theologian. Dr. Headlam at any rate does not. He leaves impenetrably obscure the relation of his realistic Nazarene to the Trinity. So far as I remember, he never once alludes to the Triune Godhead. He seems to have forgotten its existence. Unfriendly criticism might scent a faint odour of heresy in this silence; but I feel sure that nothing so daring ever entered the Bishop's head.

III

His assertions of the narrow limits within which the mind of Jesus moved are frequent and emphatic. Here are one or two specimens :—

> On any subject on which discovery or advance was possible for the human mind he added nothing to thought. It was not His work or function (p. 126).
>
> There is no reason to think that here [in regard to the literary history of the Old Testament], any more than in any other departments of thought, Jesus had knowledge of the scientific kind differing from that of his own time. He quotes the Pentateuch as the work of Moses, the Psalms as the work of David. He knows nothing of the two or more Isaiahs which delight modern scholars. He knows nothing of scientific exegesis or critical history. These were matters which concerned him as little as the correct motions of the heavenly bodies, or the geological history of the earth (p. 130).
>
> Our Lord's language [in regard to demoniac possession] is completely in accordance with the religious and scientific ideas of His contemporaries. He acts, recognizing fully what both the onlookers and those whom he cured would think. It is obvious that nothing else would have been possible (p. 187).
>
> Our Lord's purpose was to teach mankind religion, not science. He did not come to do away with the necessity of human effort. He came to teach them to fulfil His will, and thus live a life in which they might learn about God's work. So in every direction His science was the science of His own time (p. 188).

These passages afford good examples of our author's apparent inability to take up a definite position and stick to it. The pervading implication is that Jesus could if he

would have enlightened his hearers on astronomy, geology, Biblical criticism, pathology—in short, the whole circle of the sciences—but that, for good and sufficient reasons of his own, he resolutely refrained from doing so. Yet I believe I am right in saying that this is not Dr. Headlam's real opinion. He really believes the mind of Jesus to have been, like his body, that of a normal, natural man, excelling, indeed, in moral and spiritual intuition, and perhaps, at moments, specially inspired from on high, but endowed with no encyclopedic knowledge, and much less with omniscience. "As we can gather from His teaching," says Dr. Headlam, "His mind had been formed (*if we may use the term*) by the earnest and spiritual study of the word of God" (p. 292). Such a passage (and it is one of many) implies a mind like any other, to be nourished, equipped, stimulated, moulded, by ideas from without, not containing in itself, and indeed originating, all ideas whatsoever. Even in this passage, otherwise quite explicit, the parenthesis (italicized by me) shows Dr. Headlam wobbling; but, wobble as he may, he leaves us in little doubt as to his ultimate and effective theory of the matter. He believes that Jesus did not lecture on astronomy, geology, philology, pathology, etc., because he knew nothing about them; and, if this was so, we manifestly require no further reasons for his silence. When the Mayor of the anecdote offered the King two dozen reasons why he was not received with a peal of joy-bells, and gave as the first reason "We have no bells to ring," his Majesty excused him from reciting the other twenty-three.

Dr. Headlam's argument, however, is not wholly wasted. It practically amounts to the assertion that, even if Jesus had possessed scientific knowledge, he would have done wrong to use it—an interesting point of view, which we can more profitably discuss when we have looked a little more closely into our author's attitude towards miracles.

IV

The curative miracles, of course, are as grist to his mill. He has great allies in faith-healing, Lourdes, Christian Science, Monsieur Coué, etc.; though, somewhat ungratefully, he never explicitly cites them. He does not condescend upon details, like the case of the Gadarene swine; and he quotes without comment the statement of Jesus himself, in his message to John: "The dead are raised." His main point, however, is valid enough—namely, that many of the so-called miracles are now accepted by every one as falling well within the order of nature. The real interest arises when we come to the substantial feats of thaumaturgy—the water changed into wine, the walking on the sea, the feeding of the multitude, etc., etc. What has Dr. Headlam to say about these?

