

PAGES FROM AN
OXFORD DIARY

BY

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PREFACE

IN the years 1924-1925 I was abroad with my family and my brother's family. For a number of months I was left at Oxford alone. It was during this time that I wrote out these notes. I disguised their source by pretending that they were taken from the diary of an actual Oxford don. I need not say that I myself never had any official connection with the University. The notes, though fictitious in their setting, were the transcription of a very real experience of my own.

Princeton, New Jersey
February 23, 1937

ONE thing is impressed upon me year by year as more fruitful of meaning, a truth that no one who knows Oxford can overlook or deny. It has sometimes irritated me in the years gone by; I find in it now a growing comfort. These colleges with their barred windows and guarded portals look back to a monkish design. The spell was laid upon them long ago, "the dream of the Middle Ages." They, or their models, were meant to be seminaries of theological study, the refuge of men set apart to pursue for their own salvation the wisdom of God, and only incidentally to teach. It does not matter that the young men now thronging the University are thinking of secular honours and training for worldly power; it does not matter that the dons may be grumbling about their cook or straining to amass profane knowledge (if I have not grumbled much, I have studied

more than enough); it does not signify that through the streets there pass now the bustle of business and the clangor of many hideous machines. At night, or sometimes of a Sunday, when the ways are blessedly empty of men, these stone fortresses proclaim their ancient purpose, and one can still imagine them inhabited by scholars who in silence and isolation are carrying on the sacred quest.

Oxford is a creation of the Church, and her beauty witnesses to the excellence of religion. The mark was put upon her once for all, wonderful city; and why should men seek to erase it? There are other places aplenty where laboratories may be erected and secular science may flourish; why not leave this fair domicile amidst her wandering rivers and her girdle of hills, why not leave it as a home for those who choose to "flee fro the presse" and to set their hearts on God's peace? They would repay the world for all the world gave them.

• II •

The signature of the Church is legible enough on the houses and streets of Oxford, but when

one turns to the men who dwell in them and walk among them, one feels something like a shock. From the same cause can effects so unequal flow? Often I ask myself how it can be that dead stones and mortar should speak more eloquently of the divine presence than does the living face of man, made in the likeness of his Creator. Pass by the secular scholars, the philologists, scientists, historians, economists, and their kind. But what of the men whose special calling it is to search out and proclaim the sacred revelation, whose profession is the Church?

Of all places in the land the clergy are most in evidence here. From bishops in their aprons and deans in their gaiters, from monks in their black garb, to tutors who announce their consecration by wearing a soiled white rag about the collar and young theologues who mortify the flesh by long walks—in all ranks and from all parts of the country, priests are parading the streets. I meet them, and scrutinize their faces with insatiable curiosity. If many of them have found God or known His peace, it is a secret not revealed to me; yet I boast to myself the power of reading the human countenance, and think I am not deceived. Some of

the faces are strangely dull and empty; some are rubicund with the juice of the grape; some show the long pinch of unaccepted poverty; some are childish and innocent; some are marked by cunning or arrogance; some are thoroughly worldly, it may be with the world's wisdom; some, the more ascetic, are blanched by an inward haunting fear. I write not in satire; perhaps not in charity. I do not ask too much; I do not demand always the beauty of holiness. I do not require *ut facie ad faciem videamus, quamdiu per speculum et in aenigmate videamus Dominum*; nor that in that vision the man of God should be transported from glory to glory. Yet withal, if there were any lively communion of the souls of the clergy with the divinity they preach and at whose altar they serve, would not such contact leave a sign, a hint? "Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant," "And in thy light shall we see light,"—these are the words they pronounce day by day; and for the reflection of that light in the eye so illuminated I look in vain.

Of all arguments against religion the faces of the professional custodians of the faith,

with rare exceptions, are to me the most disconcerting—more troubling than the vacuity of most of their sermons. Nevertheless, I should like to see Oxford still more under the domination of the priest. He has made it; the city is his. However it may be with his own soul, he is the custodian of the ancient tradition of the spirit; he is the only security we have against the complete invasion of a devastating materialism.

• III •

To me Newman is almost Oxford, the very *genius loci*. His presence haunts the place; I can see him moving with his long swift strides through the lanes about Iffley and Littlemore; the quadrangle of Oriel for his sake is forever a hallowed spot, and I envy the fellows of that college his portraits on the walls of their Common and Smoking Rooms. If ever an Englishman was absorbed in the quest, it was he; like St. Augustine he could say that he knew only two things, God and his own soul. His, perhaps, was the most religious spirit of the past century; yet how stands it with him?

It was just a hundred years ago this day, as I reckon, that he came up to Oxford to be entered at Trinity. And, as often, I take down the volumes of his life, and turn over the pages, and scan his face as it was in youth and maturity and old age. And this is what I see. Instead of growing in grace and strength and peace, his features show what I can only call a steady deterioration. The end is almost terrible, so plainly written on the old man's countenance are the marks of anxiety and strain and a kind of pathetic fear. The shadows of defeat have fallen upon him and gathered very deep. Why is it so? It was not merely or principally, I think, the vexations he underwent from the false-tongued Manning and from other zealous Ultramontanes. No, not that. Possibly there was, with all his sweeping powers, some flaw of character that kept him from the full fruition of his faith. I recall the beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; surely his heart was pure, and he must have seen. But it is also said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Can it be that he failed here, that his great soul never, never, at least until too late, learned the lesson of humility?

One thinks of his restless eagerness to dominate the world with his own religious experience, to force other men to feel as he had felt in the growth and alterations of his faith. In that he displayed, it may be, only the spiritual egotism that has so often made great reformers and missionaries of the saints; but with Newman the reaction was too quick and versatile and assertive. So, possibly, it was that he beheld God, yet missed the peace of heaven.

That is my guess; but I would not be positive. For withal the suspicion will arise that it was through no personal fault or peculiar failure that his ancient eyes seem to be veiled with sorrow, but through his very inability to compromise with the flesh, from the very intensity and sincerity of his desire to draw near to God. What if such a passionate pursuit is doomed in the nature of things to disappointment, and the secret recess in which He abides cannot be penetrated, nor the curtain lifted? There is another saying: "Blessed are they which believe, yet have not seen." It should seem to mean: Seek, yet hope not to find! Knock, yet expect not the door to be opened! Was Newman the signal victim of that tragedy of the religious life?

The end of it all might seem to be the conclusion of *Vanity Fair*: "Which of us is happy in the world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?—Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out."

Has all the talk of the saints about drawing near to God been vanity, ending in vexation of spirit? Is the sacred name so constantly on the lips of men, though it be but in jest or blasphemy, merely the chatter of empty minds echoing the grand illusion of the few who believed that the word had a meaning, and who lost the present world without gaining another? Is the oft-quoted saying of Augustine, that there is no rest for the soul until it has found God, a mockery? For there is no God, or, if there be, He is hidden from our search in clouds and thick darkness. It is hard to believe that human life, bitter though it be, has laboured under so black and vast a deception.

Perhaps, in looking for tokens of God's presence, I have regarded too much the faces of those who, more or less, have sought for Him in my own way. Perhaps, instead of de-

manding signs of intellectual illumination, it would be better to consider the silent strength of those humbler souls who have walked in the path of duty and submission, and have had for their reward not the defeat of a spiritual pride but the comfort of an unreasoning hope. I have known one, very dear to me, who in the passage from this life, when the faculties were dulled and the conventional restraints broken, revealed in unconscious babble the secret of a ruling passion unguessed before. That soul must have known, or thought it knew, God.

Once when John Inglesant was in perplexity as to his way, he talked with Father de Cressy and this was what he heard: Forsake the effort to understand God by thinking or to feel His presence in the aesthetic sense of beauty; put away your books and your musical instruments, and come with me. I will give you charge over the little children of the poor and ignorant to teach them. Your life will be austere and at first barren; but by and by you will acquire a great joy, and a light will shine upon you of which now you have no conception, and you shall know in fact that of which

the books of the learned can give you only the name.

Was the monk right, and are we, who call ourselves scholars and philosophers, like Mr. Shorthouse's hero, mere dilettantes of the spirit? Is that the meaning of the Psalmist?—"Lord, I am not high-minded; . . . I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me."

• V •

What do men, my colleagues in particular, see in my own face? I do not know, nor do I very much care. But I do know what goes on behind that mask and behind the veil of conventional manners. The whole current of my thoughts has set in one direction; all my being has become absorbed in the quest of God, and a realization of that spirit-world of which He is the Lord and Master. I suspect my friends, even the most intimate, are not aware of this; I even hope they are not, though the hope may spring from *mauvaise bonte*.

