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TOWARDS BELIEF IN GOD

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BY

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STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT PRESS LTD.
56 BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

THE PAPER AND BINDING OF THIS BOOK CONFORM
TO THE AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

First published November 1942

Distributed in Canada by our exclusive agents
The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd.
70 Bond Street, Toronto

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS LIMITED
GATESHEAD ON TYNE

PREFACE

THE genesis of this book needs perhaps some explanation. Thirteen years ago the Student Christian Movement Press published a little book of mine called *Experience of God*. Recently it went out of print, and both publisher and author felt that that must be accepted as the end of a career which, so it appeared to some at least, had been of service. The opinion, however, found expression in quarters entitled to respect, that it was perhaps a pity that the general argument of the book should no longer be available for any willing to think seriously about such matters. This led to further discussion.

The upshot is that I have written an entirely new book on the same general subject. The basic plan, or structure, of the argument—the analysis of belief in God into coercive, pragmatic and reflective elements—is the same as that of *Experience of God,* for in that probably lay most of whatsoever there might have been of permanent value in the latter. But the treatment is different, so different that this is, as has just been said, a new book. Whether it is an improvement or not, others must be left to judge; but, in any case, such a question is for the author somewhat beside the point. For this, whatever its quality, is the only book he is able to write at this present moment on this subject for the readers he has in mind. In thirteen or so years—and thirteen such years—a man's thought moves a good deal, even though he adheres to the same general position. A reprint of *Experience of God,* had there been no other objections to it, would have suffered from what to an author is a fatal disability, however useful a book might still be in one way or another to others, namely that it no longer adequately represents, and even in some places misrepresents, his present thought.

The book is longer than the earlier work, in spite of the

fact that some matter in the latter has been entirely omitted. It is, therefore, a much fuller treatment of its theme. But it is meant for the same general type of reader, namely those who are deeply interested in the question of belief in God, and are prepared to do some serious thinking about it, but are not students of philosophy or theology in the more technical sense of those terms. I have omitted, therefore, all references to authorities, as well as all acknowledgments of indebtedness to other works. To the experts, if any should choose to read a book not primarily meant for them, these would be superfluous. To the others they would likely be just so much academic lumber. In any case they would take up some of the valuable space.

That the whole of Part II should be devoted to the reflective element in belief in God may seem disproportionate, the more so as it is maintained in Part I that the reflective element, at any rate in the form in which it is herein treated, plays a relatively subsidiary, though by no means negligible, part in the building up of positive conviction. But the disproportion arises from the nature of the subject matter. In other words it is not really a disproportion, but only apparently so. The reflective problems and difficulties which arise in connexion with belief in God are many and various, as well as sometimes subtle and elusive. Whereas, in the nature of the case, the coercive and pragmatic elements can only be described and pointed to, the reflective problems can be, and, if they are to be adequately treated, must be, as fully discussed as the general limits of such a work as this allow.

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. V. A. Burrows for reading the typescript, and to the Rev. Prof. R. D. Whitehorn, M.A., M.B.E., for help in looking over the proofs.

HERBERT H. FARMER.

April, 1942.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

THE question we are to discuss in these pages can be simply stated. It is this. What grounds have we for belief in God? How may we be assured that God is real? And the first comment some may be tempted to make may well be, why add another to the many books which have been written on such matters?

The answer to this natural query is in part contained in what follows. If we think of God as merely an abstract idea or theoretical hypothesis which men formulate by reflection on the facts of experience, like, say, the idea of gravity or the hypothesis of evolution, then it is perhaps somewhat surprising that at this time of day there should be anything more to be said on belief in Him. One would have thought that the case for such belief, if there is a case, would have been settled and stated long since. And if it has not been settled, that might perhaps be taken as some indication that the case is inherently weak and can never be made appreciably stronger. Either superfluous, a mere repetition of what has often been said before, or futile, an attempt to do what, if it can be done at all, would have been done before—this would seem to be the alternative that confronts anyone who is tempted to write on this subject. But what if by the term God we do *not* designate merely an abstract idea or theoretical hypothesis? What if God be in fact a living personal Will, as this book maintains? Surely this, that the question of His reality is always a new question, and must be tackled afresh again and again.

It is of the essence of personal will, we would maintain, that it can only be known to be real in and through concrete, historical situations and relationships where personal choices and decisions have to be made. Such situations and relationships are always new. We may discern abstract similarities between them, but these always falsify their

nature as historical, as personal; for they do not, and cannot, report the relation of the situations to my, or your, personal will and decision. My decision is wholly and distinctively mine and nobody else's, and the individuals I deal with, who constitute the situation, are their own unrepeated and unrepeatable individual selves. The personal, therefore, does not repeat itself; if it did, it would cease to be personal. Hence it is that God, the supreme Person, if He be real, must come as a new fact to each one of us, disclosing Himself through the distinctive events and situations in which we now are and in respect of which our own personal choices and decisions have to be wrought out. In other words, the question, why believe in God? has to be constantly re-asked and re-answered.

This does not mean, it is hardly necessary to say, that a book such as this is only justified in so far as it contrives to say a lot of brand-new things, ignoring all that has ever been said before in the long history of reflection on these matters. Much that has been said before, and infinitely better said, is contained in the following pages. Indeed the broad outline of the argument formed the basis of an earlier little book of my own, now out of print.[1] Yet, in another sense, we might claim that nothing in the following pages has been said before, or, at any rate, until quite recently; for it has never been said *in the midst of just this present situation by me to you, by a person to persons, who happen to be alive together in the midst of just this present situation.* Abstractly considered, an argument for belief in God may be as old as Plato himself. But if I, living to-day, feel its compelling force and restate it in terms as intelligible as I can make them to you living to-day so that you feel its compelling force, then it is in a very real sense a *new* argument. It has come alive in a new way. It has become part of our situation. It speaks, in the Quaker phrase, to our condition. In other words, no sincere interchange of thought about God can ever be merely abstract though it may be cast in

[1] See Preface.

abstract form. In this it differs from reflection on, say, mathematical questions, which begins, continues, and ends in abstraction. If thought about God " begins " and " ends " in abstraction, whatever it may do while " continuing ", if, that is to say, it does not arise out of and lead back to historical situations and decisions, then, from the point of view of a personalistic understanding of His nature, it is doubtful whether it has been about God at all.

Herein is to be seen the mistake of those modern theologians who, following Karl Barth, repudiate all argument about, and for, belief in God, all that used to be comprised under what was called, by a not very happy choice of names, Christian evidences or apologetics. They are right in saying—we shall take up the same position in the following pages—that abstract argument by itself cannot make a man religious, cannot bring him to God; they are wrong in assuming that all argument is always and necessarily abstract and " by itself ". A sincere discussion by minds anxious to know the truth is itself a concrete, personal relationship embedded in that concrete bit of history which has made the two minds what they are—specifically modern minds, impregnated with the spirit of modern times, in the midst of their own distinctive modern situations and crises. The argument by itself might avail little, but, we repeat, it is not by itself. God may well use it as one factor, even in some cases the decisive factor, in the total situation through which He approaches individual men and women. To deny in advance that even such a poor discussion of grounds for belief in God as this book contains can be used of God, to exclude even the possibility that it might provide one word, or even one syllable only, to God's speech with a human spirit, is to set a quite arbitrary limitation on His wisdom and power.

Obviously, the personal situations in relation to which a reasoned statement of grounds for believing in God may be used by God, even if only as a single syllable, in His total word to the soul, will be in many instances so very " per-

sonal ", so individual, that they cannot even be sympathetically imagined. Indeed that will be in a measure true of all situations, for, as we have said, each man's situation is always peculiarly his own. Such a reasoned statement will, therefore, be very much a matter of " casting bread upon the waters ", or, to use a more modern, if hackneyed, simile, it will be like sending out a wireless message in the hope that there may be a receiving set somewhere so tuned that it will pick it up. Yet, even so, there is a sense in which the situation of a great, and increasing, number to-day *is* the same in respect of belief in God, and can be stated, without undue falsification, in general terms.

On the one hand, under the pressure of events, many are feeling, as never before, that without some sort of belief in God human life is futile and meaningless, sometimes a sheer farce, sometimes a wearisome bore, sometimes—as especially to-day—a horrible tragedy. It hardly bears thinking about. Yet plainly it must be thought about, for it is all too evident that it was precisely into the vacuum of unbelief that those beliefs in false gods rushed which have now plunged the race into the horror of these times. On the other hand, they find it very hard to believe in God. In this also they are the children of their own time. They belong still to that scientific-humanistic era of human thought concerning which Nietzsche said long ago that its prime characteristic is that for it *God is dead.*[1] They belong still to it even though it is manifestly in some sort of dissolution and the need for some sort of belief in God may be stirring in their minds. They want to believe in God, for they at least glimpse the abyss of meaninglessness that the world is without such belief; yet the word God seems obstinately to remain little more than a word, with which are associated, at most, a few vague and very transient feelings and a few even more vague theological definitions. So far as any kind of living touch upon their spirits is concerned, any kind of

[1] See an article by Prof. H. A. Hodges in *The Christian Newsletter*, February 11th, 1942.

immediate, practical daily dealing with Him, He remains, in Nietzsche's word, " dead ", or nearly so.

This is the distinctive present-day dilemma or tension in the minds of many, at any rate in this country. It is new in respect of the poignancy with which they feel, or are coming to feel, it, even though they cannot put it into terms; it is new also in respect of the context of terrible, world-shaking events by which it is surrounded and of which it is at once an effect and a cause. A book, therefore, which comes out of that situation and seeks, in however restricted a way, to speak to it, must be in a very real sense a new book, even though it contains little that is in fact original and new.

We might relate the argument we are to follow to this tension and cleavage in many modern minds in this wise. On the one hand, we observe a reluctance to believe in the personal God because of a fear of wishful thinking. In this there comes to expression one aspect of the scientific-humanist, or at least the scientific, strain in modern man. Obviously it is not without value. It is good to acknowledge a serious responsibility for what one believes. On the other hand, we observe a certain weariness of the check and inhibition which this fear of wishful thinking continually puts upon any sort of firm faith and decision about ultimate matters. One manifestation of this weariness is the readiness of some to jump out of unbelief into a total and rigorous Christian orthodoxy which is impatient of any of the questionings of modern thought in regard to it. This weariness and this jump also have their good side, for certainly events do not wait while we solve all mysteries. Whatever the risk of error, we have to take our stand somewhere, and judging by the pace of events, we must take it, as the saying is, " pretty quick too ". Now the argument of this book has something, it is hoped, to say which will reduce, if it does not suffice to eliminate, this conflict and tension. To the one side we would say that the sources and grounds of belief in God in human experience and thought are sufficient to take such belief well beyond the reach of the

charge of wishful thinking. To the other side we would say that readiness to take a plunge, to say "begone, unbelief, let us make up our minds", is right, given the situation in which we are and the nature of the God with Whom, we believe, we have to deal. In other words, the conflict can be seen to be, when the subject-matter with which we are dealing is rightly understood, in some degree an unreal one. There are reasons for belief in God which make such belief as well-grounded as any belief which touches upon ultimate issues can ever be. Yet they are not such as to make some adventure of decision and self-commitment superfluous. On the contrary, they are such that the necessity for such adventure of decision and self-commitment can itself be seen to be an entirely reasonable thing.

PART I

THE COERCIVE AND PRAGMATIC ELEMENTS IN BELIEF IN GOD

CHAPTER I

METHOD OF APPROACH

CLEARLY, if we ask, why believe in God? we must first say what we intend by the word " God ". This is necessary not only in order to avoid confusion, but also in order to chart the course of our thought.

The word can have a number of different, though not unrelated, meanings.

In its broadest usage it may be taken to mean the ultimate reality of this universe in which we find ourselves alive, that from which all objects and events, including ourselves, derive their being, their character, their coherence with one another in some sort of unity and order. In this wide meaning of the term, everybody believes in God, though many no doubt would not be able to put it into words. The world must be a unity of some sort, and its unity must infinitely transcend and yet at the same time be deeply involved in particular, everyday things—this table, that chair, my neighbour, me. The idea that the universe might in the last analysis turn out to be chaotic, if not quite unthinkable, is entirely without compelling force on the mind; whereas the opposite idea, the idea, that is, of an ultimate and all-inclusive order, seems almost self-evident. Indeed, it seems to be presupposed by the act of thinking itself. Thinking is the search for unity in our world, and the nerve of the endeavour is the conviction that, however far thought may range, there will always be a unity of some sort to be found.

Yet, plainly, belief in God, in this very broad sense of the term, is not of very much consequence to anybody. The mere process of thinking, of looking for unities, even for an ultimate unity, has no particular value as such. The important thing is what the process brings forth, what kind of unity is found. Or, in other words, the important question

is, what is the *character* of God, what is the character of this ultimate, underived, unifying reality which we seem compelled to think of as the ground of the existence of the multitudinous " bits and pieces " of reality which make up our everyday world?

Various answers have been given to this question.

Thus some, though these are not so frequently met as they once were, have tried to think of the ultimate reality as a system of material particles knit together in fundamentally the same type of relationship as that in which, say, billiard balls are related to one another when they meet, clash, push one another about, on the billiard table. Others have sought to think of it as a system of truths which logically imply one another and are bound up in one another like the truths of Euclid. Thus the physical necessity which holds together, say, a drop in the temperature and the freezing of water, is said to be of the same order as the logical necessity binding together the premisses and conclusion in correct thought. To put it crudely, the ultimate is conceived as a great thought, or system of thoughts logically interrelated; though, paradoxical as it sounds, some very profound thinkers who have taken this view have not considered it necessary to believe in an ultimate Thinker or Intelligence to which the thought, or system of thoughts, belongs. The latter is just there, a system of intelligible, or thinkable, relations or patterns. Still another school of thinkers have thought of the ultimate reality after the analogy of a living organism. Just as a living organism is, by virtue of its " livingness ", a close-knit unity, every cell and organ giving to, and receiving from, every other cell and organ, so also the world is a unity by virtue of an ultimate " livingness ", or Life Force, which pervades it. The ultimate is creative Life Force. And just as an organism keeps going as a living unity without any explicit, conscious purpose so to do, so, according to this view, the universe keeps going. It is not in the least necessary, it is said, to think of the Life Force as conscious, intelligent purpose, or as in

any sense personal. It might be, as one distinguished thinker put it, that the world is spun from whatever is the ultimate reality as the web is spun from the belly of a spider.

These are a few of the ways in which the ultimate reality, which in the broadest definition of the term might be called God, has been characterized. But none of them even begins to indicate what we have in mind in these pages when we ask the question, how may we be assured God is real?

What then have we in mind? We have in mind, as the introductory chapter has already hinted, that characterization of God which lies at the heart of Christian belief and experience. According to this characterization, God—the ultimate reality which is the source and ground of all else—is rational intelligence and purposeful will. Whatever else His infinite being may include, and it must in the nature of the case include much beyond our comprehension, it includes at least these two things. As rational intelligence and purposeful will, God is further characterized as wholly good and as intending, therefore, what is wholly good. Part of the good which He intends is to bring into existence good personal life in a finite form. Hence He has created men and women, and actively seeks at all times to bring them into fellowship and co-operation with Himself, that through this fellowship and co-operation they may themselves be enriched with the highest personal life. To put it shortly, we are interested in these pages in that view of the ultimate reality which the philosophers sometimes call "ethical theism", the view, that is, which takes as its central ideas the idea of personality and the idea of goodness. God is an infinite, personal reality Who has created, and is unweariedly interested in, the highest good of, finite persons —men and women.

It is concerning such a God that we ask, how may we be assured that He is real? or, more accurately, it is concerning such a characterization of God that we ask, how can we be assured that it is true?

Such an interpretation of our question does not need much justification. It is indeed usually reckoned sufficient reason for the choice of a subject that the author himself is interested in it; but in this particular instance there is more to be said. To define the term God as we have done is to be brought much nearer to the spontaneous, everyday usage of men than to define it in one or other of the other ways above mentioned. Most people when asked, do you believe in God? would take the question to mean at least this: do you believe that there is good purpose at the back of all things? Nor would this be due merely to the fact that they live in the midst of a culture which is still to a considerable degree penetrated by Christian thought. Without going into the oft-discussed question whether it is ever possible to be religious, or to have religious experience, without ascribing personal quality to God, it can be confidently stated that the spontaneous religious sense of mankind does strongly tend so to do. Or to put it differently, in proportion as God is explicitly denied personal quality, the distinctive religious attitudes of worship, adoration, trust, obedience become for most men only attainable, if attainable at all, by a certain strain or effort, a certain artificiality or " non-spontaneity ".

To state what we propose to mean by the term God has, however, as was said at the beginning, a far greater importance even than that of avoiding confusion in terms. It helps also to decide the very important question of method of approach.

If we ask the question how we may know truth and fact in one sphere or another of our life, the answer will involve two sets of considerations. First we shall need to consider how we know truth and fact *in any sphere whatsoever.* There must be some quite general principles of knowledge, some quite general standards of reality, which are always and everywhere applicable, if only because we always and everywhere bring the same human mind to bear. We have not a number of different minds and natures on which we can ring the changes as on a set of gramophone records.

Yet, second, we shall need to consider how the application of these general principles is affected by *the nature of the sphere of reality with which we are at the moment dealing.* It is obvious enough when stated, though it is in fact not infrequently overlooked, that the mode in which we become convinced of one sort of fact or truth is not necessarily appropriate to another sort of fact or truth, even though the highly general principles of knowledge, already referred to, hold everywhere. An obvious illustration of this is the difference between, say, lectures on light and colour sensations, illustrated by the work of the great artists in colour-mixing and colour-composition, and lectures on art as such, illustrated again by the work of the great artists. In the former the approach is predominantly by way of abstraction, analysis, argumentation; in the latter it is predominantly concrete, synthesizing, appreciative. For the appreciation of the æsthetic quality of a picture no amount of knowledge about pigments, optics, and so on, will be of any use, and vice versa. Yet the same general principles governing the attainment of assured conviction may be discerned at work in both cases.

These matters, it is hoped, will become clearer as we go on, for indeed the discussion of the question of the reality of God affords perhaps the best possible illustration of them. Addressing ourselves to that question, we shall need to make first a brief enquiry into the general principles governing the formation of legitimate conviction in any sphere whatsoever. This will occupy one chapter. Then we shall ask, throughout the remainder of the book, how these principles apply when we are dealing with the sort of reality which we have defined God to be. The importance of the preliminary definition is thus apparent. It governs almost the whole course of our thought.

CHAPTER II

THE ELEMENTS OF CONVICTION

WE take up first, then, the question how we know anything to be real or true in any sphere whatsoever.

We begin with a rather obvious fact, namely that all experience comes to us through intercourse between our minds and the world, or environment, in which we live. We know nothing of, we cannot even conceive, an experience in which either factor is absent. There must be objects experienced and a consciousness which experiences those objects. Also it is clear that, generally speaking, the development of the individual and the enlargement of his experience come about because, for one reason or another, he falls into disharmony with his environment and seeks to adjust himself to it, or it to himself, so that the disharmony is removed. Harmonization of the self with the environment by avoiding destructive forces and using beneficent ones, by developing new powers or re-applying old ones, is the characteristic of life all through, from the lowest and simplest forms up to the highest and most complex which we know in man. Life is, throughout, a matter of challenge and response.

Thus, without going into the nice points of the theory of evolution, we may suggest that in the first instance living creatures became less vegetative and more mobile largely because of lack of food. They had to develop means of locomotion and move elsewhere, or perish. But though movement brought more food, it also brought new dangers of a sort other than starvation. And so new powers had to be developed to meet these new dangers, as, for example, a new power of long-distance vision. Yet, again, a faculty of keener vision opened up a still larger world, demanding still further powers to cope with it. Thus to man the eye

has revealed the world of colour and beauty, and this world, so revealed, has evoked in him all those wants and aptitudes which we sum up under the name " the æsthetic sense ". That the process stops short at different stages in different species of creatures does not affect the fact that this in a broad way is what the process is.

Now the distinction between truth and falsity, fact and fiction, goes back to this duality in experience, this prior and more fundamental distinction between the experiencing creature and the experienced environment. It would, indeed, be possible to define a live creature, as distinct from a dead one, as a thing to which *the truth* about its world is important, and this would be to repeat what has just been said in another form. A dead thing is not aware of its surroundings at all. It remains where it is until some mechanical force plays upon it and moves it, and then it moves strictly in proportion to that mechanical force. It has no interest in what happens. It is inert, unresponsive, malleable, dead. But a live thing shows itself to be alive by being *alive to* the changes in its surroundings and behaving accordingly. Place a ball on the billiard table and it stays exactly where it is put until somebody knocks it down a pocket with a cue. Place a mouse on the table and it runs hither and thither of its own accord until, in spite of obstacles, it finds a pocket down which to disappear. In other words, the truth about the pockets is meaningless to the ball, whereas to the mouse it is the most important thing in the world.

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

miserable and frustrated life. And the living creature must be supposed, in its own way and however dimly, to be aware of this. For corresponding to the demand of the environment that it should adjust itself to it, there is within the living creature the impulse to seek and achieve that adjustment. The facts challenge the creature, and the creature, urged on by instincts of self-preservation and self-development, seeks to meet the challenge. The two things are inseparable. The distinction between fact and fiction, truth and falsity, though it refers primarily to the external world, only has meaning in relation to a vital impulse within the living creature to live according to that distinction. Through this impulse acting in relation to that distinction development, as we have said, takes place. In its effort to adjust itself to facts the living being maintains and develops itself, unfolds its latent powers.

There is then this continuous interplay, or tension, between ourselves and the world in which we live. On the one hand, there is the given fact or truth " hitting " us, so to say, and demanding the adjustment of ourselves to it. On the other hand, there is the life-impulse within us, eager to make the adjustment, believing it can make the adjustment, unfolding its highest powers by so doing.

Now in accordance with this fundamental " life-situation " we can discern in the building up of conviction in any sphere of experience three factors or elements. There is first what may be called a compulsive or coercive element. There is second what may be called a practical or pragmatic element. There is third, though this is not so immediately obvious as the other two, what may be called a reflective element.

(1) *The compulsive or coercive element*

This corresponds with what has just been called the truth or fact " hitting " us and demanding adjustment from us. By it is signified the fact that in the apprehension of truth a man is conscious of being compelled to apprehend what he does apprehend by a reality which in some sense stands

over against him, and is independent of his mind and the satisfaction of his desires. The fact or truth has to impress him so that he has no option but to say " that is so "; it must shine in its own light and be " there " in its own right.

Thus we speak of cogent proofs, or brute facts, or irresistible impressions. Even when what we judge to be true coincides with what we desire to be true, and what we call wishful thinking is all too easy, this coercive element is not lacking; for, on the one hand, the stimulus to make any judgment at all is never *merely* desire, but always some compelling external fact which is felt to be " there ", whatever we desire; and, on the other hand, whatever be the internal psychological causes of the judgment, however much " wishing " there may be, the person judging makes the judgment because it has to him the hall-mark of all truth, namely compellingness. He believes because in some sense he cannot help doing so, and if there are no good reasons he will fabricate some bad ones. The word truth, as we have said, has no meaning except in a world where we are not permitted to believe merely what we like, or do merely what we like. Any suspicion that we are being " worked up " or " working ourselves up " to believe, makes us uneasy and puts us on our guard. We desire to be *convinced.*

(2) *The practical or pragmatic element*

This corresponds with the other factor in the tension between ourselves and our world of which we have spoken, namely the life-impulse which is all the time eager to match itself with, and adjust itself to, the coerciveness of facts. It is not easy to draw out and state this pragmatic element in our attitude to our world, but it is implicit in it all the time, ready at appropriate moments to become explicit. It seems to be capable of two formulations, one having to do more with the establishment of particular matters of fact, the other having to do more with the relation of facts in a general way to human purposes and values.

In its first form the pragmatic element discloses itself

through the instinctive feeling—we say "feeling" because sometimes, especially when we are carried away by wishful thinking, it makes itself felt only as a vague uneasiness—that no assertion of truth or fact, however intrinsically plausible and compelling, is worth very much if it is not backed by experimental verification through action. An ounce of fact, we are accustomed to say, is worth a ton of theory. And by fact we mean something verified by experiment. The word "fact" is etymologically derived from the Latin word meaning *to do* or *to act*.

In its second form the pragmatic element finds expression in the conviction that, of the various interpretations of life generally which are open to us to adopt and to live by, that which in practice proves to be more satisfying to our whole nature is the more likely to be true. *Per contra,* that which in practice leaves us frustrated, unhappy, in unresolved conflict with ourselves and with our world, is less likely to be true. So stated, this sounds extremely vague, and if it be set forth as a single and determinative criterion of truth it obviously raises many difficulties and questions. But that a pragmatic faith of this kind, however vague and unformulated, is operative in most people's minds can hardly be denied. It is significant that philosophers who have propounded a pessimistic view of life have never had much following. Mankind has never been able to take them quite seriously, and it is too glib and easy to put that down to stupidity and cowardice. It is, to say the least, a possible alternative that man's persistent refusal to accept as true doctrines which seem to condemn him to an everlasting discord with himself and with his world springs as much from his reason and intuitive insight as from a merely craven reluctance to face facts. For one thing, reason is that in man which seeks to unify experience and to discover an orderly world, and it is probably, therefore, in part a rational need which lies behind man's reluctance to accept any view which makes him a permanent misfit in the heart of the universe. And for another thing, as we have already

hinted, the whole evolution of life has depended upon a fundamental optimism, or faith, in living creatures that they are adequate to their world. Despair is psychologically the end of the life-impulse and the end of evolution. In man this fundamental optimism becomes more or less conscious of itself. Truth, he feels, is good to know; a man gains in well-being by knowing the truth; and that which in the long run is not good to know, brings with it no enhancement or enrichment, rather the reverse, cannot be, or at least is not likely to be, true. It is surely this deep-seated pragmatic conviction which lies in part behind and sustains man's restless explorations of his world, searchings for truth, constructions of unifying and interpretative systems of thought, all that enterprise which receives its most impressive expression in the activity of a great university.[1] If it be said that this fundamental optimism of all living creatures, culminating thus in the highest cultural enterprises of man, is merely a trick of nature to keep them on the move, we can only here express a profound suspicion of theories which can only give a rational account of nature by calling her a clever liar. But that is to anticipate what will be discussed later.[2]

It might be said, indeed, that our suspicion of the theories just mentioned is itself merely an expression of the pragmatic element under discussion. That we need not concern ourselves to deny. On the contrary, in so far as such suspicion would be shared by most people, as we venture to think it would be—the suspicion, that is to say, that a lie could not really produce so much good—it would support our point that this pragmatic element is ineradicably present in our minds and no theorizing, however plausible, can get rid of it. In the end we have to accept our minds as they are. They are, after all, the only ones we have.

[1] For further discussion of the relation of faith to culture see below, p. 54f.

[2] See Chap. X.

(3) *The reflective element*

The part this plays in the building up of conviction is most obvious in the case of trained and cultured minds. Such minds are not fully satisfied unless their beliefs, no matter how inherently compelling and practically verified they may seem to be, have been submitted to the scrutiny and criticism of careful thought, and can be seen to be in harmony with, or at the very least not contradictory of, other assured and tested knowledge. Yet this is but a development of an impulse which is present in some degree in all human minds. When difficulties arise in dealing with our world, when the facts prove recalcitrant to our purposes, frustrating the ends we seek, then even the least cultured is forced to do some thinking, to examine the situation however unskilfully, to relate it to other like situations, in order to get a better grasp of it. And even the least cultured feels a certain increased satisfaction when he is able to see his beliefs as forming a unified and interlocking pattern, which, as the saying is, " hangs together ". Contemporary propaganda is in part an unscrupulous exploitation of this hunger for, and confidence in, a unified system of beliefs in which things can be seen to fit together; witness, for example, the ascription of all evils to the machinations of the Jews. Of course, in one sense such propaganda only succeeds because reflection in its victims is at a minimum; yet that it should succeed at all is due in some degree to the fact that the reflective impulse is there, even if in a minimal form and at the mercy of violent emotions.

From one point of view the reflective element in belief is not so much a third element as a commingling of the other two. The impulse to reflect arises in the first instance from, and is largely sustained by, the exigences of the practical situation; and the satisfaction that grasping things as a unity gives presupposes a hunger for such a unity, and a confidence that it can be satisfied, which is as much part of human nature as the hunger for food. As a great philosopher once said, the finding of reasons, even bad ones, for

what we have already decided to believe upon instinct is itself an instinct. Reflection is therefore in a sense pragmatic in origin, and the satisfying of what we call the claims of reason is a pragmatic satisfaction. On the other hand, it is precisely the mark of rational reflection that it seeks at all points to submit itself to the compulsion of the objective world. Reason, it has been said, is thinking in terms of the object. Indeed no better illustration could be offered of what we have in mind when we speak of the coercive element in belief than the profound difference which we all recognize between the play of imagination and the processes of rational thought. In imagination the mind feels free, within limits, to range wheresoever it will; in rational reflection, in the logical examination and relating to one another of our thoughts and judgments, the mind is conscious of being under duress, very painfully so at times.

This intermingling is, indeed, characteristic of the whole process of reaching conviction as it occurs in living experience. The analysis of the process which we have given suffers from the inevitable defect of all such analysis, namely that it is forced to simplify and to divide unduly what is always in reality a very complex and continuous process. In actual experience our convictions are, as it were, deposited out of a stream of experience in which at any given moment the inescapable compulsions of truth and fact and the experimental ventures and verifications of pragmatic faith are in continual, eddying interplay with one another. There are some truths, or claimants to be considered such, which are so coercive in themselves that we cannot even suspend judgment in regard to them. There are others which carry in them considerable constraining force, but which are apparently challenged at once by something within us, or by some other proposition equally compelling. There are others, again, which carry very little constraint in themselves, but acquire a great deal after years of experience and reflection and of interplay with other truths. In all minds in some degree, in thoughtful minds in a very

large degree, reflection plays a large part in this process whereby conviction is deposited out of experience.

None the less the analysis we have given remains valid and important. It is not always possible to apply the three criteria it yields in a neatly logical and precise way, but taken together they form an indispensable guide to any who, whilst accepting the necessity to believe something as part of the business of living, none the less feel a serious sense of responsibility for what they believe, especially in the high matters of religion. If a belief (1) shines in its own light with a certain inherent compellingness, (2) " works " in the sense both of satisfying our nature and of helping in the practical task of managing our world, (3) reveals on examination both internal consistencies and external harmony with other experience and knowledge, then we have in regard to it as full an assurance of truth as it is possible for a human mind to have and as it ought ever to ask.

CHAPTER III

GOD'S EXISTENCE INDEMONSTRABLE

WE have now to consider the way in which these principles may be expected to apply when we are dealing with the sort of reality we have defined God to be. This, as we have said, is the main subject-matter of this book, and will occupy us to the end. It will, however, be well first to turn aside for a little to clear out of the way certain misconceptions, particularly as to the way the reflective element enters into the building up of belief in God, which are apt to fog the mind right from the start.

If God is in fact the sort of being Christian people, not to speak of other types of serious religious minds, believe Him to be, namely infinite, personal purpose directed towards what is good and seeking, as part of the good, that finite persons should co-operate with Him, then, in accordance with what was said at the end of Chapter I, the way to get to know Him with assured and justified conviction will be the way which is appropriate to such a reality. It will not be the way in which we get to know other things, even though it will have within it, in its own distinctive fashion, the three elements set forth in the last chapter. If, overlooking this, we try to use some other method, if we insist that the reality of God should be established by a method which in the nature of the case is incapable of establishing it, then, obviously, the result will be as negative as, on any just appraisal of the argument, it will be entirely beside the point.

It is precisely here that many people go wrong.

For reasons, into which it is not necessary here to enter—to understand them fully would require a review of the history of thought since Descartes wrote in the seventeenth century—the minds of a great many men and women who

are capable of raising questions about these matters at all are governed by the thought that the only really secure way of knowledge is the way which has been brought to perfection in the scientific laboratory, the method of detached analysis and cautious argumentation, of beginning with absolutely indubitable, universally accepted, experimentally controllable data, continuing through absolutely impeccable inferences, and ending in absolutely irresistible conclusions. Such are apt to feel that if the personal God be indeed a reality, His existence ought to be demonstrable by such a method. And when it cannot be so demonstrated, as indeed it cannot be, they feel that the religious position is quite insecure, and that an attempt to cultivate the religious life is not quite intellectually respectable or sincere. But the all-important prior question, whether the method proposed is appropriate to the kind of reality under discussion, is not asked.

It must be stated that in our view such a demonstrative proof of God is once and for all impossible. The justification of this statement is not merely that such a proof has not in fact yet been found after centuries of effort by able minds (this does not prove that one never will be found, but it is at least a very suggestive fact), but also and far more, that God is by definition such that He could not be so proved. We might put it paradoxically by saying that if anyone succeeded in proving the existence of God he would by that very fact show that he had failed. For a God Who could be thus proved would not be the God under discussion, but something else. The word would in fact have changed its meaning in the course of the argument.

Some important considerations serve to make this plain.

First, God, according to our definition, is the infinite, transcendent, ultimate reality which is the source and ground of all being. This means that His distinctive essence as God, that which constitutes Him God, if we may so put it, cannot be comprehended in terms of finite, contingent, dependent, mundane realities, or of their relations

with one another, for these draw their existence and nature from Him. God, in short, as God is in a class by Himself. He is not a bit or piece of the world, not even a very large piece. Now any argument for the existence of God, which does not assume at the start the very thing to be proved, must begin in, and argue from, the world; it must use, too, the same thought processes as those we use to deal with the world, and which normally do not take us beyond it. It is difficult, to say the least, to see how at some unspecified point in the argument it should be possible suddenly to pass by firm logical inference beyond the world and its contents, to get, so to say, from the " non-God " to God. If we think we have managed so to do, examination will assuredly reveal either that we have unwittingly introduced the idea of God from elsewhere (i.e. from distinctively religious experience) or that what we have reached is not God at all. Our argument will either have assumed God or brought Him down to the level, within the limits, of natural things. It is interesting in this connexion to note that the criticism which acute minds have urged against the traditional attempts to prove the existence of God from a consideration of the facts of the natural order has been precisely that the necessities of thought, on which such proofs have professed to base themselves, could as well be satisfied by enlarging the meaning, and range of application, of the concept of the natural as by bringing in a new concept of the divine and supernatural. But apart from this somewhat technical philosophical point, our experience, even within the sphere of the natural order itself, points by analogy in the same direction. There are certain fundamental ranges, or dimensions, of reality, which we do in fact know, but whose actuality and nature cannot be inferred by any process of argument from anything else. They have to be directly apprehended to be known at all. Thus the world of colour cannot be demonstrated from, say, the world of sound. If we have eyes to see and the sense to use them, the world of colour discloses itself to us, shining in its own light, witness-

ing to its own actuality, neither requiring nor admitting proof. The same is true of the dimensions of space. To an intelligent creature living in a two-dimensional world, a third dimension might be a theoretic possibility, but he could only know the actuality of it by it suddenly opening up to him. How much more must this be true of what may be called the " dimension of God ", if there be indeed such a dimension at all.

A second consideration leading to the same conclusion, but important also because of the general line of thought which it opens up, is this. God, according to our definition, is a *personal* reality Who enters into personal relations with man. Now we need to ask ourselves this question: are we entitled to expect to be able to prove the existence of such a *personal* reality by demonstrative argument from other data? If we are inclined to think we are, it will be well to consider that it is not even possible to prove the existence of a friend as a personal entity, let alone the existence of a divine person. Theoretically the possibility cannot be finally excluded that what I call the body of my friend is an animated dummy, or even that it is just a figure in a dream. No doubt I might argue that the most probable explanation of the strange goings-on of the said body is that there is within it a personal life of the same order as that which I know in my own interior life, but such an argument certainly falls far short of the quite indubitable certainty we have that there are other persons about besides ourselves. A probable explanation may be wrong; yet nobody can really entertain the notion that he is wrong in thinking that his friend is really " there ". This last point is important, for it suggests that in point of fact the way in which we become certain of the existence of personal beings is not by demonstrative still less by " probability " reasoning, but by some other process of apprehension to which argument appears to be able to add very little, if anything, and from which it can take nothing away.

Let us ask then, how do we become aware of personal

beings as such, and why is anything in the way of demonstrative argument impossible and inappropriate? The answer in brief is that a person is indubitably known to be "there" only through a personal relationship, and a rational argument can never *per se* mediate a personal relationship. To say this, to say that a person is known only through a personal relationship, will seem a mere tautology. In a sense it is, for we are dealing with a type of experience that cannot in fact be expressed in terms of anything else. However, we can at least point to what we mean when we speak of a personal relationship, so as to make clear why it falls outside the scope of rational argument.

Let us imagine this situation. I and a friend are discussing a third person, Jones, in his absence. We talk about his character, his peculiarities, his prospects, how we propose to treat him in respect of a certain plan we have both formed, and so on. Now suppose suddenly he walks into the room. What happens? We simply cannot go on talking *about* him? Why not? Probably most people would say, Well, you cannot go on talking *about* a man in his presence, it isn't decent, and he would probably resent it? But, we repeat, why not? Why is it not decent, and why would he resent it? The answer is that so long as you are merely talking *about* a man, though you may talk about him as a person, your relationship to him is indistinguishable from the relationship you would have to a thing. It is not a personal relationship. In exactly the same way you could talk *about* the piano or the sofa and its relationship to your plans. But when the man is present, becomes part of the situation, is *en rapport*, every instinct in you rises against treating him as the piano or the sofa, as a thing, just as every instinct in him rises against being so treated. He is a person and not a thing.

If now we ask what constitutes the personal relationship which we become aware of, or should become aware of, with Jones' entry, the answer would seem to be that he is

recognized as one with a right and claim to speak and to be spoken *to*, and not merely to be spoken *about*, to be consulted, a right and a claim which must be met so soon as the physical situation permits it. Everything is focused in this idea of speech *to* a person and not merely *about* him. Thus " speech to " presupposes that the person addressed has rational intelligence, does not lack what is sometimes called, in a very significant phrase, *discourse* of reason; that he is a self-directing and responsible will who can engage, in the light of his own rational judgment, in an answering activity of speech, indeed in any activity relevant and significant to the situation; that he is in a measure not dependent on merely external forces playing upon him and manipulating him by impact, as a leaf is blown by the wind, but can recognize and respond to what I *mean*. All this, implicit in our awareness of the other to whom we speak, is implicit also in our awareness of ourselves as speaking; for if there were no possibility of being spoken to in return, though it be only by a nod or a shake of the head, we would not speak at all.

The shortest way to sum the whole matter up is the one which has come much to the fore in recent thought, namely to say that in a specifically personal relationship a living being is a " thou " to us, and we are a " thou " to him. It is an " I-thou " relationship, or a " thou-thou " relationship. An impersonal relationship is an " I-it " or an " it-it " relationship. Or in more technical language, the difference between a personal and an impersonal relationship is the difference between a subject-subject relationship and a subject-object relationship. Where the other being is fully grasped and treated as a subject and not as an object, there is apprehension of him as personal. But the best way undoubtedly is to use the idea of " thou ", the second person, as over against " he, she or it ", the third person. The collocation " he, she or it " is significant. " He " or " she " we say are *personal* pronouns, " it " is impersonal; yet in conjugating the verb we put them together. Why?

Precisely because though " he " and " she " refer to persons, i.e. are *about* persons, they are just for that reason *pro tanto* impersonal in the relation they indicate, and are indistinguishable from " it ". That is why sensitive people have an instinctive recoil from saying things behind other people's backs which they would not be prepared to say to their face. They sense the impersonality of it. They feel that the only protection against this impersonality is always to test " speech about " in the light of " speech to ".

Now we come to the point of our argument. One reason why the attempt rationally to demonstrate the existence of a person is bound to fall far short of the conviction which we feel when we are actually dealing with, speaking to, him is that in the nature of the case it is " speech about " and not " speech to ". For certainly nobody would try to prove a man's existence *to* himself. It transforms the reality with which it is dealing into an " it " in the very process of trying to demonstrate that it is a person, a " thou ". It is like a machine which as fast as it tries to cut a way through an obstacle fills up the hole with the debris of its own efforts. Abstract rational argument about existence turns " thous " into " its ", subjects into objects, fogs the reality which it is trying to disclose.

All this applies to any apprehension of persons, but there is a special application of it to what we are particularly interested in, namely the apprehension of God. We have said that there is a certain inappropriateness which we all sense in saying " about " what we would not, or could not, say " to " one another. We have to be on guard against it. Nevertheless it is not wholly inappropriate, indeed it is often quite unavoidable. We cannot avoid using the " he, she or it " form of speech. For a finite person has a " thing " aspect. He is tied to a body, which can be weighed and otherwise manipulated; he is limited to one position in space and time, and his powers of communication are confined within the narrow limits of his bodily powers; he is a bit or piece of the world. Because of this he cannot always be in a

" thou " relationship to us. As we have said, he can be outside a room while we talk about him, and then come in, become *en rapport*, a " thou ", and radically transform the whole situation. In these circumstances we cannot but refer to him as " he " with something of the same accent, as it were, with which we speak of an " it ". But God by definition is the transcendent and infinite person, Who is the source and sustainer of all existence, including our own. He is emphatically, as we have said, not a bit or piece of the world. He is present in all situations whatsoever. He does not come into a situation, into a room. He is already there, the ever-present. Even this hardly describes it correctly. He is not, strictly speaking, " there ", for, but for Him, there would be no " there ". He is not in the situation so much as the situation is in Him. Whatever appropriateness or inevitability therefore may attach to our speaking of finite persons in the mode of " he, she or it ", it is considerably reduced, if it does not completely vanish, when we speak of God. For speech about Him is always in His presence and therefore always inappropriate. He is the eternal Thou. He is always and everywhere subject, and never, in respect of any aspect of His being, object. Thus His existence is even more elusive of demonstrative proof than that of finite persons with whom we have to deal. There is at least some force in the argument that the body of my friend behaves as though it were indwelt by a personal consciousness analogous to my own, even though it falls far short of the actual certainty we feel. But God has no localized body.

All this may seem a trifle unreal, and even inconsistent. After all, it may be said, do we not constantly talk about God? How can it be avoided? Are you not talking about Him in this whole discussion? The answer to this is that there are two ways of talking about Him. On the one hand, it is possible to talk about God with a direct and living sense of it being done in His presence, as part of an " I-thou " relationship with, and responsibility to, Him. It is possible to do this, without any pietistic unreality or make-believe,

because if He is livingly apprehended at all, He is apprehended as the eternal person always and everywhere present. He never becomes a mere " he " to us, least of all when His name is on our lips. On the other hand, it is possible to talk about God without such a sense, and then He not only becomes a mere " he " to us, but also in a measure an " it ", and anything that we say lacks convincing power either to ourselves or to others. To say " He " with an all-encompassing sense of His presence as " Thou " is manifestly a very different thing from saying " he " without any such sense at all, as any experience of the difference between a discussion of God by a religious mind and one by an irreligious mind will show. Masefield speaks of those who " know not God, but talk about Him ".

The third consideration is this. God, according to our understanding of the term, is *purpose* wholly directed towards what is good and seeking as part of the good to be achieved the co-operation of finite persons with Himself. Or, in other words, God is essentially will, disclosing itself to us by what it requires and expects of our will. Or, again, to put it more abstractly, God is the source of all the final values of the universe. They are God's values because His purpose, as part of its essential and unalterable nature, seeks them; they are our values because it is part of our essential nature, as God has created it, that we *ought* to seek them and must learn to seek them with Him.

Now if this be what we mean by God then any attempt cogently to demonstrate His reality by abstract general reasoning is bound to fall short of finality, if indeed it can carry us towards the desired conclusion at all. For it is not possible to penetrate to the region of a man's will by abstract argument. If the will is to be reached and challenged, the valuing side of a man's nature has to be stirred into activity, and that, too, in relation to particular, historical situations of real life where decisions have to be taken and consequences endured. Abstract thought *per se* is unable to do this, because it is in the nature of the case a

withdrawal from the pressures of real life-situations. We may put it differently by saying that the reality of a God Who is essentially will cannot be apprehended by a merely spectator attitude. Just because it is a matter of will, purpose, value, it is disclosed only in the sphere of act and decision. The spectator in the balcony in this case does not see most of the game. He does not, and cannot, see the game at all.

For all these reasons, then, there can be no proving the existence of God, in the sense in which we are using the term God, by cogently demonstrative argument from other data. It is in fact unreasonable to expect it. But this does not mean that reflection and discussion have not an important part to play in building up conviction of the reality of God. They have. All that has already been said about the reflective element in conviction holds. What we have been saying in this chapter merely helps to define the way in which reflection enters in, or rather the way in which it does *not* enter in, and in which nobody should ask that it should enter in, namely along the lines of demonstratively proving, from a consideration of the facts of the world, so that it is put once and for all beyond the reach of questioning and doubt, the existence of the personal God.

