

The Hearts of Men

By
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Freeeditorial 

CHAPTER I

OF WHAT USE IS RELIGION?

Of what use is religion?

All nations, almost all men, have a religion. From the savage in the woods who has his traditions of how the world began, who has his ghosts and his devils to fear or to worship, to the Christian and the Buddhist with their religion full of beautiful conceptions and ideas—all people have a religion.

And the religion of men is determined for them by their birth. They are born into it, as they are into their complexions, their habits, their language. The Continental and Irish Celt is a Roman Catholic, the Teuton is a follower of Luther, the Slav a member of the Greek Church. The Anglo-Saxon, who is a compromise of races, has a creed which is a compromise also, and the Celt of England has his peculiar form of dissent, more akin perhaps in some ways to Romanism than to Lutheranism. A Jew is and has been a Jew, a Hindu is a Hindu, Arabs and Turks are Mahommedans.

It is so with all races of men. A man's religion to-day is that into which he is born, and those of the higher and older races who change are few, so very few they but serve strongly to emphasize the rule.

There have been, it is true, periods when this has not been so. There have been times of change, of conversions, of rapid religious evolution when the greater faiths have gathered their harvests of men, when beliefs have spread as a flood threatening to engulf a world. No one has ever done so. Each has found its own boundary and stayed there. Their spring tide once passed they have ceased to spread. They have become, indeed, many of them, but tideless oceans, dead seas of habit ceasing even to beat upon their shores. Many of them no longer even try to proselytise, having found their inability to stretch beyond their boundaries; others still labour, but their gains are few—how few only those who have watched can know.

Some savages are drawn away here or there, but that is all. The greater faiths and forms of faith, Catholicism, Lutheranism, the Greek Church, Mahommedanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and many others, remain as they were. Their believers are neither converted nor convert. Men born into them remain as they were born. They do not change, they are satisfied with what they have.

They are more than satisfied; they are often, almost always, passionately attached to their faith.

There is nothing men value more than their religion. There is nothing so unbearable to them as an attack upon it. No one will allow it. Even the savage clings to his fetish in the mountain top and will not permit of insult to it. Men will brave all kinds of disaster and death rather than deny their faith, that which their fathers believed. It is to all their highest possession. The Catholic, the Chinese ancestor worshipper, the Hindu, the Calvinist, the Buddhist, the Jew—their names are too numerous to mention—none yields to any other in this. It is true of all faiths. No one faith has any monopoly of this enthusiasm. It is common to all.

But wherein lies the spell that religion has cast upon the souls of men? The influence is the same. What is the secret of it?

Can it be that there is some secret common to all religions, some belief, some doctrine that is the cause of this? If so, what is it? If there is such a common secret, why is it so hidden?

For hidden it certainly is.

Nothing can be more certain than that no one religion recognises any such secret in the others. It is the very reverse. The more a man clings to his own religion the more he scorns all others. Far from acknowledging any common truth, he denounces all other faiths as mistaken, as untrue; nay, more, they are to him false, deliberately false; the enthusiast believes them wicked, the fanatic in his own faith calls all others devilish. The more a man loves his religion the more he abominates all others. A Christian would scorn the idea of the essence of his faith being common to all others, or any other. If there be any common truth it is a very secret truth.

Is there any secret truth? If so, what is it?

There is a further question.

There is probably no one thing that we learn with more certainty than this, that whatever exists, whatever persists, does so because it fulfils a want, because it's of use. It is immaterial where we look, the rule is absolute. In the material world Darwin and others have shewn it to us over and over again. When anything is useless it atrophies. So have the snake and the whale lost their legs, and man his hairy skin and sense of scent. Males have lost their power of suckling their young; with females this power has increased. Need

develops any thing or any quality; when it becomes needless it dies. Where we find anything flourishing and persistent we are sure always that it is so because it is wanted, because it fills a need.

Religion in some form or another has always existed, has increased and developed, has grown and gained strength.

Therefore religion, all religions that have existed have filled some need, all religions that now exist do so because they fulfil some present use. From the way their believers cherish them the need is a great and urgent one. These religions are of vital use to their believers.

What is this great common need and yearning that all men have, and which, to men in sympathy with it, every religion fulfils?

Can it be that all men have a like need and that all religions have a common quality which serves that need?

Can it be possible that all races, the Englishman, the Negro, the Italian, the Russian, the Arab, the Chinaman, and the Pathan, have the same urgent necessity, and that their urgent necessity is answered by so many varying religions? If so, what is this necessity which religion alone can fill, what is this succour that religion alone can give? What is the use of religion?

These are some of the questions I ask, other men have asked the same—not many. The majority of men never ask themselves anything of the sort. They are born into a religion, they live in it more or less, they die in it. They may question its accuracy in one point or another, for each man to some extent makes his own faith; but nearly all men take their faith much as they find it and make the best of it. It does not occur to them to say, "Why should I want a religion at all? Why not go without?" They feel the necessity of it. Even the very few who reject their own faith almost always try for some other, something they hope will meet their necessity. They will prefer one faith to another. But they do not first consider why they want a faith at all. They do not ask, "Of what use is any religion?"

Yet this is in the main the subject of this book, these questions are the ones I ask, the questions to which I seek an answer. I will repeat them.

Why are all peoples, all men religious? Is the necessity a common necessity? If so, what is it?

Why does one form of religion appeal to one people and another to another people, while remaining hateful to all the rest?

Notwithstanding their common hate, have all religions a common secret? And if so, what is that?

This book of mine is in part the story of a boy who was born into a faith and who lost it; it tries to explain why he lost it.

It is the story of a man who searched for a new faith and who did not find it, because he knew not what he sought. He knew not what religion was nor why he wanted it. He knew not his need. He sought in religion for things no religion possesses. He was ill yet he knew not his disease, and so he could find no remedy. And finally it is an attempt to discern what religion really means, what it is, what is the use of it, what men require of it.

There may be among my readers some who will read the early chapters and will then stop. They will feel hurt perhaps, they will think that there is here an attack upon their religion, upon all they hold as the Truth of God. So they will close the book and read no more. I would beg of my readers not to judge me thus. I would ask them if they read at all to read to the end. It may be that then they will understand. Even if it be not so, that the early chapters still seem to be hard, is it not better to hear such things from a friend than from an enemy? Be sure there are very many who say and who feel very much harder things than this boy did. Is it not as well to know them?

These early chapters are of a boy's life; they may be, they should be if truly written, full of the hardness of youth, its revolt from what it conceives to be untrue, its intense desire to know, its stern rejection of all that is not clear and cannot be known. Yet they must be written, for only by knowing the thoughts of the boy can the later thoughts of the man be understood?

And I am sure that those who read me to the end, though they may disagree with what I say, will admit this: that, thinking as I do of religion, I would not unnecessarily throw a stone at any faith, I would not thoughtlessly hurt the belief of any believer, no matter what his religion; because I think I have learnt not only what his faith is to him, but why it is so, because I have found the use of all religion.

CHAPTER II

EARLY BELIEFS

The boy of whom I am about to write was brought up until he was twelve entirely by women. He had masters, it is true, who taught him the usual things that are taught to boys, and he had playfellows, other boys; but the masters were with him but an hour or two each day for lessons, and of the boys he was always the eldest.

Those who have studied how it is that children form their ideas of the world, of what it is, of what has to be done in it, of how to do it, will recognise all that this means; for children obtain their ideas of everything, not from their lessons nor their books nor their teachers, but from their associates. A teacher may teach, but a boy does not believe. He believes not what he is told, but what he sees. He forms to himself rules of conduct modelled on the observed conduct of other people. Their ideas penetrate his, and he absorbs and adapts them to his own wants. In a school with other boys, or where a boy has as playfellows boys older than himself, this works out right. The knowledge and ideas of the great world filter gradually down. Young men gain it from older men, the young men pass it to the elder boys, and the bigger to the smaller, each adapting it as he takes. Thus is wisdom made digestible by the many processes it passes through, and the child can take it and find it agree with him.

But with a child brought up with adults and children younger than himself this is not so. From the latter he can learn nothing; he therefore adapts himself to the former. He listens to them, he watches them, unconsciously it is true, but with that terrible penetrative power children possess. He learns their ideas, and, tough as they may prove to him, he has to absorb them, and he has not the digestive juice, the experience that is required to assimilate them. They are unfit for his tender years, they do not yield the nourishment he requires. He suffers terribly. A man's ideas and knowledge are not fit for a boy.

And if a man's, how much less a woman's? A boy will become a man; what he has learnt of men is knowledge of the right kind, though of the wrong degree. But what he learns from women is almost entirely unsuitable in kind and in degree. The ideas, the knowledge, the codes of conduct, the outlook on life that suit a woman are entirely unfitted for a boy. Consider and you must see how true it is.

This boy, too, was often ill and unable to play, to go out at all sometimes for weeks in the winter. He seemed always ailing. Thus he had to spend much of

his time alone, and when he was tired of reading or of wood carving, or colouring plates in a book, he thought. He had often so much time to think that he grew sick of thought. He hated it. He would have given very much to be able to get out and run about and play so as not to think, to be enabled to forget that he had a brain which would keep on passing phantoms before his inner eyes. There was nothing he hated so much, nothing he dreaded so deeply as having nothing to do but think. In later years he took this terror to his heart and made it into an exceedingly great pleasure, but to the child it was not so.

Therefore, when he was twelve and was sent at last to a large school, he was different to most boys at that age; for his view of the world, his knowledge of it, his judgment of it, were all obtained from women. He saw life much as they did, through the same glasses, though with different sight. His ideas of conduct were a woman's ideas, his religion was a woman's religion.

Are not a woman's ideas of conduct the same as a man's? Is not a woman's Christianity the same as a man's Christianity, if both be Christianity? And I reply, No! A thousand times no! There is all the world between them, all that world that is between woman and a man.

As to man's religion I will speak of it later. The woman's ideas of conduct and religion which this child had absorbed were these. He believed in the New Testament. I do not mean he disbelieved the Old Testament, but he did not think of it. Religion to him meant the teaching of Christ, that very simple teaching that is in the Gospel. Conduct to him meant the imitation of Christ and the observance of the Sermon on the Mount. He thought this was accepted by all the world—the Christian world at least—as true, that everyone, men as well as women, accepted this teaching not as a mere pious aspiration, not as an altruistic ideal, but as a real working theory. War was bad, all war. Soldiers apparently were not all bad—he had been told of Christian soldiers, though he had no idea how such a contradiction could occur—but at least they were a dreadful necessity. Wealth and the pursuit of wealth were bad, wicked even, though here again there were exceptions. Learning was apt to be a snare. The world was very wicked, consciously wicked, which accounted for the present state of affairs, and most people would certainly go to hell. The ideal life was that of a very poor curate in the East End of London, hard working and unhappy. These are some of the ideas he learnt, for this is the religion of all the religious women of England; of all those who are in their way the very salt of the nation. Their belief is the teaching of Christ, and that is what this boy learnt. This is what "conduct" and "religion" meant to him.

I must not be misunderstood. I do not intend to suggest that this boy was any better than other boys, that his life was less marked by the peccadilloes of childhood. He was probably much as other boys are as far as badness or goodness is concerned. His acts, I doubt not, did not very much differ from theirs. After all, neither boys nor men are very much guided either by any theoretical "Rule of Life," nor by any view of what is the true Religion. He acted according to his instincts, but having so acted the difference between him and other boys came in. Other boys' instincts led them to poach a trout out of a stream, and rejoice in their success if they were not caught. This boy's instinct also led him to poach a trout if he could, but he did not rejoice over it. Poaching was stealing, and that was a deadly sin. He was aware of that and was afraid.

Other boys' instincts made them fight on occasions and be proud of it, whether victor or vanquished, to boast of it publicly perhaps; anyhow, not to keep it a secret or be ashamed of it. This boy's instincts also led him several times into fights; but whether victor or not—it was usually not—he could not appear to be proud of it. The Sermon on the Mount told him he ought not to have fought that boy who struck him, but should have turned the other cheek, and he knew very well that it would be regarded as a sin. It must be kept secret and he must be ashamed of it, and so with many things. It never occurred to him then to doubt that the Sermon on the Mount did really contain the correct rule of life for him, and that any breach of it must be a deadly sin. Among other results this friction between the natural boy and the rule of conduct he was taught he ought to adopt, gave the boy a continual sensation of being wrong. He knew he was continually breaking the Sermon on the Mount and also other rules of the New Testament. He was perfectly sure he did not live at all like Christ, and he had a strong, but never then acknowledged certainty, that he didn't want to. All this, with the continual reproof of those around him, gave him an incessant feeling of being wicked. He could not live up to these rules, and he was a very wicked little boy bound for hell, so he thought of himself.

It is difficult to imagine anything worse for a boy than this. Tell a boy he is bad, lead him to believe he is bad, make much of his little sins, reprove him, mourn over him as one of wicked tendencies, and you will make him wicked. Perpetual struggle to attain an impossible and unnatural ideal is destructive to any moral fibre. For the boy soon begins to distrust himself, his own efforts, his own good intentions. He fails and fails, and he loses heart and begins to count on failure as certain. Then later he abandons effort as useless. What is the good of trying without any hope of success? It is useless and foolish. To save appearances he must pretend, and that is all. But at the time he went to school he had not

quite come to that, for the stress of the world had not yet fallen upon him. He still believed in what he was taught was the ideal of life, and tried, in a childish, uncertain way, to act up to it.

CHAPTER III

IDEAL AND PRACTICE

Such was the boy who went to school, and such was the mental and moral equipment with which he started.

He found himself in a new world. He had stepped out of a woman's world into a man's, out of the New Testament into the Old, out of dreams into reality. For the ideas and beliefs, the knowledge and understanding, the code of morality and conduct, in a big school, are those of the world. This filters down from the world of men to the world of little boys, and the latter is the echo of the former. It is an echo of the great world sounded by childish hearts, but still a true echo. Then this boy began to learn new things, a new morality vastly different from the old. And this is what he learnt: that it is not wrong to fight, but right. Fighting is not evil but good, all kinds of fighting. The profession of a soldier is a great and worthy one, perhaps the highest. To fight men, to kill them and subdue them, is not bad but good—provided, of course, it is in a good cause. A war is not a regrettable necessity, but a very glorious opportunity. Both men and boys rejoice to know of battles greatly fought, of blood and wounds, of death and victory. It makes the heart bound to hear of such things. Everyone should wish to be able to do them—in a good cause. Is not the cause of our country always a good cause? When this boy arrived at school he learnt suddenly that a war was going on. It was a small frontier war such as we often have. He had not heard of it at home. Now he heard of it all day. Masters announced publicly any victory, holidays were given for them, out of school hours the boys talked of little else. The illustrated papers were full of sketches of the war, and the weekly papers of accounts of marches and battles. Boys who had relations, fathers, or uncles, or elder brothers, at the front rose into sudden fame. Big boys who were hoping to pass into Sandhurst or Woolwich were heroes; the school was full of the enthusiasm of the success of our armies. Parties were formed and generals were appointed; hillocks in the play green were defended and assaulted, and many grievous blows were given in these mimic fights. One boy nearly lost his eye. To the boy of which I am writing all this was new, it was new and delightful, and extraordinarily wicked.

This was not his only awakening, this was not the only subject on which he learnt new rules. Soldiers must fight, and so must boys, if necessary, in a good cause. To a soldier all causes are good when his country bids; to a boy all causes are good when his school code tells him. Turn the other cheek? Be called a funk and a coward, be derided and scorned by all the school, be told to

be ashamed, and, worse than all, feel that he ought to be and was ashamed? Not so. Not so. A boy must fight, too, when his schoolboy honour bids. He even learnt more still than this. Battle was not always a disagreeable necessity, it was in itself often a pleasure. "To drink delight of battle with his peers" is no poet's rhetorical phrase; it is a truth. There is a sheer muscular physical pleasure in fighting, as all boys know. True blows hurt, but the blows that hurt most are not on the body, and there is, too, a moral strength, a moral pleasure, that comes from battles. It is not disgraceful to fight, it is not even disgraceful to be beaten, but it would often be very disgraceful not to fight, to turn the other cheek. All wars are not bad things. They are the storms of God stirring up the stagnant natures to new purity and life. The people that cannot fight shall die. He learnt this lesson, not as I have written it. He did not realise it, he did not put it into words as I have done. It sank into him unconsciously as the previous teaching had done—and sorely they disagreed with each other. He learnt other lessons, many of them, in the same way. He learnt that money is not an evil but a good. When he found his pocket-money short this soon dawned upon him, and the lesson did not end there. He found that wealth was almost worshipped, that it had very great power. He found everyone engaged in the race for wealth, everyone. His spiritual pastors and masters were no more exempt than anyone else. They encouraged the race. A boy's schooling was looked upon as his preparation for the battle of life in which he was to struggle for money and honours. Men who had attained them were held up to his admiration. Not the pale-faced curates of the East End, but the great statesman and soldier, the bishops, the lawyers, the writers, the successful merchants who had once been at the school, were emblazoned on the wall. No meek, struggling curate would find a niche there. The race was to the strong, not the weak. He was learning the law of the survival of the fittest, and he was further learning that the Sermon on the Mount is not a guide to be the fittest, in this world at any rate.

I must try again and guard against misconception. The school was a good school, the tone was good, the masters were all men of high character, of considerable learning. No school could have been better taught; but this was the teaching of the school, as it is and must be of all schools that are worth anything: a boy must be brought up on truths, not imaginings; he must learn laws, not aspirations; he must be prepared for the world as it is, not as a visionary might see it.

Therefore this boy learnt at school the great code of conduct which obtains in the world. Shortly, it is this: not to be quarrelsome, but to be ready always to fight for a good cause, be the fighting with sword or fist, with pen or tongue, by

word or deed, and when fighting to hit hard and spare not. He learnt to desire and strive for wealth and honour, which are good things, not in immoderate excess, which injures other forms of happiness, but in due and proper amount. He learnt that he should speak the truth in most things, but not in all. There are worse things than some lies. There are some lies that are not a disgrace, but an honour. He learnt that learning was not a snare, but a very necessary and very admirable thing also, and of all learning that knowledge of the world, the wicked world, the flesh and the devil, was the most necessary. Such in broad lines were what he learnt from his schoolfellows, the code filtered down from above, the code of a public school. A very admirable code, but how different from what he had first learnt. There were worlds between them, the immensity that lies between fact and ideal.

And yet all this time, while this public school code was being driven into him by precept and example, by coercion and by blows, all this while, every morning at prayers and every Sunday thrice, he heard the other code taught in the school chapel. The masters taught it, and the boys were supposed to accept and believe it—during chapel hours. Once chapel was over, once Monday morning came, and the other code ruled. No one remembered the theoretic code of Christ. Boys who brought it forward in daily life were disliked. They were not bullied, no! but they were left alone. The tone of the school would never have allowed bullying for such a cause, but there was an instinctive repulsion to those boys who talked religion. The others inwardly accused them of cant. Boys who alleged religious reasons for refusing to fight, to poach, to smoke occasionally, to commit other little breaches of discipline, were suspected of bringing forth religion as a cloak to hide the fact that they were afraid to fight and poach and that smoking made them sick. That they were very often rightly suspected this boy had no doubt. It was his first introduction to cant, and it surprised him. Was, then, the attempt to realise the precepts of Christ in daily life either a folly or an hypocrisy? As far as he could see it was both.

It must not, of course, be imagined that he thus faced the problem and gave this answer. He no more faced the problem than any other boy does, than the great majority of men do. He simply grew up according to his surroundings, agreeing with them, accepting the rule he found accepted, developing as his environments made him. But although he did not mentally face and enumerate his difficulties, he was aware of them just the same. He was clearly conscious of a conflict between fact and theory, between teaching and example, between reality and dreams. He became year after year also more clearly aware of a repugnance rising within him to religion and to religious teaching. He shrank

from it without realising why. He supposed it was just his natural sin. It was, of course, that he was proving its unreality as a guide to life. He began to shrink, too, from all religious topics, from religious services and religious books. They jarred on him. He found himself also losing his reverence for his religious teachers—for all his teachers, in fact—for they all professed religion. Their words had grated on him first, the difference between what they professed to believe and what he knew they did believe. Unaware of the reason till much later, almost unconsciously there grew up in him a contempt towards all his teachers and masters, a sense that they must be and were hypocrites and impostors. He found himself at eighteen far adrift from all guidance and counsel, shunning religion because he saw that the teachings of Christ were quite unadapted for the world he had to live in, scornful of and contemning his teachers for what seemed to him hypocrisy.

It was not a satisfactory state for a boy, and the less so because it was still almost unconscious. He felt all that I have said, the avoidance, the dislike, but he had not yet faced it to himself and said, "Why does Christianity jar upon me and seem unreal, what are its difficulties?" Nor, "What is it that causes my dislike and contempt of my teachers? They are better men in all ways than I am. They are good men. I shall never be as good. I honour them in their lives. I admit that. What is the difficulty?" He was adrift without compass or pilot, and he did not know it. Yet he was already far from the safe harbour of trust and belief. The storms and darkness of the sea of life were before him, and there was no star by which he could steer. He made no effort, raised as yet no alarm, for he knew not that his anchor had dragged, that he had lost hold, perhaps never to regain it.

CHAPTER IV

SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY—I

About this time he read the "Origin of Species" and "The Descent of Man." This surprised him. It was not only that this was his first introduction to the science of biology, his first peep behind the curtain of modern forms into the coulisses of the world that interested him, but there was here contained a complete refutation, a disastrous overthrow, of all that system of the Creation which he had been taught.

If Darwin was right, and he seemed to be right—nay, even his once adversaries now admitted he was right, if not in his details yet in his broad outline—if he was right then was Genesis all wrong. There was never any garden of Eden, never any seven days' creation, never any making of woman out of a rib; the world was not six thousand years old, but millions. Man himself could count his pedigree back tens of thousands of years. It was a fable; and not only was it a fable, but this fable contained as a kernel not a truth—then it would be understood—but a falsehood. The theory of the whole story was that man had fallen, that he used to be perfect, that he walked with God, but that he fell. Such was the idea. And the continuation was that Christ was required to atone to God for man's disobedience, to lead man slowly back to the Paradise he had lost.

And now it was clear that the garden of Eden was all a fable, that man had never been perfect, that he had evolved slowly out of the beast. He had risen, not fallen, and stood now higher than ever before. The first part was false, and if so, must not the sequence be false also? As a whole the fable held together; destroy the foundation and the superstructure must come crashing into ruin. Oh! it was all false, the whole of it, Old and New Testament together, an old woman's tale. And then suddenly his eyes were opened. He saw many things. His instincts that he had not understood were now clear. Yes, of course, the supernatural part was all a fable, a mistake; nay, more, it taught the reverse of truth, and the moral part of it was all wrong too. The morality of the Old Testament was that of a savage, the morality of the New a remarkable ideal totally unfit for the world as it is now or ever has been. The man who followed it would commit a terrible error. It was therefore untrue also; more than merely untrue, it was dangerous, as a false teacher must be. For long he had instinctively seen that this was so, now he knew why. At the touch of science the whole fabric of religion fell into dust. Christianity was a fraud, and there was an end of it.

But still the church bells rang and the people went there. Priests preached this belief and people held to it. Darwin had written more than ten years before and his book had been accepted, but still religion had not fallen. Men and women, as far as he could see nearly all men and women, still professed themselves Christians. How was all this possible? How could it be that this disproved Jewish fable still held together? It was wonderful. There must be a reason. What is it?

Can it be possible, he thought, that there is an explanation, that religion can justify itself, that it may still have reason? There are people who call themselves scientific theologians. They write books and they preach, and they can be asked questions. What have they to say? So this boy collected some of his difficulties and tried to find out what scientific theology thought of them. Let me name briefly some of them:—

The Fall of Man.—Theology says he fell, science says he rose. What does Scientific Theology say?

The Character of God.—In the Old Testament God is represented frequently as bloodthirsty, as partial to the Jews, as unjust, as given to anger, as changeable. How is this?

Again, God is represented as the only Almighty, the only All-present, All-seeing, All-powerful; yet without a doubt the facts detailed show the Devil to be certainly All-present, and, as far as man here is concerned, has considerably more power and influence than God. God made the world, but the Devil possesses it. Why?

Prayer.—How can this be necessary? If God knows best what is good for us, why pray to Him? Can He be influenced? The Bible says yes. Then is not this a very extraordinary thing, that if God knows what is best for us, He should have to be asked to do it—that He won't do it unless asked?

About Christ. He was God, yet He died to atone to Himself for the sin of man. What is the meaning of all this? Why did God allow man to crucify Himself in order to atone to Himself for a former sin of man, and what is the meaning of all this? Has it any?

Most important of all, as to the example and teaching of Christ regarding conduct. What did it mean, and why did everyone profess it and no one believe it?

These, of course, were not all his difficulties. There were hundreds of them. There is not a verse in the Old or New Testament, not a dogma, not a belief of Christianity, that does not furnish ground for question. These I have mentioned are but some of the most prominent. They will serve as examples of what he sought to learn.

And these were the answers he received.

The History of the Creation is an allegory. It is not in conflict with science, but in accordance with it. There is no difficulty. The seven days of creation mean seven periods; we do not know how long these were. The chronology of Archbishop Usher was, of course, in error. It is a wonderful testimony to the inspiration of the Bible, the accuracy with which the account of Creation therein fits in with the facts we have recently learnt.

The story of Adam and Eve is an allegory of life. A child is born innocent and pure, and he falls. The knowledge therein referred to, the fruit, means useless questions into the secrets of God, such questions as you are now engaged in. Had you accepted Christianity as a child does you would never have fallen into the slough of infidelity in which you are now. You, like Eve, have been tempted by the Devil with the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and have fallen. But the help of Christ, the knowledge that he died for you, can now save you. That is the answer.

You ask of the character of God in the Old Testament. You say that He is represented by His acts as revengeful, as unjust, as hasty, as very partial. Man cannot criticise the acts of God. He may seem to you so, but are you sure you can judge rightly? God cannot be all these. His injustice, His revengefulness, His partiality were merely effects produced in your mind. They do not exist. He is all-merciful, and all-seeing, and all-powerful. If the Devil seems to have more power in the world than God, it is simply because God allows him. If the Devil seems all-present it is because he has legions of demons to do his will. God is all-merciful, all-powerful, all-just; believe this and you will do well. The answers to your difficulties about prayer are also very simple. God is not influenced by prayer. He is merciful and will always do what He knows to be best for you, whether you pray or not; but He has ordained prayer for you, not because of its effect on Him, but because of its effect upon yourself. Prayer, humiliation, softens the heart of the suppliant. His cry to God will not change God, but will change him. This is the explanation. It is very simple, is it not?

The doctrine of the Trinity can be best understood from an analogy of man. Consider how a man can be a father, a husband, and a son all at once. There is

no difficulty here. Where, then, is the difficulty with God? God as the Father of man, the righteous Judge who punishes man for his wickedness, He vindicated His law; but God the Son, the pitying nature of God, had compassion on man, and therefore gave Himself as a sacrifice for man; God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, entered into man's heart and sanctified it. Cannot you thus understand the manifold nature of God?

The teaching of Christ? His example? You do not understand that? Was not His life the perfect life, His teaching the perfect teaching? You say that this teaching cannot be followed now in its entirety. Is it not the wickedness of man that prevents it? Did each man act up to this teaching, to this example, would it not be a perfect world? Let each man try his best and the world will improve. Such as I have written were the answers he found to his questions. I do not say that these are always the answers that are given. It may be there are others. It may be that in the years that have passed since then new explanations have been evolved.

Although I do not think that is so, as only a year ago I saw some of these very replies written in a well-known Review as the authoritative answer of scientific theology to these difficulties. However that may be, these are the answers the boy received, such were the guides given to lead him out of the darkness of scepticism into the light of faith.

CHAPTER V

SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY—II

What thought the boy of these explanations? Do you think they helped him at all? Do you think he was able to accept them as real? Did they throw any light into the darkness of his doubts?

The boy took them and considered them. He considered them fairly, I am sure; he would have accepted them if he could. For what he was looking for was simply guidance and light. He had no desire for aught but this. If he revolted now from the faith of his people it was because he found there neither teaching he could accept nor help. If the scientific theologian shewed him that the error was in him and not in the faith the boy would, I think, have been glad. So he took these explanations and considered them, and this is what he thought.

They tell me that the seven days of creation are seven epochs. I did not ask that. To my question whether man has fallen, as the Bible says, or risen, as science declares, no reply has been given.

There is only a specious likening of a man's life, saying that man falls from the innocence of his childhood to sin through the knowledge of evil, and requires redemption. My question is avoided, and a new sophism given me which is also untrue. A child is not innocent. It is only ignorant and weak. Its natural impulses are those of a savage. It requires to learn the knowledge of good and evil to subdue these instincts. This symbolism of the child is utterly false. A child is to us a very beautiful thing because its tenderness, its helplessness, its clinging affection awaken in us feelings of love, of protection, which we feel are beautiful. All men should, all men I think do, love children, but the beauty is in the man's emotions that are awakened, not in those qualities of the children that awaken them.

To go beyond this and say that a child should be a model to man is to display ignorance of what children are, to mistake effect for cause, to exalt childishness into a virtue. Theologians use this argument, which is merely a play upon our affection for children, to try and induce us to accept their theology with the same ignorant confidence that a child accepts all it is told by its parents. It would suit theologians for all men to be babes in this sense, in their senselessness. But if theology will bear the light of reason, why ask us to accept it blindly? Why? Is it because it will not bear scrutiny?

And surely of all the answers, this answer about the character of God is the most extraordinary. "God is not really unjust or partial, or revengeful. That is merely the impression His acts make on us." Truly here is an argument. How can anyone, even God, be judged except in His acts? If His acts are revengeful, is not He revengeful? "No!" says the theological scientist, "that is merely your ignorance. Events make a wrong impression on you."

How, then, am I to judge which are wrong and which are right impressions? God acts, as it seems to me, angrily; He is not angry. On other occasions He acts, as it seems, mercifully. How am I to know that this impression of mercy is not an error? How, in fact, am I to know that anything exists at all? If God's anger and partiality and changeableness are merely impressions of my mind, are not all His attributes merely impressions also, and do not exist? In fact, is not God Himself merely an impression and He does not exist? Where are you going to stop? The theologian will doubtless say, "When I tell you." But then he is unfortunately arrogating to himself an authority which does not exist, an authority to twist and turn the Bible to suit his own sophisms, an authority to bind your mind which no one has given him. Impressions forsooth. What impressions can any candid mind have of the scientific theologian? And when the boy read the explanation of the difference between the all-presence of God and the all-presence of Satan, I am afraid he laughed.

But prayer is a serious matter. No one can feel anything but sorrow to see the explanation of God and prayer. The theological scientist again repeats the Bible words and has his own explanation. No, God is not moved by prayer. This is merely another wrong impression of ours, an impression taken from the Bible words. The action of prayer is not objective, but subjective; its effect is not on God, but on you.

Now mark what he has led himself into. Prayer will purify a man. To ask God for what he wants won't make the slightest difference in God's acts, but will in your own feelings. Nevertheless, as of course no one would or could pray unless he hoped to be answered, man must be told that God does listen. But this is not true. Therefore, according to theological science, the Bible directly tells us a falsehood in order to lead us into a good action. Is there any escape from this? There is none. The whole meaning and reason of prayer is that God *does* listen, that He *does* forgive if asked, that He *does* help us and save us. Unless a man held this belief firmly he would not pray. Try and you will see. Imagine to yourself, as the theologian declares, that God is quite unmoved by prayer, and that the action of prayer is subjective, and see if you can get up any prayer at all. It is impossible. How much fervency will there be in a request

you know will not be granted or attended to? How much subjective action will follow that prayer? The subjective action is absolutely dependent on your belief that God does listen and is influenced by your prayer. But the scientific theologian says your premise is false.

Can you imagine this theologian's prayer? Can you see him kneeling and uttering supplications to a god whom he knows he cannot affect or influence, and pausing now and then to see how the subjective effect on himself was getting on? But it is not even a subject to be bitter over, only to be sad. Truly, if I wanted to make a man an atheist and a scoffer, a railer at all religion, at all religious emotions, at all that is best in our natures, I would take him to a scientific theologian and have him taught the scientific theological theory of prayer.

And again, though the boy understood how a man could be the son of his father, the husband of his wife, the father of his son, three different relations to three people, it did not help him to understand how he could be so to one person. A man cannot be his own son and his own father, and have proceeding from him a third person different and yet the same. The argument seemed to him childish.

As to the teaching of Christ, of what use is a teaching that is suitable only to an ideal state of things? Is it any use to me to tell me that if everyone agreed at once to follow this teaching the world would be perfect? Even if this were true, what would be the use? The world never has accepted it and does not do so now. No one does except a few people who are called visionaries or fanatics. Even the Quakers only accept a part, and it is well for them that their fellow citizens do not accept even that part, or these Quakers would soon be robbed of their wealth. A nation of Quakers would be a nation of slaves. All this talk of what would happen if at a given signal all the world became perfect is useless dream talk. I want realities. This code of Christ is not a reality. No quicker way of destroying civilization and all that it means could be desired than by attempting to follow it. We must be ready and prepared to fight other nations, we must have armies and navies, and we must honour them. We must have magistrates, and police, and prisons, and gallows.

"I went," thought the boy, "to these theological scientists, for help in my everyday life, for clear directions and explanations, and what do they give me? A mass of words meaning nothing, words and words, and tangled thoughts; evasion and misrepresentation, misty dreams and cloud-hidden ideals. They cannot explain, and therefore the whole thing is false. There is no truth

anywhere in it. The whole teaching of the Bible, from the Creation down to the incarnation of Christ and His second coming, is one huge mistake. Why people keep on believing it I cannot say. But anyhow I have found out its falseness, and I will not. Let it all go. It will make no difference and be rather an advantage. What use have I ever had from this religion that has been dinned into me? It gave me false ideas of the world and nature which I have had to unlearn. It gave me an unworkable code of conduct which I never tried to follow, but I got into trouble for it. To call oneself a Christian is merely a way of talking. No one is so really, and the only difference between me and the others will be that while they are not Christians but think they are, I am not a Christian and know I am not."