In a way I have come about a great circle, and my end is close to where I began; for I was

born, so to speak, a theologian, and my first literary work was a sermon, printed, without my knowledge, at the tender age of eight. Then in my youth, by a fatal mischance, I fell under the sway of German romanticism; I sucked folly even out of Goethe. The thoughts of God were supplanted by a morbid introspection and the practice of worship gave way to indulgence in a self-commiserating egotism. Naturally I was lonely and unhappy; but the more wretched I grew, the more assured I became that my isolation was the sign of a grand mission; somehow my very despair was to be the saviour of myself and of mankind. Under that malign spell I composed lyrics and tragedies and, at the last, a huge epic, in which I myself figured as the Wandering Jew, whose curse began with Cain's murder of Abel and was renewed at his contemptuous rejection of Christ on the way to the cross. I forget now in what manner the solution of the curse came about and how my hero was converted into the protagonist of the human race. Fortunately those ebullitions of a frenzied imagination went into the flames.

Then came a reaction into hard rationalism and materialism. A thick note-book was filled

with the project of a New Philosophy which should prove once for all that the world and men are the product of a fatalistic Law of Chance and Probability. I was to be the new Democritus, and to soar where he stumbled. That too went by the way of fire; and, treading backward at times of meditation in the path of my past follies and ambitions, I wonder how much or little of originality there was in that portentous scheme. Perhaps it is as well that I do not know.

What saved me from moral and emotional paralysis in this pseudo-philosophy was, I think, a deep-seated interest in humanity. I could not reason myself into believing that men are only machines; I could not smother in logic the sense of mystery that broods upon the world, nor find any place in the network of blind chance and fate for the human will. What is the nature of this thing we call life, this irrational power which by its own initiative expands into endless activities, and finally creates for itself a conscious soul of suffering and joy? And so, disappointed in metaphysics, I gave myself for years to the curious pursuit of literature as the spontaneous ex-

pression of the *élan vital*—and that long before this phrase was popularized by Bergson.

I wish I had kept a record of the volumes of biography and letters that I read at that period; their number must have been prodigious. And all the while I was led on by the hope that in some autobiography or in some more artificial revelation of the human heart, I should surprise the secret of existence and learn how it can be made a thing beautiful and complete and precious in itself, with no reference to supramundane values, with no philosophy beyond that of the moving present. What troubled me most in this pursuit was the fact that those who began their course with brave cheer and high confidence in the satisfactions of success lost their courage so surely as the years gathered upon them. Almost invariably in the correspondence of writers and scholars and men of affairs the last letters are filled with open or ill-concealed despondency.

I still seek in that way, but with waning, sadly waning, expectation; even curiosity grows fainter. Those were my critical years, and gave the stamp to my reputation, such as it is, among my fellows. Unfortunately I was

too much addicted to literature to be accepted by the philosophers, and too fond of interpreting art by an ethical criterion to find favour among the literary. And by an odd mischance I, whose life has been a passage through storms of emotion, am regarded as a cold and heartless intellectual.

• VI •

I see now that through all the changes of belief and interest the old flame flickered within me, the hidden fire of religion which was kindled in my soul at birth, and will still be burning when my heart is too dull to feel any heat. It flared up again when my curiosity waned, and at first tormented me with a vast uneasiness. If life is an end in itself, then why do all singular lives conclude in a confession of futility? If these earthly forms are all, then why the ever-present sense of evanescence? Is illusion the final word, and beyond the illusion nothing? Then began a passionate search to discover the eternal verities behind the veil—the realm of Ideas which Plato taught, and in which my soul could move, some day if not now, in liberated joy. I can say simply and without

reservation that to this goal I attained, and that I shall end my days a conscious, as I was born, an unconscious, Platonist. The visible world of things has contracted into comparative insignificance save as a symbol of that which is unseen; the Ideal world has become the vivid reality upon which all my deeper emotions are centred. I have no valid doubt, only at whiles the impediments of a sluggish brain.

But here I could not rest. Is that realm of Ideas a cold vacuum of inanimate images? Shall the disembodied soul that finds itself there be as the prince in the fairy tale, who strayed into the enchanted grove and palace of the sleeping beauty? The thought of that lifeless immobility shot through my joy with a kind of benumbing dread. I knew that what I still needed was God. If He were there, it would be, indeed now was, well with my soul in that mysterious life beyond the veil.

• VII •

Of all our seasons I love best the weeks of mid-winter. Summer indeed brings the glory of

gardens, but it suggests the impertinences of youth; and it brings also troops of inquisitive trippers. And marvellous as the play of sunlight may be on the towers and spires and walls, I am fonder of the gray mists, when sky and stones are of one colour and blend together in soft harmony. There is bad weather, with wet winds and muddy roads and threats of rheumatism; walking often becomes a pestilential task. But as for exercise, a little more added to the discomfort of living by the sweat of our brows keeps us wholesomely in mind of the primeval curse; and the compensations are sweet. At this time of the year I get my work, such as it is, done in the forenoon, and after luncheon my exercise, such as it is; and then for long hours I am free.

Regularly at four my tea is brought up. I draw the curtains, stir up the fire, turn on my reading light, and sink into silent solitary luxury. The scholar's uneasy conscience no longer worries me; I have conned all the books a man needs to know, all that are seriously worth studying, I think, and may rest, or read, as the mood takes me. Indeed, out of that background, in these seasons of repose, when one sits with foot on the fender and pipe

in mouth, Plato acquires a new persuasiveness, Homer a new charm, Sophocles a new depth, Virgil a new mystery, Boswell a new humanity, and Newman a subtler grace; the Psalms take on a new grandeur and the Gospels a diviner pathos. The mechanism of life dissolves away, and the spirit forces become more substantial than the air we breathe. One begins to grow wise in place of learned.

And when the book palls, or the mind breaks through the hedge of attention, there is the wizard eye of the fire amid the coals gazing into mine with a fixed and fascinating stare. Fire is the potent mystagogue. Worship began about the hearth, and shall never forget its origin. Jehovah, it was said, is a consuming fire, and maketh his ministers spirits of flame. The Brahmin, after his most daring flight into abstract mysticism, still adores Agni as did his remote ancestors, and still at dawn greets the orb of the sun with his *Tat savitur varenyam*. Fire is the miraculous force of nature corresponding to *tapas*, the heat of devotion, within the breast. And he who meditates on God before his private hearth is reminded of the fact that fire consumes, as well as comforts and enlightens.

Fire, like wine, is the old man's friend and the young man's enemy.

And so time slips away. Dinner and Common Room bring their kindly interruption, and the evening sets towards midnight. In the deepening silence one hears the hours numbered solemnly by Great Tom or more cheerily from Magdalen Tower, as the wind veers west or east. The coals cover themselves with gray ash—and so to bed.

• VIII •

I ask myself why I keep this journal, what profit there is in the record of thoughts for no eye but the writer's own. I say to myself that hereafter in these pages it will be as if memory had fashioned itself into a friend who has heard my confidences and can respond with sympathy. It is an attempt also to fix the fluid insubstantiality of the spirit; a nightly self-examination such as the Stoics recommended, and a kind of informal prayer. Does the idea occasionally cross my mind that some day, when I have passed beyond shame, my

secret life shall here be discovered and my reticence as it were justified? Hardly that. I am resolved this book shall not survive the hand that holds it.

• IX •

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Yet, after all, is there a God? One thing is certain: despite the innumerable essays of pagan and Christian rationalists reason has never been able to prove to its own satisfaction the existence of a God. And what reason cannot demonstrate, the "fool" has some excuse for rejecting.

I remember—it is one of the burning points of my consciousness—how as a youth I met with Spinoza's attempt to prove the being of God from the definition of "Being" itself; and how night after night I wrestled with that ontological bogey, and could find no escape from it, neither any satisfaction in it. I laid my discomfiture to ignorance; I know now that I was contending not with a particular proposition of Spinoza alone, but with the problem of reason itself.

It is the same with the even more famous ontological argument of Anselm: We can conceive something than which there can be nothing greater; and this something must be *in re* (an objective existing fact) as well as *in intellectu*, because if *in intellectu* alone it would be less than if *in re* also. And this, than which nothing can be greater, is the Infinite, is God.—All which may perhaps prove that such an Infinite must be *conceived* as objectively real, but it does not follow at all that it must actually so exist apart from our conception. That leap from a theorem of reason to objective reality is over a chasm that no metaphysician has ever bridged; between the two lies a gulf into which an endless succession of brave souls have fallen in their desperate desire to reach the further side.