We may now return to the main course of the argument, and ask how one may legitimately expect the reality of God, if He be a reality, to be made known to us. We shall take up this question in respect of each of the three elements in conviction in turn: first, the coercive; second, the pragmatic; third, the reflective.

CHAPTER IV

THE COERCIVE ELEMENT IN BELIEF IN GOD

FIRST, then, the coercive element, the element of direct, compelling apprehension, in the awareness of God.

It is perhaps worth saying in passing that all the evidence goes to show that there is, and always has been, such a coercive element in man's experience of God. As we have already indicated, we would expect, on the basis of a general analysis of the elements which go to form conviction in any sphere, that this would be so. But in this sphere of religion the empirical evidence is also particularly striking.

No unbiased student of the religious history of mankind could fail to sense the presence of something extraordinarily gripping in the idea of God in the lives of men and women. The word "God" comes to anyone with any knowledge or sensitivity of mind right out of the heart of the most austere heroisms and steadfast endurances of the human spirit; it comes, if one may so put it, saturated with the blood and tears of martyrs. Anyone who lightly dismisses it as a figment of unscrupulous priests, or as a fantasy product of weak natures, merely reveals a coarse, or at best an ignorant, mind. If anyone must reject belief in God, let it be at least with reluctance and reverence, with some awareness of the problem how the idea of God, if there be no reality corresponding to it, could have thus gripped men all down the ages, and impelled them again and again to do violence to every natural instinct and desire.

We ask, then, how may we expect God, as defined, to disclose Himself compellingly to the human mind?

In order to answer this question we will break up our definition into three parts and take each in turn—though it is important continually to remind ourselves that they are

not in the least separable from one another in the living experience of God.

(1) First, we have said God is the infinite, ultimate source of all that exists, upon Whom all things depend, from Whom they draw their character, in Whom they live and move and have their being. We have in mind here all that may be called the transcendent aspect of His being and character, all that makes Him specifically God to the religious mind, other than, and not merely one of, ourselves.

If now we ask how we would expect such a reality to disclose itself to us, the answer can only be that we can have no expectancy about the matter at all; for in the nature of the case there are no parallels, no analogies on which expectancy may be based. The divine reality is, by definition, unique. Or, in other words, we would expect that if we know the reality of God in respect of this fundamental aspect of His being at all, we shall just know it, we shall just know that we are dealing with God, the ultimate source and disposer of all things, including ourselves, and there will be nothing more to be said. It will not be possible to describe the compelling touch of God otherwise than as the compelling touch of God. To anyone who has no such awareness of God, leading as it does to the typically religious attitudes of obeisance and worship, it will be quite impossible to indicate what is meant; one can only hope to evoke it, on the assumption that the capacity to become aware of God is part of normal human nature like the capacity to see light or to hear sound.

To the critical mind this suggestion that the experience of God must have a core of direct, incommunicable awareness in it, and that if a man has no such awareness, nothing more can usefully be said, may sound at first hearing somewhat intolerable. It sounds at first like retiring into the inaccessible shelter of one's own subjective feelings and private, unsharable states of mind. To this not unnatural reaction three things may be said.

First, we are not suggesting that this element of direct

awareness of specifically divine reality is the only element in the establishment of religious conviction which need be considered. It is our thesis that it is only one element, though a quite indispensable one. Its presence, in however compelling a form, establishes no right to dispense with the tests of practical experience and of the acutest reflection we can command.

Second, one should take care to be fair to the religious mind in this matter. It is a perfectly proper thing for a religious man to say: "I have a direct experience of a certain kind of reality, and behold, I find it so unique that I cannot describe it in terms of anything lying outside that direct experience itself." And he may well add: "It is no doubt unfortunate and exasperating that this should be so, but the responsibility is not mine. The responsibility lies with a universe which happens to be what it is and not something other. I must ask you to accept the possibility that there is such a unique reality and to concede that if there is, it is not unreasonable that it should be known only through direct perception not describable in other terms." Such a situation is, after all, not peculiar to religion. All the basic elements in our experience are incommunicable. Who could describe light and colour to one who has known nothing but darkness? The most that can be done is to get such an one out of the darkness into the light, to lead, or put him, into such a position or state of mind that the light meets and evokes a latent capacity to see.

Third, we must not allow ourselves to be led astray by slippery words like "private" and "subjective". An experience may be private and subjective in the sense that there is no way of communicating it to those who have it not, but not in the least private or subjective in the sense that it does not mediate a reality open in principle to the experience of all, and capable of being formulated in a system of generally accepted truths. The experience of light, to use this example again, though quite incommunicable to those who have known nothing but darkness, is in

fact very nearly the most universal of all our awarenesses and more than any other perhaps it seems to disclose to our minds a public and objective world which is really " there ". Religious experience, at any rate in a form which is not merely rudimentary and transient, is certainly not so universal as the experience of light, but it is certainly widespread and persistent enough to rebut the suggestion that its basic incommunicability is due to its being subjective, in the sense that it is merely a temperamental oddity of a minority of people with no public reality corresponding to it at all.

Modern enquiry has indeed established more clearly than ever before two things: First, how widespread religious experience is in human life from the lowest stages to the highest, how little therefore it is *prima facie* open to the charge of subjectivity in the sense of belonging only to the private biography of a few people who happen to be made that way. Second, how impressively unanimous such religious awareness is that at its heart there is something incommunicably peculiar to itself, both in respect of the reality disclosed through it and in respect of the response which it evokes in the soul. Away back in the beginning of last century the great thinker Schleiermacher began a new era of thought on these matters by insisting that " piety " is not theological or philosophical theorizing about ultimate things, nor is it the seeking to achieve certain standards of behaviour and self-discipline, but is just piety—the response of the soul, in what can only be called joyous abasement, to the ultimate and infinite and worshipful reality which holds all things in its grasp and on which all things in a peculiarly final and absolute way depend. More recent thinkers have insisted again that the essence of distinctively religious awareness can only be grasped by taking note of certain distinctive religious ideas incapable of translation into other terms, such as the " supernatural ", the " sacred ", the " holy ", the " wholly other ", and so on.

Of these recent thinkers, Otto is perhaps the best known,

and we may take a glance at his way of putting things in order to emphasize the point we are making. He holds that an examination of the religious consciousness shows clearly that it centres in a quite distinctive and compelling awareness of a quite distinctive object or reality; hence we can only do justice to it by coining a quite distinctive term. The word he coins is the word " numinous ", from the Latin word *numen*, meaning the might or majesty of deity. At the heart of religion, he says, is a *numinous* awareness of the numen or *numinous* reality. He does indeed attempt to indicate what he intends by these terms, but in the end, as he himself is fully aware, he can only appeal to the religious consciousness itself. The numinous reality is a reality which is supernatural, mysterious, infinite, indescribable, wholly other than ourselves in its absolute, underived being. Yes, but what do these terms convey of his meaning except they penetrate to and evoke precisely the religious awareness itself? The numinous awareness he describes as " creature-feeling ", the sense of being at once daunted and attracted by this mysterious reality. Yet, again, what can these terms convey to those who have never had such awareness even in a rudimentary form? In the end, therefore, we are driven back to the statement that basically God must be known directly as God. And if we are asked what we mean by God we are forced to include in our answer, as we have done, terms, such as " transcendent ", " infinite ", " wholly other ", which necessitate and explain such a statement.

All this has great importance in relation to the charge of childish " anthropomorphism " often brought against religious belief. The charge is that men have only come, and do only come, to believe in God, or in gods, because they project into the world a magnified image of themselves; men have imagined the gods after their own likeness, it is said, and that is all religion amounts to. This is an old theory going back to the Greek thinker Xenophanes, who said that if oxen could paint they would depict the gods as oxen. We shall speak later in greater detail of this kind of

slick explanation of religion[1]; meanwhile it is sufficient to point out that it betrays a gross ignorance of the religious history of mankind. Much more original and fundamental in religious experience has been the awareness of God as " wholly other " than man, a reality incommensurable with humanity, mysterious, ineffable, awful. Even in early religion there is to be observed a reluctance to make images of the Deity, and where images are made they are often in animal and grotesquely inhuman forms. " If oxen ", says Otto, " do seek to imagine their gods as oxen, men would seem to have an opposite ambition, having the strange predilection to see their gods as half or whole cattle, as calves, horses, crocodiles, elephants, birds, fishes, as hybrid monstrosities, and who knows what besides."

The point can be put another way by saying that when the religious mind attributes human qualities to God it is conscious of saying something significant, something which has point, about a reality whose essential nature is *not* exhaustively described in such human terms. There is no significance, there is no point, in saying of a fellow human being that he is fundamentally in my likeness, for that is obviously what he is both by experience and by definition; there is for me nothing else " to him " but just this common humanness. But when I say that God is personal I am at once conscious that I am saying something additionally significant; so far from there being nothing else " to Him ", the discovery of such personal quality in Him carries with it something in the nature of a glad surprise. No doubt there is something very paradoxical for thought in the idea of a " wholly other " which, without ceasing to be wholly other, has kinship with ourselves, but the point is that the religious mind has always been in some degree aware of the paradox, from the primitive who gives his idol the form of a man but the face of a monster, or the form of a monster and the face of a man, to an Aquinas, or any expert theologian for that matter, wrestling with the problem how to conceive the per-

[1] See p. 178f.

sonality of God so that He does not cease to be in effect really God. Those who, like Mr. Aldous Huxley, talk of the mere anthropomorphism of theistic religion and so dismiss it, merely reveal the shallowness of their researches, their neglect of plain facts, and their ignorance of the history of thought on these matters.

How then, we may ask, has personal quality ever come to be ascribed to God at all?

(2) This leads us to the second part of our definition of God, namely this, that the infinite, transcendent God is personal purpose. We ask, how should we expect such a reality to become compellingly known to us?

Here our position is different from what it has been in considering the last point. The uniqueness of God, if we may so put it, applies only to His status as the ultimate and infinite ground of all that is, as what Otto would call the numinous reality. It does not apply in quite the same way to His character as personal will. It is precisely the theistic view that in respect of being personal God is not, so to say, distinctive in the same sense in which He is distinctive in respect of being God, for the reason that He has imparted to man, in a finite and created mode, His nature as personal and has set him in a world of personal relations with other persons. It would seem therefore to be legitimate to expect that our awareness of one another as personal beings should afford some clue to our awareness of God as personal. If there is a divine reality which is (*a*) akin to ourselves in respect of being intelligent purpose, yet (*b*) always non-akin to ourselves in respect of being divine, it is to be expected that He should disclose Himself to us in a way which (*a*) is similar to that in which we become aware of one another as intelligent personal purpose, yet which (*b*) has, without losing that similarity, a certain distinctive quality of its own conformable with its distinctive origin.

We will take up each of these two points in turn.

(*a*) First, a word on how we become aware of one another as intelligent, purposeful beings.

This is a question which has been much discussed by philosophers and psychologists. There is a division of opinion between those who say that something in the nature of a direct perception of one another as personal beings is involved, and those who say that all we directly perceive is one another's bodily behaviour, and that on this we build up the conviction that we are dealing with a being who has an interior life like our own. We have already made plain in our discussion of what we called the indemonstrability of God[1] that we hold the former view, but fortunately it is not necessary for our present purpose to enter further into the matter, for the point we wish to make holds on either view. It is this, that at the core of that full and luminous certitude which we certainly do have of one another's reality as personal beings, however we may come by it, there is always something which I have elsewhere called " value-resistance ".[2] It is in this " value-resistance " that the sense of the other man as personal purpose is centred.

The meaning of this somewhat obscure phrase " value-resistance " is not difficult to grasp if we keep in mind our everyday experience of one another, beginning with what has already been said earlier about the activity of speech. That was indeed a particular example of the basic general principle we have now in mind. When I have speech with a man in relation to any significant situation which concerns us both, I am anxious to gain his consent to, and co-operation with, my own purposive pursuit of certain ends and values. I want to get him to value what I value, to decide in line with my decisions, to act in harmony with my acts. I want him, as the Americans say, to " gear in " with my hopes and plans. And he, no doubt, in greater or less degree is hopeful of getting the same from me in respect of *his* hopes and plans. Unless indeed I am proposing merely to order him about; but that would not be " speech with " in the full personal sense in which we are using the term.

[1] See Chapter III.
[2] See *The World and God*, p. 21f.

"Ordering about" is merely the pulling of a verbal wire; it is not unlike those ingenious clockwork cars recently on the market, and not inappropriately made in Germany, which start when you shout at them "go" and stop when you shout at them "stop". "Speech with" rests upon the assumption, however little it may be brought explicitly before the mind, that the adjustment of one's purposes to those of another is at once necessary and, potentially at least, difficult. It is necessary because another intelligent purpose can, by its very intelligence, seriously, and even disastrously, resist and frustrate my own. It is potentially difficult because I have no direct control over another intelligent purpose. I have to gain his consent, and at any moment he may refuse it absolutely. The independence, the power of resistance, which makes conference necessary may harden into refusal. When that happens, a very painful relationship of tension arises, such as we have all at some time or other experienced; and when the tension is overcome, and harmony and co-operation take its place, there is a profound sense of relief, even of joy, of something precious achieved in and for itself, and not merely in respect of the immediate purposes which are served. This preciousness all the time rests on, and derives from, the power and right of resistance and refusal which each has. The power and right of resistance and refusal constitute the unique value of trust and friendship as against a relationship of domination and subjection sustained by threat and penalty. The extreme expression of the latter relationship is the attempt to paralyse, or annihilate, the other will through imprisonment or death.

Now we suggest that it is this resistance and tension which lies at the core of our awareness of one another as intelligent purposeful beings. It is the clash of purpose with purpose, will with will, as these derive from some inaccessible source of activity within the other man—a clash which we know is always potentially present even in the most friendly co-operation—which throws into sharpest relief his status as

personal. Our everyday habits of thought and speech bear witness to this. A man, we feel, has his status as personal diminished in proportion as his purposes and values become merely subservient to, or echoes of, those of another. He is a rubber stamp, we say, or a door-mat, or any other non-personal utensil we deem appropriate. We speak of a slave-mentality and this seems to most the last word in human degradation. Freedom, we say, is the supreme value, and, in President Roosevelt's words, it is better to "die standing on our feet than live cringing on our knees". Yet licence, mere individualism, we are learning anew, is a frightful source of trouble. The urgent necessity and enormous difficulty of combining freedom and order, independence and co-operation, bear witness to this basic relationship of persons, namely that as persons they confront one another in a tension or resistance of wills which must be affirmed even in the overcoming of it. Even in the totalitarian states the propaganda machine must be kept going full-blast along with the Gestapo and the concentration camp, thus bearing perverted witness to the fact that the stuff of human life is personal, and that unless men are persuaded in some measure, even if it be only by lies, through their own sense of values and their own choices in the light of those values, nothing is secure even for the most ruthless and successful tyrant.

Applying this to the coercive element in the apprehension of God as personal purpose, it is legitimate to expect that this will be along similar lines within this same sphere of our own purposive and valuing life. It is impossible, indeed, to see how any strong and indubitable sense of God as personal purpose, as distinct from entertaining a merely theoretical possibility, could be given in any other way. There must be at the heart of it an awareness of "value-resistance", of some continually renewed pressure upon, or tension with, or challenge to, our own values and purposes as these spring up in our minds with what would otherwise be felt to be an unimpeded and obvious right to satisfaction

—a resistance which we cannot escape, yet to which we are under no irresistible necessity to yield.

And this is exactly how things appear to be in the religious experience of mankind. Whether anything that can properly be called religion has ever apprehended God persistently and consistently as impersonal has been a matter of debate, but it is not open to question that the dominant tendency of all living religions has been to think of God as personal purpose. Nor is it open to question that, from the earliest beginnings of religion, this awareness of God as personal has centred in the volitional and valuing life of mankind. If we take the word morality in a broad sense as indicating the acknowledgment of general norms or standards for conduct, then it is true to say that religion and morality have always been closely intertwined with one another, a fact which is highly significant for the right understanding of both. God has always been apprehended in some sense, however crude, as " value-resistance ", as the demand or claim of another will upon the will of man, a demand to which response of some sort must be made, even if it be the impious and risky response of neglect and disobedience.

(*b*) Turning now to the other point—we said that we should expect that the way of God's disclosure of Himself to us as personal, without losing its similarity to the way in which we become aware of one another as personal, would have a distinctive quality of its own conformable with its distinctive origin. In relation to what has just been said, this means that we should expect that the demand or " value-resistance " will have a distinctive quality of its own, marking its origin, and making it to the religious mind compellingly *God's* demand or " value-resistance ". And this, again, is exactly how things have been, and are, in the religious experience of mankind. The demand which is apprehended as distinctively God's demand has always had a quite distinctive quality. What is this distinctive quality? It is the quality of *absoluteness*. What is meant by

absolute? This is meant, that the demand is apprehended as being, without any qualification whatsoever, *unconditional*. It must not be put into the balance with anything else we value; it overrides all other preferences; it requires obedience even at the cost, if need be, of life itself. It is *absolute demand*. And in and through this absoluteness is disclosed to the religious mind its distinctive origin in God. Because it has this quality it is God's demand. Because it is God's demand it has this quality. The two things, its origin in God and its quality as absolute, are given indissolubly and simultaneously together.

The spontaneous usage of popular speech bears witness to the truth of this analysis. People are accustomed to say, and they do not feel any necessity to explain what they mean, that a man follows a line of conduct very *religiously*, or that he makes a *god* of such and such a thing, when they intend to indicate that his attitude is peculiarly undeviating and steadfast in regard to it. More is meant than that the object in question is highly valued. What is meant is rather that there has entered into the valuation a peculiar added element, which can only be described as an element of absoluteness, an element which makes it impossible to induce disloyalty by appeals to the ordinary motives which usually determine men's conduct. It is noteworthy, too, how inevitably the absolute demands of our modern dictators seem to clothe themselves in religious modes of thought and expression.

It is difficult to resist the impression that we do indeed here confront the main root of religion as an abiding and always crucially important factor in history, the burning, focal point, as it were, of God's entry into human life in a compellingly real way. It is this call of sacred values, this pressure of absolute demand, claiming, in its essential and distinctive impact upon the soul, the surrender of all else, which lies behind what may be called the peculiar obstinacy of religious people. The religious motive, whenever it has occurred in a genuine form, has always been one of

the most invincible of all the motives which govern human behaviour. The hardest thing to stamp out, as tyrants are again discovering to-day, is a religion, and that is because in religion there enters the human mind a compulsion more powerful than even powerful impulses like fear, or hunger, or sex. Genuine religion has always produced the spirit, and often the actuality, of martyrdom. It is this pressure of absolute demand, too, that lies behind the fact that the idea of sacrifice to God, the idea of responding to Him by annulling natural instincts and desires, runs like a red streak, or perhaps we should say like a golden streak, through all religion from the most primitive forms upwards. The mother of ancient times casting her babe into the flames before Moloch and a Schweitzer of modern times giving up the richest things our civilization has to offer in order to tend the savages of Lambarene stand in a line of succession, though no doubt not a direct line, with one another. They are both bowing their heads, the one primitively, fearfully, superstitiously, corruptly, the other with the full and cleansing light of knowledge which has been given through Christ, to what they feel to be a divine presence in their life, a presence which discloses itself through an insistence on the surrender of all things, even the most precious, to itself.

(3) We come now to the third proposition in our definition of God, namely that He is good and purposes man's highest good.

By the word good is meant, of course, that which man can himself see and enjoy as good. To say that God's purpose is good, and then to add that its goodness may bear no relation to what we can ever hope to see, or enjoy, as good, is obviously to say something quite meaningless. We might as well save ourselves the trouble of saying anything at all. But it is of the highest significance to say that God's purpose, which discloses itself to man in absolute demand, also discloses itself as seeking the highest and richest personal life for man. It is of the highest significance to say

that a demand which asks, if necessity should arise, the surrender of this life and all its delights, is, in and through that very demand, pointing the way to man's highest blessedness.

How should we expect to become compellingly aware of this truth about God, if it be the truth?

In the end it could hardly be disclosed to us otherwise than through a direct apprehension that God's purpose in relation to ourselves is thus wholly good and trustworthy, that, to use words we have used elsewhere, He is " final succour " as well as " absolute demand ". In short, the only way to become compellingly aware of it is to become compellingly aware of it! God must Himself tell us so much through His immediate self-disclosure to the human spirit. Yet, granting this, it is possible to say something further as to how we should expect such direct disclosure on the part of God, and apprehension on our part, to enter into our experience.

We should expect, I think, that there would be two factors involved. First, there would be some discovery in practical experience that to serve God *is* to walk the way of increasing blessedness and victory even in this present life, that, to put it very vulgarly, religion does in fact deliver the goods—leaving aside for the moment in what terms " goods " ought to be defined and interpreted. " I had fainted had I not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." This, however, is plainly part of the pragmatic element in the building of belief in God, and can be postponed until we come to deal with that element. Second, as the ascription of goodness to the divine purpose must in the nature of the case go far beyond what can be immediately verified, both because it includes in its scope all the unknown future and because experience shows that in this world many and great evils are not removed, there must always be present a factor of *faith.*

It is this factor of faith which it will be well to examine for a little.

That faith lies at the heart of the religious apprehension

of the world has always been widely recognized. Most people, indeed, even those who make no serious profession of religion, have an inkling of what is meant when it is said of an individual that he is a man of faith, or when the religious life is described as the life of faith. What is meant by faith in this connexion is, however, not at all easy to put into words, perhaps because it is something so basic in human nature. Not infrequently it is described in a way that is quite inadequate to its real nature, particularly to the *compelling* element in it, which is what we are interested in here.

Thus some have spoken of faith in God as though it were hardly more than the bare probability judgment that on the whole it appears not unlikely that the world was made and is sustained by a divine purpose, and that, seeing we must act in all critical matters on the basis of some general interpretation of life, it would be better to act on the basis of that judgment rather than on the basis of any other. Sometimes the judgment of faith is said to be of the same order as the scientist's setting up of a hypothesis. It is deciding to act on " the nobler hypothesis ". A famous definition described it as " betting your life that there is a God ". On the other hand, and somewhat contrary to these views, faith is sometimes thought of as an attitude of mind which runs so counter to the appearance of things, is so little supported even by the probabilities, that it requires a great heave of the will to sustain it; and most people probably feel that the schoolboy's definition of it as making up your mind to believe what you know to be untrue is, like most caricatures, too near to the facts, or what appear to be such, to be comfortable.

The fact is, faith has *too much* compelling conviction in it to be thus equated with a bare hypothesis of probability judgment. On the other hand, it does go beyond, and even at times fly in the face of, the empirical evidence. If it were not for this paradoxical quality there would be no need to give it the special name " faith ". One of the best expres-

sions of its nature is in Santayana's familiar sonnet:

> O world, thou choosest not the better part!
> It is not wisdom to be only wise
> And on the inward vision close the eyes,
> But it *is* wisdom to believe the heart.
> Columbus found a world and had no chart,
> Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
> To trust the soul's invincible surmise
> Was all his science, and his only art.

Faith is "the soul's invincible surmise". Both words are important. It is *invincible* because it rests on, and expresses, a gripping and compelling insight of the soul, as the history of religion shows. It is *surmise*, not, we repeat, in the sense of a bare hypothesis or probability judgment, for then it could hardly be deemed invincible, but in the sense of leaping, without any loss of fundamental certitude, beyond what is immediately experienced, what has so far been explored and possessed. If we were to attempt a fuller definition and description, which, however, like all definitions and descriptions in clumsy, abstract terms, is quite inadequate to the warmth and liveliness of the thing defined and described, we might say: Faith is the awareness of an overshadowing reality which is not perceptible to the senses, nor demonstrable by logical inference from the perceptions of the senses, nor as yet expressible in precise terms; but which is known with certitude to be somehow the source of all that has been experienced, and the promise of all that will assuredly be even yet more fully experienced, of good in man's life.

The nature of faith can be illustrated, as the definition just given might lead one to expect, from the three great cultural activities of man—the pursuit of truth, of goodness, of beauty, in science, in morality, and in art. This is too large a subject to be more than hinted at here, but in a larger treatment it would be possible to show that all these activities, especially at their moments of absorbed and creative activity, rest on, and are carried by, at least an

implicit faith. They rest on, and are carried by, an invincible surmise that there is a world of truth and goodness and beauty which is somehow already real even though by us it is not fully realized and possessed, which offers us, and invites us to launch out upon, inexhaustible possibilities of exploration and achievement. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"—to believe this is faith, and such faith underlies all man's ceaseless seeking of ideal values in his cultural life.

Thus, in the pursuit of truth man's mind goes forth in the confidence that the universe is intelligible, is amenable to his reason. This is not something he can prove; indeed it is the assumption, or rather the profound conviction leaping beyond the immediately given, which lies behind all proof and the seeking of proof; take away this confidence and the nerve of the enterprise is cut. Yet on the other hand, as he proceeds with his task, his mind becomes possessed with the sense of the endlessness of it, of the infinite and inexhaustible depths of the world which he thus so confidently sets forth to explore. He does not really envisage the possibility of man ever knowing all that there is to know, a time when science will come to an end because there are no more worlds to conquer. On the contrary, such a thought, if it ever presents itself, he finds somewhat chilling; the joy of search and discovery, in a world where there is always something to search for and discover, he feels to be somehow man's birthright. So Lessing was able to say, echoing a thought of Pascal's, that if we had to choose between truth and the search for truth, we would choose the search for truth. Fortunately we do not have to make the choice. The position is that we have both; we have truth, and yet, no matter how much we have, we shall always have the zest of seeking and acquiring more.

Concerning the moral life, it is sufficient to call to mind the radical distinction we all draw between action determined by genuinely moral considerations and action deter-

mined merely by considerations of prudence or expediency. The difference rests on the fact that into the former there enters the element of faith, the readiness to launch out on the path indicated by righteousness, " damning the consequences " no matter how dreadful these may appear to be likely to be; whereas into the latter there enters no such element, the definition of expediency as a principle of action being precisely that all consequences are calculated so far as may be, and that path which promises to be the easiest is chosen. Of course, the worst opportunist cannot foresee all the consequences of his acts, and sometimes has to bank on a chance and risk the results; but how different is his " damning of the consequences " from that of the high-minded man. The one is a mere gambler's fling on the probabilities, the other has that quiet and sure confidence in it, in spite of all the unknown possibilities, which is characteristic of faith. Indeed, in one sense he does not " damn the consequences " at all, he knows they will be all right; yet in another sense he does. They are unknown, yet well known. It is faith.

In respect of art, one speaks with diffidence, knowing little of it on its creative side; but at least it may be suggested that a like attitude of faith obtains in it also. In it also there is an awareness, however unformulated and inarticulate, of a world of beauty which can be grasped and actualized in creative activity, yet it will never be possible fully to grasp it and actualize it in all its infinite reach and depth. In the appreciation of beauty in artistic products something of the same sense of an " infinite beyond " disclosing itself through, yet transcending, what is contemplated and enjoyed, is present. It is precisely this that marks the difference between, say, a Beethoven symphony and a shallow and " tinny " jazz-dance.

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Or, in the words of Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn,* surely expressing with delicate allusiveness the same thought:

> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
> Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
> Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
> Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
> Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
> Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
> She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
> For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

We have given these examples to make clear what we mean by the word faith, and particularly that it is not the mere projection of a hypothesis, but has something so compelling in it, even whilst reaching out to, and including, something that lies beyond immediate experience and verification, that it is the inexhaustible spring of some of the highest and most devoted activities of man. In an earlier paragraph we suggested that some such faith-intuition has been an indispensable factor in the whole course of evolution itself.[1] It is part of the life process. One writer has suggested that that enormously important creature in the evolution of life, the reptile which first crawled out of the water on to the land, must have had a compelling sense of some sort of a bigger world out there calling to it to enter in and possess it; must have been, indeed, in its own humble mode of life, like Abraham who, " when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went ". This, no doubt, is somewhat speculative, though it is not illegitimate speculation; but at least it helps to make clear what we are after, namely the compelling element in faith. This compelling element is the source of its creativeness and power.

Returning now to our special interest, which is belief in God, the point is, that our suggestion that there is a com-

[1] See above, p. 25.

pelling faith-insight that the divine purpose which meets us in absolute demand is wholly good, that in its absolute demand it is calling us to the way of our highest enrichment and blessedness in spite of all appearances, is not in the least odd or baffling. Rather we can discern parallels to it in other regions of our experience and, indeed, though this is in a measure speculative, over the whole evolution of life.

It is an interesting and important question how the faith element in the awareness of God as good purpose is related to the faith element in these other human activities, but to discuss that would take us too far beyond our main interest and what the space at our disposal allows. It is sufficient to say somewhat dogmatically that from the point of view of this book, that is from the point of view of one who believes in God in the sense in which we are using that term, it is somewhat misleading to regard the faith element in such belief as merely *another* illustration of the compelling part which faith plays in human life, though in fact we have adduced these other examples primarily in order to illustrate. Rather we would wish to maintain that the religious sense of God as good purpose is the deeper and more fundamental and more inclusive thing. It lies behind the others as the creative and sustaining source of them all. That this is so is supported by the fact that historically religion has been the mother of the arts. It is true that the mother, like other mothers we have known, has sometimes wanted to dominate her offspring, and only after a struggle has the latter achieved a proper autonomy and independence. It was a great step forward in European civilization when science, art and morality broke free from the leading strings of the Church—when the scientist no longer said, in effect, I must not reach any conclusion that the religious authority does not allow, but I must follow the truth wherever it leads; when the moral consciousness no longer said, in effect, I must not travel any path that the religious authority does not permit or enjoin, but rather I must follow the

good as it discloses itself to my own conscience and reason; when the artist no longer said, in effect, I must only create within the limits of ecclesiastical interests and requirements, but rather I must seek beauty wheresoever it may be found, in the highways and byways of life itself. But this, plainly, was not really to repudiate faith in God, though in the force of reaction it often took that form. Rather it was to reaffirm it against cramping and imprisoning restrictions, to go out once again like Abraham, to rediscover faith's long vistas, its always infinite horizons, its ceaseless creative function, under God, in all that is really worthwhile.

It is certainly puzzling, and would call for full discussion if there were space, that many have pursued the highest cultural activities whilst explicitly rejecting the religious, or at least the theistic, interpretation of the world. We may, however, suggest three things concerning such. First, that their activities do rest on an unconscious faith, as we have maintained. Second, that an explicit theistic faith would not merely do no injury to their pursuit of the true, the beautiful and the good, but would rather enrich, enlarge and enhearten it, giving it, in Dr. Oman's words, a world really big enough to breathe in. Explicit denial of God "with the top of the mind" may go with implicit belief in Him "in the bottom of the heart", to use Dr. Baillie's phrases; but the result must be an impoverishment of the whole life. Third, that if such people, on the reflective side, should ever want a reasonable interpretation of the world which shall make sense of these highest activities of their spirits (and should they not so want?) the theistic interpretation which puts good purpose at the heart of things is the best available. The religious interpretation of the world sheds light on man's highest cultural life and man's highest cultural life reciprocally sheds light on the religious interpretation of the world. We shall return to this last point later, when we come to deal with the reflective element in belief in God.[1]

[1] See Part II.

We may now draw the various threads of this chapter together. We have maintained that we must not come to this question of belief in God with wrong and inappropriate expectancies. If God, as defined by Christian belief, be indeed a reality, then we must expect that we shall get to know Him as real in ways appropriate to the kind of reality He is alleged to be. Applying this obvious principle to the coercive element, which we have said must lie at the heart of all living conviction, and dividing our definition of God into three propositions in order to do so, we have seen that it is to be expected that the apprehension of God as (1) the transcendent " wholly other ", (2) as purposive will, (3) as seeking in all things man's highest good, will be given with a certain compelling and unanalysable immediacy. Looking at religious experience we find that this is so. The sense of God as the transcendent other, as absolutely demanding will, as the promise and source of all good, can be discerned, in however rudimentary or corrupt a form, in most, if not all, spontaneous and living religion. Corresponding with these awarenesses there is called forth in the soul of man, in greater or less degree, an impulse towards humble abasement, absolute surrender and obedience, joyous trust and faith.

CHAPTER V

THE PRAGMATIC ELEMENT IN BELIEF IN GOD

WE now turn to the element of pragmatic verification in religious conviction. In considering this we are confronted at once with some difficulties which it will make for clarity to consider first.

In the first place it is clear that, if we are to think to any purpose of the pragmatic element in belief in God, we must first give a more closely defined and particularized content to the idea of God with which we propose to work, than any we have yet given. It has been sufficient for our purpose so far to define God in general terms as the ultimate and eternal purpose and will, the source and ground of all that is, wholly good in itself and wholly directed towards what is good, seeking to bestow the highest personal life on men by calling them into fellowship with itself. But if we now propose to observe belief in God in practice, such highly general ideas are manifestly not adequate, for the reason that nobody can really live in the practical world on the basis of abstract generalities. For practical living the question must be asked, what precisely is the *character* of this divine purpose, what is the good which it seeks, what *is* the highest personal life which is to be achieved through fellowship with God? If we are to consider whether the goods are delivered, we must know what the goods are, or claim to be, and we must agree that they are goods. This, however, puts us in a difficulty, for directly we begin to be more precise and detailed in our account of the religious life, differences of view begin to declare themselves. Any view which we put forward may seem to be merely *our* view and not entitled to be considered the basis of a decisive experiment laying claim, in some measure at least, to universal significance. The difficulty is, however,

perhaps not so great as at first sight it appears to be.

Suppose, under the necessity to particularize, we take, as we shall take, as our basis the Christian view and experience of God as founded on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and on the New Testament. Clearly in so doing we are basing ourselves on one of the highest and most persistent manifestations in history of what happens to human life when it is lived on the basis of belief in God. We are seeking guidance from an experiment of a very crucial kind, one which must be of great significance to anybody seriously considering these matters, no matter how little he may himself at the moment share in the Christian experience and faith. Furthermore we can guard ourselves against what to some might seem to be too *individual* a presentation of what claims to be part of a *general* statement of grounds for belief in God, by (1) limiting ourselves to the broad generalities of the Christian view of God and making no attempt to go into any of the variant details of Christian conviction and doctrine as these have developed throughout the years, and (2) by seeking to relate what we have to say to general truths about human life which, if they be indeed truths, may be confirmed by anyone who has any power or inclination to make more than a superficial observation of the human scene.

These last two points, taken in the reverse order, indicate what will in fact be the sequence of our argument. We shall first speak in general terms of what may be called the human situation and need, and thereafter we shall try to show how belief in God, as particularized in its Christian form (though still broadly set forth), fits on to this situation and need.

The second difficulty follows on from this. If we seek to show how belief in God is related to certain universal and permanent needs and problems of human life, the argument necessarily must fall short of that full pragmatic verification of belief in God, particularly in its specifically Christian form, which experience, we believe, in fact offers. The

reason for this is that some of the deepest needs which the Christian way of life satisfies, it must first awaken. They are only felt, or recognized, in the religious life itself. Moreover, they arise out of, and can only be grasped in terms of, the highly individual life situations and destiny of the person concerned. These difficulties are really inherent in the idea of *discussing* the pragmatic basis of belief in God at all. Such discussion is in fact in a measure artificial. For all discussion, as was indicated earlier in another connexion, is abstract, generalized, reflective, in some degree a withdrawal from the immediacies of practical life; and this disability is increased a hundredfold when what is under discussion is a belief whose sphere of application includes the most intimate concerns of individuals in their hopes and fears, loves and hates, choices and decisions. In other words, if God be personal will meeting man's will in a world of personal relationships with the challenge of an absolute demand which is also an invitation to, and an offer of, the highest personal life, then there can be no full pragmatic verification of belief in Him except by making the experiment of obedience and trust for oneself.

It does not follow, however, that because a discussion of the pragmatic element must in the nature of the case fail to do justice to its theme, therefore it is of little value. The need for God, and the capacity to know God, we must suppose, if God be real, to be present in all, and the setting forth in general terms of that need and its relation to belief in God may well enter into the personal life of the reader in such wise that it ceases to be merely general and becomes, in a measure, pointed and personal. Like a dully glowing and smouldering piece of wood it may, plunged into the oxygen of an individual history, become brightly incandescent and even burst into flame!

The third preliminary consideration arises from the fact, already insisted on, that the processes leading to conviction are always in continual interplay with one another. This is true of all three elements, the coercive, the pragmatic, the

reflective; none is in practice separable from the others. The point we wish to make at the moment is the close connexion between reflection and the pragmatic confirmation of belief. The succour which belief in God, particularly in its Christian form, brings to human personality is always partly a matter of a new interpretation and understanding of life, falling to the side of reflection, and partly a matter of active adjustment to, and conquest of, one's world, falling to the side of the more purely practical. The two are in closest interaction with one another; for without the new interpretation the practical adjustment would not be possible, and without the practical adjustment the new interpretation would soon lose its persuasive power. The interpretation gives the heart to make a new adjustment; the new adjustment, proving successful, further confirms the interpretation. The most obvious example of this is to be seen in the relation of belief in God to what is termed " the problem of evil ". We shall discuss this problem both in our consideration of the pragmatic element, and, later, in our consideration of the reflective element, in belief in God. In the former we shall discuss it more from the angle of immediate practical adjustment; in the latter more from the point of view of the general interpretation of the world which belief in God offers us. Yet plainly, as has just been said, the separation of the two is, in a measure, artificial, and is only made for convenience of exposition. Part of the victory over evil which theistic faith can give arises from the fact that it does shed some light on its dark mystery.

With these preliminary considerations, we turn to consider in a general way the human situation and need.

All living creatures, by the essential conditions of their life, continually fall, for longer or shorter periods, into disharmony with their environment. Only by such recurrent disharmony does life have any movement. If life with too hard a task would cease, equally much would it cease with no task at all. Perfect equilibrium with the environment would be hardly distinguishable in its stagnation and im-

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

The peculiar thing about man is that he has, so to say, not known where to stop in the development of his powers. He has continually evolved new powers to deal with new situations, but, the situations once dealt with, these powers have not ceased to develop at that point, as one might expect; they have evolved still further with the peculiar result that they have continually thrown man into a conflict with his world far worse and far more lasting than the one with which they were originally called into being to deal. This extraordinary fact, which seems to be without parallel in the animal world, is often hidden from us because we are dazzled by the brilliant positive results of man's development. We contemplate man's marvellous mind, his memory, his imagination, his reasoning faculty, his sense of right and wrong, his art, music, science and invention, and in marvelling at this " success " we do not notice that it has been won by a process which has involved him in a far more radical and incurable " defeat ". All his highest gifts and powers,

when they are examined, seem to have at the heart of them a surd element, for which, apart from religion, there is no solution. Had man been able to foresee whither his gifts were leading he might well have said of them what was said in ancient times of the Greeks, *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*—I fear the Greeks even when they come bearing gifts.

We will give some examples of this:

(1) Consider, first, man's transcendent capacities of memory and imagination.

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

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

(2) Consider, next, the consciousness of being "a self", which is a quality peculiar to man.

It is this quality which lies at the root of that sense of personal and individual responsibility which is so essential to man's highest life; it also supplies him with some of the most indispensable categories of his thought, such as time, substance, cause. But one of the further effects of this consciousness of being an individualized self is to give a quite peculiar intensity to man's instinctive loves and affections. A parent's love for a child, or a husband's for a wife, is, of course, a very complex thing, but at the heart of it and giving it its peculiar human quality is a more or less conscious apprehension of the loved one as a distinct self or individuality capable of entering into peculiar *rapport* with the self or individuality which loves. The relationship being between "selves" is a unique relationship, as individual and unrepeatable as the two distinct individualities which enter into it. Hence, if a man loses his wife or child he loses something which quite literally cannot be replaced. It is difficult to believe that an animal losing its mate could be conscious of irreparable loss in anything like the same degree, for not only is individuality not so highly developed but the appreciation of it, the valuation of it, as involving "selfhood" is in the nature of the case impossible. What is the consequence of this to humanity? One consequence is that death becomes a far worse problem and affront than

it ever is to the brutes. In other words, in proportion as human affection rises in quality above mere animal instinct, death becomes a fact increasingly difficult to make adjustment to. And here again, as in the case of memory and imagination, if any adjustment is to be made, it cannot be made through altering the external facts; death is a permanent factor which cannot be altered or avoided. The adjustment must be made in the inner, invisible conditions of the mind. But how? The injunction of stoicism "to grin and bear it" is, of course, not even a solution of the problem on the practical side, for it is a good deal more easily said than done. It is certainly no solution of the problem on the theoretical side. A man may conceivably succeed in grinning and bearing it, but the fact that it is a question of "grinning and bearing" shows that any truly harmonious adjustment has not really been made. The problem for thought is precisely that one of the most distinctive products of man's evolution, namely his consciousness of individual selfhood, has made him such a misfit in a world where death is a permanent fact, that all he can do, apart from religion, is "to grin and bear" it.

(3) Another example is afforded by man's intellectual powers.

As an instrument for mastering his world man's intelligence, as modern science bears witness, is superb; yet it creates problems which it can never solve, for the very attempt to solve them intensifies them. What we have in mind here is not the familiar thought that whilst science can provide knowledge, it cannot, apparently, provide the moral insight and power to use it aright, though that is an aspect of man's "misfittedness" not to be overlooked. We have in mind, rather, something which has to do with the essential nature of the intellectual need and enterprise itself. Man's mind reaches out all the time for a unified apprehension of the world. It is restless and unhappy in the presence of contrarieties and contradictions; contrariwise, if it can bring things together into a single system or perspective, cover a

multitude of conflicting "particulars" by a single all-inclusive generalization, it feels a profound sense of satisfaction. Yet, on the other hand, the intellectual enterprise by its very nature is always breaking down the broad unities of our experience into an ever-increasing number of disconnected scraps and departments. It is rather like a servant who, in tidying up, contrives to make twice as much muddle. Or it is like Tristram Shandy who, setting out to give an account of his whole life, finds he has taken several weeks to recount in detail the occurrences of one day; thus not only will the whole life never be written, but the possibility of ever completing it will get more and more remote. *Yet the motive of writing at all is the desire to complete the whole.* The vast increase of knowledge in every department, the ever multiplying army of experts who, according to a familiar definition of an expert, "get to know more and more about less and less", the impossibility of any one mind keeping pace with it all, creates the same sort of distress as one has in seeing an ill-adjusted film, where the separate pictures flicker and jump but will not settle down into the satisfying unity of synoptic vision. "Synthesis" is one of the great needs of our time; our point is that it is in part an intellectual need; yet the intellect, it would appear, cannot meet it. As knowledge progresses, it seems to recede farther and farther away.

(4) The last illustration is the most important of all. It concerns man's social life.

The part that social co-operation has played in the evolution of man's distinctive powers has been greater than that played by any other single factor. Indeed, to think of man at all apart from his group is to think in a most dangerously abstract way. De-socialized man does not exist, and could not exist. It is not merely that by co-operation man was strengthened both for attack and defence on the cruder levels of the struggle for existence. The matter is more deep-going than that. His whole magnificent mental equipment was only made possible by the interplay of minds with

one another. Speech, free ideas, the conception of a common world of fact and truth independent of our varying apprehensions of it, self-consciousness, conscience—these would have remained, at the most, merely latent powers had man, *per impossibile*, been a solitary animal. Yet, here again, man's distinctive evolution has raised some insoluble problems. It has fitted him to his world in some directions, but it has apparently profoundly " misfitted " him in others. Man's social nature makes him pay dearly indeed for the gifts it brings him.

There is, for example, the conflict, which begins in the earliest years and with which we are all painfully familiar, between the self-assertiveness of the individual and the demands of the group of which he is a member. We do not, however, rightly apprehend the nature of this conflict unless we see that it penetrates deeply into the *inner* life of the individual. The picture sometimes drawn of a straight conflict between the egotism, the self-assertiveness, the power-impulses, of the individual on the one hand, and the requirements and necessities of his group on the other, over-simplifies the matter. It abstracts the individual from his group in an entirely false way. The point is that the individual, in the very moment of chafing against the restrictions of the group, always clamours for its approval. He has " group " instincts as well as " self-assertive " ones. He is divided against *himself*. The criminal, for example, by his crime both defies the group and yet subconsciously wants it, or some section of it, to be impressed by his deed; and this illustrates, in an exaggerated way, what is present in all of us in some degree. The group provides the platform and the audience on and before which we strut; but both platform and audience are apt to seem so huge, or otherwise intimidating, that we feel ourselves to be insignificant nobodies and—strut the more. So inferiority feelings and superiority posturings, the sense of impotence and the lust for power, play hide-and-seek with one another, and we take our place somewhere in the graded series of

social misfits, which ranges from the criminal delinquent to the bossy mistress, or the club bore, or the shy and awkward man who, because he is so egotistically anxious to do the right thing, invariably, to his own intense mortification, succeeds only in doing the wrong.

