deny that God is One Mind, it is they who are heretics from the standpoint of Augustinian and scholastic orthodoxy. To St. Thomas Aquinas, as to the ordinary modern philosopher, their position would have been tritheism pure and simple." Compare Prof. Bethune-Baker's paper at the Girton Conference. The Anglican Modernists believe in God, *One Person* in three functions or activities, power, love, purpose. So far, this is sheer Unitarianism, and we are glad to have St. Augustine and Aquinas quoted for our position.

We conclude this study with the remark that so far as their doctrine of God is concerned some modern so-called Trinitarians are indistinguishable from Unitarians, and it is perhaps less for his opinions than for the offence of the name that the modern Unitarian is exiled from the comity of the

Churches and persecuted with official ostracism by Anglican and Free Churches alike, which are ruled by policy rather than by principle, and all for the sake of the weaker brethren.

The Churches must not despise a unity which is deeper than that of theology and which arises out of a like experience of the Divine in the acts of the devotional life. One touch of genuine religious feeling makes us all kin. And it is experience which is reality. The religion which runs only to the critical discussion of religious ideas is mere unlighted oil and wick. "What will it avail thee to be engaged in profound reasonings concerning the Trinity if thy life be displeasing to the Trinity?" wrote Thomas à Kempis.

Religion is a vital relation of love, obedience, self-surrender to God, not any theory about God. The purpose of life is not to prove God, but to find him and enjoy him for ever. There is a world of difference between a correct definition of Beauty or of Music, and the felt magic of beautiful things or the leap and dance of musical concords through the soul. The glory of the Lord must rise upon us and all our being must see it and feel it together, or religion is but a tale that is told.

Chapter V

REVELATION

1. Meaning. 2. Subject-matter. 3. Its form given by historical processes. 4. Christian revelation as a "focus." 5. Revelation personal rather than intellectual. 6. Is it complete? 7. Authority. 8. Miracles. 9. Problem of evil. 10. The universality of revelation.

MEN are never for long without the conviction that the world of which we form a part has a meaning. "Life," said Epictetus, "is a campaign, with a general to be obeyed, if you can by some instinct divine what he is signalling." This meaning of the universe taken as a whole is something over and above the significance we attach to the different parts and aspects of it. These serve our purposes, interest our minds, satisfy us with their beauty, stimulate our effort. The view we take of any one of them must be a partial view, an abstraction, in so far as we take them singly. But there is also an import, a significance, for the soul in man, that is gathered from the sum of these appearances, when all Being and Becoming, all life and experience are viewed in their totality. It is with this that Religion is con-

cerned. Whenever something of this world-meaning is perceived, there is *religious intuition or experience.*

(1.) *Meaning.*

Revelation is *the religious experience of the race.*

It may be asked at the outset " Why should the idea of Revelation be retained in an account of modern religion ? The word suggests a kind of information given ready made from an outside source. It seems out of harmony with the thought of knowledge gained by man's own growing experience, by the development of a truth that is immanent in human nature." The answer is that Revelation ideas have never quite left out of account the human factors in the acquisition of religious knowledge. And, on the other hand, we do need to retain the idea that this knowledge is *given.* It is true that it is won by man himself. In this respect it is like the winning of any other knowledge—geography or chemistry. But as Prof. Wendt has written[1], this inward enlightenment has always been regarded by men as " an act of heavenly grace, a self-manifestation of God to a man, a Revelation." The reason is that while any other kind of knowledge is knowledge of some particular part or aspect of the world, to which man is related as a part to a part, this

[1] *The Idea and Reality of Revelation,* p. 23.

knowledge is of something to which he is related as a part to a whole—it is an experience of the all-encompassing life which includes man as well as the objects of his knowledge. This very experience is, therefore, the work of that all-encompassing life within him, as well as the result of the man's own striving. Thus, while in one sense all that he knows is given to him, religious knowledge is " given " in a special sense, for it is the coming into consciousness of that which is the deepest truth alike of his own soul and of all things.

What we have to do, then, is to broaden and universalize the idea of Revelation, which contains elements too precious to be lost.

(2.) *Subject-matter.*

The *subject-matter of Revelation* varies much, because different aspects of world-meaning impress themselves upon different minds. At one time it may be the *dependence* of the totality of things upon God as their abiding Source or Ground. At another time, it may be the *purposiveness* and *order* in things that point to God as the designing Thought of the world. At another, it may be the suggestion that God is the Principle of all Life and Beauty.

Another aspect of the totality gives rise to the thought of God as the Father of spirits, the source of moral obligation and spiritual vision. Feeling

these things men pass through the deep waters of self-knowledge, remorse for moral failure, conversion, the heroisms of saintly conflict and triumph.

Again, the experience may be the Mystical Vision of the whole, when we contemplate the world not as many—material, moral, æsthetic—but as fundamentally One and continuous with our own spiritual life.

But whatever may be the variations of emphasis, in this or that spiritual experience, it is the unhesitating affirmation of the religious consciousness of the race that God does thus give a revelation of himself. It is not a dim, fragmentary makeshift, truth seen through a distorting medium, but the ultimate reality, the deepest fact of existence.

(3.) *Its form given by historical processes.*

It is obvious, however, that the effort to attain this knowledge has very varying degrees of success. Religious intuition is not possessed with the same clearness and force by all men. The individual seeker is always led to desire a larger gathering ground of facts and valuations than he can compass in his limited experience. The greatest masters of the spiritual life have stood in conscious relation to a religious past, which they used as a point of departure for their own further revelation.

There is a sense in which all religion is "mediated." It never comes to us "unclothed upon," as an abstraction, or *in vacuo*. Religious experience, however individual, can never shake off its *social* implications. Browning's remark is true of spiritual, as well as of artistic mediation:—

> We're made so that we love,
> First when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see.
> God uses us to help each other so,
> Lending our minds out.

Jesus, the greatest of all revealers, is the most striking instance of this. We are never left in doubt as to his obligations to the older religion. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil it, practised its ritual, and taught his followers to continue, while they enlarged, its deeper traditions.

It is this fact of the continuity and affiliation of the whole history of religion throughout, that we seek to emphasize when we speak of Revelation as the Religious Experience of the Race. We have to "unify our world," and we are less than ever disposed to cut the work of Jesus Christ loose from the real world of human conditions.

(4.) *Christian revelation as a "focus."*

"Unification" does suggest, however, that it should be possible to find among the world's tendencies and influences some outstanding

line of illumination, some dominating centre of spiritual force, that draws to itself all Man's ideal strivings, fuses them into one organic whole, and breathes them forth again into the world as the utterance of one holy spirit. Is there such a line, centre and nucleus ?

In any attempt we make to answer this question, there is one consideration that can render us great assistance. If any such powerful consolidation and gathering focus of the world's religious intuitions has existed, it must have been this that has given us our ideal of what a revelation ought to be. The demands that our hearts and minds make in respect to a revelation must have been created in the first instance by the Revelation that has actually taken place. The supply has created the demand. The Revelation that has been given has put the standard so high, that nevermore will humanity be satisfied with anything of less value. If our quest is for a revelation of a God who shall be equal to our furthest need of Salvation from Sin, who will bear our deepest spiritual woe and lead us out of the awful moral despair that besets and bewilders any radical and sincere examination of our human situation, a God who will conquer the world's evil, and yet conquer it through self-sacrificing love—then it must be that this very envisagement of the problem is itself a revelation, and the question is: Where did we get it ?

The direct suggestion arising from the question thus put, is that the Christian revelation meets the case—not, of course, as an *exclusive* revelation standing off in contrast against others, but as an *inclusive* revelation, standing in a central position among all others, as their focus and interpretation, and common point of realization. " All the light of sacred story " (and not of Judea only, but of Greece and India and every age and nation) gathers into natural relation to the central and interpreting personality of Jesus, and is reflected again from it with intensified meaning—for it is a law of human things that the higher makes clear what in the lower is only inchoate and tentative. " To every heart he will its own dream be."

Sometimes it is claimed that the " Eternal Christ " is present in all human history from the beginning, and that this presence (the Logos-Christ), pre-existent and post-existent in ages and nations that have never heard his name, is the explanation of all the good and truth that have been attained by them. This is an unnecessary speculation. All the facts are accounted for if we realize that it is the grand function of the Highest to unify and interpret the rest.

(5.) *Revelation personal rather than intellectual.*

Especially has Jesus this combining and representative power, because his revelation does not

consist chiefly in ideas. It is carried up into a higher region than any mere teaching. It is manifested in a Person, embodied in a living human experience, in a Mind and Will and a Life, to come into contact with which is to be brought into the atmosphere of Holiness and the love of God. To some extent it is left to us to formulate, to the best of our powers, the ideas and doctrines that can most adequately define the spiritual impressions made upon us by the force of Christ's spirit. This is a necessary work, and upon certain broad lines it is not difficult to reach a commonly agreed statement of the truths that were present to the consciousness of Jesus—God, righteousness, the law of love and forgiveness, salvation from sin through the Divine Mercy, the life of the soul with God through faith and prayer and humble goodness, the immortal life of souls that cannot die because the Father will never relinquish his care for them. But valuable as such an understanding of these truths is for religion, it is vastly more important that men should know Jesus Christ himself, and be united to him in one spirit. His revelation is not truly accomplished (or given) until this takes place as an actual experience in every soul. Then what we have called the revelation to each individual is unified with the revelation of " God in Christ," and in the highest sense known to man God is " revealed."

(6.) *Is it complete ?*

Is the revelation, which is thus consummated in Jesus, a complete revelation ? In one sense man must be for ever learning. But all that *we* can conceive to be desirable is found in God's revelation of himself in the world's totality, as interpreted in Jesus Christ, because *that very conception of what is desirable has been moulded for us* by the Christian spirit. The reason why we demand from a revelation that it shall show us God *as the Holiest who is also the most Loving*, is that this is the God whom Jesus reveals. The reason why the goodness we ask to have exhibited to us is no mere sectarian, or ecclesiastical, or national, or caste goodness, but one that breathes of universal humanity, is that Jesus Christ has shown us such a goodness. The reason why we cannot be satisfied with any mere idea or theory for our revelation, but must have a living Fact, is that Jesus Christ is not only the Word, but is also the Act of God. And so for us *salvation* must be through *sacrifice*, and *righteousness* is grounded in interior living *faith*, and the earthly existence is seen in the light of *Eternal Life*—all because the world has learned to make these claims in the school of Christ. As Prof. Wendt has weightily formulated it, " We must look upon the total working of God in the world, the whole natural world and its regular development, the whole spiritual and moral life in mass, as the great and universal

revelation in which God makes himself known. . . . But to this great complex there belongs also the historical fact of Jesus Christ's appearance in the world, the fact that there has been a person anointed with the fullness of the divine spirit. This is not one fact among many. It is the most important of all, standing in direct relation to the saving purpose of God."[1]

(7.) *Authority.*

This is also the real answer to the question of Authority. Authority in religion cannot mean a right to command, such as a king or a military commander exercises. Neither can it mean the issue of scientifically stated information about the nature of the world, seen or unseen, in binding formulas, such as those with which the pretensions of ecclesiastical councils have made us familiar. Spiritual authority must be spiritual in the power it wields. Christ commands a realm of human lives besides which the grandiose sway of the most powerful soldier or emperor seems but a "bubble reputation," and it is because he is meek and lowly of heart, and in him men find rest to their souls.