It is still more to the point that this "God" of reason is not God at all, but a name for the abstract sum of things as a unit or for an equally abstract transcendence, neither of which bears any relation to the concrete facts of experience or the urgent demands of life; it is a phantasm begotten by the brain, and as bloodless as a book of logic. Will any man worship that something than which there can be

nothing greater, or will he find joy in the definition of "Being?" Why, the passion of a fool's heart is a truer deity than that. Indeed, it is notable that Anselm, having demonstrated by reason the existence of the idol of the schools, proceeds forthwith to forget it and to write of a divine being which is as different from his idol as my body is from its shadow yonder on the wall. Augustine had done the same thing before him. He too demonstrates, syllogism upon syllogism, the existence of the scholastic Absolute; he creates a vacuum and calls it the Infinite. But in his *Confessions* he cries out passionately for knowledge of a living, very personal Deity. And the existence of this living Deity neither he nor Anselm, neither Plato before them nor Kant after them, has ever proved by reason, nor ever will prove. Long ago Jehovah rebuked Job for his presumption: "Shalt thou by reasoning find out God?"

But then, can reason prove anything; can I prove that the world exists, or that I myself exist? Not by a hair's breadth; I merely assert these things as facts—unless I have addled my brain with metaphysics. The veriest fool of all is he who has not learnt the function of reason,

and thinks it can demonstrate the truth of any ultimate fact. We reason properly from facts, not towards them. The question of a God must be answered by direct experience, or by the sort of inference which is rightly called faith. The office of reason resembles that of the *advocatus diaboli* in the creation of saints: is that direct experience or that inference so strong that it persists against and through all endeavours of reason to prove it illusory?

And so I proceed tranquilly on my quest. I have an advocate within me, the Spirit, and the contest lies between the *Paracletus Dei* and the *Advocatus Diaboli*.

• X •

The absolute, the abstract, and the infinite—absolute unity, abstract being, and infinite actuality—are the most impertinent and pernicious words in the vocabulary of philosophy. Their devastating effect is in exact proportion to their lack of meaning, as a vacuum is the most deadly power in nature. Taken literally, the only absolute infinity is death, and the ancient Gnostics were well advised to name

their ultimate Abstraction “the Abyss.” These conceptions are the sterile eggs of reason never fecundated by sense; and the philosopher who broods them may addle them and his own brain, but will hatch nothing. To attach such epithets to a personal deity, as the unwary Christian theologians often did, and do, under the influence of a perverted metaphysic, is to dally with the sin against the Holy Ghost; for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

I have been struck by the seductive force of these words and by their paralysing consequence—when taken seriously and understandingly—in the life of that perplexed mystic, Amiel. *Il n’y a de repos pour l’esprit que dans l’absolu, pour le sentiment que dans l’infini*, might be taken as the motive behind all his thinking and as the goal of all his emotions, as it has been of others, a few, made drunk by the abstractions of unchecked logic. And, significantly enough, this negative absolute of Amiel becomes to him in the end a monster of cruel oppression: *Je n’ose respirer, il me semble que je suis suspendu à un fil au-dessus de l’abîme insondable des destinées. Est-ce là un tête-à-tête avec l’infini, l’intuition de la grande mort?* The image

is precisely that of the sinner dangled by God over the depths of hell, which that intransigent Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards, used in order to frighten his unrepentant audiences.

The American preacher and the Swiss professor were logical and consistent. As the latter says over and over again, in various terms: The sentiment of the Infinite terrifies, troubles, paralyses. He who has grasped its meaning sees everywhere an unfathomable abyss, a yawning gulf wherever he pierces the surface of things. To live we must veil the abyss, accept the conventional surface of things, cut a house for ourselves in the homeless immensity of the universe. Do not look too fixedly at the secrets of God; you will merely grow dizzy and lose the courage to live. *L'audace est nécessaire.*

I should rather say that the *unum necessarium* was not to sink in stupid prostration before a phantom created by one's own disordered reason. By denying the reality of this abyss I do not, of course, mean that one may compass God in his mind; on the contrary, the only men who have pretended to know God in his essence are the metaphysical heretics who think that the goal of religion is absolute reason, and the mystics who think that it is ab-

solute non-reason. The orthodox theologians may have been betrayed into extravagant language, but the God of their worship, and in reality of their thought, was no logical abstraction; He was a Person, the author of Providence, the hearer of prayer, the Father of the living Christ. The mystery of God may be unfathomable, His power and majesty beyond reckoning, His ways not as our ways; but if He is a God, He is not absolute or infinite.

• XI •

Talk with A. in the Common Room—of all places—over the *Gottmenscbentum* of Solovieff, whose fame has just penetrated Oxford. He tells me that the book has opened a new world of speculation to him, and has shown him the way to reconcile his position in the Church with his profession of philosophy—rather naïve, perhaps, but comprehensible. To me the Russian's work is only another example of the confusion that overtakes the strongest minds as soon as they begin to traffic in the fiat money of metaphysics. I follow him in his religious argument to a certain point, but the

moment he identifies the God of worship with the Absolute and the Unconditioned, he is lost to me in the clouds.

No doubt such words as infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and the like are innocent enough as spontaneous expressions of reverence towards that which is raised far above the level of our understanding; though even so I think them dangerous. No doubt, also, such terms as absolute and unconditioned may have a genuine philosophic meaning, when used to denote that which is absolved from spatial limitations and unconditioned by the mechanical laws of matter; as such they may perhaps be employed properly to designate the Ideal and spiritual realm as distinguished from the physical. But when a thinker goes beyond these bounds to direct our worship and our moral sense to pure abstractions, then I hold that religion has been betrayed by reason and faith has been attenuated to nihilism.

And in fact Solovieff's servitude to reason betrays him into bad reasoning. Watch him closely and you will see how inevitably when he has attained his rational definition of the Absolute by negating all the conditions of

reality, he suddenly, to give his conclusions the colour of religion, slips in a false analogy with the conditioned. It is just so that he reduces God to a pure abstraction, and then proceeds to demonstrate the Trinity by analogies with the human and concrete process of thinking. The best that can be said for such juggling with truth is that St. Augustine long ago used precisely the same sort of arguments, thereby winning for himself the homage of mankind.

No, once begin this game of words, once admit that the infinite-abstract-absolute-one is a real thing or has any meaning, and the horrible pessimism of Amiel, at least for our occidental temperament, is the only logical and consistent conclusion. Finite life becomes pure illusion, and if this vanishes, then the bleak Nothingness reassumes its eternal reign.

• XII •

Baron von Hügel is dead—a scholar, a great advocate of mysticism, almost a saint. I saw him seldom, and his religious path was not for my feet; nevertheless his going impoverishes my world.

It is a striking fact that, besides his solid works, England of recent years has been flooded with a stream of books, large and small, learned and illiterate, sincere and false, dealing with mysticism and the mystics from every point of view. They agree only in the one point, that, so far as I know, the authors of all profess to study the subject from the outside, with no claim to personal experience of the ecstatic trance. This point to me is significant, when I ask myself what it is all about: whether it is a sign that we have really recovered any assurance of spiritual truth.

As I see it, this religiosity is coincident with the collapse of science—that is to say with the explosion of that pseudo-philosophy of science created by Spencer and Darwin and Huxley and Clifford and Buckle and the American Fiske, which tyrannised the later Victorian age, and thought itself the last word of wisdom, the very oracle of Truth. It was fundamentally anti-religious, yet it satisfied its devotees with the ardors of a new dogmatic faith. My roots strike back to that period, and I know it.

And now the mechanistic biologists and the biological psychologists, however loud their

boasting, are shamed before the public by the confusion within their own ranks and by the futility of all their hypotheses. They may go on repeating the old patter; but this is the mere bravado of desperation, and I do not find that many enlightened men of today are deceived by it. But meanwhile the religious craving of the heart by this defalcation has been left with nothing to attach itself to. And all this outbreak of mysticism, as I see it, is thus the bewilderment of prison-impaired souls, newly set free and without a home. Much of it belongs with the morbid curiosity of psychical research and other aberrations to which the unfortunate word *psychê* is attached.

