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THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

BY

GRIFFITH JOHN SPARHAM

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RELIGION: ITS MODERN NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Each writer is responsible for the views expressed in his contribution to the series. No attempt has been made to limit freedom in the effort to impose an artificial uniformity. Yet a certain unity of outlook does make itself evident, and this is all the more valuable because unforced.

RAYMOND V. HOLT

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SYNOPSIS

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I. THE FACT OF EVIL—A RATIONAL APPROACH . 9

The heart and mind of man alike protest against the presence of a hard, bitter, tragic, unpleasant, element in human experience, and ask why it is there. Various solutions are and have been offered: (i) that it is through an inherent malignity in the Universe: (ii) the decree of an inscrutable but benevolent Wisdom; (iii) the fact that the ultimate has no moral value. These solutions, however, are inadequate; hence a new approach is needed. We need to ask whether what is really evil is ultimate, and what is ultimate, even though it seem evil, is as evil as it seems. A rational and comprehensive inquiry is thus the only sound approach.

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Considering first the facts of pain and suffering, we see that these constitute an acute aspect of the problem for the modern mind. The solutions of Christian Science and Traditional Christianity are unacceptable, since neither of them faces facts to the extent that a candid inquiry requires. If we are to grapple with the problem, we must at least attempt to stand up to issues frankly. What then? We should take account of the fact of suffering without evasion. But having done that, have we done all? By no means. We should note the mitigating circumstances that exist. Among these are the possibility of exaggeration, the fact that not all apparent suffering is actual, that the major portion is borne by man, who can, if he will, lessen it, and that much suffering can be removed. But we do not get to the root of the problem this way: to do that we must see that suffering serves

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a purpose in the scheme of things. It is, *e.g.* a warning bell; a dynamic; and an educator. As such it subserves the good, and cannot be regarded as an absolute evil.

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"The higher man of to-day," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "is not worrying about his sins." This is true in a strictly orthodox sense, but not in any other. The problem of moral evil still weighs on the mind of the higher man, the substance of it being why there should be such a thing as evil, and why it should be so much easier to fall than to rise. Former solutions of this aspect of our problem have included the Eden theory, the good and bad god theory, the inherent evil of matter and life theory, and a good many others of a more modern type. But none suffices. What can we say? Let us consider the answer of evolution. Evolution reveals man as still in the making, particularly in the moral sphere, and sin accordingly as a backward fall to an outgrown good. This being so, moral evil is evil in a relative, but not an ultimate sense; we may therefore face up to the fact of it and believe that the ultimate is good.

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This form of evil is particularly distressing and baffling because of its seeming wantonness and malignity. The traditional solutions are numerous—animism, occultism, primitive religion, Hindu philosophy, and the book of Job, have each made a contribution. But none of them satisfies. The rational approach takes us further, if it does not clear the matter up: for it shows that the terms accident, disaster and misfortune cover two varieties of phenomena—natural calamities, and those controllable by man; that of the latter the majority are actually or potentially preventable; that of the former most are educative and increasingly avoidable; and that, therefore, such eventualities are not part of the eternal mystery, but a challenge to our ingenuity to set them on one side.

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The poignancy of death is something inexpressible. It is final, dark, tragic: and no good end is served if we belittle that fact. But, rationally viewed, even death does not render illegitimate a belief in an ultimate goodness, because so considered death is seen to serve ends which are beneficial. Thus, it is essential as the correlative of birth and life; it has proved itself an incentive to moral progress; it has provided a dynamic toward spiritual development; and finally it has been an awakener to a sense of life beyond. A phenomenon which thus proves beneficial cannot in itself be considered evil, especially if we accept the hint it offers of continued life beyond.

VI. WASTE 48

A type of evil very oppressive to the modern sense is that of waste. It assumes many forms: wasted life; "the flower that blooms unseen"; the evolution of apparently useless species; the prodigality of nature. In so far, however, as these are not susceptible of removal, they may be shown not to be waste at all. But a form of waste not so easily to be disposed of is that adumbrated by modern astrophysics, by which we are told that (i) the Universe is petering out, and (ii) the likelihood of the inhabitability of other planets is very slender. This sense of waste is very oppressive. What of it? Several considerations are relevant: views of Scientists change, these views may not prove final; if the universe is "running down" it was at one time "wound up," this process may be repeated: we do not know that the earth is the only inhabited planet; finally, a vanishing universe and a solitary earth did not appal man formerly, why should they now? Supposing, however, the material universe is "running down," this does not afford an insuperable obstacle, for it does not apply to the spiritual realities behind it. They indeed for the last 300,000,000 years, we are told, have been "running up." So considered the reality behind the universe is merely passing over from one form of expression to another. Hence even here there is no ultimate waste, or ultimate evil, involved.

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An adequate conception of the ultimate involves a recognition of it as "intelligent" and "ordering"—hence the crux of our problem is the reconciliation of what appears to us as evil with the thought of a Providential Order. Past solutions have followed the line of exonerating Providence. This is a tempting line to follow, but it will not do. Providence must bear the responsibility for evil in so far as it is ultimate. How, then, shall we face this issue? We should take into account the following considerations: (i) Since Providence rules through law, which is in fact the only conceivable form of divine governance, such law must operate even though by his ignoring them man be involved in suffering; (ii) God must be reticent if man is to have room to grow; (iii) in accord with the principles of universal law, God is in reality constantly intervening; (iv) suffering, it must be recognised, is often a highway of human advance. None of these considerations, however, touches the heart of the problem. This is not reached until we discover a principle that reveals that what is truly evil is removable, while that which is not removable is not as evil as it seems. This principle is found in evolution. Once we see all phenomena in the light of an end toward which they move, we perceive that they and the ultimate must be judged by that end, and since that end appears to transcend successively the stage already attained, we may judge that the final end of the process exemplified in phenomena is good, and therefore, conversely, that good is the basic principle from which all things spring.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

CHAPTER I

THE FACT OF EVIL—A RATIONAL APPROACH

MR. ROBERT BLATCHFORD (as quoted by Dr. Frank Ballard) declares, in his *God and My Neighbour*, written some years ago, " Nature is red in beak and claw. On land and in sea, the animal creation chase and maim and slay and devour each other. The swallow on the wing devours the gnat. The ichneumon fly lays its eggs under the skin of the caterpillar. . . . A pretty child dances on the village green. Her feet crush creeping things; there is a busy ant or a blazoned beetle with its back broken writhing in the dust unseen. A germ flies from a stagnant pool and the laughing child . . . dies dreadfully of diphtheria. A volcano bursts suddenly into eruption and a . . . city is a heap of ruins. And the Heavenly Father who is love has power to save, and makes no sign. Is it not so ? "

Olive Schreiner, in her *Times and Seasons*, says, " There is no justice. The ox dies beneath its master's whip. . . . The blackman is shot like a dog. . . . The innocent are accused, and the accuser triumphs. If you will take the trouble to scratch the surface anywhere, you will see under the skin a sentient being writhing in impotent anguish."

Shakespeare, through the lips of Macduff in the tragedy of *Macbeth*, after the murder of Lady Macduff and their children is discovered, cries :

" Did heaven look on,
And would not take their part ? "

And Thomas Hardy, in his *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, expresses a similar thought through the medium of a conversation between Tess and her brother, Abraham, as they trek, for their drunken father, under the open heavens of an early morning to deliver their hives at Casterbridge before the Saturday market is due to begin.

" ' Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess ? '

" ' Yes.'

" ' All like ours ? '

" ' I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like apples on our stubbard-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted.'

" ' Which do we live on—a splendid one or a blighted one ? '

" ' A blighted one.'

" ' 'Tis very unlucky that we didn't pitch on a sound one when there were so many more of 'em ! '

" ' Yes.'

" ' Is it like that *really*, Tess ? ' said Abraham, turning to her, much impressed, on reconsideration of this rare information. ' How would it have been, if we had pitched on a sound one ? '

" ' Well, father wouldn't have coughed and creeped about as he does, and wouldn't have got too tipsy to go this journey : and mother wouldn't have been always washing and never getting finished.'

" ' And you would have been a rich lady ready-made, and not have to be made rich by marrying a gentleman ? '

" ' O Aby, don't—don't talk of that any more ! ' "

Each of these quotations reflects a human mind baffled by the problem of evil : which, to state it simply, is none other than the question—why life should reveal so many phenomena, or experiences, that present themselves to our minds as unpleasant, or bitter, or tragic, or hard. Or, conversely, why life is not smoother, or easier, or more pleasant, or sweeter, or more beautiful, than it often is.

This question crosses the path of all of us. A letter comes from a friend, telling of a wife helpless with rheumatoid arthritis, suddenly left a widow with two dependent children, and no means; or a charitable trust receives an appeal for assistance from a man of exemplary character on the ground that through a swift and relentless series of misfortunes to his wife, himself and their two children, his salary being small, and having also suffered reduction in the same period, he is faced with indebtedness he can see no way of liquidating; and we feel ourselves confronted by an enigma. George Borrow, recording in *Lavengro* his feelings as he contemplated the life of the poet Cowper, wrote, " Sorrow! do I say? How faint a word to express the misery of that bruised reed: misery so dark that a blind worm like myself is occasionally tempted to exclaim, Better had the world never been created than that one so kind, so harmless, and so mild, should have undergone such intolerable woe! " Faced with the tragedies of life, we may apostrophise less eloquently, but our emotions are very similar. And in those tragedies lies the problem. It may express itself as pain or suffering; moral evil or sin; accident, misfortune or disaster; death; waste; or the whole question of the relationship of the fact of the evil itself to the thought of a Providential Order; but that is the problem, and at bottom it is the same problem. Hence, if we are to consider it as a problem, we cannot ignore the consideration of the problem as a whole, or of the various aspects in which it reveals itself.

Our enquiry is then—Is there any solution to this problem? Can we find a key that will turn the lock and admit us to the inner chamber of the mystery with which it presents us? In general, the human mind has attempted a solution, and has met with varying measures of satisfaction, along three lines. Let us take a look at these attempts.

The most primitive is that which has attributed all that man feels to be evil in life's experience to an inherent malignity

in the ordering of things. Thus the savage, faced with our problem, solves it frankly by considering himself a subject of attack on the part of some malevolent entity, or spirit. The death that lurks in the jungle is for him something devised by an evil power, or expressive of its reactions; while the misfortune that occurs to his property or person springs from a similarly malevolent source. "Spirits," says Bousset, in his *What is Religion?* "may (for the primitive man) conceal themselves in the most insignificant of inanimate objects—in a stone, for example, which, breaking away from a cliff, kills a man" or in "a nail" run "into the foot." The birth of twins may equally be attributed to a demonic agency. For the savage, in short, there is no reason or rhyme in things other than that which implies that he is at the mercy of powers to be propitiated, and that it is always as well to play for safety. And that what is true of the savage is only less true of cultured peoples is evident, if we consider the nature of our own popular superstitions. We touch wood if we boast, lest our boastfulness should bring upon us some calamity. We go under a ladder with crossed fingers, lest some evil befall us as we pass beneath.