He has much to say, and yet says very little. It is impossible to pin him down to a clear affirmation or denial. As to the feeding of the five thousand, he "ventures to suggest that, exercising a certain amount of suspense of judgment, we should refuse to rule out the story on *a priori* grounds, as necessarily unnatural and impossible." "I would suggest also," he goes on, "that we should not be too anxious to adopt a rationalistic explanation of the walking on the waves and the stilling of the storm, and should also exercise a certain suspense of judgment. It is quite easy to devise rationalistic explanations, but they are never really convincing" (p. 278). In the art of "exercising suspense of judgment" Dr. Headlam is a past master. If aeroplanes could hover in the void as he can, without getting anywhere at all, the conquest of the air would be complete. But in dealing with the Temptation in the Wilderness he does, if words mean anything, come definitely down on the side of superhuman power. This is what he writes:—

> He was hungry and fasting, and the devil came and

> tempted Him. He was conscious of powers such as other men had not; why should not He use them for his own advantage?.....Why should He not secure for himself a life free from care and want?.....But there were other ways in which He might use His powers. How was He, with this message that was forming in His mind,[1] to win credence? Would people be likely to believe Him? He must bring some credentials. The prophet had foretold that the Lord would suddenly come to His temple, and the Rabbis had elaborated this so as to create one of the signs of the Messiah. He would appear suddenly on the topmost pinnacle of the temple, and descend among the expectant people. What better way could be conceived of asserting His Messianic claims? (p. 293).

I make bold to say that, if Dr. Headlam does not really believe that Jesus could if he would have wrought all these miracles, he is simply trifling with his readers. Even here, indeed, he hedges. He goes on to say: "No doubt the angels of God would support him in His descent"—as though he were merely speculating on the thoughts that passed through the mind of Jesus, and leaving open the possibility that the miraculous powers which he felt within himself might be illusory. But if Dr. Headlam is relying on this subterfuge, I must withdraw the epithet "ingenuous" applied to his work at the beginning of this paper. Such a refined dialectical subtlety would be distinctly disingenuous. As I believe Dr. Headlam to be honest, though wobbly, I feel justified in attributing to him the view that it was within Jesus' power to appear, out of the blue as it were, on the pinnacle of the temple, and to descend therefrom unscathed. And if this was within his power, why doubt that he could walk on the water, change water into wine, and satisfy five thousand with viands barely sufficient for five? Why "suspend judgment" as to these miracles? Why worry about "rationalistic explanations"?

The truth is, I suggest, that Dr. Headlam, without

[1] Another of the numerous expressions inconsistent with any theory of supernatural knowledge or inspiration.

clearly realizing it, is up against the fundamental absurdity of relying upon trumpery and sporadic miracles as proofs of omnipotence. Why should the Son of God (whether by generation or adoption) go about performing super-conjuring-tricks to the bewilderment of certain gatherings of gaping rustics, when he could easily (for what is difficult to omnipotence?) convince the whole world, by one great miracle, of his Messianic mission, and inaugurate, in the twinkling of an eye, the millennium, the Kingdom of Heaven, the reign of righteousness, or whatever you choose to call it? Supposing there were any sense in the story of the Fall and the consequent necessity for redemption, this would be the only sane course for the Redeemer to pursue. As Jesus manifestly pursued a very different course, with disastrous consequences to the world, his apologists are hard put to it to explain his pitifully ineffectual use of his (inherent or delegated) omnipotence. In other words, the moment reason is applied to the Gospel story, the miracles are seen to be a source, not of strength, but of weakness. The problem of apologetics is no longer to vindicate their credibility, but, without absolutely rejecting them, to explain them away.