It is the emergence of conscience, however, which provides the most impressive illustration of our theme at this point. What we have to realize is that conscience is at once a highly social and a highly individualizing and detaching factor in men's lives. Whatever else it is,[1] conscience is certainly in part a social product and finds its chief sphere in social relationships. Through conscience the standards of the group speak to, rebuke, check, the inborn egotism and self-assertiveness of the individual and turn him into a satisfactory group member. Society has, indeed, more than one way of curbing the anti-social propensities of the individual and keeping him suitably subordinate to its requirements. At the lowest extreme it gets at the individual through fear, threatening him, implicitly or explicitly, with all manner of evil consequences, up to arrest by the police and imprisonment, if he does not at least in his external acts conform. On a somewhat higher plane it controls his conduct almost without his knowing it through a long process of education and suggestion, so that to think and act in accordance with the customs and traditions, the manners and habits, of his group becomes almost second nature from which he could as little emancipate himself as from the tones and inflexions of his native speech. On the highest level it " gets at " him through conscience, through his own internal sense of what is right and wrong. Yes, but note the way in which conscience works. The peculiarity of genuine conscience is that in the very act of calling upon the individual to surrender himself to the requirements of that which is larger than the self, namely the group, it calls to him to stand over against the group and detach himself

[1] We shall later discuss the wider problems connected with the scope and origin of conscience; see Part II, especially p 148f

from it. He is now under internal instruction to do what is right because it is right and not because the group requires it. Only thus, only by walking independently and loyally in the light of his own conscience, does he become a really reliable and trustworthy person. Society, in fact, more than anything else needs conscientious people. Thus it comes about that, if it be true that through conscience the standards of society speak to the egotism of the individual, it is also true that through conscience the higher insight of the individual continually speaks to society. Moral progress always comes about through the insights of conscientious individuals.

It is not difficult to see in all this a rich soil for tensions and conflicts in the soul of man, tensions and conflicts which will be more acute the more the individual approximates to what would be generally recognized as a " high type ". To the conflict, already referred to, between the " beloved ego " and the group, there is now brought an intenser, more inward, note of self-awareness and judgment. There enters, in greater or less degree, the dispeace of remorse and self-disgust, the consciousness of guilt and ill-desert, of being unworthy in oneself. The group in its condemnation has now an agent, an ally, within the innermost citadel of the soul itself, and there is no dislodging him. But also, the development of this inner sense of right and wrong opens up still another possibility of conflict. A man may feel himself at any moment to be under obligation to defy his group at the behest of conscience. This is a severe test in any case and liable to cause profound inward disturbance, but owing to the ambiguous nature of conscience as both highly socializing and highly individualizing, the disturbance is often made worse in sensitive minds by a doubt whether a conscience which thus detaches itself from the group-judgment can be wholly trustworthy, whether it may not itself be corrupted by egotism. This points to another difficulty which the development of conscience brings, the difficulty of knowing what is right with a certainty equal to the certainty with

which we know that whatever *is* right, if we can only discover it, that we must do. It is not easy to distinguish between the true voice of moral insight and that false voice which is merely the echo of the conventions and prejudices of our set. And at any time we may find ourselves, amidst the complexities of social situations, in the presence of two or more moral requirements which seem equally to demand our obedience, but which, in practice, are incompatible with one another. How to choose between them we do not know, and whichever we choose we know we shall be in the unhappy position of doing what seems right with a conscience which nevertheless is not at peace.

The full force of these abstract statements perhaps only those can appreciate who have extensive opportunity to know at first hand, and in the light of modern psychological knowledge, the inner discords of men and women. Of the general truth there can hardly be any question, namely that man's conscience, although the indispensable basis of everything dignified and worthwhile in his individual and social life can be, nevertheless, especially in sensitive and perceptive minds, the source and centre of some of the most disabling and insoluble conflicts which men undergo. We like to think of man's dignity as a moral person; in point of fact it is a somewhat untidy and dishevelled dignity, suggesting a king whose crown does not quite fit him and who cannot manage his sceptre, for all its lovely jewels. The thing is continually getting between his legs and tripping him up.

Another example, on a much larger scale, of the endless problems created for man by the combination within him of intense individuality and intense sociality is so familiar in these days that it hardly needs more than mention, the problem, that is, which lies behind the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy. This issue is nothing like so clear cut as contemporary propaganda on both sides tends to make it appear. It is the age-long problem of the relation of the individual to his group reappearing under the

forms of the modern densely populated, highly industrialized, technicalized state, and every country has got to find some sort of solution to it. The problem is, on the one hand, to give to the individual his proper status so that the group does not sink towards the merely organic level of the beehive or the ant-hill, and, on the other hand, to give to the group its proper status, so that the individuals do not become a mere collection of warring atoms. It is the problem of community, of devising a society which is sufficiently centralized to be planned and controlled as a whole, sufficiently democratic to sustain and guard and instruct a truly individual life in each of its constituent members. That the modern world should have been flung into the most horrible of all wars partly at any rate because of this problem, shows how frightfully difficult the problem is.

Enough has now been said in explanation of the sense in which we affirm man to be a "misfit" in the midst of his world. The situation, we repeat, is that the powers which so superbly fit him to his world also tragically "misfit" him; in the very process of solving problems they create others. If now we ask how religion is related to this situation, we cannot but note, as being at least of preliminary significance, that religion affirms that the environment with which man has to deal is in fact much bigger and more lasting than this world, in relation to which his powers have unfolded and have their immediate application. The central affirmation of religion is that the visible and tangible world of time and space is not all, that there is an invisible, intangible world, a supra-mundane, supernatural reality to which man must be rightly related if he is to fulfil his own distinctive nature and destiny. We have then this situation: Here, on the one hand, is man, if we consider him for the moment apart from religion, by his essential nature restless, dissatisfied, at conflict with his immediate environment and with himself, his distinctive powers stretching forth like the filaments of a spider, and either floating in the void or else being torn and broken on jagged rock. Here, on the other

hand, is the religious assertion that there is an environment larger than this world in relation to which alone can man's true life be realized. Here is human nature manifestly wanting a bigger world and there is religion saying that there is in fact a bigger world available. These two things obviously bear some relation to one another. The heart of religion on its practical side is that it is the response of man's spirit to an environment which is greater than, and includes, this world, and which offers a sphere, otherwise lacking, to those powers which, in dealing with this world, have outgrown it. It is the finding of a right adjustment to this world through relationship to a world bigger than this to the natural through the supernatural. " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

This general statement obviously does not carry us very far in the way of a pragmatic verification of belief in God, though it is not unimportant as a preliminary and preparatory consideration. It may be worth while, however, to point out that even in this highly general form, faith that there is a bigger world all about us and awaiting our possession, even if only on the other side of the mystery of death, has not negligible practical consequences; it helps not a little in meeting the problems and frustrations of this present life. Even though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, even if it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared, it is none the less a great help to believe in a general way that such things are prepared, and that life in this world is not all. Even a religious faith which is no more than a vague and generalized confidence in the ultimate, if hidden, decency of things is by no means to be despised.

Most, however, would feel that the pragmatic element in belief in God is a pretty poor affair if this is all there is " to it ". Fortunately it is not all there is " to it ". It is possible to show, in at least some detail, that religious faith does deal with precisely those " misfitments " of man to life in this

world which arise, in the way we have indicated, from his distinctive qualities and powers. But in order to do this we must, as has already been said, particularize our idea of God. We propose to do this in terms of the Christian understanding of God. Of the apparent arbitrariness, yet inescapable necessity, of this we have already spoken.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRAGMATIC ELEMENT IN BELIEF IN GOD (*continued*)

SPEAKING in the broadest generality, Christianity thinks of God's purpose with men in terms of that kind of personal relationship, that kind of intention towards persons, which we call love. More concretely and imaginatively it epitomizes and expresses it through the simile of father or fatherhood. God is Love, is Father, and any deep and far-reaching experimental verification and conviction of His reality must conform to the meaning which these terms, however inadequately and summarily, seek to convey.

But, it may well be said, what do these terms seek to convey? Love is a notoriously ambiguous term, and fathers are of differing quality. This is a real difficulty, but the Christian view has an answer to it. It says that the divine love and fatherhood are to be interpreted in terms of the personality, life, and teaching, of Jesus Christ. It is well to observe that the New Testament hardly ever speaks of God as father *simply*. It nearly always speaks of God "the father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; it means by that, the Father Whom Jesus Christ believed in and lived by, believed in and lived by so fully and consistently that His character shines through all the life and death and words and deeds of Jesus Himself. Thus we have in Christ what is at one and the same time a revelation and an experiment; the revelation is the experiment, the experiment is the revelation. The first, and always by far the most convincing, place where we look for the pragmatic verification of belief in God is Christ. Yet, obviously, it is not a verification of any sort of belief in God we like to bring with us, but just precisely of that belief in God which Christ Himself gives us through His own experimental living. Yet

again, we must add, it is through our own living according to that pattern and in the light of the truth thus revealed, that the full pragmatic verification is given, and that can only be, as was said earlier, in a form so individual and personal that it cannot possibly be adequately conveyed by the generalized statements of such a discussion as this. But we must do what we can.

Turning then to what may be called the Christ-style of life, particularly as exemplified in Christ Himself, it may be suggested that a fairly clear, if generalized, picture emerges of what faith in a divine purpose, summarily characterized as fatherly love, does effect in human experience. We propose to set it forth under four heads. We see faith in this sort of God verifying itself in practical living by giving a man a new relation (1) to himself, (2) to his moral duties and tasks, (3) to the disciplines, frustrations, sufferings of his life, (4) to his fellows. We will take up each in turn, and we will seek to point out in passing how some at least of the "misfitments" of which we have spoken in the last chapter are overcome.

(1) *The new relation to the self*

Clearly a basic problem, perhaps *the* basic problem of human life, is the problem of egotism. It enters into all the general "misfitments" mentioned in the last chapter, being closely connected with the fact of man's self-consciousness, his membership of a group, his great powers of memory and imagination whereby he recalls his own past and anticipates his own future. Modern psychologists have set forth—what indeed everyone has some inkling of—the way in which the "beloved ego" dominates our minds. Unconsciously everything that happens, every relationship into which we enter, every plan, or purpose, or possibility, which opens up, every person we meet, is interpreted in terms of what may be supposed to be its contribution, or, on the other hand, its threat to, the well-being, the dominant desires, the superiority status, of the self. So stated, this

may sound a somewhat misanthropic judgment; yet its substantial truth cannot be questioned, if we allow for a wide range of variation in the way, and in the degree, in which egotism rules the mind. Nor can there be any question as to the deplorable consequences which this dominance of the ego brings with it. All the time it carries within it the seeds of disintegration of personality and of conflict in the world of personal relations, needing only some unusual pressure of circumstance to force them into growth and to bring forth their unhappy fruit. Even what we are apt to regard, in the casual and superficial exchanges of life, as harmless varieties of egotism may work disaster in the peculiar intimacies of, say, married life; and when such varieties, or rather the egotism which lies behind them, get enlarged and reinforced with group feelings, as in modern nationalism, there arise the almost unbelievable horrors of Jew-baiting and modern war. John Galsworthy's observation that what determines human conduct more than anything else is the desire to " save face " states the same thing in another way.

The important thing for our purpose, however, is to take note of the reason why egotism has such deplorable consequences, and must have them. The reason is that egotism, in the degree to which it is present and in respect of the situation through which it has been stimulated into activity, destroys objectivity of judgment. It carries with it incapacity to see the truth. Everything tends to be seen through the distorting prism of the ego, its desire for its own enlargement, its anxious fear of its own diminution. In proportion as a man is dominated by the " beloved ego " he is necessarily in a false world, and if there is one settled and final law of this universe it is that it will not honour lies, it will not cash false cheques. There must be disastrous consequences.

But, it may be said, if the universe will not honour lies, why is not everybody cured of his egotism by sheer experience? This brings us to the heart of the human problem. The most destructive thing about egotism is that because

the ego is anxious for itself, it will not face the truth, least of all the truth about itself, even though it be battering at the door. It is incapable of facing it. Yet reality will not be denied. Because it will not be denied, the incapacity to see and face the truth must be wrought out in internal and external tensions, with the infinitely various symptoms of which every psychologist is familiar, and some of which are writ large across the face of Europe to-day. Even if a man catches a glimpse of the real nature of the problem, catches a glimpse of himself as an egotist, the problem is far from being solved. Indeed such a glimpse may worsen it. For then he begins in a new way to take *himself* seriously. He begins to worry about his egotism, and by a law of reversed effect his effort to be non-egotistic makes him more subtly and obviously, and even odiously, egotistic than before. It is a perfect illustration of the truth that he that seeketh to save his life shall lose it. Moreover, conscious perhaps of the way in which egotism destroys objectivity of judgment, and of the danger of what we have come to call wishful thinking, he becomes almost incapable of believing anything that he would desire to be true, even though in point of fact the evidence for it may be strong and would convince a less self-conscious and sophisticated mind. The refusal to believe what is pleasant and satisfying to believe is, as someone has suggested, the modern substitute for the mediaeval hair-shirt, and is equally unhealthy and the product of egotism.

Is there any way out from this vicious circle? If there is to be a way out, two things are necessary.

First, a man must come to a point where, as a modern writer puts it, "he has nothing more to promise himself by veiling the truth about himself, and nothing more to fear by uncovering it". Or, in other words, he must be shown the truth about himself in such wise that he is at the same time given the courage to accept it. It must be truth in a form which, without ceasing to be truth of the most searching kind, casts out fear. Whence is such an apprehension

of truth to come—not as an occasional glimpse, too rare and passing to exercise a cleansing and formative influence on the mind and life, but as a vision daily renewed and penetrating recreatively to the innermost springs of character and conduct? The answer we give is that it can come only from the awareness of God as holy love. Seeing *God* as holy love, a man begins to be conscious of the limitless demands of such holiness and of the deep-seated lovelessness and self-centredness of his own nature; yet also, seeing Him as holy love, there is no need to fear that truth, to deny it, to pretend that things are other than they are. He is able to acknowledge the truth and yet be at peace about it, and in such acknowledgment and peace the clarification process in his mind begins. There is no longer any need for posturing before God, or man, or the self. It must be insisted that only the awareness of *God* as holy love can bring about these results. God is the only reality which can be apprehended as knowing every movement of the heart, the only reality in respect of which a man has nothing more to promise himself by veiling the truth. And God is the only reality which in the nature of the case can carry the final guarantee that there is nothing more to fear by facing it.

Second, a man needs not only this constant revelation of his own deep-seated egotism and the power to be at peace about it, but also, more positively, to have his mind filled with the vision of a purpose infinitely bigger and higher than himself, which he can reverence and serve and to which he can dedicate his life. Only by having the windows of the mind thus open constantly to "ampler air and farther distances" can the interior stuffiness of the self be at least kept in check, if not finally dispelled. We put this another way when we say that humility—true humility—is the basis of all righteousness, all sound judgment, all mental health. By a true humility we mean one which goes with an unimpaired strength and self-reliance. Plainly such humility cannot be cultivated. No one can resolve with the

least chance of success, " henceforth I will be both humble and self-reliant ". As Charles Bennett has said, " what the self-conscious cultivation of humility for its own sake produces is a false and detestable substitute for the real thing ". Only the awareness of God, only reverence and service to Him can fashion a character which is both humble and strong, humble before, and strong in, the infinite scope and richness of His purpose of love. This brings us back from another angle to what was said earlier about faith. The strong sense of the overshadowing, infinite, undefeatable good purpose of God, the courage to commit oneself to it in spite of all appearances to the contrary, which is what faith is, is directly concerned with the problem of egotism and of achieving a right relation to the self.

These deep truths of our nature can be illustrated from still another angle. Just as one of the manifestations of egotism is the fear to face unpleasant facts and truths, with a resultant shutting up of the soul in untruth and self-deception, so egotism in its turn is one of the manifestations of fear. It is another vicious circle. Fear turns a man's attention morbidly back upon himself, whereas a trusting and confident attitude to life, as any can verify, usually goes with a blithe self-forgetfulness. This gives us a clue to the reason why some people *are* so egotistical, why indeed we all are in varying degree. The reason goes back, as psychology has shown, to childhood, when for one reason or another, usually because of a wrong relationship to the parents (themselves egotists, probably through *their* upbringing), the child shrinks back in face of life, and so develops the unconscious habit of mind of meeting all situations in an attitude, primarily, of fear and anxiety for itself. The part that faith in God can play in relation to this hardly needs pointing out. It is difficult, indeed, to see from what other source can come a confidence and trust in face of life which is in the least likely to break through the vicious circle we have described, at one and the same time checking the

egotism which produces the fear, and checking the fear which in its turn reinforces and sustains egotism.

In Christian experience all this is indissolubly bound up with, is given and confirmed through, the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ. It is our conviction, indeed, that it is only in and through the specifically Christian revelation and the specifically Christian response to it, that the awareness of God can bring about, in a deep-going, permanent and maximal way over the whole breadth of a man's experience and in face of every contingency of his life, the results whereof we have been speaking in such highly generalized terms. To go into that, however, would take us far outside our present interest which is to present in outline the general grounds for belief in God. We may, however, in accordance with that interest, set it forth in such wise that it affords an illustration, to us the supreme illustration, of the general truth that faith in God is indispensable if the problems which cluster around, and centre in, man's highly developed self-consciousness are to be solved.

According to the New Testament the man who is reconciled to God in respect of his sin, who is forgiven, *accepts himself as a sinner*. What does this mean? It means, first, that he now at least begins to be objectively realistic about himself, to see himself as he really is, to have no illusions about the extent and culpability of his own shortcomings; second, that, nevertheless, the sting of remorse, of unavailing regret and self-despising, and consequent feverish attempts to excuse and justify himself and all that that entails of internal conflict and division, is removed. The forgiven man is content to stand before God just as he is and to be accepted of Him not because of his own deserving, not because he can urge a claim or make a convincing excuse, but simply because of the divine mercy. He is at peace about his sins in the presence of God. In the teaching of Jesus the profoundest and most moving expression of this is in the parable of the prodigal. Under the relentless, frustrating pressure of circumstances, which in the last analysis is the

pressure of God Himself, the man comes to a bleak moment of disillusionment, literally disillusionment, i.e. of the destruction of illusion. He comes to himself, that is, his real self, sees himself as he really is, gets back into a world of realities. He is purged of self-justification; he no longer tries to persuade himself that he is anybody in particular. How penetrating in their psychological and spiritual insight are the words Jesus puts into his mouth: "*make me as one of thy hired servants.*" And behold, in that frame of mind, he finds he is received without reservation and without condition. Another expression of the same truth is in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican praying in the Temple. This is a picture of the contrast between the man in whom egotism with its blindness has been, or at least is beginning to be, broken up, and the man in whom it is not. It is the former, the man who really does stand in the presence of God, sees himself as he really is in that searching light, yet at the same time commits himself to God in trust, who is at peace—"goes down justified".

The same truths disclose themselves in the rest of the New Testament, not in abstract theoretical statement, not even in moving parabolic illustration, but through the whole tone and temper of the writers. Somehow through their contact with Christ (and particularly through his death on Calvary—it is the business of theology to try to understand this connexion) they have been brought into a new attitude of realistic judgment about themselves and yet are at peace about it. They confess themselves to be sinners, not because this is traditionally expected of them, nor because it is provided for in a liturgy, but because, with a deep inwardness of judgment, they really do see themselves to be such in the piercing light of truth which in Jesus Christ has begun to penetrate through all the smoke-screens the ego puts up. When Paul says, "I am the chief of sinners"; when John says, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves"; when the writer to the Hebrews says, "for the word of God is living, and active, and sharper

than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do "—it is plainly not pietistic affectation. It rings true. Yet equally clear and sincere is the note of reconciliation, the note of acceptance and peace. It sounds paradoxical, but it is not really paradoxical. It is precisely the peace which makes the realism possible, the realism which makes the peace possible. And both realism and peace spring from the vision of God as Holy Love as given in Christ and His Cross.

It has been necessary to go into this at some length, because the problem of egotism and of finding a proper humility underlies in one form or another most other personal problems. Hence to insist that it cannot be solved apart from right faith in God must be an important part of the pragmatic verification of religion. But we must emphasize the word *right*. The centrality, and acute difficulty, of the problem of egotism is once again shown in this, that the ego can as well take hold of religion as anything else to protect and nourish itself. Even the thought of God's love can be so used that He becomes hardly more than an ally of our own desires, a beneficent and indulgent contriver of good on our behalf. And, still more surprising perhaps, the thought of His holiness can also be so used. Even the confession of sin can become a form of self-display, reaching its climax in those who claim the distinction of being unforgivable even by God, and perhaps, in a final perversity of self-display, destroy themselves. But if egotism can thus use religion, it does not follow that it can even begin to be cured in any deep and permanent way without it, without *right* religion. As to what is right religion, that is, we believe, to be found only in that sort of experience of God of which the New Testament is the norm and which it is the business of Christian theology, particu-

larly the theology of the forgiveness of sins, to understand and to state.

(2) *The new relation to duties and tasks*

What we have to say here relates especially to what was said earlier about the relation of the individual to his group through conscience and the moral sense. The conflict between, on the one hand, the instinctive and impulsive life, particularly as this is taken up into and reinforced by self-consciousness and the egotism which seems inevitably to go with self-consciousness, and, on the other hand, what are felt to be the demands of duty, whether these coincide with, or run counter to, the requirements of the group, can be, as we have said, a most rending and disintegrative thing in the personal life. We spoke in the last section of the necessity of some experience of forgiveness if failure to meet the demands of duty and conscience is to be dealt with in such wise that there is neither self-deception nor self-despair, but rather a humble and self-accepting sincerity concerning it. Here we are concerned, not with the way in which failure is to be dealt with, but with the way in which success is to be achieved. We are concerned, in short, with the problem of moral dynamic.

The problem is twofold.

There is, first, the problem of finding a reinforcement to what for want of a better phrase may be called the "duty-impulse", sufficient to give it the victory over the pull of other impulses and interests. We must assume that the thought of duty has some quickening power in all but abnormal minds, that it normally evokes in greater or less degree an impulse towards the performance of what it enjoins. If a line of conduct has no such quickening power when contemplated, then it is not really being apprehended as duty, i.e. as that which is intrinsically binding on *me*, but rather, at best, as a legal requirement which it is expedient not to evade. The question, then, is of the reinforcement of this "duty-impulse". Second, assuming one can find the

motive power to do one's duty, there is the question of what is to be done with those other impulses which the doing of duty necessarily denies and frustrates. Here we come in sight of the familiar, but very difficult, problem of repression. That the performance of duty can involve, even for an honourable nature, great inner conflict and strain, leading sometimes to serious mental trouble, is a commonplace of modern psychology, and even of everyday life. The woman, for example, who devotes her life, out of a sense of duty, to caring for aged parents has to face the difficult problem of her frustrated impulses towards marriage and motherhood and home. An extreme example is the "shell-shock" condition which develops in the soldier who wants to do his duty and does it, but only by the violent repression of fear.

Turning to the first aspect of the problem, to find a reinforcement of the duty-impulse of the right kind is by no means easy. Plainly a system of social rewards and penalties does not really solve the problem. For in the first place such a system can take note only of the externalities of conduct, of behaviour whose social reference is immediately apparent, whereas the demands of morality penetrate to the most domestic intimacies of the personal life, indeed to the hidden thoughts and intents of the heart. There are, after all, *secret* sins. Then, again, the demands of conscience, as we have seen, sometimes run counter to the demands of the community. It is precisely in such circumstances that reinforcement is most needed if a man is to keep to the path of moral integrity, yet so far from society here offering the inducement of its rewards it offers rather the discouragement of penalty, even of the severest kind. And again, in any case, it is very much to be doubted whether a system of rewards and penalties can properly be called a reinforcement of the duty-impulse as such. It may prod a man to perform the act which duty requires, but it may also result in the weakening of the duty-impulse by appealing to another motive altogether, fostering a habit of mind which

does not do anything primarily because it is right, but only because it is rewarded, or its omission punished. Such a habit of mind is, indeed, a danger to society. Society is in a dilemma here, as is evidenced by contemporary problems and perplexities in connexion with conscientious objectors. It needs more than anything else truly conscientious men, and yet, because of the limitations under which it is bound to work, it is forced to discourage them by disapproval and penalty. If it be said that such penalty makes it possible to identify the truly conscientious or that it strengthens the duty-impulse by helping to cleanse it of all mixed motive, then that is a tacit admission that the duty-impulse in the nature of the case has other sources, and must find other reinforcement, than social incentive. Finally, over all merely social reinforcement of duty there hangs the risk of reinforcing at the same time that all-pervading egotism of which we have already spoken so much. The hunger for approval is a most dangerous and destructive appetite. It is the taproot of hypocrisy, vanity and self-display.

Some of our modern humanists, discerning the need for moral dynamic, yet seeing also the danger which threatens the moral life if it seek that dynamic through too great a dependence on the group, have supposed that all that is required is education in morality. Such education would be, as all education is, a matter partly of direct instruction, partly of the development of intelligent insight, and partly of learning by experience. By it the developing individual would be gradually emancipated from the sphere of rewards and penalties in which, as a child, he starts, into a sphere where he sees for himself the reasonableness and worthwhileness of the dutiful and virtuous life, and desires and seeks it for its own sake. In other words, the duty-impulse is potentially strong enough in itself; all it requires is proper training and opportunity. Apart from the question whether this view does not rest on a falsely optimistic view of average human nature, it suffers from this fatal defect, that even to human nature at its best and most responsive it offers,

and can offer, in terms of its purely humanistic outlook, no satisfactory basis either in thought or feeling for the final sacrifice at the behest of conscience of life itself. Yet without a readiness to make that final sacrifice, morality has already begun to grow corrupt and to decline towards a more or less disguised calculation of expediencies. We may put it in this way: the moral problem has not been solved if a man is not given incentive, if need should arise, to choose death rather than disobey the imperative of conscience; yet why should anybody choose death rather than disobey the imperative of conscience, how can such a course be seen as intrinsically worthwhile and reasonable, if the humanist hypothesis be true and such imperatives disclose nothing higher than the mental processes of an intelligent animal trying to make the best of his swiftly vanishing tenure of the earth?

The point is an important one and is worth dwelling on. We are not suggesting that *nothing* can be done by education and training to foster in men sensitive moral dispositions and strong moral impulses. A man, no doubt, can be conditioned in this sphere as in others. Nor are we suggesting that nobody holding a humanistic view of morality, or indeed holding no particular view at all about it, has ever, or could ever, give up life itself for something deemed of greater value than life itself. That would be absurd. For one thing there are instincts so strong that they can and do override the instinct of personal self-preservation—the instinct of motherhood, for example, or the instinct of what may be called group-preservation through which men will gladly die to defend their country. What we *are* suggesting is that the moral life cannot be truly succoured, nor the problem of moral incentive properly solved, by a purely humanistic moral conditioning, still less by relying on altruistic impulses being strong enough to defy the instinct of self-preservation. For, almost certainly, sooner or later situations will arise which are so new and complex and perplexing, or in which the altruistic instincts

are so weak in comparison with, say, the preference to remain alive, that a merely unreflective response along the lines of previous training and habit is no longer possible. In such a situation one has to think, and when one begins to think, the question why one should be prepared to give up the only life one has, or even only some of the most delightful things in it, for conscience' sake cannot long be avoided. To this question, why?—when once it has been raised—a purely humanistic interpretation of morality has no adequate answer.

If we are to see that this is so, it is important not to misinterpret the question, why should I give up the only life I have for conscience' sake? It has been said that to ask the question, why be moral? is already to be immoral. That is true if the question means, " tell me what benefit is to accrue to me from my being moral! " But if the question means, " give me an interpretation of the world, and of my relation to it, of such a kind that I can see this otherwise so frightful sacrifice to be *reasonable* ", then it is a quite proper question, and demands an answer. The attempt to isolate the moral life from any kind of world view is, in short, artificial, and its artificiality is revealed as soon as situations arise which, at one and the same time, ask the last sacrifice and give a man opportunity to reflect. Then the whole soul cries out for a " metaphysic of morals ", asks the question, what is the chief end of man?—a question which cannot be answered in abstraction from the question, what is the nature of the world which has brought forth man and presumably determines what he is meant to be and to become, and the conditions under which he must seek to become it? If the humanist says, " well, you may ask the question, but it cannot be answered; we need not, but in any case we do not and cannot, know what is the relation of the human person to the ultimate nature of things; therefore the only thing to do is to obey the call of the highest without such knowledge ", the reply we make is that such a statement itself says, in effect, a great deal about the relation of the

human person to the ultimate nature of things, and profoundly affects our capacity to do the very thing we are thus bidden do. We are told, in effect, that we are as moral personalities *isolated* in the world. We are told that these ideals of truth and beauty and goodness which seem to demand the surrender of all are *no* clue to the nature of the world in which we live. Such an agnosticism, which expresses in fact a most positive theory as to the relation of our highest values to ultimate reality, cannot fail to affect our whole response to life and to touch the innermost springs of enterprise and enthusiasm. Why give up the only life we have for truth, beauty and goodness when these *may* have no more significance, so far as the ultimate nature of things is concerned, than, say, chicken, ham and tongue?

The question, we repeat, is a question put by reason; it is a request for sanity, the completest possible sanity, and most of all at the point where we are asked deliberately and reflectively to give up life itself. The definition of sanity is that it is truthful dealing with the real world; how then can it be sane to act as though there were something of more value than our natural life, if it is well within the bounds of probability that there is nothing beyond our natural life to which any value can attach? To give up for the sake of goodness the only basis upon which any seeking of the good can be done, can only be sane if the ultimate reality of the world with which we have to deal is somehow itself concerned in goodness, so that nothing is really lost by giving up life, but rather by that very act a deeper harmony with the environment, or rather harmony with it at a deeper level, is achieved.

And yet, on the other hand—we repeat—except we *are* ready to give up life itself nothing can prevent morality from declining into a calculation of this-worldly expediencies, which is the end of morality.

This brings us to our contention, which is that belief in God, in our sense of the term, gives, as nothing else can, the right answer to all these problems. When even the highest,

most exacting, and most inward demands which are laid upon us by our moral insight are apprehended as the requirements of an eternal and austerely gracious purpose of love which is calling us to our own highest life in and through every surrender asked of us, then not only is the sanity of the final sacrifice established in the way indicated in the previous paragraphs—indeed, to anyone so apprehending, the question of sanity could hardly arise—but also the struggling stream of duty is reinforced by new impulses of religious confidence and joy. The moral task, being now set within the infinite context of the divine will of good, ceases to be mere task, imposed as by some imported "Gauleiter" on the sullenly rebellious forces of the soul; rather all that is within us begins to move towards, and to find satisfaction in, its fulfilment. For only the thought of God can draw forth *all* that is within a man, and only the thought of Him as love can draw it forth, in spite of any cost of suffering, in joy and blessedness. That love and the fulfilling of the law go together is a psychological principle which anyone can verify for himself by observing what goes on in any happy home; that only the apprehension of *God* as love can carry this principle beyond the limits of such restricted, domestic situations into every sphere of our experience, it hardly requires space to show. Even the non-religious, or the not-very-religious, by a little imagination, can see the difference it would make if they could wholeheartedly believe in the unfailingly gracious purpose of God meeting them in even the most difficult moral conflicts and demands. This is not to say that the man of vigorous religious faith has no longer any need to act from a sense of duty. For him, as for others, situations are bound to arise which strongly stimulate the feelings and desires of the natural man, which in short bring him under temptation. Jesus Himself was not exempt from temptation. We can even say that to surrender life itself at the behest of conscience *ought* to involve a struggle, for to "get a kick out of" going to the stake would almost certainly reveal a

most unpleasantly and morbidly egotistic frame of mind. Yet, even so, the doing of things from a sense of duty is a very different matter when set in the context of God from what it is when it is not so set. It has a different "feel" and an entirely different relationship to the inner life and its development.

The truth of these remarks is, once again, not impugned by the fact that the thought of God can be, and often has been, related to the moral life in such wise as to corrupt it. Not infrequently God has been brought in merely as the guarantor of adequate rewards and compensations in the next life for the deprivations which faithfulness to duty brings a man in this. This is no more a reinforcement of the duty-impulse than is the promise of rewards and penalties by the man's group. It results rather in the weakening and corruption of it. But the thought of God we have in mind is quite different from this (though, carelessly stated and superficially interpreted, it can easily be made to bear some resemblance to it), in that, as we have maintained, it does invest the last loyalties of conscience with a sanity and worthwhileness they would otherwise lack. It is important to make some careful distinctions here. Perhaps in this connexion I may be permitted to make use of some words I have used elsewhere. "The word 'reward' can have two quite different meanings. It may signify primarily the motive which leads to a way of life, or it may signify primarily the consequences which flow from a way of life. When Jesus bids His disciples endure cheerfully all the loss and deprivation which loyalty to Him will bring them in this life, 'for great is your reward in heaven', that, so far as the words go, could easily be interpreted as meaning 'obey Me now for the sake of the reward hereafter'. Yet clearly nothing could be farther from the mind of Jesus than such a low-pitched morality as that. It is contrary to His austere and continuous insistence on the necessity of complete submission of the self to, complete forgetting of it in, the will of God. What then is meant? Precisely that

it is the will of *God* to which He is asking men to dedicate themselves, the eternal, unchanging purpose of the Most High which will be finally victorious and in Whose victory those who serve it will necessarily have part." A man may surely, nay, ought to, bring before his mind this infinite reach and scope of what he does, if it have such infinite reach and scope, and steady his soul by so doing, just as Jesus wanted His disciples to do—without necessarily falling into corruptly egotistic motives. Indeed, on the contrary, it is only such a larger vision which is in the least likely to release him from whatever selfishness still clings to his soul. To look for future reward in this sense, in the sense of participation in the universal rule of that kingdom which one is now called upon to serve, is the only thing that can lift a man above his own little self and enable him to give himself, without reserve and without calculation, to the pursuit of the good. Only by getting the windows open to such a wide open sky can the narrow stuffiness of the soul be cleansed away, as by great gusts of fresh air.

Turning now to the second aspect of the moral problem, namely the matter of repression, what we have to say here has already been hinted at in the previous paragraphs. Indeed the problem is really one problem and the answer one. To set the moral task in the wide context of the divine graciousness and love is at one and the same time to find a new and healthy motive for obedience and a new and healthy redirection and sublimation of strong impulses which otherwise, denied their normal outlet, might tear a man internally to pieces. One does not wish to minimize, or speak glibly, of the difficulty of this problem for many people; but it would take too long to go into it at any length. We can only state the truth which is familiar to any who have had first-hand experience of this kind of problem, that the indispensable preliminary step, without which nothing else is possible, is that the mind should no longer rebel against, but should *accept*, the deprivation. The question then is, how may such acceptance be brought about?

The answer we give is that it can only be brought about when the *negative* necessity to deny the natural instincts and impulses of the mind is continually taken up into a great *positive* vision which commands in principle, and increasingly receives in fact, the allegiance of the whole man. Only such a larger and more inclusive sense of vocation can carry the partial deprivation so that it ceases to be a destructive repression in the mind. Of the unique way in which the awareness of God gives this vision and this sense of vocation there is no need to speak.

Once again, no better illustration of the truth of all this can be found than that which is afforded by the New Testament. A dominant note throughout is one of moral empowerment, not as something longed for, but as something already being given and experienced as part of the whole new relationship to God into which men have been brought. And this, be it noted, goes with an ethic so high that some have even declared it to be merely visionary and quite unattainable. This paradox goes back to Jesus Himself. By precept and by the whole quality of His life He held up the most exacting standards to mankind and called for the most austere self-denials. Yet manifestly nothing was more remote from His mind than merely to lay new demands on their errant wills and already overburdened consciences. That this is so is shown by His criticism of Pharisaic religion, by the note of joyous emancipation with which He proclaims His message which He declares to be good news, and by such a saying as "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you . . . for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." It *is* a yoke, but it is light and causes no weariness, and the comparison intended is with the purely legalistic "duty-yoke", with its promise of rewards and penalties, of the Pharisees. The same note runs through the other pages of the New Testament. It comes to expression in the contrast Paul draws between law and grace, and in the quiet assurance with which the most lofty virtues are listed, not

as something to be laboriously striven after, but as " fruits of the spirit " to be possessed here and now as part of the riches of the new life in Christ. The Apostle tells his converts, it has been said, to " put on " these virtues as though it were as simple as putting on one's hat.

(3) *The new relation to the disciplines, frustrations, and sufferings of life*

That belief in the wise and loving purpose of God is an equipment for meeting victoriously even the direst challenges of life is obvious. Indeed so obvious and undeniable is it, that some have supposed that belief in God is merely a form of wishful thinking by dint of which people keep themselves going in face of difficulty—a way of whistling to keep up their courage in the dark. Such a theory usually fully concedes that such religious whistling does in fact keep up courage and morale. Indeed it is disposed to grant that it would, on the whole, be a pity if religion died out. If whistling does keep up your courage, why not whistle—if you can? We shall deal with this theory later when we come to speak of the reflective element in belief in God.[1]

Meanwhile it might perhaps be suggested that since it is apparently conceded by everybody that belief in God helps people in their troubles, there is no need to spend time discussing it. On this side the pragmatic element in belief in God, it might be supposed, is obvious enough. Belief in the goodness of God—of course it helps you along, if you can believe in it. Why argue about it? Yet we cannot just leave the matter like that. For our purpose is to state the case for belief in God in the broadest and most universal way that the subject allows, and that means that we must relate the pragmatic side of the argument to broad and universal needs of human nature as these are played upon by the broad and universal facts of man's situation in the world. As indicated earlier, our argument rests upon a certain inherent " misfittedness " in human nature to its world,

[1] See Part II.

and it is the more necessary to insist again upon this here because we do not want to give the impression that we regard *any* instances of people finding help through belief in God as bringing, so to say, grist to our mill. We do not. On the contrary, we believe that there are ways of drawing comfort from the thought of God which are thoroughly pernicious, and which lead straight into—perhaps we should say rather come straight out of—a morass of falsehood and wishful thinking, of private and parochial egotisms, which seem the more petty when they invoke the great and universal name of God. The thought of a supernatural and invisible agency ceaselessly contriving things for my benefit, and guaranteeing, in spite of all, the final satisfaction of my desires, is no doubt a heartening one—to me; but it is obviously as dangerous as it is heartening. Everything depends on what our desires are, and what we conceive our true benefit to be. Here, more perhaps than anywhere else, bad religion tragically handicaps the case for good; a false idea of God masks the true.

Seeking then to think, in the most general terms possible, of our common humanity and its common situation of need, we may suggest that there is one inclusive problem which in one form or another underlies all our life. This is the problem of *waste*. The problem of waste is bound up with the distinctively rational nature of man, with his power to look before and after, with the need to grasp past, present and future in a unity of meaning. We touched on this when we spoke earlier of man's transcendent powers of memory and imagination, and of the difficulties these powers inevitably bring with them. Here we see the same thing from another and a wider angle.

In the demand for a satisfactory meaning in life, in the shrinking in unutterable desolation of spirit from any suggestion that it is meaningless—"a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing"—all the powers of man's intelligent self-consciousness are involved—his reason, his emotions, his purposive will. Reason demands that there should be

an adequate reason for things, that they should be leading on to something worthwhile. Feeling insists that the worthwhileness should be such that the human heart can in the end rejoice in it. The will insists that its own activity should be a significant factor in the ongoing process. The whole man, we repeat, is involved, and there is, therefore, no situation in his life in which the question of waste, the question, what is it all for? is not, if we may so put it, just round the corner. Even in the most zestful activities, those whose intrinsic excitement and interest seem to be their own sufficient justification, this is so. Particularly as we get older the question has a way of suddenly poking out its head and peering round the corner at us, of coming out of the wings and mingling in the business of the stage or, at any rate, of making disconcerting "noises off", of blowing a gust of cold air across even the pleasantest picnic. One does not need to have an unduly melancholic temperament for this to happen. One has merely to be an experiencing and reflective self-conscious personality, with memory and imagination, confronted with certain inescapable and unalterable facts.

There is, for example, what may be called the fact, or law, of satiety. We grow tired of even the most interesting pursuit. This results not merely from fatigue, but also from the fact that the pursuit, after a time, seems to have nothing more to offer us. It is not so much that we have exhausted our own resources of interest and attention as that we have exhausted *it*. We crave for fresh worlds to conquer, new avenues to explore. Now that, of course, does not matter in our youth. One activity exhausted, we can take up another—"the world is so full of a number of things". In a child such a transiency of interest is entirely appropriate and proper. He flits from interest to interest, dropping this thing, taking up that, in a continuous process of putting away as childish what at first seemed an inexhaustible "brave new world". And it would be a horrible and precocious morbidity if the thought ever occurred to him

that the toys which once absorbed him were so much waste. But as the years pass, and we become imprisoned in the fixed and narrow routines of a " settled-down " middle-age; as we come under the necessity of finding our satisfaction in one or two rather pedestrian activities with neither desire, nor opportunity, to begin anything fresh; as memory of the past grows longer and anticipation of the future shorter, so that we can now in increasing degree see our life *as a whole* —so the law of satiety is apt to make itself felt as a permanent problem for which there is no solution whatever in merely taking up something else. And behind and within " satiety " there is the horrid spectre of waste, a generalized sense of futility and frustration. What does it all come to in the end? The child sees no problem of waste in discarded toys; he is beckoned on by the apparently limitless horizons of life. But it is a different matter when the horizon has contracted to the walls and ceiling of, say, a city office or a suburban villa, when what once seemed an ocean shrinks to the dimension of a shallow pond, with old tins littering the bottom and the messy water only deep enough to wet and freeze the feet.

This is especially the problem, as we have said, of middle-age. The danger is that we seek false solutions of it. " Taking to drink ", which is on the whole a failure of middle-age, is a not infrequent solution. The more usual course is to compensate by setting the ego still more firmly on the throne. Frustrated outwardly, the life-impulse turns back in a new intensity on the self. After all, the ego is the most permanently interesting natural object available to us, when the world begins to fall flat. " Middle-aged people ", I once heard a young person say, " are so self-absorbed and pompous." She did not realize how severe the test is, and how likely it was that she in due course would be the same.

Then there is the fact of the general transiency of things, an acute and painful sense of which may lay hold of a sensitive spirit precisely at those points where life seems to be

offering most. And once again the problem of waste presents itself.

> The beauty of the world hath made me sad,
> The beauty that will pass.
> Sometimes my heart hath shaken with great joy
> To see a squirrel leaping in a tree,
> Or a red ladybird upon a stalk,
> Or little rabbits in a field at evening
> Lit by a slanting sun,
> Or little children with bare feet upon the sands
> Of some ebbed sea,
> Things young and happy.
> And then my heart hath told me these will pass,
> Will pass and change, will die and be no more,
> Things bright and green, things young and happy,
> And I have gone on my way sorrowful.[1]

No doubt something of unhealthy introspection and self-consciousness, or of sheer affectation and pose, can enter into the melancholy of some poets and philosophers, particularly the sort that can cry in a sonnet at midnight "Alas! the days that are no more", and then in the morning sit down to a good breakfast of ham and eggs. No doubt some melancholy has its origin in the liver, and is of no greater significance than the dose of salts which would speedily cure it. Yet even these occasional morbidities bear witness to something more permanent in the human situation on which they nourish themselves, and without which they would be so silly as to be almost meaningless. Even the most unreflectively zestful minds must at times, by virtue of that same memory and imagination to which we have referred, feel the cold breath of the thought of "the days that are gone", of the swift oncoming of age, of that black-out of the gorgeous panorama of life which is the grave. To the more reflective, however, this merely passing thought tends to become a more or less continuous ground-tone (except in so far as it is continually met by religious faith—of which we shall

[1] I have been unable to confirm the source of these lines. I believe they are from a poem by the Irish poet, Padraic Pearse.

speak in a minute), and the more so if they unite with reflection an active concern for the enrichment and ennoblement of human life. To such the hunger for permanence amidst the transiencies of this temporal scene, the sense of time's always relentlessly corroding tooth, is never wholly absent, and at times it becomes almost too painful to be borne. Yet to cease to have this hunger and this sense would be to cease to be a man and to become an animal; it would be to lose the dignity of rational self-consciousness.