This, however, is not the only form taken by this type of solution. Another is found in the Jewish–Christian doctrine of the Sâtân, or Devil, which appears in turn in various forms as the Zoroastrian Ormuzd and Ahriman, the Manichean Demiurge, and all other dualistic theologies or philosophies. Vergil wrote, "*Fortuna omnipotens et ineluctabile fatum*" (Fortune all powerful, and fate, from which no wrestler ever wrestled free), which, if in literal translation it implies nothing more than necessity, in actual usage suggests such a grimness in the necessity that it brings us back to the same idea. According to all these notions the experience of evil is explained by the suggestion of its origination in an evilly disposed element in the make-up of things, an idea which Mr. H. G. Wells resuscitated a few years ago in his conception

of the Veiled Being. This idea he elaborated at the time in several successive works, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* being the first.

Mr. Britling, who is a savant, faced with the problem of the War, resolves his problem by the device of separating the idea of God from that of the Creative Energy, and identifying it with the sum total of all that struggles towards the light. The Creative Energy accordingly he terms Necessity, which for him is other than God. Letty, his secretary, who believes herself to be a widow, her husband being at the front, has gone out to mourn in solitude in the fields near Matchings Easy, when Mr. Britling, whose son Hugh has been killed, comes upon her. They begin to talk. Mr. Britling is no longer the easy optimist, but his faith in the goodness of things is by no means silenced, and he expresses the view that in the days of peace that must inevitably follow the great convulsion better things shall be.

" ' But do you really believe,' said Letty, ' that things can be better than they are ? '

" ' But—yes ! ' said Mr. Britling.

" ' I don't,' said Letty. ' The world is cruel. . . . It is just a place of cruel things. It is all set with knives. It is full of diseases and accidents. As for God—either there is no God or He is an idiot. He is a slobbering idiot. He is like some idiot who pulls the wings off flies.'

" ' No,' said Mr. Britling.

" ' There is no progress. Nothing gets better. How can you believe in God after Hugh ? *Do* you believe in God ? '

" ' Yes,' said Mr. Britling after a long pause, ' I do believe in God.'

" ' Who lets these things happen ? . . . Who kills my Teddy and your Hugh ? '

" ' No,' said Mr. Britling.

" ' But he *must* let these things happen. Or why do they happen ? '

" 'No,' said Mr. Britling. 'It is the theologians who must answer that. They have been extravagant about God. They have had silly absolute ideas—that He's all-powerful. That He's omni-everything. But the common-sense of men knows better. Every real religious thought denies it. After all, the real God of the Christians is Christ, not God Almighty. . . . You have been misled. It is a theologian's folly. God is not absolute; God is finite.' " There is, he declares, a necessity, to which in a later work Mr. Wells, his creator, refers as " the Veiled Being," which is as yet beyond God. This is the entity on whom responsibility for evil must be laid.

The second main line of approach to the problem is that which has repudiated the idea of any malignity in the ordering of things in the sense in which we have just spoken, and has assigned the experience of evil to a source inscrutable, but benevolent: an all-wise, but not altogether comprehensible divinity, or God. This interpretation has taken many forms. According to some, it is interpreted in a way that eliminates the thought of any personal activity from the conception of divinity. Thus we have the Hindu doctrine of Karma, by which all evil that befalls men is envisaged as punishment, measure for measure, for wrong done. This Karma, in a word, is impersonal law which operates automatically, and to give it full play the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, or metempsychosis, has been developed, by which it is affirmed that the soul is an entity successively incarnate in various bodies. The suffering we endure to-day may have been merited by some action in a previous life. According to others, however, the divine activity is essentially personal. The Hebrew prophets, for example, who in most ways were men of outstanding originality and insight, taught this view. They preached incessantly the sufferings of men and nations generally, and those of Israel and Judah in particular, as the result of a divine activity meting out punish-

ment for sin in one form or another. Amos, in this way, speaking in the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel, commences his prophecies with a succession of indictments against Israel, Judah and the surrounding countries, on the ground that, since each has committed some offence, each must suffer some particular and specific affliction. And later what the Prophets applied to the nations, the Jewish theologians applied to the individual, and not only applied it in its direct form, but also inversely; so that when Jesus is confronted with the man born blind, the first thing his disciples ask him is, " Which did sin, this man or his parents ? "

Nor is this idea dead to-day. The outbreak of the War was quite commonly interpreted by religious people as a direct issue of divine governance. When the *Titanic* foundered, there were those who saw in its loss an act of divine retaliation on man's presumption in building so vast a ship. This is, of course, the philosophy that lies behind the legend of the Tower of Babel; which we see in a nobler aspect in the words of St. James, " Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth," and along this line it emerges as the notion that regards evil, in general, as divinely intruded into human life as a test of our faith, or courage: the sufferings of life as sent by way of challenge to our endurance: its moral difficulties as part of its trial or proving: its accidents and tragedies as part of its inscrutable purpose: its hardships and sorrows as given to build us up. Evil, from this point of view, is educational. We are bidden to accept its utility on faith. " We shall understand these things better by and by," is a common expression of acquiescence among those who hold this view or outlook.

> " God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform,"

is the text of their apprehension of the mystery. It is enough for them that God is good, and that the apparent evil comes

from Him. It is our part accordingly to bear with fortitude the evil, as we accept with gratitude the good, that comes to us from His hand.

And the third main line is that which has sought to find rest for the mind by eliminating all ideas of good, evil, or God, from men's estimate of the universe; or, in other words, by the apparently simple process of cutting the Gordian knot. Actuated by this line of thought, Mr. William Archer expresses himself very finely in the concluding chapter of his book *God and Mr. Wells* in the words, " When we think of the roaring vortices of flame that spangle the heavens night by night, at distances that beggar conception; when we think of our tiny earth, wrapped in its little film of atmosphere, spinning safely for ages untold amid all these appalling immensities; and when we think, on the other hand, of the battles of claw and maw going on, beneath the starry vault, in that most innocuous of jewels, a drop of water, we cannot but own that the Power which set all this whirl of atoms a-going is worthy of all admiration. And approbation? Ah, that is another matter; for there the moral element comes in." Mr. Archer goes on to say that it is possible that there is a moral element, or that there is not. There may or may not be: he does not know, therefore he will not say. But where he will admit an open mind, there are others who will not do so. These see the world of sentient existence against a background that is altogether empty. It is just an interplay of forces, working without feeling or intelligence, toward—nothing. This is, or seems to be, the standpoint of certain of the American humanists. Mr. Earl F. Cook, in his *Universe of Humanism*, writes, " Several summers ago with three companions I was in Glacier National Park. We had been walking all day, and when the shadows lengthened and darkness filled the narrow valley between two gigantic mountain peaks, we built a fire to cook our food and to keep warm during the night. In my diary I wrote the follow-

ing paragraph about that night in the open: 'There was no sound except the crackling of the fire and the occasional slow movements of one of us putting another hunk of wood on the embers. The sparks went scurrying upward in the canyon of trees. The forest was silent; now and then a slight wind coming down from the valley from the glaciers above us audibly caressed the tops of the trees. There was a tremendous loneliness. The woods crowded upon us and the trees seemed to protest our presence as "they invisibly sucked life from the dead forests beneath them." . . . The forest was a weird, ominous, and terrible thing of beauty that night. It seemed to watch us, waiting to subdue and capture us. The fire alone seemed strong enough to protect us from it. No wonder man has had gods of fire and worshipped the flaming sun. . . . The stars through the crevice between the trees sparkled and made one lying on his back on the boughs itch with wonder, although the body was dead from exertion.'" There we have the spirit of Humanism—man as a tiny Titan striving against and with the soulless and unheeding forces of nature—which Mr. E. Stanton Hodgin puts into explicit form in his essay on *Theism and Humanism*, when he says, "Neither the bible nor science nor history reveals to man a perfect god operating perfectly through world events. We can find no father and friend whose aid can be invoked in special ways. We are left to struggle with the pitiless world-forces in our own way—to master them or be mastered by them in accordance with the power and guidance we are able to develop within ourselves." John H. Dietrich, another exponent of Humanism, may say that Humanism "does not deny our right to believe in God"; and Curtis Reese may affirm that, as distinct from the positivism of Comte, it does not worship Humanity; but, in effect, it eliminates the thought of God as having any practical bearing on human life and welfare, and meets the problem of evil by placing the question of the ultimate nature

of the universe, or the nature of the ultimate in the universe, beyond the range of human knowledge or concern. This, more emphatically put, is essentially the view of Lord Russell in his *Scientific Outlook* and elsewhere. There is no ultimate goodness, therefore there is no problem of goodness, or evil, to resolve.

Those, then, are the three lines along which the human mind has customarily sought a solution of the problem of evil. Either it has postulated as the origin of evil some malign power, or it has affirmed an inscrutable wisdom, or it has denied all moral content to the ultimate essence of things in any shape or form. And that each of these avenues of approach adumbrates some truth or reality we may readily allow. The theory of malignancy is clearly an attempt to express the truth that we experience forms of evil which are curiously positive in their manifestations; that of inscrutability recalls us to a recognition of the fact that evil is a reality, aspects of which lie beyond the range of our present powers of explanation; and that of de-moralising, or a-moralising, the ultimate, is an affirmation of the truth that in the universe there are elements the moral value of which it is very difficult to assess. But as solutions to our problem they are all impossible, as becomes evident if we reflect upon the implications of each of them for a moment. If we seek to solve our problem by affirming the existence of a malignant, or potentially malignant, element in the universe, we are landed in the morass of dualism or pluralism; and if we seek to disengage ourselves from that morass by universalising the malignant element, we are confronted at once by the problem of the good. If we attempt to take refuge in the cave of inscrutability, we are faced by the paradox that a good God is the source of evil, or alternatively that an evil God permits good. While if we attempt to escape the issue altogether by de-moralising the ultimate, we are confronted by the fact, that man, who, as Julian Huxley makes abundantly clear

in his *Religion without Revelation*, " by nature and origin . . . is one with the universe," and " indivisible " from it, is capable of moral attainment; while that from which he and the universe arise is incapable—which is a logically untenable proposition.

That is the position as regards these three great theories or methods of approach. Nor does the old Gnostic or Stoic, or the modern Theosophical, solution take us any further. The doctrine of evil as something inherent in the nature of matter, or life, as we know it in this sphere, explains nothing. It merely pushes the problem back a stage further. Granted that matter or life, as we know it, is inherently evil, which is an unintelligible idea, the question still remains—Why is it evil ?—and unless we ask that question we are evading the whole issue.