(8.) *Miracles.*

For this reason also it is incongruous to seek a warrant or support for spiritual authority in

[1] *The Idea and Reality of Revelation*, pp. 14 and 36.

miracles. Jesus himself deprecated the "seeking after a sign," which is always associated with a low and unworthy conception of spiritual realities. There is now a growing disinclination on the part of the defenders of the old theology to rest their case upon miracles. Instead of miracles carrying the Faith, the Faith has to carry the miracles. To gain credence for them is the most burdensome task the Faith has to accomplish. It is not only that the Christian miracle stories are found to have parallels in all the historical religions and are seen to depend on weak and uncertain testimony. It is the conception of the miraculous itself that is seen to be unreal. If we say that a miracle is an intervention of God that violates natural law, we are trying to hold in the mind two ideas which contradict one another:—(1) that the whole of life and being, seen and unseen, is the manifestation of the power of God; and (2) that a certain portion of the whole is *not* the manifestation of the power of God but must be relegated to "mere" nature, in contradistinction from certain other portions which really *are* the manifestations of his power, and are therefore called supernatural and miraculous. These other portions are not supposed to belong to our universe. They stand out of all relation to it, disconnected and defying all explication, not only by the light of present knowledge, but of any knowledge that can ever be won in the future. "Nature" in that case is a

machine-like world that works automatically and "runs itself," and upon that world there supervenes from time to time the direct action of God. Strangely enough this belief in an automatic world of stiff mechanical law is shared by believers in miracle with the naturalism and materialism of a former time which modern science has now discarded.[1] If a marvellous event happens which is unprecedented, the mind of man is prone to say "This is the finger of God and *not* part of his ordinary operation." The error arises not from attributing it to God, but from thinking of him as standing off in isolation from that world which is really the mode of his manifestation to us. It is only a confusion, when, having conceived of God as revealed, we go on to speculate about what he must be in so far as he is not revealed.

The theory of "breaches of natural law" is nowadays mostly abandoned in favour of another—the theory that miracles are examples of "unknown law." They could have happened along the ordinary lines of causation and without any breach in the order of nature, and they only appeared extraordinary at the time because of men's ignorance of the possibilities of the physical universe. This way of putting the matter, at first sight so attractive to an apologist in difficulties, is, however, useless for the apologist's

[1]See Rudolf Otto's *Naturalism and Religion.*

purpose, for while it seems to make marvels credible, the result is only obtained by throwing away what was distinctive in the idea of miracle. If the marvellous event is not contrary to nature and law, it cannot be a proof of the supernatural. To make iron swim, or to heal epilepsy, or even to raise the dead, by means of unusual powers, would not, in that case, prove any particular connexion between the operator and God. They would only prove an immense extension of ordinary powers, which would be much less wonderful than things that God does every day and hour. We do not say that God *cannot* raise the dead, for he does something every day that is more wonderful than giving life to those who have lived before—he gives life to those who have never lived before. When it is asked "Could not God work a miracle if he wished?" we reply that the question is a form of words to which no meaning can be given, for the miraculous is a conception to which no meaning can be given. As Emerson said, it is monster. We cannot rest the case for so precious a reality as Revelation on so precarious a basis. Revelation must be a real experience drawn from a real world.

(9.) *Problem of Evil.*

One grave difficulty remains which must not be shirked. There are many facts of nature and human history that seem to deduct seriously from

the value of the Revelation—facts of disorder, misdirection, cruelty, pain, failure and sin. This is the problem of Evil. The burden of the world's evil may be thought to outweigh its good, and in any case it weighs heavily upon faith. Relief from these difficulties can only be attained if we are able to give our assent to such positions as the following:—

(1) We ought to look for the meaning, not only to the processes of evolution, but to the End; not to the course of events in which the evils appear, so much as to the Outcome. What we see is not a world where good and evil exist simply side by side. Good conquers and removes evil. Good is essentially that which gathers to itself the life-ward, unifying, preservative forces, whereas evil is disruptive and self-defeating.

(2) The End—the making of spirits finely touched to fine issues—is worth the price that is paid in the discipline of pain and sorrow and struggle.

(3) The method by which the End is attained is the vicarious bearing and sharing of the world's burden of pain and loss. We are members one of another. The redemption from the world's total evil is borne, not necessarily by those who have caused it, but in some measure by all, and when this burden is willingly accepted it becomes a great spiritual achievement—as we see in Christ's victory of the cross.

(4) All existence is fundamentally spiritual. Therefore even what are called *natural* evils (the sufferings that are caused by ignorance or weakness, and are not directly due to moral fault on the part of the sufferers) have their ultimate root in some deep malady of the natural world, which is akin, in some way we cannot understand, to spiritual and moral weakness as we know it in human nature. This cannot be argued here, but the great religions have usually allowed the truth in such conceptions, and it is certain that the problem is immensely relieved, and at the same time the horizon of hope giving a way out of the trouble is indefinitely enlarged, when we are able to attribute the world's evil to such an origin. If the whole creation groaneth and travaileth from such a cause, then we are pointed to a way of redemption.

(5) The rejection of Revelation on the ground that an Infinite Good would have been able entirely to exclude evil *in any case*, leaves out of sight the condition that the objector unconsciously but implicitly makes all the time, namely, that there shall be a finite world as well as an Infinite. If there is to be a finite world, with spirits that have limitations, then the choice must be left to them of going right or going wrong—we cannot draw a blank cheque upon Infinity and say that in a world of unbounded possibilities there must have been ways of escape from such

a limited field of existence. And there is no avoiding the condition that no spirit can freely choose the good unless he is free to choose the ill.

To many minds, however, the existence of evil will always seem a problem too vast and complex to be solved by any general considerations, and they will continue to regard it, as Browning did in *La Saisiaz* and other poems, as a matter that must strike every personal life at a special and individual angle.

> Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe.

(10.) *The universality of revelation.*

And to this extent all others will agree with them, that, in the last resort, the revelation of life's meaning is one that must come home to each individual soul and must be shaped by each soul's effort and capability. In that way the revelation "grows from more to more." Our modern view insists on the *universality* of revelation—that the light of God is given direct to every man—not first of all handed by God to certain privileged intermediaries and then passed on to the rest of us. It is God himself—nothing less—who comes to us in Nature, in Conscience, in human intercourse, in Jesus. Every time we receive any portion of "the one Spirit's plastic stress," the revelation is given anew, and in a new form. For

in the last resort revelation is given from Spirit to spirit. It is only in this sense that we can understand St. Paul's interpretation of Jesus. So far from Jesus being to him the second person in a Trinity who appeared in the flesh to reveal his peculiar metaphysical dignity and power, he said that if he had known Christ after the flesh he now knew him so no more. "Christ" was to him a spiritual experience. No doubt he strains every power of language to make clear the rarity and exceeding elevation of that experience. But it ought never to have been in doubt that his interpretation of Jesus was of this kind. He could not have countenanced the supposition that the revelation of the Father was one thing and the revelation "in Christ" another, different in nature. And we translate this into modern language when we say that all men, without distinction, are Sons of the one Father, and to no human spirit will the vision be denied.

Chapter VI

JESUS

1. Importance of Subject. 2. The Unitarian's attitude. 3. The divinity of Jesus in his humanity and goodness. 4. The implications of discipleship. 5. Jesus the exemplar not the object of religious devotion. 6. The witness of the New Testament: influence of Paul. 7. Comparative religion and mythology. 8. Conclusion.

(1.) *Importance of subject.*

THERE are three considerations which lend particular significance to the subject of this essay at this time: (1) there is probably more general misunderstanding and ignorance in regard to Unitarian teaching in this matter than on any other point; (2) it is a matter on which Unitarians differ very definitely from the commonly professed creed of Christianity; (3) the "Modern Churchmen" in their Conference at Cambridge in 1921 have expressed a prevailing view in somewhat conservative and ambiguous language which, in spite of disclaimers, is essentially in agreement with the Unitarian faith.

(2.) *The Unitarian attitude.*

It must be understood, however, at the outset that in regard to the person and the work of Jesus there is no official or unofficial Unitarian dogma that must be accepted by all who profess and call themselves Unitarians. It is of the very essence of Unitarianism that creeds are necessarily provisional and inadequate statements of truth, and that they require constant restatement. It is an ignorant travesty of Unitarianism to imagine that it has no creeds. Whoever has a faith must express it in a creed. Unitarianism is peculiar only in that it declines final and unalterable creeds. Moreover its fellowship is not based on credal agreement, but on spiritual and intellectual sympathy and liberty. As Unitarians we assert the reasonableness, as we achieve the practice, of religious fellowship, co-operation and common worship without demanding or even expecting precise intellectual agreement. There is, nevertheless, a generally prevailing and characteristic attitude of Unitarians to Jesus and his work which we share in common, but which we should all decline to embody in a creed by which to limit or define our membership.

(3.) *The divinity of Jesus in his humanity and goodness.*

It has not infrequently been said to me by new-

comers amongst us—drawn from all sections of the Christian Church as well as from outside—that one of the things that drew them to our fellowship was the fact that amongst us they learned more about Jesus as a real teacher, influence, and divinely potent personality, than they had done elsewhere.[1] That testimony in itself should be sufficient, if it were generally known, to contradict the absurd and ignorant idea that we Unitarians are people "who don't believe in Jesus" or who "deny the divinity of Jesus." But it is also commonly said of us: "Oh, they may believe that Jesus lived, but they think of him merely as a good man, one among many others." Now words which in themselves are not false can often express what is utterly misleading by reason of their emphasis and the manner in which they are spoken. When Jesus himself rebuked the ruler who addressed him as "Good Master," telling him that one alone is good, namely, God, it is surprising that the belief in Jesus as a good man should be lightly spoken of by anyone. Goodness is not so cheap that we can afford to

[1] This kind of thing has been said to a number of Unitarian ministers by converts from other denominations. I quote the following from a letter written to me by the Editor of this volume: "This has also been said to me. I doubted the sincerity of the remark until a friend who had been an orthodox believer told me that we spoke of the parables and teachings of Jesus, while orthodox preachers kept hammering away at old catch-texts."

speak of it in terms like "merely"; and a belief founded in fact on the outstanding goodness of Jesus does not deserve to be dismissed as a futile heresy. This is perhaps one of the most striking admissions of the Modern Churchmen in the Girton Conference of 1921. They there impressively asserted their conviction that Jesus was absolutely, completely and fully human, and that his divinity was his perfect humanity. The Rev. H. D. A. Major in his editorial survey of the Conference Papers published in *The Modern Churchman* for September, 1921, sums up the matter in the astonishing sentence—"Perfect humanity is Deity under human conditions." Leaving aside the inexcusable misuse of the word "Deity" which characterizes this, as well as other utterances of the Modern Churchmen, we get here the unqualified assertion of the essential Unitarian faith—that perfect human goodness is divine. In other words, the good man is a revelation of God: an incarnation of the divine spirit. To call him God under human conditions is a confusion of thought only possible to those who cannot escape from the peculiar dualism of historic Christian theology. God is not absent from any part of the universe, and consequently there is divinity everywhere; God *is* not the part or fragment but the whole substance of Goodness, Truth and Beauty. Jesus is not God; God is not Jesus; but Jesus is divine, and the glory of the light of the

knowledge of God shines in the face of Jesus. If you can find a man good without qualification, and learn from him the secret of goodness, you will not be far from God, who alone is the source and substance of the Good. We believe that Jesus was a good man—without that treacherously misleading "merely," and that he was good because the spirit of God dwelt abundantly in him. We hail him as revealer and prophet of God because he was good, and because he taught in language of unsurpassed simplicity, and in a life of unsurpassed sincerity and consistency, the way of goodness.