Another aspect of the same problem is the painful discrepancy which there always is between the ideals which fine spirits have dreamed of, and sought to realize, and what in point of fact has been achieved. What a mocking disproportion there is between the world as it now is and all the idealism that has been poured into its history! Well might one ask, in words we have used elsewhere, are things after all "exactly as they seem so often to be? Is there at the heart of the universe only a great hole through which all the sacrifice, all the loving and loyalty, all the yearning of the race pours age after age and is lost? What if, whatever we do, it all comes to the same thing in the end? Many gave their lives in the four years' war in the hope and with the faith that thus they would help to end war; and now the earth is shaking as never before in its history with the tramp of armed men. Did all that yearning and aspiration and sacrifice count for nothing? Has it poured through a hole and been lost? "[1]

This brings us to what is perhaps the most oppressive form in which the problem of waste presents itself, namely what may be called the waste of suffering.

It has often been pointed out that men do not feel that suffering as such is necessarily a problem. If they can see that the suffering is leading on to something sufficiently valuable, they consider it to be justified and worthwhile. Indeed, within limits, suffering may be felt to add to the

[1] *The Healing Cross*, p. 207.

value of the end to which it may serve as a means, providing a certain zest of conquest and achievement both to the process and the product. Everything, in some degree, is worth the pain it costs. So much so, men will even create artificial difficulties in order to have the pleasure of overcoming them, as for example in games, and the obstacle race at a sports meeting has always been a popular symbol with moralists for life itself.

But by the same argument, suffering which is non-productive, or whose products are felt to be disproportionate to the agony endured, is felt to be the greater affront and challenge. To its intrinsic undesirability as pain is added the further undesirability of sterility and waste; furthermore it gets taken up into the general meaninglessness which appears to overshadow human life, contributing to it in a specially poignant way, and itself being made more poignant by it. In some ways the most distressing impression of apparently meaningless and gratuitous suffering is given through the contemplation of the ruthless warfare of nature—the preying of birds and beasts upon one another, in the fight for existence, with claws and beaks and teeth—for there it has no observable relationship to those high personal ends of human life which at least in some degree make man's suffering worthwhile; nor is the situation in any clearly observable way complicated, and in a measure explained, by sin. Yet even in human suffering, when every allowance has been made for the resultant good which is felt in at least some degree to justify pain, and for the way in which man brings suffering on himself through his own folly and sin, the waste of suffering is challenging enough. To watch someone slowly eaten away by cancer is to have the cry wrung from the soul again and again, to what purpose—this waste? And when wholesale calamity descends on man's life, and on all that he labours to create, through the operation of forces over which he has no control, as in earthquake, flood or typhoon, the impression of meaningless destruction and

waste is, in spite of all incidental heroisms, so overwhelming as to leave even the congenitally optimistic with little to say.

Some remarks will be offered later from the side of the reflective element in belief in God on what is usually called the problem of pain.[1] What we want now at this point to make clear is how the thought of God, according to the Christian understanding of God, that is to say, the thought of God as love, meets this problem of waste in all its aspects. In this last sentence we would wish to emphasize the phrase *in all its aspects*. It has been suggested by a great thinker that at bottom all religion rests on, and expresses, the conviction of what is called "the conservation of values". Stated negatively such a conviction is precisely that there is no waste. We do not fundamentally quarrel with this way of putting the matter. Indeed we have ourselves suggested earlier that faith, in the sense of a confidence that life is essentially worthwhile, lies at the heart of religion and of the life-impulse itself, indeed is a factor in the whole process of organic evolution. But, as we also said earlier, the pragmatic verification of religion cannot be fully entered into on the basis of such a vague and ill-defined faith in the "ultimate decency of things" or in the "conservation of values". Such generalized truths do not, and cannot, meet the problem of waste as this presents itself in the piercing and agonizing particularities of our personal existence. What I need to know is not that values of some sort, I know not what exactly, are conserved, but that these precise and particular values which constitute the essential meaning of my life here and now, and from the apparent denial of which my whole soul recoils in desolation, are conserved. To one whose beloved child is dying in agony the exhortation to believe in the conservation of values would sound so out of place as to be almost impertinent.

Now there is one precise and particular value from which

[2] See p. 235f.

all the other precise and particular values of our life hang suspended as from a hook, and that is the value of the precise and particular self which I am, and of the precise and particular selves relationship with whom constitutes nine-tenths, or more, of my existence and its significance. Let me but know that selves are of indestructible value as selves—that is to say, in all their unrepeatable individuality —and all other problems are in principle disposed of. In other words the ultimate and all-inclusive waste, which, if it be a fact, spreads a blight over all else, is the dishonouring and destruction of persons; or, to put it positively, the ultimate and all-inclusive gospel is the assurance of the indefeasible value of persons. Let me but know that persons, as persons, are conserved, and their highest welfare ensured, and I am at once set in a new relationship to all the ills of life.

Another way of saying the same thing is that the problem of waste, in all its aspects, comes to a sharp focus in the fact of death. Death is on the surface the complete destruction of the individual, and if it be what it appears to be, then there is little, if any, protection of the soul against a recurrent and growing sense of the futility of that which now fills our days, of the burden of the transiency of things, of the frustration of purposes that always fall short of the ideal, of the bitterness of sickness and suffering running out at the last into the final insult of dissolution. But if it be not the end of the person, and if the person's highest welfare is ensured in whatever lies beyond, then all these troubles of our life become different things. They do not cease to be troubles, but in that longer perspective it becomes impossible to call them meaningless waste. The way in which the significance and welfare of individuals will ultimately prove to have been served through, or—since we must take into account the part that sin, as a trouble and a trouble-maker, plays—even in spite of such troubles, no doubt remains hidden from us; but it is the confidence that they are served which makes reconciliation to them possible.

Now to say that the universe is in fact such that persons are conserved and their highest welfare ensured is to say abstractly what is said more concretely and personally, and therefore more adequately, by the doctrine that God is love. By God we mean, as we have said, the ultimate reality with which we have to deal, and by love we mean that relation to an individual which "holds" him and "affirms" him and intends his highest welfare. By bringing these two thoughts together the all-inclusive answer to this all-inclusive, basic problem of waste is given. And, be it noted, it is given in a form which is more adequate to our need than the abstract statements about values, ultimate welfare, and what-not, which we have been making. There is something in the relationship of love which eludes and transcends abstract, propositional statement. For one thing, love individualizes—it is a way of grasping and affirming the distinctive and peculiar "me" of the other person; but that in the nature of the case cannot be put into abstract, generalized statement. Also it involves a feeling-relationship which again cannot be put into abstract, generalized statement. Love, in fact, is an ultimate of the personal order, and cannot be expressed fully in terms of other things and relationships. It has to be experienced in order to be known. Tell me that God respects my personality, that He intends my highest welfare, that He will never use me as a mere means, and you have no doubt told me something which it is very important for me to *know*; but tell me that God loves me, and my whole being does not merely know these things, but—how can one put it?—comes to rest in a final and all-inclusive peace and joy, which the abstract phrases can neither evoke nor convey. On the human level it is the difference between the proverbial coldness of charity and the warmth of genuine love. It is the difference between being in a boarding-house, even of the most comfortable and well-run sort, and being at home.

Once again, the best illustration of all this is to be found in the New Testament. The New Testament is, at one and

the same time, a book of hardships and a book of joy and triumph. All the experiences which we have cited as illustrations of the general problem of waste are to be found there in a form appropriate to the events recorded. There is the narrow and limited horizon of apparently interminable imprisonment. There is the deep sense, which every Hebrew mind had, of the transiency of all earthly and human things, even the most delightful—"all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." There is experience of the frustration and disappointment of high hopes and purposes and ideals and prayers. There is bitterness of bodily suffering and weakness; there is a poignant sense of the whole creation groaning and travailing; there is bafflement in the presence of the seeming confusion and chaos of human history and human affairs. Yet in spite of it all, and through it all, and carrying it all, is an unshakable peace, rising at times to a note of what has been called "conquering, new-born joy". And the source of this peace and joy is the profoundest possible conviction and experience, given to men through Jesus Christ, of the love of God. The most moving and eloquent expression of this is, of course, in the concluding verses of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What we said earlier about the deeply reverberating meaning of the word love to any to whom it has meaning at all, in comparison with abstract statements about values and their conserva-

tion, can be illustrated by substituting the one for the other in this passage. For example: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through the knowledge that the true good of persons is never sacrificed."

(4) *The new relation to one's fellows*

Much that might be said on this has already been hinted at, or implied, in what has already been said on the first three points. A new relation to the self and its egotisms, to the requirements of duty, to the sufferings and anguish of life, *is* a new relation to our fellows. For the truth is, of course, that to think of the human person, in any aspect of his life whatsoever, as apart from his fellows is a false and misleading abstraction. Such an isolated individual does not, and could not, exist. Personal relations are the very stuff and texture of our existence as persons. Every problem has some relationship to them, and a very high proportion of our problems has to do with them almost exclusively.

We again confine ourselves, however, to one all-inclusive problem which in one way or another underlies all others in this sphere. It is the same problem as that to which reference was made at the end of the last section, namely the significance of persons; but we come at it now from another angle.

It is hardly too sweeping a statement to say that the most frequent and deep-going cause of disharmony and conflict between men is that in greater or less degree, for one reason or another, they treat one another, or are conscious—however dimly—of being treated by one another, not as persons, but as things, not as ends in themselves, but as mere means to something else. This is true from the most intimate domestic relationships up to the vast and complex community problems of social and international life.

It is hardly necessary to say what we mean when we speak of treating one another as persons and not as things, as ends in themselves and not as mere means. We know well enough when someone is using us as a mere instrument

of his own purposes, not as a person to be trusted, but as an object to be manipulated and controlled by threat or trick or subterfuge. We know well enough, too, the intense feeling of degradation and resentment such treatment induces, as well as of utter estrangement, estrangement which lies always on the verge of positive hatred, and can only with the greatest difficulty be healed. And if evidence be asked that this sort of relationship is basic to most of our human problems we can only reply to the reader, keep your eyes open and observe human tensions and problems in the nursery, the home, the school, the office, and everywhere else. It is possible, however, to give a hint to guide the observation, namely that we should notice the quite universal tendency of the aggrieved human spirit to speak of its grievance as an "injustice" or "unfairness", to cry out at least for "justice" if for nothing more.

Justice is a notoriously difficult concept for theoretical ethics, as the history of thought on these matters from Plato onwards shows. Yet the core of the matter is surely not difficult to grasp. In the cry for justice, the bitter resentment against injustice, which in quite early childhood manifests itself, there comes to expression the demand to be accorded full significance as a person, the claim that one should count in whatever is going forward as one whose personal life and history and destiny are entitled to the fullest and most sympathetic consideration and evaluation *in their own right*, and not merely so far as considerations of expediency, or profit, or personal predilection, may dictate. The old definition that justice is giving every man his due puts the point very well, though it should be pointed out that the proposition only has meaning in so far as the idea of man is assumed already to convey to the mind the idea of one who has dues, one to whom duties are owed. That is to say, the proposition appeals to a man's immediate self-feeling as a person. This it tacitly, and rightly, assumes to be there to appeal to. To speak of giving the table its due would be nonsense.

It follows from all this that one basic and indispensable requirement for the better ordering of personal relations is that men should be given a deeper and stronger sense of the significance of one another as persons, so that it comes increasingly to rule their relations to one another in spite of every powerful solicitude to the contrary. The emphasis should be put on the phrase "in spite of every powerful solicitude to the contrary". A theoretical acceptance of the worth of every man and of his claim upon us as a man can, and usually does, go with a practical, and even at times callous, denial of it in this, that, or the other direction. And even the theoretical acceptance of it has a very precarious hold upon the common mind of mankind, as is appallingly revealed by the history of war and slavery and social injustice and class snobberies of all sorts, culminating in the ruthlessness of present-day fascism and communism, not to speak of more intimate personal relations in, say, the matter of sex and the satisfaction of sex-needs—each usually provided with its flimsy substructure of theoretical justification.

Our contention is that there is in fact nothing which can meet this basic and indispensable requirement of the personal order except the conviction that God Himself values persons as such. It is only as the love of God is apprehended as resting on every man, only as every man with whom we have to deal is apprehended as bringing with him the requirement of God Himself that we should accept responsibility for him as a person, that there is the least likelihood of the powerful forces of the emotional, instinctive life of the natural man being held in check. This is plainly borne witness to by what has happened in the world of recent years. That disregard for the individual and what may be called the dechristianization of Western civilization are connected with one another is now almost a commonplace. But it is none the less true and tragic for being a commonplace, and it affords on so grand and unique a scale a pragmatic verification of belief in God, in the

Christian sense of the term, in the sphere of men's relations with one another, that nothing more needs to be said.

In the New Testament a profound revaluation of persons as such in the light of the love of God, and the transformation of personal relationships which it brings is so evident on almost every page that detailed reference is hardly necessary. The Christian Church is envisaged all the time as a fellowship of people in which the ordinary cleavages which separate men and women are abolished; if they are not abolished, then the Church is false to itself and to God. There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. The characteristic marks of Christian living as set forth, for example, by the Apostle Paul, are plainly an expression in abstract terms of these transformed relationships, and they are explicitly set forth as the "fruit of the Spirit", the implication being that only as such do they come within the compass of man's achievement at all. In the Epistle to Philemon the abstract becomes concrete and living in a most impressive way. In this letter is disclosed a piece of personal dealing which, from the point of view of the forces which normally govern the conduct of even quite decent people, can only be described as miraculous—a Pharisee Jew beseeching a well-to-do Greek to take back into his household as a "brother beloved" a runaway slave. Yet, though miraculous, it happened, and it happened, as it only could happen, on the basis of a new thought of God, the thought of Him given in Christ, the thought of Him as love resting impartially on all men without any exception whatsoever.

CHAPTER VII

REFLECTION AND DECISION IN BELIEF IN GOD

WE are now ready to consider how the reflective element enters into belief in God. In the third chapter we set on one side the idea that it enters in by providing a demonstrative proof of His existence. How then does it enter in, how ought one to expect it to enter in?

It enters in, to begin with, as reflection enters in, or should enter in, to all our experience. It enters in as a check upon hasty, or superstitious, or fantasy beliefs, which seem, nevertheless, to the believer to have considerable coercive and pragmatic justification. It enters in as a help towards consistency of living by bringing to light contradictory or compartmental ideas; by helping to lay bare to a man in times of stress where his real, as against his imagined, certainties lie, and what is the precise nature of the challenge they have to meet; by giving belief a massive unity which is not merely implicit and unconscious, but which is explicitly grasped and possessed. It enters in as a factor in the formulation of belief in propositions so that it can be communicated, so far as the subject matter allows and as adequately as possible, to others. Here, in fact, as elsewhere the unreflective, unexamined life, if not exactly not worth living, is certainly not likely to be in the highest degree worthy living.

It is clear that these forms of the contribution of reflection to belief in God can hardly be made the subject of separate treatment in a work of this kind. On the one hand, they are much too intimately bound up with the texture of personal experience, as this unfolds in each individual life. The way reflection enters in will be determined by the situations a man has to meet, and by his psychological and

spiritual history up to the moment of his having to meet them. On the other hand, if we were to make the subject of our reflection the distinctively Christian form of experience of God in all its reach and depth, if we were to try to draw out in propositional statement, and build up into a unity, all that is implied in it, we should be committed to the whole task of systematic theology, and would need to produce a work on Christian Doctrine, and possibly on Christian Ethics as well.

If, however, we consider belief in God in its most general form, which is what we are mainly interested in in these pages, the reflective element will enter in in a correspondingly general form. The thought of God, we have said, is the thought of the ultimate reality from which everything else in the last analysis is derived and draws its character; therefore, even if we cannot read it demonstratively *from* the facts of the world, it ought, if we bring it *to* the facts of the world, to help us to make sense of them, better sense than, or at least as good sense as, any other available interpretation. To believe in one God is, in principle, to believe that the world is one. To believe in the divine mind is, in principle, to believe that the world is intelligible. To believe in a divine purpose of good is, in principle, to believe that the world is intelligible in terms of good purpose. We say " in principle " because belief in God is belief in an infinite and transcendent mind and purpose of good, and therefore the unity and intelligibility of the world will certainly lie beyond the full comprehension of our limited minds. But we are entitled to expect that they should not be wholly beyond us, and that the idea of God should be a powerfully unifying and illuminating idea, even though it falls short of answering all questions and clearing up all mysteries.

In other words, we are entitled to expect that belief in God, according to our definition of the term, should provide us with a reasonable and credible philosophy, with a principle of interpretation of the world in its broad aspects

and constitutive principles which shall be as convincing as any other philosophy or interpretation, and more so than most. To say this, it is hardly necessary to repeat, is not to go back on what was said in Chapter III about the impossibility of rationally demonstrating the existence of God. For what we have now in mind is not demonstrative proofs *from* the world, but rather confirmatory considerations which present themselves to us when we bring belief in God with us *to* the world. It is a matter of the coherence of the belief with other facts. If we find that the religious intuition which has arisen from other sources provides the mind with a thought in terms of which much else can without forcing be construed, then that is an intellectual satisfaction, and a legitimate confirmation of belief, which it would be absurd to despise.

We propose to deal with this side of belief in God in the second part. The reason for doing this and thus making a bigger break in the argument at this point than elsewhere is not merely one of spacing and convenience. There is another reason which is bound up with the whole line of thought we have been following and which it is not unimportant to grasp.

It is that the religious life can be lived in a high degree of conviction and power without these broad, reflective considerations, of which we have just been speaking, being entered into at all. That is obvious, for, plainly, most people have very little philosophy, or even capacity to understand the argument it pursues. Many religious folk are not aware of the problems involved at all, or only occasionally glimpse them. When they do glimpse them, they feel that the problems are beyond them, and are willing simply to believe that better equipped people than themselves could give sufficient answer. Such an attitude, provided it be part of a courageous and charitable outlook, which does not merely run away from problems and questions so soon as they come over the horizon, nor denounce those that feel and urge their challenge, is perfectly justified. No

religious life, we have said, can be lived effectively without *some* reflection, but this *particular* type of reflection, what may be called general philosophical reflection on theism as such, is not by any means indispensable to the religious life, nor by itself is it able to produce and sustain the religious life. If the coercive and pragmatic elements in belief in God are not present, philosophical arguments about theism will avail nothing; at the very most they may remove some negative hindrances in some minds. If they are present, such arguments will come in more as a subsidiary help and support than as part of the main structure —a sort of flying buttress, necessary for those whose edifice of belief has within it a certain tension or stress, but unnecessary for those whose edifice of belief has no such tension or stress. It follows from this that the important thing for *all* of us is that a living sense of God should arise and persist within the soul, through its own inevitable compellingness and its own continuous pragmatic verification. Given that, there is for those who are so disposed some point in travelling farther; without it, the rest of the journey is likely to be hardly more than mere academic exercise.

There is then a natural pause in the argument at this point. In the pause, so to say, we propose to try to draw what has been said in the previous pages to a focus, and to some sort of conclusion.

The whole course of our discussion hitherto makes clear that in the end this great matter of belief in God must be left to the reader to settle in the intimate places of his own personal being and life. He alone can translate the abstractions of generalized statement into the concrete and pungent realities of living experience.

Thus, in respect of the coercive element in belief in God, we can, at the end of all discussion, only ask the reader to interrogate his own mind and experience with such sincerity as he can muster, and discover whether in point of fact the compulsions of which we spoke in Chapter IV

have not, in greater or less degree, made themselves felt there. If nothing that was said in that chapter fits on to the reader's experience in such wise that he is prepared to pursue the matter in all seriousness further, there is nothing more to be done.

Perhaps for most the first thing to look for, and look at, in such self-interrogation, is what we have called the pressure of sacred values, or of absolute demand, the sense that there are some things for which we are under call, if need be, to sacrifice life itself, for this, we have said, is the focal point of God's entry into human life in a living and compellingly real way.

Some years ago there was given to the world the story of Captain Oates. In order to save the lives of his companions by relieving them of the necessity of carrying his helpless, frost-bitten body over the Antarctic wastes, Oates rose one night, said a word to the others, hobbled out of the tent into the blizzard, and was seen no more. There was no hot emotion, no public applause, no ecstatic vision, to urge him on. It was calm, unadulterated self-immolation, a strong, quiet obedience to something within the Captain's soul which compellingly asked him to walk the way of certain death for the sake of the others.

The vital question for each to ask himself is this: what is the instant and spontaneous response of his spirit to an incident such as this? It is not a matter of working oneself up to feel something. It is merely a matter of being a normal, unsophisticated human being. Is it admiration that is felt? We admire a clever ballet-dancer, the technique of a great violinist, the forehand drive of a great tennis player. Is that all we accord to a Captain Oates? It is very far from being all. Does there not enter in something else, something which we can only call *reverence*, a sense of something absolutely right and worthwhile, something *sacred*, something which under no circumstances would we allow anybody to turn into a jest?

If this, or something like it, be the reaction of a man's mind, we can only ask him to consider what, for his most serious judgment, it implies concerning the meaning of life taken as a whole, that the complete loss of it under such circumstances should be accounted sacred, and worthy of that total obeisance of the soul which we indicate by the term reverence. It is important, perhaps, to emphasize the phrase " the meaning of life *taken as a whole* ". Acts like that of Captain Oates, or even the opportunity for them, are not everyday occurrences, and might well seem to be too unusual and remote to disclose to us the meaning of that endless round of apparent commonplaces of which the life of most men is made up. We would wish to insist, however, that the story of Captain Oates—or rather, our response to it—makes explicit and throws into relief something which is implicit in the scale of values by which most men, who are capable of such a response at all, do in fact pass judgment on one another and (less easily, perhaps) on themselves. Most men and women would agree that there are certain deeply wrong things that no one ought to do in any circumstances whatsoever, even circumstances where, if they are done, none will know and few, if any, suffer. Even if they failed when the test came, the compellingness of the judgment, and the endorsement of it by all that is within them, would be evidenced by the deep sense of personal failure and degradation which would remain. Most men and women, too, have had fore-glimpses—even if it be only fleetingly, through, say, a novel or a film—of what a perfected humanity, embodying the highest personal life, might be; and have felt at least a stirring of desire that they might be the sort of person who could and would do something, even at great cost, to bring it about. And in the intimate and ordinary interchanges of life it is, without exception, precisely that spirit of selflessness which finds its final expression in the giving of life itself for others, which we most look up to and admire, and which seems to speak

to us most compellingly and condemningly of what we ought ourselves to be, but are not. It is wrong and misleading to idealize human nature too much, but it is equally wrong and misleading to minimize and under-estimate it. In any case, our purpose at the moment is to ask a question rather than to make an assertion—though there is behind the question a definitely held view. We can only ask of anyone sufficiently serious in mind to be interested in these matters, whether in his spontaneous reverence for such acts as those of Captain Oates, in his secret judgments upon himself, in the idealistic, heroic yearnings which continually flit across his spirit, and in other ways best known to himself, he does not recognize within his own soul the counterpart to that strange, haunting challenge and pressure of absolute demand, asking in principle the surrender of all, which we have maintained to be the touch of God.

Whether such an one will himself recognize it to be the touch of God upon him, that again is a question which nobody can answer for another. All we can do is to ask him to be as honest with himself as he can, and not to allow himself to be led away by theoretical doubts and questionings which, however cleverly argued, do not in fact succeed in smothering altogether what may well be a deeper and more trustworthy response of his mind. We can only ask, does not the call of *sacred* values (the word "sacred" should be pondered again) carry with it the awareness that it comes somehow out of the ultimate heart of things? Without that, would such values retain their quality as sacred, as overriding all other values and preferences whatsoever? Would not the "feel" of them be entirely different, if we had irresistible reason to think that their source is merely within the narrow and transient processes of our own minds?[1] Why is it that, whenever men are confronted with the necessity of surrendering life

[1] Cf. what was said above on the problem of morality, p. 86f.

itself for some end deemed sacred, they instinctively talk the language of eternity? Even the perverted mind of Hitler, when calling upon Germans to give up all, must speak in terms of what, in the symbols of time, expresses the idea of eternity—the German Reich is to last, he says, a thousand years.

At this point a man should also take a look at the element of faith in his life. This element is certainly there, for the life process itself, as we have seen, rests upon it; and it is also implicit in the higher reaches of man's cultural life. No doubt it is possible theoretically to entertain the notion that there is no good purpose at the heart of things, no satisfying meaning, that time destroys all, that all is vanity and emptiness, and even, like Omar Khayyám or the author of Ecclesiastes, take the trouble, somewhat inconsistently, to express such pessimism in a beautiful form. The view is not logically absurd. But no one can, or does, live consistently on the basis of it. The belief that something worthwhile is being wrought out in human life, and that human wills are under obligation to participate in it, is in fact so compelling that we hardly notice that it is there. It is like the air by which we live and yet which we do not perceive at all until it is taken away. It is well for a man to ask himself whether it is consonant with his status and dignity as rational personality, not to speak of other things, to leave such a supremely important matter in the sphere of the unconscious and unexamined; whether, seeing that he must live by such faith, it would not be better to live by it with open eyes, and, relating it to the sense of "sacred" values in life already referred to, commit himself explicitly and deliberately to belief in the high and holy purpose of God.

Finally—we are still thinking of the coercive element in awareness of God—we can only ask anyone who has followed us thus far to call to mind, and to reflect upon, certain moments when his mind has been gripped and abased by the sense of the infinite mystery of the universe

in which he finds himself alive, by the feeling of utter dependence upon an unfathomable creative power surrounding and upholding all things. It is hard to believe that there never have been such moments even in the lives of those who dwell in towns amidst the products of man's labour, and who, in consequence, so easily fall victim to the illusion that the sustenance of life, and its well-being, depend only on the efforts of themselves and of their fellows. Such can still catch a glimpse of the infinite distances of the stars above the roof-tops; and for such, birth and death, at least, stand as solemnizing reminders that "He (or at least something) hath made us and not we ourselves"—are windows through which to look out upon the dark immensities of being out of whose bosom we have come and to which we return. Such a creaturely sense of the daunting, yet fascinating, mystery which surrounds us, if it be present, is surely not to be kept apart from the call of absolute values coming out of the heart of things, nor from the faith that in the service of such values is the secret of man's highest life—if these in any degree be present also. When all these merge together, then, we suggest, the full chord of awareness of God as Holy Will has begun to vibrate in a man's soul. We further suggest that it is a very serious matter to disregard it, or otherwise set it on one side.

As for the pragmatic element, we can only ask anyone who has followed us thus far whether what was said in Chapters V and VI about the relation of belief in God to the deep and inescapable needs of human life does not fit his own life sufficiently to awaken at least a preliminary sense of the practical relevance and validity of such belief, and to call for a more serious experimental living on the basis of it than any perhaps undertaken hitherto. Obviously, as has been said more than once already, it is only through such serious experimental living that the pragmatic element in the building up of a massive conviction of the reality of God can play its part to the full;

hence the point is soon reached when any further abstract statement on the matter will not help, but rather perhaps be a hindrance.

There is, however, one further thing which perhaps can usefully be said.

It is not unimportant to realize that this whole matter of experience of God, alike on its coercive and on its pragmatic sides, comes to a focus in the individual life at points of really significant decision and choice. The pathway to assured conviction lies through the cross-roads of decision and choice. Or to put it differently and more adequately, God speaks His plainest word to a man in events, in things that happen to him, and which he has got to do something about. The reason for this is that, as was said earlier, the prime truth about God in His relation to men is that He is personal purpose, seeking a personal relationship with them. The fullest disclosure of Himself must therefore be centred in the will and in situations which depend for their further unfolding on what a man chooses to do or not to do.

What we have in mind may perhaps be set forth by a simile, which, though very halting and inadequate, may serve our purpose. Let us suppose that the atmosphere all about us carries always a certain charge of electricity. And let us suppose that I set out at night to walk along a path across country to a certain destination. During the first part of the walk, which I have frequently traversed before when going to other places, the electric charge in the air is so small that I am not aware of it at all. The atmosphere is "dead", and in a dull and routine way I just plod on. Then later on, as I get up among the hills, let us suppose the charge becomes greater, or I perhaps more sensitive, or both. I am now aware of a diffused "tingle" or sparkle in the air. I tell myself it is a crisp, invigorating night, and I walk with some zest, and with confidence that the path is taking me where I wish to go. Then, at a certain point, the charge gets so concentrated that it suddenly discharges

itself in a vivid flash of light, and I see in the flash, a little way ahead, a fork in the path which I did not know was there, and which apart from the flash I would have passed unnoticed. One path strikes away in what I feel to be the right direction, but up over rather intimidating and possibly dangerous places, the other runs on broadly and invitingly along the level. Which way shall I take? The flash and the fork together have broken into the routine of the walk. I must now *decide*.

Needless to say, this simile, which in any case is meteorologically fantastic, must not be pressed too far. But in some such way we would picture what we mean by saying that God comes to us supremely in significant events in relation to which we have to decide and act. For longer or shorter periods we may go on through life without any very explicit awareness of God at all. That is true both of religious and irreligious people. We are not conscious of the electricity of God's presence all about us (the phrase jars, and will jar, but that is of no consequence in comparison with the truth we are seeking to convey)—life is pretty much a plodding on with a settled and orderly routine, such decisions as we have to make being of no special importance to any. Then there come moments or periods when we become aware of a "tingle" in the air. These correspond to what we had in mind when we asked the reader a few pages back to consider whether he had not felt the pressure of "absolute values", if only in the form of reverence for a deed like that of Captain Oates, the infinite mystery of creation at once so daunting and so grand, the stirring of faith that something worthwhile in the sphere of what is true and beautiful and good can and must be created in human life in spite of all its ugliness and evil. Then, finally, there come the forks in the path, the situations of significant choice and decision. It is just at these, we would suggest, God may accumulate and concentrate the charge in a flash of revealing light which, focused at that point of decision, at that fork in the road, becomes a *question* from Him to the whole man.

Fork and flash together become a question, God's question. We are, indeed, no longer asking questions about God, but ourselves being asked a question by Him.

Stated in a general form which belies the intense particularity with which it always comes, this question is, will you in this decision bring down into the adventurous self-commitment, the irrevocability, of *act*, the hitherto vague and transient stirrings in your soul of religious belief and feeling? Will you by decision condense out of the vapour of feeling a solid mass and momentum of directed will and take all the practical consequences thereof? Will you, in short, pass out of religiosity into religion?

It is not difficult to see that every choice and decision of any importance does face a man with the final issues of self-commitment and faith, the final issue of what sort of God he really believes in, and whether he will plunge into crucial experimental test of his belief. If there be a God, then every choice and decision that matters is a question from Him. To use another simile, it is like travelling by train from Edinburgh to London and not knowing whether one has to change at York. So long as the train slides smoothly on towards York a man can argue about it, theorize about it, to his heart's content. He is there, and there he must stay. There is no event yet—for him. He is no different from a sack in the guard's van, except that he is a sack that can argue, and theorize, and admire the countryside. But when the train stops at York he has to decide and act. It is his event. He must either get out or stay in. There is no middle course, no point of suspension. He is no longer a sack, he is a person. He must act. And as he acts, so he expresses his faith. If he stays in the train, he expresses his faith that it goes to London. If he gets out, he expresses his faith that it does not.

The events and situations which have this critical quality will, of course, differ with different people. Many of them will be of an intimate and personal nature whose significance no outsider can discern. They may be concerned

with personal relationships within the family, the office, the school. They may have to do with the acceptance or non-acceptance of a new job, the putting through of a business deal, the expenditure of money on this, that, or the other thing. Sometimes the situations through which God asks His questions of the souls of men as it were amass themselves into large-scale happenings which none but the wholly blind can fail to see are supreme crises of choice and decision for a whole generation. Such are the events of these times.

From the Christian point of view, however—and this book is, of course, written from that point of view—it is possible and necessary to add one further thing to these generalities. It is the Christian conviction that there has been one event in human history which, though it happened at a particular point in space and time is, in a very real sense, *every* man's event, *every* man's crisis and decision. This is the event of Christ. The critical question which, sooner or later, in one form or another, God asks of every man is, " What think ye of Christ? " The question will, indeed, not be apart from the individual choices and decisions of a man's own personal history and situations. It will come to one man in one way, and to another in another way; but it will be the same question. To revert to our former simile, the flash of light will always be Christ, but the pathway it lights up will be each man's own, and the fork in the road it reveals, and in conjunction with which it becomes God's critical question to the soul, will be just his. The Christian affirmation, therefore, is that the path to the fullest conviction about God must lie through a decision, continually renewed, to commit oneself, in faith and obedience, to Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

There is, however, one event within, so to say, the larger and more inclusive event of Christ, in which God's question to a man concentrates and focuses itself in a peculiarly and finally challenging way. This event is the Crucifixion. The Crucifixion of Christ—in conjunction with the crises of our

personal history—continually confronts us with something in the nature of a final choice and decision—literally a *crucial* choice and decision. It does this because it is the Crucifixion of Christ; because, that is to say, it is the crucifixion of the one person in history of Whom we have reason to think that His whole being was centred in, and controlled by, the conviction that God really is what in these pages we have maintained Him to be, namely an austere and wholly trustworthy personal purpose of love. In Christ is to be seen the spirit of perfect love, resting on and sustained by the conviction that God is love, thrust right into the midst of human life. What happens? He is crucified, yet does not cease to love, does not cease to rest, even after a dreadful moment of desolation, on the divine will of love. "Father," He prays, "forgive them, for they know not what they do." And again, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." What does this prove? Logically, it proves nothing. But it penetrates deeper than logic.

The Crucifixion of Jesus confronts the soul of man with a searching dilemma, with the necessity of finally making up his mind. For it means one of two things. Either it means that that sort of believing about God, that sort of living, even when it is at its maximal point of purity and devotion, is so fantastically false, so utterly wide of the truth, that it cannot stand up to the forces which actually dominate the world, but is doomed to be stamped out by them—which is exactly what powerful leaders and teachers in the world to-day are saying. Or, on the other hand, it means that it is so true, so firmly rooted in fact, that it can afford to accept seemingly utter defeat, knowing that the victory, God's victory, is in the end with it. One of two things: the Crucifixion of Jesus is either a great, grim, hoarse, derisive shout of *No* to the proposition that God is love, gathering into itself and summing up all those other evil things in human life which seem also to shout *No* to it; or it is a firm, steady, undefeated *Yes* penetrating, per-

sisting through, all these other things. Who then is to decide which it is? The strange thing is—though it is not strange in view of the personal nature of God's dealings with us—the individual man must decide, must answer the question. And if the right answer be given, it is not the less of the inspiration of God because it is the man's own answer. The conviction that stirs deep within a man's mind and heart, that he cannot, he must not, he dare not, join in that grim, hoarse shout of *No* is only possible because God has put Christ and the Cross of Christ into the world, has brought him down the pathway of his own individual history to a fork in the road where the challenge of the Cross can no longer be avoided, has given him a nature capable of discerning, in its presence, this final dilemma of our personal life—either to believe in and commit oneself to the God of Jesus Christ, or to conclude that human existence is *in fact* what on the surface it most certainly *appears* to be, namely, in spite of all the incidental fine things that are in it, a meaningless waste of effort and suffering, ending in a silence of universal death.

Some may ask, what then of the Resurrection of Jesus? Is that of no account? Needless to say, it is not of no account. But the word of God to the soul of man which is in the Resurrection depends upon the Cross, as Christian thought has always well understood. It is indeed the answer to that final question which, we have just said, the Crucifixion puts to us; but before the answer can have meaning, the question itself must first be put and its force felt. Nor will the answer of the Resurrection be at all convincing unless something of the same answer—his own answer—is already stirring within the soul of a man as he confronts the dilemma of the Cross, unless all that is within him is already moving to a refusal to join in the shout of *No.* If that is not already in some measure his response, he will merely doubt the historicity of the story, and perhaps see in it only another melancholy illustration of that credulity by which men seek to lighten their lot in this tragic

world. If it is already in some measure his response, the Resurrection will clinch it and send him out with greater confidence on that life of discipleship wherein alone the full conviction of the reality of God can be built up.

PART II

THE REFLECTIVE ELEMENT IN BELIEF IN GOD

CHAPTER VIII

THE INFLUENCE OF BIAS

BEFORE tackling the many and often difficult questions which arise in connexion with the reflective side of belief in God, there is a further preliminary matter to which some attention must first be given. We must take note of something which is apt to enter disturbingly into the discussion of such matters, the more so because in the nature of the case it is generally unnoticed. We refer to the influence of what may be called " impressionistic bias ".

There can be no question that many people find belief in God difficult because there is in their mind a bias which predisposes them against it. Needless to say, the bias is not often a conscious one. Biases seldom are. The conclusion to which a bias impels usually seems reasonable enough in itself, and supporting arguments are soon found which make it seem more reasonable still. None the less the fact remains that the conclusion is come to primarily because of the bias and only very secondarily, if at all, because of the arguments. The latter are found afterwards and often appear astonishingly unconvincing to anybody who has not the same bias to assist his convictions.

None of us, of course, is exempt from biases of various sorts. If we say to a man who is disinclined to believe in God that he has an unconscious bias against such belief, he is entitled to retort that we who are *not* disinclined have an unconscious bias *towards* it. There is only one way out of this difficulty, and that is for each to be as honest as he possibly can, and to consider in respect of himself, as dispassionately as he is able, such evidence of mere bias as may be adduced. Part of the evidence of bias will be such weaknesses as examination reveals in the arguments, which, as we have said, every bias seeks to bring forward in support of itself. These arguments, indeed, must be considered on their merits. An argument is not necessarily an invalid one because it has been found under the stimulus of an

unconscious bias. I may call my neighbour a fool because I am jealous of him, but he may none the less really be a fool. But if the arguments prove on examination to be inherently weak, and if, in addition, other evidence can be adduced of the likelihood of an unconscious bias having obscured that weakness to the mind, then the case is strong enough to make the person concerned, if he seriously acknowledges his responsibility for what he believes, reconsider the whole matter.

We propose to mention two main types of bias which are apt to be present in greater or less degree in many people's minds to-day.

(1) The first is a bias arising from *the modern comparative study of religions.*

The so-called comparative study of religions is simply a study of religious phenomena over the whole extent of human history, so far as that history is known. It is a relatively modern enquiry, for only in recent times have the data necessary for its pursuit become, through both systematic and unsystematic research, available. Yet it has already had a not inconsiderable effect upon many people. In producing this effect it has been aided, doubtless, by the many modern facilities, such as cheap travel, cheap books, the films, for getting to know in a more or less superficial way the manners, customs, and beliefs of other lands and other times. The effect in question is the creation of a bias or disposition away from all forms of religious belief.

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

First, then, the apprehension of a certain *quality* in the religious beliefs of mankind.

It is easy to derive from a superficial acquaintance with the history of religion an overpowering sense of all the superstitions, cruelties, impurities, dishonesties, morbidities, falsehoods, and so on, which have been mixed up with

belief in God all down the ages, and still are undoubtedly mixed up with it. Such an impression tends to create a feeling that religion in all its forms is false and dangerous, and that, so far from there being a call to cultivate whatever inclinations towards it one may have in oneself, one can best contribute to the advancement of mankind by having nothing to do with it whatsoever, except perhaps to oppose it as opportunity may offer. Thus a distinguished modern writer is reported to have said, after a visit to India, that he felt strongly inclined, as a result of that visit, to found a society for the abolition of all religion. The view of orthodox communism, that religion is the arch-enemy of progress and should be abolished, usually appeals to the same facts, or apparent facts, for support.

Yet it should not be difficult on reflection to see that the matter is not so simple as that, and that so to think is to substitute for careful and responsible thought a mere impressionistic prejudice.

The fact that religion has been associated with so much that is deplorable may be due—in our view it certainly is due, but we state the point here merely as a possibility which ought not to be overlooked or lightly dismissed—to the very deep, central and inexpugnable place which religion, by its essential nature, has in human personality. Because it is so central and deep-going, it tends to enter into, to influence and be reciprocally influenced by, *every* aspect and activity of our nature. It should be noticed that if religion has been associated with a lot of horrible things in human life, it has just as much been associated with many of the noblest. To lay all the emphasis on the former and disregard the latter is manifestly to give way to the merest impressionism. It might, however, be said: Well, granting that religion has been associated with both good and evil, still, on balance, its influence has been bad; it has intensified and established the evil much more than it has intensified and established the good. If religion were eliminated, good and evil would still remain, and on balance we should fare better in the struggle between the two without it. Such a hypothetical and quantitative argu-

ment it is plainly impossible to refute, but we may point out two things.

For one thing, the argument overlooks the possibility that, even if religion often apparently intensifies and establishes the evil propensities of men, it may nevertheless have a much more essential and deeply *creative* relationship to their good propensities. Indeed it may well do the former because of the latter. The corruption of the best is the worst. In other words, the elimination of religion, if that were feasible at all, might set up a process of deterioration and collapse in comparison with which the evils which it associates with itself and in a measure exacerbates would seem hardly worth considering. That would certainly be what we who take the view expounded in this book would expect, but at the moment we suggest it merely as a theoretical possibility which it is very superficial to overlook or dismiss, merely because we have been revolted by seeing, say, a religious devotee in India sticking knives into himself.

Again, the argument overlooks the possibility that religion is so deeply implicated in human nature that it cannot in fact be eliminated. To speak glibly of abolishing it merely because of the bad company it has been known to keep may, in fact, be about as sensible as to speak of abolishing lungs from the human organism because they are continually taking in impure and germ-laden air. All that was said earlier[1] about faith and the pragmatic side of belief in God goes to show how inextricably religion is bound up with man's distinctive nature and needs as self-conscious personality. Religion may be inhibited, smothered, deflected, in various ways, but always it finds its way out from the central places of the soul even if in a starved or distorted form. The problem, therefore, is not to destroy it, which is impossible, but to purify and ennoble it.

We state the same thing in a different way if we insist on the necessity of taking the trouble to distinguish between good and bad religion. It does not really affect the question

[1] See Part I, p. 52f.

of the reality of God and the validity, in a general way, of man's apprehension of and dealings with Him in what we call religion, that the latter are mixed up with the ignorance and error and grievous sin which infect in some degree every aspect of our life; any more than the reality of the physical world, and the general validity of natural science, are impugned by the rubbish which has been on occasion spoken by scientists all down the ages. As Oman has suggested, in words which we roughly paraphrase, it ought to be possible to distinguish religion as such from bigotry and cruelty, just as it is possible to distinguish government as such from graft and wire-pulling. We may, if we choose, call both St. Francis and the Grand Inquisitor religious persons, but we should realize that that is to do something strictly comparable to, and just as shallow as, mentioning Abraham Lincoln and Boss Croker in the same breath as politicians. "It is most necessary," continues Oman, "to remind ourselves that it is the same human nature, with all its errors and imperfections, with which we have to deal in religion as in all else; and that, therefore, there is bad religion as there is bad business or bad science or bad morals."

Second, a bias against religion may arise from the comparative study of religions through an apprehension of the enormous *quantity* of religious beliefs which have held sway over mankind.

It seems at first an astonishing and perturbing thing that such beliefs should be so infinitely various. The list of all the religions of mankind is a very long one, and though it may be classified into similar or kindred groups the variety of conviction about the supernatural reality with which they all claim to deal is still challenging enough. The mind almost inevitably begins to ask whether in a sphere where conviction is so individual and various any sound basis for belief can really be found, whether that which cannot produce a greater unanimity as to itself can be a reality at all. Or if it does not ask such an explicit question as that, it is insensibly predisposed by such a chaos of conflicting voices to save itself trouble by discarding belief altogether.

Yet here again the danger is that we submit to what is merely an impressionistic bias. It is not in the least logical to infer from the great variety of religious experience and belief the non-reality of that with which they claim to deal. On the contrary, if the divine reality with which religion claims to deal be indeed a reality, we might well expect that the apprehension of it, or, as we would prefer to say, of Him, would be infinitely various; for three reasons.

(*a*) A *real* object always does present itself differently to different observers according to the point of view from which they approach it. Indeed, that it does so, is in a measure a mark of its obstinate "there-ness", if we may coin a word, its obstinate embeddedness in the complex structure of that reality with which all men from one angle or another have to come to terms. To quote Oman again:

"Both in nature and in history, it is the illusions which have shown mechanical uniformity. A mirage sun is merely a shining disc the same for all and changing nothing of what anyone is observing; the natural sun is a constantly varying object, giving to each observer a different impression of the world it shines on. To no real experience do all men react in the same way. . . . Even about the material world people can have the crudest ideas, and they can feel towards it unnaturally and misuse it sadly. But we do not argue that there can be, in that case, no stable reality, and that it is a mere phantasmagoria of man's changing moods. The variety of impression, on the contrary, is a very important part of the manifestation of reality, for we rightly know any environment only when we have a mind to perceive it aright and a will to use it well."[1]

(*b*) If God be a reality then He is, by definition, an infinitely rich and all-inclusive reality, in some sense penetrating and pervading all else. Small wonder then, that the reports men give of Him and of His dealings with them, whilst having much in common, should be so various. A variety of apprehension does not point to the unreality of an object so much as to its richness and complexity. It is, for example, of a rich and complex personality like, say, Gladstone, that men give varying reports. The people

[1] *The Natural and the Supernatural*, p. 71.

who make precisely the same impression on all are usually of the narrow, rigid, and superficial type.