V

Dr. Headlam sets gallantly about his task. Though he has the candour to quote twice over (pp. 158, 189) the message of Jesus to John about the raising of the dead, he does not scruple to argue that Jesus did not, and could not, in view of the true nature of his mission, rely upon his miraculous powers as proving its genuineness. "The absence," he writes, "of anything mechanical about the healing power exercised by Jesus harmonizes with all that we learn in other ways about God's dealings with men. Jesus is not a magician and a wonder-worker..... When the Pharisees demanded a sign—that is, some conspicuous, abnormal action so performed that it might be

held a certain proof of His claims—He refused. It is not so that He will win men's hearts. There is to be no mechanical proof" (pp. 191–93). And again, with reference to the Temptation, we read: "Have not most of us had similar dreams of some miracle increasing human well-being, and solving all those anxious problems of life which men have? But one thing was clear to Jesus. All this was absolutely inconsistent with what He knew was His work" (p. 293). He would not "assert His Messianic claims" by materializing on the pinnacle of the temple, because "it would be tempting God. It would mean commending his message in the wrong way." And again we read: "Why should He not fulfil all the highest natural hopes of His countrymen? Why should he not do something startling and wonderful to draw all men to Himself? Why not secure material comfort for Himself and all the world?[1]..... Clearly there was a higher and a lower way, and much temptation to choose the lower way, and that temptation Jesus resists" (p. 294). We are to view him, then, as going to and fro among men, occasionally yielding to the temptation to commit a miracle where he was quite sure that it could not possibly do very much good, but heroically abstaining from "drawing all men to Himself" and "securing material comfort for Himself and all the world."

Accepting for the moment this view of the case, who can refrain from exclaiming: "What a pity! What a

[1] When we are in the region of the inconceivable, the pointing out of absurdities is a literally endless task, since every movement of the mind plunges us into some new pitfall of self-contradiction. I cannot refrain, however, from a passing comment on Dr. Headlam's view that one of the motives which "tempted" Jesus was the desire to secure for himself "material comfort" and "a life free from care and want"—precisely the motive, in fact, which tempts a defaulting solicitor or a fraudulent profiteer. Whether we assume Jesus to be the real or the adoptive Son of God, how ridiculous is the conception that he could possibly be animated by any fear of "want" or desire for "material comfort"! Not more ridiculous, however, than the idea that he could, in any real sense of the word, "suffer" on the cross.

sin! What a tragic and terrible blunder!"? Jesus could have put the world all right, and he deliberately left it all wrong! He felt constrained by a pedantic scruple of method to leave it groaning and travailing under the burden of ignorance, greed, cruelty, all the hideous ills that beset the path of sentient organisms grossly misadapted to their environment. He bequeathed to it, under the guise of religion, a series of insoluble metaphysical riddles, begetting enormities of *odium theologicum* unparalleled in other cults. He denied it a single word of guidance towards that rational ordering of sublunary affairs which we are only now beginning to descry, like a mirage, upon the horizon of the future, and which we shall probably not attain save through unimagined agonies of flesh and soul. Why in heaven's name should any sane man or God, who had it in his power, hesitate for one moment to "draw all men to Himself" and "secure material comfort for all the world"? Because (Dr. Headlam replies) the mission of Jesus was spiritual, not material—with the tacit implication that the material is necessarily a foe to the spiritual. But what unspeakable nonsense! Is the world more spiritual, from the Christian point of view, because about two-thirds of it are, to this day, untouched by Christianity, and because, even in nominally Christian countries, millions upon millions are so sunk in penury, squalor, ignorance, and grinding toil as to be incapable of anything that can reasonably be called a spiritual life? Does spirituality find its most congenial atmosphere in the slums? Any honest settlement-worker will tell the Bishop of Gloucester that, if it flowers there at all, it is a sort of miraculous growth, made possible only by strenuous and expensive fertilization from without. Can any sane man doubt that a fair modicum of material well-being is—except in the rarest of cases—an indispensable preliminary to healthy spiritual development? Even if we admit the spiritual value of asceticism, it must evidently be voluntary, not imposed

by indigence. If Jesus could, by miracle or otherwise, have banished abject poverty (to say nothing of other evils) from the earth, and if he deliberately refrained from doing so, he yielded to a subtle temptation of the Evil One, and betrayed the cause of spirituality.