(4.) *The implications of discipleship.*

We hold that discipleship to Jesus does not primarily demand, much less consist in, the awarding to him of titles of honour. The highest honour a man can attain to is the honour of goodness—to become in actuality what he is potentially, a son of God by reason of his fidelity to the spirit of God expressed in love. Discipleship means assimilating the spirit, and applying the principles of the teaching;[1] not the use of modes

[1] The following is from a small booklet written by myself for the guidance and instruction of my Church Membership Classes: "Unitarians hold various opinions as to Jesus, but they are commonly agreed in placing emphasis on the importance of his teaching. They maintain that Christianity should be the religion of Jesus—the religion which he taught

of address which may be emotionally exciting or satisfying, while they are not necessarily expressive of moral and spiritual homage at all. Jesus in his lifetime disliked this sort of thing intensely, if we may judge from his words. I have already referred to his disinclination to be called even "Good Master." But he also said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."[1] "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the

and lived—and not a religion about 'Christ,' making him a mystical mediator between God and the soul. They reverence him as a great prophet and seer, a fearless religious reformer, and a wonderful revealer of the truth concerning man's relation to God and his fellow men. They desire to be known as disciples of Jesus, not as worshippers of Christ." Unitarians understand the essence of the teaching of Jesus to be that twofold application of the principle of love which the Master himself declared to be the substance of Law and Prophecy: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. From these twin commandments Jesus explicitly develops (1) the Fatherhood of God—not limited to a race, or a colour, but absolutely universal; (2) the Brotherhood of Man—similarly universal; (3) the supreme value of the human personality; (4) the necessity of conscious co-operation and unlimited fellowship in a sect transcending, and all uniting society called "The Kingdom of God" for the true development and perfection of human personality. The real application of these principles, pervaded by the supreme principle of Love, is the only hope for the salvation of the world.

[1] Matthew 7^{21}.

things which I say ? "[1] "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."[2] We believe that the essence of Jesus' greatness as the revealer and prophet of God was the very fact that he claimed the loyalty of men and won their love not for himself primarily, but for God.[3] We most honour Jesus when we devote ourselves in his spirit to the worship of God and the service of man.

The test of discipleship which we as Unitarians and Religious Liberals demand therefore is not outward, but inward. It is quite an easy matter to call Jesus Lord, and Christ, and God, and yet to stand idly by while the brothers of Jesus are nailed to their crosses of persecution and injustice. He who has the love of God and the love of man in his heart, and manifests his love in life is a true disciple of Jesus, though he may never bow at the name, nor accept any of the officially sanctioned theories concerning the relation of Jesus to God. These theories are nothing but draperies and

[1] Luke 6^{46}.

[2] John 14^{21}.

[3] Once again the Modern Churchmen are in agreement with us. "Jesus did not claim Divinity for himself" are the words of the Very Rev. Hastings Rashdall. Even more specifically the Rev. R. G. Parsons says "Jesus lived and died not in order to prove himself both human and divine, but in order to bear witness to the truth, and to bring in the kingdom; not to glorify himself, but to glorify the Father." See *The Modern Churchman*, September, 1921.

ornaments, which we must accept, or reject, or modify as the canons of reason and cultivated good taste determine for us. Some may find in the elaborate draperies of the Athanasian Creed, or in the gorgeous ornaments of Roman Catholic ritual, an aid to discipleship. If so, let them use it—but let them beware lest it become a substitute instead of a symbol for the reality of discipleship. We do not find it helpful. For us there are already enough mysteries in life and religion—mysteries of God, and not of human art. We find it a hindrance, not a help, to superinduce upon God's mysteries our own verbal or material mysteries of unintelligibility. "A man's life, of any worth is a continual allegory, and very few eyes can see the mystery of his life."[1]

The profound *human* mystery of Jesus, the Son of Man, calling over the centuries to his brothers and sisters to tread with him the way of life: drawing them by his influence, appealing to them in his teaching to enter into the same filial relation with God that he had realized—that for us is enough. It is not the way we talk about this great fact of Christian experience, but the measure in which we respond to the summons and accept the challenge, that represents our fidelity. If we are wanting in our response to the call to the divine life, so eloquently personal in Jesus, no

[1] Keats. Quoted from Robert Bridges, *The Spirit of Man*, p. 128.

amount of words steeped in an ancient piety or authorized by an ancient orthodoxy, will make good the defect. If we are strenuously and faithfully trying to respond, the ways in which we interpret our experience and visualize our call are matters which not merely *may* but *must* be left to us individually to express.

(5.) *Jesus the exemplar, not the object of religious devotion.*

The distinction between what is generally regarded as "orthodox" Christianity and Unitarianism was clearly brought out some years ago by the late Principal P. T. Forsyth, when he declared, in effect, that Christianity had nothing to do with the religion *of* Jesus, because it was a religion about Jesus. Jesus, on this view, is God: to be worshipped and adored—and it is not for us to attempt to pry into the mystery of his relation, as a member of the Trinity, with God the Father.

According to this point of view, and this dictum concerning the person of Jesus, Unitarianism is not Christian, because it is a religion which starts with man and seeks to detect in the highest humanity the revelation of God, and because it claims Jesus as the great exemplar of spiritual religion by virtue of the truth he taught and the man he was. It claims him as a man who worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth,

who loved and served his fellow men, and who thus stands out as the prophet of the eternal, the divine teacher and exemplar of true religion. The religion we seek to cultivate for ourselves, and to proclaim in its redeeming power, is not a mystery cult about Jesus, but the religion of Jesus, in the vital faith and experience of which he lived and died.

(6.) *The witness of the New Testament: influence of Paul.*

The common objection to this attitude to Jesus, which proclaims him as the great revealer and teacher of the essential things of religion, the great human captain and divine prophet, is that it contradicts statements made about him by New Testament writers, claims alleged to have been uttered by himself, and the approved theology and tradition of the Christian Churches. It must now suffice if I refer briefly to the New Testament records, and deal with the objection arising therefrom to this interpretation of Jesus in terms of a full and glorious humanity *which is divine.*

Anyone who really wishes to form an intelligent, as well as a purely imaginative, idea of Jesus should equip himself for the task of deciphering the books of the New Testament.[1] Textual and

[1] The literature on this subject is vast. The following books, all published by the Lindsey Press, will, however, put

what is perhaps unfortunately styled "the higher" criticism, have put at the disposal of every one the information which is indispensable to a better appreciation and understanding of what these documents are, and what they tell us, than was possible to the credulity which accepted everything in the Bible as the "*ipsissima verba*" of God himself. The New Testament is a set of documents compiled long after the death of Jesus when already Christians were gathering together into the Church. The oldest documents are not the gospels in the form in which we have them, but some at least of the Pauline epistles. Now Paul never set himself the task of writing the biography of Jesus—or an account of the teaching of Jesus. He seized upon what he heard about the life and teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, and made this the nucleus for the religion, of which he was the ardent and impassioned Apostle, of the heavenly Christ. His imagination had been fired by a vision, into the nature of which it is quite unnecessary here to inquire. He was a man deeply versed in Jewish law, tradition and expectation, and he shared the common hope for

any reader in possession of the necessary information with which to form intelligent judgments: J. Estlin Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels: their Origin and Relations;* S. H. Mellone, *The New Testament and Modern Life;* A. Hall, *Jesus and Christianity in the Twentieth Century;* H. McLachlan, *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Knowledge.*

the coming of the Anointed One of God—Messiah, or Christ. On the basis of what Paul heard from Christians and saw of them, he identified Jesus with this expected Messiah, and began preaching his doctrine of the Christ. Paul's "Christ" or "Christ Jesus" bears a similar relation to Jesus of Nazareth to that subsisting between Socrates, the Athenian philosopher, and the Socrates who was the mouthpiece of Plato's ever-developing philosophy in the dialogues.[1]

[1] Did Jesus himself claim to be "the Christ," or accept the title from his contemporaries? James Martineau's able plea in *The Seat of Authority in Religion* that Jesus did not accept it has never been really refuted. The following is quoted from Book iv. ch. ii. "It is one thing, however, to admit his belief in a reign of truth and righteousness as a promise made 'to the Fathers,' and now approaching its fulfilment; it is quite another to affirm that in his own person he claimed to realize it as its Prince and Head. That this also is universally assumed is not surprising, seeing that the synoptists assure us that it was so, and tell it as if it were an attested fact and not a later inference. Yet they add (what surely is not without significance), 'He strictly charged his disciples and commanded them to tell no man that he was the Christ' (Luke 9^{21}, Matthew 16^{20}). If the disciples had only kept that injunction instead of spending their lives in reversing it, Christendom, I am tempted to think, might have possessed a purer record of genuine revelation, instead of a mixed text of divine truth and false apocalypse. For, the first deforming mask, the first robe of hopeless disguise, under which the real personality of Jesus of Nazareth disappeared from sight, were placed upon him by this very doctrine which was *not* to go forth—that he was the Messiah. It has corrupted the interpretation of the Old Testament, and degraded

The gospels as we have them now show every sign of having been moulded very largely by the Pauline theology. All scholars are agreed that whatever early material lies behind and is partly embodied in the gospels, they are overlaid with the editorial addition and reinterpretation of a later generation. The stories of the life, teaching and death of Jesus which are what we call the four gospels were produced in their existing form under the conviction that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Christ expectation. They are not so much

the sublimest religious literature of the ancient world into a book of magic and a tissue of riddles. It has spoiled the very composition of the New Testament, and, both in its letters and narratives, has made the highest influence ever shed upon humanity subservient to the proof of untenable positions and the establishment of unreal relations. Knowing as we do, that Messiah was but the figure of an Israelitish dream, what matters it to us English Gentiles to-day whether its shadowy features were more or less recalled to mind by acts and words of the Galilean prophet ? Tell us only, we are apt to cry, the things he really said and did: and how far they fitted in with your lost ideal may be left untold, as belonging to *your* life and not to *his*. Yet, however natural this thought may be to us, when we grow impatient of the strange evidence which the demons and the prophets are said to give to his Messiahship, it is hasty and inconsiderate. For, had it not been for this Jewish conception of him, we should probably have had no life of him at all. It is chiefly in this primitive school of disciples, gathered in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, that the interest felt in him was essentially personal, and hung around his image in the past, and watched his steps, and listened for the echoes of his words, to detect under his dis-

histories, as persuasive pamphlets, setting out to prove Jesus was indeed the Christ. Mark begins with the pregnant and challenging assertion: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Fourth Gospel is even more explicitly persuasive. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name."

guise the traces of what he was and was to be. In the larger gospel of Paul . . . the biography of Jesus, the traits of his mind, the story of his ministry, play no part at all. . . . That we have memoirs of Jesus at all we owe to the very theory about him which has so much coloured and distorted them; and we must accept the inevitable human condition, and patiently strip off the disfiguring folds of contemporary thought, and gain what glimpses we can of the pure reality within." But see on this whole question also J. Estlin Carpenter's *First Three Gospels*, especially ch. i. §4; ch. ii. ch. viii. §4. It seems clear that whether Jesus accepted the title Messiah or not, he did not accept it or claim it in the sense in which orthodox Christian tradition has thrust it upon him. He may have solemnly accepted the spiritual call of what was then denominated Messiahship—a call to sacrifice and service and death for the sake of God's kingdom; but he did not claim "Christhood" as a metaphysical entity, the possession of which marked him off as a being separate from man. He remained the Servant, the worshipper as well as the Son of God; because his sonship was not a peculiar privilege or isolated relationship between himself and God, but was the true relationship for all men to God.