And so, having examined the popular theories that have in the main held the field, we come back pretty much to where we started. We are still faced with the fact of evil as we know it, which is a big enough problem, apart from any theories, and with the question why such a fact as evil should exist. And unless we can discover an approach which can thread its way through the maze more deftly than any of these which we have hitherto examined, taking into account the realities of the situation as we know them, seeking neither to ignore, nor under- or over-state them, we must admit defeat at the outset, in which there would be no disgrace.

Our enquiry, therefore, must be whether there is, or is not, a point of view which satisfies, at least more fully than the foregoing, these requirements. And that there is, is to the present author not in doubt. We find it when we approach the problem from a rational standpoint : when, that is to say, we enter our field of enquiry with a reasoning mind. For when we do so, we discover that, while it may be difficult to apprehend why the universe was so constructed as to allow of the possibility of what appears to us as evil (except to

emphasise that only in such a universe would it seem possible for beings capable of moral and intellectual development to have appeared); and while it may be true, as it certainly is true, that no solution yet known to man resolves our problem in a way entirely satisfactory to thoughtful minds; yet there are numerous considerations which may be adduced to relieve its pressure, if only by showing that the fact of evil, in so far as it is a fact, is not incompatible with a belief in an ultimate goodness, because what we normally regard as evil may be seen, in so far as it is ultimate, to subserve that which is good in the scheme of things, and, in so far as it is evil, to have no ultimate place in the scheme of things at all.

This at all events will be the approach of the ensuing chapters. They will seek to show that this is actually the case. Thus, it is hoped, some light may be shed upon the problem that is not shed by other view-points. For in its essence the problem before us is this : Can we look boldly into the face of the evils of life and sincerely believe in its ultimate goodness ? If we can recognise that, in any sense, what we call evil may serve a useful purpose, or may, at least, not conflict with a useful purpose, we can do so. If not, we cannot.

Let us consider the question in detail.

CHAPTER II

PAIN AND SUFFERING

FROM the point of view of facing the issues involved and at the same time being able to recognise in the universal order a final or ultimate goodness, the most obtrusive aspect of our problem to the modern mind is certainly that of pain and suffering. We have grown beyond the stage of indifference and callousness, and have passed into a stage of intense sensitiveness on this issue. To witness suffering distresses us, and even the mere realisation of its existence lacerates us incredibly. It enters like cold steel into our souls, and it is a mark of spiritual progress that this should be the case.

And, furthermore, we cannot escape the fact, even if we would, that in life as we know it suffering is indeed a terrible and ubiquitous reality. Wherever there is sentient life the fact or potentiality of suffering is found. It is present in the world of human affairs; and in that of the animal creation. There is the suffering men inflict on animals, and upon each other. There is the suffering of the innocent and the guilty; the suffering of the wise and the foolish; the suffering of the noble and ignoble. One even suffers that another may live, not to say rejoice. That is true quite apart from the fact of an increased sensitiveness, and we achieve no purpose by obscuring the truth.

This being so, we may ask whether it is possible to believe in an ultimate goodness, or, if it is preferred, in the ultimate goodness of the universe, and recognise the reality of evil in this form. And it is a healthy sign that the modern mind is not disposed to be put off with any plea of a specious nature in

this connection. If the thoughtful person of to-day is to see his way through this imbroglio, he will require an honest facing up to the situation. He will not be deaf to the claims of a reasonable statement, but he will be impatient of any burking of the issue. The question is then, Can we face up to the problem? Can we see our way through it in any degree? Can we, at least, approach it in such a way as to lessen its burden for the modern man or woman? And if so, what will that approach be? That is the problem that is before us here; and it is to this problem that we must now address our thought.

The problem of suffering, like the problem of evil of which it is an aspect, may be summarised thus: (i) The Fact of Suffering, and (ii) The Question why Suffering Exists. And there are two methods of approaching these considerations which have a certain vogue at the present time. One is to say, with the Christian Scientist, that "all inharmony of mortal mind or body is erroneous"; and that "error is illusion" (*Science and Health*, pp. 472, 473); and the other is to say, with the Christian theologian of a somewhat *passé* type of orthodoxy, that it is the result of an original sin. But to most thoughtful persons neither of these answers will give satisfaction. They will affirm that the claim of Christian Science is itself the result of "error" and "illusion," and they will say that the solution of orthodox theology is wanting in historical truth. In this they may be wrong, but that will certainly be their reaction, and with them the present author, in so far as he understands things, certainly agrees. To them it will seem that if a rational approach exists, it must involve a candid recognition of what appear actualities. And they will hold that such a recognition involves the admission that suffering is a reality, and that of all life's problems none is more harassing to the human mind than that of which suffering forms a part. But having admitted these two facts with the utmost candour, they will perceive that, so far from having

said the last word on the subject, the door has only opened to a whole tract of things, many or few, that may be said, and they will go on to a consideration of such matters with an unprejudiced mind.

What, then, will they discover? This is the question we must now press, and the answer will be that they will discover a number of facts relevant to the issue which should on no account be overlooked. They will find that they *are* facts, neither special pleas, nor extenuations, nor hypothetical propositions, nor mere theories, and that, as facts, they serve to mitigate the problem as a problem in a remarkable degree. This is at least something gained; and we shall see that what is gained makes a very real difference to our estimate of the balance of things when they are considered as a whole. What, then, are the facts?

The first fact is that it is not difficult for the sensitive modern mind to exaggerate the amount of suffering in the world at any given time, and to imagine suffering where no suffering exists. As Alfred Russel Wallace said in his *The World and Life*, "Our whole tendency to transfer our sensations of pain to all other animals is grossly misleading." Especially is this so in relation to the suffering of the lower orders of animal life. Research into this realm shows that exaggeration is very easy. Suffering in the lower types of animal existence is mainly, if not entirely, physical; and the acuteness of physical suffering depends on nothing more nor less than the development of the nervous system, or of the brain, of the animal, or creature, concerned. Where the brain and nervous system are developed, suffering is greater; where they are rudimentary, suffering is slight. This is no mere callous equivocation. It is a fact. The maggot-ridden caterpillar is not in agony as a man would be in a similar state of disintegration. We cut a worm in two, and he starts two new lives, one in each direction; we cut a man in two, and he suffers excruciating agony and dies. "We err," says

A. R. Wallace, again in his book on *Darwinism* " . . . in giving to animals feelings and emotions they do not possess. . . . The poet's

> ' Nature red in tooth and claw
> With rapine . . .'

is a picture of evil which is read into it by our imaginations."

This is no plea, or excuse, for a single act of wanton cruelty to animals, either in general or particular. We may acknowledge this truth, and hate the practice of cruelty to animals wherever it occurs. It is simply the recognition of a fact for which we may be profoundly thankful. All forms of suffering inflicted upon animals are repellent: any *unnecessary* suffering so inflicted is altogether reprehensible and without excuse: and this applies whatever the occasion be. Nevertheless, it is only sane to admit a fact as such when we see it. A worm does not suffer as acutely as a man suffers, neither does a beetle, a bird, a dog, nor even a horse. Nor does a man of lower culture, or civilisation, suffer as acutely as one of higher culture, or civilisation. Animals in general neither anticipate, nor remember, suffering as men do. A savage can endure pain that would kill a civilised man. The sting of a wasp, which may cause the death of a man, inflicts no apparent suffering on the badger, which gains its livelihood in part by raiding wasps' nests. Among certain Australian tribes when a man was found guilty of a crime it was the custom for one after another of the injured family to walk up and thrust a spear into his leg, with no ultimate injury to the man beyond the remaining scars: a practice that would result in death for the majority of Europeans. That is one fact to observe; and it is a fact of very great importance.

Then there is the fact that many things which appear to cause suffering do not actually cause as much suffering as would seem to be the case. For instance, hardly is there a sight more seemingly cruel, or heartless, than that of a cat

playing with a mouse. Hence we tell ourselves that the mouse is the victim of diabolical suffering. And we are to be commended for the reality of our concern. And yet the fact is that the greater part of the actual suffering involved is in the mind of the human observer; and that, not merely because his nervous system is more highly developed than that of the mouse, but because in the process itself a certain palliative appears to be introduced in the form of stupor. David Livingstone, the great missionary and explorer, who once himself went through the experience with a lion, records that as soon as the lion had shaken him, " the shock produced a stupor . . . similar to that which seems to be felt by a mouse after the first shake of a cat. It caused a sort of dreaminess, in which there was no sense of pain, nor feeling of terror, though I was quite conscious of what was happening all the time." This experience is one of extraordinary interest for our subject, Livingstone being a medical man, and having been trained in scientific observation. We do well to note this point also, and bear it in mind. It is one that alters the complexion of many things.

Again, there is the fact that, after all, the problem of the world's suffering is, as a problem, no greater, even if it is no less, than the suffering of any given individual; and that, when all is said and done, in most individual lives there is more time enjoyed in freedom from suffering than there is spent in subjection to it.

Once more, we may recollect, as has already been hinted, that it is man who actually bears the major portion of the suffering of the world, and he, if he will, is able in many ways to make his own sufferings, and the sufferings of other creatures, less.

And, yet again, we should not forget that a large proportion of the suffering borne by man is avoidable suffering. Most of the suffering men inflict on each other, or on animals, is avoidable: as also is most of the suffering that men endure

because they persist in certain courses of action, as, for instance, living in volcanic regions, where they know that they may at any time be overwhelmed.

These are all facts to bear in mind as being very relevant to our subject, and the thoughtful enquirer will give them weight.

But when we have taken all these facts into account, the truth remains that we have not yet done more than touch the fringe or surface of our problem : for the fact of suffering is still there, and nothing we have said has altered that. Indeed, if we have done anything, so far, it has merely been to move the problem a little higher up the scale of life. That is to say, if we have reduced the amount of suffering among lower orders of life, we have only shown that the burden of suffering rests on man. If anything useful is to be said about suffering—especially in relation to religious faith, or philosophical belief in the ultimate universal goodness—it is evident that we must dig deeper than we have done so far. And that we do only when, in relation to the problem of suffering, as in relation to the problem of evil as a whole, we see that, although the presence of suffering in the universe may be, as yet, inexplicable, and although its mere existence is essentially a dark and baffling mystery, in addition to the foregoing, in the great outworking of things, the fact of suffering, in so far as it is irremovable, has served and does serve an intelligible, or useful, purpose. And that this is so there can be no doubt.

One of the necessities of life is the preservation of life. Up to a point, at least, the individual is a necessary link, if nothing more, in the chain of sentient existence. And if the individual is to live his own life, and be preserved intact, he must have some equipment which will keep him awake to such dangers as might extinguish his life were he not warned of them in time. And one way of preserving him from such a danger is to provide him with a warning apparatus. If he is so provided, he preserves his individuality, and perhaps his

life. If not, both may be sacrificed. And this is what those sensations, or responses of our nervous system, are that we speak of as pain and suffering.