(*c*) If God be a reality, He is, by definition, a personal reality, disclosing Himself to man in a personal way. Now personality, on the one hand, and individuality and variety, on the other, go together. As we said in the introductory chapter, it is the mark of the personal and the historical that it does not repeat itself. Whence it is altogether to be expected that men's religious experiences should display a far greater variety than their experiences of the impersonal physical world, and that coming to a common knowledge of God should be an infinitely longer and more difficult process than coming to a common knowledge of the physical world. And this altogether apart from the extremely disturbing factor of sin. This does not mean that we need despair of ever attaining to some sort of unanimity of conviction in this sphere. But if it is ever attained in this world, it will be of a sort that still allows for a great variety and divergence of personal interpretation and expression, and it will be reached, not by being deliberately aimed at for its own sake, but by being discovered, or perhaps we should say by being given—for God's own personal revealing activity is primary—in and through the internal and personal evolution and history of each individual spirit.

(2) The second form of bias on which it may be well to say a word is the bias which arises out of what may be called *the obsessive place of the physical in human experience and particularly in modern science.*

It is possible to detect in many modern people's minds a more or less deep-seated prior scepticism as to whether an invisible, spiritual world could in the nature of the case be real. An outer barrier of scepticism seems to meet statements about unseen realities such as is not offered to statements about physical things, a barrier of which the individual himself is largely unconscious. An example of this is the way in which most people are much more ready to accept the existence of an invisible entity like the ether —or, at any rate, they were, when the ether was a fashion-

able idea—than they are to accept the existence of an invisible entity like, say, the Holy Spirit. Doubtless the evidence in each case is not on the same plane, but it is not difficult to detect in the mind a greater willingness to accept a quasi-physical entity like the ether altogether apart from the evidence. Anything that we can see or touch, or can be directly related to what we can see or touch, or can be pictured after the image of what we can see and touch, is a much stronger candidate for belief than anything to which none of these things apply.

This initial bias seems to lie behind many of the theoretical attacks which are made upon the reality of the supernatural sphere with which religion especially concerns itself. A careful analysis usually reveals that the authors of such attacks have started with the unconscious, or at least the unexamined, assumption that there cannot be, or that there is not likely to be, any such thing as an unseen spiritual reality corresponding to what the religious man calls God. They have really made up their minds about this in advance, and, having made up their minds about it, they then say in effect: Since we know that there is not, or that there is not likely to be, such a being as God, we must find some other explanation of the religious man's experience and belief than that which he himself offers, namely, that God is dealing with him and he is dealing with God. So theories are elaborated which say, for example, that the religious man's sense of God is due merely to the disguised pressure of his group upon him, or to wishful thinking in face of the hard necessities of life, or to some other impact of the visible, natural world upon him. We shall consider these theories more fully later, and shall see their inherent inadequacy to the facts they claim to explain. Meanwhile the point we make is that such theories derive not a little of their plausibility from the fact that those who propose or accept them have made up their minds *in advance* that religion is illusory and that, therefore, some other explanation by hook or by crook must be found. There is, in fact, apt to be a rather subtle fallacy underlying their whole reasoning. The fallacy consists in regarding the explanation

they offer of the hold of religion upon mankind, *if it be an illusion,* as somehow itself a proof and confirmation that it is one. That belief in God might be due to a cause other than the reality of God is, of course, a logical possibility, but a suggestion as to what such a cause might conceivably be is still only a suggestion. It must be examined on its merits, and not be allowed to borrow a cogency and a weight which do not really belong to it from mere bias, from an undiscussed assumption that only the seen is real and that religion's own explanation of itself is therefore necessarily false.

What then lies behind this prior scepticism about the unseen? Two reasons at least may be suggested.

(*a*) The first is that in the evolution of life the physical environment, and the necessity for the organism to adjust itself to it, come first. Basic to all life, in all its stages, is the necessity to sustain itself by food and to protect itself from physical injury and destruction. The " primary " real is the " physical " real—that which can be touched, manipulated, repelled or absorbed, by the physical organism. This is as true of man as of any other creature. Even though we grant fully that man shall not live, indeed in a sense cannot live without ceasing to be distinctively human, by bread alone, the way in which we state the truth reveals our sense that, none the less, bread is the first need, and that without it there could be no living at all. And the need for bread, warmth, shelter, etc., is certainly of a much more immediate and stinging kind than any other. To be deprived of food is to have within a few hours a massive organic discomfort and weakness which prohibits the pursuit of any other interest whatsoever, even the most exalted. The injurious effects of other deprivations are much more subtle and slow-working, and, provided one is fed, can be endured for a much longer period. All this is obvious enough; but what is not so obvious, and what it is well not infrequently to call to mind, is the effect of this primacy of the physical upon our mental habits. " Seeing ", we say, " is believing," and therein is revealed much of the order in which the evolution of life, culminat-

ing in man, has taken place. We are incurably "spatial" in our thought-processes and thought-forms. Coleridge speaks somewhere of the "despotism of the eye", the dominance in all our thinking of visual imagery. Another thinker has gone so far as to suggest that our minds have been so profoundly influenced and shaped by the primary physical environment that they are now almost incapable of grasping at all any other sort of reality as it truly is. Inevitably we spatialize everything, chop it up into bits and pieces, try to "congeal" it into nice, enduring, reliable things like sofas and chairs; if we cannot do this we find it difficult to believe in it at all. We do not need to accept the whole of Bergson's teaching in order to profit by his warning on this point.

(*b*) The second reason is more important, for it is its coincidence with the one just given that has brought about our special problem in this sphere to-day. It is the history of modern science. The challenge which the *content* of modern science offers to belief in God we shall consider in a later chapter[1]; here we have in mind only the way in which its astonishing developments during say the last sixty years, particularly in the practical sphere, may have affected the average modern man, almost without his knowing it. There are two points in this connexion.

First, the great and spectacular advances of modern science have been almost without exception in the realm of the physical. How great and spectacular these advances have been can be realized by any middle-aged person who will look back for a moment on his childhood—not so very far distant—when there were no automobiles, no electric light, no films, no wireless, no aeroplanes, no telephones, no canned food. All these vast and for the most part beneficent changes have all been brought about by physical science. Small wonder then that most of us have to make a special effort not to think of physical science as science *par excellence*. Small wonder that when we are bidden, or bid ourselves, to take up a scientific attitude to things, we feel that that means far more than that we must be

[1] See Chap. XII.

sincere and cautious in our thinking, distrusting the unverified or unverifiable assertion, not allowing prejudice to override logic (an attitude which we certainly ought to take up in all things, and which, incidentally, is as old as Socrates). We feel that we must also show a certain reluctance to believe anything which cannot be investigated and proved by the bunsens and balances, and such-like paraphernalia, of the "science block" (an attitude which is as distinctively modern as it is without rational justification). How deep-seated this modern bias is, is revealed by the fact that psychology was for a long time refused the name of science because it dealt with realities which in the main could not be measured and experimented with in the laboratory. Even more perhaps—for here we see it in its more popular manifestation—it is revealed in the picture of the scientist with which public advertisement sometimes presents us. Always he is depicted as a keen, hatchet-faced man with penetrating eyes, one, plainly, who will stand no nonsense, will see through all shams, one with his brains packed in ice, one vaguely suggestive of Sherlock Holmes, and always he is examining a test-tube with a vague array of balances and retorts and microscopes in the background.

Yet a few minutes' even casual reflection might reveal to anybody how much of the everyday texture of life is made up of things not to be seen or handled, and not to be experimented with in a laboratory. A relation of love or hate between two human beings, for example, cannot be reduced to things merely physical; it is related to things physical, and an old-fashioned and out-of-date materialist might assert dogmatically that it is merely a by-product of things physical, but its full reality as a factor in personal relationships is certainly not to be expressed in physical terms. Nor can it be dealt with by laboratory methods. Our hatchet-faced scientist will find his test-tubes and balances singularly irrelevant if, when he gets home, he is unfortunate enough to have a row with his wife. Even if he is an expert psychologist, he will not likely fare much better because of that. For one thing, moral considerations dominate the personal world. These speak of what ought

to be, whereas science deals only with what is. Of course, a materialist might affirm that our sense of what ought to be, what we usually call conscience, is only a peculiar by-product of a certain configuration of brain-particles and nerve-paths. We do not wish to beg that question, but the point we make here is that it is not as a configuration of brain-particles and nerve-paths that conscience enters the ordinary man's personal world. It enters it as something quite invisible, yet at the same time compellingly real enough to resist the most violent physical needs and appetites; and he feels no difficulty about it until for some reason or other its status in the "real" world is called in question. Then he may find satisfaction in a materialist doctrine, not noticing, we may point out incidentally, that no one, least of all himself, has ever seen the brain-particles at the moment when their evolutions are supposed to be bringing forth his moral perceptions. The materialist doctrine seems, in default of critical analysis, to satisfy because it talks of things like atoms and electrons, which, whilst they are just as invisible as the conscience they are invoked to explain, have none the less been conceived on the basis of laboratory work and, indeed, can be vaguely pictured after the analogy of physical things. Thus the bias of the mind is revealed again; of two invisibles, it invests with a sort of superior reality that which can be described analogically with physical things.

The second point bears more directly on belief in God. The innate predisposition of the human mind, just referred to, to think and believe in terms of the physical, a disposition due, we said, to the priority of the physical in experience, is nowhere more evident than at the point where the predisposition might appear to have been completely broken through, that is to say, at the point where belief in the unseen arises in religion. For the tendency is all too obvious in religion all down the ages to think of the unseen reality with which it deals *merely* as a reinforcement of man's weakness in face of his physical environment, to believe in God so long as His help in this sphere is urgently required, to disbelieve, or at least to lose interest

in, Him so soon as it is not. " The devil was ill, the devil a monk would be; the devil was well, the devil a monk was he! " The theory that religion is wholly and solely a piece of phantasy thinking through which a man keeps up his courage in face of a harsh world is certainly false, as we shall show later. There is much more in religion than that. But that religion, or what purports to be such, can have little more in it than that, is unfortunately true enough. It has been precisely the struggle of true and mature religion against false and immature religion to insist that God is not thus to be thought of as primarily an adjunct to the natural life of man, to protest against that obsession with the immediate and the physical which leads men, almost without being aware of it, to dismiss the unseen as a superfluity so soon as they feel themselves to be master over the seen and able to insure that their basic needs shall be supplied.

Now it is precisely this tendency to measure the relevance of God exclusively by the extent to which immediate physical necessities are being supplied which the progress of modern science has especially called into play. In view of the relation of science to our Western civilization during the past half-century the decline of religion is not really surprising. It was rather to be expected, the mind of man being what we know it to be. The abounding success of applied science has gradually and inevitably evoked a secularistic, humanistic temper of self-confidence which does not so much explicitly repudiate belief in God as fail entirely to see that in the main business of life it very much matters whether you believe in Him or not. Religion becomes a superfluity, at worst a hindrance to the building up of an increasingly rich and satisfying technical civilization, at best a harmless bit of sentimental indulgence on the part of those who happen to have a taste that way. Even religious people themselves have probably at times unconsciously shared the same outlook, so irresistible is the spirit (or bias) of the times. They have had at times a desolating sense that they were, or might be, after all only running a more or less irrelevant side-show, putting

a piece of pretty embroidery on the hem of life.

It is no doubt true that the break-down of our civilization into the misery and want of world-war a second time in a quarter of a century has to some extent checked and challenged this self-confident secularism, this faith in the power of applied science by itself to satisfy even the immediate needs, to deliver even the physical goods, of man's natural life in this world. It is possible to observe what are probably the beginnings of a new turning to religion. But this, however important it may prove to be, does not affect the point which we are making here. For a return to religion under the pressure of such immediate necessities and deprivations may well become a lapse from it so soon as these are satisfied and the pressure is removed. It may, that is to say, prove to be a manifestation of the same bias, the bias to make the physical the final standard of the real. Such a bias, if it remain mere bias, will certainly not cease to be played upon by the successes of modern science when the war is over. For science will play an increasing, not a decreasing, part in the shaping of things to come; it is right that it should, within the limits of its own competence. The only thing that will help real religion will be a recovery of that deeper and more penetrating sense of God which is aware of Him as the Holy One upon Whom, in spite of all the successes of our scientific enterprises, we utterly depend, and to Whom, no matter what may be our other desires, our first and absolute obedience is due. In such recovery to become aware of the biases of our minds, such as have been pointed out in this chapter, may play a small part.

Turning, then, to the consideration of the reflective element in belief in God, with as open a mind as we can muster, we ask, how would we expect such belief to be capable of reflective support and justification? The answer we give is that we would expect it to be capable of reflective support and justification along two lines, one positive, the other negative.

First, positively: we would expect that such belief will

help us to make sense of our world generally, and that it will be, in a not negligible degree, confirmed by other experience and assured knowledge that we have. Belief in God should, in other words, provide us with a reasonable and credible philosophy, with an interpretation of the world in its broad aspects and constitutive principles which shall be as convincing as any other. This aspect of the matter we set forth at the beginning of Chapter VII and there is no need to repeat it here.

Second, negatively: whilst the believer in God seeking a reflective confirmation of his belief is not called upon to examine every other possible interpretation of the world to see what it has to say for itself, there is one type of directly contrary theory which he can hardly ignore. This is the type of theory which directly impinges on those elements in the building up of belief in God which we have already discussed, and without which such belief would not be a power in men's lives at all, namely the coercive and pragmatic elements. Such theories do not deny that these elements are markedly present in the experience of the religious man, but they claim to be able to explain their presence on grounds other than the reality of God. The religious man, it is said, is genuinely convinced that God is touching his life in a compelling and succouring way, but in reality it is something else with which he is dealing all the time. Clearly such theories strike right at the heart of living religion, and if they could be substantiated, it would be a serious matter. It would mean that every religious man would cease, indeed ought to cease, to be religious precisely at the point where he reflects in a thoroughgoing way on his religious experience. It would make religion what some superior people, who have accepted these theories, are already declaring it to be, namely an activity suitable for the ignorant, the uninstructed, or the immature, and for none else.

We propose to follow these two lines of thought in the reverse order to that in which we have just stated them, taking the negative one first. That is to say, we will consider, first, theories which seek to comprehend the facts of

religious experience whilst dispensing entirely with the reality of God. We have suggested that there is usually behind such theories a good deal of unconscious bias; nevertheless, as was pointed out, they must be considered on their own merits. For they have a force and a plausibility which is not wholly derived from the prior bias of the mind to which they appeal.

CHAPTER IX

THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY OF RELIGION

THE most plausible and powerfully argued of these theories is the sociological theory. It is especially associated with a school of French thinkers, of whom perhaps the best representative is Durkheim; but it has in one form or another gained a wide currency, particularly amongst what is sometimes called the "intelligentsia".

Briefly stated, the theory is that the religious experience of mankind can be wholly resolved into the interplay of forces between the individual and society. Religion is simply one way of being related to one's group. The religious man honestly believes that he is aware of a supernatural reality which he calls God, but in fact all that he is really aware of is the quite natural fact of society presenting itself to him in a certain way, just as the audience at a conjuring entertainment genuinely thinks it sees a ghostly figure on the stage when all it in fact sees is an unusual arrangement of converging light rays reflected from cunningly placed mirrors. *Vox populi, vox Dei,* the voice of God, or what seems such, is in reality the voice of society —heavily disguised.

Thus briefly stated, the theory perhaps does not sound particularly impressive, but when wrought out in detail by able thinkers it commands more respect. Plainly the crux for such a theory is whether it can offer a satisfactory explanation *in detail* of how the individual's awareness of the *natural* fact of society becomes transformed in the religious consciousness into something so totally different, namely, his awareness, as he supposes it to be, of the *supernatural* fact of God.

It is no use proposing vague and unanalysed analogies, as some writers of this school do. One writer, for example, having maintained that the idea of God is just the idealized and personified totality of our common social purposes and values, then points to figures like Uncle Sam or John Bull or Alma Mater, as illustrative examples of entities

of the same order. Yet it is surely clear enough that the immediate impression which such entities make upon the mind is that they are emphatically not of the same order, and that it is precisely this difference in immediate impression which calls for explanation. Such entities entirely lack precisely those factors in the religious consciousness which to the religious man make the idea of God, both in its content and in the soul's response to it, quite *sui generis* and in a class apart from all other ideas whatsoever. No religious man could talk about God for long without saying things which either implicitly or explicitly insist that the one thing you must not do is thus to confuse Him, or compare Him, with human beings and their life at all. Clearly this is an amazing transformation which this theory asks us to contemplate—the idea of society into the idea of God—and we must ask for an adequate analysis of the way in which the transformation takes place, before the theory is entitled even to discussion. And no account of the processes whereby the British nation becomes symbolized as John Bull will suffice because in such cases *no transformation of like order has taken place.* The idea of John Bull contains no element not on a level with the natural elements of man's life; the idea of God, as part of its essential meaning, contains many such elements.

The best representatives of the theory, however, are fully aware that this is the crux of it, and endeavour to offer some explanation of the way in which the transformation takes place. The explanation offered contains two steps.

First, an attempt is made to show that there is an exact correspondence between all the essential relationships which the religious man thinks he has with his God and certain relationships which we know as a matter of fact he does have with his society. It is not possible, it is maintained, to mention a single essential ingredient in the idea of God which is not already present in principle in the fact of society and of its relations with its members. "A society", says Durkheim, "has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in human minds."

The second step is this. Whilst all the essential elements

in the content of the idea of God are thus provided for, it is still necessary to explain why the idea of God should supervene at all, for as we have said the idea of God is *not* in its primary impact the idea of society. It might indeed be maintained that the more completely the idea of God is translated into social equivalents, the more difficult it becomes to see why it should be necessary for society to present itself to the individual as any other than "just society". Why disguise itself as God if it contains in itself all that really makes such an idea an effective factor in men's lives? In explanation of this we are referred to certain supposed psychological laws, certain alleged necessities of the human mind, particularly in relation to the use of symbols.

We will consider each of these two steps in the argument in turn.

(1) First, then, the alleged correspondence between the idea of God as it enters into the individual's consciousness and the fact of society as it surrounds and conditions his life.

This may be conveniently dealt with in relation to the three main aspects of the awareness of God which were set forth in the first part of this work[1]: (i) the awareness of Him as meeting the will of man in some sort of absolute demand, (ii) the awareness of Him as sustaining and guaranteeing man's highest life, supplying his needs and in general being to him "refuge and strength", (iii) the awareness of Him as mysteriously and transcendently other than man. Of these basic aspects of religious awareness the sociological theory believes itself able to give an explanation which does not require the reality of God. We will take each element in turn.

(i) The sociological explanation of religion fully recognizes that the awareness of being confronted with absolute demands, or sacred values, which are not to be put into the balance with anything else whatsoever, but are to be obeyed if need be even at the cost of life itself, is quite central in, and distinctive of, religion. It does not in the

[1] See Part I, Chapter IV.

least seek to minimize the power and significance of religion in this respect in human affairs. But, it says, there is no need to go beyond the fact of society itself in order to explain it. The absolute demand, the sacred value, the unconditional imperative—however it may be described—of what men usually call conscience (whether it be consciously taken up into some kind of religious awareness or not) is merely a peculiarly profound and intimate form of that general compulsion which quite clearly the group does bring to bear upon individual behaviour in various ways. We all, for example, know the enormous pressure which the customs and conventions of our group put upon our conduct even in respect of matters which reason would declare to be relatively unimportant; it would take much to make any of us walk out clad in the fashions of thirty years ago! There are, however, certain basic necessities of group life, such as those concerning property, sex, respect for the law, readiness to surrender the individual life in order to preserve the group, which are far older than thirty years. They are indeed almost as old as humanity itself, and in consequence they present themselves, not as merely externally imposed requirements, but as an irresistible set or direction or compulsion of the whole internal psychological "make-up" of the individual, fashioned as this has been all down the centuries by group life. Not infrequently some sort of theory of evolution, in particular the theory of natural selection, is introduced. By the constant pressure of powerful "prestige-suggestion", education, tradition, public opinion, legal enforcement (aided, along lines to be considered in a moment, by religious notions) individuals who show a tendency to anti-social conduct are, it is supposed, to a large extent eliminated, and those more amenable remain. Indeed groups which did not achieve a large measure of success in doing this would themselves be eliminated by other groups of a more disciplined and cohesive type.

This, then, is the only source and origin of the absoluteness of absolute demands, the unconditionality of unconditional imperatives, the sacredness of sacred values—the

tremendous pressure of the group soaking into, welling up within—if the slightly mixed metaphor may be permitted—the individual, who, after all, has never had, and could never have had, any existence whatever apart from his group. Bergson expresses the point in a powerful simile. He bids us imagine an ant in an ant-hill. Its whole life, its every activity, is dominated down to the last detail by the requirements of the ant-group, of the close-knit organic whole of which it is but a single cell. If now, *per impossibile*, it could be endowed for a single moment with reflective self-consciousness and could raise the question during that moment why in the world it should slave itself to death for other ants, it would at once become aware of the irresistible pressure of the social organism on its psychical being in the form of a categorical imperative, saying, "you must so slave for no other reason than you must; you must because you must." Then if it lapsed back into ordinary ant-consciousness again, this awareness of a categorical demand upon its behaviour would vanish once more; the last fading gleam of its momentary illumination, as it sank back into the somnambulism of instinctive behaviour—like the last fading awareness of the doctor's words in the mind of the man being put under an anæsthetic—would be the words, growing fainter and fainter, "you must because you must, you must because you must, you must . . ." Yet, in that brief lucid interval, dominated though it was by this strange, inexplicable sense of absolute demand, the ant had not in fact been in touch with any other reality than the group to which it belonged.

It must be admitted that this is a very plausible theory of what in a broad way we may term conscience. Its plausibility derives from the fact that it does take account of a number of facts, the reality and centrality of which in relation to moral experience cannot be denied. Conscience has arisen, and to all appearance could only have arisen, out of the midst of social life and its necessities and requirements. The child's first introduction to moral standards, and to the obligatoriness of certain types of behaviour as over against other types, is through the

authority of the parents and of the larger group which it dimly senses in the background all the time, the authority being accepted for no other reason than that it presses into the very springs of its behaviour by direct "prestige-suggestion" (I have sometimes wondered why my children in their earliest years should do so instantly what they are told to do by such an unimpressive person as myself—it has always seemed somewhat of a miracle!). Even in fairly highly developed moral natures the pressures of public opinion and custom, and even the fear of the policeman, frequently merge in, and are extremely difficult to disentangle from, the genuine deliverances of moral insight. The moral judgments of men do largely concern themselves with conduct conducive to the welfare of the group as contrasted with conduct conducive merely to the satisfaction, immediate or remote, of the individual, so that the whole moral struggle of the individual can to a large extent be not inaccurately described in terms of a conflict between social and anti-social modes of behaviour. All these, and other similar facts, are beyond question and show once and for all that conscience is a socially derived and socially conditioned phenomenon.

Yet, obviously, it does not logically follow from this that conscience *in its whole bearing and reach* can be fully comprehended in terms of social conditions. A phenomenon A may depend upon, and be conditioned by, another phenomenon B, in the sense that it could not come into being, or remain in being, apart from B; but nevertheless it may in its intrinsic nature, and in the further relations into which it enters, greatly transcend B. There may be what has been called "continuity of process with emergence of real difference". Or, in short, B may be indispensable to A but not by itself sufficient to explain A. So, in the case of conscience, the social bond may be necessary to its emergence, but not by itself sufficient to explain its whole nature when once it has emerged. Whether it is so can only be determined by an examination of the facts. We are of the opinion that the facts show clearly that the moral experience of man, particularly as it is informed and in-

spired by religion, cannot be wholly comprehended in terms of the interplay of social forces.

Thus, first, the sociological theory fails to explain the universal reach that the religiously informed conscience has sometimes attained to. It is not open to question that there has emerged in the moral consciousness of mankind the awareness of an obligation to treat every human being without any exception whatsoever as an end in himself, simply because he is a human being and without any reference to the society or group to which he belongs—in short, an awareness of a moral ideal, or sacred value, of universal brotherhood. It does not affect the point we are making that this sense of absolute moral obligation binding a man to certain attitudes and duties towards all members of the human race has only perhaps possessed the minds of a few elect, prophetic souls with sufficient vividness and power to make it proof against all those many natural instincts which run violently counter to it. The point is that such a moral judgment has emerged; moreover it awakens a response in many people's minds even though they are disposed to think, in the light of experience, that universal brotherhood is in fact unattainable. Now if conscience be merely society imposing on the individual those types of conduct which are conducive to its own well-being, we must ask what is the society which is responsible for asking an individual in such a compelling way to concern himself with the whole human race irrespective of the group to which any one individual may belong. We must ask, too, what element in its well-being would be served by so doing. Actually, of course, every individual is a member of a society which is but a small, enclosed section of the total human race, a section which has its own distinctive habits and customs and laws, and to a large degree stands in a competitive relationship with other groups. It is only metaphorically, and certainly not in a sense admissible in sociological science, that we speak of men being members of the society of mankind. Indeed, if we so speak, we do so on the basis of the ethical judgment we are discussing; we are indicating, in other words, an ideal

rather than an empirical datum. So far as the fashioning of our mental make-up and the conditioning of our conduct are concerned, we are all members, as Bergson, who has powerfully argued this point, puts it, of a very narrow, closed society. Yet there certainly does arise, we repeat, in the midst of these closed societies and within prophetic souls the sense of a sacred obligation to love *all* men. How could a conscience which merely registers the utilities of the group reach such an idea, and what conceivable help would the latter be to a group which in its relations with other groups is on a fiercely competitive and even hostile basis? How little help most groups consider such an idea to be is shown by the treatment usually meted out in time of war to conscientious objectors.

Then, second, the sociological theory fails to explain what may be called the creativeness and inwardness of conscience, particularly as it is religiously informed. By these words we wish to draw attention to, and make a wider application of, something implicit in the last paragraph.

By the word "creativeness" we refer to the fact that not only in the emergence of a universal ethic of love transcending the group (which we have admitted is a somewhat unusual phenomenon, though the point is none the less valid for that), but also in more everyday ways and relationships *within* the group the sensitive and enlightened conscience reveals itself not as a merely negative thing, forbidding certain lines of conduct which have been tried and found unprofitable, but as a positive thing asking for lines of conduct which in the nature of the case have never been tried at all. Conscience, in short, continually goes beyond the "oughts" of merely social requirement and experience. "It lights", as Hocking puts it, "upon new types of action as keenly as upon old"—types of action the utility of which the group as a whole could not as yet have experienced, still less have had time to stamp upon the inner life of its members. Yet conscience does all this *without any loss of the accent of unconditionality.* How could it do so if this accent be merely the reflection of group experience?

We come at the same thing from another angle when we speak of the "inwardness" of conscience. This inwardness we do in fact recognize in our dealings with one another, without, however, seeing its implications.[1] When we say "you ought" to a person in the specifically moral sense, we do not feel that we are merely issuing a command, or that we are merely conveying a piece of information about the past experience or general will of the group, nor certainly do we mean simply that it will be prudent for him to act thus because others prefer it. Again, our reaction to one who is supposed to have violated the moral "ought" is not one of simple anger or annoyance. It has in it an ingredient of regret. We are concerned not merely with his future discretion in matters of conduct, but also with his past decisions; we deplore the process by which he reached those decisions. We assume, rightly or wrongly, that he was capable of a better inward process of mind, and that he knows it, or is capable of knowing it. In brief, the "you ought" addresses itself to an answering "I ought" within, and unless the "I ought" responds, it has missed its target. While we ply our moral precepts, we wait anxiously and all but helplessly for evidence that our meaning has struck home, for we know that every new person must find this angle of vision for himself, and that having found it he is called upon to abide by what he sees no matter what others may say. In other words the pressure of the social "ought" is never merely instructive, merely informative of what is done or what is not done; it is also awakening, and what it awakens is another sort of "ought" which transcends the merely social "ought". It calls for an inward personal judgment as to what ought to be done and an inward rectitude in obeying its absolute behest. This leads us to the third point which, again, is a drawing out into explicit statement what is implied in the two points already made.

Third, the sociological theory fails to do justice to what

[1] In what follows in this paragraph we follow Hocking fairly closely, freely using his phrascology and in one or two places quoting sentences almost intact. See *Human Nature and its Remaking*, p. 118.

may be called the socially detaching power of conscience, particularly as it is informed and inspired by religion. What we have in mind here is not adequately set forth merely by calling attention to the fact that conscience often makes a man a "nonconformist" in respect of social customs and requirements; for other things besides conscience do that—pride, snobbery, self-assertiveness, anti-herd complexes and what not. Rather the point is that it is just precisely the distinctive mark of conscience, it is part of its *essential meaning* that it requires at least the spirit of "non-conformity", even though it does not in every situation require the actuality of it. In short, the imperative it imposes is *unconditional*, and by the conscientious man is explicitly apprehended as such.

It is important to understand precisely what this unconditionality is, if the inadequacy of the sociological view at this point is to be made clear. If the unconditionality of conscience meant nothing more than that conscience must be obeyed whatever a man's personal feelings and desires might be—and it does mean that, of course—then there would be no difficulty in supposing, at any rate so far as this specific aspect of conscience is concerned, that nothing more is involved than the requirement of the group that its safety and well-being should always be put above the concerns of any individual member thereof. But the unconditionality of the imperative means far more than that to the developed moral consciousness. It means, not merely that a man is under obligation to obey conscience whatever his feeling and desires may say, but also *whatever any external authority, whether of custom or law or any other form of social pressure, may say about it.* It is precisely here that the supreme crux for a purely sociological theory of conscience arises. It is extremely difficult, to say the least, to see how the mere pressures of society could ever become invested with an accent of unconditionality which in its *essential meaning* requires them to be opposed and negated, if nothing but themselves is involved. It is no use saying that the pressures of society by becoming internal to the soul of man "somehow" take

on such a self-stultifying accent. The whole problem is in that "somehow". How should a pressure *of* society become a pressure *against* society? Here the simile of the ant in the ant-hill fails to fit the facts. What we must imagine is a very queer ant who in his moment of lucidity feels, not the pressure of the ant-hill going against his momentary desire for an easier life, but the pressure of an absolute demand which says in effect, "Let the ant-hill and its conventional and stupid ways go hang, let it do its worst; this is the way, walk thou in it, O ant, come what may!"

Faced with all these facts we have just been considering, namely that conscience is not merely negative and prohibitive, but is a source of positive ideals which often transcend, and even run directly counter to, the immediate utilities and necessities of group life, without, however, any loss of authority, writers of this school sometimes attempt to get around them by attributing to the group a sort of surmise, or forefeeling, or prevision, of its own as yet unrealized future. It manifests this prevision by producing some elect individuals through whose conscience it speaks in unconditional accents of the unrealized necessities of its developing life; thus it moves forward to higher things, and, for our theorists, the problem of the independent and nonconformist conscience is solved. For the latter is, according to this suggestion, only apparently independent and nonconformist; in reality it is still merely registering, merely echoing, the pressures of the social organism by which, and by which alone, it is carried and sustained. "A society can neither create nor recreate itself without at the same time creating an ideal," says Durkheim, and presumably he would be prepared to add, "without at the same time creating at least some individuals to whom the ideal, the unrealized future, will call with magisterial authority." Elsewhere the same writer says, "A society is not merely the mass of individuals who compose it, the ground which they occupy, the things which they use, and the movements which they perform; above all it is the idea which it forms of itself." And in "idea" he clearly includes the notion of "ideal".

What are we to say to this? Clearly, it oversimplifies the facts in two ways. First, it overlooks the point made above concerning the universal reach of some of the behests of conscience; it is impossible to see what sort of vision of its own future would lead a group to impose on its members an ethic of universal love to all men whatsoever. Second, it overlooks the fact that it is the frequent habit of groups to persecute and exterminate the man with an independent conscience as a public nuisance, and even as an enemy and a traitor. This, to say the least, is an odd proceeding if it be true that it has itself produced such a man in order to serve its own future.

But altogether apart from these two points, is it not clear that the theory, in thus elaborating and extending itself to meet the challenge of awkward facts, has overreached itself and demonstrated its own inadequacy? In thus attributing to the group this unconscious grasp of its own future, does it not really concede what we have been contending for, namely that conscience cannot be fully comprehended in terms of strictly natural, sociological forces? Does it not cease, in other words, to be strictly a sociological theory basing itself on empirical data? For consider, our theorist has been forced by the facts to bring into his picture of the supposedly purely empirical and natural fact of society (*a*) an ideal society as yet unrealized, yet somehow real enough to be a factor in its present life; (*b*) a quasi-personal faculty of envisaging that ideal, even when the vast majority of its members are not yet aware of it—it forms an ideal of itself; (*c*) a secret process of imposing this vision of the unrealized on certain individuals—secret, because *ex hypothesi* it is not imposed by mass suggestion, for the masses do not share it; nor by education and instruction, for education is only concerned with the tested and established; nor through the long instruction of the evolutionary process concerning what makes most for survival, for the sort of conduct involved has never yet been extensively followed. Just what is the status of this unrealized ideal in the world of being, or of this quasi-personal faculty of idealizing residing somewhere in the midst of the general

low, uninspired levels of ordinary conventional behaviour, just what the process is whereby the ideal reaches the inner life of certain elect spirits, is not discussed. Instead it seems to be assumed that by calling them all functions of society you have brought them within the scope of purely natural facts and forces, and there is no call for any further explanation. Yet do they not cry out for explanation? Is it not obvious that all this is but to mythologize society, to attribute to her vague powers which there is not the least empirical evidence to suppose she has; to explain the unknown by the more unknown? More important, is it not just the flimsiest projection into society, in a somewhat attenuated form, of that which we first discover in the insights and requirements of our own self-directing, self-conscious life as moral and religious individuals? Yet, as Charles Bennett says, if they require explanation in the individual, they require it just as much in society. It is not explanation simply to transfer the mystery elsewhere.

(ii) Turning now to the awareness of God as man's refuge and strength, the support and stay and guarantor of his life, the sociological theory conceives that it is able to disclose the real source of this also in social relationships. It points out that the individual is in almost every aspect of his being dependent upon, and sustained by, the social organism to which he belongs. He is nothing apart from it, and the sense of being one with it, and having its powerful reinforcement and protection, is an enormous satisfaction, even as its opposite, the sense of alienation and estrangement, is, at least to the vast majority, a frightful misery and torment. Moreover this sense of the social setting and reinforcement of the individual life abides throughout all his activities, even when he is not explicitly thinking of it; it is there all the time as a dimly realized, but absolutely indispensable, basis and framework of his life. Now, in moments of religious awareness, particularly in the observance of the religious cult in worship, these social reinforcements, it is said, emerge from the background and become not only more explicit, but also more exalted and powerful. There is a tremendous reverbera-

tion of social emotion, which multiplies and intensifies itself by mutual induction from worshipper to worshipper, and the individual feels himself exalted and quickened and reinforced in every corner of his being. At the same time the awareness of the demands of the group upon the individual, the pressure of its super-individual values and necessities, is heightened, so that the sense of succour and the sense of demand fuse in the awareness of what is mistakenly supposed to be the supernatural God. Yet all that is really involved are the quite natural sociological and psychological forces. Advocates of this theory are anxious, as a rule, to grant that by such religious exercises a man's powers *are* quickened and his personal life enhanced; but this, says the theory, is simply due to the man being soaked, so to say, in social stimuli and encouragements which the idea of the deity, and the cults which surround it, bring to bear upon him in an unusually concentrated form.

What are we to say to this? Well, once again there is no need to deny the truth that is in it. That religious experience is profoundly implicated in our social nature, nobody, least of all a Christian, need be concerned to deny. It is indeed but one way of stating the truism that religion, whatever else it involves, is most certainly a function of human nature. The question, however, is once again whether the theory, granting it covers many aspects of religious experience, covers all. Is there the alleged exact correspondence between all essential elements in the religious experience of divine help and forces which can be discerned at work in social relationships? We do not think there is. Just as we have seen that the element of absolute demand presents itself to the individual in a form and with a bearing which cannot be related to empirically known social factors, so also with this element of succour.

Once again the crucial instance is the situation wherein an individual feels called upon to withstand the demands and pressures of his group. It is in just such a situation that he most needs the sense of the backing of God; indeed it is in just such a situation that many prophetic souls have been most aware of such backing; yet it is just there,

according to this theory, that it should be at a minimum, if not completely lacking. If the maximum point of felt religious reinforcement is reached in the common observation of religious ceremonial and cult, it becomes, to say the least, a little difficult to understand, say, Amos coming from lonely meditation in the desert and striding into the midst of the national religious festival at Bethel with words of terrific denunciation, sustained by a most profound awareness of the call and backing of the Eternal. Or on a still higher level, what are we to make of Jesus going to the Cross in the midst of loneliness, misunderstanding, hatred, and all but universal repudiation by Jewish society, yet sustained by the sense of the overshadowing presence and power of God? Jesus, in fact, affords a test case for any and every attempt to reduce religion merely to the play of social forces upon the individual. According to such a theory, we have to suppose that an intensely nationalistic and exclusive society, such as the Jews predominantly were in the time of Jesus, for its own purposes of construction and reconstruction, contrived to present itself to one individual in its midst as the Holy God and to impose upon that individual through the medium of that disguise an ethic of universal love which immediately threw him into violent conflict with itself; thereupon it slew him, though continuing by some mysterious process to give him sufficient sense of divine backing to ensure that he should not run away from his horrible fate. This is surely a most mysterious proceeding, and until our sociological theorists can do more to clear up the mystery in terms of purely sociological forces, we are entitled to put a quite emphatic question mark against their views.

The fact is, of course, that such theorists lack an understanding of the significance of the individual. They have fully grasped the deeply social side of religion, which, we repeat, none would wish to deny. But they have failed to grasp its intensely individualizing, isolating, and detaching side. We may justly set against the social theory of religion the statement of one of the acutest minds of our generation, A. N. Whitehead. "Religion is solitariness; and if you

are never solitary, you are never religious. Collective enthusiasms, revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, bibles, codes of behaviour, are the trappings of religion, its passing forms. They may be useful, or harmful; they may be authoritatively ordained, or merely temporary expedients. But the end of religion is beyond all this."

Sometimes defenders of the theory under discussion seek to meet the point we have just made by suggesting that the individual finding himself thrown into conflict with his group creates for himself the sense of divine backing by a process of phantasy thinking. This is to call in the aid of that theory of religion which we shall next consider, and which has its own difficulties. But even apart from those difficulties the problem still remains how and why religion should throw a man into conflict with his group at all, if it be merely a manifestation of group influences.

(iii) Finally, there is the religious man's awareness of God as a mysterious, supernatural, ultimate reality other than and transcending himself, the source of his being and having the disposal of his life. To this element also it is said there corresponds in the social situation something sufficient to explain its rise. The individual, it is said, is not aware of the source and origin of the social forces which continually play upon him, directing his actions, sustaining his courage, and in moments of religious worship and exaltation surging up within his being and lifting him above himself. They seem, therefore, to him, as he becomes aware of their effects in himself and in his neighbours, to come from some mysterious, all-encompassing reality other than himself and his neighbours, transcending all that he is able empirically to observe in their everyday life, and outlasting the brief span of their years. Thus here also society provides him with the raw stuff of the idea of God. One might compare the relationship to that of a single cell in the body to the whole body. It lives and moves and has its being in, is played upon continually and sustained by, forces emanating from the total organism of which it is a member and apart from which it could not exist. Now suppose—like the ant in the simile we have perhaps already

used too much—the cell were suddenly endowed with self-consciousness, but not with physiological knowledge; will not its dim awareness of the larger organism by which it is carried convey the sense of being in a relation of dependence upon some mysterious, ultimate being, other than and transcending itself?

In answer to this we would point out two things.

First, it unduly narrows the scope of the religious sense of the ultimacy and otherness of God and of dependence upon Him. An essential element in this aspect of the awareness of God is the sense that the group itself depends for its existence and sustenance upon a divine reality other and higher than itself, and not only the group itself but also the whole natural order by which it is environed. In other words, there is an all-inclusive cosmological side to religion which must not be overlooked. It is not right to suggest, as some have done, in reply to this, that the cosmological reference only comes in much later, and is due to the taking up into religion (which, however, still draws all its vitality from social relationships) of rational questioning as to the cause of the world. For the evidence is clear that in the earliest beginnings of religious awareness there is a sense of the divine reality manifesting itself in natural events, in storms and floods, as well as, be it noted, in more beneficent and orderly processes such as seed-time and harvest, events which no doubt profoundly affect the life of the group, but of which the distinguishing mark and challenge is that neither the individual nor the group has any final control over them. Even in primitive religion there is a sense of God as creator who is lord over all things, including the group itself, and in more mature religion it is even more evidently there, and that, too, in a form so living that it is, to say the least, difficult to think of it as a merely theoretical extension of an idea of God derived primarily from the social sphere.

Second, this view reveals a defective grasp of what precisely the religious awareness is which is given inadequate expression in such a phrase as " the transcendent otherness of God ". Such awareness, we would suggest, is the dis-

cernment of another dimension of being which no combination of influences and impacts, either from society or from nature, could produce. Society and nature may be, indeed are, in a sense mysterious, overwhelming, sustaining, perduring as over against the individual, but still *not in exactly the same sense* in which the divine reality is apprehended by the religious mind as mysterious, overwhelming, sustaining, perduring. What needs explaining is precisely the subtle, but very real, change in the meaning of these terms which takes place as the specifically religious awareness supervenes; and no matter how many parallels in a man's relationship to his group or to nature may be found, they are, and must be, beside the point, because by definition—definition which is not arbitrary, but springs out of the religious awareness itself—*there is no parallel* to God. In short, all attempts to naturalize the supernatural, whether in terms of society or of any other phenomenon, only appear to succeed because *the essential quality of the supernatural as it discloses itself to the religious mind is not fully grasped.*

We have put this point elsewhere in relation to the connexion between the mystery and sublimity of nature and the awareness of God, and we may perhaps be permitted to quote the words we used. They can obviously be made to apply, *mutatis mutandis,* to the connexion between the mysterious and transcendent qualities of society and the awareness of God.

" Merely to be abased before the vast dimensions of the mountains or the stars or the seas, or to cringe before the irresistible might of the winds and storms . . . is not yet to be religious, to discern God. Such experience only becomes religious when there is apprehended through it that which is *super*natural, when through the vastness of the overarching sky and the hills, the irresistible forces of nature, another reality of a different order is given; one which, vast as the sky, is not the sky; eternal as the hills, is not the hills; mysterious as the woods, is not the woods; irresistible as the winds, is not the winds, but that from which these take their being. When this happens the experience is of an entirely different kind; it is not evoked by a merely quantitative step-

ping up of the sublime, but by the discernment through it of another dimension of being in which nature lies and by which it is sustained."[1]

Substitute society, or some aspect of society, for the various natural phenomena mentioned in these sentences, and the point we are making is expressed.

(2) This brings us to the second main step in the argument—the explanation how the fact of society is transformed into the thought of God.

Here, it is said, is the individual played upon by social forces whose real origin he does not know, and which disclose themselves to him in the form of an imperious demand upon his conduct and a sustaining succour to his life. Such a situation inevitably calls into action, and co-operates with, another tendency of the mind, the tendency to create concrete symbols as a focus for any powerful and pervasive system of feeling which possesses the mind, but whose real nature and genesis are not grasped. This tendency, it is suggested, can be illustrated from this same social sphere which the theory would make the source of religion, in such wise as to throw light on the genesis of religion itself. Consider, it is said, the awe and respect, the high sounding honorific titles, the elaborate court etiquette with which a monarch is invested, even though he may be in fact "a very ordinary fellow", to use the phrase which King George V is reported to have used concerning himself. Consider also the national flag; this is a valueless piece of rag, but in its capacity as a concrete symbol for group feelings it becomes so sacred that any act of disrespect induces in the beholder almost a shudder of horror as at some blasphemous sacrilege; and men will die, defying every consideration of reason or common sense, in order to rescue it, mere rag that it is, from the hands of the enemy. What then bestows upon such commonplace persons and objects these strange qualities? It can only be group feelings and necessities. Apart from the latter they are commonplace and insignificant, but as symbols through which powerful group forces

[1] *The World and God*, p. 58

focus and concentrate and canalize themselves they become the very reverse of commonplace and insignificant. And the individual, aware of the focused impact of the group forces upon him through these objects, but ignorant of their real source, naturally and inevitably conceives that he is dealing with a reality of an entirely different order from every-day things, a reality awful, sacred, and wholly other, a reality for which he must have a distinctive name, the name "God" or "divine". So kings are deified or regarded as direct representatives of the ancient tribal deity, or the totem, which is at one and the same time the tribal badge or flag and the source and vehicle of sacred force, is set up. And so the thought of God is launched on its long history. It starts tied to the concrete symbol, but in course of time it escapes from this and, in accordance with the unfolding of man's life generally, particularly his intellectual life, takes on new significances; it may come indeed to be hardly more than a bare philosophic idea, a mere conceptual symbol, with no feeling content or vitality at all—as with many to-day—but if at any time it recovers vitality and power, it is always because once more for one reason or another the old, powerful social influences are stirring again and pouring themselves as it were into the ancient symbol, the ancient symbol of that vast all-encompassing social reality in which we live and move and have our being and with which our whole personal destiny is bound up.