(7.) *Comparative religion and mythology.*

The study of comparative religion has brought to our knowledge the fact that this sort of thing is quite usual.[1] The great figures of religion—Zoroaster, Gautama, Mohammed—all underwent at the hands of their disciples and literary exponents, a kind of transfiguration. Miracle, myth and mystery were attached by the pious to the record of their birth, their deeds, their life, their death. We recognize these decorative stories as being the spontaneous tribute of loving hearts to the greatness of their leaders, teachers, saviours. We do not think that Gautama—called Buddha for reasons and by a process significantly analogous to the manner in which Jesus came to be called Christ—was the Eternal God in human form because in the course of time his later disciples thought of him so. . . . We know—all Christian scholars know—how to get behind the luxuriant symbolism of myth and miracle to the essentials of the actual human life, when we are dealing with a non-Christian religion. Unitarianism applies the same standard of scholarship, of reason, and of common sense to the Christian records; and the result is that we find the inspiring and overmastering personality of a great human teacher,

[1] See J. Estlin Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels*, ch. i. §4; ch. ii. §3; ch. iii. §1, section 5, §4, sections 3, 4; ch. iv. §4, section 3, §6, etc.

partly veiled behind, partly expressed through, the wonder and myth elements of the New Testament: a prophet and lover of mankind who preached and lived a religion of absolute sincerity, of intimate personal relation to God, of profound sympathy with man; the great test of which was the test of fruits, and the outstanding character of which was the subordination of forms, traditions and speculations to the weighty matters of the law of love and goodness.

Man does not live by myth and symbol alone, however important a part these things play in his religious beliefs and outlook: he lives also by a penetrating insight into the laws of the good life, by the inspiration and contagion of noble example, and by the fellowship of radiant personality. We declare to the world that herein is the secret of Jesus; this is what he was—not the mystery figure of a ritualism that bows the head at mention of his name—but the virile, clear thinking, deep feeling teacher and seer, at whose words of illuminating insight, and life of divinely eloquent goodness, men feel constrained to arise to try to do the will of the Father. For ever there ring in our ears such words as these: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? . . . Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. . . . If ye love me, keep my command-

ments. . . . He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

(8.) *Conclusion: the "place" of Jesus in the world's religion.*

On these deep, broad principles Unitarians are united; and in our particular differences of interpretation and emphasis we find no barrier to fellowship, but a perpetual stimulus to honest thought. I confess that I find the laborious attempt to determine and define what is called the " place " of Jesus, or any other great prophet of God, altogether unedifying. It is enough if we follow the light where and when we see it, in whose hands soever be the torch. When I am in Switzerland, worshipping God in the splendour of the snowy mountains, it is of no interest to me that, in India or America, there may be snow-clad mountains which are a few hundred feet loftier. If I am in Switzerland, let me breathe in the beauty of its mountain grandeur, and expand my soul in contemplation of these present symbols of the Infinite and Eternal: he who is among the Rocky Mountains or in India can do nothing more, and should do nothing less. We live in an atmosphere and under a civilization whose best characteristics are steeped in the influence of Jesus. We are enlisted by birth, environment, and choice, under his banner. There are other

captains in the one great army of God; but he is ours, and we shall promote the success of the divine campaign for the kingdom of heaven, not by gossiping about the particular features, demeanour, or apparel of the various captains—but by loving and faithfully following our own; for all genuine religions are allies, and not enemies. The prophets of God are many, but God is One; and that under whatever banner India, China, England or Palestine may move forward, they may be led by their accepted captain, courageous, faithful, loving their brothers and honouring their leader, to God, should be the aspiration and the prayer of all who are disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

Chapter VII

ATONEMENT AND SALVATION

1. The Unitarian attitude. 2. The Atonement: its history. 3. The truth in vicarious sacrifice. 4. The Unity of God and redemption. 5. Salvation by character.

(1.) *The Unitarian Attitude.*

THE Unitarian professes a rich, full faith, which takes into consideration not only the peculiar doctrines of the various forms of Christianity, but also the revelations of God to the prophets of non-Christian religions. He endeavours to preserve the good and true in the religious experience of the past, and also to discover the spiritual content of human experience and thought to-day. He is not a mere survival from a past conflict concerning the person or persons of the Godhead, as he is often described. He stands forth to-day, as he did in the past, as pre-eminently an exponent and advocate of a reasoned and hopeful view of the universe and as a vindicator of the ways of God to man. That candid

scholar, Dr. Hastings Rashdall, has given generous expression to a truth, in writing, "Modern Unitarianism was originally quite as much a protest against the traditional doctrine of the Atonement as against the traditional view of the Trinity. The value of these protests must be acknowledged by all who feel how deeply the traditional views have libelled the view of God's character which finds its highest expression in the teaching of Jesus and in a truly Christian doctrine of the incarnation."[1] Its literature proves that its protests against the doctrines of Original Sin, Vicarious Punishment, and Eternal Hell were contemporaneous with its denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that its energies were not dissipated in an academic discussion on the nature of the Deity. It set itself to show with all the force at its disposal that redemption is an eternal and universal process, and not a solitary event in the brief history of our planet. In that endeavour it urged by the way that history finds no place at all for Adam; that sorrow and toil, which were regarded as evils resulting from Adam's transgression, are still the lot of all; that the death of Jesus gains its significance from his life and message; that the efficacy of the sacrifices of a good man is not in his *sufferings*, which are incidental, but in his *efforts*; that the call to be a

[1] The Bampton Lectures, *The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 438, note.

saviour, to fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Jesus comes to every man in his best moments; that the sacrifice of Jesus was obviously not *plenary*; that "the debt of sin cannot be transferred, and the virtue of another can be no compensation for wrongdoing"; that to inflict on the innocent the punishment due to the guilty could not satisfy any justice with which we are acquainted; that however much the sinner may be helped, guilt must be eradicated from his spirit; that it is contrary to the teaching of Jesus and to fact to assert that God cannot forgive men, unless he has first received a satisfaction which men cannot render; *that a finite being cannot commit an infinite sin*, for which according to the theory of the Atonement an infinite expiation is necessary; that the claims of the propitiatory theory of the death of Jesus have not been proven; that the orthodox theory of substitution in its crude form is defamatory of the justice and love of God; and that the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, as commonly understood, "may be in accord with ancient sacrificial rites and heathenish superstition," but is inconsistent with Infinite Moral Perfection.[1]

Unitarianism supported each of these statements with arguments which still remain unre-

[1] See especially, Martineau's Essay on "Scheme of Vicarious Redemption" (1839) in his *Studies of Christianity*, pp. 83f. *Essays and Addresses*, vol. ii. pp. 493f. Drummond's *Studies in Christian Doctrine*, p. 325f.

futed, and which, being reiterated in books and pamphlets, need not be repeated here. It turned to the Scriptures and found that Christianity in its earliest form was in substantial agreement with these contentions. It discovered that the New Testament taught that Jesus died "*on behalf of*" not "*instead of*" us; that the Christian was called to suffer *on behalf of* Christ; that the death of Jesus was due to the bigotry of his persecutors, the fickleness of a mob, and the weakness of a Roman official; that Annas and Caiaphas, Judas, and Pilate were not the chosen instruments by which God wrought the redemption of the world, but misguided men for whose forgiveness the Master prayed with his latest breath; and that man needs reconciling to God, not God to man. It learnt from reason, and the soul's intuitions, as well as from Scripture, that redemption is the joint work of God and man, that the inclination to goodness is first a movement of the Divine Life in the human soul and afterwards a response of the human will; that "the working *in us* is God's part and the working *out* in word, act, thought and character is ours";[1] and that the Apostle Paul summed up the Gospel of Redemption in the words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work for

[1] See John Hamilton Thom's *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*. Fourth edition 1893, vol. i. p. 92.

his good pleasure." It felt anew in this doctrine the message of the love and Fatherhood of God, and bent in reverent affection before the Supreme Being for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. It dwelt with especial tenderness over the parable of the Prodigal Son, saw no trace there of any doctrine of propitiation or any demand of an angry father, and rejoiced in the belief that God welcomes freely and gladly the returning sinner and will never reject the soul that comes home to him with sincere contrition. It urged and still urges men to ponder over this parable, to note how repentance and returning to the waiting Father secures immediate forgiveness of sin, and also how the consequences of wrongdoing still operate, for the prodigal's living was wasted. It found that Jesus never asserted that salvation depends upon the acceptance of any theory concerning the atoning efficacy of his blood, but on the contrary that he taught that the forgiveness of God follows on true repentance, that it can be obtained by acts of love, and is bestowed on those who forgive the trespasses of others against themselves.

Consequently, it announced with confidence that the Divine forgiveness follows upon human repentance, and it proclaimed that the aim should be, not to escape by cowardly means the penal results of transgression, but to secure moral redemption by endeavouring throughout life to

attain unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This was and is the message of the redemption of the individual taught by Unitarianism.

(2.) *The Atonement: its history.*

The doctrine of the atoning efficacy of the death of Jesus with its scheme of vicarious punishment has occupied a central position in Protestant theology, and in consequence it is generally assumed by those who have not studied the history of its development that it has always been an integral part of the Christian message. But it is comparatively modern in origin. That becomes clear to anyone who takes the trouble to read Dean Hastings Rashdall's Bampton Lectures on *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* or Prof. G. B. Stevens's *Christian Doctrine of Salvation.* It is not mentioned in the earliest symbol of the Church known as "The Apostles' Creed," and it is not formulated in either the Nicene or the Athanasian Creed. It has never been made a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. For more than a thousand years, until the appearance of Anselm's *Cur Deus homo,* the theory of the Atonement was that the death of Jesus was a ransom paid to the devil who had gained claims over the souls of men. No one accepts that theory to-day. The interest of the

early Church was in the Incarnation not the Atonement, in the cradle not the cross of Jesus.

In Protestantism the doctrine of the Atonement has been bound up with the belief that man shared not only the consequences of the sin of Adam, but the guilt of his fall, with the discouraging assumption of the *impotence* of man to do any good—an assumption which is contrary to the message of Jesus that we are children of God, and with the unedifying teaching that intellectual belief is more efficacious than moral regeneration. These positions have become hopelessly unstable and indefensible in face of the modern view of the nature of man and the new interpretation of the teaching of Jesus, who certainly never confused faith with intellectual belief as Luther, Calvin, and Protestants generally did.[1]

[1] Socinianism differed widely from Unitarianism on many subjects, but there is sympathy between the views held by Faustus Socinus and Unitarians on the subject of Salvation. He maintained that owing to the supremacy of the Divine will (a Calvinistic dogma) God could, if he chose, pardon any affront to his majesty without demanding satisfaction, and being moved by love toward man, that is what he actually does. If God demand a *penal* satisfaction, he thereby does away with his power to forgive. While the Reformers generally made the exercise of mercy by God optional, Socinus made the exercise of his justice optional. He argued that the transference of guilt and punishment from one being to another is not possible. "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die." Our *debts* may be paid by others, but our *penalties* cannot be borne by another.

(3.) *The truth in the doctrine of Vicarious Sacrifice.*

The natural tendency of the Unitarian, convinced of the love and justice of God, is to shrink from most doctrines of substitutionary or vicarious sacrifice. But he is faced with the fact that they are the basis of early forms of worship. Many peoples have accepted the belief that God will forgive, if the penitent sinner makes a surrender of what is dearest to him. Consequently altars have been erected all over the world, on some of which human beings have been sacrificed. We condemn the worship of Moloch, but it is well to ponder on the suffering which a man like the king of Moab underwent, when he offered up his eldest son on the wall of the city (2 Kings 3^{27}). It was only a man in desperate straits who would take such a step, and it evidently spread terror among his enemies, the Israelites. Again, the appeal of the orthodox doctrine of vicarious sacrifice has undoubtedly been due to the interpretation that God gave his best-beloved son out of love for sinful humanity. But the oft-quoted text, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life," spoken, as it was, at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, could not possibly refer to his death on the cross. The love shown was in sending the Son into the world (John 3^{17}). Further, it is frequently pointed out that nations have been saved

through the heroic self-surrender of leaders or volunteers from the rank and file, and that often individuals have been redeemed by the devotion of noble men and women. There is evidently a truth underlying this idea. Every belief which has fostered the faith of man throughout centuries, we may rest assured, contains a truth, though it may be mingled with much that is erroneous. We must extract the precious metal from the ore and not cast it aside.