As Le Conte has said, " Painful sensations are . . . watchful vedettes upon the outposts of our organism to warn us of approaching danger. Without these, the citadel of our life would quickly be surprised or taken." Or, to use more homely language, pain and suffering provide, as it were, a warning-bell that rings to tell us that danger has come too near. If we touch a black-hot poker, it burns us, and we drop it. In that we have a perfect illustration. The warning-bell has rung to alarm us, lest unalarmed we meet a very much worse fate. Usually, of course, we complain because we are hurt, but in reality we should be glad. If we had not been hurt, we should have sustained a far greater injury, which would clearly have been worse. It is one of the misfortunes that in the case of such diseases as cancer, or leprosy, frequently, little or no discomfort is felt in the early stages, at which point of development some cure might be wrought. Thus Father Damien, the famous missionary to the lepers, did not suspect his own leprosy until his hair had already begun to fall out and he was able to plunge his feet into scalding water without being conscious of ill-effects. Pain is in this way a form of evil that has uses. And these uses should not be overlooked. This is a very significant aspect of our subject—the functions of pain as Nature's alarm-bell. If we did not suffer we should die.

Then in relation to the fact of progress, or development, there can be no question that in the actual outworking of things, pain or suffering has proved itself of the greatest possible service. It has been a great dynamic. The race of man, as a whole, is characterised by a tendency to inertia. Most of us are very willing to settle into grooves both of thought and life, until, as has been said, the grooves at least threaten to become our graves. And until something

transpires to hound us out of our complacencies, we run along in the beaten tracks serenely indifferent to realities, and things are as they have ever been. Thus great civilisations, like those of China and India, having arrived, respectively, at certain stages of development, remained there for centuries and millenniums, with detrimental results to the peoples concerned, whereas races lost in barbarism when they were highly developed have spurred past them in the race. And one of the things, both in the past and in the present, that has hounded, and does hound, men out of the grooves is unquestionably suffering. It is when men are brought face to face with conditions that make them suffer—or think, that they begin to act in unprecedented ways. This is a truth of universal application. How often in our personal experience it has been some unpleasantness, some pain, some suffering, or some fear of suffering, that has galvanised us into effort! And in the long story of the race, how often the incentive that has urged men forward has been the thing that stung! It was the period of the four ice-ages that witnessed the rise of man from pithecanthropus erectus, to the Cromagnard and Grimaldi peoples, in the interval that lies before the dawn of history; and it is the breaking down of the present economic system, with its consequent hardships, that is witnessing the rise of an awareness of the need of fashioning a new economic system suited to the world in which we live to-day. Even the apparently useless suffering that Mark Rutherford inveighs against so nobly in his *Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, is not so useless as it often appears. Zachariah Coleman would never have become the man he rose to be, apart from his experiences in his first unhappy marriage.

And, once again, in relation to man's moral development, suffering, or pain, has been a great educator or teacher. The morality of man is not, as some insist, a mere convention; it is something implanted in the substance of his being—indeed, in the soil and rock of life itself. And, this being so,

a relationship has always existed between suffering and moral behaviour. Man has discovered that the totality of suffering increases as he defies, or ignores, his moral nature, and lessens as he accepts it and lives by its demands. Historically speaking, one of the factors in determining for man what he regards as good and evil, respectively, has been his discovery that to act unjustly brings suffering and sorrow upon himself and others in a way that acting justly does not. Nor is that all. The moral education afforded by suffering has not stopped merely at the point of stimulating a sense of values that remains at the self-regarding level. Honesty is not always the best policy, and goodness and comfort do not always go together. There is a higher honesty, and a higher goodness —that which we call sympathy and love—which have no commerce with material considerations, and it is through, or at least by the aid of, suffering, and the realisation of others' suffering, that we have actually learned as a race the happiness of love and sympathy, and from this to rise to the virtues of the higher life.

Often, as George Eliot says in *Romola*, " this sort of happiness . . . brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good." But still it is good, and we know it to be good. The mother's love for her child, the comrade's sacrifice for his fellow in distress, the passion that stirs the social reformer, the love of man that summoned a Shaftesbury to live and a Christ to die, the nurse's devotion and the surgeon's care—these are things that seemingly we should never have known, at the present stage of development, apart from suffering : for of suffering at least this may be said, if it makes life hard, it gives it depth.

Thus, though the fact of suffering may lie like a shadow across life, and though we may bid everyone who lessens it, " God speed " ; if we approach it from the broad angle, and take into our purview all the relevant considerations, we may

say that it assumes a place in the scheme of things that the human intelligence can appreciate. We may see, in short, that it plays a part in the preservation and development of life. Why this should be so may present us with an enigma; but that it is so we may recognise as a fact. And if we apprehend that, the darkness of our problem does not remain unbroken. It is possible to perceive that the phenomenon of pain does not rule out the possibility of the goodness of the ultimate reality of the universe. It becomes possible to hold together a recognition of the reality of evil, and faith in such a goodness. It is not a case of "*credo, quia impossibile*," but a rational act.

CHAPTER III

MORAL EVIL OR SIN

In an article in the *Hibbert Journal* of April 1904, Sir Oliver Lodge recorded it not merely as his opinion, but as a truism, that "the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins." And in the sense in which the writer was using the words there can be little doubt that he was right.

The word 'sin' has a theological content. Theologians speak of the 'sense of sin.' The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that we are, or should consider ourselves, 'miserable sinners.' And far more recent liturgies, and hymnodies, retain the term. It is an unnatural form of speech to modern people, but one which lingers because it has come to us from a remote and venerable past. We received it from the Puritans and the Roman Church; they, in turn, received it, through the Early Church and the Primitive Church, from the Jews; and they—to go no further back—acquired it with a rather different connotation from the Hebrews, from whom they themselves directly sprang. And it is unnatural because the word used in this connection implies a conception of morality related to that of a deity to whom men stand in an attitude dictated by considerations, more or less, of fear; a morality that cultivated people to-day have consciously abandoned. This is unquestionably what Sir Oliver had in mind at the time of writing. He was thinking of 'sin' in its theological setting. And in this sense it is perfectly true to say that the "higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins."

But if that is so, it is not true, either to say or to imply, that he is not worrying about the fact of moral evil. He

recognises that fact about him on every side. He sees its presence in private, or individual, relationships. He is emphatically aware of it as a factor in his social and economic disorder and distress. And his recognition of it expresses itself in the attitude to war and armaments that is now current in all intelligent communities; and in the multifarious, if sometimes confused and ill-directed, efforts toward social, economic and international reform. For to the modern thinking man or woman—who is presumably intended by Sir Oliver when he speaks of " the higher man of to-day "—moral evil is the evil of wrong behaviour, and he has indeed both seen the reality of moral evil so understood, and is worrying about it in a way, and to a degree, that is unprecedented in the history of mankind. He feels that humanity is beset by certain moral defects—or defects of behaviour which it must either overcome, or possibly be overwhelmed by. He realises also that between these moral defects and human suffering there is an intimate connection. He sees that if the amount of wrong behaviour in the world were lessened, the amount of human suffering would be lessened likewise. He is inclined, thus, to agree with Dr. A. S. Peake, when he says that if the " problem of pain is the more obscure " problem, the problem of moral evil " is the darker." The problem of moral evil is, therefore, not absent from, but very much present in the mind of the " higher man of to-day."

At any rate, in discussing the problem of evil in general, we cannot overlook this aspect of it. Whether we speak of the problem of moral evil, or that of sin, the issue is there. And fundamentally the question that presents itself to the modern mind is not merely how moral evil may be overcome, which is the practical aspect; but also how, or why, it should exist, which is practical and theoretical as well. This problem has occupied the mind of man in every generation. Man has found that there is a ' bar sinister ' in his inner and his outer

life. He has discovered that within his being there is the sense of a 'higher' and a 'lower,' between which there is an age-long conflict. He has observed also that if, in response to the urge to what he recognises as the 'higher,' he does what he has come to regard as 'right,' he advances—though perhaps painfully and slowly—toward a life that is found to be ultimately happier and freer; while if, in response to the pull of what he feels to be 'lower,' he does what he has come to describe as 'wrong,' he involves himself, and others, including very often those as yet unborn, in suffering and impoverishment of life. And finally, he has learned—and herein is the crux of the whole matter—that whether the suffering, or impoverishment, comes as a result of his personal choice, or through his weakness, or his ignorance, or in any other way, it generally seems very much easier for life, or himself, to follow the wrong way than the right one. That is the problem of moral evil: the fact of its existence, and the fact that as a matter of experience it is so much easier to respond to the downward pull than to the upward urge. And that this statement of the problem is a fair one may be seen from the fact that all the solutions to it that have hitherto swayed the mind of man approach it from this angle. A glance at these solutions will reveal this fact.

Probably the answer which has affected the Western mind most widely is that which in various forms has postulated the idea of a Fall. According to this theory, man originated in a state of moral perfection, and by his own choice, or by some accident of fate, fell from that state into a condition of moral chaos. This suggestion was found in the Greek Legend of a Golden Age, and in the Roman Legend of the reign of Saturn. The form in which it is best known to us, however, is that which is based on the Hebrew Legend of Eden. According to that legend, as we know, man was created without moral blemish. Further it is stated that the world, as originally brought into being, was free from sin;

and that, because it was free from sin, there was in it neither suffering, nor misery, nor want, nor arduous toil. Then came evil in the form of the Serpent, tempting Eve, and, through Eve, Adam. Adam yielded to temptation, and so the whole cycle of sin and suffering began. That is the theory of moral evil on which traditional Christianity is established. Without this doctrine of a Fall, the traditional Christian Scheme dissolves; for to the simple legend traditional Christianity has added the further doctrine that, through Adam's sin, a taint passed into the blood of the human race, making it impossible for man to recover his original perfection without the intervention of a God-given saviour: thus bringing the philosophy of determinism to bear upon the original idea. But in whatever form it emerges, the Fall-conception is fundamentally identical. And it will be seen that in all its forms it approaches the problem of moral evil from the dual aspect we have named. It attempts to answer the questions why moral evil exists, and why it is easier for man to choose the lower way than the higher: which is a demonstration of our point.

Or if we consider another theory, or solution, which has had a bearing on human thought (the theory to which we referred in the first chapter)—that of the good and bad god—we see the same tendency emerging. This theory, whether expressed in the doctrines of Zoroaster and the Manichees; the Greek and Roman conflict of the gods; the God and Devil, or God and Satan, of ancient Christian tradition, according to which moral evil is the result of the impact upon man of higher malign powers; clearly approaches the problem from the same ultimate point of view. First, the fact of evil, and then the reason for the ease with which man may adopt the evil path. For if these theories postulate goodness as the ultimate victor, they all affirm that in the present order of things evil has the freer hand, by which they seek to explain man's susceptibility to wrong.