Was the boy glad or sorry? I do not know. I think perhaps he was both. He felt like a man who has shaken off a burden, a load that contained mere weight and no useful thing. He would step more lightly in future.

But he felt, too, like a man who has skirted a precipice, secure in that a railing fenced him in from danger, when he suddenly discovers that the railing is decayed to the core and will vanish at a touch. He felt dizzy and afraid, and the feeling grew upon him.

May be, he thought, it is a good thing to have a religion. People of all faiths, of all nations, seem to cling to theirs very strongly. It is the one thing they cannot bear to lose. Yet I do not know what they get from it. At least I do not know what people get from Christianity. What I look for in a faith are these three things.

I wish an explanation of my origin, of the origin of man and his relation to this world, and to what there may be beyond this world. I want an explanation I can accept, and that is not contradicted by the knowledge we acquire from other sources than religion.

And I want a guide to life. I want a guide to life as it is. For I have to live in the world as it exists, and I would have help and direction to do so well. I want a teaching and an example I can refer to in my everyday troubles.

Finally, I would know something of the Hereafter. I would desire to hear of the after death. I cannot believe that all non-Christians, including myself and the majority of Christians, go to hell. That is repulsive. Nor can I believe in the heavens they tell us of. If all be true that they tell us, it has no attraction this Christian heaven. To be for ever singing praises is not life but monotony. Did any man in health, and strength, and sanity ever yearn to die in order to reach

this Heaven they tell us of? Did not Aucassin say long ago that if he were to believe the monks Heaven was a place for the poor and maimed, the foolish, the childish and silly, the stupid, the cowards, the ugly, the undesirable, the failures of earth, and that he cared not for it? Whoever was unfit for earth was the more fit for heaven. No! If there is another world it must be different from the conceptions of Heaven and Hell as are taught. And I would know. These seem to me the essentials of religion. They are the three things I want. I have not found them. It may be that in the other greater faiths that hold the world I may find what I seek. I cannot say. But meanwhile I must do without. It is better to have no compass than a faulty one. It is better to watch for the stars, even if the night be thick and it be hard to see.

Such, I think, was what he thought. Whether he ever found what he sought, whether any faith can give what he asks, whether indeed these three things are essentials of religion at all, will be found in the latter part of the book. This part is but the introduction to explain why and by whom the search was made, and what was sought.

CHAPTER VI

WHENCE FAITHS COME

From the East has come all our light. All world religions have begun there, have grown there, have mostly spread there.

Brahminism and Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, Mahommedanism and Parseeism, the cult of the Taoists and Confucians, every belief that has been a great belief, that has led man captive, has come from the East. Even the Mythologies of Greece and Rome were from Asiatic sources, from Babylon and Chaldea. In the North we have originated only Thor and Odin, Balder and the Valkyries.

I do not think anyone who has lived in the East can doubt why this has been so. Where is it man's thoughts are deepest and strongest, where is it that his heart responds to the heart of the world until they beat throb for throb?

It is never in the North; for the cold winds and dreary skies, the rain and cloud and gloom, do not draw a man out from himself, but drive him in. Every keen breeze that blows, every shower, every grey day, reminds him not of his soul but of his body. It must be kept warm, it must be fed, it must be housed. He cannot forget that the outside world must be guarded against, is an enemy to be feared.

And man must live in houses with other people. He cannot be alone, he cannot ever feel alone with just himself and the world. Yet it is only in solitude, when alone with Nature, that she will talk to you. For her voice is very low, and there must be a great silence before she will tell her secrets.

But there in the East it is not so. For weeks and months, for half the year may be, one perfect day is joined to another by more perfect nights.

Only there can man be alone. Only there, in the limitless silence of the desert, in the unending forests, can you live and forget all other men, and yourself almost, and be alone with Him who is God.

You want but little, no house to shelter you, no fire, but very little food and drink and clothes. You do not feel that restless desire to do something born of cold winds and skies. Your roof by day is the palm or tamarind, by night you watch the stars wheeling over your head. There is no one to commune with but Nature, and if you love her as she should be loved; if you woo her as she

would be wooed; if you can send out your soul to lose itself with her in the wonders of the infinite, then shall you hear the music of the stars.

Thus has all religion come from the land of the sun: light is the fount of faith.

Never till you have been to the East can you know what faith is. Have we not religion, nay religions, in the North? Yes, but not as they have there. Do we not believe in the West? Yes, but not as they believe. Faith lies there in the great distances, in the dawn, the noon, the sunset, in the holiness of the dark. It has sunk into the heart of man. Consider, what do you see when you land anywhere in the East, what strikes you most, what is most prominent, not in the landscape, but in the people?

It is their religion.

You watch the people in the streets and you ask, Why has the merchant in that shop trident marks on his forehead? Because he is a Hindu and follows Vishnu. And that clerk who gave me money in the bank, why has he those other marks? Because he is a Brahmin. And that money-lender seems to have rubbed his forehead with ashes? He is a Chetty.

They carry their religion about with them, they are proud of it, they desire all men to know it. See that man's beard, he is a Mahommedan; and yonder man with a green turban, he is a Seyid. They would not desire you to doubt it.

Did you ever see Englishmen praying in the streets? Perhaps never. Certainly if ever you have seen it you condemned it as unnatural. "Let him pray at home," you have thought. "He is parading his piety." But here in the East it is different.

Go by the morning train, leave Rangoon Station when the sun is shining on the great pagoda, and you will see men and women and children lean out of the carriage windows to salute it, to murmur a prayer. The Mahommedan spreads his cloth and turns to Mecca, and prays no matter where he may be. He is not ashamed. It does not seem to him strange. He does it absolutely naturally, as all these people do all the things that pertain to their faiths. Neither his fellow-believers nor the adherents of other faiths wonder.

The Hindu may hate the Mahommedan for social reasons, and the Buddhist may hate both, but they do not despise each other for being religious.

It would never occur to a Hindu to despise or jeer at a Mahommedan for spreading his cloth at the street corner and praying. He thinks the faith a mistaken faith, *he* would not have it. But if a man is a Mahommedan it is right of him to pray, of course.

I have never heard, no one has ever heard, one Oriental jeer at another for being religious, for obeying the commands of his faith. But I have heard Christians and teachers of Christianity do so very often. We will jeer at a Mahommedan for praying, at a Hindu for observing his caste, at a Buddhist for raising his hands in honour to his pagoda, at a Chinaman for protecting the graves of his fathers. For in the West we have never known what real religion is. We have it not ourselves, and so we cannot recognise and honour it in others. No brave man will mock at another brave man, though an enemy; no one who has loved mocks at another lover, though he love strange things. Only those jeer who do not know, and the Christians of the West jeer at the faiths of the East, at the simple natural religion of the people, because they know not what religion of the heart can be.

In Europe, what difference does a man's faith make? None. He may live a lifetime with other men and no one know or care what his faith may be. Unless he is a poor man and in need of mission, it is considered impertinence to ask. But here in the East a man's faith is everything. You cannot get away from it even for a moment. It is an essential part of him.

There is another thing that strikes one very soon. These Oriental religions have little or no organisation. Here in Europe there is nothing so organised as religion. Consider the Catholic faith and the organisation of Rome. It is a marvel of government, of very strict government indeed. And the other forms of Western Christianity are not much behind. The Greek Church is organised as a branch of Government. So, too, to a lesser extent is the Anglican Church, and if the Dissenting bodies, as we call them, are not connected with the State, they have nevertheless a strong system of government.

These organisations are not now, of course, so strong as they were. They used to drag the men into religion by force, by State aid, they used to insist on conformity and punish laxity of observance. That is now gone, but a strong and continuous pressure still exists, exerted by the Churches in many ways. All Churches in Europe are always having "missions." Our great cities are full of them, and the country is not free of them. There has to be a continual shepherding of the flock or the Church might dwindle sadly. Men have to be preached at and caught one way or another. All through Europe immense sums are spent yearly in Christianising the poor.

In the East nothing of this exists. There is no head of Hinduism; that of the Sultan in Mahommedanism is merely nominal; how slight the organisation is of Buddhism those who have read my former book will know.

Hindus are guided by the race of Brahmins, who in turn are guided by no one. They are a great community themselves, without any organisation or binding authority. They need no Pope, no Acts of Uniformity. They are Brahmins because they are so. And so it may be said in general. Faiths in the East require no strong organisations to hold them together. Religion is innate in the believers. It seems wonderful. And they have no missions. If a man feels the need of faith he will seek it and obtain it. It is there for him if he will come. And all do come. How many millions in Europe, even in England, have no religious usages? Can you in the East find one man?

When you think of Europe and its faiths you seem to be in a garden where the hedges are carefully clipped and the flowers are trained and pruned, and where you may not walk on the grass. It is all order, and method, and restriction, for the flowers are exotics and would die without the tending, they would vary if they were not kept true to type. But the East is Nature's garden, where the flowers grow wild everywhere; no one tends them or cares for them, but each grows his own way, develops his own power and strength, from the lowest grasses to the gorgeous orchid or the poison lily.

Therefore it may be that in this East, this country whence all religions have come, where the whole air breathes of faiths and all life is full of them, the man who has lost his early beliefs may learn new ones. There is so much to choose from, so many varieties of thought and emotion.

In this Empire of ours are all the great religions. It is the home of Brahminism, of the mystical forms of Hinduism, beyond which it has never spread. There are more Mahommedans here than under the Sultan of Roum. There are the Parsees here, fugitives long ago from Persia on account of their faith, the only sun worshippers who are left. There are Jews who came here no one can tell how long ago, there are Christians who date back may be eighteen centuries, there are Armenians and Arabs. Within this Empire live the only race professing a Buddhism that is pure and without superstition; and beside these there are a hundred other cults, superstitions, or religions, call them what you will.

From the spirit worship of the Shan plateau to the dignified philosophic theories of the Brahmo Somaj is a space as wide as the world can show, yet may it be bridged with religions that differ but by small degrees till the whole be passed.

If anyone want a faith here are enough and to spare. "Therefore," thought the boy, who had now become a man, "I will seek here for what I want. I know what

I want. I have it clearly before me. I have even written it down. It is not as if I was undertaking a blind search for something of which I was not sure. These are my three essentials: a reasonable theory of the universe, a workable and working code of conduct, a promise in the after life that gives me something to really desire, to really hope for, to be a haven towards which I may steer. I will take each subject, each section of a subject, separately and read it up. I will read up these faiths from books, I will study them as I can from the people, and I will see what they are. Surely somewhere can be found what I desire, what I desire so greatly to find."

CHAPTER VII

THE WISDOM OF BOOKS

Therefore the man got books and read them. He read books on Hinduism, many of them; he read the Vedas and the sacred hymns. He learnt of Vishnu and Siva, of Krishna and the milkmaids. He found books on caste and read them, of how these were originally four castes which subdivided. He read of suttee and the car of Juggernaut. He then turned to Mahomedanism and the life of Mahommed. He read the Koran. He learned the early history of the faith, of its rise, of the glory of its result, of the fall of its great Empire. He saw it had much to do with Judaism, there were great similarities, there were also differences. He read of Parseeism, that taught by Zoroaster which they call fire worship; he read of Jainism, of the cult of the Sikhs, of many another strange faith; he learned of the spirit worship of the aboriginal tribes among the mountains, of Phallic worship and its monstrosities.

He read of Confucius and his teachings, of Laotze and his doctrines, of ancestor worship among the Chinese, of Shintoism in Japan.

Most of all he read about Buddhism. There was something here that attracted him more than in all the rest. In the life of Gaudama the Buddha he found a beauty that came to him as a charm, in the teachings of the Great Teacher there seemed to him a light such as he had not seen. Mystery and miracle and the supernatural had always jarred on him, they had an unpleasant savour, as of appeals to the lowest elements in the minds of the credulous and ignorant. Truth he thought should not need such meretricious attractions. Here was a faith that needed none of these things. It could exist without them. It contained explanations, not dogmas. It was reasonableness instead of hysteria, it denounced mysticism and the cult of the supernatural.

It took the man several years to read these books, and he lived those years much alone. His house lay half up a mountain side. Below him lay tangled masses of hills clothed with dense forest, with here and there a clearing. Before him was a jagged mountain wall, behind a great bare dome of rock. It was always wonderful to sit and watch, to see the sun rise in gold and crimson behind the peaks, while all below lay in a white mist; to watch the sun rays fall and the mist grow thinner, showing faint outlines of tree clump and hill contour, till all the mist was gone and the world was full of golden light. Daily he saw the marvel of the dawn. He learnt to love it as the most beautiful of things, most beautiful because full of the promise of untold glory. For the most

part his life was very lonely. There were the labourers who worked for him, the black, half-nude people who came in gangs in May and left in February of each year. They were not of his world. He directed their work, he paid them, but he did not know them. He wondered at them, that was all, and there were scattered here and there throughout the hills other Europeans, who lived much the same life as he did, and whom he met occasionally at their houses or his, or at the club ten miles away. He liked them, some of them were his best friends, a great part of his life was theirs also.

But there was, aside from his friends, aside from the merry meetings, the games, the chaff, the laughter, another life apart. There was a life he lived to himself, in another world it seemed. His world was of the mountain and the fell, of the brooks that laughed down the precipice, of the giant trees, the tangled creepers, the delicate orchid far above. His thoughts were with them and with his books, for they should be brothers. He read and he watched, and he tried to understand; he asked of nature the meaning of these religions, to tell him the secret that he would know. What is the truth of things—what do you mean? And I—What do *I* mean? What is the secret of it all?

The mountains and the trees answered him and told him secrets, the secrets of their hearts, but not the secret he would know. They murmured to him of many things, of beauty, of love, of peace, of forgetfulness. They sang the world's slumber song.

But of whence, of how, of whither they told him nothing, only they ceased talking when he asked, they ceased their song and there was silence. They could not tell.

So he lay upon the rocks and read, and the hills and trees wondered because they knew not of what he read. "Take care," they whispered; "why trouble? Life is so short, surely it were wise to make the best of it; for no one can answer what you ask. We die and fall and new trees grow again, the hills are newly clad each year. The old return in new forms. We can tell of ourselves, we are not afraid. Our lives are full of delight. Death has no terror for us. But you? Of you we know nothing. We have no echo to your words."

Yet the man read on. He dreamed and read and dreamed again.

"I have three wants," he said. "I would know whence I came, I would have some rule to live by, I would know whither I am going. Religions, many religions profess to tell men these things, surely somewhere there will be truth. Nearly all men are satisfied with their religion, cannot I find one that satisfies me? It is

so little that I ask, I have here so many answers. Amongst them I will be able to find what I want." Therefore he read on. But in the thoughts of many teachers there is not clearness, but confusion. In a multitude of counsellors there is not wisdom, only mist, only the strange shadows made by many lights. He found that he did not gain. "Sometimes," he said, "I agree with one, sometimes with another. No one seems to be altogether true. There is Truth, perhaps, but not the whole Truth. This will not do."

At last he said to himself that he would make a system. He would take certain ideas from various faiths, he would put them together, he would compare them one by one and see what he learnt.

There is, he said, the First Cause. What do religions say about this First Cause? There is Brahma, and Jehovah, and Ahriman, with Ormuz; there is the Buddhist doctrine of Law, there is the Christian Trinity. These are some of the chief ideas. What can be made of them? Have they a common truth? Are the great religions utterly at variance about this First Cause, or can they agree? I will take this point and consider it first. What is the First Cause? Then I will pass to another. What does life mean? Why are we here? Is there any explanation of this? For what object does man exist? To what end? He did not mean what is the end of man, but what is the object of man, of life? To whom is it a benefit that man exists? To God—if there be a God? If not, to whom? It cannot be that existence is an aimless freak, that it has no object. But what can this object be? What was to be gained by creating man at all? That was question number two. There is no answer to this question.

There were many other questions that he asked. And when he had framed a question he sat down to his books to find the answer. He worked at them as problems to be solved. He sought in the various faiths described in his books the answers to these problems. What he found will be shown in the next few chapters; but let it be understood again how and why he sought.

He had been born in a faith and brought up in it, and had abandoned it. He left it because he sought in it certain helps to thought and to life that it seemed to him religion ought to give. More, it seemed to him that these answers were of the very essence of religion. His fathers' faith gave him answers he could not accept, it gave him a rule of life he could not follow, that seemed to him untrue. Yet would he not be satisfied with ignorance, he would search further. He wanted a religion, a belief, and he would find it.

For I want it to be understood very clearly that he was no scoffer, no denier of religion. It was the very reverse. He so much wanted a faith, it seemed to him

such an eminently necessary thing, that he would not be content till he had one that he could really accept and believe. He hated doubt and half acceptance. He wanted a truth that appealed to him as a whole truth, that held no room for doubt.

"All men," he said, "have religion. They love their faiths, they find in them help and consolation and guidance, at least they tell me so. Why am I to be left out? Men say that religion is a treasure beyond words. Then I, too, would share in the treasure. But I cannot take what has been offered me. It does not seem to me to be true. I *cannot* believe it. This religion repels me. I cannot say how greatly it repels me. They say it is beautiful. It must be so to some. It is not so to me. Its music to me is not music, but harshest discord. It is not surely that I have no desire for religion, no eye for beauty, no ear for harmony, I know it is not that. No man loves beauty more than I do. There are things in this faith I have rejected that appeal to me. I see in other faiths, too, ideas that are beautiful. But no one seems all true, and none answers my three questions. Yet will I look till I find.

"And meanwhile there are the hills and the woods. These are my dreams.

"But surely in my scheme I shall discover something."

CHAPTER VIII

GOD

Sitting on the hillside when the hot season was coming near its end he saw the thunderstorms come across the hills. From far away they came, black shadows in the distance, and the thunder like far off surf upon the shore. Nearer they would grow and nearer, passing from ridge to ridge, their long white skirts trailing upon the mountain sides, until they came right overhead and the lightning flashed blindingly, while the thunder roared in great trumpet tones that shuddered through the gorges. The man watched them and he saw how gods were born. It was Thor come back again—Thor with his hammer, Thor with his giant voice. Thus were born the gods, Thor and Odin, Balder God of the Summer Sun, Apollo and Vulcan, Ahriman and Ormuz, night and day.

So were born all the gods. You can read of it in Indian, in Greek, in Roman, in Norwegian mythology, in any mythology you like. You can see the belief living still among the Chins, the Shans, the Moopers; for them the storm-wind and earthquake, the great rivers and the giant hills, all these have causes, and they who cause them are gods. From these have grown all the ideas of God that the peoples hold now. They were originally local, local to the place, local to the people, and as the people progressed so did their ideas of God.

It seemed to the man lying on his hillside easy to follow how it all arose; for, indeed, was it not going on about him? Did not the forest people speak of a god in the great bare rock behind him? Were there not gods in the ravines, gods in the hidden places of the hills? It was so easy to realise as he watched the storm-cloud bursting before him, as the lightning flashed and the thunder trumpet sounded in the hills, that men should personify these. Nay, more, he saw the wild men about him actually personifying them. He could understand.

God was the answer to a question; as the question grew so did the reply.

The savage asks but little. He does not ask "Who am I?" "Who made the world, and why?" Such questioning comes but in later years. He fears the thunder; it is to him a great and wonderful and overpowering thing. It forces itself upon his notice, and he explains it as the voice of a greater man, a God. He lives in the heavens, for His voice comes from thence. The giant peaks that swathe themselves in clouds, the volcano and the earthquake, the great river flowing for ever to the sea, with its strange floods, its eddies, its deadly undertow, in these too must be gods. These are the first things that force themselves upon his dim observance. He wonders, and from his wonder is born a god. But as he

grows in mental stature, in power of seeing, in power of feeling, he observes other forces. How is the heaven held up, the great heavy dome as he imagines it? It is Atlas who does so. There is a god of the Autumn and Spring, of the Summer and Winter. So he personifies all forces he perceives but does not understand. For he has no idea of force except as emanating from a Person, of life which is not embodied in some form like his own or that of some animal. Whenever anything is done it must be Some One who does it, and that Some One is like himself, only greater and stronger.

There is not in the savage god any conception differing from that of man. There is not in any god any realisable conception different from that of man. The savage god is hungry and thirsty, requires clothes and houses, has in all things passions and wants like a man. That makes the god near to the man. With later gods is it different? God can be realised only by means of the qualities He shares with man. Deduct from your idea of God all human passions, love and forgiveness, and mercy, and revenge, and punishment, and what is left? Only words and abstractions which appeal to no one, and are realisable by no one. Declare that God requires neither ears to hear nor eyes to see, nor legs to walk with, nor a body, and what is left? Nothing is left. When anyone, savage or Christian, realises God he does so by qualities God shares with man. God is the Big Man who causes things. That is all. To say that God is a spirit and then to declare that a spirit differs in essence from a man is playing with words. No realisable conception does or can differ.

The conception of force by itself is but a very late idea. As one by one the phenomena of nature attract man's observation he personifies them. It will be noticed that unless a force intrudes itself on him he does not personify it. What people ever personified gravity? And why not? Surely gravity is evident enough. Every time a savage dropped a stone on his toes he would recognise gravity. But no. That a stone falls to the ground because a force draws it is an idea very late to enter man's brain. It seems to him, as he would say, the nature of a stone to fall. And then gravity acts always in the same way. It is not intermittent—like lightning, for instance. Therefore he never conceives of gravity as a force at all. When men had come to perceive that it was a force, they had passed the personifying stage. But the savage personified each force as he perceived it. First the sun and storm, till at last he came to himself and began to study his own life. He had good and bad luck; that was Fortune. Evil deeds are done, and good; he is beginning to classify and generalise; there are gods of Good and Evil. He has come to Ormuz and Ahriman little by little; as his power of generalising progresses, he drops the smaller gods. They disappear, they are but attributes of greater gods. And as he grows in mental

grasp and makes himself the centre of his world, so does the God of Man become the God of Nature too. The greater absorbs the lesser.

The God who cared for man, the God of his past, of his present, of his future, is become the great God. He rules all the gods until he alone is God.

So it seemed to the man that God arose, never out of reason, always out of instinct. There was no difference. It is all the same story. There is innate in all men a tendency to personify the forces they cannot understand. Because they want an explanation, and personality is the only one that offers at first. To attribute effects to persons is aboriginal science. To attribute them to natural laws is later science. Each is the answer to the same question. Men personify forces in different ways according to their mental and emotional stature, to their capacity for generalising. They express their ideas in different ways according to their race and their country. The Hindu began with a god in each force, to represent each idea, and so the lower people still remain, afraid of many gods. But those of mental stature gradually generalised, till at last they came to one God, Brahm, and the lesser gods as emanating from him. This was a hierarchy; and then finally the greatest thinkers came to one God only, and the idea that the lesser gods are but representatives of His manifold nature. You can see all the stages before you now. It is simply a question of brain power, and the sequence remains the same. First the lesser, then the greater. It is never the other way on.

So does Christian mythology personify three ideas of God, as a Trinity, as three Persons in One, and a Devil. The Hindu would express such a conception of God by a god with three heads. Christianity, rejecting such crude symbolism, does so by a mystical creed. The Devil is being dropped. But the Jew and the Mahommedan have only one God. All force emanates from Him. He is the Cause of all things. He is One.

And yet it is not a reasoned answer, but an instinctive one. The savage, no more than the Christian, does not reason out his God. The feeling, the understanding of God is innate, abiding—never the result of a mental process. The idea of God is a thing in itself; it grows with the brain, but it is not the result of any process of the brain; just as a forest tree grows the greater in richer soil.

As the idea of gods increased in majesty, as the numbers decreased and became merged in three, in two, or in one, so did their power increase. The gods were at first but local, local to the place, local to the tribe. So was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was jealous of the other gods. And

gradually their local god or gods grew into the God of the whole world. It was only a question of mental development, of the power of generalisation in conception. Man conceived a ruler of the world in the Roman Emperor before he conceived an all-powerful God. The man as he meditated, as he watched, would see the stages before his eyes. There was the savage, the Kurumba and Moopa with his many gods in the hills all about; there were the Hindus, the traders whose temples shewed white in the groves beneath, many steps higher in civilisation with their supreme Brahm and minor gods emanating from him; there was the Moslem with his "God is God." He had the stages before his eyes.

Therefore when he came to consider this question of God he found in God-worship in Hinduism, Parseeism, Mahommedanism, Judaism, Christianity, no differing conception. They held all the same idea in different shapes. There was nothing new. God, one or multiple, made the world according to His own good pleasure, ruled it according to His will. The savage knew most of God, because his god was but a man enlarged and the nearer to him for that. With greater contemplation the crudities have been removed, the manlike qualities disappear one by one, until with the few greatest thinkers they are all gone. God has become a "Spirit," an abstraction, an unthinkable, incomprehensible God that is of no use to anyone; for He cannot be influenced by prayer, He has no passions to be roused, He has become lost in the heavens, an inscrutable force. Such was the evolution of God.

Only when he came to Buddhism was there a new thing. He found no longer God or gods, but Law. That was indeed new, that was indeed very different from the other faiths. The world came into being under Law, it progressed under Law, it would end, if it ever did end, under Law. And this Law was unchanged, unchangeable for ever. Let me consider, he said, these two conceptions, Personality and Law.

What is this world to the Buddhist? It is a place that has evolved and is evolving under Law. He does not speak of God creating one thing or another, but of a sequence of events. The Buddhist was Darwin two thousand years before Darwin. He saw the rule of Law long before our scientific men found it in the stars. I do not think it is so easy to follow the origin of this idea as it is of the idea of God. With the latter we have the stages before our eyes, but how the Buddhist idea of law arose we can only conjecture. It is not, I think, an instinct like the knowledge of God. It is more of a mental process, like the reasoning of science. It is a negation as opposed to an assertion. It is the negative pole. It must surely have arisen like modern science from the observation of facts. I do not say that the idea of law is absent from other faiths. You see it in the

Commandments. Certain sequences were recognised, but with Judaism they were ascribed to the order of a Personality. Buddhism, like science, knows of no Personality. The laws of a Theocracy were always liable to change and correction. The laws of the Buddhist are inviolable. The Christian thinks laws can be violated, the Buddhist knows they are inviolable.

You cannot break a law. It is true that many declare otherwise, that Charles Kingsley in a famous lecture declared you could break the law of gravity. "The law is," says he, "that a stone should fall to the earth; but by stretching out your hand you can prevent the stone falling. Thus you can break the law." So argued Charles Kingsley, so think mistily many men because they have never troubled to define the words they use. There is no law that a stone should fall to the earth. The law of gravity is that bodies attract each other directly as their mass, and inversely as the square of the distance. You do not break this law by holding a stone in your hand. Nay, you can feel it acting all the time you do so. You cannot break this law. You cannot break any law. Law is another word for the inevitable. Whom did the Greeks put above all the gods? It was [Greek: anachkê , Necessity. Did, then, the Greeks see that behind all their personification of forces Law ruled? It may be so. They have the two ideas, God and Law. It is perhaps the old battle of free will and destination. And which is true? To the Greek Necessity was behind God, to the Theist God is behind Law. The laws are but His orders. He can break them and change them and modify them. And yet, it is so hard to see clearly how Theists can avoid the difficulty. If God's laws are perfect truths they cannot be alterable. Only the imperfect would be changed. Yet if God's laws are perfect, is not He, too, bound by them? And if He be bound, is not His free will, His omnipotence limited? Surely God cannot transgress His own laws of righteousness; is there not "necessity" to Him too? But if this be so, then where is the need of any knowledge beyond the knowledge of law? If it be indeed eternal, as the Buddhists say, what need for more? In the science of nature we need not go beyond, we cannot. In the science of man, who is but part of nature, why should we do so? Is it not better, truer, more beautiful to believe in everlasting laws of righteousness that rule the world than to believe that a Personality has to be always arranging and interfering? Would we not in a state prefer perfect laws to a perfect king, who, however, was imperfect in this that his laws were imperfect and had to be checked in their working? Which is the more perfect conception? Surely that of law. If crime and ignorance, if mistake and waywardness brought always inevitably their due punishment and correction, where is a ruler needed? It is imperfection that requires changing.

CHAPTER IX

GOD AND LAW

Think what a difference, what an immense difference, it makes to a man which he believes, how utterly it alters all his attitude to the Unknown, to the Infinite, whether he believes in God or in Law. For among all religions, all faiths, all theories of the unknown there are only these two ideas, Personality or Law, free will or inevitableness. And how different they are.

In the face of eternity there are two attitudes: that of the Theist, whether Christian or Jew, Hindu or spirit worshipper; and that of the Buddhist, the believer in Law. To the believer in God or in gods, what is the world and what is man? They are playthings in the hands of the Almighty. God is responsible to no one, He knows no right and wrong, no necessity beyond Himself, all He does must be right. He is All-powerful. Man must crouch before Him in fear. If man suffer he must not cry out against God; he must say in due submissiveness, "Thy will be done." A man must even be thankful that matters are not worse. If in a shipwreck many are drowned and few, bereft of all but life, are hardly saved, what must they do? They must render thanks to God that He didn't drown them too. Not because they are aware of being punished for any sin, that does not come to man in calamity. You cannot imagine a common sin that engulphs men and women, children and babes, from all countries, of all professions, of many religions, in one common disaster. No! God can be bribed, not with presents perhaps now, but with reverence. It is the cringe that deprecates uncontrollable Power. It is the same feeling that makes the savage lay a fruit or a flower before the Spirit of the Hills lest he too be killed by the falling rocks.

For what do men imagine God to be? Do you think that each man holds one wonderful conception of God? Not so. The civilised man's idea of God is as the savage idea. Each man builds to himself his own God, out of his ideals, civilised or savage. Truly, if you ask a man to tell you his idea of God he will answer you vaguely out of his creeds or sacred books; but if you watch that man's actions towards God, you will soon discover that his God is but his ideal man glorified.

To a tender woman her God is but the extreme of the tenderness, the beauty, the compassion which she feels, and the narrowness which she has but does not realise. And cannot you see in your mind's eye the German Emperor's God clanking round the heavenly mansions wearing a German pickelhaube and

swearing German oaths? Man's God is but what he admires most in himself. He can be propitiated, he can be bribed. The savage does it with a bowl of milk or a honey cake, the mediæval man did it with a chapel or a painted window. You say this idea has ceased. Have you ever prayed to God and said, "Spare me this time and I will be good in future. I will do this. I will do that." Or, more beautifully, "Spare him that I love and let the punishment fall on me. Let me bear his sins." Is not the very idea of atonement expressed by Christ's life? A price has to be paid to God. He must be bought off. Man's attitude before God must be that of the child, submissive with downcast eyes, full of praise, never daring to blame. "Tell me and I will obey, do not punish me or I perish." Then there is the attitude of the believer in eternal law. For him the world holds no caprice, no leaning to one side or another, no revenge, no mercy. Each act carries with it an inevitable result: reward if the act be good, punishment if it be bad. You can break a command of God. He may tell you to do a thing and you may refuse. You cannot break a law. It is the inevitable, the everlasting. You cannot rebel against law. The sin is not rebellion, but ignorance. The attitude is not submission, but inquiry, the thirst for truth. Adam lost Eden because he sought for the knowledge of good and evil. But the law-believer says that only in wisdom, only in truth, is there any hope. He stands before the eternal verities with clear eyes to see them, with a strong heart to bear what his ignorance may make him suffer. Out of his pain he will learn the sequences of life. He has gained much.

What has he lost? Are not mercy and fatherly care, forgiveness and love, beautiful things? Yet they, too, are of God. If you know not of Him, only of Law, have you not lost out of your life some of the greatest thoughts? How will you comfort your heart when it is sore if you have not God? Is prayer nothing?

Truly, said the man, these are beautiful things. If I could have them alone. But I cannot. I fear the other qualities more than I love these. I would have neither. I would be a man and live under Law. It seems to me enough. If Law be absolute I see no room for God.

Over against him were the long ridges of the hills where the rain-clouds gathered from the south. He saw them come in great masses surging up the valleys and hiding the contours of the hills. The lightning flashed across the peaks and the thunder echoed in long-drawn trumpet blasts. "The savage," he said, "saw there only gods warring with one another. Now with wiser eyes we see the reign of Law. We do not know all the laws; we cannot even yet tell how much rain will come, whether it will be famine or plenty. We cannot see the Law, but we never doubt the Law is there. With man it is the same. Births and

deaths, suicides and murders, are they too not all under Law? Why should not man's soul be so too? Where is the need of God?"

As he came down the mountain side the rain was falling heavily, as it can only in the tropics. The dry hollows were already streams, the streams were foaming torrents. "They act under Law," he said. "Their life is bounded all by Law." And then of a sudden, watching the foaming water, he saw more clearly.

"True, the stream runs within its banks, but banks do not make the stream. Gravity, that drags down these waters, acts in certain sequence, but that sequence is not gravity. Gravity is a force. When we enumerate the law we do not define, or know, or understand the force, only the way it acts. Force is force, and law is law. They are not the same. They do not explain each other. What a dead thing would law be that had no force acting within it. Truly, I must see more clearly. Law does not deny force; nay, but it predicates it—is, in fact, an outcome of it. Law is a sequence along which force acts; neither can exist without the other. All force is ruled by law. Yes, but what is force—what are any of the forces that exist: gravity, and electricity, and heat, and life? Forms of motion? May be; but whence the motion?

"Ah me!" said the man, "then am I back again at the beginning. Have I learnt nothing? I thought law might suffice, but it will not. If law is inevitable, then are we but helpless atoms following the stream of necessity. Then is freewill dead. Yet there is freewill. There is force, there is life, whence come these forces? And if one say that force is God, what then?

"Perhaps there is this: there are two truths—there is God and there is Law. Both are true, as there is destiny and there is freewill. But how can that be? I see it is so, that it must be so. But how? Is it that there are facets of some great truth behind which we can never know?"