But, of course, he did nothing of the sort. He was an ignorant enthusiast of a class not uncommon among his people, though doubtless with a touch of genius denied to most. It would be folly to blame him for being, as Dr. Headlam insists, a man of his age and race; but it is still greater folly to pretend that his limitations, whether natural or self-imposed, have been a boon and a blessing to men, or that, by doing no material good to the world, he secured great spiritual advantages and furthered the work of salvation. How happy might it have been for us if only he *had* had a little of the knowledge denied to his time! Would you have had him, says Dr. Headlam, talk "in the scientific and medical language of the present day? It is obvious that to have done so would have conveyed no meaning to any one who heard him" (p. 187). Dr. Headlam forgets that, had he possessed miraculous knowledge, he might have given his hearers miraculous understanding. By what right does even a Bishop set a limit to omnipotence? But supposing that he never had been, or had temporarily ceased to be, the Second Person of the Trinity—supposing that only limited power and knowledge had been miraculously conferred upon him—he might nevertheless have done enormous good. If he had not power to impart to the multitude the rudiments of physical, chemical, pathological, and economic enlightenment, he might have imparted them to his disciples, and sent them forth, not to sow the noxious seeds of salvationism, but to lay the firm foundations of science. What a different world it might have been if (for example) the Lord had inspired Peter and Andrew with the idea of paper-making and printing from movable types! Ten to one there would have been no

Dark Ages, the chasm between ancient and modern times would never have yawned, and we should to-day have possessed the whole culture of antiquity. These are crude enough notions, no doubt—who am I that I should suggest miracles to omnipotence? My point is that only a shallow sour-grapes philosophy pretends to rejoice that the teacher of Nazareth did not work miracles, or worked none but futile ones, benefiting only a few scattered individuals. The ignorance of Jesus, his powerlessness for material good, was not his fault, but is distinctly the world's misfortune. Since a strange conjunction of historic circumstances was to give his words such a wide and lasting influence, it is the greatest possible pity that they were not clearer, more enlightened, more helpful words.

VI

"But what about his moral teaching?" it may be asked. "Does not its beauty, its elevation, more than compensate for any lack of practical power for good? If his knowledge was small, was not his wisdom great? What would the world be to-day without the teaching of Christ?" No one can tell what the world would be *without* it, but we all know what the world is *with* it. Have we not heard, through four agonized years, the heavens re-echoing the testimony of shell, bomb, and torpedo to the efficacy of Christ's teaching? Are not our militarists gloating even now over the prospect of the next war, in which the distinction between combatants and non-combatants will be finally repudiated, and whole populations of men, women, and children will be wiped out with poison gas? Not long ago I saw in Martinique the ghastly ruins of St. Pierre, where some forty thousand human beings were destroyed in a few seconds by the flames and fumes of Mont Pelé. "Here," said I to myself, "is a picture in little of the fate Christian civilization has in store, perhaps in a few decades, for London

or Paris, for Bombay, Melbourne, or New York—quite possibly for all five of them." And, war apart, what are we to say of the relations between the classes and the masses, between the white races and brown? What sort of witness do they bear to the benefits conferred upon mankind by the Galilean moralist? It is true that the past five centuries have been marked by astounding progress—material progress—but the teachings of Jesus have had nothing to do with it. He all too effectually ignored what Dr. Headlam calls "material comfort." And now material power threatens to outgrow the control of reason, and, scorning all impotent spirituality, to overwhelm civilization in a cataclysm of havoc. This is not rhetoric, but perfectly sober prognostication.

Dr. Headlam does not fail to supply us with the key to the inefficacy of the Christian ethic. He writes:—

> Throughout the teaching of Jesus there is an element of paradox, and it might seem of exaggeration. Sometimes His commands seem mutually contradictory. But if they sometimes seem impossible in practice, that is no reason why they should not be true as ideals.....Commands such as these cannot be fulfilled literally now, but if society were constituted as it ought to be it would be easy to fulfil them. If the will of God prevailed absolutely, then the full and literal fulfilment of these rules would be normal. Our conduct is necessarily conditioned by the state of society (p. 227).