• XIII •

I feel certain that the common need today is more conviction of the positive reality of the otherworld and less talk about God; for a while at least more sermons modelled on the *Phaedo* of Plato and fewer on the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. The old notion of the Ideal or spiritual world as divided into a static and eternal heaven and hell, has been forever dis-

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• XIII •

I feel certain that the common need today is more conviction of the positive reality of the otherworld and less talk about God; for a while at least more sermons modelled on the *Phaedo* of Plato and fewer on the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. The old notion of the Ideal or spiritual world as divided into a static and eternal heaven and hell, has been forever dis-

credited. And that is well; for such a tenet not only outraged every decent instinct of justice we possess, but is contrary to all we know or can guess of the progressive life of the soul. We shall never again believe that a man's future through unending time is determined by his state of mind *in articulo mortis*. But, that belief gone, what new symbolism or dogmas shall fill the void? Unless the soul is to be left a prey to sentimental whims and emasculate aestheticisms and flimsy mysticisms, ending in a revulsion to grosser materialism, something must be imparted to religion to take the place of the old belief in the day of judgment. Men must be made to believe, and to confess with more than lip-service, that there are laws which govern the spirit-world as rigid and exacting as those which control a steam-engine; that even now and here to tamper with those laws, or even to forget them, may bring penalties upon the soul more terrible than physical evils, and that there is a great and ineffable joy in understanding and obedience; that the centre of consciousness is not shattered with the break-up of the body, but goes forth on its mysterious way, either in a life exempt from

matter and space, or subject to these conditions in a manner we cannot now comprehend; that the right and wrong, the ignorance and knowledge, the moral defeats and victories, in this little blaze of light which we call our earthly life may have long-enduring and far-reaching consequences for the pilgrim soul; that there is a possible glory and beauty of the Ideal world by the side of which the common pictures of heaven are pale and vulgar; that the soul may involve itself in a curse from which ages of penitence may be the only way of escape; that withal there is still hope, and through suffering we may learn and be made wise in the long school of eternity.

When something of that sort has been brought home to the conscience of a man, then it may no longer be futile to talk to him of God.

• XIV •

Perhaps, when all is said, the best evidence we have of the being of a God is the old inference from design, refurbished in the light of modern science. At any rate the breakdown of the mechanistic theory, the patent failure

of natural selection and all other anti-teleological formulae to account for the course of evolution, must bring us back to some form of teleology—or leave us nowhere.

Now, as I see it, there are three steps, or stages, in the teleological belief. There is first the rationalistic scheme inherited from Aristotle. The world as a whole is eternally the same, there is no development from species to species in time, but a co-existent scale of species, showing a kind of geometric design; and within the species each individual has a *telos* inherent in itself, a perfection of its own nature to which it may or may not attain. This, by a contradiction of terms corresponding to the inconsistency in the idea itself, might be called a theory of static evolution. It may claim to be teleological, but in fact it leaves the world not much different from a machine; it fails to recognize the despotic power of time in this sphere of change, and gives no inkling of a cosmos growing better or worse by reference to any standard; nor does it adequately explain the curious sense of design that we seem to observe in the adjustment of part to part, of individual to individual.

And the static theory is by necessity also impersonal. Aristotle himself discovered no interested designer behind the design. That is to say his *telos* was in no proper sense a purpose, an end proposed by an agent who adopts means to achieve that end, though without such an implication it is hard to see just what force is left to the term *telos*.

A static, impersonal teleology must be set down as one of the grandiose confusions of human thought.

Then comes the evolutionary teleology of Lamarck, to which, significantly enough, there are some signs of return on the part of the baffled Darwinians. Lamarck broke through the static repose of the Aristotelian system, and, so to speak, thawed its frozen logic. There is now development in time from species to species towards a *telos*, or consummation, and this progress is caused by the conscious, or virtually conscious, purpose of the individuals of a species to attain the fulfilment of some desire. By striving after that end they acquire certain mental and physical traits, and these acquired traits, being inherited, may in time create a new species. Teleology thus becomes veritably evolutionary and personal—though

the personal element is still very imperfectly grasped. The weakness of such a theory, if it stops at this point, is that it remains too atomistic; it fails to account for the interknitted design of the world as a whole, and does not touch the mystery of the cosmos itself as a corporate entity.

And so we are drawn to the third stage, which extends the notion of teleology to the universe as a manifestation of one comprehensive design, and gives to *telos* its full meaning of "purpose." One must admit that our savants have not offered a kindly welcome to this, as it seems to me, inevitable climax to the theory of evolution. Yet it is but a slight modification of the oldest view of all, one over which Plato and St. Paul might join hands, as it is also, I think, the instinctive view of the simple man today who looks out upon the marvellous pattern of the earth and the sky, with a brain unperturbed by false philosophies. At least, so far as my knowledge of science goes (not very far, to be sure, though once it was my favourite study), so far as I can observe the panorama of existence and read the records of time with an impartial eye, all things speak to me of a great and marvellous

plan slowly moving towards accomplishment, of a vast purpose, held in some transcendent mind, but unaccountably marred and thwarted in its execution.

I say unaccountably, yet in fact purpose implies just those two things. It means an end consciously conceived and proposed; and it means obstacles and difficulties in the way of carrying out the proposed end. These are the two factors, as I see it, that distinguish evolution from a mere succession of events or from a static immediacy. And they are the factors that at the last will make teleology only another name for a true theism. For the sense of design in the world as an unfolding purpose implies a person effecting his will through some obscurely resisting medium or material. In simpler language that would be God, but it would be a Creator stripped of those paralyzing terms of a metaphysical theology,—infinite, absolute, omnipotent, and the remainder brood of a licentious reason.

I do not hold this as a proof of the existence of God; there is no proof. If another mind, studying the history of the earth and of humanity, does not receive that unshakable impression of purpose working itself out through

thwarts and hindrances, or if he thinks purpose can be thinned down to an accidental emergence of new events, for him my argument will have no force; it is sufficient for me. It may come from an emotional reaction, from the imagination, or what you will—I care not. It certainly does not spring out of the demands of pure reason; I am afraid it is even fundamentally irrational, for the idea of purpose, as implying a dualism at the bottom of nature, leaves us with an insoluble paradox on our hands.

Curious, is it not, that purpose is the only basis of a reasonable life, yet purpose as an hypothesis of creation leads to an irrational premise. Must we conclude that “reasonable” and “rational” are not convertible terms? that rationalism is unreasonable?

• XV •

Perhaps in the end one has to fall back on the comfortable word faith. Perhaps I cling to the notion of purpose in the world and to the corollary notion of a personal God, because without that the whole sum of things becomes to my

mind horrible beyond endurance. It may be so. Nevertheless I still hold my faith to be reasonable; I maintain that a reasonable interpretation of experience points to a providential Creator. But while affirming this I have to admit that a reasonable conviction is something different from a rational proof, since the conclusions of pure logic demand an absolute monism in which there is no place for purpose or God.

In fact the only thoroughgoing rationalism, the only belief consistent with unchecked logic, is either that which regards the world as an infinite nexus of cause and effect, a pure determinism, a tremendous machine forever grinding on ruthlessly and unconsciously, or that which regards the network of phenomena as an absolute illusion, out of which the liberated personality of a man, being itself a part of that illusion, must dissolve into an ineffable Nirvâna or be absorbed into Brahma, an equally ineffable and inhuman Absolute. A wonderful belief, this of India, and capable of producing saints.

But however logical, materialism is put out of court by the clearest and most insistent facts of experience; it is nothing less than

frigid nonsense. And the *maya* of India, again however logical, seems to me only a half-truth. In one sense the world to any man of insight appears illusory, in so far as it receives the imprint of Ideas imperfectly, mingling with them its own qualities of transience and decay and death; illusion, so taken, is in accord with our moments of deepest reflection and may be called the handmaid of spiritual wisdom. But illusion in the sense that all this manifold display of life, the constant efflorescence of beauty, the noble aspirations and warm affections of the living human heart, are meaningless riddles, phantom bubbles out of vacuity, insubstantial forms and inconsequential events, with no purpose behind them, with no relation to a permanent world of peace and justice and truth, with no characters of love written upon them by a designing mind—illusion in that sense I cannot accept; it also is contradicted by what I see and know, and so faith seems to me more reasonable than rationalism.

For many years the existence of the Ideal world has been as real to me as these visible phenomena of the material world, more real

since in the sphere of Ideas illusion would have no part. Only slowly did the incompetence of such a belief, in itself with no connecting link between the two realms, dawn upon me. It was just the perception of purpose in the evolution of the world, as something above and beyond the static imitation of Ideas, that finally led me to the quest of a dynamic, personal agent at work. That made me a better, as well as a more complete, Platonist, and it set me again on the road to Christianity. Now, the thought of a naked soul journeying forever on and on through inanimate Ideas, with no personal guide or consoler, with no glimpse of the majestic Spirit whose eternal home is there,—the thought of such a journey sends a shudder and a chill through me. I cry out: Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!