The man was weary. "What have I gained? Only that I have a truth, which I cannot understand, which gives me no help, or but little? Have I gained anything to help me in life? I have gained this, perhaps, that if Law be not a full explanation, it is true, as far as it goes; if not a whole truth, yet it is a truth. Why go further? The scientist cares for nothing more when he has learned the laws of gravity. He is content to be ignorant of whence the force comes, because he can go no further. In the battle of life is not this enough? Can we not, too, be as the scientist, denying nothing, but searching only for that which we can know and which will be useful to us? If force be God, yet should His ways not be mysterious. Let us not shut our eyes and comfort ourselves in ignorance by saying, 'There is no Law; God is inscrutable, God knows no Law. He is

inexpressible, changeable and uncertain.' But truly there is Law. Behind the gods, behind God, there is [Greek: anachkê , there is Necessity, there is an unfailing sequence of events, which is righteousness. Let us learn then what righteousness is. Let us learn what is true in order to do what is right."

But after all it is all speculation. There is no evidence. It is a theory built on nothing. What is the value of it? Nothing at all. What is to be gained by all this? Only barren words, finely spun theories made of air. Where is the proof of God or of Law? There is none.

CHAPTER X

THE WAY OF LIFE

Perhaps it does not matter. It may be that all this speculation about the First Cause, about the Ruling Power of the world, is unnecessary. What matter if God be inscrutable, if He has given us commands for our lives that are clear, if He has laid down for us His will that we should follow. Even if Law be not a full explanation, even if a knowledge of all Law would not mean a knowledge of everything, what would this signify if we can see enough of the laws that govern our lives so to order ourselves as to reach the goal? Whether the Theist be right or the Buddhist, in his theories of the world, the main question with which we are concerned is ourselves. Has any religion a working code of life that is true, that is adapted to us as we are, that is not in conflict with facts and common sense? What matters its name or its supposed origin? Is there such a thing? So thought the man, turning from abstract ideas to real necessities. After all, what I and all men want is not abstract ideas, whether of God or Law, but present help and guidance. Has any God taught any believer a perfect code of life, has any Buddhist searcher discovered the natural Law of life? For if so I would know them. Never mind the whence or how, give me the facts.

It seemed to him, looking back in the beginning of faiths, that morals, that rules of life had no part there. When the Northman saw Thor in the thunder there was no moral code there. The Greek gods were frankly not so much immoral, which predicates a code of morals, as unmoral. They knew of no such thing. It is the same with all the early gods, with the Hindu gods and those of all other early beliefs. The Chin savage on the Burmese frontier sees gods in the great peaks, but these gods demand from him no moral observance, they impress upon him no moral standard. All that the early gods demanded was fear, reverence, worship. Even the Jehovah of the Jews asked at first only this. It is not till you get to the third commandment that conduct comes in, and the moral code was scanty. The early gods of all kinds, of all faiths, had no moral code either for themselves or man. They demanded only obedience and fear and worship. The moral code came later.

It seems unnecessary now to consider whence they came, how they grew, why they became added to the worship of the gods, which was all that early religion meant. Some of that will come elsewhere. It is immaterial here which is only the man's search after a code, any code that would act. For it remains that all faiths when once they had left the elementary stage did add a code of conduct as part of their religion, saying it came from God, or was an immutable law,

and tried to induce men to follow it by declaring that it alone would lead to happiness hereafter. All the greater faiths have these codes. "And I," said the man to himself as he searched, "I care nothing whence the code is supposed to have come, truly or falsely, as long as I find it. I want a guide to life as it is. Has any faith such a guide? For each declare that it alone has. Show me these rules to life."

The books showed him. They showed him codes of all degrees, from the simplest to the most complex, from the plain cult of courage, the very first and most necessary of all virtues, to the immensely complicated code of observances of the Brahmin; and outside religions there were the philosophies of Greece and Rome, of India and China, of Persia and Germany, and Scotland.

Now should man so order his life as to live righteously here, and to be of good repute before man and his own conscience? How shall a man so form himself here that if indeed there be a life hereafter he may enter it without fear? What are these codes?

It seemed to him that there ran in some ways a great sameness through the creeds, that up to a certain stage they differed but little. Courage against the foe, courage to face suffering, truth and honesty, and later mercy and compassion, charity of act and thought, courtesy and beauty of mind; these were the additions the faiths made, little by little, to the ground-work of reverence of the gods. And so they grew, adding bit by bit, as civilisation increased and necessity dictated. They added many of them sanitary rules, observances for washing, for cooking, for choosing food, incorporating with religion whatever practice found useful, and thereby giving a sanctity which it would otherwise have lacked. Sometimes rules were added to preserve the race pure, as with the Jews or the Hindus, evolving in the latter religion into the vast system of caste that separates the different races, all of whom call themselves Hindus. With the two faiths as just mentioned the tendency was to narrowness and restriction, to the exclusion of other races; with others, such as the Mahommedan and Buddhist, it was to expansion, to the acceptance of other peoples, until at last some great Prophet arose to give coherence and form to the whole and include it in the sacred books. So arose the codes, the man thought. But this hardly matters. What are the codes?

It seemed to him that out of all the faiths only two held codes that rose much above the level of savage conduct. We cannot go back to the codes of Moses or Mahommed; we cannot accept the narrow racial limitations of Hinduism; we

have outgrown the simple ethics of Zoroaster and the Egyptians. The teachings of Confucius and Laotze are strange to us, and the philosophies, if they seem clear, are so singularly unconvincing. They lack so greatly all that appeals to mankind; they are so much codes in the head and not for the heart; they are as mathematical drawings compared to a work of art; they do not ring true. And so there were quickly left for him only two, the codes of Christ and of Buddha, the examples of the two greatest prophets the world has known.

And between the teachings of the great Teacher who lived two thousand and five hundred years ago, and that of the man God of the Christians six hundred years later, what difference is there? They start from different beginnings, they work towards perhaps different ends; but in the methods, in the rules of life, what difference is there? That which was taught by the sea of Galilee is but the echo of the words spoken long before below the Himalayan Hills. They are the same, read them. The two greatest faiths the world has known, the two greatest teachers that ever came to man to help him in his need, have brought him the same message. Believe not in the world, believe not in wealth, in power, in greatness, in strength. These are not what man should seek. Nay, but leave the world behind you because it is all evil, all very evil. Nothing of this world is of any value. In a man's heart is his greatest treasure. Make therefore your heart pure from the world. Leave it all and turn to God, to righteousness. Cultivate your own soul apart from all the pleasures of life. The other world can be gained only by abjuring this. Wealth and honour and ambition, all the glories of the world, are but traps to catch you. Even the loves we love are wrong. The Buddha left his wife and child. The Christ never married, and denied even his mother any love beyond that of a disciple. It is all the same. Their lives, their teachings are the same.

The man sighed as he read. Surely, he said, these are hard things to believe, that the world is evil. No, but it is not evil. That a man can only fit himself for heaven by being unfit for earth. I cannot believe this. I have not changed since I thought this over as a boy. This is not a true code, not a true rule, not a true faith, whether Christian or Buddhist. I did not believe then, a boy; I do not believe now, a man.

The world is not evil. There is evil there, but so much of good. There are stains there truly, but so much of beauty. Do you think I can watch the sun rise, the daily marvel which is beyond words, and hate the world? Can I see the man I love, the men who have helped me, who have been with me, the men who are my friends, and say that they are of a world that is evil? And the women, the girls, the children, are their lives for us nothing? Are they of a world that we

must abjure? It is never so. Truly, there are in these teachings, whether of the Christ or of the Buddha, much that is of beauty, much, so much that touches our hearts, I had at times fain believe. But I find in the world beauty also, beauty that comes as near, that comes nearer than they do. When a man is honest and honourable and true, and rises to great position, to be spoken well of by all men, is that an evil thing? Is the wealth that comes of the keen brain, the strong will, a calamity? Are our loves, our hopes, our fears but evil? Yet they are of the world. Beautiful as is the teaching, there are in the world things far more beautiful. I will never believe, never, that the world and flesh are partners to the Devil. I will never believe that.

"And more," said the man slowly. "No one ever does believe it—none but a very few. The world has rejected it always; not from wickedness, but because the teaching is never true. They do not acknowledge their disbelief. No! The Christians and the Buddhists maintain their faith by words. But in secret, in their own hearts, before the world, in the action of their own hands, have they ever acknowledged these beliefs?"

Neither the Christ nor the Buddha are the models men follow, because men are sure that, though there be truth in their teachings yet it is not all the truth, though there be beauty yet are there other beauties as great, nay greater than these. The world is never evil, and if it were, to follow these doctrines would not be the way to make it better.

Then the man turned from his books again to the world beneath him, he came to reality from dreams. I have learnt nothing? No, but I have learnt something. I have learned what I have yet to learn. And I have learned more. I know why I disbelieve, because I love the world as it is, and because I will never believe that what calls to my heart from there is wrong. The beauty of things is the truth of things. And in truth and beauty is the voice of God as surely, nay more surely than in the voice of any prophet of two thousand years ago.

CHAPTER XI

HEAVEN

"I am not getting on very well," he thought. "I have looked for three things, and two I am sure I have not found. I have found nowhere any explanation of the Universe, of the First Cause; I have found nowhere any true rule of life. Yet these are two of the three 'truths' that the faiths offer to me as inducements to believe. 'We will give you,' they say, 'a theory of this world and of its origin which is true, which will help you in this life because it will show you what you are and the world is, and whence you came. We will give you through this troublous life a guide that will never fail you, a staff that will never break. And finally, if you believe, you shall attain after death the happiness that is without end.'"

So they promise, and of their promises I have tried two. Have I found that they give what they declare? Is there anywhere any belief of the First Cause that is true, that is the whole truth? There is none. And is there any guide to life that can be followed in sincerity and truth? There is none. There remains only heaven. There remains only the bribe, the promise of happiness, if we will believe as they declare, if we will do as they say.

It may be that here is the secret, that I shall come now to the answer; it may be that this is the key to all. If there is in the heaven they promise us such a fulfilment of glory, such an appeal to our hearts that they cannot but answer, what matter the rest? Happiness is our end in life. For what do we strive all our days but for happiness, for truth, for joy, for the beauty of life? What matter that in the theory of the First Cause we can see no truth, that in the rule of life I can find only a contradiction of beauty, if in the end in heaven these are attained? The end, if the end be perfect, will reveal the truth and the beauty in the ways that are now hid. What is this heaven?

When we think of heaven, when with our eyes shut we try to recall all they have taught us of the Christian heaven, what are the images that come up? It seems as if we went back all those years to when we were little lads beside our mothers, and as the fire flickered across the unlit room, full of strange shadows, we said our childish prayers and leant our heads heavy with sleep upon her knee. It is our mothers that tell us of the heaven, whither they would that we should go, that urge us with imaginings of beauty to come to be "good." It is a childish heaven of which we learn, a heaven full of girl angels with white wings and floating dresses, of golden harps, of pearly gates, of everlasting song.

There are, I think, no men there, only girls; no sheep, but fleecy lambs. It is a heaven that appeals only to them. And is it very different when we grow up? Indeed I think not. It is the same heaven always, the same conception full of childish things. Did you ever hear a sermon on the heaven, did you ever read a book, did you ever listen to a discourse that did not take you back again in memory to that far-off fire-lightened room of childhood? Surely there is nothing in all the world so babyish as the general idea of the Christian heaven. Can you imagine a *man* there, a man with great deep voice and passion-laden eyes, a man with the storms of life still beating on his soul amid these baby faces and white wings? "Ah," said the man, "they must make us into infants that we may enter their heaven. When I revolted against it as a boy as but a kindergarten, without even the distraction of being put in the corner, was I wrong?"

May be, for there are things beyond this. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." "The peace of God which passeth all understanding." "Where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." These are not childish things. Happiness that hath no sorrow, light that knows no shadow, glory that never ends.

I read a book long ago; I have forgotten the name of it, I have forgotten who wrote it, and I remember that at the time I did not understand it. The book was on the subject of perfect happiness, on heaven, which is postulated as the ideal peace. And what this book tried to show—what, indeed, it showed, I think—was that happiness if *perfect* was near akin to annihilation. The argument ran something like this. "You are happy in some particular employment, say in singing a hymn, in some particular attitude, let us say in kneeling. If your happiness in this act and attitude is perfect, they will endure for ever. You will pass eternity kneeling and singing the same hymn. For consider, Why do you ever change your acts, your attitudes? Because a particular act or a certain attitude has become wearisome. But if it be stated that your happiness is *perfect* you can never feel satiety, never feel any desire for change. The wish for change is born of the feeling of wearisomeness. You have had enough of one thing, you want another. But if you are perfectly happy this cannot be. Life would become a monotony, a satiety near akin to death. And if indeed peace be the highest happiness, then would this perfect peace be so near annihilation that the difference would only lie in that your consciousness of happiness still remained." Thus did this writer show that if the Christian heaven be as declared, *perfect* happiness, so it must be almost indistinguishable from death.

I do not think this writer had ever read of the Buddhist Nirvana, I do not remember that he ever even alluded to it. He was thinking of the Christian heaven and trying to make out what it was like, and that was what he found. He, taking the Christian ideal and working it to its inevitable conclusion, arrived at the same result as Buddhist teachers starting from such widely different premises have arrived at: the Christian heaven and the Buddhist peace are the same.

Readers of my former work, "The Soul of a People," will remember how the Buddhists arrive at Nirvana. It is the "Great Peace." Life is the enemy. Life is change, and change is misery. The ideal is to have done with life, to be steeped in the Great Peace. Thus do the purer ideas of the Christian heaven and the Buddhist heaven agree. It is the "Peace that passeth all understanding" for each.

And yet perfect happiness, sleep without waking, light without shadow, joy without sorrow, gaiety without eclipse. Can this ever be heaven? Let us look back on our lives, we who have lived, and let us think. Let us close our eyes that the past may come before us and we may remember. What are the most beautiful memories that come before us, that make our hearts beat again with the greatest music they have known, that bring again to our eyes the tears that are the water of the well of God? What have been the greatest emotions of our lives? There has been struggle and effort, unceasing effort, crowned maybe with success, but maybe not, effort that we know has brought out all that is best in us, that we rejoice to remember. There will be no effort in heaven, only rest; there is no defeat, and therefore no victory, only peace. Therefore also, because we can have no enemies there we shall have no friends. Our friends! How we can remember them. We have loved them because we have hated others. But in heaven there is no hate, only an equality of indifference. Heaven is nothing but joy. But consider, has joy been the most beautiful thing in your life, is it joy that sounded the deepest harmonies? Remember how you have stood upon that faraway hillside and laid to rest your comrade beneath the forest shadows? Was it not beautiful what your heart sang to you while you said "Farewell," and tears came to your eyes? There are no farewells in heaven.

There are women you have loved, women whose eyes have grown large and soft as you have spoken to them in the dusk of evenings long ago. You have loved them because they were women. What will they be in heaven?

And the children! Think of that childless heaven. Think of the children who laugh and play, and come to you to laugh with them, who cry and come to you

for comfort. They will require no comfort from you in heaven, and how much will you lose? The child angels are never naughty. They can never come to you and hide their heads upon your shoulder and say "I was wrong. I am very sorry. Please forgive me." None of these notes shall ever sound in heaven. There are no tears there. But do you not know that the greater beauties can only be seen through tears, which are their dew?

What is it that sounds the deeper notes of our lives? Is it sunshine, happiness, gaiety? Is it any attribute of the heavens of the religions? Surely it is never so. It is the troubles of life, the mistakes, the sorrows, the sin, the shadow mysteries of the world, that sound in our hearts the greater strings.

And are these to be mute in your heavens? Are we to fall to lesser notes of eternal praise, of eternal thanksgiving? Prophets of the faiths, what are these heavens of yours? Is there in them anything to draw our hearts? Have you pointed to us what we really would have? Your sacred books are full of your descriptions, of your enticements; you have beggared all the languages in words to describe what you would have us long for. And what have you gained? Is there any one man, one woman, one child, not steeped in the uttermost incurable disease, in feeble old age, who would change the chances of his life here for any of your heavens? There is no one. Or if you were to say to a man, "Choose. You shall be young again, and strong, or you shall go to heaven." Which would he choose? Therefore, ye teachers of the faiths, are your promises vain. I do not believe in nor do I fear your hells, those crude places of fire and pitch and little black devils. I care not for your heavens; I would not go there, not to any of them, neither to the happy hunting ground, nor to heaven, nor to the garden of the Houris nor to Nirvana, *not if they be as you tell me they are*. Nor do I want to merge my identity in the Infinite. This life is good enough for me, while I retain health and strength. I am not tempted. Nor is anyone tempted. Whom have you persuaded? You know that you have enticed no one. No one is deceived. Men will die for many things, they will leap to accept death—but not for your heavens. All men *fear* death and what is beyond, the righteous who you say have earned heaven no less than the unrighteous. All faiths have had their martyrs, but that is different. They have died to preserve their souls, as soldiers die to preserve their honour, gladly. Even the godly do not believe. They will have nothing of your heavens. I cannot understand how either Christian or Buddhist came to imagine such unattractive, unreasonable heavens.

And so they have all failed. No religion gives us an intelligible First Cause, no religion gives us a code of conduct we can follow, no religion offers us a heaven we would care to attain.

There are many definitions of religion. I have written some on my first page. It will be seen that they all hinge on one of these ideas, either that religion is a theory of causation, or it is a code of conduct, or that it is concerned with future rewards and punishments.

But if indeed religion have any or all of these meanings, then is religion false, then are all religions false. And more, no one who thinks over the subject, no one who takes it seriously would believe any one of them, could take any as a satisfactory explanation. No one accepts any code of religious conduct as absolutely workable, no one is attracted by their heavens. I am sure of these things.

Then shall I sit down with Omar Khayyam and say:—

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument About it and about; but evermore Came out by the same door where in I went."

Shall I say all religion is but windy theory and no one cares for it? Neither do I.

The man put down his books and laughed. No one believes? But every man believes, or would like to believe. Every man is at heart more or less religious. I see that in daily life as I go. Why? Why? What is it he finds? I will not give up. I will not come out at that same door. I will try again in a new line. I must be on the wrong road. Let me try back and consider. What is it in religion that we see and love and feel is true? Who are the people that we would be like? Is it the scientific theologian with his word-confusion about homoiousios? Is it the Hindu sophist making theories of Brahm? Is it the Buddhist word-refiner speculating on Karma? Surely it is not any of these people. It is the street preacher crying to the crowd, "Come and be saved"; it is the peasant with bowed head in the sunset listening to the Angelus; it is the priest in his lifelong lonely exile. These *are* Christians, and their thoughts are the religion worth knowing. It is they who are near God. I care not for the intricate intellectual mazes a Hindu can make with his brain, but I care for the coolie. I can see him now, putting his little ghi before the god, giving out of his poverty to the mendicant. It is he who knows God, even if his God be but the God of the hill above him. And it is the woman crying at the pagoda foot for succour; it is the reverent crowds that look upon the pagoda while their eyes fill with tears; it is

the Buddhist monk, far away beneath the hills, living his life of purity and example that I reverence. They *have* religion. I will go to them and ask them what it is. I am sure it is not what the theologians of all creeds have told me. What do these poor know of thought and speculation? They do not think, they *know*. What is it that they know? Not certainly what the professional divines tell me.

I do not believe these thinkers or their thoughts. If I believed that what they say is religion—is, in fact, so—I would have done with it. That is where most men end. They ask the divines what religion is. The divines produce their theories and creeds. The enquirer looks and examines and reflects. For he says, "If the professional men don't know what their own faith is, who does?" But I will not end so. I *will* know wherein the truth of religion lies. I will now go to those who know, because they *know*, not because they think. My books shall be the hearts of men.

PART II

CHAPTER XII

THEORIES AND FACTS

There is a festival to-day among the coolies. All night, from down in the valley where their huts are, has come the sound of tom-toms beating. And this morning there has been no roll-call, no telling off the men to making pits and the women to weeding. The fields have been empty, and the village which is usually so abandoned by day, is full of people. They have roamed lazily to and fro or sat before their doorways in the sun talking and waiting, for the ceremony is not till noon.

It begins with a procession. It is a long procession, all of men or boys, for it seems that among these people women are not concerned in the acting of the ceremonies. They are all men, mostly the elders and the headsmen of gangs, and before them dances a man half naked, half mad, who cries and throws his arms about. He is possessed of the Spirit. I do not know what the procession means, and I ask. No one can tell me; only it "is the custom." And so they pass up the main road near my house with tom-toms beating and flowers about their necks, and the "possessed" priest dancing ever before them. They go perhaps a mile about and then return, and by the entrance to the village, where are boys who carry rice and cocoanuts; and as the priest approaches they throw this rice before him and break the cocoanuts at his feet. So they enter the village. In the centre is an open space and they stop, the procession breaks, for the priest goes to the centre still dancing, and the people form a great ring about him. He dances more and more wildly as the tom-toms quicken their beat, his eyes are bloodshot, his hands are clenched, there is foam upon his lips. "He has the Spirit," the people murmur with wonder. Then into the centre of this ring come two men dragging a goat. It is a black goat with a white star on his forehead. His horns are painted and there are flowers about his neck. When the priest sees the goat he rushes forward. He grips the goat by the ears, the men let go and depart, and the priest and goat are left alone. He is about to sacrifice the goat, I know that, but I do not know how, for he has no knife. But I quickly understand. He has seized the goat by both ears in a grip of steel. Then bending down he bares his teeth and catches the lower lip of the goat between them. He tears and worries, and the goat struggles ineffectually, for with savage energy the priest has torn at the lip till it peels off in a long strip down the throat, so that the veins and arteries are laid bare. And

then with a sudden jerk he lets go the torn skin and buries his teeth deep in the palpitating throat. You see his jaw work, you see the goat give a great convulsive struggle, there is a sudden rush of blood from the torn arteries pouring over the priest in a great red stream. For a minute there is stillness, and then the goat's tense limbs relax. They droop, for he is dead; and with a tremor in all his limbs the man stands for a second and then drops too senseless, his face falling on the goat that he has slain. For two, three, five minutes, I know not how long, there is a dead silence. The sun is at its height and pours down upon the intense crowd, upon the victim lying in its pool of blood, upon the priest a huddled heap beside it. And then with a great sigh the people awake. There is a movement and a murmur. Some elders go and carry away the goat, and the priest is supported to the little temple near by. The blood is covered up with fresh earth, the ceremony is over, and the people break up.

In the evening my writer Antonio tells me all he knows. What is the god who entered into the priest? I ask, and he shakes his head. "For sure," he answers, "I do not know. They only tell me 'Sawmy, Sawmy'; that is, 'God, God.' They say he want sacrifice, he want people to give him present. I do not know why he want present, except he big God and must be worship. If he not get sacrifice he angry. If he get sacrifice he pleased."

So Antonio explains to me the scene. He argues like my books do. Let me consider. They would explain it some way like this. They would say that the "Sawmy" was the Sun God, or some other idealisation; that first of all the Indians imagined this Sawmy out of ghosts or dreams; that having done so they gave this God certain attributes and powers; that subsequently they imagined the God angry and punishing the people, and so they would proceed to a priest suffering from hysteria, which they supposed to be the possession of this Sawmy, and finally arrive at the procession and sacrifice. They would point out how the flesh of the goat was divided among the coolies, thus bringing them into communion with their God. And so they would come at last to the concrete fact, as caused by a long process of imagination, an explanation quite incredible to me. I read the facts differently, much more simply. As to imagination the people have hardly any; they are hopelessly incapable of such a train of thought. The priest himself admits that not one in fifty has the least glimmering of any meaning in the ceremony. Nevertheless they like it, they are

awed by it, they would by no means allow it to be omitted. And as to this feast of communion with their divinity, what are the facts?

The coolies are poor, they live almost entirely on rice and vegetables. Meat can very rarely be afforded. Yet they long for it, and a few times in the year they all subscribe and buy a goat for food as a very special luxury.

The goat being bought has to be killed. Now, to people in this stage of civilisation, to people in *any* stage of civilisation, the taking of life is very attractive, it is an awe and wonder-inspiring act. These people are so poor they can seldom afford such a sight, and therefore it must be made the most of. You may note exactly the same passion in bull fights, the execution of martyrs, in public executions of all countries. What greater treat can you offer a boy than to see a pig killed? So the death of the goat is compassed with much show and in a peculiarly impressive way. That done the meat is divided as already arranged, and everyone is pleased. They have got their food and their sensation. The priest, too, is pleased, and makes his little scientific theology to explain and apologise for this peculiar emotion. It has the further result of making him powerful and revered. For he alone can see and tell the coolies the inwardness of it all; and he can further claim the tit-bits as representative of the Deity.

So arose sacrifice out of some inward hidden emotion of men's hearts. Do not say this emotion is purely savage. It is allied often to the purest pity, to awe, to strange searchings of the heart. To some it may be hardening, but to most it is not so.

How do I know? I know by two ways, because I have watched the faces of this and many crowds to see how they felt, and that is what I saw. I have seen death inflicted so often, on animals and on man, that I know and have felt what the emotion is. I cannot explain the emotion—who can explain any emotion?—but I know it is there. And I know that, if not witnessed too often or in wrong circumstances, the sight of suffering and death, rightfully inflicted, is not brutalising, but very much the reverse.

Who are the most kind-hearted, even soft-hearted, of men? They are soldiers and doctors. The sights they have seen, the suffering and even death they may themselves have inflicted of necessity, have never hardened them. They have but made their sympathies the deeper and stronger. Look at the contemporary history of any war, of that in Burma fifteen years ago, of that in the Transvaal to-day. Who are they who call out for stringent measures, for much shooting, for plenty of hanging? Never the soldiers. Never those who know what these

things are. It is the civilians and journalists who know not what death is. Who wrote "The Drums of the Fore and Aft," "La Debâcle," "The Red Badge of Courage," with their delight in blood? Not men who had seen war. Nor is it they who read such books with pleasure. Men who have seen death and watched it could never make the telling an hour's diversion. It is those who have never seen the reality, who seek in art that stimulus which they know they require.

The sight and knowledge and understanding of unavoidable suffering and death is the greatest of all purifiers to the heart. The weak cannot bear it. Women may avoid it because they know they are unable to sustain it, because they know it does brutalise them. But with men it is never so.

Suffering and death are facts; they are part of the world, and men must know them. They are needed to strengthen and deepen the greatest emotions of men.

And therefore there is in man this instinct, this attraction to the sight of suffering and death, an instinct that, rightly followed, has in it nothing but good.

So I read the ceremony I had witnessed. Such is, I am sure, the meaning of all such ceremonies. They never arise from mental theories, always from inner emotion. The scientific theologian of the tribe has explained them in his way, and when enquirers have tried to understand these ceremonies they have gone to the priest instead of the people. Hence the absolute futility of all that has been written on the origins of faiths.

Men have begun at the wrong end: they have argued down instead of up; they have begun their pyramid at the top. Yet surely if there is any fact that ought to be impressed on us since Darwin, it is to begin at the bottom. Reason never produces facts or emotion. It can but theorise on them.

And meditating on what I had seen, I came to see at last all my mistakes.

Instead of beginning with ideas of God, to find man I ought to have gone first to man, to see how arise the ideas of the First Cause. Instead of examining codes of conduct as supernaturally given and impossible, I ought to have gone to man and tried to discover how he came to frame and to uphold these codes. And so also with heaven and hell, man has but imagined them to suit his needs: and if so, what needs? I have tried all the creeds to find an explanation of man, and there is none. I begin now with man to find an explanation of the creeds. Man and his necessities are the eternal truth, and all his religions are but framed by himself to minister to his needs. This is the theory on which to work and try for results.

We have an authority for such a method in science, for she proceeds not from the unknown to the known, but from the observed to the imagined. Thus has she imagined the unimaginable ether to explain certain phenomena and to act as a working theory to proceed on. Scientific men did not invent ether and the laws of ether first, and so descend to light and electricity. They felt the light and heat, and gradually worked inwards and upwards.

So perhaps has man felt certain needs, certain emotions and certain impulses, and has imagined his First Cause, his Law, his codes, his religious theories, one and all, to explain his needs and help himself.

The whole series of questions becomes altered.

It is no longer which is true, the Christian Triune God, the Hindu million of Gods, the Mahommedan one God, the Buddhist Law? but from what facts did these arise, and why do they persist to-day?

Out of what necessity, to justify what feeling, does the Christian require a Triune God, the Hindu many Gods, and the Buddhist no God but Law? Why does each reject the conception of the other? It is not what code is the true code of life, the Jewish code, the Christian, the Buddhist, but why are these Codes at all?

Why had the Jews their ruthless code? Why have the Christians and Buddhists adopted codes they cannot act up to? Why have the Hindus in "caste" the most elaborate codes we know.

Why did the Jews have no hereafter at all, the Mahommedans a sensual paradise, the Greeks the Shades, the Brahmins and Buddhists a transmigration of souls leading to Nirvana? These are very different ideas. What necessities do they serve? And so with the many facets of religions. Faiths do not explain man, perhaps man can explain his faiths. That is my new standpoint from which I shall see.

CHAPTER XIII

CREED AND INSTINCT

I had six years of that life in India. I passed six years living in a solitary bungalow miles away from any other European, meeting them but occasionally, six years with practically no intercourse at all with the natives. For the jungle people who lived in the hills were few, and savage, and shy; and besides these, there were only a few Hindu or Mahommedan shop-keepers in the main bazaar, and the great crowd of coolie-folk who cultivate the estates. It was not a life in which it was possible to learn much of any people. Solitary planters living unnatural lives in isolated bungalows do not usually offer much of interest to an observer. The wild tribes were mere savages. The coolies came in gangs and worked for a few months and went home. It was a life of almost complete solitude, a life where for days and weeks perhaps, except for a few orders in the native tongues to headmen of gangs, or a short discussion about the work, no word was spoken. It was, may be, a time for reflection and thought, for reading and meditation, for such a search as was made. But it was no life for observation, for collection of facts, for seeing and understanding. Even had one tried to know the coolies or the jungle people, it had been impossible; for they too have the inaccessability of the Indian, and are not to be approached too near.

But after these six years there came a change. Of the reasons, the methods of that change there is no necessity to write. It was a great change. From a country of mountains to a great plain, from forests to vast open spaces, widely cultivated; from a life of stagnation to a life full of the excitement of war and danger, from a life of books and dreams to a life of acts almost without books; from a people sulky and savage and unapproachable to a nation of the widest hospitality, where caste was unknown, where the women were free, a people with whom intimacy was not only easy but very pleasant; and, finally, from the life of a private person pursuing private ends to the working life of an official, where responsibility was piled on responsibility, and the necessity of knowing the language and the people was obvious if they were to be discharged even decently. Yet still it was a life of solitude. True, in the cold weather there were columns and expeditions made with troops, when there was pleasant companionship of my own people. But there were great stretches of solitude, months and months together, with no Englishman, and especially no Englishwoman, near. For four years I saw never an English girl or woman. And there were no books. What few I had were burnt one night with all my

possessions, and thereafter I had hardly any. They were years of hardship, of scanty lodging, little better than the natives, ill-cooked, unvaried food, a life that had in it none of the delights of civilisation. And yet I can look back to it with pleasure. For there were always the people to talk to, the people to study, to try and understand, their religion to observe and try to understand.

I have written in "The Soul of a People" about that religion, of the things I learned about it, of what it taught me. I tried to understand it not from without but from within, to see it as they saw it, not to criticise but to believe. If I am to credit my reviewers I have done this, for the thoughts in the book are all considered to be my own also.

That may not be so, and yet I may have learnt much that I could only have learnt by adopting the attitude I did. It is possible to understand if not always to accept, and out of understanding to reach something needful. A critic can never understand; he destroys but does not create. So I learnt many things. I learnt among others these.

That the religion of the Burman is a religion of his heart, never of his head. It is spontaneous, as much as the forest on the hillside. He has in his heart many instincts, that have come there who knows how, and out of these he has made his faith. What that faith is I have told in my first book. It is not pure Buddhism. But because Buddhism has come nearest to what his heart tells him is true, because its tenets appeal to him as do none others, because they explain the facts he feels, therefore he professes the faith of the Buddha and calls himself a Buddhist. That is what I learnt to be sure of. And what I heard from others, what I read in many books I learned absolutely to disbelieve. I was told, for instance, that a Burman villager far away in the hills thought he could remember his former lives *because* the doctrine of the transmigration of souls had been introduced by Buddhist monks. But I, looking into his heart, was sure that the villager was a Buddhist because the Buddhist doctrine of transmigration resembled the instinct and knowledge of his own soul. It is not the same. The Buddhist faith recognises no ego. The Burman does. But in some sort or other he could fit the imported theory to his facts, and he therefore was a Buddhist.

Communities of Christians and Mahommedans, Jews and Hindus, have lived among the Burmans for hundreds of years; there have been no converts to any of these faiths. Burma now is full of Christian missions and there are converts—a few—but never, I believe, pure Burmans; they have always some

other blood in their veins, usually Mahommedan. And why? Because Buddhism accords with the instincts of the Burman and no other faiths do.

Yet pure Buddhism knows no prayer, and the Burman prays. Why? Ah! again it is the instinct of the heart. He wants to pray, and pray he will, let his adopted faith say what it will.

But on the whole the beliefs of his heart are nearer akin to the theories of Buddhism than the theories of any other faith, and therefore he is a Buddhist. That was one thing I learnt, that religious systems are one thing and a man's religion another. The former proceeds from the latter and never the reverse, and men profess creeds because the creeds agree more or less with their religious feelings; they do not have religious feelings because they have adopted a creed, whatever that creed may be.

I had at last come down from creeds, which are theories, to religions, which are feelings and instincts; I had left books, which are of the intellect, and come to the hearts of men.

From these facts was born a large distrust. I had learnt what the Burman's faith was. I learnt that his beliefs came from his heart, were innate, that they agreed only partially with his creed. I found that so much stronger were they that where possible the observance of the faith had been altered to suit him, that where the rigidity of the creed forbade, he simply put the creed aside—as with prayer. I found also that to begin with the theory of Buddhism and reason down landed me nowhere, but to begin with the Burman and reason up explained everything that at first I could not understand.

Clearly the way to arrive at things was to begin with facts. What were the Burman's instincts, not only as referred to religion; but generally? What were his peculiarities?