Advocates of this theory of religion might well point to-day to what has happened in Germany. There group feelings have been powerfully stimulated by large-scale observation of cult and ceremonial, and, significantly, the word God or divine has been frequently used in connexion therewith, the word being defined, so far as definition is given at all, in terms of *the spirit and destiny of the German people*. Some of the more fanatical have indeed proposed deliberately to reinstate the old Teutonic deities. Durkheim cites an earlier instance of the same sort of thing. "This aptitude of society", he says, "for setting itself up as a God, or for creating Gods, was never more apparent than during the first years of the French Revolu-

tion. All this time under the influence of the general enthusiasm, things purely laical by nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things; these were the Fatherland, Liberty, Reason. A religion tended to become established which had its dogmas, symbols, altars, feasts. It is true that this religious renovation had only a short duration. But that was because the patriotic enthusiasm which had first transported the masses died down."

What are we to say to this? Well, clearly, this second step in the argument rests upon the validity of the first. If the alleged exact correspondence had been established between the essential content of the idea of God, as this manifests itself in the actualities of religious experience taken over its whole breadth, and the relation of society to the individual, then the suggestion that the strange sacredness of the idea of God is basically of the same order as the sacredness of the King's person or the flag would have considerable weight. But so soon as it is clearly seen that this correspondence has not been established, then the instances cited of social forces investing otherwise ordinary objects with what are called "religious qualities" lose their force; for we then see that to call these qualities "religious" is really a misuse of terms. It becomes clear that these qualities are not really religious in the full sense of the term at all, but are only *analogous* to what is religious; closely analogous, if you like, because society is an important factor in religious awareness, and because religion, as we saw earlier, has a way of entering into alliance with all sides of human experience; so analogous, indeed, that violently excited social feelings may borrow words and phrases from religion and even become temporarily a sort of substitute for religion; but lacking altogether the power permanently to grip and hold the human spirit, over all stages of its development, as genuine religion has done. From this point of view it is possible to interpret the illustration from the French Revolution in an entirely different way from Durkheim. We may suggest that the reason why the purely national religion of that period died out was not that the causes which produce

all religion ceased to operate, but that it was not real religion that was produced. It lacked that grip on something deeper and wider and more permanent than social relationships which genuine religion always has. It was artificial, substitute religion, but not the real thing. So it will be, we may predict, with the new-found "religion" of the Third Reich. In support of this we may cite instances of religious revivals which have apparently lacked the support of social forces in any marked degree and yet which have not petered out, as, for example, the evangelical revival in eighteenth-century England. The reason why the latter did not peter out was, surely, that it penetrated right through the social sphere to something deeper.

The sociological explanation of religion, then, we may legitimately set on one side as unsatisfactory and unconvincing. It does not cover the facts of the religious history and experience of mankind. Before we leave it, however, there is perhaps one further comment which is worth making. We may ask how it comes about that society, having produced religion, and still producing religion, in order to preserve itself and meet its own needs of "construction and reconstruction", should now in these latter days have produced, say, a Durkheim, and indeed a whole school of sociological writers, to undo its work. For it is certain that if this theory be true and if its sponsors succeed in getting men to accept its truth, religion will sooner or later disappear; men will certainly not continue to be religious when they discover that the whole business is rank deception. Society in bringing forth its own exposure has simply frustrated and stultified itself, which seems another extremely mysterious proceeding. The only way out of this difficulty would be to suppose that science in general, and sociological science in particular, are not in essence sociologically conditioned, but have some other source which gives them their authority over us and entitles them to our complete allegiance whatever the consequences. But if this position is taken up in regard to science, why is the same position not taken up in regard

to such another major activity of the human spirit as religion? The only reason is that there is here operative that prior judgment or bias about religion to which reference has already been made.

As a matter of fact, Durkheim and his friends, with a bold consistency which one cannot but admire, are willing to carry their methods right into the sphere of science itself and to set forth a sociology of science, a sociology of sociology. The categories with which reason works, it is maintained, are themselves reflections of social relationships, and the source of the apparent self-evidence and coerciveness of rational principles is once again the pressure of group experience over long centuries. This is a most intrepid consistency, but the courage of it is not in fact able to stay the course. For obviously we must ask, if religion as a product of society deceives us, why not science? And in that case what is the use of discussing, or writing books about, anything? May not Durkheim's own theory be the result of the working out of obscure social forces, which for their own purposes of "construction and reconstruction" have now imposed a deception upon him? Durkheim sees this abyss of absolute scepticism opening at his feet and draws back. He is ready, along the lines suggested, to maintain that the categories and principles of reasoning arise out of social relationships, as indeed, in some sense they plainly do, for a child brought up in complete solitude, if that were possible, would, we may surmise, be an idiot; but he maintains also that they have a foundation in, and a validity for, reality as a whole, for reality as a whole, he says, is mirrored in society, society being part of, and continuous with, it. Thus he retains the general objectivity of science, despite its social origins, incidentally retaining also the significance of his own book. But he still refuses to concede a like objectivity to religion, though, so far as its social origin is concerned, it is on precisely the same level. This surely discloses once again the prejudice and bias which underlie the whole theory.

CHAPTER X

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF RELIGION

THE sociological theory we have just considered concentrates its attention mainly on the element of sacred and unconditional demand in the awareness of God, seeking to explain it as a disguised form of social pressure; though, as we have seen, it does have something to say also about other elements in the awareness of God. The theory to which we now turn concentrates more on the awareness of God as man's "refuge and strength". It proposes to explain this without appealing to the reality of God, and it supposes that once this is done everything that gives religion its vitality and its hold upon human minds has been explained.

The explanation offered is a psychological one, or, in a broad sense, a biological one. Passing reference was made to it in an earlier chapter when we discussed the pragmatic element in belief in God[1]; we now give it more detailed consideration. The theory is that religion is the outcome of the fundamental biological urge inherent in all living creatures to conserve and develop their own life. The business of living, for man as for other creatures, is to achieve some sort of mastery of an environment which is apparently indifferent, and even at times destructively hostile, to his needs and desires. He must get on terms with his world or his life becomes intolerable, if it does not actually perish. He has many ways of doing, or attempting to do, this, and one such way has been, and is, religion.

By ordinary psychological processes which it is not difficult to trace, primitive man inevitably, so it is suggested, came to believe in invisible personal entities. "There are few men living to-day", says one writer, "who, if deprived of the inheritance of civilization, would not people an unseen world with these unreal creatures." How then do some of these unreal creatures become endowed with the specific and distinctive quality of divinity? Here the imperious urge of man to reinforce himself in his life task

[1] See Part I, p. 96.

comes in. He endows some of these unseen personal entities, which the normal working of his mental processes has led him to project into his world, with all the powers necessary to supply his own deficiencies. Perhaps we should not, according to this view, say "he" endows them, for that might suggest a deliberate self-conscious reflective process; rather it is the life-urge within him which necessitates that he should do so, if he is "to keep his end up" at all. Because it is this deep, subconscious urge which lies behind the imaginative peopling of his world with powerful allies whose help he can win by prayer, gifts, adulation and such-like personal approaches, he really does find the whole business an enormous help. The theory is anxious to grant that religion has been, and is, a great reinforcement, and as such is a normal, and even at certain levels a necessary, function of human personality in its life task. Even though the gods never in fact do what the worshipper hopes and prays they will do—how can they, seeing they are not "there"?—yet there are a number of unsought beneficial results of the highest consequence—a feeling of confidence and optimism, a stimulus to the will to go forth confidently to conquer its world, a reinforcement of the hold upon the mind of moral ideals, and so on. These are the results of believing in the gods, not of the gods being actually "there". "The objective existence of personal deities", says Leuba, "is an assumption necessary to religion; but the mere belief in their existence is quite sufficient to account for the important place it has occupied, and still occupies, amongst the factors of human development."

This is the heart of the theory. The hold on the human spirit of belief in God is due entirely to the clamour of men's needs and desires for satisfaction in a world which in so many ways seems to deny and frustrate them. Such belief keeps alive that faith without which the life impulse would sink back into the death of despair; it is, in short, as we said earlier, an elaborate process of whistling to keep up one's courage in the dark, and if it does keep up one's courage, why not whistle? Even in these modern days when we no longer people the world with invisible spirits, the deep bio-

logical urge still persists. We refine the idea of God in various ways by our philosophical and theological arguments, but we hold on to it, and the source of whatever vitality it has in our minds is the same, namely the help it brings.

The theory is in broad principle an old one, going back in one form or another to the Greek philosophers, but it has gained both in force and popularity to-day by calling to its aid modern psychological knowledge, now so widely disseminated in half-baked forms through the press and cheap handbooks. We have all been made familiar in these days with the part played in men's mental life by wishful thinking, projection, phantasy compensation, and the whole bag of tricks whereby weak souls make for themselves the comfortable paradise of fools. What could be more plausible then than the suggestion that religion is fundamentally of the same order, even though on a somewhat higher level? Not many perhaps have wrestled in detail with the somewhat obscure pages of Freud, and still less with the criticisms of his theories which are urged by other psychologists, but most know in a vague way his view that belief in God is just a reappearance in adult life, in response to the harshness of the world, of the child-father relationship of infancy, and are either encouraged or troubled, according as they do, or do not, wish to dismiss religion from their life, by the authority of so great a name in the history of psychological science. It is precisely here, indeed, that this type of theory has the advantage over the sociological theory previously considered, though in other ways it is nothing like so convincing, namely that it claims to give a much more precise account of the psychological mechanism through which the mind reaches the idea of God under the compulsion of its need. In the sociological theory the process whereby the voice of the people reaches the individual as the voice of God is left almost entirely unexplained, whereas the theory now under discussion seeks to confirm itself by pointing to mental processes with which, as we have said, modern psychological science has made the popular mind almost too familiar.

What then shall we say to this theory? Again, as with the sociological theory, we are quite ready to accept whatsoever there is of truth in it. It must bear some relation to the truth, for otherwise it would have no plausibility at all. We have ourselves spoken at length in Part I of this work of the pragmatic side of belief in God. God *is* refuge and strength, and men often enough are driven to turn to God by a feeling of desperate need. It does not follow logically, however, that, because men turn to God under the pressure of need, therefore the pressure of need alone creates the thought of God. A may occasion B without being its sole and sufficient cause. On the other hand, we are quite prepared to grant that there has often entered into religion, and does often enter into it now, phantasy thinking of a morbid and undesirable kind. Much that passes for religion is, we may grant, infantilism, a running away from life, escape mechanism—whatever it may be called—a rather shameless making of God an ally of our own purposes, a reduction of Him to the level of the plumber whom we call in only when the pipes burst. It is not difficult to see that *given a mind disposed to this kind of thing* there might well be produced in it by a phantasy process a fairly lively sense of God as father, especially as in the type of mind in question infantile attitudes to father and mother and their protective function almost certainly subconsciously survive. But the fact that we can see how such processes *might* enter into religion, and in some cases do give to it whatever liveliness it possesses, is no warrant for saying that they lie behind, and are sufficient to explain, the whole religious life of mankind. Various considerations make such a generalization extremely dubious, not to say absurd.

The first and most obvious point that suggests itself is that the theory leaves out of account the element of absolute demand which we have seen is so very central, indeed is in some ways the most distinctive feature, in the religious life of mankind all down the ages. Religious history is full of instances of the most dreadful torments endured by men and women because of what they felt to be the will of God laid upon them, torments from which, but for that com-

pulsion, they would have run a thousand miles. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives a lurid, but not exaggerated, catalogue: "stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, wandering about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, tormented, afflicted", and so on. There was no necessity for them to suffer these things other than what they felt to be the necessity laid upon them by the will of God. It would seem to be a curious psychological mechanism which, in order to comfort and establish man in face of the inevitable ills of his life, succeeds in presenting him with an idea which lands him in a number of far worse ills, ills which he could escape, as indeed some have escaped them, by the simple method of abjuring their religious faith. If the motive behind religion is *merely* to comfort ourselves, how does it come about that so many religious minds, when faced with the alternative of being disloyal to God or suffering enormous loss and pain which otherwise would not come their way at all, have chosen the latter? The answer is clear. It is that there is more in religion than this theory has had the wit to see. It is indeed a gigantic over-simplification.

Not all representatives of the theory, however, fail to see this point, though an astonishingly large proportion seem to do so. Leuba, for example, attempts to deal with it, and as what he says is fairly typical of the way in which it is usually dealt with, we may take a brief look at it. Leuba says in effect that amongst the needs and desires which are inherent in the biological make-up of man there are needs and desires for what are usually regarded as the higher things of mind and character. That is how man is made. The same urgent life-process which puts in man the desire for food or for a mate puts in him also the hunger for righteousness and self-forgetfulness and love. Now the situation is such that a man cannot satisfy all these desires at once; if some are to be fostered and satisfied, others must be suppressed. It is impossible to have the satisfaction of the desire for self-control along with the satisfaction of the desire for fine foods or sexual gratification. The one has to give way to the other. The

life struggle thus becomes a conflict between two sets of desires, and in that conflict, at least in certain people, religion comes in as a reinforcement of the higher desires. The thought of God as demanding the suppression of the lower desires, and as rewarding the pursuit of the higher, ensures the victory of the latter, at any rate in those who happen to be so constituted that they do want above all things else to see that victory. Thus all the martyrdoms of religious history are explained.

It is clear, however, that some account must be given of the genesis of these higher desires. A desire which is just "there" in human nature without any sort of relationship to the facts and tasks of the real world is an absurd idea, and most of all in a theory which is professedly built on biological principles. So far as this point is gone into at all, the suggestion appears to be that these desires have to do with the social environment. Nature has put into man both regard for self and regard for others, both egotistic and altruistic impulses, because it has made him at one and the same time an individual and a member of a group. It is the needs of the group which are served by the higher moral insights of the individual. But this raises the same difficulty as appeared in connexion with the sociological theory of religion, the difficulty, namely, that the higher moral insights of the individual often transcend, and go counter to, the requirements of the group. Indeed that is precisely the problem we have raised, the problem of the martyr who goes to the stake, is, in fact, sent to the stake by the group, and goes through the agony of it because of his awareness of God. How does it come about that the individual feels the demand to go counter to the group in the interests of the group, and how does it come about that he can relate such a demand so vividly to the thought of God that he is able to go through with it to the end? Surely if it is *merely* a matter of the mind fabricating an idea in order to ease its way, an individual finding himself possessed with a freakish idea of conduct leading to such dire consequences would fabricate an idea to justify giving it up, not following it through. If that is all there is to it

why not use the idea of God to justify not going to the stake rather than going to it? And in any case, we repeat, where did such a freakish idea come from and with such power, if only group necessities are involved?

Not all who propound the sort of theory under discussion are aware of these problems, but those who are fail to find an answer to them in terms of purely psychological theory. Leuba, for example, has to take refuge in a vague Life Force philosophy. It is the Life Force which, in these instances of non-conformity to the group and consequent martyrdom, is pushing the individual towards conduct which, though contrary to his own immediately felt impulses, is ultimately in the direction of a richer, fuller life, if not for himself, then for the group and perhaps for mankind generally. It exerts its pressure upon him in the form of an unconditional demand, and gives him the needed incentive to obey by producing, through the psychological mechanisms with which it has provided him, the idea of God. Plainly this is no longer psychological or biological science, but speculative philosophy. It is exactly on a par with Durkheim's attempt to get out of the same difficulty by attributing to society all kinds of mysterious powers for discerning the unrealized ideal and imposing it on the individual, that is to say, by attributing to society all the powers necessary to make up for the deficiencies of the sociological theory itself. Now a man is entitled, of course, to adopt a Life Force philosophy as against a theistic philosophy if he is minded so to do; but the case for the former as against the latter ought to be first argued and established on its own merits, and certainly it ought not to be brought in without discussion to fill up the gaps in what purports to be a psychological explanation of religion. That it is so brought in indicates once again the presence of unconscious bias.

We turn now to some other criticisms of the theory.

It may be suggested that the theory does not really accord with the findings of psychology, and indeed of experience generally. One of the things that has most clearly emerged from modern psychological study, though

keen observers of human nature hardly needed psychology to tell them it, has been that phantasy thinking can never be more than a temporary make-shift in dealing with life. In the end it does not really equip the personality for its tasks; rather it leads, not only to external disaster, but also to internal stress, arrest of growth, and disintegration. At best it can only serve as a temporary protection or "cushion" to ward off the full force of a blow whilst the mind recovers its balance, though even then it is dangerous. Psychiatrists know only too well the urgency as well as the difficulty of getting their patients to face facts, to see reality as it is and not as their clamant desires would wish it to be. It is, therefore, incredible that a phantasy so widespread, deep-seated, and permanent, as this theory really declares religion to be, should be so beneficial in its effects; for, be it remembered, the theory rests on the assertion that religion *is* beneficial in its effects, not temporarily and incidentally, but in a very profound, creative and indispensable way. There is, in fact, a dilemma confronting us here. If we start by granting that religion invigorates human personality and makes it more adequate to life, we cannot, consistently with psychological principle, proceed to explain it in terms of phantasy thinking. If, on the other hand, we start with the idea that religion is fundamentally phantasy thinking we cannot, consistently with psychological principle, explain its central and permanent place in human life and the fact that it is continually found in conjunction with the greatest possible vigour, poise, sincerity of mind, adequacy to the most exacting demands of life.

Sometimes the attempt is made to get out of this difficulty by assimilating religion to poetry and art. It is suggested that the assertions of religion about God are not true in the sense that the statements of science about matters of fact are, or may be, true. The God of religion is not "there" in the precise sense in which the religious man believes Him to be "there", in the sense that tables and chairs, or men and women are "there". Yet, on the other hand, the assertions of religion are not false in the sense that the

neurotic's phantasies are false, the phantasy, say, that he is the Shah of Persia. Religion, it is said, belongs to a sphere in which the categories true and false as ordinarily understood do not apply. It belongs to the same sphere as poetry and art. In poetry and art we recreate, decorate, embroider, idealize the real world in a way that makes it more satisfying to our own inner life with its dreams and aspirations—dreams and aspirations which are the spring of all the order and beauty and warmth of our personal world. Thus the self is cleansed, enriched, enlarged and satisfied. So also it is in religion, which is akin to poetry and art, and has, in fact, always found in these its natural allies. "Religions", says Santayana, "are better or worse, never true or false."

It is sufficient answer to this suggestion to say that it is utterly false both to art and to religion. It is a central element in the artistic consciousness that it is, in its work, seeking to grasp and express an ideal world which in spite of its ideality is real and in some sense stands objectively over against the artist; it is never apprehended as merely a source of internal satisfactions and delights.[1] Without this, neither the work of artistic production nor its product would internally satisfy or delight. This is even more obviously true of religion. In religion the reality-interest is paramount. Once persuade the religious man that the reality with which he supposes himself to be dealing is not "there" in the sense in which he supposes it to be "there" and his religion vanishes away. To substitute for the objective reality-interest which religion feels so passionately some other sort of interest, the interest, say, in expressing and satisfying our own inner states of mind, and to go on using the term religion, is either to show a complete failure to grasp the real nature of what is being discussed or else to use terms with a looseness which is hardly creditable.

The next point of criticism is this. It will be remembered that in discussing the sociological view of religion we pointed out the pit of complete scepticism which opened

[1] See Part I, p. 56.

up at the feet of Durkheim, and how he drew back from it by arbitrarily conceding an ultimate truth to rational categories whilst denying it to moral and religious categories. Now the same pit opens up at the feet of those who would say that religion "works" admirably in human life, but is in its main assertions false and illusory. This is obviously a very dangerous position. For it opens up the possibility that man's mental processes are merely instruments in the struggle for existence, with an omnipotent and mysterious life force in the background using those mental processes without the least regard for fact or truth, provided only that it can get on with its own inscrutable business. On that basis, how do we know that science, and indeed every other major activity of the mind (let it never be forgotten that religion, when all is said and done, *is* a major, a central, activity of the human mind), is not in exactly the same position? How does the psychological theorist know that in his explanation of religion he is not the dupe of the life force which, for its own purposes, has now caused him to believe a lie? May not the senses also be radically deceptive—merely a method of so transforming the real world, whatever it may be in itself, that we, biologically constituted as we are, may be able to manage it a little better? And may not even the most severely rational processes be of the same order? Thus the pit of scepticism yawns at our feet again, as it always does when once we begin to explain away any major activity of the mind as fundamentally a biologically useful illusion. The fact is, of course, these theorists start out with the undeclared assumption that the religious way of apprehending the world is false, only the so-called scientific way being true and trustworthy. This is bias, and the strength of the bias is revealed by the failure to see that the arguments used to support the former position, if consistently carried through, take away all grounds for believing the latter.

The last comment we make is that this type of theory falls into the error of confusing the question of the psychological causes of a belief with the question of its truth. It

confuses "cause" with "ground" or "reason". It is impossible to determine the truth, or falsity, of a belief merely by a consideration of its psychological origins. The psychological origins need not be wholly ignored, but by themselves they are not in the least conclusive. A simple example may serve to make this clear, if that is necessary. The writer once "had words" with a man in the presence of a third. He told the man that he was a bumptious ass, and to this the retort was given that such a rude thing was only said out of jealousy. Whereupon the third party intervened in a rather devastating way. He said, "You are both right." "You," he said to the writer, "spoke out of jealousy." "And you," he said, turning to the other, "have been a bumptious ass." In other words the psychological motive of speech does not affect the truth of what is spoken. What was spoken out of jealousy happened none the less to hit the mark.

So it is with psychological analyses of the origins of religion. We do not deny, as we have already said, that the challenges and troubles of life play a large part in evoking, and giving liveliness to, the thought of God, and particularly to the thought of Him as refuge and strength. But taken by itself such a fact neither proves nor disproves the reality of God. We might even be prepared to accept much of Freud's elaborate and speculative account of the origin of belief in God in the child's relationship with its father, and yet regard the question of its truth as still open. Indeed it would be possible to argue that if God be indeed the Father of men's spirits, and if His plan be to bring men to a knowledge of that fact through the interplay of their inner life with the facts of their world, then nothing could be more appropriate than that He should, on the one hand, set man as a child in relation to an earthly father in order to give him a living knowledge of such a personal relationship, and, on the other hand, set him in a world which drives him to use the idea of father thus implanted in him to make sense of it and to gain the mastery over it. We are by no means suggesting that this is a true account of the matter, but so far as psychological theory is

concerned it might well be. As Dean Matthews says, "to say that religious belief is merely a projection of ourselves is to say nothing about its truth. A projection, like a projectile, may hit some reality corresponding to it." Whether it does so or not can only be determined by much wider considerations than those of psychology. These wider considerations it is the purpose of this book in some measure to provide.

All this is but another way of illustrating the point made earlier, namely that the error into which this type of thought is always falling is that of supposing that a psychological (or sociological) account of how religion might have arisen, *if* it be an illusion, is somehow a proof that it *is* an illusion. But, of course, it is not. The decision that it *is* an illusion is really made *prior to the excogitating of the theory.*

The point is so important, and despite its obviousness when pointed out, so frequently overlooked, that we may be permitted to dwell on it further by means of a quotation from Prof. J. B. Pratt's *The Religious Consciousness.*

"Let us imagine", he says, "the human organism always played upon by light. Let us suppose, moreover, that the majority of men are blind and that only a few see. When, now, the eyes of one of these seers are open, or he is not in some way shading his retina, he will be constantly receiving light sensations. In investigating these very interesting experiences your strict psychologist, who is seeking to frame an exact scientific account of one of these unusual individuals, would, of course, correlate the light sensations with raised eyelids, and their cessation with closed eyes. Light sensations, he would say, are the invariable accompaniment of open eyes; they are, in fact, a 'function' of open eyes. The principle of single difference could be applied with exactitude to show that the opening of the eyes was the cause of the light sensations, and fully explained them (in the psychological sense)—no reference being needed to the sun or the ether waves or any other outer source. The naïve seer, innocent of the ways of science, might indeed insist that he saw the *sun*, and not merely his own sensations; but the psychologist would assure him that he mistook his sensations for something objective,

that, in fact, he was substituting interpretation for description, and that the only verifiable and scientific fact was his sensations of light. These, he would add, were fully described, generalized, and therefore explained, by the scientific law correlating them with a certain condition of the organism—namely raised eyelids, stimulated retina, afferent impulses of the optic nerves, and stimulation of the visual centres in the occipital lobes. If the naive seer were still unsatisfied, the psychologists could challenge him to see light with his eyes shut or to fail to see it with them open, or to point out a single element in his experience not accounted for by the psychological formula.

"Both seer and scientist would be right. The psychological explanation would be complete (in its own way and within its self-imposed limits), and it would be vain to seek to prove the objective existence of the sun by breaking down the psychological correlation of light sensation and organic condition. And yet it would be true that the seer saw the sun.

"May it, then, perhaps be that the mystics are the seers of our world, and that whenever they open the eyes of their souls, the Eternal Light pours in; and that though we blind ones learnedly describe, generalize, and explain their experience by regular psychological laws which take account only of the psychological organism, still the light is really there and the mystic apprehends it directly, even as he says? The question is not for psychological discussion. But I think we may say at least this much: that while the psychology of religion must have a free hand, and whilst it is hopeless to look to it for a proof of anything transcendent, nothing that it can say should prevent the religious man, who wishes to be perfectly loyal to logic and loyal to truth, from seeing in his own spiritual experiences the genuine influence of the Living God."[1]

[1] *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 457

CHAPTER XI

POSITIVE REFLECTIVE CONFIRMATIONS OF BELIEF IN GOD

WE now turn to the second and more positive line of thought in the reflective support and justification of belief in God, namely that which seeks to show that such belief helps us to make sense of our experience generally, is confirmed, or at least not contradicted, by other assured knowledge that we have, and provides us with a principle of interpretation of the world which, in spite of all remaining mysteries, is as satisfying as any other interpretation available, and indeed more so than most.

Manifestly it is impossible in the space at our disposal to set forth the whole reflective case for theism as this has been wrought out by many first rank minds in the history of thought. It may well be noted, however, in passing, that the fact that it has so been wrought out is itself for more ordinary minds a confirmation of their religious belief not to be despised. It at least shows that belief in God is able to stand up for itself in the forum of acute philosophical discussion, and that lightly to dismiss it, as some of our moderns supposing themselves to be intellectually emancipated, still do, as intellectually of no account is merely to reveal the crassest prejudice and ignorance. Some of our laboratory trained intelligentsia, not to speak of the " not so intelligent "-sia, badly need a course in the history of philosophy, and to be reminded of great names like Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Lotze, and not a few others.

We ourselves propose to follow only a single central line of thought—one which has always bulked, and must always bulk, largely in the case for theism and without which any other considerations would not carry us very far. This line of thought is, in effect, to ask the question, what of man? Man, with his rational, moral, æsthetic and religious experience, has in fact come forth from the heart of nature. The world has produced him and called forth the whole range

of his experience; it sustains him and responds to him. What then is its ultimate constitution and nature that that should be so? That is the question which every philosophy, if it seriously tries to give us a unifying interpretation of things, must try to answer, and our claim is that theism of the type we are interested in in this book, taking all in all, answers it best, though, as will become plain, it leaves many questions still unanswered.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to make clear the exact procedure and scope of the argument. We must repeat once again in this context, even at the risk of being wearisome, that we are not proposing in any way to go back on what was said earlier about the impossibility of demonstrating with complete logical cogency the existence of God. We are not going to suggest that from the fact of man the fact of God can be deduced "by due and necessary consequence". It cannot. It is usually possible in respect of any consideration brought forward to suggest some other explanatory hypothesis, which if it is not particularly convincing is certainly not demonstrably false. And if one is minded to be sceptical, one can always take refuge in what the logicians call the principle of the plurality of causes. That is to say, it is always possible to suggest that the "cause" of man might be, not God, but some other sort of reality of which at the moment we know little or nothing. Such an agnostic position is, in the nature of the case, impossible to refute. No, what we are interested in is not logical proofs, but confirmatory considerations which present themselves when we bring the thought of God with us to the interpretation of the world and man's place in it. It is a question of the coherence of the belief with facts, particularly with the fact of the existence of man, and of its capacity so to interpret, illumine and explain them that we can see them in some measure as a unity. Of course, if we are not interested in attaining the most comprehensive and illuminating explanatory view of the world and of man's place in it that we can command there is nothing more to be said. The question whether we want such a view or not is, however, not an open one for

those who feel the compelling touch of God upon them in other ways. Such, if they are prepared to think at all, must try to see other facts and experiences in the light of that compelling touch, and if they find that the thought of God, which has thus come to them along other lines, does provide an illuminating and unifying viewpoint, then that, to repeat once again what was said earlier, is an intellectual satisfaction and a confirmation of belief which it would be the merest affectation to despise.

One further preliminary point. The full weight of the confirmatory case for theism can only be felt when the various considerations we shall bring forward are taken altogether. The case, in short, is a cumulative case. Any one line of thought taken by itself might not be very convincing; but all of them taken together, as lines converging and meeting in a common centre, constitute a not unimpressive argument. It is somewhat similar to circumstantial evidence in a court of law. The police may be quite convinced on other grounds that they have their man, but to satisfy the jury, and perhaps in some measure to satisfy themselves, they bring together a number of pieces of circumstantial evidence all pointing in the same direction. It is in this unanimity of direction that the strength of the legal case lies.

(1) The first and perhaps the most obvious consideration which presents itself is that man is a being with intelligence, and, behold, when he uses his intelligence with which nature has endowed him upon nature itself he finds that it is intelligible. It responds to the exercise of his reason upon it. To the intelligence it has brought forth it discloses itself as an intelligible, reliable, predictable order. Does not this strongly suggest that reason and intelligence are constitutive of nature? If man's thought can penetrate nature, then surely thought must be in some ultimate sense behind and within nature, and not be merely an isolated, unattached, non-significant by-product which has casually appeared in this odd creature called man. Yet how can there be thought without a thinker? "Thought behind

and within the world" means "thinker behind and within the world". And this is part of the idea of God as this is given in religious experience, namely that He is the supreme creative intelligence behind all things, giving man his reason and the world its unity and character.

To most this will not be lacking in force. Assuredly, they will agree, the intelligibility of the world implies an ordering intelligence behind it. Yet for the sake of clear and sincere thinking we must remind ourselves of what has just been said in the previous paragraphs. We cannot in strict logic proceed from the bare fact of the amenability of the world to our reason to a firm theistic conclusion. For, in the first place, are we entitled to assume that the intelligibility which our minds have discovered in the world obtains *everywhere* and will obtain *for all time*? It is at least theoretically conceivable that there are reaches of reality which to our reasons would seem utterly chaotic and unintelligible; even what we have hitherto discovered of order in the world might suddenly become disorderly. If we say we know that that cannot happen, that is to express a faith which seems to presuppose the very belief in God which is under discussion; such a conviction is a manifestation of religious faith, as was suggested in Part I of this work,[1] and must not be used as a confirmation of it. And then, in the second place, we can hardly claim that the theistic interpretation is the only possible interpretation even of that great amount of responsiveness to our reason which we have experienced up to now and still do experience every day. It is theoretically possible, as some have maintained, that the world has a structural unity of a logical kind, so to say, in its own right, which structure runs up into our minds, which are after all part of the world. It is possible that the world is just there as an order of intelligible relationships without anything beyond it, or above it, or at work in it, in the nature of a supreme ordering intelligence. After all, it is said, you have got to come to rest somewhere in the ultimate mystery of the given, in the final, ineluctable stuff of things, unable to give any further reason why there

[1] p. 55.

should be anything at all, and why what is, is not in fact something else. In other words, why not be contented with saying that reality *has* a rational structure? Why take the further step and posit another reality, a supreme mind, which *gives* it its logical structure?

The force also of this we must grant. But we must point out once again that it does not really affect the position we are taking up. The line of thought set forth in the last paragraph and our own line do not really cut across each other. For, we must repeat, we are coming at the matter from the angle of religious experience, which, it is our contention, already has some power to shine in its own light. Bringing the thought of the supreme, creative Mind with us we find it met and supported by the success which has hitherto attended the whole rational enterprise of man. Or to put it differently, in the thought of God the intellectual and religious experience of man can be seen to blend together and become a unity. We would, however, point out, following Tennant, that in the thought of the supreme ordering intelligence not only are rational and religious experience brought together, but also we are given an enlightenment of the mystery of this mysterious universe in which we find ourselves alive which, though it is not logically compelling, is nevertheless, even from a purely rational standpoint, not to be despised. It is no doubt right to say that in the end we must come to a stop somewhere in the sheer mysteriousness of the given, but part of the purpose of thought is after all to illumine mystery as far as may be. To the question which is the more illumining and comprehensible idea to our minds, that of a rational structure which is just "there" independently of any creative intelligence, or that of a creative intelligence from which such rational structure is derived and of which it is an expression, there can surely be only one answer. The latter is the more illuminating and comprehensible, if only because it points to something which, without losing its mystery, is analogous to that of which we have some experience in our own minds. We know in our own selves what intelligent, creative purpose is. The theistic hypo-

thesis has distinctive value, therefore, considered merely as a hypothesis. Yet, we would repeat, from the point of view of this book, it is not "merely a hypothesis" which we project as a possible explanation; it comes to us also with direct compelling force in religious experience.

(2) The second consideration which presents itself as fitting in with the theistic position has to do with the beauty of the world and with man's capacity for appreciating it, for æsthetic experience.

With almost negligible exceptions everything in nature, from the vast aggregates of matter in the heavens down to the infinitesimal, perceptible only with the aid of a powerful microscope, of the diatom, discloses itself to man as either gloriously sublime or exquisitely beautiful or, as in some grand, far-stretching landscape, as a combination of both sublimity and beauty in an awe-inspiring and tender loveliness The created order is beyond all question *saturated* with beauty. We have quoted elsewhere, and quote again here, some words of Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* which strikingly express the point.

"A gander drowns itself in our pond. We draw it out and open it on the bank and kneel, looking at it. Above are the organs divided by delicate tissues; below are the intestines artistically curved in a spiral form, each tier covered by a delicate network of blood-vessels standing out red against the faint blue background. Each branch of the blood-vessels is composed of a trunk, bifurcating and re-bifurcating into the most delicate hair-like threads, symmetrically arranged. We are struck by its singular beauty. And, moreover, this also we remark: of the same exact shape and outline is our thorn-tree seen against the sunset-sky in winter; of that shape also is the delicate metallic tracery between the rocks; so shaped are the antlers of the horned beetle. How are these things related that such deep union should exist between them all? Is it chance?"

There is clearly a problem here which no thoughtful mind can brush on one side. Why is nature, even in its most secret recesses, thus uniformly beautiful-- saturated

with beauty, to repeat the phrase just used—so that wherever man strikes into it, beauty is disclosed to his delighted mind? To feel the full force of this problem and the way theistic belief is related to it, it is necessary to note three points.

First, beauty is something in the nature of a superfluity. Here perhaps I may be allowed to quote some words I have used elsewhere:

"Science, which studies the relations of events with one another as causes and effects, and the utilities which they serve in the system of animate and inanimate nature, takes very little account of, and can give very little account of, beauty. Beauty from its point of view is a superfluity which can be ignored. Consider, for example, a sunset and analyse it scientifically into its component parts, give a scientific history of its origin and purpose and end; and what becomes of its beauty? The sun is just a flaming furnace to give light and warmth that creatures may live. The clouds are the same as the clouds of steam in a laundry—condensed moisture; the wind which blows the clouds across the sky is only an air-current equalizing regions of different atmospheric pressure. That is all—yet it is all gorgeously beautiful and moves the appreciative spirit to the depths. From the scientific point of view all this beauty is just a bit of inexplicable high spirits on the part of creation, a 'wild sunset-foolery'. Or consider a landscape. I remember once discussing this with the late Principal Skinner. We had been walking together and had been admiring the strange, fascinating beauty of even the flat fen country, with its pollard willows and its marvellous expanse of sky. 'Curious,' he said in a later letter, 'mysterious, this landscape beauty. We know pretty well the forces that determine the shapes and contours of a landscape, and the surprising thing is that they produce anything having æsthetic value at all. But they do!' Even the desert, where no man can dwell and where nothing grows, is often coloured as with an artist hand. Or, again, consider a flower. It knows nothing of its own beauty. It is in itself a strictly utilitarian thing, having a task to perform and using all its structure merely in order to perform it. That task is to propagate its kind and maintain the continuity of plant life. The pistil is meant only to carry the seed germs and the stamens are artfully arranged to deposit the fertilizing pollen on the marauding insect, and the petals, we are told, are merely stamens flattened out and splashed

with colour to attract the said insect, and the exquisite scent has the same very humdrum purpose, and the whole of it is only a scheme for getting fertilized and shedding its seeds. Immediately this is done, it drops its petals, loses its perfume, and is no more. Yet what an exquisitely beautiful thing it is! Why? Any splash of colour would have served to attract the bee, and any arrangement of stamens would have served to brush its back with pollen, for neither flower nor bee shows any signs of appreciating the beauty as a whole, even in terms of their immediate biological interest and task. So far as the latter is concerned it is a superfluity."[1]

This leads to the next point.

Second, man alone is capable of appreciating this superfluous quality of beauty in and for itself, that is to say, in its superfluity. It would be wrong to suggest that there are no signs whatever in the lower creation of some sort of apprehension of what we delight in as beauty. There is some connexion between beauty and sex selection. The peahen no doubt feels some sort of attraction to the resplendent tail of the peacock, but such attraction, even if it have within it the mere rudiments of what we experience as æsthetic appreciation (which it probably does not, though the question in the nature of the case can never be decided), is very transient and incidental, and is strictly confined to the biologically necessary business of mating. There is no appreciation of beauty for its own sake, i.e. precisely at the point of its superfluity as judged on utilitarian or biological grounds. No doubt, as has just been indicated, we can never know what goes on in an animal's mind, but when the horse stops browsing to admire the view, when the frog stops croaking to grow ecstatic over the colour of the water-lilies, when the bee gives up collecting honey and lies on its back in a rose savouring its scent and admiring the sky, we can overhaul the argument. Meanwhile it stands.

The third point is this. Man can add the quality of beauty even to his most utilitarian creations *if he chooses to do so,* and is willing to take the trouble and pay the

[1] *Things Not Seen*, p. 49, last sentence adapted.

price. The creation of beauty is not necessary to the fulfilment of his instinctive, biological needs as an organism, and a sensitivity to beauty is of no particular consequence in the struggle for existence; yet such creation is always possible and his sensitivity can be developed, provided only he values beauty and directs his purpose towards it. Beauty, of course, can appear as an unintended by-product of human activity; it often happens that the most efficient way of doing things is æsthetically the most pleasing to contemplate, e.g., the most efficient way to swing a golf-club is for some curious reason the most graceful. But the extent to which this is true is limited and it does not affect the point we are making, namely that over large areas of his life man can create beauty if he intends it, and if he does not intend it, it just does not happen, rather the reverse happens, as, for example, in a modern industrial monstrosity like Wigan or Stoke. So far as human activity is concerned beauty is a quality of the real inseparable in quite considerable degree from conscious purpose directed towards it.

We have then these four facts in respect of beauty and man's appreciation of it to take account of—its universality, so far as our experience goes, throughout the whole of creation; its superfluity considered from the standpoint of the world disclosed to us by organic and inorganic science; its sole appeal to the mind of the only personal being that inhabits the earth, namely man; finally, the necessity that the conscious purpose of the latter should be directed towards it if it is to characterize the products of his own creativity. What is the explanation of these things? Well, it is clear that the theistic view does fit them all perfectly. The theistic view is that nature is thus uniformly beautiful because it has been fashioned by a supreme creative purpose which itself delights in beauty; beauty expresses something ultimate in the nature and purpose of the living and personal God. Because it thus expresses something ultimate in the nature and purpose of God, it has value, or is a value, for its own sake, in its own standing, and for eternity; hence its superfluity when viewed from the angle

of those limited temporal contexts of man's journey through this world, in terms of which so many of the everyday utilities of his life are, and must necessarily be, defined. Furthermore, beauty is able to disclose itself to, and delight the mind of man, and the mind of man alone, because, according to the theistic view, man as *personal* has been made by God in His own image in order precisely that he might share His creative purpose and, sharing, so realize to the full the riches of personal life under a finite mode. Hence, finally, the partial dependence of beauty on man's conscious purpose directed towards it; it is a correlate of purpose in man as personal, because in the last analysis it is wholly a correlate of the purpose of the personal God.

We must, however, once again point out that we are not suggesting that it is possible logically to demonstrate theism from the fact of beauty alone. If we are sceptically inclined we may suggest that the beauty of the world is in fact not known to be universal and permanent; that, indeed, to deem it universal and permanent is already to express a religious faith; that, for all we know to the contrary, the world may at some time collapse into intolerable chaos and ugliness. Or again, it might be suggested that the explanation of the beauty of the world and of our appreciation of it may be something of which we are at the moment wholly ignorant; such a possibility cannot be logically excluded once and for all. If we are not minded to be so completely agnostic as this, but rather to take the request for an explanation seriously—there is much to be said for the view that agnosticism, though it has the appearance of open-mindedness, is just sheer mental laziness and cowardice, a refusal to think even when confronted with the highest values and allegiances of the human spirit—an answer along the same lines as those indicated in our consideration of the intelligibility of the world could be made. That is to say, it might be suggested that, just as it is theoretically possible that the world is just "there" as a system of intelligible relations amenable to our reason without anything beyond it in the nature of an ultimate, supreme intelligence, so also it is theoretically

possible that it is just there as a system of æsthetic harmonies without anything beyond it in the nature of a creative purpose which fashions such harmonies. Man's mind, on the one hand, and nature, which has brought it forth, on the other, may constitute a single, closely-knit, rhythmic pattern of beauty and emotional satisfaction in beauty, and this may be just what reality is " in its own right ", so to speak, and there is no need to go beyond it. This possibility also cannot be logically excluded, though it is perhaps worth pointing out, once again, that the æsthetic harmony of the world, otherwise so remarkably universal, does strangely break down in the one sphere of the conscious personal life of man; man does after all produce Wigan or Stoke, except in so far as he deliberately purposes otherwise. This at least suggests that æsthetic harmonies are not just " there ", but have some connexion with conscious valuation and purpose.

All these suggestions and considerations, however, though they must be noted by careful thought, do not affect our position, which remains that which we set forth at the end of the consideration of the amenability of the world to our reason. That position is that, given the thought of God as already in some measure shining in its own light and able pragmatically to justify itself in experience, we find that it does fit on to, and make sense of, in a way that nothing else does, the strange fact of beauty and the æsthetic experience of man. And this is one element in the total, cumulative, reflective case for theistic faith.

(3) We turn now to a third consideration, perhaps the most important of all. It is the moral status of man.

Man is a moral subject, a being who has moral experience. By the word moral here we mean something rather wider than that which it means in popular usage. We mean it to include all that has to do with the awareness and pursuit of ideal values, meaning by ideal values such values as are usually summed up in the highly abstract, but useful, formula, " the true, the beautiful and the good ". Stated briefly the argument is that theism offers the best

interpretation available of the moral experience of man when this is taken in its full reach and power in human life. Or negatively, apart from a theistic interpretation of it, moral experience remains in many ways an inexplicable and even an irrational thing, as difficult to make sense of to our minds as it is utterly inescapable and indispensable in our life. To get the full force of this argument we must take note in turn of three aspects of the moral experience of mankind.

(*a*) First, an ideal value, so soon as it is apprehended as such, enters into a peculiar relationship with the will—the relationship of what may be called "unconditional-oughtness". The two words are hyphenated because it is one quite distinctive idea which is being expressed and because this might be obscured by the ambiguous way in which the word "ought" is used in popular speech. Thus we say, "if you want your motor to run well, you ought to use good oil", the force of the ought being *conditional upon* wanting the motor to run well. This, however, is not the specifically moral use of the word ought which we have here in mind. It is impossible to express the peculiar quality of the specifically *moral* ought in the conclusion of a conditional proposition concerning one's wants. For the specifically moral ought imposes itself, immediately it is apprehended, directly, finally, unconditionally, on the will, whatever one's wants. It is "unconditional-oughtness". As one writer has said, "to the sensitive moral consciousness the question, Why should I be moral? is unmeaning, indeed in a sense immoral." No other reason for doing the right and seeking the good is necessary than simply that right is right and good good, and these bind unconditionally.