That is my faith, and I let it pass as such. Only, in the name of truth, why should a man call himself reasonable unless he knows the limits of reason, or not admitting such limits, goes the full length of the mechanical materialist in the one direction, or of the Brahmin or the Buddhist in the other direction? The pseudo-Platonist, the religious aesthete, the

moral Epicurean, the sentimental Cynic, the worshipping pantheist, the deist who refines his God into a mere name,—for all these spiritual shams the world has never had much respect.

• XVI •

Belief in the resurrection of the body, if rightly understood, strikes me as by no means crude or even unreasonable. That the soul in some stage of its existence should form about itself a new vehicle and instrument of a finer sort than that we now know, invisible to fleshly eyes and capable of activities impossible to these earthly limbs,—there is nothing absurd in the notion, nothing really contradictory to what we learn of the laws of matter.

On the other hand I can in a fashion comprehend what is meant by the existence of an utterly disembodied soul, of a spirit, that is to say, not associated with any vehicle or instrument extended in a limited field of space. In our present life mind and consciousness are in themselves non-spatial, however they manifest their energy through a spatial medium; and I

see nothing impossible, or even very difficult, in the notion of such a consciousness going out of space as through an open door. I can in a manner comprehend this, at least assent to this, though it is a chilly thought to one who, like Charles Lamb, has a secret longing for a heaven where there are huge folios to hug to one's bosom, and friendly hands to clasp.

Perhaps in its long pilgrimage the soul passes through both stages of existence.

On the contrary the talk of timeless being, the conception of eternity as a kind of duration without succession of moments, whether on the lips of *divus Platon* or of some very undivine idealist of our modern academies, conveys to my ear no meaning at all. Mind and consciousness are in their nature temporal, their life, their very corporeal substance, so to speak, is in the succession of past, present, and future; they cannot be dissevered by any analysis of their energy from time, as they can be, in a fashion are, dissociated from space. Timeless eternity is a bubble of language that bursts at the slightest shock of sense, and that has not even a soap-bubble's iridescent beauty. It is nothing to the question that we cannot

give a rational definition of time: I know very well what time is, said Augustine, until some one asks me to define what it is.

• XVII •

Tonight, in my room, in the late stillness when the temptation is strong to open the heart, I said something of my secret quest to X., who has known me from ancient days. And he, with the smile of superior understanding which is the prerogative of a friend, observed that it was always so: we think we have grown and changed our nature, but in the end we fall back into the pit from which we were digged; and I, who for so many years had stood as the champion of reason and critical self-control was slipping into the romanticism of my youth.

Some truth there is in his words, and they would be truer if he had referred to the still earlier years of my childhood unknown to him. But the reproach does not dismay or shame; it warns me to be more careful of my speech. No doubt we do in a way double on our tracks in old age. Certainly I have come a circuit about the moods of scepticism and critical

contention to the more emotional and imaginative strain of my beginning, though in truth, however I may have schooled my heart and however I may have appeared to my little world, that strain never ceased to be dominant in my character. But I cannot believe that my long journey through so many phases of life, my anxious study of so many creeds and anti-creeds, I cannot think that all my experience and discipline have availed nothing, and left me where I started. It is not so; the Deity I seek is not quite the same as the God of my childish faith; He is far removed from the flimsy ghost of transcendentalism to whom my vows went up, though intermittently, in the years of my romantic aberration.

In those yeasty years between childhood and maturity if I knelt at all it was before the image of my own vague desires, as it were a subtle quintessence of the fermentation of the flesh; if I knew any peace it was in moments of nerveless relaxation when self and the world swam together in a kind of vertiginous dream; if I had any philosophy, it was the reaction of a despairing disillusion, a sense of emptiness, out of which the phantasmagoria of life swirls

up like a seething mist only to sink back into eternal vacuity. And God—

Et je vis l'ombre d'un esprit
Qui traçait l'ombre d'un système
Avec l'ombre de l'ombre même.

That is not the God I now seek and, seeking, adore. Faith has been rewon from observation, and is not the mere vapour of a sickly discontent. The Lord of order and righteousness, the Foe of tumult and of sloth, the fighting Jehovah whose arm can slay as well as save,—not by expansion of instinctive desires, nor by sentimental revery, nor by mere letting-go, is His presence felt, but by a certain constriction and bracing-up at the centre of one's being. He is the great creative liberating Spirit, yet His uttered commands are chiefly: Thou shalt not. The longing to know and meet the Master of my soul is deeper than any emotion of my youth; but it is a passion purged and made sane and, I may say, sanctified by humility. I am not ashamed of my new-found religion, though only once have I confessed it frankly—and never again to X., nor perhaps to any other. If I were young, I would preach; now I may trust that some light will fall be-

fore me on my remainder path, but in words I shall say little.

• XVIII •

I admit that at the beginning of my present quest for God, when I was driven to that search by the loneliness of an Ideal world without a Lord, I admit that the first result was a tense anxiety of mind, a peremptory contention of soul, that could not be called peace. My longing for some audible voice out of the infinite silence rose to a pitch of torture. To be satisfied I must see face to face, I must as it were handle and feel—and how should this be? And then, having learned that faith is expectation, that now, as Plato knew and St. Paul declared, we can see only in a glass darkly, then came the healing waters of tranquillity. I am growing more content with the assurance of the fact, willing to wait for its fruition.

• XIX •

One of our sages of Boar's Hill has said: "The days that make me happy make me wise." It

would be more commonplace, as it certainly would be less rhythmical, but it would also perhaps be truer to say: "The days that make me wise make me happy." A little of this wisdom I hoard as a treasure discovered late in life, sought for so long in such blind ways.

Another of our sages, the pride of Pembroke, has avowed that "you cannot have the glory and comfort of religion without its superstition, its magic, its brutal hatreds and slavish fears." I do not claim the glory of religion, but only its comfort; I may be guilty of what he deems superstition (though surely not of *deisidaimonia*), and magic may be merely a petulant word in his mouth for mystery, but brutal hatreds and slavish fears are precisely what the right belief in God banishes.

• XX •

Epiphany. Doctor Y. in the pulpit of St. Mary's. The Vice-Chancellor visibly nodding in his throne. Some of us wishing our scarlet robes less conspicuous so that we too might succumb to the drowsy air of this dull January day. In the pews a pitiful scattering

of the curious and the faithful. The preacher straining to render the occasion solemn and to impart something of religious awe into the scene. It was not so when Newman from this same high pulpit poured out those golden sentences that still, in the printed page, possess the magic of a living faith.

The text from the Epistle for the day: "And no one knoweth the father, save the son and he to whom the son shall reveal him." And I thought as I listened, how vague to the minds of men, even apparently to our learned theologians, is this mystery of the fellowship, this manifold wisdom of God and His eternal purpose, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.

• XXI •

Three things I see manifest in the Incarnation. First, and most important, that God is a person, and such a person as can be revealed by the assumption of humanity. In the light of the Epiphany all the raw conjectures about the absolute and the infinite and the unconditioned vanish away, and God appears before

me simply as one who from the beginning has cherished a purpose, and now brings it to fulfilment. It is as if He would have us retract that hard saying: "Thy ways are not as our ways, and Thy thoughts are not as our thoughts." For He has shown Himself like unto us in all points, sin only excepted. I do not write these words presumptuously. In one sense even Shakespeare's thoughts are not as my thoughts; and who am I to enter into the mind of the Almighty, as He may be named in the hyperbole of reverence? I am not desecrating the majesty of the divine being; neither am I suffering it to expand into inanity, but would point to the straight line of its depth.

If there be any truth in this theory of the Incarnation, then the Church was right in clinging to its formula "of one substance with the Father." For the revelation is radically different from that which could be made by a man who through wisdom and holiness had penetrated into the counsels of heaven, or in a fashion raised himself to be like unto God, and so from the authority of a unique faith spoke as it were the oracles of salvation. It is more even than could have been divulged by a being

of Godlike attributes, a quasi-deity but not simply God. The very pith and marrow of the matter is that the personality, or a personality, of God could walk among men, holding their nature without losing His own nature, suffering the lot of humanity without forfeiting His divine prerogatives.

And I do not know how that Epiphany, which is the corner-stone of the temple of faith, could have occurred, save as it is recorded in the New Testament. Oh, I understand the stupendous paradox of such a belief—who better than I?—of the belief that God, the remote and awful mystery of the world, lived and spoke and endured as this Jesus lived and spoke and endured in the little corner of the earth called Galilee. I recite the creeds, and wonder and doubt. And then I read in the Gospels, and out of some sentence or some act—out of some gesture or some glance of the eye I think it would have been had I been there to see—springs a flash of light, comes a sudden lifting of the curtain, which compels me to say: This thing is of man and more than man.