I found many of them. To take one as instance. The Burman has a very strong objection to authority. There is nothing he dislikes so much, not only as submitting to an interfering authority, but to exercising it. Thus he has never developed any aristocracy, nor any feudal system. His Government was of the slightest, his villages were almost entirely self-directed. No other people in the same stage of civilisation can show so much local freedom. He would never serve another if he could help it. He liked freedom even if accompanied by poverty. The ideas of obedience and of reverence for authority did not appeal to him as the highest emotions. He dislikes interference. He will not give advice often even if sought.

Now I said if this be one of his greatest instincts, and if my theory be true, this instinct will be exhibited in his religion. Either Buddhism must accept it, or I shall find that the Burman in this case ignores his creed. So I looked, and I found that Buddhism was the very thing to assist such a feeling. Buddhism knew no God, no one to be always directing and interfering, no one to demand obedience and reverence. There was only Law. Buddhism was the very ideal faith for such a man. But in other matters it was not so. The instinct of prayer is in the Burman as in all people, though perhaps less with him than others. The Buddhist theory allows of no prayer. Then does the Burman not follow his instinct? My observation told me that here the Burman ignored his creed and satisfied his instinct despite of all. But his instinct of prayer is slight, of dislike to authority very great; therefore he remains a Buddhist. Had it been the other way he would probably have been a Hindu. And so with many other things. The Burman might fairly be called a Buddhist, not because he so dubbed himself, but because his religious instincts were mainly in accordance more or less with the Buddhist theory.

Further, I thought if this is true with the Burman, is it not likely to be true of all people? I know that a creed, a religious theory, is no guide to the belief of a people. If it were, would not all Christian nations believe much the same, have the same ideals, the same outcome of their beliefs? But they do not. They vary in a most extraordinary way. Each people has its own beliefs, and no one agrees with another on more than one or two points. And not one at all agrees with the theories they profess. Now as every European nation has the same holy book, the same Teacher, the same Example, how is this? Can it be explained by arguing from the creed down? No. But may be it can by reasoning from the people up. It may be that I shall find elsewhere what I have found here, that creeds do not influence people, but people their creeds, and that where the creed will not give way the people simply ignore it. Each people may have its own instinctive beliefs from within differing from all others. And because they require a theory to explain, and as it were codify, these instincts, they adopt nominally some great creed, but with the reservation that in practice they will follow that creed only where it meets or can be made to meet their necessities, and ignore it where it does not. That may work out. Let me study mankind to find what they believe.

This I have tried to do, and what I have found comes in the next chapters, but no one who has not tried knows how difficult it has been; for I have found no one to help me, no facts hardly, except what I myself might gather to go on. Books on religion and on folk-lore there are in plenty. They have been of little use to me. They all begin at the wrong end. They all assume as facts what I do

not think exist at all. They talk, for instance, of Christianity as if in practice there is now or ever has been any such clear or definite thing. There is Roman Catholicism of different forms, the ideas of the Latin races; there are the many religions of the Slavs, of the Teutons, of the Anglo-Saxons, of the Iberians, of the western Celts, all differing enormously, all calling themselves Christian. There is the religion of the Boers, of the Quakers, of the Abyssinians, of the Unitarians. There used to be the Puritans, the Fifth Monarchy men, the Arians, and many another heresy. They call themselves Christians. What are their real beliefs? Whence do they come?

It is the same with Buddhism. There are the Burmese, Ceylon, Chinese, Japanese, Jain, Thibetan, and many another people that call themselves Buddhist. What are the real beliefs of these people? I have found the Burmese beliefs; who has found the others? The answer is, no one has even looked for them. They have started at the very end and reasoned down; they have coloured the facts with their theories till they are worthless.

And the religions of Greece and Rome, of Egypt, of Chaldea, of many an ancient people, out of what instincts did these people form their creeds?

As in tracing the Burmese religion, so in this further and wide attempt I have had practically only my own observation of facts to go on. How narrow one man's observation must be can quickly be judged. Some knowledge of the Burmese, a very little of Mahommedans and Hindus, a little of the wild tribes, and in Europe some little knowledge of my own people and their history, of Anglicanism and Puritanism and Lutheranism, some observation of the Latin peoples and their beliefs. Yet still, narrow as the range is, I think my theory works out. I think that even in my narrow circle, with my own limited knowledge and sympathies, I have found enough to prove my case. The evidences in the next chapter are, it is true, few, and the discussion of the subject must be greatly condensed. Still, wherever I have been able to investigate a point I have always found that my theory does prove true and the old theory false. Out of my theory is explained at once the divergences of the Latins and Teutons, why one Christian people worship the Madonna and another not, why one has confession and another not. I have never applied my key but the lock has turned. I have never tried to reason the other way without coming to a full stop, and I have never met anyone else or read any book that did not do the same.

For my belief is that religion is not a creed and does not come from creeds. There are in men certain religious instincts, existing always, modified from

time to time by circumstances and brain developments. Out of these instincts grows religion, and when a creed, which is a theory of religion, comes along and agrees with the main instincts of the people they adopt the name of the creed, they use it to codify and organise their instincts, but they keep and develop their instincts nevertheless, regardless of the creed. It is a fundamental error to talk of Christianity or Buddhism. We ought to speak of Latinism, Teutonism, Burmanism, Tartarism, Quakerism. In all essentials the Quaker is infinitely nearer the Burman than he is to the Puritan.

CHAPTER XIV

RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

It will not be denied, I think, that even in England, where we pride ourselves so much upon our religiousness, where we have a hundred religions and only one sauce, the only country except Russia where the head of the State is also the head of the National Church, that even in England religion is unevenly divided. Men do not take to it so much as women, some men are attracted by it more than others, some women more than the rest of women. We find it in all qualities, in all depths, from the thin veil above the scepticism of many men of science to the deep emotional feeling of the enthusiast, and it is nowhere a question of class, of education, or of occupation. It would be very difficult, I think, to assert, and quite impossible to prove, that religion affects any one class more than another; for it must not be forgotten that, although more perhaps of certain classes go to religious services than of others, the explanation may not be any comparative excess of religious feeling. In a class where the women greatly exceed the men in numbers, there will be apparently comparatively more religion, and the rank of society also influences the result. For some it is easier and pleasanter to attend church or chapel than for others, and a class which is not hardly worked during the week can more easily spare the leisure for religious exercises than others to whom the need for air, for exercise, for change, appeals more strongly. There may also be other factors at work. But indeed it is unnecessary to press the matter closely, for it will hardly be asserted, I think, that religion is ever a question of class. *One* religion may be so, but not religion broadly speaking, not the religious temperament as it is called. To whom, then, does religion appeal most, and to what side of their nature does it appeal?

Generally speaking, I think, to the more emotional and less intellectual.

That this is but a general rule, with many exceptions of which I will speak later, I admit. But I think it will be admitted that it is a general rule. Intellect, reason, whether cultivated or not, hard-headed common sense, whether in the great thinker or the artisan, is seldom strongly religious. Faith of a kind they may retain, but they usually restrain it to such a degree that it is not conspicuous. Hard-headed thinkers are rarely "deeply religious." But as you leave the domain which is the more dominated by thought, and descend or ascend—I have no wish to infer inferiority or the reverse,—to the natures more accessible to sentiment, more governed by the emotions, religiosity increases.

Till finally you arrive at the fanatic, where reason has disappeared and emotion is the sole guide.

They are easily recognised, these enthusiasts, by their lined faces, by their nervous speech, but above all by their eyes. You can see there the emotional strain, the too highly strung system which has abandoned itself to the excesses of religion. But there seems to be another rule; religion varies according to the interests a person has in life. A man, or a woman, with many interests, with much work, living a full life in the world, has but little time usually for religion; he can devote but a small part of his life to it. Its call is to him less imperative, less alluring; it is but one among many notes. But as the absorption in daily life decreases, as the demands from without are less, so does the devotion to religion increase. Until at last among these rural people, who with strong feelings have but little to gratify them, whose lives are the dreary monotony of a daily routine into which excitement or novelty never enters, we find often the greatest, the strongest, and narrowest faith. So too among those many women of our middle classes whose lives, from the want of mankind or of children, fall into narrow ways, whose lives are dull, whose natural affections and desires are too often thwarted, there lives the purest and strongest, if often, too, the narrowest religion. It comes to them as a help where there is none other, it brings to them emotions when the world holds for them none, it contains in itself beauty and love and interest when the world has refused them. How much, how very much of the deeper religious feeling is due to the want of other pleasure in life, to the forced introspection of solitude, to the desire to feel emotion when there is nothing without to raise it.

The old and disappointed turn almost always to religion. Thus it seems as if the quality of religion in mankind were due to two causes; to temperament, according to the emotional necessity, the desire for stimulation and the absence of mental restriction; and to environment, according as the life led furnishes excitement and interest or is dull, leading to a search within for that which does not come from without. Of such are the ultra religious.

And the irreligious, those who say openly that they have no religion, amongst whom are they to be found? They can, I think, be divided into three classes.

There are first of all those who are very low down in the scale of humanity, who are wanting in all the finer instincts of mankind. You will find them usually in

cities, amongst the dregs of the people; for in the country it is difficult to find any who are quite without the finer emotions. The air and land and sky, the sunset and the sunrise, the myriad beauties of the world, do not leave them quite unmoved. And then solitude, which gives men time to think, not to reason but to think; which gives their hearts peace to hear the echoes of nature, is a great refiner. Countrymen are often stupid, they are rarely brutalised.

Then there are the sensualists of all classes in life. It is a strange thing to notice that of all the commands of religions, of all laws of conduct they have given forth, but one only is almost invariably kept. There is but one crime that the religious rarely commit, and that is sensuality. It is true the rule is not absolute. There are the Swedenborgians, if theirs can be called a religion. I doubt myself if it be so, if this one fact did not oust it from the family of faiths. But however that may be, sensuality in all history has been almost always allied to irreligion. Not as a consequence, but because I think both proceed from the same cause, a nerve weakness and irritability arising from deficient vitality, a want of the finer emotions, which are religion.

Finally, there are the philosophers. In all history, in all countries, in all faiths there have been the thinkers, the reasoners, the "lovers of wisdom," and they have rejected the religion of their people.

Of what sort are these philosophers? Are they, as they claim to be, the cream of mankind, those who have the pure reason? Are they such as the world admires? I think not. For pure reason does not appeal to mankind. It is too cold, too hard, too arid. It is barren and produces nothing. What has philosophy given the world but unending words? It is the denial of emotion, and emotion is life. It is the reduction of living to the formula of mathematics—a grey world. Those who, rejecting religion, rely on pure reason, are those who have lost the stronger emotions, who have heads but no hearts, while the enthusiasts have hearts but no heads. And in between these lie the great mass of men who are religious but not fanatics, who reason but who do not look to reason to prove their religion, the men and women who live large lives, and are lost neither in the tumult of unrestrained emotion, nor bound in the iron limits of a mental syllogism.

"Do you infer," it will be asked, "that religion is in inverse ratio to reason? But it is not so. Many men, most men of the highest intellectual attainments, have been deeply religious, great soldiers, sailors, statesmen, discoverers; the great men are on our side, the thinkers have been with us." I am not sure of that.

The great *doers* have always been religious, the great thinkers rarely so. No man has ever, I think, sat down calmly unbiassed to reason out his religion and not ended by rejecting it. The great men who have also been religious do not invalidate what I say. Newton was a great thinker, perhaps one of the greatest thinkers of all time. He could follow natural laws and occurrences with the keenest eye for flaws, for mistakes, for rash assumption. He could never accept until he had proved. But did he ever apply this acumen to religion? Not so; he accepted at once the chronology of the Old Testament unhesitatingly, blindly, and worked out a chronology of the Fall much as did Archbishop Usher.

Indeed, I think it is always so. There is no assumption more fallacious than that because a man is a keen reasoner on one subject he is also on another, that because one thing is fair ground for controversy other things are so also. Men who are really religious, who believe in their faith whatever that faith may be, consider it above proof, beyond argument. It is strange at first, it is to later thoughts one of the most illuminating things, to hear a keen reasoner who is also a religious man talk, to note the change of mental attitude as the subject changes. In ordinary matters everything is subject to challenge, to discussion, to rules of logic. But when it is religion that comes up, note the dropped voice, the softened face, the gentle light in the eye. It is emotion now, not reason; feeling, not induction. It is a subject few religious men care to discuss at all, because they know it is not a matter of pure reason. True religion, therefore, that beautiful restrained emotion which all who have it treasure, which those who have not envy and hate, lives among the men who are between these extremes. Those who with strong emotions have but narrow outlets for it become unduly religious, narrow sectarians.

Those with uncontrolled religious emotions become fanatics, those with none but brute emotions remain brutes. Those whom the cult of sensual desires has overcome follow Horace and Omar Khayyam. Those in whom reason has overpowered and killed the emotions become those most arid of people, philosophers. True and beautiful faith is to be found only amongst those who lie between all these extremes. They have many and keen emotions, but they find many outlets for them all, so that the stream of feeling is not directed into one narrow channel. And they employ reason not as a murdering dissecting power, but as an equaliser and balancer of the living. Reason is not concerned with what religion is, but only with the relative position religious emotions shall occupy in life. Too little lets it run wild, too much kills it.

But religion is never reason. It is a cult of certain of the emotions. What these emotions are I hope to explain further on.

CHAPTER XV

ENTHUSIASM

Such are the qualities and such the circumstances that increase and nourish religious feeling, of such are the more religious of all peoples. What is the result in their lives? Does their religion cause them to live more worthy lives? Are the more deeply religious those whom the world at large most deeply respects? What is the effect of their religion in their lives?

I am not speaking here of professors of religion, of priests or monks, of fakirs or yogis, of any whose lives are directly devoted to the practice of the teaching of religion. They are a class apart, and are judged by standards other than ordinary men. Their world is another than that of ordinary folk. I speak now of the religion of those who still live the lives of ordinary people. What effect has religion upon them, and how are they ordinarily regarded in the world?

It is strange that if indeed religion be the truth of truths it should be regarded with such impatience, with such suspicion, if brought into ordinary life. For so it is. Every class has its own rules, its own conventions; every profession, every teacher, every form of society has its own rules, which are not founded at all upon religion. In every walk of life it is assumed that, subject to the special etiquette of that trade or profession and to the observance of what is considered honourable conduct therein, every man's actions are governed by self-interest alone. If a man allege any reasons but this he is regarded with doubt and suspicion. He is avoided. I will give an instance in point. There was a doctor once whom I knew who practised a certain "cure" for disease—it is quite immaterial what the system was; it was especially good for tropical diseases—and as some of us were conversing with him on the subject, and recalling with gratitude and pleasure the benefit we had derived, it was suggested to him that he might do well in India. "If in a hill station," we said, "you were to establish yourself and practise your treatment, you would have a large clientèle. Many Englishmen who could not afford the time to come home would come to you, and there would be natives also. Such treatment as yours would hurt no one's caste. No doubt you would do well, you would make a name and be rich." This was his answer: "I would not care about that if I could only do those poor natives some good." It was sincerely uttered, I doubt not. There was no conscious cant, but it fell upon his hearers as a chill. The conversation dropped, it changed, and gradually we went away. The remark pained. Why? It is always so. Trade is trade and professions are professions, but religion is apart. It is not to be intruded into daily life; it is to be kept sedulously away.

Not because its introduction suggests something higher and shames or discountenances the observances of life. The feeling is the very reverse. We suspect it. It does not suggest a higher code of morality at all. No man of experience but would instinctively avoid doing business with anyone who brought his religious motives into daily intercourse. Let a man be as honourable, as scrupulous, as high-minded as he can. We honour him for it. But religious! No. To say that we suspect the speaker of cant is not always correct. It may in cases be so, but not always, not generally. It is not the reason of the instinctive withdrawal. To say that religious feeling is a handicap in the struggle for life is also incorrect. It is not a handicap at all. Let a man be as religious as he likes provided he tempers it with common sense and keeps the expression of it for home consumption. To say that a man is highly religious in his private life is praise, and creates confidence. To say that a man intrudes religious principles into his business or profession or daily intercourse is enough to make men shun him at once. He becomes an impossible person. This is a strange commentary on the theory of religion, that what is supposed to elevate life is, when introduced into everyday affairs, almost always a sign of incompetence or fraud. Yet it may be so. Some years ago all Britain was alarmed by a terrible bank failure. It was colossal, the biggest perhaps that has ever occurred. There were no assets, and there were liabilities of over ten million pounds. The shares were unlimited, and the shareholders liable for all this great sum of money made away with by dishonesty and crime.

It brought ruin, absolutely blank ruin, to many thousands of people.

The directors of this bank were known in the city as religious men. They were kirk elders, Sunday school teachers, preachers—I know not what. They were steeped in religion and iniquity to the lips. They were tried, and some went to penal servitude.

There was again some years later another terrible failure. It was a building society and its allied concerns. And again the chief managers were known as intensely religious men. They too, were prominent members of the religious community to which they belonged; they gave freely to charity; they held, it was stated, prayer meetings before each consultation of the Board. They were steeped in lying and fraud also. And again quite recently a solicitor absconded with great sums of trust money. The same story. It has been the same story over and over and over again.

The writer can remember being concerned in the trial of a similar case in the East.

It is useless to assert that all these men were hypocrites, that they shammed religion, that they used it as a bait to catch the unwary. It may be true in one case or two, but not in the majority. It is useless to assert that their assumption of religion was false. Who discovered it to be false until the catastrophe? No one. They lived among religious men, their lives were to a great extent open. Was there any doubt about the truth of their religion then? No one has suggested such a thing. These men were religious from boys, they lived among religious people all their lives. They were honoured and respected for that religion. No man could sham such a thing. It is easy to talk of deceit; but a life of such deceit, such sham is impossible. It is quite absolutely impossible. That the religion of these men was and is as good and as real as that of other men it is impossible to doubt. Criminals are often very religious. What is the explanation of this?

Well, Christians when presented with these facts have two answers. One is that these men are all shams—an impossible explanation. The other is a mournful shake of the head, and the statement that such a connection ought not to be; religion should always purify a man. "Should" and "ought!" What answers are these? Who can tell what "should" and what "ought" to happen? The question is what *does* happen? And all history tells us that there is nothing so deplorable, nothing that results in such certain catastrophe, nothing that ends by so outraging all our better feelings, as the bringing of religion into affairs. Let us recall at random the greatest abominations we can remember. The Thirty Years' War, the Dragoonades, St. Bartholomew, the Witch Trials, the fires of Smithfield, the persecution of the Catholic priests in Elizabeth's time, the Irish Penal Laws. All these were done by religious people in the name of religion. No faith is free from the stain. Can anyone possibly say that the men responsible for these were shams? Was Cortez a sham, was Cromwell, were all the Catholics in France shams? Were the Crusaders, who celebrated the victory that gave back the city of the Prince of Peace to His believers by an indiscriminate massacre, shams? Did not the German Emperor in one breath tell his army that their model was Christ, and then in the next to show no quarter in China? Who were the most ruthless suppressers of the Mutiny? Did not blood-thirstiness and religion go together? Is the Boer religion sham? Yet they lie and rob as well as any other man, or better. Is it not a maxim that a fanatic in any religion is simply blind, not only to his own code, but to all morality? Does not the religious press of all countries furnish examples of the deplorable lengths to which religion, unrestrained by worldly common sense and worldly decency and honour, will go? I do not wish to press the point; it is a very unpleasant one. No one who honours religion can touch it without

sorrow; no one who is trying clearly to see what religions are can overlook it. Religion requires to be tempered with common sense, with worldly moderation and restraint; taken by itself it is simply a calamity. But if religion has its failures, has it not its successes? Have not great and beautiful things been done in its name? Are not almost all the great heroisms outcomes of religion? Yes, that is true, too. If religion has much to be ashamed of it has very much to be proud of. In its name has been done much of which we are proud. No one will deny that. More than enough to set off the evil? Well, that is hardly what I am seeking. I am trying to find out what is the effect of religion—or, rather, of an excess of religion—when imported into life. Is the influence all for good? I think in face of history we cannot say that. Has it been all for evil? That answer is also impossible. Then what effect has it had? And I think the reply is this.

When religion (any religion, for it is as true of the East as the West) is brought out or into daily life and used as a guide or a weapon in the world it has no effect either for good or evil. Its effect is simply in strengthening the heart, in blinding the eyes, in deafening the ears. It is an intensive force, an intoxicant. It doubles or trebles a man's powers. It is an impulsive force sending him headlong down the path of emotion, whether that path lead to glory or to infamy. It is a tremendous stimulant, that is all. It overwhelms the reason in a wave of feeling; and therefore all men rightly distrust it, and the tendency grows daily stronger to keep it away from "affairs." For the people who are most apt to bring religious motives into daily use are not the clearest and the steadiest; they are the more emotional, the least self-controlled, those who are fondest of "sensation." And the want of self-control, the thirst for emotion, when it passes a certain point is, we know, always allied to immorality, is very frequently a form of incipient insanity, and not seldom results in crime.

It is not probable any believer will think the above true of his own faith, but he will do so of every other. If you are an European, think of Mahommedanism, of some forms of Hinduism, of the Boxers, who are a religious sect. You will admit it to be true of them certainly, as they will of you. And to come nearer, if you are a Catholic, you will see how true it is of Protestantism; if you are a Protestant, of Catholicism. And that is enough. Each believer must and will defend his own faith; that is the exception, the one absolute Truth. So we will suppose this chapter to refer only to others, the false faiths. Everyone will admit it to be true of them.

It must not be forgotten that this chapter is not of the general effect or the ordinary results of religion. It applies only to the excess when brought into public or business life. Do not let us have any mistake. Of the ordinary effect of

religion in an ordinary person there is here no word at all. The general effect of religion on private natural life is quite another subject, a very different subject indeed. Therefore let us have no misunderstanding.

CHAPTER XVI

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

Has, then, a force, or a teaching that is capable of excess, no use?

If you look back at the histories of peoples, at the histories of their great wars, their movements, their enthusiasms, you will find that on one side or another, usually on both, religion has been invoked to their aid. For one side or for both the enthusiasm has been declared to be a religious enthusiasm, the war a religious war, the awakening of thought a religious awakening. The gods fought for the Greeks before Troy as the saints did for the Spaniards against the Huns, as the Boers expected the Almighty to fight in South Africa to-day. The intellectual revolt of the Teuton against the mental leading-strings of the Latins became a conflict of religion, as did the political conflict of the Puritans against the Stuart Kings. It has been religion always, if possible, that has been called on to lend strength and enthusiasm to the fighters to attempt forlorn hopes, to carry out far-reaching reforms, to dare everything for the end.

There is one great exception.

In the conflict that broke out in France at the end of the last century, that storm which swept before it the breakwaters of a world and changed mediæval Europe into that of to-day, religion was not the motive power. Those six hundred men of Marseilles "who knew how to die" were sustained by no religious belief. Those armies which affronted the world in arms had no celestial champions in their ranks. Those iconoclasts, who broke down the barriers that made the good things of the world a forbidden city to all but a caste, had no religious doctrine to work by.

Indeed, it may be said that it was quite the reverse, that the war of the Revolution was against religion; but I doubt if that is quite the truth. That the war was against the priests is in great measure true, but it was because of their support to the nobles, because of their connection with worldly abuses, because of their irreligion, that they were attacked. Religion, too, suffered, it is true, but only incidentally and for a time. And anyhow, you cannot get force out of a negation. But however this may be, the point as far as I am now concerned is not material; for all I want here to assert is that the enthusiasm which acted as a breath of life to the half-dead millions of France was not a religious enthusiasm. It never even assumed at any time a religious basis. It was not an enthusiasm of God, but of Humanity, and the war cry was "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." It was a revolt of the bond against the gaoler, of the

spoiled against the ravishers; it was the assertion of the absolute equality and liberty of man.

Looking back at that turmoil now from the security of a hundred years it is easy to scorn these enthusiasts. We can point to their excesses, to the horrible crimes that were committed, and ask where was Liberty then; to their wars, and ask in vain for the Fraternity; to their proscription of whole classes made in the name of Equality. The excesses are so black, so prominent, that it is even possible sometimes to forget the great vitalising and regenerating effect of that enthusiasm.

It is easy, too, now that all is past, to criticise the very war cry itself. Liberty, we say! Yes, liberty is good—in moderation and according to circumstances. All liberty is not good. Children must be under government, they cannot be quite free. They have to be directed in the right way. And peoples, too, and classes who have fallen behind in the race, who are unable to live up to the higher standards of greater nations, they cannot be free. Then the citizen of a great nation must in many matters resign his liberty for better things. Liberty is good, in moderation, and so are Equality and Fraternity, but they are not absolute truths. To cry them aloud, as did the Revolutionists of France, to insist upon them in season and out of season, is to fall into an error almost as great as their opponents'. We have little doubt now that in every well-ordered state there must be inequality, submission to masters as well as freedom, and that there are many people it is quite undesirable to fraternise with. Truth lies in the mean.

And yet consider, does truth always lie in the mean? There were the peasants of France ground into the very earth, denied any sort of equality with the nobles, any sort of liberty at all, hopelessly unable to fraternise with anyone. To breathe into them the breath of life, to rouse them from their deadly lethargy to a furious enthusiasm, to fill their hearts so full that they would go forward and never cease till they had won, that was the eminent necessity. The difficulties were so immense, the arms of the people so weak, the chains so rivetted into their souls that only from a furious and uncontrollable impulse could any help be obtained. If the philosopher had gone to these dry bones of men, thrashing the ponds all night to prevent the frogs annoying their seigneur by croaking, sowing for others to reap, raising up sons to be slaves, and daughters to be worse than slaves—if he had gone to them and said, "My friends, you are ground down too much; you want a little more freedom—not too much, but some; you require more equality—not complete, for the perfect state requires certain inequalities, but more than you have; you require also a

modicum of fraternity," what would he have effected? That level-headed philosopher would be saying the truth doubtless, and Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, as the Revolutionists understood it, were impossibilities, therefore untruths; but what would he have effected? Would his "truth" have freed the slaves, have burst their chains; have restored sunlight to a continent, as the exaggeration did? Never imagine it. It may be that in the mean lies truth, but in exaggeration lies motive power. It was in the glorious dreams, the beautiful imaginings, the surgings of the heart that arose from that war cry *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, that the strength lay. There is no strength in the mean. It is the enthusiasts that make the world move. If they have been guilty of half the misery, they have achieved half the joy of the world. And therefore consider again, before you brand beliefs and the teachings and enthusiasms as untruths, because they are exaggerations, because they are unworkable as they stand. What is Truth and Untruth? Is not truth also to be judged by its results? May not what is an untruth now have been a living truth then? Have we reduced truth to measure? If, therefore, this which is an exaggeration now was then a necessary revivifying truth may there not be others like it? Consider the conditions of the world into which the Buddha preached first the teaching of peace, of purity, of calm, of holiness. It was a world of unrest, of fierce striving, of savage passions, expressed to their full. It was a world wherein these were virtues worshipped to exaggeration. It was a world without balance, and to redress this balance there came the Buddha with his teaching of the rejection of all the glories of the world, the teaching of the cult of the soul, the aspiration after peace, and beauty, and rest.

As was the world to whom the Buddha preached so was the world to whom the Christ preached six hundred years later. Their codes of conduct were the same. Against violence they taught resignation, against the search for glory they taught renunciation; they opposed pride with meekness, struggle with calm, success in this world by happiness in the next. They came to redress the balance of the world; they came to make men hope. And therefore it is impossible to take their codes by themselves and consider them, to reject them because they do not express the exact truth. What is to be considered is not that code alone, but the purpose it came to fulfil. The codes of Buddha and of Christ are exaggerations, that is true; they cannot be lived up to in their entirety, that is also true. Taken alone they are impossible; that is true. Are they then untrue, useless, valueless guides to conduct?

Not quite so. For man is so built that he requires an exaggeration. If you would persuade him to go with you a mile you must urge him to come two; if you would have him acquire a reasonable freedom you must create in him an

enthusiasm for unreasonable freedom; if you would have him moderate his passions he must be adjured to wholly suppress them.

And therefore, it may be, do these codes of Buddha and Christ live. Not because they are absolutely true, not because they furnish an ideal mode of life, not in order to be fully accepted, but because they are exaggerations that balance exaggerations; and out of the mean has come what is worth having; because they have an effect which the exact truth would not have in the masses of men.

They have been truth, because their results were true.

But the world is growing older, it is learning many things. Never again can we hear that cry of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, the enthusiasms of a nation for its ideals. These ideals were true then, they were true because their work was true. But their work is done; men's eyes are open now, we do not require such exaggerations to move us to our work. They were in themselves but half truths. It required the violent assertions of inequality, of slavery, to make up a whole truth. With one has died the necessity for the other.

And so it may be with the codes of Buddhism and Christianity. They were true in their day, because they had their work to do. To have any effect at all they had to be enormous exaggerations; to earn any respect or attention they had to be proclaimed as perfect, as divine. But now, with the dying of the old brutalities, with the growth of civilisation, of humanity, and culture, the old savage exaggerations are dying out. The world is more refined, more effeminate, more clear-sighted. It says to itself, "These codes, if divine and perfect, must be capable of being implicitly obeyed; but they cannot be obeyed, and therefore they are not divine."

And in the increased civilisation we feel less the need of a teaching of gentleness; our nature is no longer too coarse; it may be it is going the other way, that the softening process is going too far, and that our need is a new savagery. And above all we hate exaggeration. To minds capable of thought, of reason, and of culture, exaggeration on one side is no excuse for exaggeration on the other. We are changing from the older men who required enthusiasms to drive them and violent exaggerations to cause them to move. We like exactitude.

These codes were made for rougher days than ours. They were true then. They are not true now—not true, at least, to the more thoughtful. But that they were true once, that the world owes to them its rescue from the exaggeration of the passions, we must never forget. They were truths while opposed. When opposed no longer they become false and fall. An exaggeration can only be useful as long as it is not perceived to be so. Set up two beams against each other, they are savagery and the purist codes. While one stands so does the other, and they make an equilibrium. But take away one and straightway the other must fall too. One cannot stand alone.

CHAPTER XVII

MIND AND BODY

"I have been lent your book 'The Soul of a People,'" said a lady to me, "but I have only had time so far to read the dedication. Do you know what I exclaimed?"

"I cannot even guess," I replied.

"I said, 'How very scientific.' Do you know what I meant?"

As my dedication is to the Burmese people, and only says I have tried always to see their virtues and forget their faults, as a friend should, I was quite unable to see where the science came in, and I said so.

"It is Christian Science," she told me.

Then she proceeded to tell me much about this Christian science, that it was the science of looking at the best side of things, that it cured the body by mind, despair by hope, darkness by light, solitude by a sense of the companionship of God (good). She had proof in her own family of what a change it can bring to the unhappy. It was, she said, all new, and discovered by Mrs. Eddy.

This was not, of course, the first I had heard of this strange cult. It has been in the air for some time past. Mostly it has been jeered at as an absurdity by those who have looked only at the extraordinary claims it makes, at the intellectual fog it offers as thought, at the childishness and inconsequence of whatever conceptions could be picked out of the maze of words; and up till then it had seemed to me but another of those misty foolishnesses that amuse people who have nothing else to do.

But when a case of real benefit, of benefit I could see and understand, was offered me in proof of its value, it seemed to me worth while to consider what there was in this teaching, to see what sense lay in this apparent senselessness, and to what want this new science appealed.

I have mentioned elsewhere in this book—it is a fact that comes to one who has been in the East many years very strongly—the aimless pessimism that is so prevalent in England and Europe. I am not here concerned with its cause. Mainly, perhaps, it is due to the rise of a great class of middle and upper-middle people who have no object in life. They have by inheritance or acquirement enough money to live upon, and the struggle for life passes them

by. They have no necessity to work, and they are not endowed with the brain or energy necessary to take to themselves some object or pursuit. Their minds and sympathies have never been trained by necessity. They have fallen out of the great world of life and passion into eddies and backwaters. They have become flabby, both bodily, mentally, and emotionally, and, conscious of their own uselessness, they have fallen into the saddest pessimism. They are not blasé, because they have never tasted the realities of life; they have few friends, because they have no common interest to bind them to others. Their lives are monotonies, and their thoughts and speech are a prolonged whine. They are perpetually searching and never finding, because they know not what they seek. Most of them are women, but there are men also. I do not mean that all Christian Scientists are from the ranks of the unemployed. It is recruited also from those who with larger needs for emotion find the circumstances of ordinary life too narrow for them, from the over nervous and weak of all classes. But the majority are, I think, of those who do nothing.

They turn to the established religions, vaguely hoping for the emotional stimulus they need, but they fail to find it.

I am not quite sure why. One Christian Scientist assured me that Mrs. Eddy had discovered, all out of her own mind, that God was Love, and that was why Christian Science was so successful. This was a lady who had gone to church regularly all her life. Yet she supposed this a new discovery! A strange but not at all solitary instance of what I have so often found, that the immense majority who call themselves Christians have never tried to realize what their religion is. Many others have told me that they are "Christian Scientists" for other allied reasons. But no doubt the great attraction of Christian Science is in its doctrine, that bodily ills can be cured by mental effort, the assertion that evil exists only in the mind. This is, of course, nothing new. Faith healing has been common in all stages of the world, has allied itself to all religions. There is the standing example of Lourdes to-day, there was the relic worship of the middle ages, the pilgrimages and washings in sacred pools. It is common all over the world. The good effects attributed, and often truly, to charms and magic are but another instance of it. A great deal of the sickness and unhappiness of the world has always been purely the result of a diseased thought acting upon the body. The great antidote the world has always offered to this evil has been work. In daily work, in the necessity for daily effort, in the forced detachment of mind it brings on, in the interest that a worker is obliged to take in his work lest he fail, or even starve, lies the great tonic. And to this has been always added the belief in some religious rite, or in charms.