Or consider, again, the solution which comes to us through the channel of Stoic philosophy, though it had its origin in Eastern speculation: viz. the doctrine that moral evil arises from the fact that, while spirit is good, in life as we know it, spirit is enmeshed in matter, which is in itself an inherently evil thing—and we find the same principle emerges. This theory, which may also be found in the doctrine of the Chinese philosopher, Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130–1200), and which underlies the Catholic doctrine of the Sacrament, again contemplates the problem, from the dual aspect—viz. why evil, and why the way of righteousness is hard.

And when we come to the philosophies of more modern schools, for instance that of Schleiermacher, who affirmed that evil was due, not to the sin of Adam, but simply to a taint in human nature; or that of Hegel, who held that moral evil was part of the antithesis through which man must pass as he goes from Thesis to Synthesis; or that of the illuminationist school, which argued that moral evil arose from a natural weakness in man's spiritual constitution; or that of Kant, who said that moral evil consisted in, and to that extent resulted from, man's failure to obey the 'categorical imperative' within his soul: we see that, from one standpoint or another, whenever the problem has been faced, these two aspects have been taken into consideration—why evil; and why it should be easier to do wrong than right.

That, then, has been the approach, and the approach has been a sound one. But if this is so, it must also be felt that most of the solutions so far proposed have failed in some important aspect to face the central issue. The doctrine of a fall in the traditional sense is put out of court at once by the fact that it is untrue historically speaking. The doctrine of a dual Godhead fails because it does not tell us why one of the two gods should be evil, and if so, why the good god, if he is to prevail in the final instance, should allow the evil one to exist at all. The doctrine of the evil quality of matter is

manifestly untenable, because one cannot impute a moral quality to an amoral entity. And despite the great names associated with the other theories mentioned, it is impossible to pretend that they cast much light upon our problem, when we present them with the simple question " Why ? " And so we come back again to the question with which we started—Why the fact of moral evil ? Why do we feel the upward urge, and the downward pull ? Why is it so easy to respond to the latter, and so hard to respond to the former ? And why does a yielding to the downward pull work such chaos in human life ? It is clear that the theories we have glanced at are either too ill-founded, or too partial, to wrap themselves around the facts of the situation. The question is whether there is a point of view adequate to our need. In dealing with the whole problem of evil, the line taken in this little book, hitherto, has been that if there is no complete solution to the problem as yet known to man, it is at least an easement if a rational consideration can suggest an intelligible place or reason for what is, or appears to be, evil, in the scheme of things; and in dealing with this aspect of the problem it is claimed that once again this principle applies.

Professor Henry Jones, in his book on *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, says, " Modern Science and philosophy assume as a starting-point for their investigation . . . that the lowest forms of existence can be explained, only as stages in the self-realisation of that which is highest. This idea levels-upwards : and points to self-consciousness as the ultimate truth of all things " (Ch. VIII, Browning's *Solution of the Problem of Evil*). Much the same may be said in regard to our present problem. We find an approach to the issue of moral evil that makes it intelligible if we consider it from the same view-point, namely, the doctrine of evolution that is now accepted, in the realm of biological and other scientific research. For the doctrine of evolution affords us the picture of life on this earth as, in the main, an upward-

moving development; and it shows that, in relation to the nature of man, as it does in relation to the nature of other forms of life. Man as we see him in the light of evolution is, to begin with, a product of a long ascent. He is, further, as we know him to-day, not at the end of his climb upwards. There is in him a heritage from the past; and there is in him an urge, or dynamic, toward things not yet arrived at. From the biological, and physiological, point of view the nature of this ascent is from the protoplasm to homo sapiens. From the psychological, or spiritual, point of view it is from unconscious to conscious and from instinct to reason. And, that grasped, we have the practical clue to the whole question. Man is a creature in transition. He is a climbing, or ascending creature. He is a complex of instinct and reason. He is rising from the one to the other; and his moral nature, and his moral problem, are an outflow of that fact. Both instinct and reason are good, but for man it is a question of which is to govern. When he allows instinct to defy or dominate reason, he is, usually speaking, falling backward in the scale. When he allows reason to control instinct, he is rising to the being he ought to be, and shall become. And the reason that the " lower " way is easier than the " higher " is simply that it is always easier to follow the well-worn path than to depart from it. In short, man is a creature in process of self-discovery. He is climbing, and he may easily slip back. This, indeed, is the true doctrine of the Fall : that man as a whole, or any man in particular, may, in the upward struggle, fall back to a level he should have left behind him. In this sense we are literally correct when we talk of a " higher " and a " lower," or when we say that such and such behaviour was " less than human," or that so and so was vile, because he behaved himself " like a beast." This is the rational outlook on the problem of moral evil. It is the outlook that our knowledge of facts, so far, supports and compels to. It may not explain the ultimate problem, which is why evolution should

be the mode of man's creation. It may not make the struggle any easier, except in so far as it tells us that the universe is on the side of the higher that is within us. But it does explain why, as human beings, we have the *sense* of a higher and a lower; why we know consciousness of failure, and shame, when we follow the lower, and not the higher impulse; and why modes of behaviour perfectly proper at lower levels of evolution make havoc of the life of man. Furthermore, viewed from this angle, we can see, if we will, that moral evil has a rational place in the scheme of things. It is an interim phase through which we are passing on our way to the heights beyond it. From this standpoint we perceive that the fact of moral evil is an inverse testimony not to man's depravity, but to his inherent greatness, since it shows that there is in man that which is not in the lower orders of being and life. Hence it lifts our eyes to the time when, having passed through this present phase, our race shall emerge at a stage of development where instinct shall have receded to a place of subordination, and reason shall predominate.

And finally it shows that since what we designate as moral evil is not something absolute, but something relative, it does not constitute a final barrier to belief in our ultimate reality of goodness. What is improper in a man is perfectly proper in the beast he should have left behind him. There is nothing evil in the thing itself, but only in its undue survival. And this consideration has a bearing when we relate it to the question of the nature of the final reality behind the appearance, or the facts.

CHAPTER IV

ACCIDENT, DISASTER, AND MISADVENTURE

An aspect of our problem often even more practically distressing than those we have already considered is that of accident, disaster, or misadventure. A party of miners is working at the coal face; there is a fall of rock, the men are entombed, and a score of women and children are left widows or fatherless. A great liner is in mid-ocean; through some fault in insulation the electric wiring sets fire to the woodwork, and hundreds of lives are lost. Such things are constantly occurring, and they never occur without raising our main question with an unabated poignancy. Here is a type of phenomenon that presents us with what appears at first sight an insoluble problem. We are faced here with what seems not merely unintelligible, but malign. On what rational ground can we suppose a place in any scheme for such events? Here is suffering that falls generally upon the innocent, which is the most insufferable suffering of all.

Among primitive peoples, of course, such happenings are frankly assigned to diabolical, or evilly-intentioned, agencies. Among the peasants of China, for instance, the failure of the millet crop, or the overflowing of a river, is attributed to some offence given to the local tutelary deity, or to the anger, perhaps, of the spirit inhabiting a neighbouring hill. A little higher up the scale, they may be attributed to the operation of occult forces. The word "disaster," the Greek δυς ἄστρον (*dusastron*), or Latin *dis-astrum*, indicating the influence of an 'untoward' or 'evil star,' preserves this point of view.

Higher again is the conception, as we have seen in our opening chapter, of such occurrences as a punishment for

sin. Thus, as we remember, of the man in St. John's Gospel who is said to have been born blind, it was asked, " Which did sin, this man or his parents ? "

And yet again in minds more developed still a solution is found, as in the Hindu doctrine of Karma, or the Book of Job, in the thought that in such misfortunes men are reaping the reward of ill deeds done in some past existence, or are being subjected to a testing from which they will emerge as gold refined in the furnace of an eternal power.

That an element of truth may lie behind such notions may be readily conceded. The thought of diabolical agencies may point to the fact that we live in a world of unknown potentialities : that of occult forces may remind us that there are events and happenings to the relation of which to each other we have not as yet the key ; that of a punitive deity may reveal the dawning consciousness of the existence of a universal moral governance ; and that of Karma, or the Book of Job, may point to the idea of Causation, or the fact that man is fundamentally a spiritual being. But whatever truth they may reveal, or hide, it is clear that none of them as such will satisfy the rational thinker. In the man of to-day especially, these conceptions, at least in their traditional setting, belong to the myths of humanity, which the human race must learn to cast away.

Hence we are left to face the problem afresh ; and to do so without recourse to the adventitious aid of escape into the supramundane. We have to face the facts, as we see them, looking at them in a rational light. What do we find ? Four considerations at once present themselves ; and what these are, we may now proceed to enquire.

To begin with, when we approach the question of accident, misadventure, and disaster, from a rational view-point, we find that these terms, like many other similar terms, are used to cover a number of phenomena of fundamentally different kinds. We have thus such a variety of eventualities as earth-

quakes, tempests, floods and droughts, on the one hand; and peculiarities of temperament, epidemics, wars and their aftermath, street accidents, lapses of memory, mental and physical diseases, and what we term ' sheer bad luck ' on the other. A moment's thought will reveal that such an assortment of contingencies, or possible contingencies, covers a very wide field of every sort of potential and actual divergence, and it admits of a distinction of at least a twofold kind. In this catalogue of possible occurrences it will be seen that we have certain which may be described as natural calamities, or ' acts of God,' to employ a quaint but significant phrase from legal terminology, and others which lie, more or less, within the control of man. And this distinction is important, for it at once divides the category of happenings which are generally classed as one into two groups : the one group consisting of phenomena which lie outside the region of human control—at least at the present stage of human development: the other of phenomena which lie within.

This brings us to our second consideration, which is that, having thus realised the twofold nature of our problem, we may realise that of those phenomena which lie within the region of human control, the majority are, either actually or potentially, preventable eventualities. Consider any of the forms of calamity enumerated in the second part of the foregoing catalogue of possibilities—namely, peculiarities of temperament, epidemics, wars and their aftermath, street accidents, lapses of memory, cases of mental and physical disease, and even much of what we designate " bad luck." In the majority of cases it is safe to say that these forms of misfortune, or calamity, are, to a large extent, either actually or potentially, preventable. That is, they are due to causes that human wit may, or may conceivably, remove.