After all, any true philosophy of God demands the Incarnation.

The second inference I would draw from the Epiphany is that it reveals God not only as a person, with whatever limitations personality implies, but as a person implicated, morally at least, in the consequences of His acts. The Incarnation would be no accident in the divine economy, but part of the eternal hidden purpose, a deliberately accepted condition of imposing order upon chaos. And indeed, apart from the inference to be drawn from the Incarnation, we should be justified in saying that, by the very necessity of His supreme rôle, God could not easily shift from His shoulders the heavy burden of the world's life. In some sense the imperfection of the creature is the weakness of the creator; no amount of sophistical theology can avoid the shuddering conclusion that tracks the causes of evil back to the first Cause of all.

The tougher-minded old Calvinists would say bluntly that God of His own good pleasure, in perfect righteousness and entire omnipotence, willed the fall of man. St. Augustine had sugar-coated the pill by calling the first sin a *felix culpa*, in so much as in the end it led

to God's greater glory and man's, some men's, greater felicity. But I think the Gnostics in this, and despite the grotesque puerilities of their mythology, saw deeper into the possible truth when they raised the tragedy of human life into a cosmic drama wherein the celestial Aeons were involved. Only, the Gnostics were bitten by the same metaphysics as the Christians, and so insisted on positing a God above the Aeons—the Abyss, or the Silence, as they named Him, a pure Abstraction of reason, unconcerned with the troubled facts of existence. Plato, from whom in part they took their ideas, had dealt more wisely with the matter when he attributed the imperfections of the world to the dark unfathomable Necessity, clinging to the very act of creation and obstructing its execution. Only, again, Plato shrunk from bringing his God as demiurge into contact with this obstinate residue of chaos, and so invented his lesser gods to bear the responsibility of the actual faulty work of genesis.

The Epiphany, as it shows God suffering in the world, might have taught the wonderful lesson that in some way and in some measure, He is implicated in the responsibility for that

suffering, that the terrible Necessity clings about His robes as it does about the robes of Plato's fashioning deities. There are indeed hints in two or three of the Greek Fathers that they were so far impressed by the Gnostic drama of the Aeons as to connect Jehovah with the tragic side of creation; but in dread of the consequences of such an admission, they too fled for refuge to the innocuous Absolute.

• XXIII •

And the Epiphany, as it reveals God as a person, implicated in creation, also reveals Him as the redeemer.

If there be any meaning in the tragic end of the Incarnation, if the Cross have any cosmic significance, it must be simply this, that God as the Author of an imperfect world, so through his suffering made himself voluntarily its redeemer. I do not pretend to fathom the mystery of evil and pain, I leave them unexplained as part of the dark Necessity; but we know that in some way evil and involuntary pain are bound together, and we seem to

see that in some way also evil may be redeemed by voluntary suffering; that is the secret of penance, however the sacrament of penance may have been abused by the Church. We know that until now the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together, waiting for its release, and I believe that on Calvary the great *peripeteia* took place. On that day the demands of Necessity were satisfied, the awful responsibility was acknowledged, the debt of creation was paid.

And I take the transaction simply and honestly. Theologians, in the interest of their notion of an absolute divinity, have been fond of distinguishing so as to ascribe the suffering of Christ to his human nature, while holding his divine nature to have been impassive. I cannot follow this distinction. It has, I know, a certain justification in human psychology, in so far as a man may suffer and know himself superior to suffering at one and the same time; but the analogy is misapplied. When in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed in an agony of spirit that the cup might pass from him, I cannot believe that his divine nature was, so to speak, standing by unconcerned, or that his innermost being and personality was

not involved. On the contrary the pathetic significance of that scene for me hangs on the assumption that Christ, as the Son of God, was bowed down under the burden of the world's evil and momentarily shrunk from the cost of redemption. And more than that. I am not frightened by that bogey of orthodox theology called patripassionism. When it was said that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," unless that gift meant suffering for the giver, the words are a mockery to man and a blasphemy against God. I acknowledge myself a patripassionist in so far as I hold that the Father as well as the Son, that God, suffered in the act of the world's salvation.

• XXIV •

I could smile at myself for my arrogance. Here I sit in my chamber, with a few feet of light about me while all beyond stretches an infinity of night, with a few scraps of knowledge gained laboriously from life and books, while of my ignorance I have discovered neither the beginning nor the end,—here I sit gravely

plotting the drama of God and the universe. My friend X. would bid me remember the oft-repeated warning of the Greek sage: Think as a mortal.

But I do. It is just as a mortal man that I can find no key to the Incarnation unless it reveals God as a personality somehow involved in the failure of His own handiwork and somehow redeeming the evil of the world by participating in the penalties of imperfection. This is not to propose a solution of the dark problem *unde malum*, or to define in exact terms the obligation of the Creator towards the creature; it is merely an attempt to bring together two things, two truths for which the evidence appears to me to be sufficient to warrant my faith: (1) the existence of a personal God, (2) the Epiphany, that is to say, the self-manifestation of God in the person of the Christ. To be less than vague here would be folly and vanity.

Only, in the case of man, where evil and imperfection take the character of sin, it seems as if we could go a step further. Here certainly the record, and the response to it in our conscience, would indicate that God voluntarily assumed, so far as that was possible, not only

His own but man's share of responsibility for the wreckage of life. So was the Incarnation for us a work of vicarious atonement. This too I see dimly as part of the terrible Necessity. How else save by this divine condescension should we learn the full meaning of sin and holiness, and see how our deeds reach out in their consequences into the eternal world of the spirit, to the very heart of God? Only so could we be raised to God's point of view as He willingly lowered Himself to ours. In the language of the old theology: God became man in order that man might become God.

Further, I can see that the redemption of man, in so far as it is effected through vicarious suffering, includes an element of forgiveness. I do not believe that the wrong we do can be completely effaced by the act of another; evil is not of so light a nature, and we shall rue its commission in this world and the next, just so surely as the moral law is inexorably just. But in so far as the evil we do as conscious agents becomes something more than mere transgression of a law and takes the character of sin against a person, so far the sense of pardon may bring to the guilty a needed relief and a

large renewal of strength; so far the consequences of our wrong-doing may be mitigated.

And that is what the Incarnation as an act of vicarious atonement may reveal to us: not only that we have erred and broken the law and must pay the penalty, but also that in so doing we have been false to One who has claims upon our obedience, disloyal to One who has counted upon us for aid in the bitter war with Necessity, ungrateful to One who has honoured us with the call to partake in the glorious work of creating order and beauty and joy. Our great Taskmaster we may name Him, but ah, the splendour of the task! And we, slothful servants, unworthy allies, treacherous children, ignoble friends, have wrought confusion and in our little blind egotism have added to the evil of the world, to the misery of ourselves, and—so the tragedy of the Incarnation would tell us—to the burden of the Creator.

• XXV •

This whole dogma of redemption, with its corollaries of pardon and vicarious atonement,

was one of the things that kept me long a rebel against Christianity. My philosophy, or my pride, repudiated the thought of suing for forgiveness and of accepting grace. Redemption also seemed to introduce an unreasonable and sentimental element into religion, relaxing the strict bonds of cause and effect upon which the moral law is founded. I liked to contrast the manner in which both Socrates and Buddha in their last moments bade their disciples depend upon themselves and work out their own salvation. I resented the notion that I was not competent to shape my own destiny, that I was not the captain of my own soul.

Well, age and experience, time that knoweth all things, have brought me to look on life with other eyes. I am impressed by the weakness of men and their dependence on help; I see my own humiliating limitations. I am impressed also by the fact that evil is something greater than our own private concern; I feel it more as a failure to take our part in the cosmic conflict of forces into which we have been called, for which perhaps we were created. Like cowardly recruits we have deserted our place in the ranks. Oh, the battle will be won by him

who said, "I have overcome the world." But what of us in the hour of victory, for how much delay in the coming of that hour may we be held accountable? Surely we have offended and need forgiveness; we are fearful and feeble and need heartening. To fall on our knees and supplicate for that pardon and help seems to me not an abdication of our manhood, but an acknowledgement of our sin, an act of wisdom and of an enlightened will.

No doubt the doctrine of redemption may be abused. The theology of the Reformation, which so magnified divine grace as to destroy human freedom, in this matter is false, as are all absolutes. We cannot escape the ultimate responsibility of choosing our path, and no true man would wish to do so. But to know that we have a great Friend at our side who voluntarily shares with us the consequences of our faults, who will not abandon us though we err seventy times seven, who shows us that the evil we do is a breach of trust between person and person,—to know that is to gain a new insight into life and death, and to be inspired with new hopes; it may mean rebirth from above. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world!