But these resources are closed to the unhappy class that I am writing of. They need not work. They never have worked at anything, and know not how to do it. Even from childhood their brains have been relaxed and their interests narrowed. Yet a great interest is a necessity for all men and women. But consider the lives of these people, especially of the women, how terrible it is. There is nothing they care for, nothing. One day of monotony is added to another for ever. Marriage and children may dissipate it for a time, may give them the interest they require, but it does not last long. Love fades into indifference, the children grow up. They no longer need care and thought, and there is nothing else. Dull, blank misery descends upon them as a garment never to be lifted.

And if the love be a disappointment, a tragedy, then what help is there anywhere? "Let me die," she cries, "and be done with it. Life is not worth living." The world is horrible, because they see the world through glasses dimmed with their own misery.

To them comes Mrs. Eddy and says, "All the evil you feel, the mental sickness, the bodily sickness, is imaginary. Face your evils in the certainty that they are but bogies and they will flee before you. You shall again become well and strong, and life shall be worth living."

It is, of course, a wild exaggeration. Pain and sickness are real things, and the empire of the mind over the body is very limited. Still, there is an empire and it must never be forgotten. The healthy-minded—those who work, who live their lives, who love and hate, and fight, and win and lose, to whom the world is a great arena—will laugh at Mrs. Eddy. They need not this teaching which is half a truth and half a lie. They see the false half only because they need not the true half. And the others, the mental invalids, they see the true half and not the false. It is *all* true to them, and it *must* be all true to be of use, for power lies in the exaggeration, never in the mean. This is the secret of "Christian Science." We have in our midst a terrible disease, growing daily worse, the disease of inutility, which breeds pessimism, and Mrs. Eddy's doctrine of the imaginary nature of evil is good for this pessimism. The sick seize it with avidity because they find it helps their symptoms, and in the relief it affords to their unhappiness they are willing to swallow all the rest of the formless mist that is offered to them as part of their religion.

I do not know that "Christian Scientists" differ greatly from believers in other religions in this point. It is an excellent instance of how one useful tenet will cause the acceptance of a whole mass of absurdities and even make them seem

real and true. Christian Science has come as the quack medicine to cure a disease that is a terrible reality, and it is of use because it contains in all its mélange one ingredient, morphia, that dulls the pain. But the cure of this disease lies elsewhere than in Christian Science, than, indeed, in any religion.

I have given a chapter to this "Science," not because it appears to me that it is ever likely to become a real force or of real importance, but because it illustrates, I think, the reason of the success or otherwise of all religions. It exhibits in exaggerated form what is the nature of all religions.

They come to fulfil an emotional want, or wants that are imperative and that call for relief. And they succeed and persist exactly as they minister to these emotional wants. The emotion that requires religion is always a pessimism of some form or other, a weariness, a hopelessness. And the religion is accepted because it combats that helplessness and gives a hope. All religions are optimisms to their believers.

A great deal of foolishness may be included in a faith without injury to its success. Doctrine, theory, scientific theology, may be as empty and meaningless as it is in Christian Science, and still the faith will live. And the central idea must be exaggerated. It must be so exaggerated that to outsiders it appears only an immense falsehood. It is so in all the religions. Truth lies in the mean, power in the extreme. They are opposed as are freewill and destination, as are God and Law.

CHAPTER XVIII

PERSONALITY

There is one complaint that all Europeans make of the Burmese. It matters not what the European's duties may be, what his profession, or his trade, or his calling—it is always the same, "the Burmans will not stand discipline." It is, says the European, fatal to him in almost all walks of life. For instance, the British Government tried at one time in Burma to raise Burmese regiments officered by Europeans, after the pattern of the Indian troops. There seemed at first no reason why it should not succeed. The Burmans are not cowards. Although not endowed with the fury of the Pathan or the bloodthirsty valour of the Ghurka, the Burman is brave. He will do many things none but brave men can do; kill panthers with sharpened sticks, for instance, and navigate the Irrawaddy in flood in canoes, with barely two inches free board. He is, in his natural state in the villages, unaccustomed to any strict discipline. But then, so are most people; and if the levies of the Burmese kings were but a mob, why, so are most native levies. There seemed *a priori* no reason why Burmese troops should not be fairly useful. And the attempt was made. It failed.

And so, to a greater or less extent, all attempts to discipline the Burmans in any walk of life have always failed. Amongst the police—which must, of course, be composed of natives of the country—discipline, even the light discipline sought to be enforced, is always wanting. And good men will not join the force, mostly because they dislike to be ruled. In the mills in Rangoon labour has been imported from India. Not that the Burman is not a good workman—he is physically and mentally miles above the imported Telugu—but he will not stand discipline. It is the same on the railways and on the roads, and the private servants of almost all Europeans are Indian. The Burman will not stand control, daily control, daily order, the feeling of subjection and the infliction of punishment. Especially the infliction of punishment. He resents it, even when he knows and admits he deserves it.

Is, then, the Burman impatient of suffering? He is the most patient, the most cheerful of mortals. I who have seen districts ruined by famine, families broken up and dissolved, farms abandoned, cattle dying by the thousand, I know this. And in the famine camps, where tens of thousands lived and worked hard for a bare subsistence, was there any inability to bear up, any despondency, any despair? There was never any. Such an example of cheerfulness, of courage under great suffering, could not be surpassed. Yet if you fine your servant a few annas out of his good pay for a fault he will admit

he made, he will bitterly resent it and probably leave you. It is Authority, Personality, that the Burmans object to. And the whole social life of the people, the whole of their religion, shows how deeply this distaste to Personal Authority enters into their lives.

There is no aristocracy in Burma. There has never been so. There has, it is true, always been a King—that was a necessity; and his authority, nominally absolute, was in fact very limited. But beside him there was no one. There were no lords of manors, no feudalism, no serfage of any kind. There was a kind of slavery, the idea of which probably came into Burma with the code of Manu, as a redemption of debt. At our conquest of Upper Burma it disappeared without a sign, but it was the lightest of its kind. The slave was a domestic servant at most, more usually a member of the family; the authority exercised over him or her was of the gentlest, for with the dislike to submit to personal authority there was an equally great dislike to exercising it. The intense desire for power and authority over others which is so distinguishing a mark of western people does not obtain among the Burmese. It is one of our difficulties to make our subordinate Burmese magistrates and officers exercise sufficient authority in their charges. This dislike, both to exercising and submitting to authority, is instinctive and very strong.

In western nations, more especially the Latin nations, who made Christianity, it is the very reverse. There is in us both the desire and ability to govern and the power to submit readily to those who are above us. We rejoice in aristocracies, whether of the Government or of the Church. We organise all our institutions upon that basis. We have a rigid Government, such as no Orientals have dreamt of, least of all the Burmese. We revere rank instinctively. We like to have masters. Personal submissiveness is in our eyes an excellent quality. We know that to declare a man to be a faithful servant is a great praise. In our lives as in our religions, lord and servant express a continued relationship. And from this quality, this instinct of discipline, this innate power both of governing and submitting to governance, come the forms of government and our success in trade and in many other matters.

It would, however, be quite outside the point of this chapter to discuss all the results of these differences and their effect for good and bad. To the European the Burman, with his distaste for authority, appears to be unfitted for the greater successes of life. To the Burman the European's desire for authority appears to result in the slavery of the many to the few, in the loss of individual liberty and the contraction of happiness. Either or both, or neither, may be true. It is here immaterial, for all I wish to point out and to emphasise is that

whereas the Burman, who is a Buddhist, dislikes all personal authority instinctively, the western Christians, more especially the Latin peoples, on the contrary crave after it. The Burman's ideal is to be independent of everyone, even if poor, to have no one over him and no one under him, to live among his equals. But in western countries the tendency is all to divide the world into two classes, master and man, to organise—which means, of course, authority and submission—and to make obedience one of the greatest of virtues.

Now consider their faiths. The Christian has a personal God. He owes to that God unquestioning obedience and submission. Man may praise God and thank Him, but not do the reverse. Man owes to God reverence, one of the greatest of the virtues. And the Churches are all organised in the same way. The authority of God becomes the authority of the Pope, the Tsar, the Bishops, the priests. The amount of submission and reverence due to the priests of Christianity may vary in different countries, but it is always there, and the reverence due to God never alters.

Do you think such a system of religion would be bearable to a Burman? To him neither reverence nor submission to Personality, whether God or priest or master, is an instinctive beauty. He acknowledges neither God nor priest, and he avoids masters as much as possible. His nature does not lead him to it. He revolts against Personality. Courage under the inevitable he has to the greatest extent. If he suffer as the result of a law he has nothing but cheerful acceptance, even if he do not understand it. If he can see his suffering to be the result of his own mistakes he will bear it with resignation, and note that in future he should be more careful. But that he should be *punished*, that rouses in him resentment, revolt. He would cry to God, Why do you hurt me? You need not if you do not like; You are all-powerful. Cannot you manage otherwise than by causing so much pain to me and all the world? There are other feelings caused by a Personality, many other feelings than that of submission. There is defiance, bitterness. Did not Ajax defy the lightning? If a man or a boy looking at the world discovers in it more misery than happiness, more injustice than justice, of what sort will be his feelings to the Author of it all?

I fear that if the Burman accepted a Personal All-powerful God and then looked at the state of the world, his attitude towards that Personality would not be all admiration and reverence. Indeed, they have often told me so.

But before Law, before Necessity. You cannot revolt against the inevitable. Passion is useless. The suffering which would be resented from a Personality is borne with courage as an inevitable result. You may be of good courage and

say, "It is my fault, my ignorance; I will learn not to put my hands in the fire and so not be burnt." But if you suppose a God burnt you without telling you why, without giving you a chance, what then? Is this hard to understand? I do not know, but to me it is not so. For I can remember a boy, who was much as these Burmans are, who found authority hard to bear, punishment very difficult to accept; who remembered always that the punishment might have been omitted, who thought it was often mistaken and vindictive. For if you are almost always ill, and find for days and weeks and months that very little mental exertion is as much as you are capable of, how much do you accept the justice of being called "idle," "lazy," "indolent," and being kept in to waste what little mental strength you have left in writing meaningless impositions? There is more. It is a Christian teaching, a lesson that is frequently enforced in children, that all their acts are watched by God. "He sees me now." "God is watching me." How often are not these written in large words on nursery walls? And do you think that there are not some natures who revolt from this? To be watched—always watched. Cannot you imagine the intense oppression, the irritation and revulsion, such a doctrine may occasion? "Cannot I be left alone?" And when he learns that there is another belief—that he is not being watched, that he is not a child in a nursery, but a man acting under laws he can learn—cannot you imagine the endless relief, the joy as of emancipation from a prison? That it is so to many people I know, the feeling that law means freedom, but I also know that to others it is not. "Law, this rigid law," said the French missionary priest with a sigh when we were discussing the matter, "it makes me shudder. It seems to me like an iron chain, like a terrible destiny binding us in. Ah, I never could believe that. But a God who watches over us, who protects us, who is our Father, that is to me true and beautiful. Who will help you if not God? Under Law you must face the world alone. No!" and he shuddered, "let us not think of it. I cannot abide the idea." And how many are like him?

Do you think that such feelings can be changed? Do you think that he who thinks Law to be freedom will ever be argued or converted into Theism? It can never be. Such beliefs are innate, they are instincts far beyond reason or discussion, to be understood only by those who have felt them.

There is the instinct for God which rules almost all the West and India. There is the instinct against God and for Law which rules the far East. You cannot get away from either, you cannot prove either or disprove it. They are instincts, and they influence not only the religious beliefs but the whole lives of the peoples.

It is easy to see how in Europe the instinct for Personality has influenced all history. In moderation its effects have been all for good; it binds people into nations, it enables the weaker and more ignorant to accept willingly the leadership of the better. It has manifested itself with us even to-day in the respect and reverence and affection we have all felt for our Queen, who has so lately left us. And in its excess it has been wholly evil. It has led us to irresponsible monarchs, to the terrible tyranny of the French aristocracy, that required the whirlwind of a Revolution to efface. In the blind worship for Napoleon in his later days it drove the nation to terrible suffering. This desire for Personality has writ its effects large upon the history of the West, more especially in Latin nations.

And in Burma the want of this instinct is also written deeply in the history. There has been with them no enthusiasm for persons, no idealisation of individuals. There is no inborn desire for rulers and masters, for obedience and submission.

The effect of the instinct is writ largely in their history. They have no aristocracy, they have no feudality, there are neither masters nor men. They cannot organise or combine. The central Government was incredibly weak. There is nothing that strikes the Burman with such surprise as the unvaried obedience of all officials to a faraway government. But I am now concerned with effects, only causes. I have wished to show why a Burman believes in Law and not in God, that it arises from an instinct against overpowering Personality, an innate dislike to the idea. It is never to him Truth. It makes him unhappy even to hear of it. He could never accept it as a truth, for truth is that which is in accord with our hearts.

Yet the Burman whose ideal is Law is not quite without the instinct of Personality. He also prays sometimes, and you cannot pray to nothing. Far down in his heart there is also the same instinct that rules the West, but it is weak. It finds its vent now and then despite his faith. And in the West the idea of Law is rising. It is new, but not less true for that. It rises steadily hand in hand with science, and it, too, will find its vent despite the faith.

When the scientific theologian declares that God is not variable, that He has no passions, no anger, no vengeance, that He is bound by immovable righteousness and is not affected by prayer, cannot you see the idea of Law? No one would have said this a hundred years ago. It is growing in him; it is there, even if he do not recognise it as such, and sore havoc it makes with the old theologies.

The instinct of generalisation made many gods into one God; the instinct of atonement obliged the sub-division of God; to be explained only by an incomprehensible formula. And now there is arising a third instinct—that of Law. It is weak yet, but it is there. When it becomes stronger either Personality must disappear or else a still more incomprehensible creed must be formulated to reconcile the three ideas. But what is truth? Are they all true?

CHAPTER XIX

GOD THE SACRIFICE

It is Sunday to-day in the little Italian town, and they have been holding a procession. I do not know quite what was the reason of the procession; it is the feast day of the patron of the Church, and it is connected in some way with him, but quite how no one could tell me. It was the custom, and that sufficed. It was not a very grand procession, for the town is small, but there was the town band playing at the head, and there were girls in twos singing and priests, also in pairs, singing, and there were banners and a crucifix. This last was just like any other crucifix you may see; there was the pale body of Christ upon the cross, with His wounds red with blood, there was the tinsel crown over the head, there was upon the face the look of suffering. It was like any other crucifix in a Catholic country, not a work of art at all. It was gruesome, and to the unbeliever repulsive and unpleasant. But all the people uncovered as it passed, and many looked to it with reverence and worship.

But indeed Catholic countries are full of such crucifixes. They are upon the hills, they are beside the roadsides, they are in all the churches, they are in every Catholic household, there is very often one worn upon the person.

Throughout Italy, throughout all Catholic countries, there are only two representations of Christ—as a babe with the Virgin Mary and crucified upon the cross. It was in Italy that Western Christianity arose and grew, it was in Italy that it became a living power, it was in Italy that it acquired consistency, that it was bound together by dogmas and crystallised in creeds. And still, after nineteen hundred years, it is Italy that remains the centre of the Christian world. There is no Christian church so great, so venerable, so imposing as the Church of Rome. It lasts unchanged amid the cataclasms of worlds. And this people whose genius made Christianity, whose genius still rules the greater part of it, what are their conceptions of Christ? What part of His life is it that has caught their reverence and adoration, what side is it of His character that appeals to them, what is the emotion that the name of Christ awakens in these believers?

Of the Virgin Mary and the infant Christ I have written in another chapter. It is of the crucifix I wish to write here. Why is it that of the life of Christ this end of His is considered the most worthy to be in continual remembrance?

I confess that when I climb the hill and see the dead Christs upon their crosses shining white against the olive gardens, when I see His agony depicted in the

churches, when I see the people gaze upon Him sacrificed, my memory is taken back to other scenes.

There is a scene that I can remember in a village far away against the frontier in our farthest East. It was a little village that was once a city, but decayed; it was walled with huge walls of brick, but they are fallen into mounds; it had gateways, but they are now but gaps; and a few huts are huddled in a corner where once a palace stood.

It is the custom in this village that every year at a certain season white cocks are to be sacrificed at the gates. There is as may be some legend to explain the custom, but it is forgotten. And yet are the cocks sacrificed each year.

There is the memory, too, of the goat I saw killed in India years ago as I have described. And there are other memories—memories of what I have seen, of what I have read. For this ceremony of sacrifice is the very oldest of all the beginnings of religion. It is akin to prayer, it is at the root of all faiths; we can go no further back than sacrifice. Where it began religion had commenced. Far older than any creed, arising from the dumb instincts of human kind, it is one of the roots of faiths.

Therefore, when I see this image of God, the Son sacrificed to God the Father, I seem to behold the highest development of this long story. Sacrifice, it has always been sacrifice. It has been small animals—goats and fowls and pigeons; it has been greater and more valuable beasts—cattle and horses. It has been man. How often indeed has it been man: Abraham leading Isaac to the sacrifice, the Aztecs sacrificing in Mexico, the Druids in Britain, the followers of Odin, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the early Hindus, can you find a faith that has not sacrificed? Sometimes it has been single victims, sometimes hecatombs of slaughtered slaves. It has been sacrifice by priests, it has been self-sacrifice, as Curtius or as those who threw themselves before the car of Juggernaut. Everywhere there has been sacrifice; it is one of the roots of faiths, it arouses the emotion that has helped to make all religions. And in Christianity it has reached its zenith, for it is no longer an animal, no longer even a man—it is a God, the Son of God who is self-sacrificed to God. In what manner this awakens the emotions of man the following extract will show. It is from "The Gospel of the Atonement," by the Venerable J. Wilson.

"The law that suffering is divine, [Greek: to kalon pathein], is verified in the experience of the soul. Now Christ's death is the supreme instance of that law. The power of Gethsemane and Calvary, in the light of such a law, needs no explanation. They open the heart as nothing else ever did. We know that

whatever reservations we make for ourselves, whatever our own shrinking from utter self-sacrifice, Christ, living in perfect accordance with the laws of spiritual health and perfection, could not do other than die. Thus without any thought of payment or expiation, with no vestige of separation of the Son from the Father, we see that the death on the Cross demonstrated that the human and divine know but one and the same law of life and being. Thus it is that the death of Christ, the shedding of His blood, has been, and ever will be, regarded by theologians, as well as by the simple believers, as the way of the atonement. *Via crucis via salutis.*"

The scientific theologians tell me when I ask that this parade of the sacrifice of Christ is to recall to men how much they should love Christ. That He so loved them that He gave Himself a victim for their salvation. The crucifix, the incessant preaching of the death of Christ, the sacrament of the Communion, is to cause us to love Him as to do what He taught us. That it does have some such effect no one can doubt—on Latin people. But on others?

To some it seems that if you try to reason at all about it, the emotion awakened might be, nay should be, otherwise. In those not instinct with one emotion the first impression awakened is disgust at the parade of death and blood; the second, horror at the God who could demand such a sacrifice, who could not be pacified but by the execution in circumstances of shame of His own Son. They shrink from it. It is no matter of reason. Do you think one who felt so could be argued out of his horror or a Christian out of his devotion? They are instinctive feelings which nothing will change. And yet in a very small way even the Buddhist has the instinct of sacrifice. For I remember that when the fowls were killed inside the city gate and their blood ran upon the ground the people looked just as these Italian people looked. The emotion was the same in kind, and it was not either love for the fowls or wonder at the demand of the spirits that moved them. And so when the slaves were sacrificed beneath the oaks, was it gratitude to the slaves that was evoked? And in the self-sacrifice at the car of Juggernaut? It may be sometimes that gratitude may be added, but this is not the root emotion. The instinct of sacrifice has its roots much deeper than this, quite apart from this; and, with perhaps only one exception—Buddhism—all religions have practised it. Christianity performs no more sacrifices now, but all its churches, in all their varieties weekly at the great sacrament of the Communion, commemorate—nay, it is claimed in a measure recreate—this sacrifice of the Son to the Father. Sacrifice is of the very root of this religion. It is far older than any creed. The Jews knew of sacrifice two thousand years before the day of Christ, the Celts sacrificed slaves ages before that.

But it may be said these crosses, these crucifixes, are peculiar to Catholic countries. You do not see them in North Germany, in England, in America. Teutonic nations do not parade this sacrifice. No, they do not, for it does not appeal to them so much as to the nations of Southern Europe. Sacrifice was not unknown to the Teutons and the Northern people, but it never reached the height it did further South. It has been the Latin peoples who in this as in other matters went to extremes. It was the Greeks who sacrificed Iphigenia, who had the festival of the Thargalia; it was Rome which produced Curtius and others who sacrificed themselves. It was the Romans who sacrificed thousands in the Coliseum. It is in the tumuli of Celtic peoples where we find the cloven skulls of slaves.

Sacrifice has appealed always more to the Latin than now; and therefore you see the crucifix in Latin countries, but not with us. Still, we are not free from the emotion. We have the sacrament of Communion; the Atonement appeals to us also. The passions that are strong in the Latin peoples are weak with us, yet they exist. The instincts are the same. When executions were public our people thronged to see them. Death has always a peculiar attraction, quite apart from any idea connected with it. It is such a wonderful thing the taking of life, so awe-inspiring, that it has appealed always to men; especially in the west.

In the East that has accepted Buddhism, especially in Burma, it is much less so. They have, it is true, the usual pleasure and curiosity in seeing blood and death. And occasionally you come across some petty sacrifice like that of the fowls mentioned above; but the instinct is comparatively weak. It has never, even before they were Buddhists, been general, and never extended even to cattle. The sacrifice of a man (remember, I say sacrifice, not execution), would be absolutely abhorrent to them, how much more so that of a God? They have not the instinctive recognition of any beauty in it. Therefore, for this amongst other reasons, the Burmese reject Christianity.

But to the Western instinct this sacrifice and this atonement is wonderful and beautiful. It appeals to us. The old instinct is satisfied.

Therefore, amongst other reasons, Christians cling to the Atonement, and to make that sacrifice the greatest possible it must be the sacrifice of God, and as God can only be sacrificed to God the Christian God must be a multiple one. To

postulate as the Mahommedan does, God is God, would destroy the depth of the Atonement. Hence arises the creed, the attempt to reconcile two opposed instincts. There is one God—that is an instinct, arising from our generalising power; there must be at least two Gods to explain the Atonement, and so we have the Father and the Son.

For of the three Godheads only these two are real to most people. There is God the Ruler, the Maker of the world, and there is Christ. These are both very real to all Christians. They are prayed to individually, they are worshipped separately, they are clear conceptions. But is there any clear conception of the Holy Ghost as a distinct personality? Is He ever cited separately from the others? Has He any special characteristics? There are, for instance, many pictures of God, and many more of Christ—are there any of the Holy Ghost? This Third Person of the Trinity appeals to no instinct, and is only an abstraction in popular thought. When the Creed was framed it was necessary to include the Holy Ghost because He is mentioned in the New Testament. He has remained an abstraction only. But the other two Godheads are realities, because they appeal to feelings that are innate. They are the explanation of these feelings.

Thus do creeds arise out of instincts. It is never the reverse. Postulate God the Father as All-Powerful, All-Merciful, and see if by any possibility you can work out the Atonement or see any beauty in it. Can anyone see aught but horror in this Almighty demanding the sacrifice of His Son? You cannot. But granted that Atonement and sacrifice have to you an innate beauty of their own, and the dogma of a multiple Godhead easily follows. There are creeds built on ceremonies, and ceremonies upon instincts: ceremonies are never deduced from creeds.

CHAPTER XX

GOD THE MOTHER

The only other form in which the Christ is presented to popular adoration is as a baby in the Madonna's arms. Out of all the life of Christ, all the varied events of that career which has left such a great mark upon the Western world, only the beginning and the end are pictured. Christ the teacher, Christ the preacher, the restorer of the dead to life, the feeder of the hungry, the newly arisen from the grave, where is He? The great masters have painted Him, but popular thought remembers nothing of all that. There is Christ the sacrificed and Christ the infant with His mother. To the Latin people these two phases represent all that is worth daily remembrance. There are crucifixes and Madonnas in every hill side, by every road, at the street corners, in every house, and of the rest of the story not a sign.

What is the emotion to which the Madonna appeals? Why do she and her Child thus live in Latin thought?

There are historians who tell us that the worship of the Madonna was introduced from Egypt. She is Astarte, Queen of Heaven, the Phœnician goddess of married love or maternity, she is the Egyptian Isis with her son Horus. It is a cult that was introduced through Spain, and took root among the Latin people and grew. There is no question here of Christ, they say; it is the goddess and her son.

It has also absorbed the worship of Venus and Aphrodite. Venus was the tutelary goddess of Rome, she was the goddess of maternity, of production. It was not till the Greek idea of beauty in Aphrodite came to Rome and became confounded with the goddess Venus that her status changed. She was the goddess of married love, she became later the emblem of lust. But it was she who purified marriage to the old Roman faith; she was the purifier, the justifier, the goddess of motherhood, which is the sanction of love and marriage.

It may be that all this is true. It may be possible to trace the worship back through the various changes to Astarte, Ashtoreth, to Isis, to older gods, maybe, than these. All this may be true, and yet be no explanation. The old gods are dead. Why does she alone survive? What is the instinct that requires her, that pictures her on the street corners, that makes her worship a living worship to-day?

And why is it that she appeals not at all to the Teutonic people? Where are her pictures in Protestant Germany, in England, in Scotland, in America? Do you ever hear of her there? Do the preachers tell of her, the picture makers paint her, the people pray to her? Such a worship is impossible. And why? What is the answer that to-day gives to that question? Is the answer difficult? I think not, for it is written in the hearts of the people, it is written in the laws they have made, in the customs they adhere to, in the oaths they take, in their daily lives.

Consider the Roman laws of two thousand and more years ago, the French laws of to-day. What is there most striking to us when we study them? It is, I think, the cult of the family.

The Roman son was his father's slave. He could not own property apart from the father, he could not marry without leave, his father could execute him without any trial. Family life lay outside the law; not Senate, nor Consul nor Emperor could interfere there. The unit in Rome was not the man, but the family.

As it was so it is. The laws are less stringent, but the idea remains. A man belongs not to himself but to his people, to his father and to his mother. In France even now he has to ask their leave to marry. The property is often family property, and his family may restrain a man from wasting it.

There is no bond anywhere stronger than the family bond of the Latin peoples. In mediæval Rome, even often in Rome of to-day, all the sons live with their father and mother even if married. It is the custom, and, like all customs that live, it lives because it is in accord with the feelings of those who obey it.

A man belongs to his family, he clings to it; he is not an individual, but part of an organism.

And although in law it is the father who is the head, it is the father who is the lawgiver, the ruler, is it really he who is that centre, that lode-star, that holds the family together? I think it is not so. It is the mother who is the centre of that affection which is stronger than gravity. We laugh when a Frenchman swears by his mother. But he is swearing by all that he holds most sacred. No Latin would laugh at such a matter. Because he could understand, and we do not. To everyone of Latin race there comes next to God his mother, next to Christ the Madonna, who is the emblem of motherhood.

The Latins do not emigrate. They hate to leave their country. And if they do, if necessity drive them forth, are they ever happy, ever at rest till they can see

their way to return? The Americans tell us that Italians are the worst immigrants because they will not settle; because they send their pay to their parents in the old country, and are never happy till they themselves can return. We call it nostalgia, we say it is a longing for their country. It is that and more. It is a longing for their family, their blood. They cling together in a way we have no idea of.

Does an Englishman ever swear by his mother, does he yearn after her as the Latins do from a far country? Does the fear of separation keep our young men at home? It is always the reverse. They want to get away. The home nest tires them, and they would go; and once gone they care not to return, they can be happy far away. The ties of relationship are light and are easily shaken off, they are quickly forgotten.

Italian labourers and servants give some of their pay always as a matter of course to their parents. It is a natural duty. And in Latin countries there are no poorhouses. They could not abide such a theory any more than could the Indians. It would seem to a Latin an impossibility that any child would leave his parents in a workhouse. Poor as they might be they would keep together. The great bond that holds a family together is the mother, always the mother. We can see this in England too, even with our weaker instinct. The mother makes the home and not the father.

And now are we not finding that sanction we were searching for? If the Madonna, the type of motherhood, appeals to all the people, men and women, is there not a reason? It is an instinct. These images and pictures of the Madonna sound on their heart-strings a chord that is perhaps the loudest and sweetest; if second to any, second only to that of God. God as father, God as mother, God as son and sacrifice, here is the threefold real Godhead of the Latins.

But with us the family tie is slight, the mother worship is faint. Our Teutonic Trinity is God the Father, God the Son, and now later God the Law. These are the realities.

For with us conduct is more and emotion is less than with the peoples of the South.

CHAPTER XXI

CONDUCT

Of all aspects of religion none is so difficult to understand as the relation of religion and conduct. It is ever varying. There seems to be nothing fixed about it. What does conduct arise from? It takes its origin in an instinct, and this instinct is so strong, so imperious, so almost personal, that of all the instincts it alone has a name. It is conscience.

By conscience our acts are directed.

There are scientific men who tell us that our consciences are the result of experience, partly our own, but principally inherited. That if conscience warns us against any course of action it is because that has been experienced to result in misfortune. It is an unconscious memory of past experiences. Conscience is instinctive, and not affected by teaching to any great extent; and that conscience is the main guide of life no one will deny.

But do the voices of conscience and of God, as stated in the sacred books, agree?

When the savage sees a god in the precipice and is afraid of him, there is no question of right or wrong. Not that the savage has no code of morals. He has a very elaborate one. But it is usually distinct from his religion. What virtue did Odin teach? None but courage in war. Yet the Northmen had codes of conduct fitted to their stage of civilisation. The Greeks had many gods. They had also codes of morals and an extensive philosophy, but practically there was no connection. In fact, the gods were examples not of morality but of immorality. It was the same with the Latins and with all the Celts. Their religions were emotional religions, their codes of conduct were apart, although even here you see now and then an attempt to connect them. And when the Latin people took Christianity and formed it, they put into their creeds no question of conduct. You believed, and therefore you were a Christian. The results of bad conduct would be annulled by confession, and the sinner would receive absolution. To a Latin Christian a righteous unbeliever who had never done anything but good would in the end be damned, whereas the murderer who repented at the last would be saved. "There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

Is the inference that the Latin peoples were wickeder than others? I doubt it. They initiated all European civilisation, and trade and commerce, and law and

justice. Probably the highest examples of conduct the world has known have been Latins. They had and have the instinct of conduct, they had and have consciences as good as other people, but only they do not so much connect conduct and religion. You can be saved without conduct.

The Jews, on the contrary, had no instinct of conduct apart from religion. In the Ten Commandments conduct, if it have the second place, has yet the larger share. Righteousness was the keynote of their belief, and if the only righteousness they knew was little better than a noble savagery, it was the best they could do. They included every form of conduct in their religion—sanitary matters, caste observances, and business rules. The Hindu goes even further in the same line. Everything in life is included in his religion.

When in the Reformation the Teutonic people threw off the yoke of Rome, a yoke which was not only religious but political and social, one of their principal arguments against Roman Catholicism was the abominations that had crept in. I think it would be difficult to assert that the people who revolted were in morals generally any better than those they seceded from. Good men in the Latin Church saw equally the necessity for reformation. But bad morals did not seem to them so destructive to faith as it did to the Teutons. There was this difference, that whereas the Latin could and did conceive of religion apart from conduct, the Teuton, like the Jew, could not do so. With the Latin they were distinct emotions, with the Teuton they were connected. One of the principal aspects of the Reformation is the restoration of morality to religion, the abolition of indulgences, of confession and absolution, the insistence on conduct in religious teachers.

The morality of Christ?

The remarkable fact is that it was not the morality of Christ at all. The Reformation was never in any way a revival of the code of the Sermon on the Mount or the imitation of Christ. To a certain extent it went further away from Christ than the Latins. For instance, the Latin priests imitate Christ in being unmarried, the Protestant pastors married. When Calvin burnt Servetus he was not returning to the tenets of the New Testament, and what thought had the Puritans or the French Huguenots, the most masterful of men, of turning the other cheek?

Protestantism was a return of conduct to religion, but it was not Christ's conduct. It was rather the Old Testament code softened by civilised influence that was revived. It was a revolt against excessive emotionalism, and was, in

fact, a combination of two creeds tempered as to conduct by the conduct of the day.

So it continues to-day. The Latin's idea of religious conduct is the imitation of Christ, and when a Latin cultivates religious conduct that is what he does. He becomes a priest or monk, poor, celibate, self-denying and unworldly. But conduct to him is not the great part of religion that it is to a Teuton. With us conduct is the greatest part; the mystical and ceremonious part has decreased, in certain sects almost disappeared. Confession disappeared, and with it absolution from priests. Conduct is part of religion, and the code of conduct to be followed is that which conscience bids, and the code of conscience is, scientific men tell us, the result of experience, personal and inherited. Practically, what conscience tells us to do is what suits the circumstances of the day.

Therefore we may say that the religion of the Latins is mainly emotional, that of the Teutons half emotional and half conduct; and then we come to the Buddhist, which is nearly all conduct.

The Latin would say of an unbeliever, "He cannot be saved; faith is the absolute necessity, and faith even at the last moment by itself is sufficient." The Teuton would say, "I do not know. To be a good man, even if an unbeliever, is very much; it may be that God will accept him."

And the Buddhist? He has no doubt at all. Conduct is everything. Believe what you like as long as you act well. To be a Buddhist is best because there you have the way of life set clearly before you, and it is easy for you to follow. But any man can be saved if he act aright. Conduct is *everything*. In fact, Buddhism in its inception was in one aspect a revolt against excessive emotionalism, that of the ascetics, and it maintains that attitude to-day.

Or, to put it another way: Roman Catholicism is all emotion, Protestantism is half emotion, Buddhism is the suppression of emotion. These are the theories. And the facts? What effect does this difference make on the lives of the peoples?

It may have some effect. There is sometimes action and reaction. These different views of the relation of religion and conduct come from the instincts of the people, and being held and taught they in turn affect the people. But how much? Personally, I believe very little.