What truth, then, can we find in this theory of substitution? Voluntary sacrifice may be regarded in two ways. We may be impressed by the suffering involved or by the love displayed, by the pain cheerfully endured or by the effort exerted on behalf of another. Orthodox Christianity has stressed the former, and not sufficiently emphasized the latter. The question we have to ask is, "Wherein lies the redeeming power of sacrifice?" Is it in the suffering endured? When the hero rushes forward through shot and shell, regardless of the danger, does he save his comrade by the wound he receives or by the brave effort he makes? The wound is surely incidental. It contributes nothing, rather it hinders him in his endeavour and may prevent his achieving his object. The power that saves is the love which expresses itself in effort. That is the truth which underlies vicarious sacrifice.

Vicarious sacrifice is inherent in the very

nature of society, owing to its organic structure. "Whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it, or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." We are heirs to all that our forerunners have wrought by their struggles and aspirations. As Jesus said: "Other men have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours." Men save others by the love and endeavour they consciously and unconsciously put forward on their behalf. Reformers and saints have to supply what is wanting in the service of others. They have heavier burdens to bear, because the work of many men is selfish and destructive. We are thus brought again to the truth on which Unitarians are always insisting, that the difference between Jesus and other men is one of degree, not of kind. To limit the Divine work to one person is to deny the fact of experience, namely, that the law of redemption or of vicarious sacrifice is operative in all good lives. Every man who by doing good counteracts the evil done by others is a substitute. Every noble achievement which removes evil from the world is an act of substitutionary redemption. Consequently, the process of salvation is essentially *social in character*.

It may, however, be mentioned that in early Christianity it was a common belief that moral inspiration was to be found in contemplating the sufferings of Jesus. It has been contended that this was the Pauline theory of the sacrifice on the

cross. Certainly we are deeply moved to emulate prophets, apostles and martyrs, when we read how they have laboured and suffered for right. But the idea which has been the basis of the theory of the Atonement is that the death of Jesus delivered not from sin, but the consequences of sin.

(4.) *The Unity of God and Redemption.*

The Unitarian by the very strength of his belief in the Unity of God occupies a unique position. In holding with tenacity to that doctrine and in endeavouring to secure its acceptance, he is not engaged in continuing an historic controversy which has spent its force. On the contrary, the doctrine of the Unity of God is vital to religion, as Trinitarians admit, when they contrast monotheism with polytheism. If anyone supposes otherwise or if any Unitarian is lukewarm about this principle of his faith, he has not seriously thought upon the declaration of Jesus that the first commandment is that man shall love God, the one and only God.

Let us see how this doctrine affects the subject of Salvation which we are considering, bearing in mind that other articles of faith viewed in its light yield similar results.

Under a theology which divides the persons of the Godhead, theories of propitiation and satisfaction, such as those which have held sway in

Protestantism, are possible. Not only are they possible, they have proved themselves inevitable. The persons being separated, their functions become differentiated, but under a consistent monotheism the purpose of God is necessarily regarded as One and the Universe as One.

The great prophet of the exile, known as Second Isaiah, delivering the message of the Lord concerning Cyrus, the King of the Persians, wrote: "I am the Lord, and there is none else; beside me there is no God: I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me: that thou mayst know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me: I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil: I am the Lord, that doeth these things." In this declaration the doctrine of the Unity of God reaches its topmost note, and its implications are clearly set forth. God creates the darkness as well as forms the light. He creates evil as well as makes peace. This is the assertion that one life, one law holds the universe together, and that God is the author of all things. Was the prophet aware of the interpretation of the third chapter of Genesis, which ascribes the origin of evil to a sinister being in the form of a serpent? Almost certainly not. That was a later idea and strange to say, the Old Testament bears no trace of any doctrine of the Fall of Man beyond the narrative in Genesis.

The theory of the Atonement involves the assumption that there is in the world something undivine in origin, the redemption of which requires the intervention of God. Consequently it deprives us of the hope that all things may be made to work towards

> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves.

In doing this, it denies a fact of our experience, that evil may be transmuted into good, that energy may be employed for either noble or unworthy purposes—a fact which proves once and for all that there is one principle at work in all things. If there is anything inherently evil, anything devil-made, it is difficult to see how it can be redeemed.

This dualistic doctrine which is involved in the theory of the Atonement is beset with moral dangers. To treat evil or sin as infinite or absolute, requiring another infinite or absolute to overcome it, is to sheathe the sword of the spirit, to put off the armour of God and to give up the battle. To feel that the wrong done was due to a force over which there was no control, instead of charging it to weakness or perverseness of will, is an easy way of shelving responsibility, and may be pleasant to a perverted conscience. But the very act which rids the soul of the consciousness of

guilt deprives it of the hope of self-improvement. The doctrine of the absolute impotence of man is inextricably interwoven with the orthodox theory of Atonement.

We are all aware of the reality of the conflict of good and evil, or, as these terms may be regarded as absolute, of the struggle, between the perfect and the imperfect, of the better and the worse, within us. But would the pangs of conscience have any reality, if we were not certain that we have abused that which we ought to have used, that we have devoted to unworthy ends that which might have been employed in the highest service ? Surely that is what we mean by wrong, that something inherently good has been robbed of its beauty and value by the use to which it has been put. If that were not so, then all our hopes of a world that is fair and good and of humanity redeemed and glorified, would be vain.

Thus we are bound to conclude that God is One, and that he is the source of that power, out of which through greed, oppression and mismanagement, evil comes into the world. St. Augustine, to whom we are finally indebted, for some of the gloomy doctrines of Christianity, in an inspired moment declared that wickedness has no substance, but is a perversion of substance. In his *Confessions*, he writes: "I asked what wickedness was, and I found that it was no substance, but a perversity of will, which turns aside from

thee, O God, the supreme substance, to desire the lowest, flinging away its inner treasure and boasting itself an outcast" (vii. 16).

In our doctrine of the Oneness of God and the consequent salvability of the world, we are supported by modern knowledge. Every pioneer goes to work in the firm conviction that all things may be made to work together for good. As John Fiske writes: "From the general analogies furnished in the process of evolution, we are entitled to hope that, as it approaches its goal and man comes nearer to God, the fact of evil will lapse into a mere memory, in which the shadowed past shall serve as a background for the realized glory of the present. . . . The mystery of evil remains a mystery still, but it is no longer a harsh dissonance such as greeted the poet's ear when the doors of hell were thrown open: for we see that this mystery belongs among the profound harmonies in God's creation."[1] Redemption is possible, because the whole world is God's, and God is One.

(5.) *Salvation by Character.*

Men's conceptions of salvation and of the way to attain it have undergone radical alterations. So long as the old theological ideas obtained, the theological methods of deliverance

[1] John Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, p. 55.

made their appeal. Men sought to placate the offended God by means of ceremonies, ritual observances, and professions of faith. But as soon as it was perceived that salvation is the attainment of a moral state, it became clear that the method of attainment must be moral. If salvation is to be found in perfection of character, in nearness to God, in that union with him which enabled Jesus to say: "I and the Father are one," then a life of spiritual endeavour becomes necessary. So the Unitarian makes "Salvation by character" a principle of his faith. His aim is not to save himself *from* God, but to save himself *for* God. The result is that he stresses the necessity of being upright in the business of life, faithful in all human relationships and honest in the statement of personal belief.

This endeavour to attain salvation by character is not a lonely undertaking. We are surrounded by myriad influences which are making for the uplift of our being. From the past comes the inspiration of thinkers and workers who have left us a vast inheritance. Here the value of the life and teaching of Jesus, under the influence of which we should strive to bring ourselves, is of pre-eminent importance. Among the saviours of the world he stands easily first, but he saves by the grandeur of his message and the example of his life. "If we concentrate our attention," writes the Dean of Carlisle, "on the points on

which all the early Christian writers agree rather than upon those on which they differ, we should not go far wrong, if we were to say that what the earliest Church really believed in was salvation by the influence of Christ and of His teaching. That this influence was enormously enhanced by the appeal made in His self-sacrificing death was true then, and it is true now."[1] It is when men isolate the death of Jesus and proclaim it as a legal transaction for the payment of the sins of the world instead of as the supreme example of fearless devotion to truth and God that it loses its moral power. When regarded as typical of his message of self-sacrificing love, it becomes a stimulus to aspiration and effort. It was a confessed Unitarian who wrote:

> When the woes of life o'ertake me,
> Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
> Never shall the cross forsake me:
> Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

Again, the consciousness that he is not alone in his struggle steals into the heart of every seeker after truth and every labourer for reform. "One with God is a majority," said William Lloyd Garrison. The late Auguste Sabatier asked, "What worker in a lofty cause has not perceived within his own personal activity and saluted with a feeling of veneration, the mysterious activity

[1] *Bampton Lectures*, p. 207.

of a universal and eternal power?"[1] It is the consciousness that God is with his children, or as some would prefer to express it, that the universe is on the side of right, which sustains those who struggle against obstacles and lead apparently forlorn hopes. Left alone, we might faint and be weary, but eternal forces are making for righteousness and sustaining us in every worthy endeavour. That being so, we may be confident that, apart from any formal profession of faith or ceremonial observance, every truthful thought, every noble emotion, and every loving act are contributions not only to our own salvation but to the redemption of the world. This is what is meant by salvation by character. It is a process of gradual development towards righteousness, and it is certain that it will not be complete here. It is not strictly accurate to speak of "saved souls," for the best of men are only "being saved." We may, however, believe with reason that opportunities for moral advance will not cease with death, and even that hopes which have been disappointed here will receive their higher fulfilment hereafter. Out of his belief in "Salvation by character" grows the conviction of the Unitarian that "the progress of mankind will be upward and onward for ever."

[1] *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 66.

Chapter VIII

FELLOWSHIP

1. The Church Ideal, a part of religion. 2. The social reference in Christianity. 3. The actual and the ideal. 4. Conditions of membership. 5. Sacraments. 6. Brotherhood—world-wide; industrial, economic.

(1.) *The Church Ideal, a part of religion.*

MANY people in Protestant countries who are profoundly convinced of the reality of God, the life after death, and the revelation in Jesus Christ, nevertheless find difficulty in regarding the Church as an object of religious faith. They agree that it is a useful institution for collective worship and co-operation in good works. They may even recognize that it is the natural outgrowth of the social instinct. They think, however, that individuals can be religious without it.

The question carries us far into the heart and mystery of religion itself. When we believe in God, how much of our thought about the world as a whole do we pass through that belief as through a transforming crucible? Belief in God is assuredly not concerned with an abstraction

standing alone in our "universe of discourse." God is apprehended in religious experience as the innermost life of the great world. If we take our theism seriously there is nothing in the universe that it does not affect. Therefore, one description of religion is that it is *a view of the world*. And because the most important part of the world we have to do with is the human world—not the world of inanimate things but the grand progression through the ages of moral forces and noble causes, the interplay of actions and hopes and aspirations in the social community working out the salvation of the race—therefore religion is also a view of man and society. Of *this* world also God is the underlying reality, the innermost life. When we believe in God we believe in this God. He is the Good that is immanent in home and family, in progressive civilization, in the continual unfolding and clarifying of moral perceptions. "Immanent" does not mean that there is nothing more in the indwelling life of God than becomes *explicit* in society and human history. But it does mean that in society and human history all that religion is in quest of is *implicit*. The Divine dwells there, and has to be met there. It is there that we learn what love means. If a man love not his brother whom he has seen, how shall he learn to love God whom he has not seen? Christianity knows no vision of God, no sublime heights of experience and divine

intimacy, that do not find their roots in the common human contacts and obligations. That is why Jesus habitually spoke of his religious ideal as the Reign of God among men. The kingdom was to come and dwell on the earth.