Haec nobis deus otia fecit. Is it a pure coincidence that the fervour of devotion should have flamed up within me just when I laid aside the more strenuous duties of my profession and relapsed into what bears the aspect of idleness? Is the air of quiet needed for the blossoming of the finer flower of faith?

I suspect it is so. I fear that for most men, as the business of life is organized, religion at the best must remain more or less in the background, an affair of Sunday, so to speak, while the weekdays are given to the world. The recurring act of worship even so may have its value; it may unwittingly colour the morality of conduct, soften anxieties, steal like a half-remembered strain of music through unoccupied intervals of time, temper the pleasures of relaxation. Perhaps in the great crises of sorrow and joy it may bring consolation and benediction. If only it shall do that! But can a man follow the high quest of God steadily, while his mind is deeply engaged in secular interests?

Nowhere is the division of labour so necessary as in this matter of religion. Though we

have pretty well forgotten that etymologically "school" means "leisure," nevertheless the very foundation and function of a university is to provide a place where a society of scholars may withdraw for the uninterrupted pursuit of the contemplative life. And Newman was putting the matter at the lowest point when he argued that religion should be the focus and centre of all organized study. So too the priesthood was devised in order that the continuity of worship might be maintained by men relieved from other duties for that purpose. We are apt to overlook the importance and exigencies of such a service, and many a priest today must repeat the complaints of the Platonizing Synesius of Pentapolis, the friend of Hypatia, that he could find no time for devotion since he was appointed to the bishopric.

For the generality of men the participation in things of the spirit must be largely vicarious; without the professional scholar and the ordained priest they would sink into brutish indifference.

As for me, I am no priest, and for most of my life I have been diverted from the highest duty of the scholar; but at least I grow old learning.

• XXVII •

I can hear my precious friend X. snort at my marshalled conjectures. "Do you not see," he would exclaim, "that all your nice alternatives prove only one thing, the complete absurdity of arguing about such topics as liberated souls, whether with or without bodies, non-spatial existence, Ideas, and all the other ragged paraphernalia of a metaphysic you pretend to despise? Why not rest content with the world you know—and which also you pretend to despise?"

And I should reply—if it came to replying—that it would ease me mightily of thought to wallow in the cynic's tub with you, good fellow that you are, if only I could. But there's the rub; I cannot. For that other alternative stares me in the face: either the Hindu's philosophy of absolute illusion, which denies any value to this life, or the perception of plan and purpose in the world. Hindu I am not. And if I discern plan and purpose, how shall I exclude these souls of ours, whatever you make them to be, from the great design? And if I embrace them in the divine economy, how

shall I believe that they are dispersed at death? And if they perdure for a time or for eternity, what vehicle shall I give them in that long journey, and what name shall I bestow upon the objects of their high adventure?

At bottom it is just this: the thought of a conscious personality, yours or mine, caught in a web of outrageous follies and injustices, lured on to extinction through lying dreams and expectations, is too hideous to contemplate. Without God, and the otherworld, and the hope of salvation at the last, without these the universe becomes no sorry jest, as you would courteously deem it, but a purulent cancer on the corpse of nonentity.

I prefer my conjectures.

• XXVIII •

The final answer to my questioning was given in a vision of beauty one perfect day last summer. And this evening I see it all again: my thoughts come back to me as though I were reading them in a book—not very striking or original, as I review them, but the emotion that accompanied them then, and that in a

measure reawakens with them now, was almost as if I had undergone conversion.

Before me lay the outspread valley of the Severn, divided by dark green lines of hedge and grove into squares of lighter green where the corn grew tall, and of golden brown where the new-mown hay was drying in the sun. It made a scene wonderfully calm and sweet and rich; "earth has not anything to show more fair," I said to myself, with better right than the poet looking over London.

And from the present my mind turned backwards to the long ages, the incalculable years, of preparation through which the land had passed before it was made fit for this fruitful cultivation: the fiery convulsions that had tossed up the earth into a sea of mountains, the vast sweep of water that by slow attrition had scooped out this wide channel, and then, contracting, had left it a fertile champaign. Earth and air and fire and water had all contributed their part, blindly and, as it were, reluctantly, to the fashioning of a perfect home for the sons of men.

And I thought also of the secular disciplining of man, which had brought him up from the savage ways of his remote ancestors to

this life of orderly and on the whole happy civilization,—the lust and greed and fear and hate which, like the elements of nature, had played their part in the unfolding order, as they were checked and directed and educated in the slow school of experience.

It was not they who did it—these unwitting elements and these reckless passions; rather, in its own expansive nature and left to its own unchecked action, each of these was an agent of destruction or obstruction. Nor were they, each in itself, capable of learning or of changing their character; they are today what they were in the beginning, and at any moment any one of them, if it break bounds, may in an hour undo the labour of centuries. Conflagration, deluge, famine, tempest, earthquake, war, and slaughter are forever possible and forever threatening.

What, or who, then did that work?

The Epicurean would account it all an accident, the chance product of a myriad senseless atoms, which cling together in hazardous, ephemeral groups as they go hurling forever through the infinite inane. But how sense came out of the senseless, why some groups should endure because fit to endure, in a universe

without law of fitness or right or any other law, in what way chaos generates a cosmos, or why in such a world my heart should thrill to the spectacle of beauty,—these things I have never understood, nor has any man. The theory would be more tenable if by “chance” the Epicurean meant not a cause, but took it only as another name for the final illusion of ignorance; but for illusion and ignorance of that sort the Epicurean has no place in his philosophy.

The Stoic would banish chance and attribute all things to the power of an absolute law. But his answer is as dark to me as the Epicurean’s. I could in a manner comprehend the meaning of such a law in an unchanging world that ran on and on like a machine, doing today precisely what it did yesterday and what it will do tomorrow; but a deterministic law of development, a law which of itself works as if it had a goal in view, is a contradiction in terms. It cannot work to an end without intention, and with intention it ceases to be a mere law.

As for the theory of modern Darwinism, which combines in one system the chance of the Epicurean and the law of the Stoic, thereby confounding old confusions, that is to me

an ugly riddle. I can see no difference whether it clings to the old notion of mere survival, or seeks to hide its fatuity by denying purpose for a blind *élan vital*; we need a Voltaire to *écraser l’infame*.

Beat about as we will, there are only two conclusions in which the philosophic mind can abide. Either, as the Hindu taught, the whole thing, this globe and this life, are utterly without design or purpose, a phantasmagoria in which we can detect no meaning and to which we have no right to apply any interpretation, not even that of chance, a vast illusion of ignorance which merely vanishes into nothing at the touch of knowledge; or else, if we see plan and purpose, then there is no holding back from the inference of the theist. The agnostic will say that this is to fall into anthropomorphism. It is. Design and purpose are already anthropomorphic terms; and to use the term design while refusing to admit a designer, or the term purpose while refusing to admit a person behind the purpose, is the folly of half-heartedness. On the other hand the agnostic who, denying plan and purpose, thinks he can stop short of the illusory

philosophy of the Hindu, is like a man who boasts that he can walk upon water.

As for me, the writing on the face of the earth is too clear to leave place for hesitation. I can read nothing but this: a will and intelligence working out a design, a person striving to accomplish some purpose through slowly yielding difficulties, a God.

Why there should be such difficulties, what is the ultimate nature of these obstacles, why the great plan should unfold laboriously through time, to a far-off event which yet, for all we know, may never be attained, in a word *unde malum*,—only a fool or a metaphysician would presume to answer these questions. So far we seem to see: that the materials, so to speak, of the inanimate and the animate realm, the brute elements and the brutal passions, have in themselves no tendency to restraint and government, but rather a tendency to operate each in its own way to the ruin of harmony and peace and beauty and happiness. That is to say, the materials in which the plan of creation is wrought seem of themselves not to be evil in the sense that they have any malignant purpose or design, but to be evil in the

sense that of themselves they are totally devoid of purpose and only imperfectly amenable to design. This is not to explain the why and wherefore of evil, or to evade its preposterous reality by calling it a pure negation. It is just to leave it there, as Plato left it: the dark Necessity.

• XXIX •

It is one of the recompenses of old age that the tablets of memory multiply with the number of our years. And it is a reward for studying many books, some of which were heavy enough at the time, and for much reflection on the problems of life, though often futile of immediate result, that these tablets of memory are of more varied interest as the record grows longer. Night after night, in the last hour, I sit before the fire thinking back over the past, as if the lapping flames were the active agents of recollection. It is not vanity that holds me, for the record has nothing glorious; it is not egotism, for so little is the ego engaged that I might almost be reading the biography of a stranger.