A man's daily conduct is regulated by quite other factors. If the effect was great we should find Buddhists the least criminal of peoples, the Teutons a medium,

and the Latins without any idea of conduct at all. But this is certainly not true. The Burman is greatly given to certain crimes, the outcome of his stage of civilisation.

And I have great doubts whether the Protestants generally can show any superiority over the Latins when the circumstances are considered. Are the English Roman Catholics less honest than Protestants in the same class? Are sceptics more criminal than religious people? The inclusion of conduct in religion is astonishingly varied. Some peoples cannot be born or come to maturity, or marry, or die without religion; others do not allow religion to have any part in these matters. But the fact remains that, though conduct may be included more or less in every religion, no religion has a code of conduct for daily life. Priests and monks apart, the codes of conduct are not taken from religion.

But it must not be forgotten that neither Christianity nor Buddhism professes to provide a code of conduct for this life. Judaism knew no future life, and its aim was therefore to ensure success in this. That is the reward offered to the righteous—success for them and their children. There is no hint that this life is not good and worth living, that love and wealth are not good things. On the contrary, they are held out as the reward of the godly. The Judaic code was a good and workable one for its age. But Christianity and Buddhism declare that this life is not good; that it is, in fact, absolutely wicked and unhappy, and that therefore all worldly pleasures and successes are to be eschewed as snares. The codes given are ways to reach heaven, they are by no means codes for ordinary life. Followed to their meaning, every Christian ought to be a monk or nun and every Buddhist the same.

But this teaching of the evil of life is one that no one but a few fanatics accept in its fulness, and heaven or Nirvana are ideas that do not appeal to most men. In Latin and Buddhist countries a few with their higher spiritual powers take their faiths very seriously, but the majority try to make the best of both worlds. In Protestant countries no one at all accepts the doctrine of the worthlessness of life. With the immense majority of men of all nations life is held to be a great and beautiful thing, to be used to its best advantage. The Latins with their keener logic, seeing that the code of Christ is for the next world, not for this, and therefore fit only for monks and nuns and not for men of the world, divorce conduct from religion. Protestants, rejecting the code of Christ for men of the world equally with the Latins, yet feeling a need for a code of conduct, adopt the best current code of the day and call that "Christian conduct." Thus are working religions built up. One religion is all conduct,

another half, another hardly at all—in theory. But in fact, for ordinary life, is there any difference between the code of a Latin, a Teuton, or a Buddhist? There is hardly any. Codes of life vary very little, and that variation is due never to religious influences, but always to the stage of civilisation and mental development and the environments. In Scotland and North Germany it is common for peasant girls to have a baby first and marry afterwards. A Hindu or a Burman would be horrified at such a thing, just as a better class Scotchman or German would be. But to the people who do it there is no immorality. How do you explain this from religion?

Conduct is an instinct. It evolves according to the civilisation and idiosyncrasy of the people. It is influenced by many causes. People, for instance, who are not pleased by acting call theatres wrong, and so on. Experience is also a factor. And the connection of conduct with religion varies. Some people make it a great part of their religion just as sanitary and social measures are included, other peoples make it less prominent. But conduct does not proceed from religious creeds any more than prayer or confession does. It may be slowly influenced by religious teaching, but it has its own existence, and religious teaching is only one of many influences.

CHAPTER XXII

MEN'S FAITH AND WOMEN'S FAITH

There is a faith—Judaism—which originated so far back that we have only a legendary account of it. It was the cult of a warrior nation whose ideal was bravery and whose glory was war, who considered the rest of the world as Philistines and treated them ruthlessly, who kept themselves as a nation apart.

Nineteen hundred years ago there arose among them a prophet, said to be of the ancient kingly house. He preached a doctrine which prescribed as the rule of life mildness and self-denial, renunciation of this world; who denounced war and conquest, and held out as a goal for attainment heaven, which is the peace of God.

This Prophet, The Christ, was executed, but He left behind Him disciples who spread His religion widely. Amongst His own people it never attained great strength, and in time it died away and disappeared. There are no Christians among the Jews. All Semitic nations have rejected this faith. But it spread far to the west, and is now in one form or another the accepted faith of the half world to the west of Palestine. It never spread east.

There is a faith—Brahminism—which originated so far back that we have but legendary accounts of it. It was the cult of a warrior nation whose ideal was courage and whose glory was war, who considered the rest of the world as outcasts and treated them ruthlessly, who kept themselves as a nation apart.

Two thousand five hundred years ago there arose among them a prophet, the son of the Royal House. He preached a doctrine which prescribed as a rule of life meekness and self-denial, renunciation of the world. He denounced war and conquest, and held out as a goal for attainment the Great Peace.

This prophet, the Buddha, was rejected by all the higher castes and he died, having made but little way. But his disciples spread his religion widely. Amongst his own people it never attained great strength, and in time it died away and disappeared. There are no Buddhists in Oude, and, with perhaps a slight exception, there are no Buddhists at all in India. But it has spread far to the east, and is now in one form or another the accepted faith of nearly all people east of the Bay of Bengal, and also of Ceylon. It never spread west.

I do not say that Christianity and Buddhism are the same, for although in some ways, especially in conduct, their teaching is almost identical, and in others—such as Heaven and Nirvana—though differently expressed, the idea is almost the same, yet in certain theories they differ very greatly. Yet, however they may differ, the above parallel cannot but strike one as extraordinary. Indeed, the parallel might have been very largely augmented, but it suffices for the purpose of this chapter; and that is to enquire why each teacher's doctrine was rejected by his own people and accepted by others.

It is no answer to say that no one is a prophet in his own country. All the Jewish prophets, from Moses to Isaiah, *were* prophets in their own country. Christ alone was not. Mahommed was a prophet to the Arabs, Zoroaster to the Persians, Confucius and Laotze to the Chinese. All teachers of Hinduism have been native born Hindus. In Buddhist countries it is the same. Luther was a prophet to the Germans, Loyola to the Spaniards. The rule is otherwise. A prophet is never a prophet to any *but* his own people, except the two greatest Prophets in the world, Christ and Buddha. They alone were rejected by their own and accepted elsewhere. They almost divide the world between them. Hinduism, from which Buddhism arose, still exists untouched by either; Judaism, from which Christianity arose, and its near kin Mahomedanism, exist untouched by either; but most of the rest of the world is either Christian or Buddhist. These are very astonishing facts, and must have some very strong reasons to cause them. The question is, What are the reasons, and are they the same in each case? Was it a similar cause that occasioned such similar effects? What quality was it in the Jews and Hindus that led them to reject their prophets, and what are the qualities in the converted nations that led them to accept these prophets?

It might seem at first as if the clue was contained in the first sentence of each paragraph, that the reason was because both Jews and Hindus, especially the higher caste Hindus, were warrior nations. The rule of life preached by each teacher was absolutely against all that they had revered so far, hence that each rejected it. The fact, of course, is true. Each nation had up to the coming of the Teacher learned a rule of life hopelessly in contrast to the new teaching. The ideals of Christ and Buddha were absolutely opposed to those a fierce, warlike, exclusive people could maintain. They could not accept them without throwing to the winds all their past. This is true, but is it an explanation? It is certainly not a full one. The Jews were warriors, bitter, terrible, ruthless

fighters, and they rejected Christ. But they are no longer a nation of warriors, and they still reject Him.

The world has never seen keener soldiers than those of western Europe, but these nations accept Him.

The Hindu warrior caste are warriors to the bitter end. They rejected Buddha, but so did many peoples of India; the Bengalees, for instance, who are not fighters.

Where can you find stronger warrior spirit than has always existed in Japan? Yet Buddhism is the prevailing religion there. It is evident, I think, that this explanation will not suffice. It may in addition be asserted that the men of Latin nations are usually frankly atheistic, and the Teutonic nations, though theoretically Christian, yet practically when they want to fight they forget Christ and fall back to the Jehovah of the Jews. The Puritans and the Boers are cases in point. They get their fighting faith out of the Old Testament, not the New. But still they accept Christ, and though they may find it impossible, like all nations, to follow His teaching, they do not reject it, or deny it. With Buddhism in the further East the parallel does not last, because Buddhism in ethical teaching stands alone. The Buddhist who wants to fight cannot fall back on the original faith. He has simply to go without a faith at all. He has not the advantage of a double set of conduct, one of which can always be trusted to fit anything he wants to do. He has to go without a faith when he fights. Still he does so.

I confess that for a long time I seemed to find no answer, and at length it came not through studying out this question, but in observing other phenomena of religion altogether.

To one coming to Europe after years in the East and visiting the churches nothing is more striking than the enormous preponderance of women there. It is immaterial whether the church be in England or in France, whether it be Anglican or Roman Catholic or Dissenter. The result is always the same. Women outnumber the men as two to one, as three to one, sometimes as ten to one. Even of the men that are there, how many go there from other motives than personal desire to hear the service? Men go because their wives take them, boys go with their mothers or sisters, old men with their daughters. Professional men are there because it would injure them among their women clients to be absent. Women go because they desire to do so; nine out of ten even of these few men who do go are taken by their women folk. They admit it readily. And more, when they are away from these women they do not enter the

churches. It is borne in upon an observer, especially an observer who has been long enough away from Europe to become depolarised, to what an enormous extent the observance of religious duty in Europe among Christian nations is due to women. It is they only who care for, who are in full sympathy with the teaching of Christ; for men when they are religious, and in certain cases they are so, take their religion of conduct much more from the Old Testament than the New.

In Burma it is not otherwise. The deeper the tenets of Buddhism are observed, the more the women are concerned in it. Who lights the candles at the pagoda, who contribute the daily food to the monks, who attend the Sunday meetings in the rest houses? Nearly all of them are women. Even in Burma, where the devotional instinct is so strong and so deeply held, the immense influence of women is manifest. In Christian and Buddhist countries the women are free to attend the services; they are free, to a greater or lesser extent, in all matters, and in religion they are conspicuous—they rule it, they form it to suit themselves.

But in the races that rejected Christianity, that rejected Buddhism, it is otherwise. The Hindu women keep themselves in zenanas. They are not allowed in the temples, or only in special parts. They can take no part in the public services. They cannot combine to influence religious matters. At the time the Buddha lived women were very much freer than they are now, and this accounts for its initial partial success at home. But as waves of conquest, the incessant rigorous struggle for existence deepened and circumstances contracted that liberty, so as it contracted did Buddhism die. Till at length the women remained immured, and Buddhism fled to countries where women had still some freedom.

It is the same with Christianity. The Jewish women, if not quite so secluded as Hindu women, were yet never openly allowed to join in the synagogues. They, too, as the Mahommedan even, had their "grille" apart. The Jewish men and the Mahommedan men kept their religion for themselves, a virile religion, where women had little place. It may be the fact—I think in another chapter I have shewn that it is a fact—that women seek after religion far more than men. But they must have a religion to suit them. The tenets of Christ and of Buddha do appeal to them, do come nearer to them than they do to the generality of men. And so where women have been free to make their influence felt, to impress their views upon the faith of a country, the mild beliefs of non-resistance, of peace, of meekness and submission have obtained. Whereas in the countries and nations where for one cause or another women are not free

to make their combined influence felt, where they remain under the greater dominance of man in all matters, the faiths that retain the stronger and more virile codes of conduct have remained.

I am not sure that there have not been other influences also at work. I can, I think, see another strong influence that has worked to the same end. There may be many reasons. But that would not alter the fact that the influence of women has been a main force, that they have greatly been concerned in the change of faith.

CHAPTER XXIII

PRAYER AND CONFESSION

What is the most general, the most conspicuous form in which religion expresses itself? Is it not in prayer? Where is the religion that is without prayer? There is none. And perhaps, too, it is the very first expression of religion, that when the savage fell and prayed the lightning to spare him, he was inaugurating the greatest religious form the world has known.

What a wonderful thing it is, wonderful in every form, beautiful wherever you see it—from the glorious masses sung in the cathedrals to the Mussulman spreading his mat upon the sand and bowing towards Mecca. There is nothing so beautiful, nothing that so touches the heart of man as prayer.

I have said that it is common to all religions, and so it is. Religions live not in creeds, but in the believers. Pure Buddhism knows not prayer, but does not the Buddhist know it? Go to any pagoda and see the women there praying to Someone—Someone, they know not whom—and ask if Buddhists know not prayer? I have written so fully of it in my other book that I will not repeat it here.

Prayer is common to all believers; it is the greatest, as perhaps it is the only expression common to all religions. And whence comes this custom of prayer? The Jew and the Mussulman and the Christian will answer and say, "It comes from our belief in God, it is an outcome of that belief. Our God has bade us pray to Him."

And the Hindu, how will he answer? He will say, "Our gods have power over us, they deal with us as they will. They listen to us if we pray. And therefore it is right for us to beseech them in our trouble. It comes from our belief in our gods." And the savage will answer, "I fear the Devil, so I pray to him." But what will the Buddhist answer?

For Buddhism knows no God. The world is ruled by Law, unchangeable, everlasting Law. No one can change that Law. If you suffer it is the meet and proper consequence of your sins. The suffering is purifying you and teaching you how to live. It would not be well for you to be relieved of it now if you could be. Therefore suffer and be silent.

A very beautiful belief. And yet the people pray. Why? When a Buddhist prays it is not in consequence of his belief, but in spite of it. It cannot be traced as the result of any theory of causation.

Therefore one doubts the Theist's explanation and one reflects. Was, indeed, prayer born of their beliefs? And then the doubt increases. Are these creeds older than prayer, or maybe is it not that prayer is older than the creeds? Did these creeds exist in men's minds first or did the necessity for prayer exist first? Which is nearer to man?

Let us consider what prayer is. It consists of three things mainly. Petition to be saved, to be helped from imminent danger; praise at being so saved; and last, probably last, but surely greatest of all, confession.

When men pray they are always doing one or other of these things. When the savage was caught in the thunderstorm or shaken in the earthquake and fell on his knees in fear, babbling strange things, do you think he had reasoned out a God behind the force first? Do you think his inarticulate cry for help was not involuntary? That if he had not first reasoned out the God he would not so cry? Have you ever seen people in deadly fear, how they will babble for help, crying unto the unknown? If there was ever anything that came forth absolutely spontaneously from the heart of man, which needed no belief of any kind anterior to its birth, it was prayer, the prayer that comes from fear, the prayer for help. It is the unconscious, unreasoned cry of the heart. If there is Someone to whom to direct the cry, well and good; but if not, the cry comes just the same.

When troubles fall upon the man, what is his first impulse? To tell someone. If the confidant can help, so much the better; but if not, still to tell. To ease the pent up heart by telling, that is what is wanted. And with joy, too. Have you not seen how, when good news comes to a man, he loves to rush forth and tell it? To whom? It does not matter. Tell it, tell it. Cry it aloud, if but the trees and rocks can hear. To keep secret a great thing is very hard. Remember the courtier who discovered that King Midas had asses' ears. He could not keep the terrible deadly truth to himself. He dared not tell it to man. And so, going softly to the river, he confessed the dreadful knowledge to the reeds: "Midas hath asses' ears." Can you trace here any cause and effect? And there is confession, to tell someone of our sins, to confess. Is that dependent upon any religious theory? Much has been written about confession, this necessity of the laden spirit, but never has anything been written like that study by Dostoevsky called "Crime and Punishment." The "Crime" was murder, not an ordinary murder committed by a ruffian in passion or from sordid motives, but a murder by a student intended to result in good. The murderer is suspected—nay, is known by a police officer—and the motive of the first half of the story is not to gain evidence, not to unravel the story, but it lies in the efforts of the detective

to induce Raskolnikoff to make a voluntary confession. And why? There was evidence enough, the offender could have been arrested and convicted at any time. But that would not do. Punishment alone will not always, will indeed but seldom, benefit the criminal. Punishment is for the protection of society. It is for the future, not the past. For the criminal to redeem himself he must confess. In that lies the only medicine for a diseased soul. It is a marvellous story, and it holds the truth of truths. Confess. There is no emotion of the human heart so strong as this, the eminent necessity to tell someone. No one who has had much to do with crime will doubt this. There is in all natural men a burning desire, an absolute necessity, to tell of what has been done. It comes out sometimes in confessions to the police or to the magistrate. All criminal annals are full of such stories. A crime is committed and there is no clue, till the man confesses. I have myself seen a great deal of this. I have received many confessions. But you will object that was amongst Burmese; and I reply, Wherein is there any difference? Criminals of all countries frequently confess. But as civilisation progresses the confession is not often to a magistrate. The fear, the terrible fear of punishment outweighs the natural impulse. But still the confession is made. If you read the cases in the papers you will see how often it is made. To a wife, to a companion, sometimes to a complete stranger. The men who can hold their tongues, who can stifle nature, are very few. With all but hardened criminals the tendency is always to confession, and those whose work has laid among them know that the denial, the defence, except with hardened criminals, is seldom theirs. If there were no relations to urge them, no lawyers to assist them, five out of six first offenders would confess openly.

Is it otherwise with our children? What is it we teach them above all else? Never to do wrong? No! For we know that is impossible. Children, like men, will err. But, "when you have done wrong confess, for only so can you lift the weight from your heart." Confess, confess. Everywhere it is the same. If you have done wrong, only by confession can you remove the stain. But it must be voluntary. It must not be forced. Such a confession is of no value. Even our courts reject it.

It is an instinct of the heart that comes who can tell whence, that means who can tell what? And from this have grown many things. It has become part of all the greater religions, and the forms it has taken are significant not so much of the faiths, but of the people.

Among the Jews and the Mahommedans we hear little of it. They were a hard people when their faiths were formed, a strong people, and little advanced in

the gentler feelings. They were warriors who lived greatly by the sword, and it was necessary for them to stifle all that might weaken or even polish them. For one man to humble himself to another is very hard, for a proud man to confess to another is almost impossible. And so into these Theistic faiths the confession was to God. If a man sinned it was to God alone he could confess. But with Christianity it has been different. There is in Christianity what exists in no other faith in the same way, an intermediary between God and man.

There are the priests.

This desire of the soul for confession, the absolute necessity with strong emotional people to tell someone their sins and their truths, has been one of the greatest cults of the Church of Rome. Man must confess, let him confess to the priests. Their tongues are tied, they will never reveal what they are told; they are the ministers of God. Therefore let the innate desire for confession be directed towards the priests. It is universal in Catholic countries. Whatever may be its abuses it is the great safety valve, the great help of the people, that as they must confess they should have someone to confess to.

With the Northern Teutonic nations it has been different. They got their Christianity from Rome, a Christianity that was built on the needs of impulsive Celtic natures. It suited not with the harder natures of the north. They could not confess to men, it galled them to be told to confess. Their natures were different. Had they no need of confession? Yes, but they were as the Jews and Mahomedans. They would not humble themselves to men. And so, for this and other similar reasons, they revolted from Rome and made their own church, where confession is only to God. But the necessity of confession still remains; our services are full of it. It is strange how very often we find the Christianity of Teutonic people nearer in observed facts to the faiths of Semitic peoples than to the Christianity of the Celts. All these peoples, all these Churches, recognise the need of confession. But, it may be said, all this is a difference of very slight detail. All confession is to God. The Roman priests are only representatives of God. If you believe in God you must believe in confession, because God has always directed it. Confession is in all the Churches because God ordered it. The need comes from God, who gives absolution.

Then how about the Buddhists? They have no God, but yet they confess. The Buddha himself many times pointed out how needful confession was, and how healing to the heart. There is no God to confess to, there is no representative of God. But there is the head of the Monastery. Let the younger monk who sins

confess his sins to his superior. There is no absolution. Man works out his future himself, always by himself. There is no absolution, no help to be gained by confession. But the Buddha knew the hearts of man. He knew that confession was good for the soul. He knew that it needed no absolution from any priest to help the confessor, no belief in any God to pardon because of the confession. Confession, if it be made honestly and truly, brings with it always its own reward. It may be objected, that this is not general, but only applies to those trying to live the holy life. The Buddha taught that all men should do so. He meant it to be general. It is true that it is not, it cannot be general, or the world would cease. Only a few are monks. Is, then, the help of confession denied to the multitude? Perhaps by the stringent Buddhist faith it may not be urgently inculcated, and men and women in outside life cannot confess to monks. Do they then go without? Not so. Go to any pagoda at any time and you will see there kneeling many people, some men, but mostly women. They are there confessing, audibly sometimes, their troubles, their sins, their joys also. To whom? Ah! then I cannot tell you. "Someone will hear," they say, "Someone will hear." Religions are for the necessity of man, and if the narrow creed will not suffice it must be enlarged.

It is a strange subject this of confession, and its ally, prayer. It is strange to follow it to its roots in the human heart, and to see that it is stronger, is older, is more persistent than creeds. Creeds come and go, they change, and man changes with them; he may have any religion or have none, but it makes no difference to this. Hindu and Christian, Mahommedan and Buddhist, Atheist and Jew, the heart of man is ever the same. Read that wonderful story of Balzac's, "La Messe d'Athée," and you will see.

If you postulate God or gods, and try from that to deduce prayer and confession, you find yourself very soon as the boy found himself long ago. You are at an impasse. If God be indeed as stated, then can prayer and confession never be necessary. You cannot get round it, you can only hide yourself in mists of words like the scientific theologian. If God be as postulated, then can prayer and confession not be necessary, or even beautiful.

But you can see from daily life that they are so. Who can doubt it? There is in life nothing so beautiful, nothing so true, nothing that acts as balm to the heart like prayer and confession, and they exist naturally. They are there from the beginning; they need no religious theory to bring them into life. What, then,

is the inference? Not perhaps exactly what it at first sight would seem to be, that God does not exist or has those qualities of prejudice, of favour, of partiality which religious books and religious people give to Him. It is, I think, this: That the truth, the original truth, is the necessity of confession and prayer, and that to explain this the theory of the nature of God or gods have arisen. Prayer did not proceed from God, but God from prayer—*i.e.*, the theories of God.

No strongly religious man can reason about his own faith. Christians will say that the idea of the True God is inherent in man also, that if not earlier than prayer, it is co-existent. So be it. But how about false gods—the savage praying to a mountain, the Hindu to an image or a stone, representing who knows what? the Buddhist woman praying by the pagoda? Their prayer is beautiful. It is as beautiful as yours. Never doubt it. Go and see them pray. You will learn that prayer is beautiful, is true in itself. And can such a thing proceed from a false theology? See men pray and hear them confess and you will be sure of this, that prayer and confession, no matter by whom, no matter to whom, are always true, have always their effect upon the heart. Whatever is false, they are not. It is one absolute truth that all men will admit.

CHAPTER XXIV

SUNDAY AND SABBATH

I am not sure that in such an enquiry as this history is of much avail. I do not find that those who search into the past to write the history of it ever discover much that is of use to-day. It seems to me that in tracing an idea, or a law, or a custom, historians are satisfied with giving an account of its growth or decay as if it were the life of a tree. They do not enquire into the why of things. They will tell you that an idea came, say, from the East and was accepted generally. They do not say why it was accepted. And to have traced a modern belief back into the far past is to them sufficient reason for its presence, forgetful that whatever persists, whether a law or an idea or a belief, does so because it is of use. Living things require a sanction as well as a history, and therein lies their interest. And what I am writing now is of the sanctions of religions.

Still, there is sometimes an interest, if but a negative one, in the history of an observance or belief. It is useful sometimes to trace an observance back, if only to show that the reason generally given for its retention is not and cannot be the real one. Of such is the history of the observance of Sunday, or the Sabbath, in England and Scotland.

We have discovered from the inscriptions at Accad, upon the Euphrates, that in the time of Sargon, 3,800 years B.C., the days were divided into weeks of seven days, named after the sun and moon and the five planets, as they are now in places. And there were, moreover, "Sabbaths" set apart as days of "rest for the soul," "the completion of work." There were five of these Sabbaths in Chaldea every lunar month, occurring on the 7th, the 14th, the 19th, the 21st, and 28th of the month. That is to say, the new moon, the full moon, and the days half way between were Sabbaths, with the addition of a fifth Sabbath on the 19th day. On these days it was not lawful to cook food, to change one's dress, to offer a sacrifice; the king may not speak in public or ride in a chariot, or perform any kind of military or civil duty; even to take medicine was forbidden. It was a day of rest. And this was 3,800 B.C., nearly 2,000 years before Abraham lived, 2,300 years before Moses and the Ten Commandments, almost contemporary, according to the Bible records, with Cain and Abel. The day was already called the Sabbath. It had existed already for no one knows how long, probably thousands of years; it was a day of rest, and it was observed much as was subsequently the Jewish Sabbath. Without doubt the Jews only adopted a custom known to more civilised nations ages before, and they gave to it the sanction of their religion, as they and many other people

have done to many matters. There is everywhere a strong tendency, if possible, to give religious sanction to every observance. The stronger emotions attract to themselves the lesser. So have the Jews and Mahommedans adopted sanitary precautions, the Hindus sanitary and marriage laws, and Christianity marriage laws also in their faiths. So did my friend mentioned in the preface include all civilisation in his religion.

The observance of the Sabbath arose not from a religious command transmitted by Moses, but as the result of observation and custom thousands of years before, that a day of rest was needed for man.

When they reached a certain standard of civilisation all peoples seem to have had such a day set apart. It was a want that arose out of the keener struggle for existence, a mutual truce to the war of competition. But the day itself varied. The Greeks divided their lunar month into decades, having thus three festival days in a month. The Romans, we are told, divided it into periods of eight days, though I do not know how they managed their arithmetic or got eight into twenty-nine without some awkward remainder. And in the farther East it was usual to celebrate the full moon and the new moon and the days half way between as days of rest. A lunar month consisting of sometimes twenty-nine and sometimes thirty days, the period between rest days was sometimes six days as in a week, and sometimes seven days. Thus among the Burmese, although there are, as usual, seven days named after the sun, moon, and planets, the rest day goes by the day of the month, not by that of the week, just as it did with the Accadians. For in the East a month remains a month; it is the life of a moon. It begins with the new moon and ends with the fourth quarter, and is easily reckoned by any villager. With us in the North the age of the moon has ceased to be of any importance. Our life after dark is indoors, where we have lights and the moon is of no use to us. Our houses are lit artificially, and very few Europeans could tell at a moment's notice how old the moon is.

But in the East it is not so. With them the night is the time for being out of doors, and when they go to their houses it is only to sleep. The nights are cool after the hot day, and on the full moon nights the world is full of light. The night of the full moon, when the scent of flowers is on the still air and all about is full of magic, is one of the great beauties of this world. But of it we know nothing in Europe.

Therefore in colder climates the month by the moon was abandoned, and reckoning the year by the sun took its place. And as civilisation progressed it

was inconvenient to be uncertain about which was the day of rest, so it became the custom to make it every seventh day, regardless of the moon. This seems to have obtained first in Egypt and to have spread over the civilised world, the seventh day being the Sabbath. But it still remained a day of rest, unassociated, except by the Jews, with religion.

The early Christians kept no Sabbath. They kept the first day of the week as a day of rejoicing, to celebrate the rising of Christ. Indeed, the Jewish Sabbath was considered as abrogated, and the first day of the week was kept, much as it is now kept on the Continent, as a day of rest, of rejoicing, of relaxation after work.

So it was observed till the Reformation.

The Reformers, whatever they altered, did not alter this. They gave no command to return from Christian observance of the day to Jewish observance, and all over the Continent, among those of reformed churches as among those of the Catholic church, Sunday is the day of rest, of worship, and of relaxation.

It was so, too, in England and Scotland.

The change back to the Jewish Sabbath seems to have come with the Puritans and to have been introduced by them to Scotland. And this is but one example of how Puritanism was practically a rejection of Christianity and a return to the codes of Judaism, which suited those iron warriors much better than Christian ethics.

In England the feeling has been tempered, but among the Scotch, who are in so many ways like the old Jews, it took root, it flourished, and it is the Jewish Sabbath both in name and observance that we see now there.

Why was there this reversion? For what reason has the Jewish Sabbath appealed more nearly to the Scotch than the Christian Sunday? What feelings were those that caused this?

If you turn to the people who have done this and look into their characters you will note one strong and marked instinct. It is the dislike to art of all kinds, to painting and music, to dancing and acting, their strong distrust of beauty and gaiety. They are a sober people, hard and stubborn and dour, to whom art and amusement appeal, as a rule, not at all; and when they do appeal it is too strongly. They would not have organs in their churches and cards were to them the devil's picture books. They had in them then, they have now, no single fibre that responds to the lighter and brighter things of this world. Their very

humour is grim. Have they, then, no idea of pleasure? Do they never enjoy themselves? It would be a mistake of the greatest to suppose that. They, too, as all other men, have their times for relaxation, for enjoyment, for mental rest and refreshment. Only that what gives pleasure to them is different from what gives pleasure to other people. They take their pleasures sadly; the chords of their hearts are tuned to other keys than that of gaiety and art. These latter they cannot understand, they awaken either no echo or far too strong an echo; and, like all men when they cannot understand a thing, they hate it. There is no medium in these matters that appeal to the emotions. You must either like or hate. You may see this always. Either you enjoy Wagner's music or you abominate it, either you appreciate old masters or they are to you daubs, either you are in tune to laughter or it seems to you the veriest folly.

The Scotch take their amusement and their relaxation on the Sabbath as other people do on the Sunday. They rest from work, they attend divine service, and for relaxation they awaken those gloomy and fanatical thoughts which give them pleasure. For these are to them pleasure, just as much as gaiety is to other people.

Do not doubt that it is real pleasure to them. Men's hearts are tuned to many keys, and there is a minor as well as a major. It is true that it is difficult for those who rejoice in light and sunshine, in gaiety and humour, who revolt from grey skies and shaded days, from gloomy thoughts and dreams of hell, to realise that there are men to whom these are in harmony.

Most of us would forget hell if we could, would banish the thought if it arose, but some love to dwell upon it, to repeat it, to preach of it. The idea thrills them as blood and massacre do others. Some men would go miles to avoid seeing an execution, others would go as many miles to see it. Emotions are of all sorts, and what to some is horrible is to others attractive.

"Will the doctrine of eternal punishment be preached there?" asked the owner of a large room suitable for meetings to one who would have hired it to preach there. And when the answer was that the subject would not be touched on the room was refused. "Ay, but I hold to that doctrine," he repeated to every objection.

Widely, therefore, as the Continental Sunday and the Scotch Sabbath differ in appearance, they arise from the same causes, they result in the same effects.

They are caused by the desire for bodily rest, for soul nourishment, for mental relaxation, necessities of mankind, and each people so frames its conception of

the proper way to keep the day as to attain those ends. For "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," and men adapt their religious teaching to suit their necessities.

CHAPTER XXV

MIRACLE

It is some years ago now—about twenty, I think—that we first heard of the beginning of a new religion, the arrival of a new prophetess who was to unfold to us the mystery of the world and teach us the truths of life. And this religion began as other religions have been said to begin, this prophetess claimed belief as other teachers are said to have done, by her miraculous powers. She could do things that no one else could do: she could divide a cigarette paper in halves, and waft half through the air to great distances; she could piece together broken teacups in an extraordinary way. And because she could perform these feats she claimed for herself an authority in speaking of the hearts of men and of the before and after death, an authority which was accorded to her by many.

I have expressly refrained from suggesting either the truth or the falsehood of these miracles. I am aware that the whole process is said to have been fully exposed. The question is immaterial, for they were, true or false, believed by many, and it is this question of belief in miracle which I wish to discuss, not the possibility of miracle or the reverse.

There is another point I wish to make clear. I have said that other religions are said to have started in the same way, other teachers to have claimed authority on the same ground. This may or may not be true. The theory of Buddhism is so essentially anti-miraculous that the miracles attributed to the Buddha seem almost certainly outside additions, as they are in direct variance with his known acts and beliefs. And the words and acts of Christ in His life seem all so at variance with the miracles attributed to Him that they, too, may be later additions or contemporary exaggerations. This has already been obvious to some, and had not the absolute inspiration of the Sacred Books been insisted on, thus stifling criticism, it would have been obvious to more. All this is immaterial. True or false, all religions have an embroidery, more or less deep, of miracle, and on these miracles their claim to truth was in the early days more or less pressed. If Madame Blavatsky performed miracles with teacups it was because she saw that there was an attraction to many people in miracle that nothing else could supply. Miracle to many is the proof of truth. Had Madame Blavatsky performed no miracles, had there been no teacups, were there now no Mahatmas, who would have stopped to listen to her compote of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and truly western mysticism which she called Theosophy?

How can miracle be the proof of supernatural knowledge?

Suppose there arose to-morrow in England a man who could make one loaf into five, what should those of us who are without the instinct for miracle say? Merely that he knew some way of increasing bread which we did not know. The inference would end there. We should not suppose that he therefore knew anything more about the next world than we do. Where is the connection, we would ask? The telephone or the Röntgen rays would have been a miracle a hundred years ago. Two thousand years ago a phonograph would have been supposed to hold a devil, and the proprietor would have been a prophet, no doubt. But we do not now go to Edison or Maxim for our religions. Still, Madame Blavatsky started with miracles, and was wise in her generation. Still, all religions retain more or less of the miraculous, because there are many to whom this appeals before everything, because they are sure that miracle is the proof of truth. Again, Theosophy claims to be Esoteric Buddhism. The country *par excellence* of practical Buddhism is Burma. Yet the Burmans generally laugh at Theosophy. How is this? The answer lies, I think, like the answer to all these questions of religion, in the varying instincts of the people. It is an idea with us in the West that the East is the land of enchantment, of mystery, of the unknown, of miracle and all that is akin to it. We are never tired of talking of the mysterious East; it seems to us one vast wonderland full of things we cannot understand, full of marvels of the unknowable, the very home of superstition; while the West is matter of fact, material and reasonable, and easily understood. And yet I think the very first thing a man learns when he goes to the people of the East, certainly to the Burmese people, and tries to see with their eyes and understand with their hearts, that all this is the very reverse of the facts. Will anyone who wishes to see how very far they are from the cult of the mysterious, of dreams, of miracles, of visions, how very *little* such things appeal to them, turn to my chapters on the Buddhist monkhood in "The Soul of a People," and read them? I do not wish to repeat what I said there, only that a monk who saw visions or performed miracles would be ejected from his monastery as unworthy of his faith.