Sometimes this is pushed so far that religion is held to be social and ethical and nothing besides. There is then no religion but that of " doing good," without reference to any divine ideal—nothing but secular standards and utilitarian estimates. That is the Protestantism with which we started turned inside out. Beginning with a religion that has no social reference, it ends with a social reference devoid of religion.

(2.) *The social reference in Christianity.*

To get away from this confusion let us reflect that religion has these two sides: (1) it is an experience that is *immediate* to the consciousness of the person who has it—no external warrant is needed for the reality of what is felt at the moment. This is the affirmation of every type of believer, and it is incomparably stated by one furthest removed from Protestant individualism. " The Catholic Church," says John Henry Newman, " allows no image of any sort, no rite, no sacrament, no Saint, to come between the soul and its Creator. It is face to face, *solus cum solo*, in all matters between man and his God. He

alone creates; He alone has redeemed; before His awful eyes we go in death: in the vision of Him is our eternal beatitude."[1] But (2) this experience is *mediated* as an *event that happens historically* to the person. It has its roots in a far past, and depends for its form and articulation on the impress of environment and education and opportunity.

Certainly the social reference of religion is conspicuous in Christian ideas from the outset. Jesus gathered about him a number of friends, sometimes regarded as brothers, sometimes as disciples, sometimes as a nucleus for an ever-widening movement (" salt of the earth "). That this was to be no loose and casual association, to serve its time and break up, is evident from the fact that Jesus knew himself all through to be the centre and bond of it. The deed of mercy to the least of the brethren, in the great " Inasmuch " saying, is really done to the Master! When he is about to depart he leaves the solemn injunction that the little group is to remain in unbroken unity until his spirit has descended upon them, and then they would be more than ever one. He will still be present in their smallest gatherings: " Lo, I am with you always, even to the end."

We cannot stress too much the fact that the whole of this afterwards world-wide organism

[1] *Apologia*, p. 195.

began as a noble and affectionate friendship. How far it had gone towards some simple kind of systematic joint action we cannot tell. If the details of the Judas story are founded in fact there was a common purse, and there were times when the friends met for solemn observances. The sending out of the twelve, or the seventy, or both, points to some tradition of organized evangelism. The form of the Lord's Prayer seems to indicate that the Prayer was to be said together—" Our Father . . . Give us . . . Forgive us . . . Lead us . . . Deliver us." In any case, the wonderful development which gives the superlative illustration of God's immanence in external history, began with the forms of common friendship: the divine event strikes its roots in human happenings.

It is not necessary to suppose that Jesus intended to found an institution which would grow into the Christian Church. What is of the utmost significance, however, is that the Christian religion from the first not only recognized that the religious nature of man is implicated with his social instincts; it also made this implication part of its essential creed. No particular organization, no system of bishops or presbyters, no specified ritual or disciplinary routine, can be traced back to him. On the other hand, the idea of Fellowship, of a common life of aspiration and service in which Many become One, through the spirit he imparted—this is of the essence of his religion,

not an accident of it. This is what created the Church. To this ideal his followers have always, in spite of endless aberrations, looked back with longing and regret.

(3.) *Actual and ideal.*

No definite body or association has ever *been* this spiritual Church, in this ideal sense. Think only, for example, of the church at Corinth to which St. Paul wrote. Moreover, no actual body could ever become an essential object of man's primary religious belief, in the sense that this body could properly " mediate " his primary religious experience. This condition could be fulfilled only by the whole world of men throughout history, in whose moral striving and advance God is immanent.

But any group of men can be a church—not *the* Church—if they have their worship in common, join in common quest of God's truth, and submit themselves to mutual discipline for the sake of realizing the Reign of God in the life of society. They cannot, however large the group, be the *whole* Church, with its unconfined sweep through time and its ever-shifting identity. But they can be *a local and limited attempt to focus and concentrate*, within the reach of every individual, *this ideal of the spiritual Church of universal man.* Essential religion requires, not that a particular

institution or society shall be the object of faith, but that every such church shall strive to reproduce, in miniature, that perfect City of God which has moved in vision through the hopes of religious men in every age. "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

(4.) *Conditions of Membership.*

What conditions of membership shall be set up in such a limited group, what minimum of agreement in belief and doctrine shall be required, will not depend on any abstract principle. Ideally, all who love and follow Jesus are members of his Church. In his lifetime this was a stringent condition and a sufficient test; stringent —for a cross or a prison loomed up somewhere on the road; and the test was self-imposed. In other ages it has seemed necessary to require some amount of doctrinal agreement in order to secure continuity of witness for the teaching held to be indispensable. It is easy to say, in the interests of toleration, "Make no conditions at all, of this or any other kind," but this is impracticable. And if we say "Make only ethical requirements (He that doeth the will of my Father)," who shall be the judge whether a man fulfils these? This is obviously a counsel that looks forward to the ideal Church, not a rule for a limited and definite group. *As things are,* every group finds

it necessary, whether ostensibly or only by tacit implication, to gather about some point of agreement in ideas or mental attitudes. But this will become less necessary just in the degree that the churches as a whole discover that they stand for a universal spiritual ideal, not for any partial or temporary form in which the intellect of man has tried to express that ideal.

That is why the churches known as Unitarian, or Liberal or Free Christian, try to keep in view both (*a*) the need for ever-increasing freedom as to the conditions of church-membership, and at the same time (*b*) the need for preserving their own definite witness—their protest against doctrines which have no rightful place in a spiritual Christianity, such as Biblical Infallibility, the Trinity, Atonement through vicarious punishment, and Everlasting Hell. These churches freely welcome adherents without requiring the acceptance of any kind of stated creed. They have a long and honourable history that exemplifies the possibility of a Christian Church unhampered by the manufactured "creeds" with which ecclesiastical authorities have bewildered and misled the world. If it be objected that the general tone and consensus prevailing among these free societies constitutes, in its way, a kind of selective standard of membership, it must be pointed out that this is the natural result of the exclusiveness shown by the creed-bound churches, which push

from their midst all who cannot coerce their minds into the stipulated arbitrary fashions. Whatever specific teachings on questions of doctrine are, in practice, the connecting link among these free churches, they are present not as a test, but as a protest against dogmas imposed by other churches as the essence of Christian faith. When a Unitarian teacher emphasizes his divergence from Trinitarian beliefs, it is not because he thinks that Unitarian theology is an adequate expression of Christian religion, but because Trinitarianism has been put forward as a *sine qua non*. Whenever this exclusiveness shall be abandoned, the controversy, so far as these free churches are concerned, will fall to the ground.

In the meantime, these churches count it an exceedingly rare privilege that they are able to offer to the world a Catholicism "high as the Love of God, broad as the needs of Man."

(5.) *Sacraments.*

Everything that is beautiful in ritual, everything that can deepen the worshipful character of church services, comes within the scope of this Catholic aim. It is this aim that will at last restore their rightful place—misunderstood from different sides by all the churches—to the Sacraments. Many people have been alienated from sacramental worship, because it has come to

mean formalism and externalism of the most mechanical type. It is only when we grasp the social implications of religion that we see what sacraments can and ought to mean.

All social or common worship has certain material and temporal conditions. The people come bodily, to a certain place, at a certain time, in certain habitual reverent usages. All religions have their sacred places—the gorgeous mosque, the mysterious cathedral, the Quaker meeting-house, "Where," Whittier says, "God should be most, for man is least." However indifferent to ritual as such, all religions set up some symbolical habits of worship. Even the silence of the Friends, originally perhaps nothing more than abstention from vain speaking, has become a distinguishing symbolic form. But the forms of social worship are more than symbols. A symbol stands for something which is other than itself, whereas a sacrament is both the symbol and the thing symbolized. This distinction corresponds to the difference between private and social worship. When a man raises his thoughts to Divine things in solitary, private prayer, there is no absolute need for expressive gestures. Public worship on the other hand can hardly become an habitual practice without some resort to an agreed order of appropriate acts—the voices joined in the hymn, the heads bowed for reverence, the quietness of demeanour, the kneeling and

standing. These acts are sacramental. By such means a number of individuals are formed into a worshipping fellowship. It is no longer the individual need that is the main concern; the attitude is that of a corporate whole. Here, therefore, the outward act, the expressive solemnity, the collective gesture, are of the essence of the worship. The body and the soul of the worship are inseparable.

It is in response to this sure instinct for what is most vital in religious fellowship that the historic rites of Christianity have been enriched by such Sacraments as those of Baptism and the Communion Service. There seems to be no good reason for restricting the name of sacraments to the arbitrary number of the Roman seven or the Anglican two, for all social usages of worship are in their nature sacramental. But the peculiarly eloquent appeal of the services of Baptism and Communion has found wellnigh universal approval. The one is the outward recognition, by the whole Fellowship, of the new-comer to whom it pledges its care and oversight, while parents enter into a bond to give their children Christian nurture. Or, if it is a service of Adult Baptism, the obligation is accepted for himself by the one who is thus received into the church. It is not an individual grace that is bestowed, for that is a matter of private experience. It is a social experience, an event in the history of the Fellow-

ship, to which both the individual and his Fellows are partners.

The other, the Communion Service, in its simplicity and beauty is perhaps the most moving embodiment of the faith in self-sacrifice and triumphant love, that religion has given to the world. Like all great Art it suggests an infinity of meanings that can never be put into a prose formula, and there is no single form of service that gathers up so powerfully all the leading motives of the Christian experience—the sense of a mighty Fellowship to which we vow ourselves, the setting forth of Christ's death, the sanctifying of common life, the spiritual significance of all material things, the abiding union of master and disciples, the power of love to feed the world's spiritual hunger. Unfortunately the Roman and some other churches have hardened these great meanings into magical operations. Individual salvation was made to depend on participation in the sacraments as if they were mechanical means to procure spiritual ends. In revolt from such a perversion Protestantism has often reduced the sacraments to a bare and somewhat negligible ceremonial, a mere survival which has no justification except as a literal obedience to the supposed command of Jesus. Protestantism has usually been at a loss to give any proper *rationale* of the sacraments, because it has regarded them as more or less helpful, but not indispensable

means of grace *for the individual.* On any showing, however, Jesus never instituted the Communion as an individual means of grace, or as the vehicle of personal salvation. Thus, between the magical and miraculous transubstantiation of the Romanist, and the thinness of the Protestant tradition, the Communion Service has lost much of its true significance. The line of recovery is plain. The Communion is for the community.

(6.) *Brotherhood—world-wide ; industrial and economic.*

It is worthy of note that the recovered insight into the sacrament of Communion has come at a time when the churches are recognizing that they have never given their full message to society as a whole. Never since the break-up of the mediæval Holy Roman Empire—the ideal of Dante and the temporal correlative of the universal Christendom of the Pope—has the Church been inspired with an adequate purpose in regard to national and international brotherhood. This helplessness was manifested at the outbreak of the Great War in a way that might have been less tragic if a few years' longer opportunity had been enjoyed by the efforts to create a World Alliance of churches. There is no institution that has such infinite resources of spiritual power to draw upon as the Christian Fellowship, and these will be

available as soon as the separate churches of Christendom learn to abandon their outworn dogmatic exclusions and factitious differences. Herein consists the function, so splendid that no words can exaggerate its promise, of a Liberal Christianity—its function being, to reveal to the as yet opposed churches their true mission as the spiritual focus of the "oneness of humanity"—which Whittier felt to be the inspiration glorifying the bare room of the Quaker meeting. When creeds cease to divide, there will be an immense disengaging of these vital forces of Fellowship now latent in the Church. Such new phenomena as the League of Nations are the political correlate to this spiritual movement. There is no wonder that a great statesman spoke of a new wind blowing through the world's mind, when he saw the old racial animosities yielding to the efforts for a truer international understanding. Such changes do not come about by any merely utilitarian computation of the advantages of peace. They are induced by a profounder insight into the underlying reality of the world-aim, the sense of an overruling direction in history. The name for this insight is Religion, and when it rids itself of barbarous excrescences, it functions in universal brotherhood.