Chiefly, I like to analyse the causes of my changing philosophy, and to pursue my mind in its course through successive creeds, as one might follow a voyager's tale of many seas and distant lands. Sometimes the periods seem to be so sharply divided that I might count myself not one but half a dozen different persons, or a single soul in a series of strangely varied transmigrations. What bond of continuity, for instance, links an age of flamboyant agnosticism to my present state?

Yet at other times, when I probe more deeply into the history, I wonder whether there is not some deception in this sense of separate, even antagonistic, periods, whether the elements of mind, or moods, or philosophies, or whatever one may call the lords of these successive ages, have not been present throughout, the only alteration being a slight shift of emphasis. In that case the motives of childish faith, romanticism, rationalistic scepticism, critical curiosity, classical taste, Platonism, and this last absorbing quest would have been lying together always in my soul, the constant factors of a motley character; and the passage, true or seeming, from domination to domination would have been mainly

the work of circumstances or of some other power not myself. The suspicion is not wholly flattering to one who likes to boast to himself of spiritual progress.

What gives me pause is the remembrance that along with the rise of militant scepticism, went moods of honest, if intermittent, religious exaltation. It was then, while trying to outdo Democritus, that I plunged into Oriental philology, particularly the Vedânta. And though I never quite succumbed to that insidious spell, I at least saw that there was the home of ecstasy, and that the attempt to impose a system of absolute mysticism upon Christianity, with its belief in a personal Creator borrowed from Judaism, could only lead to impossible inconsistencies. Annihilation in Jehovah is a contradiction in terms.

If one may judge from the end, perhaps the fairest, certainly the kindest, explanation would be to say that I lived through successive distractions, under which, however, ran one strong steady current, often out of sight, but at the last coming broadly to the surface, and, by gathering all other movements into itself, giving, in appearance at least, a unity of direction to them all. I was not, I hope,

without guidance through these wandering interests and adventures. And still I need to repeat what the Psalmist wrote so long ago:

O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me.
For thou wilt light my candle:
The Lord my God maketh my darkness to shine.

• XXX •

Towards the end of life, when scepticism had grown rank in his heart, Father Tyrrell avowed that he could see no grounds for the continued existence of a Church save mysticism and the Eucharist. If he had said the Incarnation and the Eucharist he would have shown himself a better philosopher and a truer prophet. For in the Incarnation we have the basis of all we need of dogma, and in the Eucharist the basis of all we need of formal worship; and the two are not twain, but different aspects of one and the same fact. To me the virtue of the Eucharist cannot be exhausted in a phrase, any more than the scope of the Incarnation can be confined to a formula. But best of all I like to consider it as completing, so to speak, that event by which the

Word became flesh, and as showing on a thousand altars how flesh becomes the Word.

For if creation is a slow and painful redemption of the world of matter for spiritual ends, and if the Incarnation may be regarded as a summary act condensing in one tense moment the will and benevolence of the Creator, with all they cost, and by its appealing force bringing man back to a consciousness of his share in the glorious task; then the Eucharist may be taken as man's response to the appeal and as an enactment in human hands complementary to the divine drama that had its close on Calvary. We are here, already incarnate, soul and body, Word and flesh; it is for us, imitating our great exemplar, so to live in purity and holiness, in faith and charity, that the full man shall be made ready for enjoyment of the Ideal world. And in the invocation of the Holy Ghost upon the elements I see, as it were, an epitome of the religious life, a presentation in foreshortened form of the slow spiritualization of the flesh.

In this sense acceptance of the miracle wrought upon the altar would be the supreme act of faith, confessing, against all appearances, its secret history of matter and Ideas which

no mind can comprehend and no discerning eye can fail to observe.

I do not ask where symbol ends and magic begins in the performance of the sacerdotal rite. I only know that the doctrine of transubstantiation founded on a metaphysical distinction of substance and attributes is untenable, and that, at the other extreme, the Zwinglian doctrine deprives the act of all potency over the imagination and reduces it to a superfluous mummery. There is more of wisdom as well as of modesty in the position of our great Anglican divines who, from the days of Henry VIII to the present, have resolutely refrained from analysing the operation of the sacrament, and have held its efficacy a mystery to be felt and not expounded.

Nor do I personally care to be a partaker in the Communion. I am satisfied, I even prefer, to remain in undisturbed contemplation as a spectator, leaving the active rôle to the priest, whose function and duty it is. So sitting, and watching, and hearing, and meditating, I seem to be brought very close to the heart of the creating and redeeming God, carried for a season into the hidden world of spiritual forces. That pure luxury of worship is not

attainable now in our college chapels; but sometimes in the little church at —, where for centuries past my people have knelt in adoration, sometimes from the clear radiance of morning on the dewy fields coming into the candle-light of the altar, and surrendering myself to the spell of the ancient liturgy, I have known an emotion deeper than tears, stronger than any doubt, beyond all expression in words.

• XXXI •

It is with Providence as with the other last things, a wise man will neither deny it absolutely nor accept it as an absolute. Here again, *medio tutissimus ibis*.

I have been struck by the fact that so many men, otherwise not given to religious views, have a strong conviction that from the beginning some power—their star they call it, or use perhaps a less poetic name—has shaped their ends, bringing them through strange-seeming ways to whatever measure of character and success they have achieved. Certainly in my own case I am aware of such a

look for the good wherever possible. The other palliation lies in the moral uses of adversity, giving to adversity its fullest meaning. An event may be evil in itself, even irremediably evil in certain aspects, yet still the part of courage is to wrest from loss what profit we can, to learn from error whatever lesson it may teach. So acting, we do not gloze the fact nor turn bad into good, but we do, to the measure of the strength within us, overcome evil. And that, I hold, is to act in the way of God in His world.

Thus only, to the end of edification, it may be justifiable to speak loosely of an absolute Providence, and of all things working together for good.

• XXXII •

We are intellectually incompetent and morally responsible; that would appear to be the last lesson of life. I cannot remotely understand why this should be, and no man, who had the world in his hands, would subject the creatures of his will to so fantastic a necessity; nevertheless so it is.

We are born knowing nothing and with much striving we learn but a little; yet all the while we are bound by laws that hearken to no plea of ignorance, and measure out their rewards and punishments with calm indifference. In such a state humility is the virtue of men, and their only defence: to walk humbly with God, never doubting, whatever befall, that His will is good, and that His law is right.

Intellectual incompetence and moral responsibility, humility and pride: it is because Sophocles made this the theme of his *Oedipus* that the play reads not as a tragedy of the Theban King alone, but as the story of the human race.

• XXXIII •

Another birthday. I am not exactly aged, as years number, nor am I aware of any slackening of mental power; yet in a sense I account myself old—in the sense that, having come through many ways in the wanderings of thought, I have reached my goal, and cannot now imagine myself undergoing any radical change of belief. Never before have I had quite this feeling of finality, and I esteem it the

privilege of age and of a certain honest dealing with myself.

And so I sit and wait. I have not been idle; but my work, costly enough to myself, is about done, and will soon be forgotten. Occasionally a cloud darkens my reflections, when I think of vast ambitions that have shrivelled to insignificance in the performance. But I take comfort in remembering that, if I have not moved the world, I have moved myself. Now and then I ask querulously what profit has been gained from so much toilsome learning, which in a few years will vanish away. But will it altogether vanish? Has it not entered into the fibre of my being, and will it not follow whither I go, at least the little kernel of wisdom when the husks are stript off? And at times I am troubled by a longing, purer than ambition, for the gift of persuasion, for "that warning voice," clear and loud enough to rouse the world from its heavy slumber. If I could once before I leave speak out what I have known and felt of the sacred truth in such a manner that others should know and feel! But my voice is dull and confused; and it is hardly a cause for weeping not to be numbered among the prophets.

And so I sit and wait, in patience and serenity—for the end which is no end. I turn over in my mind the various possibilities of the long journey, amusing myself with fancies that I trust are not purely fanciful. Only of this I am assured, that some time and in some way, spirit to spirit, face to face, I shall meet the great Lord of life, and, falling before Him, tell my gratitude for all He has done, and implore pardon for all I have left undone.

For thou wilt not abandon my soul to the grave;
In thy presence is fulness of joy,
At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

• XXXIV •

Κύριος, ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθὸς
ἐξίλασάσθω
ὑπὲρ πάσης καρδίας
κατευθυνούσης τοῦ ἐκζητῆσαι
τὸν Κύριον, τὸν Θεόν
τῶν Πατέρων αὐτοῦ,
καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἀγνείαν
τῶν ἁγίων.