I do not say that there are no superstitions among the people. Their stage of civilisation is as yet low, as low perhaps as ours five hundred years ago. They have their strange fancies here and there; I have heard many of them. They are amusing sometimes and curious. I very much doubt, however, if the Burman of to-day is as superstitious as an ordinary countryman in England. I have heard English soldiers tell tales of old women changing into hares, *that they themselves had seen*, quite as seriously as any Burman could. And if you compare the Burman of to-day with the European peasant of even two hundred

years ago, there is no comparison at all. The West simply reeks with superstition and all that is allied to it compared to the East. (I exclude the belief in ghosts, which is, I think, a separate matter.)

The delusion has, I think, arisen in many ways. To begin with, we are always looking out in the East for the mysterious. It is the East, and therefore mysterious. We very seldom try to understand the people, to see them from their standpoint. We prefer generally to assume that they have no standpoint and to talk of the incomprehensible Oriental mind, because it is easier to do so and it sounds superior. And again, we are apt to make absurd comparisons and reason without remembrance. An English officer will come across a Burman from the back country of the hills who has a charm against bullet wounds, and he will sit down and indite a letter to the paper on the "incredibly foolish superstition of these people," oblivious of the fact that he will find even now amongst his own countrymen quite as many people who believe in charms as among the Burmese, that Dr. Johnson touched various articles as charms, and that he himself throws salt over his shoulder. Yet he is of the better class of a people five hundred years older in civilisation than the Burman.

I confess that, personally, I have found even to-day infinitely more superstition and leaning to the miraculous among my own people than among Burmans. There are classes of English people who are almost free from it, there are other Englishmen, and especially Englishwomen, who are steeped in it to a degree that would astound any Oriental. And what was it a few hundred years ago? Have there ever been witch trials in the East, have there ever been ordeals, or casting lots "for God to decide"? Magicians have come to us from the East, truly; they were made for export, the use for them at home being limited. Theosophy was started in the East, truly, but not by Orientals. Madame Blavatsky is believed to have been a Russian; her supporters were English and American. Palmistry and fortune-telling appeal as serious matters to many people in England and Europe generally. To the Burman they are matters of amusement. Do you think "Christian Science" would gain any foothold in the East? or spiritualism or a hundred forms of superstition that cling to the civilised people of the West?

The East is the home of religion, of emotion, of asceticism, of the victory of the mind over the body. The West is the home of superstition, of second sight, of miracle, of conjuring tricks of all kinds exalted into the supernatural. You may search all the records of the East and find no superstition—like touching for the King's evil, for instance. Can anyone imagine Joanna Southcote in India or in the further East? I have tried not to hear, I could never repeat, what the East

says of the miraculous in Christianity. Superstition there is, of course, legend and miracle; they are the outcomes always of a certain stage of pre-civilisation. But even in India how scarce and faint they are compared to the West. For one thing must be carefully remembered. Ignorance of the power of natural causes must not be put down to attribution of miraculous causes. The peasant in the East will often attribute a property to a herb, a mineral, a ceremony that it has not got. That is their ignorance of natural law, never their attribution of unnatural power. If a Burman peasant sometimes thinks a certain medicine can render his body lighter than water, it is simply that he is unaware of the limited power of drugs, not that he supposes there is anything miraculous in it. The power of phenacetin on a feverish patient seems to him far more astonishing. Indeed, from miracle as miracle he shrinks. To miracle as miracle the average European is greatly attracted. To the one it spells always charlatanism, to the latter supernatural power.

And therefore, even in the religions of Hindustan—Hinduism in its myriad forms, Mahommedanism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Parseeism—miracle plays a very minor part. I think there is no doubt that this repugnance to miracle is one reason why the Semites eventually rejected Christianity. How very few and unaffected the essence are the miracles in Mahommedanism. But in Christianity it plays the major part. Christ was born and lived and died and rose again in miracle. In Latin countries miracles are of daily occurrence—as at Lourdes, for instance.

And though in Teutonic Christianity it is less than in Latin countries, it plays a great part also. The miracles of Christ's life are retained. Truly they say that now the age of miracle is past. The Church believes no more in prophecy, in miraculous cures, in risings from the dead. The bulk of the people reject miracle. But what a large minority is still left who absolutely crave for it, let the records of Theosophy and many another miraculous religion show. Miracle satisfies a craving, an instinct, that nothing else will meet. It is curious to note how the inclusion of miracle in religion varies inversely with the inclusion of conduct. With the Latins miracle is most, the Latin Christianity is the most miraculous of all religions, and therein conduct is least. With the Teutons miracle and conduct are both accepted, the former authoritatively of the past, privately also of the present. With the Burmans miracle and the supernatural are rejected absolutely as part of the religion of to-day, and conduct is all in all. Thus again do the instincts of the people find expression in their religion.

As to the growth of the instinct it is more difficult to reply. Instincts are very hard to account for. Indeed, in their origin all are quite beyond the scope of

inquiry at all. We can only see that they exist. But with this instinct for miracle there is one cause that no doubt contributes to its increase or decrease. It does not explain the instinct, but it does show why in some cases it is greater than in others.

It is greater in the West than in the East because many people in the West, with greater emotional power, from better food and little work, live narrower lives than any in the East. It is astonishing to see the difference. In the East every peasant lives surrounded by his relatives, very many of them; he is friends with all his village, he has always his work, his interests in life. He is hardly ever alone among strangers, with no work to occupy him. But in the West, how many there are who live alone, their relations elsewhere, with few friends, with no necessity for work, with no interests in life? It is terrible to see how many there are living lives empty of all emotion. These are they who seek the miraculous as a relief from their daily monotony of stupidity. These are they who run after new things. It is

"The desire of the moth for the star,Of the day for the morrow,The longing for something afarFrom the scene of our sorrow."

It is the result of high emotional power with no food to feed on. There are other factors, for instance—that people who live in mountains are more superstitious than people of plains, due again to narrower, more isolated lives, I think; and as a rule country people are more superstitious than town people, due to the same reason. Nothing exists without its use, and this is some of the use of the miraculous instinct in man. It has played its part in the world, a great part no doubt. Where it exists still it does so because it fills a necessity. Never doubt it. Those who live full lives find it so easy to laugh at this craving for the supernatural. Would you do away with it? Make, then, their lives such that they do not need it. Give to them the knowledge, the sympathy, the love, the wider life that makes it unnecessary.

Nurtured in narrowness on the ground that should grow other instincts, it disappears in the sunshine of happiness, when the heart is furrowed and tilled by the experiences of life and planted with the fruit of happiness.

If we cannot do that, at least we can recognise that it, as all instincts, has its uses, and exists in and because of that use, never because of any abuse.

And where the instinct exists it is attracted as are nearly all the instincts into that great bundle of emotions called religion.

But if those who support Christian missions wonder why they are not more successful, here is another reason. What satisfies your instinct revolts theirs. They do not require it. Orientals, even peasants, live such wide lives compared with many in the West, that they need not the stimulus, and their hard lives lessen the emotional powers. And if Christians are often unable to understand the charm of Buddhism to its believers, it is because western people seek and require the stimulus of miracle which is here wanting. It is as if you offered them water while they cared only for wine. But Easterns care not for your strong emotions. They are simpler and more easily pleased.

CHAPTER XXVI

RELIGION AND ART

"This is not the place, nor have I space left here, to explain all I mean when I say that art is a mode of religion, and can flourish only under the inspiration of living and practical religion."—*Frederic Harrison*.

"No one indeed can successfully uphold the idea that the high development of art in any shape is of necessity coincident with a strong growth of religious or moral sentiment. Perugino made no secret of being an atheist; Leonardo da Vinci was a scientific sceptic; Raphael was an amiable rake, no better and no worse than the majority of those gifted pupils to whom he was at once a model of perfection and an example of free living; and those who maintain that art is always the expression of a people's religion have but an imperfect acquaintance with the age of Praxiteles, Apelles, and Zeuxis. Yet the idea itself has a foundation, lying in something which is as hard to define as it is impossible to ignore; for if art be not a growth out of faith, it is always the result of a faith that has been."—*Marion Crawford*.

Quotation on both sides could be multiplied without end, but there seems no reason to do so. The question is the relation of religion to art, and it has but the two sides. Indeed, the subject seems difficult, for there is so much to be said on both sides.

On one side it may be said:—Art is the result of and the outcome of religion. Look at the greatest works of art the world has to show. Are they not all religious? There are the Parthenon, the temples of Karnac, the cathedral at Milan, St. Peter's at Rome, and others too numerous to mention; the Mosque of St. Sophia and the Kutub Minar, the temples of Humpi, the Shwe Dagon pagoda, the temples of China and Japan. What has secular art to show to compare with these? Are not the Venus de Milo, the statue of Athena, and all the famous Greek sculptures those of gods? What is the most famous painting in the world? It is the Sistine Madonna of Raphael. Even in literature, is there anything secular to compare with the sacred books of the world? The oratorios and masses are the finest music. What can be more certain than that only religion gives the necessary stimulus to art and furnishes the most inspiring subjects? Great art is born of great faiths, great faiths produce great art.

To which there is the reply:—Many of the greatest Greek statues were of gods truly, but was it a religious age that produced them? Were Phidias and Zeuxis religious or moral men?

Was the thirteenth century which saw the building of most of the best cathedrals, a religious age? Is it not the fact that for many cathedrals the capital was borrowed from the Jews, enemies of Christ, and the interest paid by the sweat of slaves; and when the interest was too heavy, religious bigotry was resorted to and the Jews persecuted, killed, and banished. It is probable that of all ages the thirteenth century was the worst. Were the painters of great pictures religious or moral? Raphael painted the most wonderful religious paintings the world has seen—how much religion had Raphael? Leonardo da Vinci painted "The Last Supper"; he was a sceptic. Are not artistic people notoriously irreligious? The pyramids of Egypt and the Taj at Agra are not religious buildings; they are tombs. The sentiment that raised them was the emotion of death. In music and literature secular art rivals religion. And even if great art be allied to religion, deep religious feeling does not necessarily produce art. Indeed, it is the reverse. The most serious forms of belief have not done so. Where is the art of the Reformation? Protestants will be slow to admit that there was no deep religious feeling there. Yet their great cathedrals were all built by Roman Catholics. Were not the Puritans religious? They hated all art. Is there no religious feeling in the North of America? Where is its religious art? In Europe there is no religious art out of Catholicism. In that alone has it succeeded. And again, although some religious art is great, such is the exception. The bulk of religious art all over the world is bad—very bad—the worst. What art is there in the crucifixes of the Catholic world, in the sacred pictures in their chapels, in the eikons of Russia, in the gods of the Hindus, in the Buddhas of Buddhism, and the popular religious pictures of England? They are one and all as Art simply deplorable. There is grand religious literature, but what of the bulk of it? Most of the hymns, the sermons, the tracts, the religious literature of England and other countries cannot be matched for badness in any secular work. It is the same everywhere. The Salvation Army had to borrow secular music to make its hymns attractive. Striking an average, which is best—secular or religious literature, art, music, and architecture? Without a doubt secular art is the best all round.

Art may often be the representative of religion, it is never the outcome of religious people or a religious age. The very contrary is the fact.

These are strong arguments, and there are more. But these will suffice.

What is the truth? What connection has art with religion?

I do not think the answer is difficult. The connection depends upon what you define religion and art respectively to be. With the old definitions no answer is

forthcoming. But when you see religion as it really is, when you understand its genesis and its growth, the answer is clear.

Religion, as I have tried to show, arises from instincts. The instincts of the savage are few, the emotions he is capable of feeling are limited. As his civilisation progresses his instinctive desires increase, his emotions are more numerous. And as the greater attracts the less, the older and more established attract the newer, so religion attracts to itself and incorporates all it can. Religions have varied in this matter; but of all, Catholicism has been the most wide-armed, it has always justified its name. Where a new emotion arose and became strong the Roman Church always if possible attracted it into the fold. I have already shown how this was done. There is hardly an emotion of the human heart that Roman Catholicism has not made its own.

Now what is Art?

Art, as Tolstoi explains, is also an expression of the emotions, and therefore the difference between religion and art lies in the emotions expressed and the method of expression.

Different peoples express in their religions different emotions. What some of these emotions are I explain in Chapter XXX. Different people are also more or less susceptible to art, and express in their art different emotions. Where a great religion has absorbed certain emotions, and a great art subsequently arises and wishes to express in art some of the same emotions, then the art becomes religious art. The two domains have overlapped. But there is no distinction between secular and religious art. Nor is there any necessary connection between Art and Religion. Neither is dependent on the other. They are quite distinct domains, each existing to fulfil the necessities and desires of man.

How they came frequently to overlap is easily enough seen.

Consider the religion of Rome. It came, as I have said, out of the necessity for expressing and cultivating certain emotions. It is a very catholic religion, the product of a highly emotional people who had many and strong feelings. As much as possible these were accepted into the religion.

Therefore, when there came the great outbreak of art in the fourteenth century, when there were great painters and sculptors desiring to paint pictures that appealed to the heart, all the ground was occupied.

Did they want to depict feminine beauty, there was the Madonna accepted as the ideal. Did they want to awaken the emotion of maternity, there was the Madonna again; of pity, there were the martyrs; of sacrifice, there was the Christ. Long before these emotions had been crystallised by the Church round religious ideals, and a change would not be understood.

And with the Architects. There is but one emotion common to a whole people—catholic, so to speak—namely, religion. A town hall, a palace, a secular building would be provincial; a church only is catholic. In palaces only princes live, in municipal buildings only officials, in markets only the people, but in churches all are gathered together, and not only occasionally but frequently. Therefore, given a great architect, what could he design that would give him scope, and freedom, and fame like a cathedral? His feelings were immaterial, it was a professional necessity that drove artists then to religious matters. What was Raphael, the free-liver, thinking of when he drew his Madonnas? Was it the Jewess of Galilee over a thousand years before or the ripe warm beauty of the Florentine girls he knew?

The Roman Catholic Church desired to attract to itself all that appealed to the emotions, and included art of all kinds in its scope. And all artists, painters, architects, even writers, found in the Church their greatest opportunities and greatest fame. Deep and real feelings in art of all kinds sought the companionship of the other great feelings that are in religion. Shallower art often shrinks from being put beside the greater emotions, and so some of the shams of the Renaissance.

But the deepest religious feeling is always averse to art. No age full of great religious emotion has produced any art at all in any people. The early Christians, the monks of the Thebaid, hated art, as did the Puritans. They felt, I think, a competition. When an emotion is raised to such a height as theirs was, none other can live beside it. Such emotion becomes a flame that burns up all round. It cannot bear any rivalry. It puts aside not only art but love, reverence, fear, every other emotion. Religion is before everything, religion is everything. There are Christ's words refusing to recognise his mother and brethren. It has been common to all forms of exalted religious fervour. No emotion can live with it. Only when it has somewhat died away does art get a chance. Then only if an artistic wave arises can it be allied with religion. But deep religious feeling is not always followed by an artistic wave. There has been no such sequence in most countries. This sequence in Italy was an exception. It was perchance. There has never been an art wave connected with Protestantism, and only very slightly with Buddhism. I have shown in "The

Soul of a People," that art in Burma is only connected professionally with Buddhism. That is to say that wood-carving, one of Burma's two arts, is not religious in sentiment, and is applied to monasteries because they are the only large buildings needed. There is no other demand. To depict the Buddha in any artistic way except that handed down by tradition would be considered profane. Would not the early Christians have considered Raphael's Madonna profane, considering who he was, and what probably his models were? I think so. I doubt if the deepest religious emotions would tolerate a crucifix or any picture of Christ at all. Certainly not of the Almighty. The heat of belief must have cooled down a great deal before such things became possible. So, in fact, it is as history tells us. Religion is a cult of the emotions. Art, as Tolstoi shows, is also a cult of the emotions. Very deep religious feeling leaves no room for any other emotion, it brooks no rival in the hearts of men. A deeply religious age has no art; its religion kills art. What were the feelings of the early Christians towards Greek art? They were those of abhorrence. What those of the Puritans towards any art? They were the same.

But when religious emotions have cooled, and room is left for other feelings, then art may arise. And if it does so, and is a great art, it allies itself with religion, if the religion permits of it. Some forms of faith would never permit it. Which of the emotions of which Puritanism is composed could be expressed in art? Art is almost always the cult of emotions that are beautiful, are happy, are joyous. Puritanism knew nothing of all these. Grand, stern, rigid, black, never graceful or beautiful. Any art that followed Puritanism could but be grotesque and terrible. There would be no Madonnas, but there might be avenging angels; there would be no heaven, but certainly a hell. Indeed, in the literature of the religion we see that this is so.

Religion and art are both cults of the emotions. They may be rivals, they may be allies, in the way that art may depict religious subjects. But great art, like great faith, brooks no rival. And therefore great artists are not necessarily religious. They may have scant emotion to spare outside their art.

This, I think, is the key to the relation between religion and art. It is impossible to treat such a great subject adequately in a chapter. Most of my chapters should, indeed, have been volumes. But the key once provided the rest follows.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHAT IS EVIDENCE?

If you go to any believer in any religion—in any of the greater religions, I mean—and ask him why he believes in his religion, he has always one answer: "Because it is true." And if you continue and say to him, "How do you know it is true?" he will reply, "Because there is full evidence to prove it." He imagines that he is guided by his reason, that it is his logical faculty that is satisfied, and his religion can be proved irrefragably. And yet it is strange that if any religion is based on ascertained fact, if any religion is demonstrably true, no one can be brought to see this truth, to accept this proof, except believers who do not require it. The Jew cannot be brought to admit the truth of Christianity, let the Christian argue ever so wisely; nor will the Christian accept Mahommedanism or Buddhism as containing any truth at all, no matter how the adherents of these faiths may argue.

It is not so with most other matters. If a problem in chemistry or physics be true at all it is altogether true for every one. Nationality makes no difference to your acknowledging the law of gravity, the science of the stars, the dynamics of steam, or the secrets of metallurgy. If an Englishman makes a discovery a Frenchman is able to follow the argument. The Japanese are not Christians, but that does not in any way prevent them assimilating modern knowledge. Twice two are four all over the world, except in matters of religion.

This is a somewhat remarkable phenomenon. What is the reason of it?

I can remember not very long ago walking in a garden with a man and talking intermittently on religious topics. He was a man of great education, of wide knowledge of the world, a man of no narrow sympathies or thoughts. And as we went we came to a bed of roses in full bloom; there were red and white and deep yellow roses in clusters of great beauty, filling the air with their perfume. "To see a sight like that," he said, "proves to me that there is a God."

Proves! There was the *proof*.

I did not ask him how such roses would be proof of a God. I did not say that if beauty was proof of a God, ugliness would be proof of a Devil, for I know there is no reasoning in matters like that. The sight and scent awoke in his heart that echo that is called God. Not only God, nor was it any God, nor any Gods that the echo answered to. It was *his* God, it was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that came to him. He saw the roses, and their beauty brought to his

mind the idea of God. That was enough for him. He had, as so many have, an absolute instinctive understanding of God, as clear to him as if he saw Him at midday—unreasoning because *known*.

"And for others," he said, "is there not ample evidence? How do you account for the world unless God made it? Have we not in the Scripture a full account of how it was made out of chaos? And has not He manifested Himself in His prophets? The truth is proved over and over again, by the prophecies and fulfilment, by the birth and death of Christ, by the miracles of Christ, by endless matters. It is so clear." And so it is to him and those like him who have in themselves the idea of God. They *know*. It seems humorous to remember that scientific men have thought they traced this to a savage's speculations on dreams. The speculation of a savage, forsooth, and this certainty of feeling. The Theist says: "How can you answer the questions of who made the world other than by God?" It is a question that rises spontaneously. Do you remember Napoleon the Great and the idealogues on the voyage to Egypt? They were ridiculing the idea of a Creator. And to them the Emperor, pointing to the stars above him, replied, "It is all very well, gentlemen, but who made all those?" But the Non-Theist replies that it would never occur to him to put such a question. To ask "Who made the world?" is to beg the whole question. That question which is always rising in your mind never does in ours. We would ask how and from what has the world evolved, and under what cause? "Your evidence is good only to you." The Hindu has perhaps the keenest mind in religious matters the world knows; does he accept it? Do the Buddhists accept it? Do keen thinkers in Europe accept any of this evidence? It is not so. If you have the instinct of God, then is evidence unnecessary; and if you have not, of what use is the evidence brought forward? Was anyone ever converted by reasoning? I am sure no one ever was. Religions are not proved, they are not matters of logic; they are either above logic or beneath it. To a man who *believes*, anything is proof. He will reason about religion in a way he would never do about other matters. He will offer as evidence, as absolute proof, what he who does not believe cannot accept as evidence at all. The religions are always the same. The believers *know* them to be true, and they cannot understand why others also do not know it. Their truths seem to them absolutely clear, capable of the clearest proof. And as to this evidence, this proof, there is always plenty of it. Any faith can if pushed bring evidence on some points that not even unbelievers can disprove, that is clearly not intentionally false, that if the matter were a mundane concern would probably be accepted. It is so, I think, in all religions, but here is a case from Buddhism.

In my book upon the religion of the Burmese I have given a chapter to the belief of the people in reincarnation, a belief that is to them not a belief but a knowledge. And I have given there a few of these strange stories of remembrance of previous lives so common among them. For almost all children will tell you that they can remember their former lives.

There is a story there of a child who remembered nothing until one day he saw used as a curtain a man's loin-cloth, that of a man who had died and whose clothes had, as is the custom, been made into screens. And the sight of that pattern awoke in him suddenly the knowledge that he had lived before, and that in that former life he had worn that very cloth. His former life was "proved" to him, and in consequence the fact that all men had former lives. There was proof.

When I was writing "The Soul of a People" I went a great deal into this subject of the former life, and I collected a great deal of evidence about it. I not only saw a number of people who said they could recollect these lives, but I came across a quantity of facts difficult of explanation on any other hypothesis. The evidence was honestly given, I know. But did I believe this former life, or has any European ever been convinced by that evidence? I never heard of one. Why? Because we have not the instinct. The Burman has.

They have the idea as an instinct, just as my friend held the idea of God as an instinct, and there were certain matters that awakened these instincts. They needed no more; the facts were proved to them and to those of like thought to them. But proof. What is proof? Proof, they will tell you, is a matter of evidence, it is a matter of cold logic, it arises from facts.

If that is so, why does not everyone believe in ghosts? Was there ever a subject on which there was more evidence than in the existence of ghosts? We find the belief as far back as we can go—the witch of Endor, for instance. We find the belief to-day. Not a year passes but numerous people assert that they have seen ghosts. Their evidence is honestly given; no one doubts that. The mass of evidence is overwhelming. The fact that certain people do not see them in no way invalidates the direct evidence. Yet the belief in ghosts is a joke, and a mark, we say, of feeble-minded folk.

I have myself lived in the midst of ghosts. One of my houses in Burma was full of them. Every Burman who came in saw them. Not even my servants dared go upstairs after dark without me. My servants are honest, truth-telling boys, and I would believe them in a matter of theft or murder without hesitation. I would certainly hang a man if the evidence of his being a murderer was as clear as

the evidence that my bedroom contained a ghost. No absolutely impartial lawyer, judging the evidence of former life and of the existence of ghosts as a pure matter of law, but would admit that they were conclusively proved. The Burmans firmly believe both, considering them not only proved but beyond proof. No European believes in the former life, and with regard to ghosts the belief is relegated to those whom we stigmatise as the weak-minded and imaginative.

Is the explanation difficult? It does not seem to me so. For it is simply this. To believe and accept any matter it is not sufficient that there be enough evidence, the subject itself must appeal to you, must ring true, must be good to be believed. But with ghosts to most of us it is the reverse. That our friends and those we love should after death behave as ghosts behave, should be silly, unreasonable, drivelling in their ways, imbecile in their performances, should in fact act as if the next world was a ghostly lunatic asylum, is not attractive but the reverse. For a murdered man's spirit to go fooling about scaring innocent people into fits, and unable to say right out that he wants his body buried, strikes the ordinary man as sheer idiocy. And therefore men laugh and jeer. People who see ghosts may believe them; no one else will do so. Because they are not worthy of belief. If these be indeed ghosts, and they act as ghost-seers say, it is a deplorable, a most deplorable thing. And if it is a choice of imbecilities, we would prefer to believe in the lunacy of ghost-seers rather than in that of the dead, our dead.

But it is not only in matters relating to religion as the idea of God, or to the supernatural as in ghosts, that we reject evidence. We can do so also in matters that have no connection with each. For why do we refuse to accept the sea serpent? Numbers of absolutely reliable men declare they have seen it. And yet we laugh, or at best we say, "They were mistaken, it was a trail of seaweed."

All men who have lived to a certain age have learnt that there are certain facts, certain experiences not at all connected with the supernatural, which they dare not tell of for fear of being put down as inventors. They are curious coincidences, narrow escapes, shooting adventures, and so on. They have happened to us all. Who has not heard the tale of the general at a dinner party who related some such incident that had occurred to himself, and was surprised to see amusement and disbelief depicted on the faces of all around him. "You do not believe me," he said stiffly, "but my friend opposite was with me at the time and saw it too." But the friend refused with a laugh to bear witness, and the conversation changed. "General," explained the friend

subsequently to his irate companion, "I know, of course, all you said was true. But what would you have? If fifty men swore to it no one would believe them. They would only have put me down as a liar too."

Just as the old woman was ready to accept her travelled son's yarns of rivers of milk and islands of cheese; but when he deviated into the truth she stopped. "Na, Na!" she said, "that the anchor fetched up one of Pharaoh's chariot wheels out of the Red Sea, I can believe; but that fish fly! Na, Na! dinna come any o' your lies over yer mithers."

They are old stories, but they illustrate my point. On some matters we are ready to believe at once, on others no amount of evidence will change our opinions.

Indeed, we are too apt to assume that reason is our great guide in life. To think before you act may be wise—sometimes. But if in matters of emergency you had to stop and think first, you would not succeed very well. The great men of action are those who act first and think afterwards, and sometimes they even do the latter badly. There is the story of a man who was going abroad to be a Chief Justice, and who was addressed by the Lord Chancellor in this way: "My friend, be careful where you are going. Your judgments will be nearly always right, but beware of giving your reasons, for they will almost invariably be wrong." There are many such men.

What, then, is religious proof? If it is not founded on evidence that all can accept, on what is it founded? Why do men believe their own religion and accept the evidence of it as irrefragable, while scornfully rejecting that in favour of other religions?

The answer, I think, is this.

If you will take two violins and will tune them together, and if while someone plays ever so lightly on one you will bend your ear to the other, you will hear faintly but clearly repeated from its strings the melody of the first. For they are in harmony. But if they are not, then there will be no echo, play you never so loudly.

And so it is in matters of religion. If you are in harmony with any thought there will come the echo in your heart's strings, and you will know that it is true. But if you are not in harmony, then no matter how loudly the evidence be sounded there will be no echo there. All these ideas on which religions are built are instincts. They are of the heart, never of the head. Reason affects them not at all. These instincts are not the same with all. They vary, and so the religions

that are based on them vary. They have nothing to do with reason, and therefore those of one religion cannot understand another. And they are not fixed; for the belief in the Unity of God only evolved, after many thousands of years, quite recently, and the belief in ghosts, universal among earlier people and now among the half-civilized, lingers with us only as a subject for amusement. There is no "evidence" in religion; you either believe or you don't.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE AFTER DEATH

It is two years and a half ago now that I passed through Westminster Hall, one of a great multitude. They went in double file, thickly packed between barriers of rails on either side the hall, and between where everyone looked there lay—what? A plain oak coffin on a table.

Within this coffin there lay the body of Mr. Gladstone, he who in his day had filled the public eye in England more than any other man. His body lay there in state, and the people came to see.

Emerging into the street beyond and seeing the ceaseless stream of people that flowed past, I wondered to myself. These people are Christians. If you ask them where Mr. Gladstone is now, they will, if they reply hurriedly, answer, "He is dead and in there"; but if they pause to reflect they will say, "He is in heaven. His soul is with God."

If, then, his soul, if *he* be with God, what are you come to see? Shortly there will be a funeral, and what will it be called? The funeral of Mr. Gladstone. But Mr. Gladstone is in heaven, not here. Surely this is strange.

"If there is anything I can do for you be sure you tell me, for your husband was my great friend." So wrote the man. And to him came her reply: "Sometimes when you are near go and see his grave where he sleeps in that far land, and put a flower upon it for your remembrance and for mine."

But if he, too, be in heaven and not there at all? If it be, as the Burmans say, but the empty shell that lies there? Why should we visit graves if the soul be indeed separate from the body? If he be far away in happiness, why go to his grave? To remember but the corruption that lies beneath?

Men use words and phrases remembering what they ought to believe. For very few are sincere and know what really they do believe. You cannot tell from their professions, only from their unconscious words and their acts.

What do these unconscious words, these acts, tell us of the belief about the soul and body? That they are separable and separate? No, but that they are inseparable. No one in the West, I am sure—no one anywhere, I think—has

ever been able to conceive of the soul as apart from the body. We cannot do so. Try, try honestly, and remember your dead friends. What is it you recall and long for and miss so bitterly? It was his voice that awoke echoes in you, it was the clasp of his hand in yours, it was his eyes looking back to you the love you felt for him. It was his footfall on the stair, his laugh, the knowledge of his presence. And are not these all of the body?

Men talk glibly of the soul as apart from the body. What do they mean? Nothing but words, for the soul without a body is an incomprehensible thing, certainly to us.

And it is always the same body, not another. It is the old hand, the face, that we want. Not the soul, if it could be possible, looking at us out of other eyes. No; we want him we lost, and not another. It is the cry of our hearts.

And therefore, "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Have you wondered how that came into the creed? It came into religion as came all that we believe in, never out of theory but out of instinct.

What is your feeling towards the dead? Is it envy that they have reached everlasting happiness? Is it gladness to reflect that they are no longer with us? Do we think of them as superior to us? Alas, no. The great and overpowering sentiment we have for them is pity. The tears come to our eyes for them, because they are dead. They have left behind them light and life and gone into the everlasting forgetfulness. "The night hath come when no man can work." That is our real instinct towards the dead. "Poor fellow." And you will hear people say, with tardy remembrance of their creeds, "But for his sake we ought to rejoice, because he is at peace."

We ought? But *do* we? Surely we never do. We are sorry for the dead. All the compassion that is in us goes out to them, because they are dead.

The Catholic Church has prayers for the dead. There was never a Church yet that knew the hearts of men as that Church of Rome. Prayers for the dead. Masses for the dead.

Our Protestant theories forbid such. But tell me, is there a woman who has lost those she loves to whom such prayers would not come home? How narrow sometimes are the Reformed Creeds in their refusal to help the sorrow of their people.

"In the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection." What is to arise? The disembodied soul? But you say it is already with God. What is to arise? It is the

body. It is more. It is he who is dead—who sleeps; he whom we have buried there. Whatever our creeds may say, we do not, we cannot ever understand the soul without the body. Not *a* body, but *the* body. We believe not in the life of a soul previous to the body. They are born together, and they die together. If they live hereafter it must be together. For they are one.

Never be deceived by theories or professions. No one in the West has ever understood the soul without the body, no one can do so. The conception is wanting. We play with the theory in words as we do with the fourth dimension. But who ever realised either?

But with the Oriental it is different. He believes in the migration of souls. They pass from body to body. He can realise this—somehow, I know not—but he can. Those who have read my "Soul of a People" will remember that they not only believe it but *know* it. They are sure of it because it has happened to each one, and he can remember his former lives. This comes not from Buddhism, because Buddhist theory denies the existence of soul at all, nor from Brahminism. It is the Oriental's instinct. He does not, I think, ever realise a soul apart from any body, but he can and does realise a soul exhibited first in one body then in another, as a lamp shining through different globes.

Therefore, when a Christian tells him of the resurrection of the body he cannot understand. "Which body," he asks, "for I have had so many?" Neither can he understand a Christian heaven of bodies risen from the earth. His heaven is immaterial. It is the Great Peace, where life has passed away. That he can understand. For neither can he conceive a life of the soul without some body. When perfection is reached and the last weary body done with, then life, too, is gone—life and all passion, all love, all happiness, all fear, all the emotions that are life. They are gone, and there is left only the Great Peace.

Our heaven grows out of our instincts as his does out of his instincts. Our dead without their bodies would not be those we love, and hence our heaven, where we shall recognise each other and love them as we did. I did not understand heaven when I read books, but out of men have I learned what I wished to know. Reason alone can tell you nothing, but sympathy will tell you all things.

It would be interesting, it is very interesting, to look back into our past histories and see these instincts grow and wane, to mark how they have influenced not only our religious theories, but our lives; to trace in other people like or opposed instincts. The Mahommedans refuse amputation because they will not appear maimed in the next world. For they, too, cannot distinguish

soul from one body. The Jews had no idea of soul at all as existing after death, whether with or without a body. "As a man dies so will he be, all through the ages of eternity." They learned the idea of immortality from Egypt, but it never took root because they had no instinctive feeling of soul. Their witches were foreigners. "You shall not suffer a witch to live." The incantation of ghosts was utterly forbidden by them as a foreign wickedness. It has so been forbidden by *all* religions. Yet there are people who think religions arise from ideas of ghosts.

The African negroes have no idea of life after death, as witness the story of Dr. Livingstone and the negro king about the seed. It is a very curious history this of the longing for immortality, the belief in a life beyond the grave.

But I am not now concerned with the past only with the present. The history of instincts is never the explanation of them. If we could unravel clearly all the history of the instincts of all peoples as regards the after death, we should be no nearer an explanation of why the instinct exists at all, why it grows or decays, why it takes one form or another. But we might, as so many do, blind ourselves to the fact that instincts exist now quite apart from reason, either now or previously. No reasoning can explain the absolute clinging of the European peoples to the resurrection of the body. No reasoning can possibly explain the Burman's remembrance of previous lives. Reasoning would deny both. Observation and sympathy know that both exist.

And which is true? No one can tell.