So much for the wider outlook. There remain the everyday relationships of business conduct and economic affairs. Too long has it been supposed

that religion had no more than the vaguest bearing on these engrossing social interests. The Church cannot, indeed, lay down specific rules for the market or deliver authoritative judgments on rival economic theories and social panaceas. Whenever it intervenes in this way it is pretty certain to reflect the unweighed preferences of a dominant majority, as in times of national panic, or when vested interests are imperilled, and its resort is sometimes even to the crude expedients of force and war. The real work of the Church is to form in men's minds the ideal of a just State, that will grow from within outwards. The forces and ideas that are immanent in the activity of the Christian Fellowship are the most revolutionary and subversive now abroad in the world's thought, and as soon as the Church can jettison its surviving ancient encumbrances the world will know the difference. The reign of the class and caste spirit, the continuance of all privileged power and position not founded on service, the acquiescence in a world of business and economic affairs motived by the purpose of gain and the ethics of the jungle—all this will go down when the great Fellowship of Faith is able to envisage its Hope in a spirit of Christ-like Love.

Chapter IX

THE IMMORTAL HOPE

1. Sources of belief. 2. Moral and spiritual value of the belief. 3. Grounds of the belief. 4. Materialism a delusion. 5. Belief a certainty.

THE Immortality of the Soul is one of the fundamental ideas of religion, and above all, of the Christian religion. Modern Unitarians offer no peculiar version of this belief. They do, however, urge that its essential meaning and truth shall be properly understood and valued, and that it shall be freed from superstitions and mythological accretions.

Belief in immortality is connected with some of the principal problems of physical science, but the connection is not equally close in all cases.

Biological and anthropological questions may be set aside. It used to be feared that the theory of evolution, as presented in Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*, had disposed of the belief that man is in any true sense a spiritual being. The supposed ape-like ancestor jeopardized every real interest of the human soul. And

yet what theory of descent, in past ages, could be more disturbing—if questions of beginning are of any relevance at all—than the evident fact that the beginning of every individual life is purely animal? Why should the theory be deemed of such vast and terrible significance, if the physiological fact is of no importance? Whatever view we may take as to the bearing of the physiological beginning of each individual life on the question of its destiny, that view must *a fortiori* hold good of the beginning of the race. We must avoid the use of the word "origin," which is ambiguous and misleading; we have no scientific right to speak of anything more than the historical beginning in time; the mere substitution of the accurate term "beginning" for the inaccurate one "origin," in these too often confused discussions, is enough to show the true bearing of what is at issue.

It has also been supposed that the anthropological theory as to how belief in the soul began—as set forth, for instance, by Spencer and Tylor—has a vital bearing on our problem. But even if we grant to this theory all that it claims, the truth or error of our belief in "something after death" is not touched. To ask "How did this belief begin? What causes suggested it to the primitive mind?" and to ask "What are the causes of its survival or continuance afterwards?" are two entirely different questions. If any belief

in its beginning rests on illusions characteristic of the childhood of the race, this will not affect its truth as we hold it, unless our belief were the same as that of the primitive savages among whom it began, or were held on the same grounds. Why do we state such obvious truths? Because intelligent persons have often suggested that, since the belief in another life, in its original form, rested on primeval superstitions, it is in its developed form, as held to-day, groundless!

(1.) *Sources of belief.*

The purest and the most natural source of belief, or, as it is to-day, of a desire to believe, lies in human affection; that those whom we have loved long since may, like the mystic angel-faces of Newman's dream, be but lost awhile. We are not concerned to put adequately into words the strength or the bitterness of this longing, ever renewed in the heart of man, age after age—a longing which, unsatisfied, shakes the fabric of faith to its foundations. We wish only to draw attention to one note in it which not infrequently escapes notice. It is not through selfish fear that we tremble on the brink of death, and cling to the severing link of our existence here; it is a clinging to our fellow creatures. If the immortal life is to be more than a name for a shadow, it must be a life where men are members one of another, not

less but more than they are here. We desire an immortality which shall signify a personal life in the full sense of these words, not the existence of a "disembodied spirit," or a "pure, indivisible, immaterial substance"; and a personal life must be an embodied life. This is a plea which gathers to itself the strength of the whole social nature of man.

There are other pleas which have their roots in the universal moral consciousness of man. There is first the great discrepancy which has furnished moralists with a theme since history's dawn; the disproportion between the abilities and just deserts of men, and the recognition given to them in this life. When every allowance is made for the possibility that the inequalities of life are not so great as they appear, and that worldly honour, success, or happiness is not the true reward of moral desert, there remains a range of facts so vast that we cannot number the multitudes who in this life have suffered incalculable wrong. "The injustice or inequality seems the more flagrant," says a modern divine and thinker, "when we see that it is the very goodness of the good to which their extra share of suffering, the very badness of the bad to which their immunity from suffering, is often traceable. On the one hand, the very sensitiveness of conscience which characterizes the former, subjects them to inward pangs of self-reproach, to painful moral conflicts

and struggles, to bitter distress for the sorrow and sin of the world, of which the latter know nothing; and on the other hand, against these and other causes of suffering the vicious or morally indifferent are case-hardened by their moral insensibility." It is not merely by their own sufferings that men are oppressed. "I feel a pain in my brother's side," is the motto of the higher ethical endeavours of to-day. This feeling is intensified, apart from all questions of desert, by a consciousness of the intolerable conditions in which tens of thousands of our fellow creatures pass their lives. Grant that in the future the civilized world will see to it that no such black spots disgrace the very name of "civilization," can there have been no other possibilities for those who have come here only to swarm and fester for a little while, too miserable to be conscious of their misery, shut out for ever from all possibility of living a human life? The great and good, who have known the inward joy of noble work, might be more justly believed to perish, for they at least have lived. Yet for these, too, there is a claim of equal strength. They are the strong workers of the world, builders of the city not made with hands. Is it possible that these great souls who have accomplished so much—they and all that was in them—have become dust and vapour, and nothing more? Are they to have no share in the abiding glory of their work, and never see the oncoming

triumph of the ideals for which they laboured and died ?

(2.) *Moral and spiritual value of the belief.*

It is true that we find strange variations in human sentiment and conviction on this subject. Mere moods may have the force of conviction for the time being. Where the preference for annihilation is expressed, in some cases it is due to personal wrongdoing ; in many others it is an unreal pose which is the result of fashion and prejudice; in others it is simply lack of imagination. And—to the disgrace of our civilization be it said—we cannot deny that in some cases it is due to conditions which have not only taken away all interest from earthly existence, but have destroyed all desire for better things.

Yet this is not the last word as regards real or supposed loss of desire for continuance of life. What shall we say of such expressions of feeling as the following ? Harriet Martineau speaks of a longing for rest, confessing that she would tire of the " For ever." Charles Bray writes, " I am thankful for life, and would willingly do it all over again, but I have no wish to begin again under entirely new conditions; neither can I see how, with a new body and under such altered circumstances, the recollection of my existence here could be of the slightest service to me." R. L.

Stevenson pleads for a stern struggle with fate while we live, but also for a putting away of " this fairy tale of an eternal tea-party, and that our friends will yet meet us, all ironed out and emasculate, and still be lovable." What is the explanation of this feeling in such minds ? We believe that at the bottom it is a protest, not against the thought of continued life, but against an inadequate interpretation of " immortality," against the notion of mere " Endlessness " without growth, and therefore against the possibilities of utter discontinuity or of eternal sameness. The notion of existence without end, never getting " quit of oneself," is a weariness or even a horror to many minds; and not unreasonably so, for if we adopt such a view, we have dropped the vital element in the thought of a future life. The vitally important factor in the idea is not mere endlessness, but continued growth. It is true, growth is the progressive fulfilment or realization of latent powers; it is and must be a process in time. But to suppose that the process is literally endless in time, is to go far beyond anything that experience or reflection warrants in our present state. If the idea of a future life is presented in such a form that it seems to fail in giving the field for the exercise and progress of our best faculties which even this life gives, there is nothing strange in a repudiation of it.

We have bri fly reviewed the main sources

from which the immortal hope springs. Before proceeding to estimate their worth as sources of evidence, of probability or proof, we may inquire how they appear when judged specially from the ethical standpoint. As we know, it has been urged that the race would rise to a higher point of view if the hope of immortality were dispensed with.

We reply that there is one truth which we not only admit, but lay down as primary and fundamental. The superiority of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness to their opposites is not conditional on the permanence of the individual life. If some one doubted their superiority, we could not cure him of his moral scepticism by convincing him that his personality was to endure for centuries or millenniums. To ask, as Tennyson, for example, is so fond of doing, " What is it all of it worth " if death is the end, is to put the emphasis in the wrong place. Immortality is not the whole of the religious view of the world, but only a subordinate part of it, a consequence (as we shall see) of the more fundamental view that Truth, Goodness, and Love are supernal realities, whose permanent worth does not depend on the continued existence of any man or million of men. " Human ministers of Justice fail, but Justice never." Hence, so far from saying that a noble earthly life is not worth living without immortality, we say the opposite of this. Immortality is worth

having, just because a noble earthly life has an intrinsic worth of its own. It follows that the only true preparation for another life is to make this life noble.

Is there, however, any real substitute for the immortal hope ? We are told that if individuals perish by the way, even after they come to be forgotten their work survives. This is true as far as it goes. How far it goes will be made clear to anyone who tries to answer Huxley's forcible question: " Throw a stone into the sea, and there is a sense in which it is true that the wavelets which spread around it have an effect through all space and all time. Shall we say that the stone has a future life ? " The universal life of humanity, which is ever deepening, growing, developing, and advancing through the ages to its consummation, has a deeper unity than any that science finds in dead matter; but it is none the less true that to take this fact of the results of our individual lives being incorporated into this wider life of humanity, as a substitute for the belief in personal immortality, is mere confused self-deception.

Is the desire to live after death merely the barren utterance of human egoism ? It is not to be denied that the desire for another life as affording " compensation " has been so held as to become a refined form of selfishness. But the real meaning of the wish for " compensation " is nothing ignoble or selfish. Frequently we can trace in it a

motive like that which animated Milton's great poem, " to assert Eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men," to live to see the meaning of the apparently undeserved sufferings of life. Even when we regard it as the expression of a man's interest in his own destiny, it is the opposite of a merely personal or selfish wish. The man who desires the compensation of another life is not desiring anything which he can enjoy by himself, and from which others can be excluded. He wants to be allowed to go on loving those whom he has loved here, and to go on doing whatever good he has done here, and more. If you will say that this is to seek a reward, then—as Tennyson reminds us in his noble poem on " Wages "—it is the reward of going on.

(3.) *Grounds of the belief.*

We found that two motives were specially prominent in forming the desire for another life: that personal affection and love may continue, and that personal goodness may grow. These may be stated together in a form which includes both: that all our faculties may be realized and exercised to their fullest capacity. In this life we do not find it possible to do and to be all that we feel and know ourselves to be capable of; every element in the life that now is seems rudi-

mentary, incomplete. and preparatory. What is the significance of this fact ?