Now the question we cannot help asking, when we begin to reflect, is what is the source of these "unconditional-oughtnesses" which thrust themselves into the midst of our ordinary likes and dislikes, wants and preferences? Obviously they must have some relationship to, must spring from, something in the world of fact, otherwise they could not happen at all; they must have a cause. What is their

cause? We saw in Part I of this work,[1] when considering the pragmatic element in belief in God, that this question in certain contingencies arises in the practical conduct of the moral life itself; we now come at the same question from the purely reflective angle, from the angle, that is, of anyone who is disposed to ask questions anyway, whatever the practical contingencies may be.

Various answers have been given to this question by different thinkers. It is impossible to discuss them fully in the space at our disposal; but we can say enough to indicate the superiority of the answer which theistic faith gives.

Usually the answers given conform to one type; they maintain in one form or another that the "unconditional-oughtness" which cuts right across our natural inclinations and desires merely appears to do so, for it is itself merely a transformation of those natural inclinations and desires, a transformation which has taken place through processes of which, so it is alleged, some account can be given. In other words you can explain the "ought" in terms of the "is" of ordinary human needs and desires. One such theory—that moral obligation is merely a disguised form of social pressure—we have already considered when we were discussing the sociological explanation of religion, and we need not consider it further, except to state again the point of the criticism which is particularly relevant here. We pointed out, it will be remembered, that it is part of the meaning of the unconditional ought that it obligates the individual, if need arise, to defy the pressures of society however strong these may be, and that it is impossible to see how this could be, if only such "natural" pressures are involved. Another view, not so plausible as the last but still occasionally to be met, is that the unconditional imperative is at bottom merely a disguised experimental expediency. The human race has found, through a long process of trial and error, that certain lines of conduct are conducive to pleasure and well-being, and this long experience has registered itself in the individual as an absolute

[1] See p. 89f

moral imperative. Honesty presents itself as a moral value, for example, because it has been proved "the best policy". In regard to this we must make a similar comment as that just made in respect of the sociological view. Whilst not denying that pleasant or painful experiences play a part in determining the content of the moral imperative we must point out that such experiences cannot explain its accent, or form, as unconditional, for it is precisely the meaning of the unconditional ought that it denies the right of any expediency whatsoever, least of all one conceived in terms of getting pleasure or avoiding pain, to rule our conduct. Furthermore, as was pointed out earlier in another connexion, the accent of unconditionality attaches itself without any loss of authority to new ends and values which the race as a whole has never even glimpsed, much less experimentally tested over a long period of years. Still another suggestion is that the absolute imperative of ideal values merely expresses the "drive" of the human organism towards its own proper maturity and self-fulfilment. Would not the acorn, it is asked by way of illustration, if temporarily endowed with self-consciousness, feel the irresistible, internal processes of growth and development towards the oak as an absolute demand to do this or that in order to realize the ideal of "oakiness"? In reply to this we would point out—without denying that the moral life is bound up in some way with man's proper self-fulfilment—that the absoluteness and unconditionality of the moral imperative requires as part of its essential meaning that life itself should be surrendered, if need be, at any stage of development; that is to say, it demands, if need be, the surrender of any possibility of reaching self-fulfilment and maturity so far as life in this world is concerned. This is extremely odd if *only* the natural "urge" to self-fulfilment is involved.

In sum, it is not possible, along any of these lines, by a manipulation of the natural "is" to pass to the ideal and unconditional "ought". Such explanations only seem plausible because one momentarily loses sight of what the specific quality of the unconditional ought, as it discloses itself to the moral consciousness, really is. They carry you

a part of the way, but never the whole way. There is always a gap left unfilled.

Now this gap, we would maintain, theism fills. It says that the explanation of this "unconditional-oughtness" is that in man's moral experience another range or dimension of reality than what is comprised within natural processes discloses itself to him—the range or dimension of the supernatural, of God as Holy Will. It cannot be wholly explained in terms of the "is" because, though it is related to the "is" of this world, it transcends it in its origin and derivation. God is the source and bearer of ideal values, and this discloses itself to man in this otherwise inexplicable quality of unconditionality which attaches itself to, and is the distinguishing mark of, typical moral experience.

It might, however, be said in objection to this that the theistic view does not really fill the gap, does not really explain the unconditional accent of ideal values, unless it be self-evident that if there were in fact a transcendent divine purpose disclosing itself to us, it would necessarily do so through an unconditional imperative. But is this self-evident? Is there a self-evident logical necessity uniting the idea of God with the idea of unconditional demand? Surely not, it is said. Again, it might be urged that even if there were, the argument would still not be conclusive, for the accent of unconditionality might be the result of some other cause, or combination of causes, of which at the moment we are ignorant. These objections serve to emphasize once again the real nature of our argument. We grant fully that there is no self-evident logical necessity uniting the idea of God with the idea of unconditional values, in the sense that the bare concept of an eternal purpose of good necessarily implies to anybody capable of grasping it the further idea of an unconditional ought. We grant also, working in the opposite direction, that it is not possible to exclude logically all other possible causes of the unconditionality of the moral imperative; logically the principle of the plurality of causes holds here as elsewhere. But then our argument, we must repeat, is not directed towards the establishment of theism by demonstrative

logical necessities, certainly not on the basis of the single fact of moral experience. All we are maintaining is that the theistic view does, in addition to its explanatory value in relation to other things, in fact provide a reality in the universe corresponding to what otherwise remains an unfilled gap, and that this is a strong reflective consideration in its favour.

We are, however, entitled to repeat what has been said earlier in this work, that there is, as a matter of fact, for vast numbers of people, and possibly for all at least potentially, a very close correspondence between the idea of God and the idea of an unconditional demand upon the will, though it is not a connexion of bare logical implication. It is a connexion which arises out of the deepest springs of religion in the human soul, and which probably most men feel in some degree, even when they theoretically repudiate a theistic view of the universe. To the religious person, whosoever says God says absolute demand upon the will. It may therefore be considered another point in favour of theism that it fills the gap we have been considering in a way that does justice not only to morality but also to religion, and enables us to comprehend, without straining the facts, the intimate connexion which has always existed between morality and religion in the experience of the human race.

(*b*) The second aspect of the moral experience of man of which we must take note is what has been called "the paradox of morality".

One side of the paradox is that in making a moral judgment we are conscious of apprehending a real moral order which is there whether we apprehend it rightly or not, and which is independent of our wishes and desires. We are conscious that we are not describing our own tastes and feelings, but rather an objective reality. This is shown by the fact that we think it worth while, even a duty, to discuss moral questions whereas a discussion about personal likes and dislikes we regard as a waste of time. If I say "freedom is good" and my friend says "freedom is bad", we feel at once that both propositions cannot be true to-

gether; if, on the other hand, I say "I like freedom" and he "I do not like freedom", it is obvious that both propositions can be true together. The difference arises out of the claim to objectivity which the moral judgment, by its essential nature, makes.

The other side of the paradox is that in making a moral judgment we are equally conscious that we are apprehending that which is in some sense *not yet real*; for it is precisely our moral task, precisely the claim which the moral value thus disclosed to our minds makes upon us, that we should, by our acts, give it reality in a world where it otherwise would not have it.

It should be noted that it is in this paradox that the critical significance of the moral struggle resides. If moral values were not real, in the sense that we are entitled to ascribe to our moral judgments reporting those values, despite all admixture of error, an objective reference, they would have no more claim upon us than the phantasies of a dream, certainly nothing like the absolute claim which they do in fact bring to us. Yet if they were real in the sense of being already fully actualized, then equally they would have no claim upon our purposes, for there would be nothing for our purposes to achieve; the moral life would be reduced to the status of a stage play in which nothing is really accomplished except perhaps an elaborate pretence that something is accomplished.

This paradoxical status of moral values—real and yet unrealized—has been the subject of much discussion among the philosophers. It is a difficult question and we cannot go into it deeply here. One view, however, we must take note of, and that is that there is nothing paradoxical about it at all! To suppose that there is, it is said, is to confuse "validity" with "existence". Moral truths, it is said, are "valid" in the same way that abstract mathematical truths are "valid". That is to say, they remain valid even if there is in fact nothing corresponding to them in "existence", in the world of actualities. The three angles of a triangle, for example, exactly equal two right-angles even though there is in fact no perfect triangle in respect of

which the equation exactly holds. So also, it is said, the moral judgment "justice is good" remains true in the world of abstract validities, even though justice has entirely vanished from the world of concrete actualities. Thus the apparent paradox vanishes.

It may be questioned, however, in reply, whether this way of putting it really does justice to the facts of moral experience. There is a very important difference between a valid mathematical judgment and a valid moral judgment concerning ideal values; it is a difference in respect of the relation in which each stands to the will. A mathematical truth is apprehended through the theoretic and detached attitude of a spectator. In that sense it is indeed abstract, very abstract. But this is precisely *not* the way to apprehend the world of values. Directly the merely spectator attitude is adopted, the world of values vanishes—it is no longer "there"—for us. We may indeed still describe the behaviour of other people in respect of what *they* call moral values, as we might describe the behaviour of an animal going after its food; but, we repeat, when we take up that sort of attitude the world of moral values as such has ceased to be "there" for us. In the very act of moral apprehension the attitude of detachment becomes impossible; the value, which discloses itself to us, draws us into its circle, gives us no rest. It is apprehended, if it is apprehended at all, as a reality which is actively related to the creative centre of the personal life, in such wise that a detached neutrality is impossible; for neutrality does not leave matters in suspense, it is itself an act in relation to the moral value and enters formatively and fatefully into the further unfolding of the personal life.

There is, then, something distinctive about moral values as grasped through the moral judgment. They stand over against us as something fatefully *real,* and yet they only stand over against us as something *fatefully* real because in another sense they wait upon us for their realization.

What are we to make of this paradoxical status? One view which has been set forth, as for example by von Hartmann, is that values exist in the universe as what are called

"timeless essences". They are just "there" waiting and pressing for their actualization in history by the will of man, and that is all that can be said about them. This is parallel to the views, already considered, which ask us to suppose that intelligible relations and æsthetic harmonies are just "there". The difficulties in these latter views we have already discussed, but there are even greater difficulties in relation to the so-called timeless essences of moral values. Indeed it is not easy to attach any meaning at all to this last phrase, so that, so far from illuminating our moral experience, it leaves it wrapped in even greater mystery. We must ask what exactly is this shadowy "intermezzo of being" where values exist, or subsist, in a sort of disembodied state and yet are real enough and potent enough to exert such a fateful influence over human life and destiny. We must ask whether there is any meaning in speaking of a value which subsists, even though it is unrelated to any purpose to which it is a value and which seeks and intends it. We must ask how values which are not carried by any dynamic energy of purpose contrive none the less to press for their own actualization through the purposes of men. It is interesting to observe how von Hartmann, the most impressive recent representative of this view, in order to do justice to the facts of moral experience is continually forced to ascribe to values, to these "timeless essences", a sort of *personal* interest in, and activity towards, their own realization in human life. He is forced to "personalize" them. "Values", he says, "are not indifferent or inert towards what is in antagonism to them, but negate it, refuse to recognize it."

In contrast with these views we would strongly maintain that the theistic affirmation of a supreme creative purpose of good behind all things, seeking the co-operation of man in the creation of good, does make sense of this paradox of morality in a way that is intelligible and illuminating to our minds. It fits the picture. Are we not perfectly familiar in the realm of our own purposive life with the way in which that which is not yet real is none the less real enough to determine the actual course of events? For example, I form

the intention to write a letter, and as a result it is written. The non-existent event has contributed to its own actualization through the medium of my idea of it and my intention towards it. Grasped thus within the organic unity of intelligent purposiveness the operation ceases to wear the appearance of paradox. Transferring this to the special problem of moral values and their peculiar relation to the will of men, theism would maintain that in becoming aware of moral values we are becoming aware of a fully objective reality, something which has permanent and unalterable status in the ultimate constitution of things. For we are becoming aware of the settled character and direction, the permanent ends, of the divine purpose as this is related to us, and to the historical process in which He has placed us and given us the status of responsible moral agents. Yet also we are becoming aware of a reality which without losing its standing as such, for the purpose of God is from everlasting to everlasting, is, so far as it is concerned with us, not yet realized and has therefore the most critical significance for our lives. For it is precisely the theistic viewpoint that it is part of the divine purpose to fashion us into *co-operators* with Himself in the realization of values; such co-operation is itself a value.

No doubt this leaves many problems unsolved, as every student of philosophy knows; the idea of an eternal purpose, for example, itself presents difficulties, though not such as to make the idea quite untenable. But, so far as this aspect of moral experience which we are considering is concerned, we can claim that theism makes sense of it as no other available theory does.

(*c*) The third aspect of the moral consciousness which we must consider also has the air of paradox. On the one hand, it is part and parcel of our awareness of ourselves as moral agents that we are conscious of being in some real sense free. The notion of moral obligation is meaningless to the ordinary man unless it be addressed to him as a being who has some power of volitional control by which he can suspend his immediate impulses and can direct behaviour this way or that according as his best moral

reflection may direct. This we take to be self-evident, and though the idea of freedom is a very difficult one for the intellect to grasp and express, as all ultimate, self-evident realities are, and raises many problems, we do not discuss it. We take it to be a direct deliverance of the moral consciousness.[1]

On the other hand, it is also part and parcel of the moral consciousness to believe in the ultimate triumph of moral values. We came at this point from another angle when discussing in Part I the meaning of faith generally.[2] Here we concentrate on the specifically moral consciousness, and we affirm that all the evidence goes to show that faith in the ultimate triumph of moral values is implicit in any serious and active acknowledgment of their authority over us. So soon as the thought really begins to possess the mind that moral endeavour is doomed to defeat, the springs of moral energy begin to dry up. If evidence of this be required, one might consider how much the drive of the communist movement is bound up with its conviction that the whole historic process is behind it and guarantees its ultimate victory. Or one might quote the writer already referred to, von Hartmann, who is the more interesting because he rejects the theistic viewpoint: "the venture of moral obedience", he says, "is great, as the call to it is insistent in men's hearts. Only a deep and mighty faith, permeating a person's whole being, can sustain it—a faith which reaches out to *the whole of things*."

Man then is a moral subject conscious of freedom, freedom to refuse the good, and yet conscious also that the good must triumph. But how can these two thoughts be held together? If man is free to reject the good what guarantee is there that it can ever be realized; or to put it differently, how can the good be guaranteed in such wise that full room is left for man's freedom? This again is one of the great problems for philosophy, and different views have been put forward which we cannot here discuss. Our purpose is merely to point out that theism at least has the

[1] Some further discussion of freedom will be found below, p. 213f.
[2] p 52f.

great merit of holding these two things together—the freedom of man and the ultimate triumph of the good—in a way which, whilst it falls short of illuminating all mysteries, does at least relieve the mind of a sense of final bafflement and frustration. The only picture we can form of an ultimate reality which never denies man the exalted status of free, creative moral personality with power to refuse the good, yet still keeps such a grip upon the total situation that in the end good must triumph, is that of an infinite personal wisdom. A control of persons which does not depersonalize them could hardly be other than that of a personal will continuously adjusting itself with infinite, manifold wisdom to the situations, many of them evil, created by their free choices. Here no doubt is mystery enough—how God can thus keep in His grasp all the complexities of history we cannot imagine. But it is not a self-contradictory idea, and we can form a dim inkling of it in the relation of a big and wise human personality to lesser personalities whom he is leading and directing in some enterprise. On the other hand, non-theistic theories which refuse to ascribe anything in the nature of personal intelligence and wisdom to the ultimate reality, in so far as they do try to make room for both freedom and faith (many, in fact, do not) present us, as Tennant says, with the spectacle of a universe which keeps its head amidst all the contingencies of free choice, when *ex hypothesi* it has no head to keep.

(4) The fourth consideration in the reflective confirmation of belief in God rests on all those qualities of man which we have been thinking about in this chapter. It confronts us with the whole fact of man in all his distinctiveness—his intelligence, his appreciation of beauty, his moral sense, his creative power—and asks what account we can give of the emergence of this so distinctive personal being in the midst of nature. Take a look, it says, at the whole course of evolution, culminating in the emergence of man, and consider whether it does not irresistibly suggest, and exactly fit in with, even if admittedly it does not demonstratively

prove, the idea of a controlling purpose directed towards precisely that culmination.

The argument has been summarized by Hocking along these lines. Passing the course of evolution in review we observe in it the successive emergence of different levels of being. From the inorganic there emerges the organic. From the non-mental organic as it is found in the lowest organisms and in plants there emerges the mental organic as it is found in the animal world. From the non-rational mental as it is found in the animal world there emerges the rational and self-conscious mental as it is found in man. Inorganic to organic, non-mental to mental, subrational mental to the rational self-conscious personal—each level emerges, so far as we can judge, subsequent to the others in time, each rests on and takes up what has gone before, each marks an increasing complexity of organization, a more delicate sensitivity, a wider apprehension of the world.[1] These different levels of being, moreover, irresistibly convey to our minds the impression of being ascending levels in the scale of value.

We next observe that this process of emergence has gone on step by step in a universe full of forces interplaying with one another in infinite and unimaginable complexity; yet at no point has the process been brought to a stop by these forces, as it were, destructively breaking loose or otherwise, from the point of view of the life process, getting out of hand. The higher and more valuable forms have emerged and have so far been conserved and been made the basis of further advance. This thought is particularly impressive

[1] The difference of level at the last stage, that is to say, between man as self-conscious rational personality and the next level below that as found even in the higher apes, is, some would wish to insist, so infinitely greater than the difference between any other two levels, that it is wrong to "lump" it in with the rest; rather at that point in the process we must suppose a special intrusion of divine creative power, a breathing in of the divine spirit But that is a point into which for the purposes of our argument we need not enter. For we are not at the moment discussing how the process of evolution is best interpreted, either in general or in respect of any particular stages or transitions in it. We are merely stating the facts, and amongst these is the quite indisputable one that man comes out of the midst of the process of evolution, whatever our view of the ultimate factors at work in that process may be, and that he stands at the moment at the last and highest level which has been reached.

when one considers the constitution of the inorganic world. The latter conveys the impression of being extraordinarily and most subtly adapted to the role of being a suitable environment for this broadly ascending evolution of life. For it has been shown by L. V. Henderson that only a very slight alteration in that most complex and finely-poised balance of coincident material conditions on which the emergence and support of life depend—a little more nitrogen, let us say, a little less carbon and oxygen—would have been sufficient to make life, at any rate as we know it, vanish entirely from the scene. Yet such a slight alteration has never, over the long ages of evolution, taken place. How easy, one would have supposed, for such a slight, yet catastrophic, change in the balance of things to have happened!

We have then values emerging, these values being preserved as a basis for the emergence of still higher values, appropriate conditions of a highly complex and finely balanced kind provided and maintained. To say the least, that looks uncommonly like a creative purpose of some sort governing the whole process. For, the argument concludes, how do we, or can we, recognize the presence of purpose as distinct from the blind interplay of forces, if it be not through precisely these three things—values sought, values preserved, means adapted to these ends?

It can hardly be questioned that this line of thought carries to many minds considerable weight. It can hardly be questioned that taken thus in its broad sweep the evolutionary process does look "as if" there were some sort of intention behind it, or, to put it negatively, the notion that it has all come about blindly and for "no particular reason" strikes even a critical, philosophic mind as being, in the popular phrase, "a tall order". Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, we must tread warily and not let "impressions" do duty for careful thought. On reflection we are forced once again to admit that however strongly the emergence of man in the midst of nature may *suggest* purpose it falls short of demonstratively proving it. On the other hand, we are entitled to maintain that the fact that it so strongly suggests purpose is so far confirma-

tory of a belief in God which has other sources and supports, and that on the whole such belief makes more sense of the facts than other views. We can best make this plain by taking up one or two points.

In the first place we must frankly admit that the argument does, at a very crucial point, make an assumption which might be questioned by some. It assumes the validity of our judgments of value. The argument is that *higher levels* of life have actually emerged in the evolutionary process culminating in the personality of man, and all the virtue of it is in the phrase *higher levels*. That there has been an emergence of *different* types of life is obvious enough; but the argument only becomes persuasive if we substitute for the phrase "different types", which is a bald description of fact, the phrase "higher levels", which expresses our valuation of fact. Certainly *to us* the stages seem to be successively higher stages, but unless they are in fact that, unless there are real values and we really have knowledge of them, the argument breaks down. How do we know, it may be said, that what we value really is valuable, and that we are not merely expressing our merely human preferences? After all, it is natural for man to think of himself as the crown of creation. In answer to this, we can only say that if anybody cares to take up such a sceptical attitude, cares seriously to suggest that a Socrates is, or may be, merely a different type of life from, but not a higher and more valuable level of life than, a tadpole, we have really nothing more to say. No argument in favour of a divine purpose can get very far without appealing to our sense of values, for purpose has no meaning apart from values, as values have no meaning apart from purpose. An ultimate and unteachable scepticism about the validity of our judgments of value does, we frankly admit, cut the ground from under our feet. Yet concerning such scepticism we may point out two things. First, that it is plainly of a purely theoretical and even artificial kind, for the sceptic, when he is in the midst of the practical business of life, does inevitably, like the rest of us, take his value judgments to be a report of how things actually are; he does

quite inevitably think that Socrates is a higher form of life than a tadpole. Second, that a scepticism which can seriously question such an inevitability of thought cannot consistently stop short of an all-inclusive scepticism which questions even the axioms of logic and so destroys the possibility of any genuine knowledge whatsoever. If thought is not to come to a complete stop, then we must make the assumption that that which we cannot help thinking, that which imposes itself coercively on our minds, is true. That Socrates is a higher form of life than a tadpole we take leave to regard as axiomatic, just as axiomatic in its own sphere as the axioms of mathematics are in theirs.

Next we must look at the suggestion which has been made by some that the fact upon which the argument rests, namely that there has been a vast, complex, finely balanced, orderly co-operation of factors at work in the emergence and sustenance of higher levels of organic life, might have come about by chance. It is suggested that if we suppose that the ultimate units which constitute the universe (whatever they may be) are in aimless and undirected interplay with one another over an infinite duration of time, then precisely that amount of order, which we know as a matter of fact has happened and which is taken by the theist as confirmation of his belief, was bound according to the laws of probability to happen at some point or other. For all we know, we may happen now to be in the midst of a relatively limited patch of order which has appeared, as it was bound at some point to appear, in the general aimlessness of everything. An analogous suggestion would be that if an infinite number of letters were tossed up and allowed to fall in a shower over an infinite period of time, the complete works of Shakespeare, not to speak of other literature, would be bound to occur at some point or another.

One is inclined to answer this suggestion merely by, as it were, raising a sceptical eyebrow and saying to anyone who makes it: " My friend, if the theory of probability really requires us to take seriously the possibility that that's how this universe arose, then so much the worse for the theory of probability! It may admit of no answer, but it carries

no conviction." And this reply would not be the setting up of mere feeling against logic, but rather one form of raising once again the whole question whether the merely abstract theoretical possibilities which the intellect succeeds in excogitating can be allowed to stand against the compulsions of the mind of man so soon as he begins to deal with the real world. Nothing is more certain than that the hypothesis of the purpose of God is much more satisfying, makes more sense, than such a hypothesis of chance. But in point of fact the latter hypothesis is not satisfactory considered even as an abstract possibility. It is not true that any given arrangement of units or particles must produce any other arrangement, if it change blindly and aimlessly over a long enough time. On the contrary, it can be shown that some arrangements, when once they have occurred, finally exclude the possibility of some other arrangements. It can be shown that, given certain non-symmetrical relationships between the elements, then certain other symmetrical arrangements cannot, under any circumstances whatsoever occur. Non-symmetry can only produce non-symmetry. However, there is really no need to develop, or even to press, this point. We are content to leave it to the reader to decide which, in any case, is the more reasonable and satisfying hypothesis to explain the admitted facts.

The suggestion that the theory of probability forbids us to use the order of the universe in the interests of belief in God can, however, be stated in another and more persuasive way. Suppose that a certain event A has happened, and suppose I know that it could have been produced either by cause B or cause C. If this is all I know, then I am quite unable to decide whether B or C is the more probable cause. Before I can decide that, I must know something about the probability of B and C *independently of the fact that A has happened.* For example: suppose I know that in a deal of cards one player has, in fact, received a hand of thirteen hearts. This may have been due to sheer chance (it has, in fact, so happened—very rarely) or to the presence of a dishonest player who purposed and intended it to

happen. Obviously I cannot decide which is more probable unless I know something about the players, and, in particular, unless I know independently of the deal something about the probability of a dishonest player being present, something of what is called the " prior independent probability " of the latter. Without that knowledge the fact of that one deal of thirteen hearts tells me nothing. Applying this to the point under discussion, it is granted that the universe is and always has been the highly organized and orderly affair that it discloses itself to us to be. But it is said there is, after all, only one universe, and we have no sources of information apart from or independently of it. How then can we decide that God is the most probable cause and source of its order, as against other possible causes and sources? For in the nature of the case we have, and can have, no knowledge of the prior independent probability of God. The universe is like the deal of thirteen hearts, except that whereas in the deal of cards we can usually make enquiries about the *bona fides* of the players, and so get some basis for a judgment as to the prior independent probability of someone having intended the deal, in the case of the universe, because it is the universe, no such sources of information are open to us.

This is obviously another way of stating the principle, which we have met more than once already, of the plurality of causes. Logically, it must be admitted, there is no answer to it. We cannot, as we have said before, finally exclude the possibility that the order of the universe may be due to something of which at present we know nothing! Yet this only serves once again to bring out what is the real nature of our argument, which we must repeat again, even though the reader must by this time be getting rather weary of it; namely, that we are not claiming to prove theism from the facts of organic evolution, but only finding in the latter a confirmation of it. Our claim is that what is given so compellingly and pragmatically in religion very satisfactorily fits what is disclosed to us in other spheres of our knowledge and experience. Coming at the matter from this angle, we might even with some justice deny that there is no " prior

independent probability of God". To the religious man, contemplating the facts of the evolution of life culminating in the emergence of man, there is a prior probability of God being behind it all; it is given in and through that which comes to him independently of any knowledge of evolution, namely, his whole inescapable sense of God as this has been set forth in the first part of this work. And this, we would suggest, probably in part lies behind the fact that most men do feel, when they begin to reflect, that of all possible explanations of the world overwhelmingly the most convincing and satisfactory is that which would see behind and within it some sort of intelligent purpose. In that judgment there probably comes to expression an immediate, if rudimentary and undeveloped, sense of God.

The third point which we must briefly consider is the part played by what is called natural selection and the survival of the fittest in the process of evolution. It is hardly necessary to explain what these terms mean, for most educated people are familiar both with them and with the facts to which they refer. It is obvious enough, when once it is pointed out, that living creatures have to struggle more or less continuously, and with varying degrees of intensity, with their environment and to some extent with one another for the means of subsistence. There is a struggle for existence, for survival. This being so, it is obvious that creatures which for one reason or another develop qualities which equip them better for the fight will tend to persist, whereas the others will tend to be eliminated, to become extinct. There will be a process of "natural selection". This, so far, is hardly more than a statement of plain fact not requiring discussion; it can indeed be verified in almost day to day experience. If I and a friend are caught in a blizzard, he being strong and vigorous and I having a weak heart, then he survives and I go under. The survival of the fittest and the elimination of the unfit is quite ruthlessly brought about by a natural order containing blizzards; it is an almost mechanically certain process of "natural selection".

We enter the realm of discussion when this fact of natural selection, which no one would wish to deny, is turned into

a theory which, it is claimed, explains the whole evolution of sentient life in the earth, and puts the theistic interpretation "out of court". This theory, which to be sure is nothing like so popular as it once was, though it is still to be met, is made up of two parts which it makes for clarity to keep distinct from one another.

In the first place it is said that the whole process of evolution, culminating in the emergence of man, has taken place wholly and solely through various stocks mutating more than others in the direction of qualities which have survival value, the environment being what it is. These have survived through natural selection, the others have disappeared or will disappear. Man has mutated in this way infinitely more than other animals; hence his pre-eminence in the world—he plants his "lordship firm, on earth and fire and sea and air". In regard to the first part of the theory we must ask two questions. First, is it scientifically satisfactory, does it really cover the known facts, to say that the *only* factor in the evolutionary process is the mechanical elimination of unfit stocks? It is sufficient to say, in reply to this question, that a great many biologists would deny that it is scientifically satisfactory and covers the facts. That natural selection is *a* factor in evolution none would deny, but to what extent it is a factor is still a matter of discussion and controversy. Second, even if it were scientifically satisfactory thus to reduce the whole thing to natural selection playing upon mutating stocks, does that necessarily exclude the idea of a divine purpose at work in it? Clearly it does not. There is no reason why the divine creative purpose should not be at work both within the mutations of organisms and within the provision for them of a disciplinary environment to which they must adjust themselves or perish.

So we come to the second part of the theory, which is concerned with the point just mentioned, namely, what lies behind the mutations of the organisms and the selecting environment. Obviously this is the crux of the matter. Why have the mutations in the organisms taken place and why have they been such that the environment has never,

so to say, been under the necessity to eliminate *all* of them for taking the wrong turning? Why has there been such a steady mounting upward to such a miracle of adaptation and adaptability as man? After all, as someone has said, does not the survival of the fittest necessarily presuppose the arrival of the fit? Why do the fit arrive? Or, as Samuel Butler put it, you don't explain in the least degree why I am here by telling me how and why my aunts and uncles went away! Now, on these points the theory we are discussing takes up a position which, if it were justifiable, would definitely exclude theism. It is said, in effect, that the mutations of the organism are *chance* mutations, in the sense that there is no directing purpose or intention behind them anywhere; they come about through the continuous and fluctuating interplay of the highly complex elements which constitute organic life especially within the reproductive cells. It is said, further, that the selecting environment is a purely mechanical system of forces having behind it or within it no sort of spiritual or moral meaning and purpose whatsoever. It is all a blind process of feeding the raw stuff of chance organic variations into the witless eliminating machine of natural selection.

Concerning this, it is sufficient for our purpose to insist on the point made in the last paragraph but one, namely, that even if the evolutionary process could be explained in terms solely of organic variations and natural selection (which is scientifically, to say the least, extremely doubtful) that would not necessarily exclude a theistic interpretation of the ultimate reality lying behind it all. God might have created man by that method and He would not be any the less his creator for so doing, nor would the essential meaning of man's life, when once he is thus brought forth from the womb of nature, be any different from what Christianity claims it to be. That being so, the position set forth in the last paragraph, the position, that is, which asserts that there is no directing purpose, no prevision of what was being achieved of any sort anywhere in the evolutionary process, is seen to be merely a piece of philosophic dogmatism. It is not necessarily required by the facts as

examined and set forth by biological science, though those who advocate it sometimes speak as though it were. The fact is, those who take up this position have usually made up their minds on other grounds, or through other causes, to reject theism. They then make the mistake of thinking that because the scientific description and analysis of the facts of evolution does not, and should not, use the idea of God (if it did, it would cease to be science and become philosophy) therefore their *general* non-theistic position is required by their scientific work and justified by its results.

We are back then in the realm of philosophy, and we maintain, once again, that, taking all the considerations which have been set forth in this chapter together, the theistic view can make a strong reflective case for itself. It fits, illumines, is confirmed by, our knowledge and experience in spheres other than that of religious experience itself. At the same time it would, from the standpoint of philosophy, be equally dogmatism on our part to dismiss other theories out of hand as though *they* had no case to make for themselves. We cannot do that because we do not maintain that theism explains everything or can be finally demonstrated from the evidence. It does not explain everything, and it cannot be so demonstrated. But we repeat it has a strong case. In other words, the reflective element in belief in God, as so far set forth, is of great weight, which is all we are concerned to maintain.

CHAPTER XII

SCIENCE AND FREEDOM

In the last sentence of the last chapter we spoke of the reflective element in belief in God "as so far set forth". We used that phrase because we were conscious, as perhaps the reader was also, that in the argument we had concentrated, somewhat selectively, on those elements in our knowledge and experience which support and confirm the theistic viewpoint. This we were entitled to do, and nothing, we would maintain, can take away the positive force of what has been said. At the same time it would be manifestly improper to take no account of facts and considerations which might seem to point in the opposite direction. There are "demurrers", challenges to belief in God, there are questionings and doubts, which arise, not out of the abstract theorizings of clever people, but out of facts and experiences which are common to us all and the pressure of which is at times very great. To these plainly we must give some attention, if we are to think as sincerely and comprehensively as we can on these high matters.

There are, in the main, two such challenges to belief in God. The first concerns that whole range of facts which is usually included under the phrase "the problem of evil". The second concerns the problem of freedom, particularly in relation to the picture of the world with which science appears to present us. The two problems are connected together inasmuch as it is impossible to deal with the problem of evil from the angle of belief in God without taking freedom to be a fact. In this chapter we take up the problem of freedom.

It is hardly necessary to say that the conviction that persons are in some real sense free lies at the heart of that experience of, and belief in, God which are the subject-matter of this book. Indeed that is precisely what we mean by a person, namely, a self-conscious centre of free activity. The religious experience with its awareness of God as

sacred demand upon the will, and the more reflective theism which emerges from that experience as a general interpretative philosophy, both put freedom at the heart of things because they both put personality at the heart of things. If we are asked what we mean by saying that a person is free, we are inclined to say that we can give no answer, since freedom is an ultimate and therefore not expressible in other terms; all we can do is to appeal to the immediate awareness of persons themselves. We can, however, say at least this much in order to bring out the point of tension when science comes into the picture: when we say that a self, or a person, is free we mean that it is capable of initiating events in accordance with ends which it foresees more or less clearly, and which it has consciously selected according to some principle of valuation out of a number of other possible ends; nor would such events happen had not the free self so selected and so initiated. Persons, in short, are real sources of activity, real causes, and not merely transmitters of force deriving from elsewhere; they really can, and often do, bring to pass, because they choose to do so and for no other reason, events which otherwise would not happen, and which, because they would not happen without the person's own free decision, could not certainly be predicted.

As against this, science seems to work on the presupposition that such free and unpredictable causation, which appears, as we have said, to be bound up with the whole idea of personality, does not really obtain, however much it may appear to do so. It appears to work, that is to say, with a principle of causation which asserts that every event is the absolutely necessary consequent of some other event, or complex of events, which is prior to it; every event is bound to other events in a bond of unbreakable causal law, and is therefore in principle wholly predictable—all we need to know is the prior facts and the causal law involved. It is the work of science to discover these causal laws which bind events rigidly to one another, and the idea of a self initiating events according to some other principle of spontaneous selection would, so it appears, stultify all its

activity. Take, for example, it is said, the religious idea of God answering prayer, the idea, that is to say, of God initiating an event in response to the personal relationship which is what prayer is; that surely would make scientific prediction impossible. What is the use of attempting to make a scientific forecast of the weather, when a prayer can bring down a shower? Or take the alleged freedom of man—what becomes of a science of physiology, biology, psychology, in relation to man, if there is some original source of activity in him which at any moment may break into the causal series of events which it is the purpose of these sciences to study, and cause things to happen which would not otherwise happen.

This is not merely a theoretical difficulty as between the abstruse principles of science on the one hand and the abstruse principles of religious philosophy on the other. It expresses a cleavage, a tension, in the modern mind of which we all become more or less clearly aware at some time or other. No intelligent person can work for long in the domain of science, or even merely read some of the popular scientific handbooks and periodicals, without becoming at least dimly conscious of the challenge apparently offered not only to the religious faith of mankind, but also to some of the basic presuppositions of our daily life. Every one of us in ordinary life lives in a world which is soaked through and through with the idea of purpose and the sense of freedom. All our personal relationships, which constitute nine-tenths of our life, all our moral judgments, all our most eager enterprises, presuppose freedom. At the moment we are fighting a major war to preserve something which we call freedom. Yet when we turn scientist it seems we have to drop all this, and accustom ourselves to a system of mechanical rigidities, which we immediately forget again when we come back into the world of men and women, of education, sport, business, religion, and heroic acts like that of Captain Oates! It is when we bring events like the latter into relation with the sciences of the human organism, particularly psychology, that the difficulty becomes most acute. We read our psychological

treatises with their talk of subconscious complexes, compulsions and fixations, and all the rest; we know well enough that there is much truth in them. Yet we still reverence the sacrifice of Captain Oates. Which is right, the psychology books or our hearts? Or if both are right, how are we to fit the two together? Suppose the psychology books really do tell us the whole of the matter. Then we must see Oates' sacrifice to be a necessary result of his mental make-up, his mental conditioning from birth, perhaps even of the state of his glands. Is there any reverence left now? A voice within whispers, despite the solemn psychological authorities, "rubbish!" Yet psychology is a true science, so far as it goes. We *are* conditioned; glands *do* make a difference. This really is the whole question—how far does psychology go? How far does any science go?

No subject has been more discussed of recent years than this, and a great deal of very profound thought has been devoted to it by able minds. Here we can touch only on one or two points sufficiently to substantiate the main position we wish to take up, which is that the method and results of science, when properly understood and interpreted, do not in the least necessarily extrude freedom from the universe, and therefore do not in the least invalidate a theistic faith of the type we are setting forth.

In the first place it is worth pointing out that in our everyday life we do not find the least difficulty in the idea of more or less mechanically rigid cause-effect uniformities, such as science studies, cohabiting the same world with that freedom of self-directing purposefulness which is the very breath of our personal life; and not merely cohabiting, but also functioning in harmonious and co-operative interplay with it. Nor does it enter our heads that because of this interplay the work of science is thereby stultified and thrown into confusion. On the contrary, the work of science itself is the direct result of personal, rational purpose—the purpose of the scientist to explore reality and acquire knowledge—and would instantly vanish without it; and much of its profoundest research has only

been possible through a very intimate interplay of purpose and mechanism, as, for example, in the building and maintenance of the great electro-magnetic machines in the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge. Without the reliable mechanisms of the natural order our purposes would be frustrated at every turn, for everything would be in flux and we could have no certain means of attaining any end—we could never invite to tea, if fire sometimes boiled the kettle and sometimes froze it. On the other hand, without intelligent purposes selecting this line of activity as against that, the mechanism of the natural order would be relatively sterile, quite incapable of producing what the world does now in fact contain—aeroplanes, steam engines, wireless sets and what not. Take a simpler example of this interplay of free purpose and mechanism, one perfectly familiar to us in everyday life and creating no problems about science in anybody's mind. I am contemplating throwing a stone; clearly science can tell me fairly exactly (assuming conditions remain fairly constant) what will happen to the stone *if* I throw it with a known strength and in a known direction; but whether it will be thrown or remain lying at my feet will depend on my personal decision.

This being so, it might seem the obvious thing to say that there is in the universe both free personal causation and mechanical causation, that it is the job of scientists to study the latter, and that if they say that there is only mechanical causation and nothing else whatever, they are merely repeating in a more academic way the folly of a man who because he has dealt in nothing but horses all his life maintains that there is no other sort of beast whatsoever, that even a camel is only a horse in disguise!

In point of fact that is exactly the conclusion that many of the ablest thinkers on this subject have come to, on the basis of an examination of what the scientific method actually is. It has come to be seen that science, quite legitimately confining itself to formulating the dependable regularities and predictabilities of the world (horses!), fulfils its purpose only by a continuous process of abstraction,

of leaving out whatever cannot be brought within the scope of that purpose (camels!). It is looking for fixed regularities, it finds them, and it quite properly, in view of its special purpose, ignores everything else. It abstracts the regularity from the infinite richness and variety and individuality of purposeful and personal life as we actually know it and live it. This is most obviously so in the science of physics wherein every aspect of the world is ignored except the quantitative aspect, and even the physicist's wife becomes for his purpose *qua* physicist merely so much avoirdupois, so many pointer readings on a scale—a view which, if he is wise, as Eddington has suggested, he will not obtrude upon his domestic relationships. Yet even in the most concretely descriptive sciences also how much, how very much, is left out. "Man is mortal," we say; it is certainly very nearly the most dependable of all regularities in our experience that men die. Yet how infinitely various men are, and how infinitely various the causes of death and the manner of their dying, and how subtly even into dying there enter the purposes and the valuations and choices of personal life. How different the death of Oates from the death of a hanged criminal! Yet both are included in the highly abstract generalization that all men die.

Science, then, in its search for the fixed regularities of nature, undoubtedly leaves a great deal out, and it would appear to be the merest dogmatism, the elevation of a legitimately specialized method and task into an all-inclusive metaphysic, to assert that what is left out is not really there, or, at most, only appears to be there to our way of looking at things, the ultimate reality of everything being, in spite of all appearance to the contrary, of a mechanically necessitated kind which science *could* fully expound if only it had the requisite knowledge. This, we repeat, is not science but dogmatic philosophy, and science could go on with its work quite well, that is to say, with exploring the fixed mechanisms of the world, without committing itself to such a philosophy at all. Science might even assume, it probably ought to assume, that there is, in

fact, a mechanistic side to all reality which it can explore, but that is very different from saying dogmatically that there is no other side whatever. It is possible that science is in a position to say something about everything, but it may still remain true that it can, in fact, never say everything about anything. There is always another side. Of course the problem of how the mechanistic side is related to the other sides of reality has still to be faced; but that is a problem, we repeat, for philosophy, and the scientist as such has no title to say anything dogmatically about it, though of course he is entitled to hold an opinion.

It is, however, worth pointing out before going on that the generalizations which science makes, the so-called causal laws it discovers, do not, in fact, give us, as is sometimes supposed, a basis for absolutely certain prediction of the future, though it is very easy to suppose they do. Scientific generalizations, barring perhaps one or two of a highly mathematical type, do not logically permit us to say more than this: on the basis of past experience and experiment we judge that with a more or less high degree of probability this general type of event, if it recurs, will bring with it that general type of event. The probability, which is the measure of our expectancy, may be very high, and may amount for practical purpose to certainty; but logically there is no absolute certainty. There is no absolute certainty that the sun will rise to-morrow, though we normally think of sunrise as very nearly the most certain event on which to count in the practical conduct of our life.

The idea that science enables us to predict the future with absolute certainty arises in part from a misinterpretation of the word "law" in the phrase "law of nature". Either it is interpreted as a law laid down by a divine lawgiver, to which all events must henceforth conform, or else pay the extreme penalty of not being allowed to happen at all!—"laws that never shall be broken for their guidance hath he made", as though events were a lot of bucking bronchos needing to be held in by bit and bridle. This is clearly pure mythology. Or else it is interpreted as though science itself uncovers and observes the compulsive link

which binds certain general types of event together in bonds of unbreakable necessity, like the steel coupling between carriages. But of course it does nothing of the sort. All it does is to observe a regularity of sequence *so far* between cause A and effect B, and an observed regularity is only a regularity as up to that time observed. What it is that binds cause and effect together, and whether it will go on binding them together for ever, science is not competent, and is not interested, to say. The link, for all science knows or cares, so far from excluding purpose, might well be a continuous and consistent purpose in the mind of God, laws of nature being so to say divine consistencies of purposive action. That is at least a possibility; but the work of science does not really require a decision on the point. It is a question for philosophy.

Granting, then, that the universe contains both freedom and necessity, both spontaneity and fixed regularities (science investigating the latter), how can we figure their relationship to one another so that neither is swallowed up in the other? To take again the example of answers to prayer—how can we conceive God controlling events in relation to personal situations in such wise that scientific work is not made a most precarious business, more precarious than we know it in fact to be? This is a very difficult question, as every philosopher knows; we have dealt with it at length elsewhere, and there is neither need nor space to repeat the discussion here.[1] Suffice it to say that it *is* possible to conceive an order of nature which is sufficiently settled to give a basis for the probability judgments which science makes, and without which we could not conduct our life, and yet sufficiently plastic not to exclude the spontaneity of personal purpose whether in man or in God. Yet, this should be added, even if it were not possible, even if we had to confess to a final bafflement of mind, it would be very absurd to consider that a justification for denying that spontaneity of personal purpose which is so much part of our whole being and existence. It is poor philosophy, not to say

[1] See *The World and God*, p. 160f.

poor science, because one cannot solve a problem, to deny the reality of one of the facts from which it arises.