"Not one returns to tell us of the Road Which to discover we must travel too."

For some years now there has been a movement in England to introduce cremation as a method of disposing of the dead. There can be no doubt of its sanitary superiority to burial; there can be no doubt that, as far as reason and argument go, cremation should be preferred to the grave. There seems to be absolutely no good reason to bring forward in favour of the latter. And yet cremation makes no way. Men die and they are buried, and if over their tombs we do not now write "Hic jacet," but "In memory of," our ideas have suffered no change.

We cannot bear to burn the bodies of the dead because we cannot disassociate the body from the soul. The body is to rise, and if we burn it, what then? What will there be to rise? Man has but one body and one soul dwelling therein, and if you destroy the body the soul is dead too.

Only people who believe in the transmigration of souls burn their dead—the Hindus and, in Burma, the monks of Buddha. They see no objection to the destruction of the body because the soul is migratory, and has passed into another. What is left after death is but the "empty shell."

Therefore do Hindus and Buddhists cremate, whereas Christians and Mahommedans bury. Nor does rejection of creed alter this instinct. Intellectual France boasts of its freedom from religion. But is it free? Has it outgrown the instincts that are the root of religion? One certainly it has not yet done, for secularists are buried just as believers are, usually with the same rites. And even if the funeral be secular, the body is buried, not burnt. Why do they shrink from cremation if reason is to be the only guide? The creed is outworn but the roots of faith are never dead.

CHAPTER XXIX

OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

Thus are the heavens of all religions explanations to materialise, as it were, the vague instincts of men's hearts. The Mahomedan's absolutely material garden of the houris, the Christian semi-material heaven, the Buddhist absolutely immaterial Nirvana, are all outcomes of the people's capability of separating soul from body. These heavens are just as the dogmas of Godhead, or Law, or Atonement, but the theory to explain the fact, which is in this case the desire for immortality. And in exactly the same way as the theories of other matters are unsatisfying, so are these theories of heaven. The desire for immortality is there, one of the strongest of all the emotions; but the ideal which the theologian offers to the believer to fulfil his desire has no attraction. The more it is defined the less anyone wants it. Heaven we would all go to, but not *that* heaven. The instinct is true, but the theory which would materialise the aim of that desire is false. No heaven that has been pictured to any believer is desirable.

It is strange to see in this but another instance of the invincible pessimism of the human reason. No matter to what it turns itself it is always the same.

I have read all the Utopias, from Plato's New Republic to Bellamy's, from the Anarchist's Paradise to that of the Socialists, and I confess that I have always risen from them with one strong emotion. And that was, the relief and delight that never in my time—never, I am sure, in any time—can any one of them be realised. This world as it exists, as it has existed, may have its drawbacks. There is crime, and misfortune, and unhappiness, more than need be. There are tears far more than enough. But there is sunshine too; and if there be hate there is love, if there is sorrow there is joy. Here there is life. But in these drab Utopias of the reason, what is there? That which is the worst of all to bear—monotony tending towards death.

No one, I think, can study philosophy, that grey web of the reason, without being oppressed by its utter pessimism. No matter what the philosophy be, whether it be professedly a pessimism as Schopenhauer's or not, there is no difference. It is all dull, weary barrenness, with none of the light of hope there. Hope and beauty and happiness are strangers to that twilight country. They could not live there. Like all that is beautiful and worth having, they require light and shadow, sunshine and the dark.

And the lives of philosophers, what do they gain from the reason alone? Is there anyone who, after reading the life of any philosopher, would not say, "God help me from such." What did his unaided reason give him? Pessimism, and pessimism, and again pessimism. No matter who your philosopher is—Horace or Omar Khayyam, or Carlyle or Nietzsche:—where is the difference? See how Huxley even could not stifle his desire for immortality that no reason could justify. What has reason to offer me? Only this, resignation to the worst in the world, and of it knows nothing.

To which it would be replied:

And religion, what has that to offer either here or in the next world? For in this world they declare—at least Christianity and Buddhism both declare—that nothing is worth having. It is all vanity and vexation, fraud and error and wickedness, to be quickly done with. The philosopher has Utopias of sorts here, but these two religions have no Utopia, no happiness at all here to offer. All this life is denounced as a continued misery.

And you say that neither heaven nor Nirvana appeal to men, that men shrink from them. If philosophy be pessimism, what then is religion? Do you consider the Christian theory of the fall of man, the sacrifice of God to God, the declaration that the vast majority of men are doomed to everlasting fire, a cheerful theory?

Do you consider the Buddhist theory that life is itself an evil to be done with, that no consciousness survives death, but only the effects of a man's actions, an optimism?

Philosophies may not be very cheerful, but what are religions? Whatever charge you may bring against philosophy, it can be ten times repeated of any religion. Compared with any religious theory, even Schopenhauer's philosophy is a glaring optimism.

To which I would answer, No!

I do not agree, because what you call religion I call only a reasoning about religion. The dogmas and creeds are not religion. They are summaries of the reasons that men give to explain those facts of life which are religion, just as philosophies are summaries of the theories men make to explain other facts of life. Both creeds and philosophies come from the reason. They are speculations, not facts. They are pessimistic twins of the brain. Religion is a different matter. It is a series of facts. What facts these are I have tried to shew chapter by chapter, and they are summarised in Chapter XXX., at the end. I

will not anticipate it. What I am concerned with is whether religion is pessimistic or not. Never mind the dogmas and creeds; come to facts. When you read books written by men who are really religious, what is their tone? You may never agree with what is urged in them, but can you assert that they are pessimistic? It seems to me, on the contrary, that they are the reverse.

And when you know people who are religious—not fanatics, but those men and women of sober minds who take their faith honestly and sincerely as a part of life, but not the whole—are they pessimistic? I am not speaking of any religion in particular, but of all religions. Can you see religious people, and live with them and hear them talk, and watch their lives, and not recognise that religion is to them a strength, a comfort, and resource against the evils of life? Never mind what the creeds say; watch what the believers *do*. Is life to them a sorry march to be made with downcast eyes of thought, to be trod with weary steps, to be regarded with contempt? The men who act thus are philosophers, not religious people.

To those who are really religious, life is beautiful. It is a triumphal march made to music that fills their ears, that brightens their eyes, that lightens their steps, now quicker, now slower, now sad, now joyous, always beautiful. Who are the happy men and women in this world? Let no one ever doubt—no one who has observed the world will ever doubt; they are the people who have religion. No matter what the religion is, no matter what the theory or dogma or creed, no matter the colour or climate, there is no difference. If you doubt, go and see. Never sit in your closet and study creeds and declare "No man can be happy who believes such," but go and see whether they are happy. Go to all the peoples of the world, and having put aside your prejudices, having tuned your heart-strings to theirs, listen and you will know. Watch and you will see. What is the keynote of the life of him who truly believes? Is it disgust, weariness, pessimism? Is it not courage and a strange triumph that marks his way in life? And who are those who go through life sadly, who find it terrible in its monotony, who have lost all savour for beauty, whom the sunlight cannot gladden, who neither love nor hate, neither fear nor rejoice, neither laugh nor cry? I will tell you who they are. There are two kinds, who think they are different, but are the same.

First, there are those who call themselves philosophers, men who have abandoned all religion and accepted "barren reason." For reason cannot make you love or hate, or laugh or weep. There is no beauty there, no light and shadow, no colour, only the greyness of unliving outline.

And there are those who mistake what religion is. They think it consists of creeds. They do not know it consists of emotions. And so they take their creeds to their hearts, and see what they make of them! Or they, abandoning their creeds, search all through the world to find new creeds. They speculate on Nirvana, on Brahm, on the doctrine of Averroes. They are for ever digging out some abstruse problem from the sacred books of the world to make themselves miserable over.

They, too, are the victims of a barren reason.

But religion is not reason; it is fact. It is beyond and before all reason. Religion is not what you say, but what you feel; not what you think, but what you know. Religions are the great optimisms. Each is to its believers "the light of the world."

I cannot think how this has not been evident long ago to everyone. Have men no eyes, no ears, no understanding? Yes, perhaps they have all these things. But what they have not got is sympathy, and without this of what use are the rest? For what men see and hear in any matter are the things they are in sympathy with. If your heart is out of tune, there is never any echo of the melody that is about you.

To this chapter on optimism and pessimism I would add a small postscript. I would fain have made it a chapter or many chapters, but I have not the room. It is the strong connection between religion and optimism as evinced in a high birth rate, between irreligion and pessimism as shown in a falling off in the population. For that is the great complaint in France to-day. It is noticeable especially amongst the cultured classes, who are absolutely irreligious, and who are absolutely pessimistic: the birth rate is falling so rapidly that France ceases to increase. Only in Normandy, where religion yet retains power, does the birth rate keep up. This is not a solitary instance. All history repeats it. Do you remember Matthew Arnold's lines:

"On that hard Pagan world disgust and secret loathing fell, Deep weariness, and sated lust made human life a hell. In his cool hall with haggard eyes the Roman noble lay; He drove abroad in furious guise along the Appian way. * * * * * No easier nor no quicker passed the impracticable hours."

The Roman Empire fell because there were no more Romans left. They had died out and left no children to succeed them. Where is the highest birth rate to-day in Europe? It is in "priest-ridden" Russia, where the people are without

doubt more deeply imbued with their faith than any other people of the West now. In Burma, where religion has such a hold on the people as the world has never known, the birth rate is very high indeed. The Turks in the heyday of their religious enthusiasm increased very rapidly, but now and for long they seem to be stationary, and in the Boers we see again a high birth rate and very strong religious convictions. Our birth rate, on the contrary, is falling with the growing irreligion in certain classes. Not that I wish for a moment to infer that religious feeling causes more children to be born. I have no belief whatever in the usual theories that the fall in birth rates is due to preventive measures, which religion disallows, or to debauchery, which religion controls. The supporters of such a theory admit that they cannot prove it. And there is very much against such an idea. When religion in the early ages of Christianity discouraged marriage and did all in its power to encourage celibacy, it never succeeded in the end. Men and women might go into convents for certain reasons—not, I think, mainly religious—the birth of children from those outside did not alter. And during the priestly rule in Paraguay population disappeared so rapidly the monks were alarmed, and took stringent and strange methods to stop the decay, but in vain—the people had lost heart.

Why are the Maories and many other people disappearing? From disease? That is not a reason. It is a fact that with a virile people a plague or famine is followed by an increase in the birth rate. This is proved in India. The Maories, too, have lost heart. They may have acquired Christianity, but that is no help. No; the adoption of a religion does not affect the question.

But still they go together, and the answer seems to be here: A nation that is virile, that is full of vitality, finds an outlet for that vitality in children, an expression of it in religion. A virile people is optimistic always. Pessimism, whether in nations or individuals, comes from a deficiency of nerve strength. But why peoples lose their vitality no one yet knows. There is a tribe on the Shan frontier of Burma that twenty years ago was a people of active hunters, always gun or bow in hand, scouring the forests for game, fearing nothing. And now they have lost their energy. Their nerve is gone. They are listless and depressed. For a gun they substitute a hoe and do a little feeble gardening. Their children are few, and shortly the tribe will be dead.

No one knows why.

Religion, deep and true, and strong faith is possible only to strong natures; it is the outcome of strong feeling. It is a companion always to that virility that is optimism, that does not fear the future; it knows not what may come, but faces

the future with confidence. It takes each day as it comes. Such are the nations that replenish the earth. The world is the heritage of the godly. The Old Testament is full of that truth, and it is no less true now than then. But one does not proceed from the other. They both come from that fount whence springs the life of the world.

CHAPTER XXX

WAS IT REASON?

Reason and religion have but little in common. They come from different sources, they pursue different ways. They are never related in this order as cause and effect. No one was ever reasoned into a religion, no one was ever reasoned out of his religion. Faith exists or does not exist in man without any reference to his reason. Reason may follow faith, does follow faith; never does faith follow reason.

Is it indeed always so? Then how about the boy told of in the earlier chapters? He was born into a religion, he was educated in it, and he rejected it. Why? He himself tells why he did so, because his reason drove him away from it. His reason, looking at the world as he found it, could not accept the way of life inculcated by his faith. He found it impossible, unworkable, and therefore not beautiful. His reason told him it was impracticable, not in accordance with facts, and therefore he would have none of it.

His reason, too, following Darwin, told him that the earlier part of the Old Testament could not be correct. Man has risen, not fallen; he had his origin not six thousand years ago, but perhaps sixty thousand, perhaps much more. In many ways his reason fought with his religion, and it prevailed. Was no one ever reasoned out of a faith? Surely this boy was, surely many boys and men equally with him have so been deprived by reason of their faiths. Reason is the enemy of faith. Is not this so?

When that boy was fighting his battle long ago I am sure he thought so. Certainly he said so to himself. Was he insincere or mistaken? Surely he should know best of what was going on in his mind. He tells how reason drove him from his faith. Was he not right?

I think that he had not then learned to look at the roots of things. If there is one truth which grows upon us in life as we go on, as we watch men and what they say and do, as we watch ourselves and what we say or do, it is this, that men do not do things nor feel things because they think them, but the reverse. Men think things because they want to do them; their reason follows their instincts. No man seeks to disprove what he likes and feels to be good, no man seeks to prove what he instinctively dislikes and rejects. You cannot argue yourself into a liking or a distaste. If, then, you find a man seeking reasons to disprove his faith, it is because his faith irks him, because he would fain shake it off and be done with it. If he were happy in it and it suited him, reasons

disproving any part of it would pass by him harmlessly. You cannot shake a man's conviction of what he *feels* to be useful and beautiful.

To the man, therefore, looking back it seems that all the boy's thoughts, his arguments, his reasoning, arise from this, that his religion did not suit. It galled him somewhere, perhaps in many places; it was a burden, and instead of being beautiful it was the reverse. So to rid himself of what he could not abide he sought refuge in his reason. And his reason going, as reason has always done, to the theories of faith instead of to the facts, he found that the creeds and beliefs had no foundation in fact, were but formulæ thrown upon an ignorant world, and should be rejected. So he left them. But it was never his reason that made him do so; reason came in but as the judge, openly justifying what had happened silently and unnoticed in his heart.

What was it, then, that drove the boy from his faith? What were his instincts that remained unfulfilled, roused against his religion till they drove him to find reasons for leaving it? What was it that galled him till he revolted? There were, I think, mainly two things—the rise of an intense revolt to the continual exercise of authority, and the greater effect of the code of Christ upon him.

When a boy is frequently ill, when his constitution is delicate and easily upset, it is necessary that he should be very careful what he does, how he exposes himself to damp or cold, how he over-exerts himself at work or play. But for a boy to exercise this care is very difficult. He feels fairly well, and the other boys are going skating or boating, why should he not do so? The day is not very cold, and the other boys do not wear comforters; they laugh at him if he does so. He will not admit that he cannot do what other boys can do. So he has to be looked after and guarded, and cared for and watched, and made to do things he dislikes. If, too, the supervision becomes unnecessarily close, if there is a tendency to interfere not only where he is wrong and wants correction, but in many details where it is not required, is it not natural? If in time it so comes, or the boy thinks it so comes, that he cannot move hand or foot, cannot go in or out, cannot think or read, or even rest, without perpetual correction, is it so very unnatural? Mistake? Who shall say where the mistake lay? Who shall say if there was any mistake at all, unless great affection be a mistake? Maybe it was the inevitable result of circumstances. But still there it was. And though a small boy may accept such rule without question, yet as he grows up it irks him more and more, until at last it may become a daily and hourly irritation growing steadily more unbearable, more exasperating, month by month.

There is, too, in many people—women, I think, mostly, and with women chiefly in reverse proportion to their knowledge—a tendency to give advice. Few are without the desire, maybe a kindly desire in its inception, to advise others. The world at large does not take to it kindly, so the advice has to be bottled up, to be expended in its fulness where it can. This boy got it all. He received advice from innumerable people, enough to have furnished a universe. Most of it he felt to be worthless, almost all of it he was sure was impertinence. Yet he could not resent it, because he was under authority.

And now perhaps you may see how there grew up slowly in him an utter loathing of authority, a hatred to being checked and supervised, and advised and lectured for ever. Sometimes he would revolt and say, "Can't you leave me alone?" and this was insubordination. He would have given all he could, everything, for liberty. "I would sooner," he said to himself, "catch cold and die than be worried daily not to forget my comforter. I would sooner grow up a fool and earn my living by breaking stones in the road than be supervised into my lessons like this, that I may be learned. But when I am grown up it must cease. It SHALL cease. Then I shall be free to go my own way, and do wrong and suffer for it."

And now imagine a boy in a state of mind like this told that he would *never* be free. A boy's authorities might pass, school and home might be left behind, but God would remain. Masters can be avoided and deceived, God cannot be deceived. His eye is always on you. He sees everything you do. His hand is always guiding and directing and checking you. It seems to him that the exasperation was never to end, was to last even into the next life, if this be true. Then you may understand how his instincts drove his reason to find good and sufficient cause for rejecting this God and for seeking freedom. "Give me freedom," he cried, "freedom even to do wrong and suffer for it. I will not complain. Only let me alone. Do not interfere. I will not have a God who interferes." His reason helped him and showed him the emptiness of the creeds, and he went on his way without.

Then there was the Sermon on the Mount. To most boys this does not appeal at all. They hear it read. It is to them part of "religion"—that is, for consumption on Sunday. It is not of any consequence, only words. They do not think twice of it. But with this boy it was different. The Sermon on the Mount did appeal to him. He thought it very beautiful as a little boy. It seemed worth remembering. He did remember it. It seemed worth acting up to as much as possible.

But as he grew older and learned life as it is, he became able to see that it was not applicable at all to life, that life was much rougher and harder than he supposed, and required very different rules. He slowly grew disillusioned. And with the disillusion came bitterness. If you have never believed in any certain thing, never taken it to yourself, you can go on theoretically admiring it, and, if that becomes impossible, you can eventually let it go without trouble. But if you have believed, if you have strongly believed and desired to accept, when you find that your belief and acceptance have been misplaced, there comes a revulsion. If it cannot be all, it must be none. Love turns to hate, never to indifference. Belief changes to absolute rejection, never to toleration.

This code of Christ could not be absolutely followed in daily life, therefore it was absolutely untrue. And being untrue he could not bear to hear it preached every Sunday as a teaching from on High. He shrank from it unconsciously as from a theory he had loved and which had deceived him: the love remained, the confidence was gone. He was betrayed. But he never reasoned about it till he had rejected it. Then he sought to justify by reason what he had already accomplished in fact.

So do men think things, because they have done or wish to do them; never the reverse.

It seems trivial after the above to recall a minor point wherein instinct has had much to say.

I can remember as a boy how I disliked to hear the church bells ringing for service. I hated them. They made me shudder. And I used to think to myself that I must be naturally wicked and irreligious to be so affected. "They ring for God's service and you shudder. You must be indeed the wicked boy they say." So I thought many a time.

And now I know that I disliked the bells then, as I dislike them now, because of all sounds that of bells is to me the harshest and noisiest. I dislike not only church bells, but all bells. I have no prejudice against dinner, yet I would willingly wait in some houses half an hour, or even have it half-cold if it could be announced without a bell. And church bells! Very few are in tune, none are sweet toned, all are rung far louder and faster than they should be, so that their notes, which might be bearable, become a wrangling abomination.

But I love the monastery gongs in Burma because they are delicately tuned, and they are rung softly and with such proper intervals between each note that

there is no jar, none of that hideous conflict of the dying vibrations with the new note that is maddening to the brain.

It is trivial, maybe, but it is real. And out of such trivialities is life made. Out of such are our recollections built. I shall never remember the call to Christian prayer without a shudder of dislike, a putting of my fingers in my ears. I shall never recall the Buddhist gongs ringing down the evening air across the misty river without there rising within me some of that beauty, that gentleness and harmony, to which they seem such a perfect echo.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHAT RELIGION IS

What, then, is religion? Do any of the definitions given at the beginning explain what it really is? Is it a theory of the universe, is it morality, is it future rewards and punishments? It may be all or none of these things. Is it creeds, dogmas, speculations, or theories of any kind? It is none of these things.

Religion is the recognition and cultivation of our highest emotions, of our more beautiful instincts, of all that we know is best in us.

What these emotions may be varies in each people according to their natures, their circumstances, their stage of civilisation. In the Latins some emotions predominate, in the Teutons others, in the Hindus yet others. Each race of men has its own garden wherein grow flowers that are not found elsewhere, and of these they make their faiths.

Some of these emotions I have tried to show in this book. For the Latins they are the emotions of fatherhood, of prayer, and confession, of sacrifice and atonement, of motherhood, of art and beauty, of obedience, of rule, of mercy, of forgiveness, of the resurrection of the body, of prayer for the dead, of strong self-denial and asceticism, of many others; but those, I think, are the chief.

For the Protestant, the more rigid Protestant, it is the cultivation of the emotions of force, grandeur, prayer, justice, conduct, punishment of evil, austerity, and also many others.

With the Burman Buddhist it is the recognition and cultivation of the beauties of freedom, peace, calm, rigid self-denial, charity in thought and deed to all the world, pity to animals, the existence of the soul before and after death, with no reference to any particular body. The Mahommedan has for one of his principal emotions courage in battle, and the Hindu cleanliness of body and purity of race.

These things are religions. Out of his strongest feelings has man built up his faiths.

And the creeds are but the theories of the keener intellects of the race to explain, and codify, and organise the cultivation of these feelings.

Creeds are not religions, nor are religions proved by miracle or by prophecy, by evidence, or any reasoning of any kind. The instincts are innate or do not exist

at all. Like all emotions and feelings, they cannot be created or destroyed by reason.

Why does a man fall in love? No one knows. And if he fall in love, can you cure him of it by argument? Would it be any use to say to him? "The girl you love is not beautiful, is not clever; she would be of no use to you, she does not return your love at all. You cannot really love her." He would only laugh and say, "All that may be true, and yet the fact remains unaltered. She is the woman I love. My reason may prevent my marrying her, it cannot prevent my love. And you may be right that this other woman has all the virtues, but I have no love for her." So it is with all the emotions. You either have them or have not. You do not reason about them. Reason is of things we doubt, not of things we know. Therefore are the beliefs of one religion incomprehensible to the believers in another. Nothing is so difficult to understand as an emotion you have not felt. What is perfect beauty to one man is stark ugliness to another. So it is with religion. To understand well the faith you must have in you all the chords that these faiths draw music from, and how many have that?

Religion is of the heart, not of the reason. Theologians of all creeds warn the believer against reason as a snare of the devil. A freethinker must be an Atheist. History is one long conflict between religion and science. But why is this, if they have no concern one with another? Why fight, why not exist together?

Because all men, freethinkers as well as theologians, have failed to see what religion really consists in. They think it is in the theories of creation, of God, of salvation, of heaven and hell. They look one and all to the creeds and dogmas as religion.

And none of these creeds and dogmas will, as a whole, stand criticism. They fall before the thinker into irretrievable ruin, and therefore the freethinker imagines he has destroyed religion. But religion lives on, and he wonders why. He puts it down to the blindness of men. The theologian rejoices because the continued life of religion seems to him the vindication of the creeds. Yet are they both wrong. Men are not fools, nor does religion live by the truth of its creeds. The whole initial idea has been mistaken. The creeds are but theories to explain religion. Scientific men have invented the ether and theories connected with it to explain heat and light and electricity. These theories are good now, and are universally accepted, but they are not proved. Supposing a hundred years hence wider perception and new facts should throw great doubts on whether ether exists at all as supposed, or on the present theories of heat and

electricity? Suppose, too, that the old school scientists are stubborn and refuse to meet these new thoughts? What will the sensible man do? Will he say, "This theory of ether waves is untenable, exploded, foolish, and therefore I will believe it no longer; and as the theory is wrong, so too the phenomena of the theory are all imaginations. There are no such things as heat and light, and I will not warm myself in the sun." Would that be sense? I think reason would reply, "I am sorry the old theories are gone. They were true while they lasted. But now they are dead, and we have not found new ones. Yet if the theory be dead, the facts are still there. The sun still shines, and we have heat and light. These things are true. No man shall frighten me and say, 'If you will not believe our science you shall not warm yourself at our sun. You shall not light your fire or your lamp unless you admit ether waves.' Perhaps a new theory may arise. But anyhow I have the sun yet, and my lamp is not broken. They are facts still."

That is exactly the present position as regards many faiths. The creeds are theories to explain facts. The theories are very old and we have grown out of them. The theologians will not surrender them, clinging to them in the imagination that they really are religion, and that without them religion will fall, conjuring with words to try and support them.

What should reason say in the face of this? "I do not believe in your theories of God and the future state, and the resurrection of the body, and so on, and therefore I won't have anything to do with any religion." Would that be reason? Yes, if you believe the creeds are religion; no, if you believe that religion lies far deeper than creeds. Or to use another simile: the creeds are the grammar of religion, they are to religion what grammar is to speech. Words are the expression of our wants; grammar is the theory formed afterwards. Speech never proceeded from grammar, but the reverse. As speech progresses and changes from unknown causes, grammar must follow. But if not? If grammarians are hide-bound, are we to refuse to talk? In this latter case, if the reason were mine, I think reason would say, "Bother these theologians, their dogmas and creeds, their theories and grammars, what do they matter? The instinct of prayer remains, of confession, of sacrifice. They appeal to me still. They fill my heart with beauty. Shall I refuse to accept the glories of life, shall I refuse to cultivate my soul because some people who claim authority have theories about these things with which I don't agree? Not all the creeds nor theologians in the world shall prevent my making the best of myself. The garden of the soul is no close preserve of theirs."

"Religion is the satisfaction of some of the wants of the souls of men. It is a cult of some of the emotions, never of all. For the emotions are so varied, so contradictory, that all cannot live together. I do not quite know why one people includes one emotion in religion and another rejects it out of religion, while still maintaining its beauty and truth. But no religion includes more than one side of life. There are others. I, too, will cultivate these emotions which I need. But this I will not forget, that life has many sides. Life has many emotions, and all are good, though all may not come into religion. There is ambition, there is love of gaiety, of humour, of laughter, there is courage and pride, the glory of success. To live life whole none must be neglected. They are planted in our hearts for some good purpose. I will not weed them out. My garden shall grow all the flowers it can, and reason shall be the gardener to see that none grow rank and choke the others.

"Whatever things are beautiful, that make the heart to beat and the eye grow dim, whatever I know to be good, that shall I have. 'For that which toucheth the heart is beautiful to the eye.'"

CHAPTER XXXII

THE USE OF RELIGION

But granted, people may say, that religion is what you say, a cult of the emotions, of what use is it? Why should these emotions be cultivated at all? You say that they are beautiful because they are true, and that they are true because they are of use. Of what use are they? Some can be explained perhaps, but not most—not the instinct of God, for instance, nor of Law, nor the instinct of prayer. It seems to me that unless you can prove that they are true, essentially true conceptions, they cannot be beautiful. And this you say you cannot prove. "No one can prove God," you say, and prayer, surely that is against reason, and demonstrably a weakness. Certainly not a good emotion to cultivate. "You say it is beautiful. How can you prove that?"

Travelling on the Continent among those places where there are little colonies of English people who for one reason or another have left their own country, there crops up occasionally a man of peculiar kind, hardly ever to be met elsewhere. He is a man who has left England, we will suppose, for economy's sake, who has settled abroad, perhaps in one place, perhaps roaming from place to place, who has no work, no interest in life. He has drifted away from the current of our national life, he has entered no other, but he exists, he would say, as a student of man and a philosopher on motives.

One such, meeting me one day, turned his conversation upon wars and upon patriotism. The former horrified him, the latter revolted him. "Patriotism," he said, "can you defend such a feeling? Have you any reasoning to support it? Patriotism is a narrowness, a blindness. It is little better than a baseness founded on ignorance. How can it be defended? You say it is beautiful. Prove to me that it is so. I deny it."

To whom, and to men like this, it seems that there is only one answer to be made.

"My friend, the love of your own people and your own country, if it ever existed within you, is long dead or you would never ask such a question. I cannot reason with you on the subject, because it would be like reasoning with a blind man on the beauty of being able to see. He who sees knows; but if a man be

blind, how can it be explained to him? Neither I nor my fellows can talk to you about patriotism, because it is a feeling we have, but of which you are ignorant. It is not a question of reason. But if you would know whether patriotism be beautiful or the ignorant foolishness you suppose, I can show you the road to learn.

"Go back to that England you have forgotten, and in your forgetfulness begun to despise. Go back there on the eve of a great victory, or a great deliverance, such a day as that on which Ladysmith was relieved. And go not into the streets if the loud rejoicings hurt your philosophic ear, but go into the homes of the people. Go to the rich, to the middle class, to the artisan, to the labourer, and mark their glowing faces, their glad eyes, the look of glory, of thanksgiving that our people have been rescued, that our flag has escaped a disaster. Look at the faces of these men and women and children, whose hearts are full at the news. And then ask them, 'Is patriotism a mean and debasing passion?' They know. Or do better even than this, go yourself to Africa, to India, to the thousand league frontiers where men die daily for their flag, for their own honour, and that of their country. Take rifle yourself and beat back those who would destroy our peace, take up your pen and give some of your life to the people whom we rule. You will find it a better life, perhaps, than at a foreign spa. Give yourself freely for your country and those your country gives in charge to you. I think you will learn, maybe, what patriotism means. But argument, reason? I think you exaggerate the power of reason. It can argue only from facts. It is necessary to know the facts first. And you are ignorant of your facts, because you have never felt them. Only those who feel them know. Go and give your life, and before it be gone you will have learnt what neither I nor any man who ever lived can *tell* you. You will have learnt the *realities* of life.

"For you and those like you mistake the power of reason, you have forgotten its limitations. Reason is but the power of arranging facts, it cannot provide them. Your eyes will give you the facts they can see, your ears what they can hear, your sympathies will give you the realities of men's lives. If you have no emotions, no sympathies, how can you get on? You are like mariners afloat upon the sea vainly waggling your rudders and boasting that you are at the mercy of no erratic winds, while the ships pass you under full sail. Where will reason alone take you? It cannot take you anywhere. A rudder is only useful to a ship that has motive power. What motive power have you? So you float and work your rudders and turn round and round, and are very bitter. Why are all philosophers so bitter, so hard to bear with, so useless? Because you are conscious unconsciously of your futility, that the world passes you by and laughs.

"The functions of reason are very narrow. You forget them. You exalt reason into the whole of life, committing the mistake for which you rail on others. Unbridled emotion is, as you say, terrible. So is unbridled reason. Where has reason alone ever led anyone save into the dreariest, driest pessimism? Was a philosopher ever a happy man? Even your Utopias, from Plato's to Bellamy's, who would desire them? Hell would be a pleasant relaxation after any of them. The functions of the senses, of which sympathy is the greatest, are to give you facts, the function of reason is to arrange them. The emotions drive man forward, reason directs and controls them. That is all.

"You say religions are founded on errors, on what are your reasonings founded? They are founded on *nothings*. "

Of what use is patriotism? Is it beautiful or no? Of what use is religion? Is it beautiful or no? Prove to me that it is necessary or beautiful. Show me why it should be so.

Is it not the same answer in each case? It is so easy to point out the evils of exaggeration in each. Anyone can do it. But the mean. Prove to me the use and beauty of the mean.

The answer is always the same. If you have religion in you, such a question would never occur to you, for you would feel its use, you would *know* its beauty. And if you have not, who shall prove it to you? Who shall provide you with the facts on which to reason, who shall open your eyes? But if anyone doubts that religion is useful and is beautiful to its believers, go and watch them.

It matters not where you go, East or West, it is always the same. In England, or France, or Russia, among the Hindus, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Parsees. It makes no matter if you will but look aright. For you must know how to look and where. You must learn what to read. It is never books I would ask you to read, never creeds, never theologies, never reasons, nor arguments. You will not find what you search in libraries nor yet in places of worship, in ceremonies, in temples, great and beautiful as they may be. Not in even their inmost recesses is the secret hid, the secret of all religions. I would have you listen to no preachers, to no theologians. They are the last to know. But I would have you go to the temple of the heart of man and read what is written there, written not in words, but in the inarticulate emotions of the heart. I would have you go and kneel beside the Mahommedan as he prays at the sunset hour, and put your heart to his and wait for the echo that will surely come. Yes, surely, if you be as a man who would learn, who can learn. I would

have you go to the hillman smearing the stone with butter that his god may be pleased, to the woman crying to the forest god for her sick child, to the boy before his monks learning to be good. No matter where you go, no matter what the faith is called, if you have the hearing ear, if your heart is in unison with the heart of the world, you will hear always the same song. Far down below the noises of the warring creeds, the clash of words and forms, the differences of peoples, of climes, of civilisations, of ideals, far down below all this lies that which you would hear. I know not what you would call it. Maybe it is the Voice of God telling us for ever the secret of the world, but in unknown tongue. For me it is like the unceasing surge of a shoreless sea answering to the night, a melody beyond words.

The creeds and faiths are the words that men have set to that melody; they are the interpretations of that wordless song. Each is true to him whom it suits. Every nation has translated it into his own tongue. But never forget that those are only your own interpretations. Whatever your faith may be, you have no monopoly of religion. I confess that to me there is nothing so repellent as the hate of faith for faith. To hear their professors malign and abuse each other, as if each had the monopoly of truth, is terrible. It is as a strife in families where brother is killing brother, and the younger trying to disinherit the elder. I doubt if in all this warfare they can listen for the voice that is for ever telling the secret of the world. Whence came all the faiths but from that inexplicable feeling of the heart, that surge and swell arising we know not whence? If you would malign another's faith remember your own. If you cannot understand his belief stop and consider. Can you understand your own? Do you know whence came these emotions that have risen and made your faith?

The faiths are all brothers, all born of the same mystery. There are older and younger, stronger and weaker, some babble in strange tongues maybe, different from your finer speech. But what of that? Are they the less children of the Great Father for that? Surely if there be the unforgivable offence, the sin against the Holy Ghost, it is this, to deny the truth that lies in all the faiths.

Religion is the music of the infinite echoed from the hearts of men.

THE END

Freeditorial 