The story of the evolution of living beings, as interpreted by modern science, tells us that each new physical quality or power—such as a sharpened sense, or the beginning of a new organ—which survives and grows, does so because it is useful for a purpose and is needed. Utility for a purpose involved in physical life; this is the important factor in the evolution of the distinctive features of new species in the animal world.

What are the qualities distinctive of human life ? Without entering into interrupting refinements concerning animal intelligence or animal conscience, it is evident that while human life includes animal life, it rises above the latter; and these higher things which distinguish man from the animals are his rational, moral, and spiritual qualities. We may make in the sphere of spiritual life an assumption like that which science makes in the sphere of physical life; that these characteristically human qualities have their proper use and function, which is not realized until they are exercised in all their fullness. Everything that is best in us bears witness in itself of a power of life and growth far beyond the utmost afforded by the opportunities of earth. True, there are human beings in whom the higher emotional, intellectual, and moral qualities seem crushed out of existence, and there are others who seem to

show no sign of possessing such qualities. Yet every one who has begun to use the higher gifts of his manhood, has begun to find in them possibilities of growth to which no limit can be seen; and the more faithfully he does all that his life calls for, the more he feels that a thousand such lives would not exhaust his powers.

These distinctively human qualities do not serve any merely physical purpose; they are not useful in the biological sense. "The moment we enter into the inner circle of human characteristics," says Dr. Martineau, "the interpretation of these characteristics as instruments for working the organism utterly fails us." In fact, to explain them, in their present form, by this means, is never attempted; but it is supposed that they were manufactured out of primitive animal wants whose utility to the organism needs no demonstration. We need not dwell here on the growing perception that this process of manufacture is inconceivable, and rests on a fundamental misconception of all that development can possibly mean.

If, then, the realization of such powers has a purpose, which is not fulfilled until they are put forth to their full capacity, we must suppose that human existence is constructed on a scale such that each man can put them forth in their fullness. This means that the life begun here is continued beyond death, where these endowments may find

progressively more adequate scope and employment. At first sight, the analogies of nature's ways do not lead us to regard this suggestion as a very hopeful one. What if the undeniable waste in the animal and vegetable world has its analogue in the human world? It involves a waste of resource, and a frustration of purpose and capacity; if in the case of man death ends his life, there would be only a similar blighting of promise, and perishing of capacities that have just begun to unfold. Granting that the analogy is a true one, i.e., mere waste in both cases, we must observe that in one it is a waste of physical capacity, in the other a waste of intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacity. Has this difference any significance? Have we a right to hold the growth of human love and reason as worth more—to expect that, though physical life may be wasted, spiritual life will not be? A conviction of the absolute and indefeasible worth of these human ideals answers the question for us. These are the only things that give value to life; and if we have a right to believe anything, we have the strongest moral and intellectual right to believe that these shall abide for ever. We do not, however, admit that the aforesaid analogy is a true one. The physical waste is not so in reality, it is a change of form; but if the progress of humanity continues, while the individuals whose efforts contribute to it perish by the wayside, then what

perishes is the best part of the whole achievement —the effects of each man's work which remain in his living, growing self. All our ideals are realized for us only by personal activities which grow by their personal use.

The assumption on which our conclusion rests—that human faculty has a purpose—itself rests on a deeper principle, apart from which it is groundless. This deeper assumption is that the world is rational, is constructed according to an order or plan on which we can depend. Otherwise there could be no ground for supposing that our powers fulfil any purpose by their growth, or that the incompleteness of this life had any meaning. And this assumption or trust that the universe is rational, is one kind or direction of trust in God. There is no abstract proof of this principle, because the truth of all reasoning depends on it; but it is progressively verified by acting on it or working it out; and this, as Browning always reminds us, is the one searching test which in the end never fails. Thus at bottom the belief in immortality depends on belief in God, for to believe in God means at least to believe that the creative power which sustains the universe is rational. We may, therefore, trust the truth in the immortal hope, not as we trust the results of particular observations and experiments, but as a reasonable probability, based on the essential reasonableness of the world.

(4.) *Materialism a delusion.*

Among the difficulties remaining there are some, the scientific aspects of which call for special attention.

The old materialism assumed that the brain produces consciousness. The standing metaphor for this type of materialism was suggested by Plato, that the soul is to the body as the musical harmony is to the instrument that produces it. Modern writers liken the soul to a "force" which the brain exerts, or to a "state" into which it passes, just as matter under certain conditions passes into a state of incandescence. On the other hand, some scientific thinkers of the last century, like Dubois-Reymond, Huxley and Tyndall, and many in the present century, have frankly admitted that the production of such a thing as consciousness in the brain is more than an enigma—it is almost a self-contradiction. And such assertions as that "thought is a mode of motion," have only to be carefully scrutinized in order to reveal themselves as simple or rather complex nonsense.

The more refined form of materialism which would be professed in some quarters at the present day assumes that consciousness is a "function" of the brain. It is evident that this need not mean more than that the manifestation of mental life and personality in this world of time and space depends on the brain and nervous system; but

more than this is meant, although the theory does not commit itself to the assertion that bare brain and nerve produce mind and feeling. The point of view of which we speak is connected with the results of modern physiology and physiological psychology. The latter study is specially concerned to investigate those mental facts whose bodily concomitants are best known, such as the elementary forms of perception, impulse, and memory. It works on common ground with physiology in studying the different brain-changes which correspond to different states of consciousness; and the localization of these changes in the brain has been determined with considerable success. Now in these investigations the physiologists nearly always forget the vitally important fact which Professor James has stated so forcibly. Is the mind a "function" of the brain? "If we are talking of science strictly understood, function can mean nothing more than bare concomitant variation. When the brain activities change in one way, consciousness changes in another way; when the currents pour through the occipital lobes, consciousness sees things; when through the lower frontal region, consciousness says things to itself; when they stop, she goes to sleep, etc. In strict science, we can only write the bare fact of concomitance." This fact has suggested the famous hypothesis of "psycho-physical parallelism," that every change in consciousness corres-

ponds to a change in the activity of the brain—a hypothesis which is well grounded as regards the more elementary facts of sensation and ideation, and is assumed to hold throughout. This principle rightly used, should exclude materialistic and all other assumptions as to the real connection between the mental and the physical series, for about this connection it says nothing. It is adopted by careful writers for that reason, as a hypothesis regulating the study of mental in relation to physical facts. But many of the physiological school have given it a materialistic turn by speaking always as if the mental state were entirely "dependent" on the bodily, and assuming that the mental state is "explained" when its corresponding bodily state is assigned. Hence the idea has arisen that the "new" psychology has proved everything characteristic of human personality to be due to the activity of the brain and nervous system; while the truth is, that if such results appear in the end to be proved, it is only because in the beginning they were taken for granted.

On the whole, modern psychology has nothing to contribute to the solution of our problem. Psychology has effectually disposed of what Professor James calls "the whole classic Platonising Sunday-school conception" of the soul and body as two separate things, of which the body is necessary to the soul only in this world of sense,

while the soul is absolutely immaterial, "separated by the whole diameter of being" from bodily existence. On the contrary we find it nearly impossible to say where body ends and soul begins. Psychology affords us no means of making clear the distinction between them. And, apart from mere assumptions, we are told nothing as to their connection which is not obvious from common experience. We do not need the psychologist to tell us that there is a good deal of the body in the affections and emotions of the soul, that in deep thought the brain is taxed, that anxiety or joy affects the heart, that other instincts affect other organs; and as a writer like the late R. H. Hutton freely admitted, "the only distinction we know with any certainty between the two is that the soul is more essential to the personality, while the body is less so."

We are thrown back on the evidence on which we formerly dwelt, of the intrinsic possibilities of man's own higher nature, which is the one thing of supreme worth in the known universe, and which bears within it the power of ever-growing life.

(5.) *Belief a certainty.*

"Is there, then," it may be said, "no certain knowledge?" This question, which seems so plausible is yet most unreasonable. Strictly

speaking, none of our knowledge is "certain" in the sense of being free from any assumption and from the possibility of future modification. "But, waiving these refinements, cannot we 'know' that our individuality endures, in the sense in which we 'know' any other matter whatsoever—as a matter of fact and evidence?" This, again, is an irrational demand. We cannot know that the earth and planets move round the sun. This and similar results are based on definitely measurable facts, constantly and uniformly recurring in the experience of our senses; while the main foundations on which our belief in another life rests are the higher possibilities of human nature as revealed in moral and spiritual experience. Though these latter facts also form a constant and uniform experience, they are not definite and measurable, and their adequate interpretation is not immediately obvious. And we may add that, if anything is likely, it is that the material world includes objects of many different forms and degrees of reality operative within it, that there are kinds of matter and sources of energy subtler and more complex than have been dreamt of, that the universe has in it resources deeper than any of which we have the faintest inkling, deeper than our deepest thought can reach so long as our bodily senses are limited as they now are.

The somewhat trivial difficulties raised as to the

embodiment of the spirit in the life beyond, and as to its beginning under the conditions of this life, should be regarded in the light of what we have been saying. The visible and tangible body decays in the grave: is that all? Certainly not; for science explains the body as consisting of material molecules, invisible and intangible, in highly organized forms of combination. These molecules enter into other combinations in the earth; but were they the whole of the body? Here we touch the root of the matter. If science has but touched the outer film of the reality with which it deals in its theories of molecular action, it has opened to us far larger possibilities of embodied existence than any which it has destroyed. If, again, it is asked, "When does the existence of the soul, or its connection with the body, begin?" we must be clear as to the meaning of our terms. If the soul were created with a complete outfit of faculties, ready in all respects for the plunge into the life of sense, it would be inevitable that the question should be pressed, at what point in the history of the body was the ready-made soul joined on to it, or whether the soul pre-existed. But now we know that the beginning of the soul could not have been after this manner. What does experience tell us as to its beginning? As we try to work backwards in the history of the mind, with the aid of comparison and analogy, we find the differences that were distinct in the

adult mind disappear, complexity grows less and less, until we come to a state of vague feeling which must be called consciousness, but from which knowledge, will, and all distinct sensations and mental images, are absent. At what point in the physiological development of the organism, previous to birth, this faint dawn of "sentience" emerges, we do not know and we cannot guess. We have good reason to believe that in its beginning the consciousness of the human fœtus is analogous to that of the oyster, perhaps even to that of the amœba, and that the gradual growth in complexity of nervous structure proceeds along with growth in complexity of conscious life. We know also that the physical connection between parents and offspring is in some way which we do not understand, the basis of a mental connection in "heredity." Beyond this our conclusions have to be altogether speculative. But there is a serious confusion of thought in imagining that this question of the beginning is the fundamental one. The beginning of any growth shows us, as far as the outer appearance goes, nothing even to tell us what the thing is, far less what it is to be: there is a point at which the ovum of man is indistinguishable from that of any invertebrate animal; at a later point in its development, it might be that of any vertebrate animal; at a still later point, that of any mammal, and so on. As the capacities of any growing thing gradually

emerge, we have gradually better ground for inferring what it will come to be; and the case of mental growth is on the whole an analogous one. In this way the profound remark which has come down to us from Aristotle is seen to be of ever-increasing significance. The end may throw light on the beginning, but not the beginning on the end. It is not impossible that we shall have to reverse the agnosticism of the last century, and admit that we have clearer knowledge of ends than of beginnings. We may be agnostic as regards the speculative questions of evolutionary psychology, while we hold firmly and with good reason to the great principle that for each person growth continues, and death is but a stage in life.

CORRECTION

p. 157, line 8. For "We cannot" read "In a sense we do"

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

Born 13 March, 1733. Died 6 February, 1804.