Many will feel, however, that in all this we have not yet really come to the main problem. We used the illustration earlier of a man throwing a stone. Science, we said, can predict what will happen to the stone if it is thrown in a certain direction and with a certain strength (conditions remaining constant), but whether it is thrown or not depends on the man's personal choice and decision. But, it may be said, what of that choice and decision? Is not science bound to regard that as determined by prior events, and in principle predictable if only we had sufficient psychological and biological knowledge? We may feel free, and so far as *physical* science can say we may be in some real sense free, but what of *psychological* and *biological* science? What, after all, about Captain Oates' glands? Without rigid and predictable uniformities, how is a science of human behaviour possible? Yet there is such a science, and great strides it has made in recent years.

In replying to this we must distinguish between two questions. There is, first, the general theoretical question whether there could be anything worthy to be called a science of psychology, if human behaviour, including even those occasions when we feel most free and responsible in what we do, were not, in fact, completely determined. Second, there is the more empirical question whether, when we examine what goes on in the mind even on those occasions when we feel most free and responsible, we are not driven by the facts to a deterministic view.

In answer to the first of these questions, we would say that it is not at all necessary to take a wholly deterministic view of human conduct in order to have a science of psychology. If we maintain, as we do, that there is at the heart of human personality an ultimate capacity for self-direction and self-determination in the light of its own judgments of value, not reducible to the merely mechanical pressure of forces, so to speak, from the rear, that does not mean that we regard such " self-causality " as completely unconditioned, acting, as it were, in a vacuum of unrelated-

ness. It is a strictly conditioned activity all the time, but it is not necessarily wholly conditioned. It is the task of psychology to study it *so far as conditioned.*

Thus, human behaviour is conditioned, on the under side, so to speak, by the physical limitations and states of the organism, by the functioning of the glands, by the presence or absence of toxic material in the blood, and so on. It is also conditioned, on this under side, by the psychological make-up of the individual concerned, his mental gifts, his general temperament and disposition, the inhibitions and repressions, and so on, of his subconscious life. All of these things are partly inherited, and partly induced by the environmental influences, particularly those of family relationships in the earliest years, which have been brought to bear upon him. Furthermore, it is conditioned, on what may be called the upper side, by the actual constitution of that intelligible and ideal world, capacity to act in the light of which is part of the very definition of freedom—that intelligible and ideal world which is mediated through the sense of what is true, or reasonable, or good, or decent, or necessary to tolerable social life, and so on. In whatever degree and in whatever sense we are free, we are not free to jump over St. Paul's Cathedral, to put our hands in the fire and not get burnt, to think that two and two make five, to change a shy, introverted disposition into a bold, extroverted one, to think as evil of that which discloses itself to us as good. Hence, in respect of situations which are broadly the same, and given a personality which falls somewhere within the broad limits of what we call normality, conduct will be predictable on the basis of empirical, psychological and biological generalizations, not to be sure with anything even distantly approaching the precision of physics or mathematics, but with sufficient probability and accuracy to make the judgment not altogether worthless as a guide for conduct. But even then our judgment will be extremely general and abstract, "leaving out" all the intimate and individual personal "feel" of the behaviour in question, all that makes conduct, however like other people's, still essentially and

peculiarly "mine", part of "my" history, the result of "my" decision. No competent psychologist has ever supposed that in respect of the more intimate and personal aspects of human conduct, he could do more than indicate a probability, a tendency, a "target area", if the simile may be allowed, wherein the bomb of decision will fall, though nobody knows quite where.

It has, indeed, been suggested by some that if human conduct is *not* wholly determined, I cannot be sure even of getting a stamp at the post office; for, in that case, there is no assurance that the post-office assistant will not exercise his underived freedom and reply to my request by smiting me over the head with the office ruler. This suggestion is, of course, absurd; it rests upon the assumption that to act freely is to act in what we have called a vacuum of unrelatedness, so that quite literally anything may happen. Yet, of course, in another sense, I cannot be *quite* sure that I shall get my stamp, though I can be sure enough. The assistant, after all, might conceivably have such a highly developed æsthetic sense that he conceives it his duty, at whatever cost to himself, to destroy a face like mine with the ruler, though that is not likely.

Another important point is that if we hold that a personality can act as a free agent, that does not mean that we believe that he always does so. In other words, human conduct is not always free, any more than it is always determined. And that this is so we may be thankful, for to be confronted at every turn with the necessity for free responsible decision would make life intolerable. Thus there is the beneficent law of habit. Owing to habit we live for long periods at a stretch without needing to deliberate and make a personal choice. Certain situations are constantly recurring and conduct in respect of them is for all practical purposes predetermined. This holds good for both the higher and lower levels of conduct. A good character is built up on certain habitual, morally good reactions, and a bad character on certain habitual, morally bad reactions. Obviously it is a thoroughly good thing that actions do thus become habituated; for only thus can

attention be released for other things and some sort of progress made possible. Just at what point an action originally free becomes so habituated as to pass beyond the control of the personality it is impossible to say, but it is undeniable that there may be such a point. The important thing, however, is that the necessary building of all ordered existence upon a broad foundation of habit gives plenty of scope for a careful and scientific study of psychology and history and economics without in any way infringing the truth that, in moments of moral choice, the individual may exercise his power of free personal direction and confound all the scientific prophets—as has often happened. The area in which such free choice can be exercised may, in certain instances, owing to the nature of the limiting conditions of natural equipment, formed habits, subconscious compulsions and the rest, be very small; but that does not affect the point.

It follows from all this that even in those cases where there has been something in the nature of genuine choice and self-determination, there is still something that the psychologist can do. He can enquire into all the conditioning factors which went to the making of the choice; he can try to enter into the agent's point of view just prior to the making of it and by intelligent sympathy and imagination make it in some sense his own. And this he can do because, as we have said, there *is* uniformity running through our human nature as well as through the world in the midst of which it has to operate, though there is also an individuality which makes every person in some degree incalculably unique. We must be careful, however, to see that this does not plunge us into the illusion which Bergson somewhere points out—the illusion of retrospective inference. Suppose we are considering the decision of Cæsar to cross the Rubicon. We know as a matter of historic fact that he made that decision and acted accordingly. That is settled once and for all. We now make a psychological study of Cæsar's mind, and try to describe every pulse of feeling and thought which took place just prior to the decision being made. We give the fullest account we

can, and we know that out of all that personal life which we have thus inadequately analysed the decision as a matter of fact emerged. Then, if we are not careful, our minds do a subtle little twist. Knowing that the decision in question *did* emerge, we suppose that as we, as it were, imaginatively stand in the conditions of the man's mind just prior to the decision, we can foresee and forecast the decision purely on the basis of those conditions. But really we only foresee and forecast it on the basis of *what has previously transpired in fact*; there has been no real prediction, and there could be none. It is a little like the boy who, not being able to solve the equation, looks up the answer at the back of the book, and then monkeys about with the equation until he gets the answer!

We turn now for a little to the more empirical question, whether, when we examine what goes on in the mind on an occasion of apparently real choice between alternatives, we are not driven by the facts to a deterministic explanation.

The answer we give to this question is that we are not so driven. We suggest that those who think we are, are guilty of a superficial and confused reading of the facts.

There is, in the first place, usually a superficial analysis of what is called "motive". Here is an individual confronted, let us say, with the necessity of making a moral choice—a choice, let us suppose, between confessing a misdeed and keeping it hidden. In such a situation it is usually said there is a conflict of motives. On the one hand, there is the impulse to obey conscience, to live up to a high standard, to approve oneself a gentleman, to stay the pangs of remorse, and so on. On the other hand, there is the impulse of fear, dislike of the consequences of confession. Well, the choice or what we call the choice, is made; the man confesses his misdemeanour. What has happened? The answer is quite simple, it is said; the strongest motive has won, that is all. The result was as inevitable as the result of a pull of ten pounds meeting a pull of five pounds. That is to say, the picture is formed of the self being a sort of static entity like a cart, with forces called motives attached to it and

pulling it like horses. But this is clearly inadequate. It is indeed in a measure a begging of the question under discussion, for the forming of such a picture is an uncritical "reading in" of mechanistic notions, as our minds are always prone to do, accustomed as they are to dealing with the world of external things, wherein forces do pull on objects, and unaccustomed as they are to dealing with the internal process of our most intimate selves. Some simple considerations show that such a purely materialist and mechanical analogy is not adequate, and falsifies the facts.

In the first place, to explain a choice that has actually been made by saying that the strongest motive has won is clearly an example of the fallacy of retrospective inference just mentioned. There is no means of defining, or identifying, the strongest motive except on the basis of what has actually transpired in fact. Nobody has ever succeeded, or could ever succeed, in measuring the strength of motives according to some common scale prior to the actual issue in decision. How could one ever measure a liking for beer against reverence for the moral law? To say, then, that the strongest motive has prevailed is to convey no information at all. It is but to say that that which prevailed prevailed. The only way to give any significant meaning to the statement is to assume the whole mechanistic view of behaviour in advance, to assume that the most diverse motives are in principle, if not in practice, measurable by some common scale. Then again, the analogy breaks down for this reason: when two forces pull upon a physical object, the movement of the object is the resultant of the two forces acting together; the object, for example, moves in a diagonal lying between the directions of the two forces. But that is not so in the realm of deliberate volition. To give one motive rein is to put the other out of action; it is not to annihilate it, for the desire which is denied may still be felt, but it is quite definitely to suspend it. A physical pull cannot thus suspend another force applied to the same object; it can only merge with it.

This last point indicates what is surely a truer reading of the facts. A motive is not a force pulling on the self; it is the self itself in action, tending to act, moving or tending to move in a certain direction, and a conflict of motives so-called is really a self tending to act along lines which for one reason or another are incompatible. If this be so, then there is nothing so far impossible in the idea of a self in such a situation suspending or inhibiting its tendencies to act, while it deliberates and decides which to give rein to; and the decision to give rein to one will of necessity mean keeping the other in suspense, not the merging of the two. This to be sure is hardly more than a transcript of how the thing feels in our inner life. In precisely this way we are conscious of suspending impulses, and there seems to be no reason, except that of a deterministic viewpoint previously adopted and dogmatically propounded, for supposing that is not how things in fact are.

But, it may be said, granting that the analogy with physical forces is inadequate and misleading, we have still to find a reason why the self suspends its tendencies to act and why, after deliberation, it should choose to give this tendency release rather than that. Whether the self will suspend its activities in any given situation, and whether it will choose to act this way rather than that is surely entirely determined, it is said, by the sort of self that it is, by, in other words, its character; and its character is entirely determined by the interplay of countless environmental influences since birth with certain original qualities bestowed by hereditary transmission. What a man chooses does flow from his character—in that sense it is not the result of external forces applied to him like horses to a cart; but the character itself is not chosen.

This sounds very plausible, and its plausibility derives from the fact that it covers a certain amount of the facts. We have already fully admitted that the freedom of the self is not unconditioned; it does not spring out of "a vacuum of unrelatedness". It has to take place within the context of internal and external conditions, and often, we may grant, the space left for it by these conditions may be

very small. A man with an irascible temper, for example, is set a task quite different from that of a man with a more placid nature; and often his tendency to act will have become the full act almost before he is aware of it. Yet, even so, is it really adequate to say that a man's choices are determined by his character? The answer must be that it is not. The inner life is not quite so simple as that.

First, we would suggest that when the advocate of determinism speaks of the character determining the self's volitions, he is really slipping back once more, though now in a more subtle way, into the same sort of false analogy as when he spoke of motives pulling on the self and, as it were, dragging it along. For the word "motive" there is now substituted the more comprehensive word "character". A vague picture is presented of two entities, self and character, the second pushing or pulling the first. But is this a true picture? Can there be a self without some specific content or character, and can there be a specific content or character apart from a self? There is not first a collection of impulses and tendencies and dispositions somehow unattached—something like Pirandello's "six characters in search of an author"—and then, behold, there suddenly appears in their midst a sort of naked or empty, unsubstantial phantom called a self, to which they attach themselves like tugs to the empty hulk of a ship and which they then proceed to pull where they will. This is pure mythology, and once again goes far to beg the whole question. It is to turn abstractions into real entities. The tendencies, impulses, dispositions, are tendencies, impulses, dispositions of a self, and apart from it they have no existence save as abstractions of theoretical analysis. They exist only as unified in, as manifestations of, a central core of particular selfhood which is active in and through them, and they are active only in and through that particular selfhood. Doubtless their character and direction are to some extent given by heredity and environment, but they are given only as in, and through, and part of, that ultimate mysterious something which we call a person. The question, therefore, still remains open whether at any point the

self tending to act this way or that can, because of its self-conscious awareness of responsibility for what it does, suspend its tendency to act whilst it evaluates morally the situation. And it would not have this power any the less, if it has it at all, because the moral sensitivity and the ethical standards by and through which it evaluates the situation are themselves in a measure given by heredity and environment.

Second, we would point out that the view we are criticizing involves a quite unjustified identification of character on the one hand, with inborn, or environmentally conditioned, impulse and disposition and temperament on the other. If such an identification is justified, how does it come about that we habitually make a distinction between a man of character and a man who, as we say, has no character? Do we not mean by the distinction precisely the distinction between a man who is *not* in his behaviour ruled by impulse and disposition and temperament and a man who is so ruled? We do not mean by a man of character a man who happens to have a nicer disposition than others, for indeed we recognize that a person may have a nice disposition, and yet prove utterly unreliable and weak in a crisis calling for moral insight and integrity. We mean a man who, whatever his disposition and impulses may have been originally and however strong their influence may still on occasion be, is ruling them, or at the very least seeking to rule them, according to some moral valuation or principle which he recognizes as binding on himself as a rational and moral personality. It is impossible to see how this distinction could have arisen with the inevitability with which it does arise, so that we cannot even begin to think about that whole area of our experience which centres in moral values and judgments without explicitly or implicitly making it, if it, in fact, corresponds to no essential distinction in the nature of things, if character is just another name for the "given" of disposition and impulse. No doubt in any instance of internal moral conflict and temptation the interplay with one another of all these factors of which we have been speaking—disposition,

impulse, temperament, moral judgment, habits good and bad, character as so far formed or as still in a measure not yet established—may be exceedingly complex, so that even the most expert psychologist cannot unravel them, still less say just where, and how, and to what extent, the ultimate free causality of the self, in and through which all these things are active and have their interplay with one another, is exercised, if exercised at all. But the temptation to reduce the complexity by a falsifying over-simplification, however strong, must be resisted. The notion of the self as an ultimate source of free activity is no doubt an extremely baffling one, perhaps just because it is an ultimate and because it, in fact, underlies the thought-activity itself; but it is so indissolubly bound up with our whole awareness of ourselves as persons that to deny its truth, without first making the most strenuous efforts to retain it, can hardly be considered as anything other than quite unscientific.

How indissolubly the sense of freedom is bound up with our human self-consciousness is shown by the fact that in psycho-therapeutic work the one fatal obstacle to recovery, and to the building up of a strong and unified character in the patient, is for the latter to become possessed by the thought that he is merely the passive victim of forces over which he has, and can be expected to have, no control. In other words, one thing that a determinist, Freudian psycho-analyst must not let his patient suspect is the truth of the matter. This, to say the least, is extremely odd if determinism be indeed the truth of the matter. To require us to take as true that which in practical experience we must treat as untrue is to be committed to a theory of knowledge which the most elementary student of philosophy would know to be impossible. But then, that is often just the trouble—so many of our psychologists, and still more of those who read cheap hand-books on the subject, are not even elementary students of that subject.

Our conclusion then is that there is nothing in the general method and outlook of science that makes theism impossible, though there is much in it that raises difficult problems for reflection.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

IN turning to this subject it will be well, perhaps, to remind ourselves first of what was said in the first part of this work concerning the way in which belief in God can, and does, meet the problem of evil in the practical sphere. We considered this in the discussion of the pragmatic elements in belief in God.[1] We there affirmed that one of the most important of these elements is the new and victorious relation to the disciplines, frustrations and sufferings of life which faith in God, particularly faith in Him according to the Christian revelation of His nature and purpose, gives. We pointed out, however, that it is somewhat artificial to separate the practical from the reflective life, particularly in relation to the overcoming of evil. For one element in the victory which belief in God, particularly in its Christian form, gives over evil is the new interpretation of it which such belief is able to offer. Now it is the interpretation of evil from the theistic standpoint which we are now about to consider, and we may well hope that what we have to say will, for the reason just given, enter at least as *a* factor into that faith which overcometh the world. At the same time, however, we would wish to emphasize that it is merely from the point of view of a reflective theistic interpretation of the world that we are about to discuss evil. We are quite clear, therefore, that what we have to say in this chapter will by itself give no one that sort of victory over evil which Christian faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ can give, and that many will win that victory of faith apart from what we are about to say, and, indeed, apart from what any reflective theologian or philosopher may have to say on the matter. Christianity has never claimed to take the sting out of evil by explaining it, but rather by giving victory over it, which is a different thing. It is indeed part of the victory of faith that it enables a man to carry

[1] See Chapter VI especially.

in his mind a considerable load of theoretical agnosticism, particularly in respect of the relation of evil to the good purpose of God. It is indeed very easy to put the onus of proof in the wrong place in this matter. It is very easy to assume that it is the Christian's task to show in detail that this is the best of all possible worlds. The Christian believes it is the best of all possible worlds (barring the discords introduced by man's sin, though it is not unreasonable to hold, as we shall see, that a world which allows man to introduce discords into it is better than one which does not); but it is not for him to demonstrate it, because, if he is wise, he will not claim to reach it by demonstration himself.

However, as we have indicated, the reflective element is not to be despised, first, because there is no point in making the task of faith heavier than it need be—a little reflection often lightens a problem, even if it does not, and cannot, fully dispose of it; and second, because if we are setting forth a reflective confirmation of theism, we must, as we have already said, face all the facts and not build our case on a favourable selection from them.

It is not difficult in view of the line our positive argument for theism has taken to see what on the reflective side is the main challenge of what we call evil. We argued that the emergence in the midst of nature of man, with his capacity for rational, moral and æsthetic experience, and for the highest personal life, can be best understood in terms of that view with which religious experience provides us in a living and compelling way, the view namely that this emergence is due to the creative purpose of God. Finite persons, and the values which are disclosed to and can only be apprehended and realized by persons, are valued and intended by God. That has been our thesis. But, now, what if there appear in nature and history facts which run counter to these values? What if there are facts which frustrate, hinder, destroy personality and the highest aspirations and achievements of personal life? How do they affect the argument? Are there not such facts? What, in view of them, becomes of the good purpose of God

which, according to the theistic viewpoint, governs all things?

It is clear that the crux of the problem lies in the question we have just asked—are there not such facts? If it could be firmly established that there are facts in the world which are necessarily and finally destructive of persons and the highest values of personal life, then the whole case for theism would be seriously jeopardized. We could then only hold to theism by subordinating logic to religious intuition, which would be a serious thing to do. On the other hand, if it cannot be firmly established that there are such facts, if any alleged instance proves on examination not finally to contradict belief in God, then the latter, having other and more positive foundations alike in religious experience and reflection, is surely entitled to stand.

From this it would appear that the reply which theism makes to the challenge of evil must lie along three lines.

First, it must try, so far as may be, to take up the alleged evil fact into the theistic viewpoint itself; or, in other words, to show that its evil is only apparent, the appearance of evil being due to judging it by a scale of values to which theism is not bound, which, indeed, it must, when properly understood, repudiate. If theism, without doing violence to the facts, can thus in a measure illumine, or reinterpret, an alleged evil in such wise as to take some at least of the sting out of it, then that may be considered as an added argument in its favour, and the consideration of evil may thus make a positive contribution to its case. For it is, so far, a verification of a hypothesis, if it can illumine facts for which in the first instance it was not intended, and which at first sight raise a demurrer to it.

Second, in so far as theism fails to provide a " hundred per cent " positive illumination of alleged evil, it must seek to show that the margin of darkness which is left unillumined does not finally contradict it. Here a saying of James Ward may be cited: " The only justification of the ways of God to men we are called upon to attempt is to require those who say that they are not justifiable to prove their indictment." Yet even the darkness which theism

fails to illumine can in a measure be taken up into it, provided only that the darkness in question can be declared to be not finally contradictory of it. For, in the first place, as has already been pointed out, theism is definitely an assertion of a transcendent divine purpose, that is to say, of a divine purpose which, whilst working in the world, is not exhaustively contained in it; it is a purpose which is seeking ends which transcend the finite world and therefore cannot be fully comprehended in terms of the finite world. And, in the second place, if the world be in God's purpose a training ground for personalities, then it is possible to see a use for unillumined darkness in relation to that purpose. Without the necessity of walking by faith, without the opportunity for adventurous plunge into unillumined darkness, some of the highest qualities of personal life and of personal relation with God could not, so far as can be seen, be realized. Thus, paradoxically, the failure of theism to solve all mysteries becomes part of its case!

Third, and again in so far as theism leaves problems unsolved, it must seek to show that to repudiate theism would leave still greater problems unsolved. It may be admitted, indeed, that in a sense theism accentuates the problem of evil by its endeavour to interpret the world in terms of an ultimate purpose of good interested in persons. Strictly speaking, there is no special problem of evil except for those who thus attempt to interpret the world in terms of good purpose. If we dismiss the idea of such a purpose being behind things, as some do, then an earthquake is no greater problem than the fall of a leaf; it is for reflection, whatever it may be for our feelings, just one piece of a jigsaw puzzle along with others, and it is of no particular consequence that we humans do not happen to like its jagged shape and ugly colours. Theism, therefore, in a sense accentuates the problem of evil; but does it not go far to solving greater problems? What, after all, are we to make of the facts considered in the last chapter but one? What of the emergence of man with his power to judge things to be evil and to dedicate his whole being to the seeking of the good, if theism be not true? In other words,

as has often been pointed out, there is a problem of good as well as of evil. Theism at least illumines the former and sheds some light, as we shall try to show, on the latter even though at first it seems to make it more pressing; and we are entitled to argue that no other view does either of these things in anything like the same degree, or, on balance, is able to take up so much of our deepest and most poignant experience into itself.

Bearing in mind these possible lines of approach to any alleged instance of evil, we will consider in turn the two most general forms of evil which are usually discussed in this connexion—(*a*) suffering, (*b*) moral evil.

(*a*) *Suffering*

There are some things which should first be said about pain and suffering which are not specially related to theistic belief, but are simply the outcome of an attempt to see suffering for what it really is, to get it into a right perspective, before seeking to pass any sort of judgment upon it whether from the angle of religious faith or from any other angle. If we are going to reflect on these matters at all we must reflect as objectively as we can, and not through an emotional haze.

Thus, in the first place, it is important not to overlook the essentially private character of pain. By this is meant the fact that everybody suffers his own pain and not that of someone else as well; as felt pain it is his own private experience. No doubt other people's suffering and need can, through sympathy, *cause* pain to me, yet even so the pain thus caused (or however caused) is still just my pain and mine alone.

The importance of this is twofold.

It means, first, that no one is in a position to evaluate pain in any kind of final way. Just because it is so private, so indivisibly one with the intimate personal experience and history of the individual, we are compelled to be agnostic about it. This is manifestly so in relation to another person's suffering. My neighbour's cancer and the agony resulting therefrom are evil things, and I am called

upon to seek to relieve them. But in so far as they are not relieved, I am not in a position to say that they are as utterly dark as they appear to the observer to be, still less am I in a position to say that they will not prove worth while in the larger context of my neighbour's whole spiritual history when this is completed. And my neighbour's history can only be experienced as completed by him, and not by me. I should need to be he, with all his past experiences, his present capacities, his future destiny, even to catch a glimpse of something perhaps not altogether un-worthwhile at the moment of the pain's occurrence; and I should need to live his life to all eternity (if there should be an eternity—a point to which we return in a moment) to be able to see the pain completely justified as a factor in the dealing of some ultimate purpose of good with him. But the same holds also in some degree of our own pain. Even here we are compelled to be agnostic as to the way in which it may ultimately prove to be worthwhile; nevertheless, in the intimacies of our own experience we can often detect gleams of light which are necessarily unobservable to others and which, if they occurred in some other sufferer, would be equally unobservable to us. It has often been pointed out that it not infrequently happens that suffering seems more of a problem to the observer than to the sufferer himself.

Second, the privacy of pain warns us not to think of the "quantity" of pain in the wrong way and so to let our minds be unnecessarily stunned and intimidated by arithmetical magnitudes. When we think of the vast numbers of people in the world who are suffering pain at any one time, we must not imagine that that means that there is a correspondingly vast quantity, or intensity, of actually felt pain. The privacy of pain makes it impossible to sum different people's pains together and draw out a grand total. Each suffers his own pain and his own alone, and there is not, strictly speaking, more pain in the world when two people are suffering than when only one is. There is no such thing as pain in general. This is so clearly the case, and yet is so often overlooked, that it cannot be un-

important to insist upon it right at the beginning of any discussion of these matters.

We would not wish to suggest, however, that numbers are altogether irrelevant to the problem, though it is arguable that the universe would be revealed in quite as odious a light by being cruel to *one* individual as by being cruel to a great many. The real challenge in the vast numbers who suffer is not in the arithmetical total of pain, but in the suggestion inevitably conveyed to the mind that the world is in its essential nature ruthlessly indifferent to individuals and their sufferings. The suffering of sentient creatures looks so wholesale, so indiscriminate, so pitilessly wrought into the very texture and design of reality. This, however, is another problem, to which we return later. Meanwhile the point we have made stands. We quite illegitimately aggravate the problem by adding sufferings together.

Then, in the second place, it is important, when considering the fact of suffering in the animal world, not to make the mistake of reading into lower forms of sentient existence our own highly developed nervous sensitivity, our memories and hopes and fears, our sense of personal dignity, and so on. It would be absurd to deny that there is suffering in the animal world, but it is equally absurd to exaggerate it by unwittingly, for example, projecting ourselves into the place of the mouse with whom the cat is playing. It is pure assumption that the mouse feels as we imagine we would feel. The evidence indeed, so far as it goes, appears to suggest that, quite apart from the fact that an animal has not the same nervous sensitivity as a man and, in the nature of the case, cannot know the terror that comes from memory and imagination, a merciful provision of nature provides that extremes of agony shall not be borne. There is evidence, we are informed by those who really know the jungle at first-hand and not merely from a centrally-heated city dwelling, that it is not the terror-stricken place it is sometimes represented to be, and that when a creature falls into the grip of another an anæsthetizing paralysis overtakes it. We quote from a recent writer

on this subject, who on the basis of direct experience of jungle life warns against the mistake of which we are here speaking: "Sensibility to pain is determined by the delicacy of the nervous system. It is therefore safe to presume that a man is more anguished than a deer when attacked by a beast of prey. Yet Livingstone, mauled by a lion, recorded his emotion at the time as one of delicious languor. Other hunters have witnessed similarly."[1]

Finally, it is important not to overlook the fact that in practical life we do take up much frustration and difficulty, and even pain, into our pursuit of ends without the least suspicion crossing our minds that there is any sort of problem involved; on the contrary, it is commonly felt that the overcoming and enduring of such things enhances the value and significance of the whole enterprise. If there is not difficulty enough, man will invent it and arrange for it in sports, games and self-imposed tasks of various sorts. No one, certainly, after due reflection would vote for a slick world of painless functioning, where there is no need to measure oneself against the threat of frustration and defeat, and even agony and death. This is an obvious point, but it is sometimes overlooked and it serves to illustrate once again a general principle, which is nowhere of greater importance than in relation to the problem of pain—the principle that in all the ultimate issues of life we must take care to think "existentially" and not merely theoretically. We must take care to think from the point of view, so far as we are able, of the actual participants in the practical business of living, and not from the point of view of the spectator in the balcony. To the latter the wrestlers in the arena may appear to be having a dreadful time; yet in point of fact they may be getting, as the saying is, "a considerable kick out of it".

Turning now to the specifically theistic interpretation of suffering, it is clear that suffering, considered in its general idea, does not raise any final difficulty. It would only raise such a final difficulty if pleasure and happiness were so

[1] *I Am Persuaded*, by Julian Duguid, p. 216 The whole chapter is valuable on the subject of pain in nature.

clearly the supreme value of life that the theist had no option but to accept it as the standard by which he must judge the world to be good or bad. But that is far from being the case. Leaving on one side the fact that few moralists would admit the validity of such a standard, theism certainly, alike in its fundamental affirmation and in the considerations it brings forward in support of that affirmation, would not admit it. Indeed it would expressly deny it. The ultimate value for theism is moral worth realized in persons and through persons, and anything which is instrumental to that end is from the theist viewpoint justified. In so far then as suffering can be seen to be an indispensable means to the achievement of personal character there is no problem. And that there is at least *some* connexion between the two all experience testifies. Pain does often serve the high ideals of truth and goodness. It is the great teacher. It has been said that there is nothing so painful as a new idea; but it is also true that there is nothing so potentially full of ideas as a new pain. Pain indicates that there is something we have yet to learn about the world in which we live; it not only indicates it, it compels us to do something about it. Further, pain draws out men's sympathies with one another, and calls forth that heroism and sacrifice which we recognize as amongst the most sacred things in personal life. To revert to the story of Captain Oates, that sublime deed would have been impossible had there not been such destructive things as blizzards and such painful ones as frostbite. It is at least quite as rational to regard the blizzard as somehow ultimately justified by the greatness of character to which it gave opportunity and of which therefore it was a part cause, as to regard the greatness of character as somehow nullified and rendered meaningless by the apparently brute and impersonal force of the blizzard. If it be asked why personal worth cannot be achieved without the discipline of difficulty and frustration and all that these may involve of suffering, it is in the last resort impossible to say. There are facts and laws in this mysterious universe which are just given, and we have to accept them. Nobody

in the last resort can say why a combination of oxygen and hydrogen in certain proportions should produce a liquid with the properties of water and not something else. The fact stands that pain often brings good as judged by those standards on which theism rests and to which it is committed, and to the extent to which pain can and does do this it is, we repeat, for theism no problem.

This line of thought brings us to the point where the real challenge begins which the suffering and frustration of life offer to theistic faith. It is the point where such suffering and frustration seem to have no relation to the achievement of the values of personal life, or in so far as they have such a relation, appear to run counter to that achievement. We will take up each of these problems in turn.

First, the point where suffering and frustration seem to have no relation to the achievement of personal values. We get our chief impression, perhaps, of such waste of suffering in contemplating the ruthless and competitive warfare of nature. This is in part the outcome of a seemingly irrational and unnecessary fecundity on the part of nature in the production of living creatures all under the necessity of fighting for their life. Even if we warn ourselves, along the lines already indicated, against exaggerating the pain of the animal world, it seems impossible to deny that there is a good deal of it which appears to serve no purpose whatever in relation to the world of personality, for it bears no direct relationship to man. Why should there be parasites, microbes, insects, beasts with claws and beaks, all preying on one another and inflicting greater or less degrees of pain on one another in a way that seems to us both hideous and unnecessary? What ends of personality are served by such a process going on in the depths of the ocean or of some primeval jungle, where the foot of persons never treads?

We are bound to admit that little that is positively illuminating can be said on this question from the point of view of theistic belief. It remains a mystery. All we can do is to point out negatively that nobody is in a position

to assert that this suffering in nature *is* waste, whatever it may *appear* to be. We must, in short, be careful not to claim a greater knowledge than we actually have. The suffering of nature, if our minds do not in fact exaggerate it, may be necessary, in a way which we cannot at present understand, in a creative, evolutionary process which is finally to bring forth personal beings; or it may be necessary to some other divine ends of which we know nothing. If, indeed, we are prepared to affirm that the emergence of personal beings is *not* sufficiently valuable, and that no other divine end could be sufficiently valuable, to justify such a prelude and such a setting, then of course the case for theism would be seriously challenged; for that would be tantamount to saying that there is a final, discernible contradiction between the pain of nature and the goodness of the creative purpose which theism affirms. The only way then to preserve theism would be to relieve God of the responsibility for the suffering of sentient existence by attributing it, as some have done, to some evil power at work, some corruption which has entered into the creative process. This, however, creates as many difficulties as it solves. But are we really entitled to say confidently that the travail of nature is not, and never could be, justified in the light of what the purpose of God may be leading up to whether in personal life or in some other range of values as yet undiscerned? The writer of these pages can only express his conviction that we are not entitled so to do, and that to think we are is to set much too high a value on pleasure and happiness as such. In short, he is prepared to leave the whole thing in mystery, basing himself on the proposition that there is nothing finally contradictory of a theism which has other strong grounds in the *apparently* unnecessary surplusage of suffering in the sentient world.

Second, the point where pain and frustration seem to run counter to the value which the theist position sets upon the moral personality. There is, for example, the wholesale destructiveness of earthquake, flood, typhoon, giving an irresistible impression of a ruthless indifference on the part of the universe to man's life and works. There is

agony so great, and deprivation so devastating, that it crushes and weakens the personal life instead of helping to emancipate it and give it strength. There are those horrible accidents of generation whereby a child is born mentally or morally deficient, fatally handicapped for the achievement of even a passable humanity, not to speak of anything higher. There is the fact that man, even at his highest, never seems to realize even a hundredth part of that vision of higher things which at times haunts his soul. In short, there is all that far-reaching misfittedness of his nature to the world in which he lives of which we spoke in the first part of this book. All these things, however, are really included in the greater, because more universal, fact of death. Whether it come early or late, to the immature or the mature, to the noble or the base, to the mighty intellect or the poor mental deficient in an asylum, every living person is under sentence of death, suffers this apparently final negation and disruption of being, this vanishing into the abyss.

Belief in God certainly comes to a sort of crisis in the fact of death. If death be the end of the human person, then theism of the sort we are discussing collapses; for it would be impossible to maintain the significance of personality in a universe where the only example of personality we know is destined to total extinction. But if it is not the end, then the problem of those evils we have just mentioned in the previous paragraph is to some extent relieved, for the possibility is opened up at once that such evils will find their justification in terms of personal values in whatever lies beyond death for each individual. So long as that possibility is open, nobody is in a position to say positively that those evils which now seem to contradict the values of personal life do, in fact, necessarily and finally do so.

Death, in other words, whilst it is part of the problem, also introduces such an enormous uncertainty into it that it becomes impossible to give a dogmatically anti-theistic answer to it. Death, after all, is *not* finally known to be the end, though materialistic writers sometimes speak as if it were. None of the arguments which are used to

show that it is prove on examination to be logically conclusive.

The most powerful of such arguments is that mind and personality as we know it are plainly in some sense a function of the physical organism, from which it would seem to follow that with the dissolution of the latter the former will be dissolved also. A blow on the head destroys consciousness; a whiff of chloroform suspends it; excisions of the brain blot out great areas of it, therefore . . . Yet plainly the cogency of the argument depends on the answer given to an important prior question, namely, in what sense *is* mind a function of the body? William James has pointed out that the word function has two distinct senses. It may mean what he calls "productive" function or it may mean what he calls "permissive or transmissive" function. An example of the former is the secretion of bile by the liver. An example of the latter is the release of an arrow by the trigger of a crossbow. The trigger does not propel the arrow; it gives a force which lies outside itself the opportunity to concentrate on the arrow. Now if the body's relation to the mind is that of productive function, if the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile, then the argument against survival beyond death is strong. But if the relation is one of transmissive function, if, that is to say, the body does not produce consciousness, but, so to say, focalizes and limits its manifestation in relation to the material world, then the argument does not hold at all. Now—and this is the point—it is impossible to decide in which of these two senses the mind is a function of the body, for the observable phenomena would be exactly the same in both cases! If the body's relation to the mind is one of transmissive function then the state of the body is bound to affect the state of the mind, but it does not follow that there could be no mind without a body, or at any rate the particular body it has now. As I once heard Dr. McTaggart say, because I cannot study philosophy with the toothache, it does not follow that I could not study it without any teeth at all; indeed, if they are bad teeth, I might without them study it all the better.

Death, then, we repeat, is not finally known to be the end. It may be said, of course, that equally much it is not known to be *not* the end. That is so, but the point we are making remains, namely, that death is such an unknown factor that neither it, nor any other of those things in this present life which seem to run counter to the values of personal life, no matter in how dark a guise they may appear, can be used as an argument against the theist position. They raise a question and a demurrer, they call for faith, but they do not finally contradict faith. We are entitled, therefore, to refuse to let the facts of suffering and death, terrible as they are, shake a belief in God which has, as this whole book endeavours to show, very strong foundations elsewhere.

(*b*) We turn now to the fact of moral evil, or sin.

The fact of moral evil, like the fact of suffering, is not in its general idea a serious problem for a theistic view which interprets human life in terms of an eternal personal purpose seeking to bring finite persons to their highest life through co-operation with itself. On the contrary, it might be taken to be in a measure a confirmation of it. For, as we have seen, the whole meaning of personal existence, as distinct from other types of existence, is bound up with the idea of freedom. A person who is not free to do wrong is a contradiction in terms. Personal freedom, therefore, requires that what has in fact happened in the way of moral evil should have had the possibility of happening from the beginning. That man, who alone amidst all the inhabitants of the earth is personal, should be also the most prone to shocking error and corruption—as he plainly is; there is nothing even faintly comparable to human sin in the animal world—is, therefore, entirely consonant with the whole theist position. Indeed at this point the theist view would seem to have the advantage over all others, namely, that it can do full justice to the gravity of, and to man's responsibility for, sin, and yet find in it no insuperable obstacle to its own position. Most other philosophies find it extremely difficult to take the fact of freedom seriously; they tend to

explain moral evil away as though it were something else.

The point where moral evil begins to be a pressing problem for theism is when it seems to become part of that general indifference to the high issues of personal life which the world in other directions also, as we have seen, seems to display. To adapt some words I have used elsewhere, when wickedness is seen to work on apparently unchecked, the wicked prospering, the innocent suffering, its consequences being wrought out indiscriminately over the whole area of human life, then it seems to take its place alongside the earthquake and the flood in lending to the whole world the appearance of brazen indifference. The cry, " why does not God stop the war? " is not necessarily superficial, though it often is; it registers precisely this aghast sense of the apparent indifference of the universe to the issues of righteousness in human life. The essential freedom of persons doubtless requires that wickedness should have some rope, but must it have quite so much rope as it appears always to have had, and not least in this present time of unspeakable brutality and anguish?

What is the theistic view to say to this? Well, first, there are some things which can be said in mitigation of the general impression just described which the human scene is apt to make upon us. As with suffering, so with moral evil and its consequences, we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by feeling. If we are going to reflect at all, we must reflect as objectively and dispassionately as we can.

Thus, in the first place, a principle of judgment upon, and annulment of, evil can be discerned at work in history and even in individual lives, in a broad way, though not in the precise and immediate detail we might desire. The extent to which wickedness has its own way in the world is manifestly not unlimited; later, if not sooner, it overreaches and defeats itself. This is at least sufficiently plain to warn us against inferring too quickly from the appearance of things that the universe is brazenly indifferent to moral issues. Then, next, in so far as the judgment upon and annulment of sin seems to be incomplete or in sus-

pense, it is possible to argue that this is exactly what might be expected if the world is, as theism maintains it is, a training-ground for personality; for men must learn to love righteousness and hate evil for their own sakes, and not for their consequences in reward or punishment. A world wherein every sin was instantly penalized would not be a suitable place for character to grow in. Finally, if the divine purpose be, as theism maintains, to create good personalities, not merely through fellowship with Himself, but also through fellowship with one another (is not the idea of an isolated, self-contained personality a contradiction in terms?), then the suffering of the innocent for the guilty becomes inevitable. For a fellowship of good personalities is only possible if the members of it are dependent upon one another, not merely on occasion and in respect of the consequences of their good acts, but all the time and therefore in respect of the consequences of their evil acts as well. Nay more, in the highest reaches of moral experience the innocent suffering for the guilty does not remain merely a regrettable necessity of that mutual dependency without which personal fellowship would be unattainable; it can become, when it is united with real love, a chief factor in achieving that fellowship, the highest expression of fellowship that there is. According to Christian faith this is supremely illustrated in the redemptive power of that which is the most awful example in all history of the innocent suffering at the hands of, and for, the guilty, namely, the Cross of Jesus Christ.

It must be admitted, however, that important as these considerations are, something of the heavy pressure of the problem still remains. It centres in the fact that evil in countless souls—both that for which they are themselves responsible and that which is at least in part induced in them by the wickedness of others—seems to remain unredeemed. The divine purpose to fashion men into fine personal life in fellowship with Himself seems from this point of view to be a colossal failure. Freedom, no doubt, had to be granted to make the end possible at all, the risk had to be taken—yes, but the appearance is that the risk has turned out ill

for God. Man has grossly misused his freedom and things are now as they are, all of us infected by evil and busily infecting one another, and God apparently not choosing, or not able, to do anything effective about it. Was the risk really worthwhile?

It must be admitted that the mind staggers more than a little at the thought of a divine purpose which could make a race free enough to bring about the abominations of corruption and sensualism and cruelty of which history is full; and in consequence a sceptical something within the soul sometimes takes the opportunity to suggest that by believing in God we have gratuitously magnified the problem for ourselves, and that there is behind the whole process no controlling good purpose at all. The full weight of the problem can only be felt in some real situation of horror and tragedy. To say to a mother contemplating the body of her child raped and done to death by brutal soldiery, that it has happened because of God's wonderful gift of freedom to men would seem altogether too glib and easy. None of us, in fact, could say it. The natural retort would be that freedom at such a ghastly price is not worthwhile, and that men should not be left in such uncontrolled and uninterrupted freedom that they can do that kind of thing. Is not the child dead once and for all, and will not the evildoer himself in all likelihood die unrepentant and uncleansed—the flotsam and jetsam of that grim historical process which a philosopher has recently written of as "the story of liberty"?

Concerning these things we can only repeat what was said about suffering, namely, that though they are a terrible mystery in the heart of our world they do not finally disprove belief in God. Once again a door of possibility is left open by the fact that we have no empirical knowledge of what lies beyond death. We do not know positively that this life is all there is, and therefore it is not possible to say that God is not at work even in the worst situation created by sin, effectively redeeming it, for we cannot be sure that we can see the whole situation for what it is; we can only grasp what lies this side of death, and we cannot

even grasp that fully. The question then reduces itself to this: admitting the terrible challenge of the problem of moral evil at its worst (even when we allow for freedom, as we must), but taking note of the fact that that challenge does not, and in view of the wide margin of ignorance introduced by death cannot, finally disprove belief in God, is such belief sufficiently well grounded in other things to make it a reasonable and proper thing to commit ourselves to it? The answer which this whole work proposes is that it is, but, of course, it is a question which each must answer for himself.

It will be well before we leave this subject to make one further point plain. The conclusion we have reached that, though a core of irreducible mystery remains at the heart of the suffering and sin of the world, it is nevertheless not such as finally to contradict belief in God (mainly owing to the uncertainty introduced into the problem by the impenetrability of death) may well seem to many to be somewhat glib as well as most dissatisfyingly negative. Such poor comfort, it might be thought, could only be offered by one who writes from the armchair of the study and not from the midst of the agonies of real life. In answer to such a criticism we have no alternative but to make plain once again what the line of our thought has been, because it is at this point more than ever susceptible to misunderstanding.

We have never maintained, and we do not now maintain, that it is possible to read theism convincingly out of the facts of nature and history. Least of all, needless to say, would we wish to maintain that it can be read out of the sort of facts we have been considering in this chapter. What we do maintain is that if we bring the thought of God with us to the facts of nature and history much can be found there to confirm it and nothing finally to contradict it, and that along these lines the reflective element in belief in God is sufficiently provided for. We have not suggested that the reflective element alone could establish in any man's mind a living and victorious faith in God. We are certainly not suggesting that the considerations

adduced in this chapter would suffice as a gospel to any one upon whom the bitter anguish of life presses heavily at this time. We are not disturbed that what we have written should even seem somewhat detached, for, as we have said, if we are going to reflect effectively at all, it must be with something of the detachment which characterizes all reflection. The argument has thus been strictly limited in its scope and in its mood and as such it must be judged; nor is it to be separated from the context of the whole book, that is to say, from the coercive and pragmatic elements in belief in God which are, as we said at the close of the first part, incomparably the more important. Indeed without them all the discussion of this second part is likely to be so much waste of ink and paper and time. With them, however, it may play its part, at least for some, in the building up of a massive and unshakable faith in God.

In the end, however far we may range in reflection, belief in God is a matter of making a great and final decision. Let the reader, then, if he will and if he has accompanied us thus far, go back now and re-read the concluding chapter of the first part, fortified, we dare hope, with the conviction that to make the decision therein set forth to believe in God as revealed in Jesus Christ is not in any way whatever to commit himself to a view of the world which cannot bear the scrutiny of careful thought. For the purposes of exposition it was necessary to put that chapter there; but it belongs also here. For, we repeat, whilst reflection has its part to play, decision is, and must always be, the conclusion of the whole matter, God being what He is, namely, personal purpose seeking to fashion men into sons.

INDEX