For instance, epidemics can be prevented by medical research, sanitation, and segregation and treatment of those who have become subject to the particular infection. The

aftermath of wars can be eliminated, for the simple reason that wars can be eliminated as soon as mankind resolves to eliminate them by abandoning its present ultra-nationalistic infatuations and substitutes a rational world organisation for that so far in vogue. Street accidents only require a sufficiently bold and radical scheme of road-making, traffic control, and town-planning, to reduce their number to a negligible quantity. Peculiarities of temperament that lead in turn to all manner of misfortunes are probably susceptible, in a very high degree, of a fuller understanding, and the application of the principles of psychiatry, physiology, and eugenics. Lapses of memory are probably in many cases due to worry, or malnutrition, which a better ordering of society would go far towards removing. And even 'bad luck' frequently arises out of circumstances of a kind that could be altered if mankind revised its methods of social and economic conduct. Already, as the Medical Correspondent to the London *Daily Telegraph* pointed out in the issue of January 10th, 1933, such major and minor diseases as leprosy, rickets in children, chlorosis, or typhus, anæmia in young girls, and gout in their elders, have now either entirely vanished, or are rapidly waning, so far as Britain is concerned, simply as a result of better hygiene, wiser dietary, and healthier living. All of which is a thing to be borne in mind. Let mankind use its intelligence, and in a similar way much suffering and evil that we to-day accept as part of our human heritage could be eliminated—which is a very important fact.

Then, again, we should realise that even among the unavoidable types of accident, misadventure, or disaster, many may be seen to have a place in the scheme of things inasmuch as they arise from the interplay of cosmic forces necessary to the preservation of the universal order, and constitute an educative factor in human life. This, too, is significant. Man learns by the method of trial and error. Experiment is the essence of his advance. He flies because

he has risked and often succumbed to catastrophe. His trains and steamships are swift, or stately, because he has dared to make, and has suffered by, mistakes. Mr. H. G. Wells in his *Short History of Mankind* observes that man lives in an " unsympathetic universe." The laws of nature are inexorable realities, but this unsympathetic element by which man has been, and is, environed has been his tutor. In many directions he may avoid disaster only to the detriment of his advancement. Progress involves the risk of incurring suffering, or even death.

And finally, in relation to that type of misadventure which as yet lies beyond the power of man to control, much may be done towards elimination. Earthquake, tempest, drought, flood, and natural convulsion, may be avoided more readily than is often realised. Seismic disturbance is largely a localised phenomenon upon the earth's surface, and its worst effects are due to the fact that man chooses to live and to return to live where he knows that such disturbances are prevalent. Flood is often the direct result of human negligence, or incapacity, or, if not, can be mitigated by an adequate system of warning and channeling. Drought may be modified by irrigation and afforestation, and famine which ensues by corporate effort. Tempest may lie, as yet, beyond the power of man's control, but its evil results may be avoided, and are being avoided, in increasing measure, by the science of meteorology and normal telegraphic or wireless communications. In short, many of the sources of disaster which he cannot control man may circumvent or modify. Or again, in relation to this most distressing aspect of our problem, it is true to say that it lies largely within human power so to reduce its quantity as radically to alter our evaluation of its nature. And, that realised, it will be seen that it ceases to be for man an enigma. It belongs no longer to the eternal mystery. It is a thing quite apprehensible—in a word, a challenge.

CHAPTER V

DEATH

THE poignancy of accident, disaster, and misadventure is due, in a large measure, to the fact that the phenomena that may be so classified frequently endanger human life; and it is instinctive in man to regard life as good and death as evil. This instinctive feeling is by no means devoid of rational content. Death means bereavement; it means the cessation at least of existing relationships; and above all, as far as immediate experience goes, it is irrevocable and final. To the ordinary man, and to the race, death is something from which to shrink. Spinoza's saying that " a free man thinks of death least of all things; and his wisdom is to think not of death but of life," sounds suspiciously like whistling to keep one's courage up. While, on the other hand, Tennyson's phrase, " the Shadow fear'd of man," may well be taken to consummate the sentiment of the general human heart.

Death, then, forms a part of our present problem. It is one of the things that help to darken human life. We cannot be blind to the fact that when the writer of the Book of Revelation, in picturing a perfect state, enumerates among its other attractions the prospect that " there shall be no more death," he strikes a vibrant cord within our beings. For, as Charles Voysey once put it, " We do not like death," and further, " we do not need reminding that there are facts " relating to death " which do oppose, or seem to oppose, the sense of what is right, and the instinct of love and pity in our hearts." And that being so, we are bilking the whole issue under consideration if we ignore this part.

Let us admit, then, right away that the fact of death constitutes a part, and a formidable part, of our present problem, and, that granted, that it falls to our lot to face the fact and its

implications. What then? Are we to conclude that here at all events we have a sphere of investigation which presents us with insuperable difficulties? On the contrary: we have only to face the issue frankly to see, as Dr. Griffith Jones points out in his *Ascent through Christ*, that, in common with every other aspect of our problem treated so far, its complexion is altered, and it reveals itself as an intelligible element in life's plan, as soon as we apply our rational principle of approach. That this is so may be demonstrated in the following way.

In the first place, from the rational point of view, the fact of death serves a purpose in the scheme of things so practical and essential that it is not too much to say that life could not persist a generation without it. Life is not something static, but dynamic. Every living thing is in more senses than one a moving thing. Change is a law of the Universe. Even where movement is least apparent, it is there.

Now, part of the movement of life is that involved in the fact of reproduction. Nowhere do we find any one form of life abiding in this world unalterable. This applies to structural form, and also to entity; and the most obvious illustration of this phenomenon is the continual bringing to birth—every tree, every animal, every creature after its kind.

This being so, it stands to reason that it is an absolute necessity for the welfare of the living that every creature born should at some time cease to exist in its present form. There would, to put it simply, be no room for the forms of life that are constantly being born, if other forms were not as constantly removed by death. In other words, death is a correlative of birth and life. It is necessary for some to die, if others are to be born and live. As long as the appropriate balance between birth and death is maintained, society is served. The fact that for various reasons this balance is at present disturbed is one of the constituent elements in our contemporary disorders. That is one practical consideration. Death makes room for those who are being born to live. Apart from death,

birth would have to be abolished; and the world of life would be impossible. If we rejoice at birth, we must be willing to bow in resignation at the fact of death. It is only through death that life escapes senility, as it is only through birth that it renews its youth.

Another purpose served by death is its contribution to the general developmental process. Death, in short, is a great spur to that effort which makes for fuller life. It has already been observed that in his natural and healthy state man is repelled by the thought of death. At worst he dreads it, at best he resists it calmly, or tries to postpone it, or avoid it as long as possible, for his own sake, and the sake of others.

This fact is of the very greatest significance. It means that since life in this world is, in a sense, a battle with death, through the fact of death man has learned more fully how to maintain life. Thus he has developed a knowledge of what foods are suitable for the preservation of his body from starvation, and also how to produce, or cultivate, those foods. In this way have arisen his various systems of agriculture.

In this way, too, for the purpose of sheltering his body from things inimical to life, have arisen his industries of every sort. He needs protection from the wind and damp, and so he has learned to construct houses. He requires warmth in the chill of winter, and so he has learned to fell the forest and hew coal.

These industries in turn have given rise to others. And these industries again afford employment, and thereby support life. And further, in the pursuit and discovery of these systems and appliances the mind of man has itself been enormously expanded and enriched and endowed with knowledge and prepared for contingencies of manifold sorts. So that now, to-day, when man is discovering that his old methods of industry confront him once more with the spectre of death he is casting about for new methods that will ward off the peril; and we may rest assured that eventually he will discover a means of escape.

Yet again, the fact of death has served the purpose of moral

and spiritual education. It is no hyperbole to say that to an almost incalculable extent it has been the fact of death that has engendered the higher and nobler qualities of the human soul. It is, for instance, death, or the fear of death, that has called forth or fostered in the male the desire to labour, or plan, to protect his mate, and in the female, in particular, the loving energies of watchfulness for the welfare of her offspring. It is death, or the fear of death, which has contributed to the rise in the human breast of heroic virtues, as well as of the tenderer emotions of sympathy, and in the human mind of scientific concern for cleanliness and sanitation, and the thousand and one devices for preserving life.

Historically speaking, too, it is death, and the emotions to which death gives rise, that have assisted in the awakening of the sense which speaks to men of larger issues and widening horizons. Death, indeed, among other things, is that which has somehow hinted to us what life undisturbed by thoughts of death would never have implied. In fine, it is death (which has helped to make the nobler things of life so precious) that has whispered the thought that death itself is an illusion, and given us a sense of discrimination between temporal values, and values which abide. In this way, but in a sense different from its original meaning, death, in the words of the Roman proverb, has proved itself "a gate of life."

Such, then, is the appearance of the fact of death when we approach it from the rational standpoint. We see it, and the fear of it, as things that are dark, but that make a contribution to the well-being of life. And that being so, we may recognise that however strongly we are repelled by it, death cannot be regarded as the evil thing it often seems to be. That which in fact contributes to the stock of human good, cannot, even from the human point of view, be evil in the last analysis. If we accept the hint it gives us of continued existence, this is obvious. If we reject that hint, having looked upon the facts with steadfast eyes, we may say, It still is true.

CHAPTER VI

WASTE

AKIN to the problems raised by death, disaster, accident, misadventure and suffering, which we have just investigated, though in some ways even subtler, is the problem raised by what at least appears waste in the universal process: wasted talent, wasted effort, wasted life. These problems have already been touched upon partially and indirectly under the heading of accident, disaster, and misadventure. For clearly, if we lived in a world in which man ordered his life on a basis more rational than he has built on so far, much of this waste of energy and mental power might be avoided. The generations that a modern writer has likened to "torrents running to waste" might be harnessed to constructive corporate enterprise that would utilise their energy, and afford them a fuller and more meaningful existence, and that in turn would tend increasingly to eliminate the evil at its source.

And as regards the aspect of this problem which finds expression in Thomas Gray's line about the flower that "wastes its sweetness on the desert air," though it has not been specifically dealt with, it need not greatly trouble us. For in so far as the flower's offence is that it grows in a 'desert,' we have already suggested a solution under the head of disaster and accident; while in any other sense the alleged waste is entirely illusory. The fragrance of a flower is not wasted merely because man is not present to enjoy it. The flower did not become fragrant primarily for man's benefit, but for purposes of its propagation, and all that that subtends;

and to the extent that it serves that purpose it is not waste. Under this head may also be considered the seeming waste of biological evolution. If the end of that process, hitherto at all events, be man, why, we may ask, all the grotesque forms of animal life which haunt the jungle, infest the ocean, and fit in nowhere in the human scheme? And that this aspect of the problem is real need not be denied. Yet it must be admitted that it is based on the assumption that the ultimate value of things is their value from the human standpoint, which is fundamentally an illegitimate assumption. These creatures, like the flower, did not come into being merely for man's benefit and satisfaction. They have a right to their own existence. From their point of view not they, but man, is the interloper. An anthropocentric judgment of values is not an infallible criterion. Their right to existence is as real as man's is. Intellectually, at least, we must live and be willing to let live.

Again the problem that presented itself to the mind of Tennyson when, in reference to Nature, he wrote:

> "That I, considering everywhere
> Her secret meaning in her deeds,
> And finding that of fifty seeds
> She often brings but one to bear . . ."

in so far as it is not answered by Tennyson himself, and by what has been said of man's powers of eliminating such contingencies, finds its solution in the fact that Nature nearly always, if not always, has a second use for her products. Thus the seed which does not germinate, disintegrates, and enriches the soil from which it has sprung. Or, in the case of the human being, the sex energies whose first use is procreation, may, if that outlet is for any cause denied them, find a second use on the physiological side in the enrichment of the bodily life, and on the psychological side, by sublimation, in the enrichment of the spiritual.

These aspects of the question therefore do not present

insuperable difficulties. They may be approached in a rational manner, and found to fall in with a universal economy which presents itself as a rational whole.

But there is an aspect of the problem which calls for fuller consideration, and that is the aspect presented by modern scientific research in relation to the study of astrophysics—namely, the colossal waste that, according to astrophysicists to-day, has been, and is, going on in the structure of the universe itself.

This may be presented in two ways.

First, we are told that the material form of the universe itself is wasting. In the words of Sir James Jeans, " We have seen how the solid substance of the material universe is continually dissolving away into intangible radiation. The sun *e.g.* weighed 360,000 million tons more yesterday than to-day." (*The Universe Around Us*, Chap. VI.)

And secondly, we are told that the probabilities are at least 100,000 to one against any other stars being like our sun, encircled by habitable planets, and that the probabilities against any other planet than our earth's being a scene of human, or other living habitation, are even greater. (*Ibid.*)

Thus, the doctrine of the indestructibility of matter which found acceptance as late as the early days of the current century has been set aside; and the easy assumption that, in view of the multitude of the heavenly host, there *must* be other worlds inhabited, is said to be without foundation. The man and woman of to-day, then, are faced with this overwhelming suggestion—that not merely the generations, but the universe

> " like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind."

What, then, of this suggestion? If we cannot face this

issue, we are baffled completely, for all that can be said is, There is no meaning to anything :

> " our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep."

It is now our task to see what answer, if any, may be made to this question. How shall we address ourselves to this task ?

In the first place, we may enter a word of warning. The doctrine now approved by men of science in relation to the entire dissipation of the material universe is only, at best, in the nature of a hypothesis. It is the best interpretation so far attained of the facts so far discovered. As has been pointed out, not many years ago it was regarded as axiomatic among men of science that matter was indestructible. For that hypothesis they could produce what seemed to be irrefutable evidence, and innumerable proofs. To-day, with an equal display of evidence and proof, they tell us that their former conclusion was wrong. But was it ? At least we must not suppose that their present conclusion is of necessity the last word upon the subject. It may very well be that in a few years' time they will tell us that once more they have been wrong.

Again, as has been indicated by astrophysicists like Jeans and Eddington, the fact, as science alleges, that the universe is " running down," points by inference to the supposition that at one time it must have been " wound up." This may be only a necessity of logic, but granted the first premiss of the argument, the logical necessity is one one cannot escape. Unless either the contention itself, or the analogy, is wrong, the one thing follows from the other. But if the Universe has been " wound up " once, there is, as Sir Francis Younghusband has suggested, the Second Law of Thermodynamics notwithstanding, no valid argument against the belief that the process under conditions of which we know nothing may be capable of repetition. At least we may say

it happened in the past, and presumably there must have been something there before it happened. As with the spring of a clock, or the pulsation of the heart, there may be dilation and contraction; and if so, then we are simply in one of the contractive moments of universal history, with possibilities of innumerable future eras of expansion; and the pressure of the problem is to that extent removed. Nor need we accept as final the affirmation that the probabilities against the existence, or habitation, of other planets than our own are overwhelming. In any case, even with an adverse probability of 100,000 to one against such eventualities, computing the number of suns in our own galactic system at no more than the known number of 1500 million, we have a possibility of 15,000 planet systems, which, after all, is no negligible figure, against the inhabitability of which we have no absolute knowledge. And further, what seems so valid an affirmation to-day may not appear as valid to-morrow.

Once more, it is somewhat strange that the thought of the final destruction of the material universe, or the unique position of the earth as an inhabitable sphere, if conceded, should stimulate in the mind of the modern man and woman so grave a feeling of despondency; for neither of these ideas, as such, is new. The Church, in its historic hymn, the "Dies Irae," contemplates "Heaven and earth in ashes burning," with equanimity; and Giordano Bruno actually suffered martyrdom for believing in a plurality of worlds. The shock that these hypotheses of the modern astronomer bring to the modern mind is the result of a fundamental materialism. In ages when men frankly believed that the material was transient, and that the abiding reality was the spiritual, they could even rejoice at the anticipation of a speedy destruction of that which hindered the full realisation of the spiritual order; while the thought that the world alone was inhabited assured them of man's unique importance. It was a source of confidence, not of misgiving.

Indeed, unless we are rank materialists, there is no reason why we, to-day, may not catch the spirit of their vision. If we are told that the material universe is dissipating, we are not told on any valid authority either that matter is the only expression of energy, or that energy as such is petering out. In fact, we are informed that the totality of energy remains the same; it is merely its form, and its availability for the maintenance of the material universe that vary. Meanwhile, energy expresses itself in mind or spirit, and there is nothing to show that mind or spirit depend for their existence on the world of matter. Indeed, Sir Arthur Eddington in his *Science and the Unseen World* produces excellent grounds for affirming that they do not. But however that may be, granted that the universe in its material aspect is, and has been, " running down," we know that for the past three hundred million years or so, in its spiritual aspect, it has been " running up." The unicellular protoplasm has passed into the algi and amoebae, the amoebae have been succeeded in due course by the crustacea, the crustacea by the vertebrates, and the vertebrates have flowered into man. And the measure of this process is not found in its mere physical realisations. Its significance lies in the fact that it has witnessed the appearance and development of mind. And this process, we are assured by men of science, is, in some form, likely to be continued. At a modest estimate they give it an expectation of not less than a million million years. If this is so, it is an indication that the ultimate reality of the universe is progressively revealing itself not as material, but spiritual; or at least it is an indication that the ultimate reality of the universe is such as to be capable of producing mind. May it not be, then, as Professor Stratton, the Cambridge astrophysicist, has suggested, that by the time the material universe has become completely dissipated, mind or spirit, as such, or that which lies behind them, will no longer need material media of expression, and we shall

pass, as modern conceptions of matter appear to anticipate, into an era when mind or spirit will be all in all? If we believe in the reality of the spiritual, this would seem a very reasonable hypothesis. If we believe in the immortality of the human soul, it is a natural thought. In any case, we may see, in the known facts of the universal order, nothing to warrant a completely pessimistic outlook. The fact that at our present stage of development we cannot comprehend the meaning of a process is no final barrier to a belief that it has a meaning. We may hold that it means intensely, and means good—in fine, that, in this respect, reality is simply passing over from one mode of expression to another.

CHAPTER VII

EVIL AND PROVIDENCE

Our investigation has, so far, been designed to show that however we conceive the nature of the ultimate, we may face up to what seems to us to be the fact of evil and yet believe in an ultimate universal goodness. But mind in the universe implies, as we have seen, mind in the ultimate, and order in the universe implies an ordering potentiality in the ultimate, and so we have not arrived at the crux of the problem until we have envisaged the question of the relation of evil to a recognition of the ultimate as including intelligent and ordering power. Accordingly, our final task must be to enquire whether we can reconcile a recognition of the ultimate as intelligent and ordering with the fact of evil as we know it. Or, to employ more homely language, whether we can reconcile the fact of evil with the thought of a Providential order, or, in yet other words, whether we can reconcile the fact of evil with a recognition of the reality of God, conceived as moral, intelligent, purposeful, and supreme. If we can do that, we have plumbed the depth of our problem. If not, we have only skimmed its surface. As Julian Huxley says in another connection, the discussion of ultimate realities is " an affair of outposts " as long as the conception of God is not included. " The real conflict " is reached only when the " conception of Deity " comes in (*Religion without Revelation*, p. 7). This, then, is our fundamental question. What are we to say ?

The solution of this aspect of our problem, as generally offered in the past, has taken fundamentally one common

line of treatment: it has sought to elude the central issue by exonerating God. Thus we have had the theory of the fall of man; the bad and good god theory; and the Demiurge or Veiled-Being theory: all of which have conspired to remove the difficulty by taking the onus off the ultimate Power. But a moment's reflection will reveal that in relation to our problem these suggestions cannot be accepted. Unless our thought of God goes further than any mere personification of human endeavour and idealism, and includes the conception of a supreme, creative, designing, and sustaining power, we are guilty of evasion and futility. Unless we can resolve our problem, while placing on the ultimate the responsibility for all that the ultimate should justly bear, we are simply wasting time. To say that the responsibility for evil rests not on God, but on man, or the Devil, or the Demiurge, or to make God less than the ultimate and so relieve Him of the burden, is clearly just so much beating about the bush. It is therefore obvious that we cannot look for an answer along these lines.

What, then, will be our angle of approach? We shall endeavour to approach the question frankly. We shall recognise that in so far as the ultimate is responsible, the onus must be placed thereon. What this will mean we shall endeavour to elaborate in these concluding paragraphs. It will be seen, it is hoped, that whether the view presented appear commendable or otherwise, the central issue at least has not been shirked.

To begin with, then, be it said quite frankly that any rational treatment of this question must start with the recognition advanced by all considered theism, that there is only one conceivable way in which a divine governance of the universe can find expression. Either we must have governance by law, or chaos. That is to say, either God must work out His purposes by following consistent principles, or the result must be confusion. This conclusion is inevitable if we think out

the issues. And further, apart from theory, science has taught us that, in fact, the governance of the universe is through law. Whatever may be said by certain physicists about the spontaneity of atomic or electronal reactions, and by certain theologians about the spontaneity of divine activity, in effect or bulk, we find that that spontaneity follows consistent principles; and that it is only because this is so that we have a dependable universe, or indeed a universe at all. It is essential that the laws of thermodynamics, or diffusion of gases, or heredity, or hygiene, or what-not, shall always operate uniformly, or the persistence, or indeed the mere existence, of a universe would become impossible. And this being so, it follows that there can be no repudiation of the laws of the universe on any consideration even for a purpose that might appear good or beneficial. If we live for good health, we must of necessity reap good health, or at least the best health of which our particular body is capable; while if we live for ill-health, we must, equally, of our living reap at any rate to some extent the resultant of our life. The importance of this point is obvious for the subject of our consideration, for what it means is that if man chooses to violate, or even if in ignorance he violates, the principles by which the universe is governed, he must suffer the consequences; because in any sense which repudiates those principles, God cannot intervene.

This consideration is one which cannot be too strongly emphasised, inasmuch as it is relevant to so many of the otherwise impenetrable mysteries of life. A child born of healthy and virtuous parents dies of some nameless disease in the first flower of boyhood or girlhood. What answer have we, in relation to our specific problem, unless we recognise that, somehow or somewhere, the cause lies in the fact that, through human ignorance or folly, certain laws of health, which must operate, have in some way been flouted or overlooked? If, however, we recognise that fact, the death of

the child, though tragic, no longer challenges belief in a Providential ordering. We see it not as an act of God, but as an issue of ignoring principles which in themselves are essential to, and operate for, the general good.

And further, it should be recognised that we should not allow ourselves to confuse the necessary outworkings of laws which function in the physical sphere, and those of the laws which function in the spiritual or moral; for this confusion is one which again leads to frequent irrelevance of thought. Though it is true that, on the whole, the man who lives the good moral life also lives the good physical life, this by no means always follows. Providence is arraigned because a man who has given himself unsparingly in the welfare of humanity dies in a mental home as a result of cerebral hæmorrhage, or a sweet-spirited and gifted woman becomes insane through the undue nursing of some sorrow. If it were only realised that a man, however morally good he may be, may sin against the laws of physical health, or that a woman, however sweet, may sin against the laws of mental soundness, these eventualities would not cease to be pathetic, but they would cease to be unanswerable riddles. We should see that they fell into a general scheme which in itself was good. The suffering and death of Jesus, and all who, like him, have courted men's hostility for the sake of an ideal, also fall into this category. Jesus, and all the glorious company of true apostles and martyrs, fulfilled the moral law; but they, generally of set purpose, set at defiance the psychological law that bids men be cautious of a new idea, and that once done the law had to take its course. God could not interfere. They had challenged a basic principle of life; and therefore, they had to pay the price.

Another consideration to be taken into account is the fact that if man is to grow he must have room to grow, which means that he must be free to buy his experience, without divine interference, even though to do so brings suffering

in its train. The child who is perpetually sheltered from the risk of harm by the well-intentioned parent never learns the lesson of self-determination. To grow man must be able to choose the good for himself, which means he must be free to choose it; and to be truly free to choose the good, he must be free to choose the evil in like fashion. But freedom to choose the evil involves the consequences of evil, as far as evil is chosen. And since this freedom, if it be real, must of necessity include the freedom to choose evil which will inflict suffering on the innocent and defenceless, such things must be, at least potentially, even though it be evident that such suffering is undeserved. The child of tubercular parents is, if he is so disposed, free, as far as nature is concerned, to marry and have children, and thus expose his children to the disease which in himself may, or may not, have lain dormant; or the nation which is sufficiently barbarous is similarly free to force itself at the point of the bayonet upon some other nation, and thereby cause untold suffering to numberless people who morally deserved no such fate. The cure for these things is to be found in the fuller application of the principles of medical science, or international and world co-ordination. We cannot arraign Providence for these things from the rational point of view. Providence cannot educate us except by providing us with the conditions in which self-education is possible, and by leaving us room to acquire it. Under this aspect of our subject it is that we should also consider the question of accident and disaster. In fine, the development of man demands the reticence of God.

Once more, we must not overlook the fact that in ways consistent with the principles of universal law, Providence is always intervening to rectify human error and lessen human suffering. We injure ourselves, and immediately our body becomes the scene of remedial influences. A dynastic regime threatens the destruction of a people, and a rising of the spirit

in man eventuates which sweeps the offending dynasty away. In the phrase of the Psalmist, he makes even the " wrath of man " to " praise " him. Historically man has constantly reaped better than he has sown. In the Providential ordering the remedial activity of the Eternal is constantly at work.

And, yet again, we should not ignore the fact that the path of suffering and sorrow has often proved itself a highway to human progress. Intellectually, morally, and spiritually, mankind has repeatedly advanced to new visions of truth which apart from the experience of suffering it would apparently never have come to apprehend. De Stogumber, the old rector, in Mr. Shaw's *St. Joan*, it will be remembered, explains how it was not until he *saw* Joan burnt that he really understood the inward villainy of cruelty. The establishment of the League of Nations, as a direct issue of the Great War, is a further illustration of this fact.

But if we recognise all these considerations, we are not yet at the heart of our problem. They answer the question why God does not intervene to prevent the occurrence or continuance of evil or suffering in any particular instance, or in particular instances considered collectively. But they do not touch the question of the existence of evil as such, nor that of ostensible evil among the lower orders of creation, which, being guided largely, if not entirely, by instinct, have presumably little choice but to obey the divine law. Such instances of apparent malignity as that of the treatment meted out by the queen-bee to her rivals, or by the worker-bees to the drone, do not come, except partially, within the ambit of what has been said so far. Here is evil that seems to form part of the warp of life. What, then, can we say in respect of such things ? Is there any line of approach which envisages these aspects of our problem ? To the present author it seems that the solution is suggested by a consideration of the scientific doctrine of evolution ; for the heart and centre of the problem consist in the conflict between the conception of God

as the all-good creator, and the thought of evil, and particularly suffering, as an absolute and integral part of the universe He has made. The solution, therefore, if there be one, must be found in some principle which shall show, on the one hand, that the element we regard as evil, in so far as it is evil, is not absolute, or permanent, and, on the other, that in so far as it is absolute or permanent it is not as evil as it seems. And it is in the doctrine of evolution that we find this principle. For by this principle, which Le Conte defined as "a continuous progressive change according to certain laws by means of resident forces," we see the past and present of the universe under the aspect of the end towards which it works. This is not to say that the process is automatic, or that it proceeds in a straight line; but it is to affirm its existence and the fact that in its totality it shows a consistent direction. And since, in the light of the story of life upon this earth, we may claim that the direction or purpose of evolution includes the production of successively higher and nobler types of animate being, we may say, not merely that that which is capable of giving rise to such must be good, inasmuch as it is adequate to their successive generation, but that the end towards which the process goes is also good. Hence we may conclude that nothing that is truly evil can be permanent, and that what is permanent cannot be truly evil. Or, in other words, that evil, in so far as it is evil, is not ultimate in its nature, but only contingent on the incompleteness of the process from which it is being, or may be, increasingly removed. Along this line of approach we have the promise of an ultimate solution. As yet it does not, perhaps, resolve the problem entirely, but it goes toward where the solution lies. Facing the issues from this standpoint, we can bring together the conception of God conceived as the all-good creator, and the turmoil and stress of life as we know it; and that is the essential. A swift recapitulation of the subject-matter of the foregoing chapters of this book will show that this is so.

Take the evil of suffering. Suffering is clearly not as desperate a problem as it normally seems, when we see it in the light of evolutionary process. Much of it, as has been shown, is obviously not ultimate, and what remains, as we have seen, is by no means as evil, or ultimate, as it appears at first sight. In so far as it exists, as part of the scheme of things, it serves as the warning-bell, or vedette, which saves us from very much worse evil; and as a means by which, as free beings, we have been driven during the course of evolution to successively higher levels of attainment: and finally, it lifts us progressively towards stages at which many forms of it have proved increasingly susceptible of being removed.

Or take the fact of moral evil. In the light of evolution we see that moral evil consists simply in man's tendency, as a risen and rising type of life, to fall back, or revert, in the course of his upward struggle, to some outworn level of goodness. Seen thus, we perceive that moral evil again is not an ultimate thing. It is contingent on the fact that mankind has not as yet acquired a full self-mastery. When that is attained it will, and does actually, disappear.

Or take the evil of accident, disaster, or misadventure. In the light of evolution we perceive that it too has no ultimate significance. Much of it is due simply to human error, and as such is open to removal by a better ordering of affairs. Apart from that, it arises from the interplay of cosmic forces which in themselves are necessary to the preservation of the universal order, the effects of which, in so far as they are detrimental to human life, may be increasingly avoided by human ingenuity; and further, through an acquired mastery over which man can, and does, raise himself continually to greater and greater mental and moral heights.

Or take the evil of death. Here is a thing which at first seems harsh and final; and yet in the light of evolution is seen to be neither so harsh nor final as it appears. Let

human society order itself more rationally, and it is clear that much hardship that follows from death may be avoided, while death in itself is revealed as necessary to fuller life. Biologically speaking, it is essential if the worse evils of sterility or over-population are to be avoided, and spiritually speaking it serves a purpose which is no less high. The fact of it has stimulated man's mental and moral development amazingly, and if we recognise the material as no more than a temporary circumstance of the spiritual, it becomes in itself no more than an incident in our progress on.

Or coming at last to the evil of waste; we find in the light of evolution that the idea of waste, except in so far as it is removable by a better ordering of life and a more intelligent utilisation of natural and human resources, is mainly, if not entirely, an anthropocentric notion. The flower that blooms in the desert, or the seed that fails to bring forth, or the instinct that is sublimated, is not wasted. It is merely subserving an end which man does not usually associate with its particular use. And as for the alleged wasting of the universe, or the possibility that our earth alone may be the scene of human existence and development, we have seen that the passing of this material order may be interpreted as a mere stage towards an expression of being that far transcends it, and that if this earth of ours indeed be solitary in its inhabitability—which is by no means proved to us—that affords no warrant for declaring that all the rest is waste.

That is the position, then. In the light of the thought of evolution, or the idea of *process*, the phenomena we normally designate as evil reveal themselves as evil, not inherently or ultimately, but only as seen from the human angle, or in a relative or contingent sense. A vast tract of things we regard as evil are clearly not ultimate, because removable, and the remainder are either avoidable, or not as evil as they appear to be, or not ultimately evil because they serve a purpose which, when fully consummated, will transcend the means

by which it has been attained. Hence the fact of evil as we have known it in the past, and know it to-day, constitutes in itself no final objection to belief in the reality of a Providential Order. To put it simply, we may believe that God is good when we apprehend that what is truly evil is not ultimate, and that all we see as yet is the uncompleted task or plan. In the light of the discovery that in the universe there are cosmic forces that are ever urging upward, we are entitled to say that the true evaluation of the Creative Mind is to be seen in the purpose of the higher things towards which it labours. Even in the face of what appears evil, we may affirm that that which ever works toward a higher good is Good. If we agree, it is for us to rise in courage, as fellow-workers with that Good Power, and in our corner of the great outworking to throw in our lot with all that makes towards the perfecting of the Cosmic Scheme. For in the end the noblest solution to the problem of evil is the practical solution. The life lived for the betterment of life goes further than all the speculations of the mind.

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