In other words, Jesus preached an idealistic and impracticable morality, suited to no form of human life that ever existed on earth. That is very true; and it is equally true that in so doing he did the world an enormous disservice. What can be worse for a nation or for a race than to be brought up in superstitious reverence for an ideal of conduct which can never be realized? Teach people that they are "miserable sinners," and prove it by demanding of them an impossible, and sometimes immoral, morality, and the necessary result will be that they will go on cheerfully sinning, and

despise in their hearts the virtue to which they do lip-homage once a week. It is by insisting on bringing morality down from heaven or from Galilee, and seeking its sanction in "the will of God" instead of the well-being of man, that the Christian Church has through all these centuries proved itself so impotent to enforce "the will of God," or to constitute society "as it ought to be." Dr. Headlam speaks with mild scorn (p. 82) of "the highest point which a sober and somewhat utilitarian morality may attain." Verily the benefits of a non-utilitarian morality are writ large upon the face of the world of to-day. The German march through Belgium and devastation of France may probably be taken as marking the highest point it has attained as yet. But it will doubtless do better next time.

MR. HAVELOCK ELLIS ON MYSTICISM AND SCIENCE

THERE are in England to-day few more powerful or better-furnished minds than that of Mr. Havelock Ellis. The range of his knowledge is immense, and his interpretations of biological, psychological, and historic data are always original and suggestive. I often wonder why his rank among modern thinkers is not more widely recognized—why he seems to be passed over by the distributors of honorary degrees, Nobel prizes, and the like. My present purpose, however, is not to attempt any general estimate of his place in literature or in philosophy, but merely to jot down a few reflections suggested by an essay on "The Art of Religion" in his latest book, *The Dance of Life*. Briefly to forecast the course of my argument, I may say that this paper seems to me to show a certain over-comprehensiveness or over-catholicity of mind, which may, perhaps, account for the comparatively restricted range of Mr. Ellis's influence upon contemporary thought.

For the explanation of his title, *The Dance of Life*, the reader must turn to the book itself; it will be well worth his while to do so. There, too, he will learn the sense in which Mr. Ellis speaks of "The Art of Religion." I am not sure that either phrase is particularly luminous; but perhaps that is because I have not fully grasped the author's intention. The general argument of the essay is to the effect that there is no "hostility between mysticism and science"; that both are "based on fundamental natural instincts"; and that "scientific persons" who "become atrophied on the mystical side" and "mystical persons" who "become atrophied on the scientific side"

are alike lop-sided in their development, mere bunglers in the art of life. Very literally interpreted, this may pass as true. The man of science (if, indeed, he exists) who thinks that the science of to-day has emptied the universe of its mystery may be a most competent specialist, but is an inept thinker. We may go further and say that every advance in science deepens the mystery, so that the structure of the atom is seen to be even more awe-inspiring than the stars in their courses. It is quite probable that science, shackled as it is by the limitations of the human intelligence, can never lead us to the core of existence. If Mr. Ellis means no more than this, he is on safe ground. But if he means that mysticism can carry us further than science, or anything like as far, he is making what I take to be an unwarranted assumption. And if he means that a too exclusive devotion to science is now as detrimental, or has in history wrought as much mischief, as a too exclusive devotion to mysticism, he is, I cannot but think, flying in the face of the evidence. A lop-sided man of science may live in a narrow and gritty world of realities, but a lop-sided mystic lives, or rather wallows, in an opium-dream. Can there be any doubt which excess is the more common, or the more noxious?

Mr. Ellis himself, as we all know, has a most honourable record as a man of science. But such is his determination not to be lop-sided, such is his eagerness (as the French proverb puts it) to understand everything and pardon everything, that he makes this essay read very like a plea for a lop-sided mysticism. He actually goes the length of asserting it to be a disadvantage to set forth in life without a mystical bias; at least I cannot otherwise interpret this remarkable and rather alarming passage:—

> The man who has never wrestled with his early faith, the faith that he was brought up with, and that yet is not truly his own—for no faith is our own that we have not arduously won—has missed not only a moral but an

> intellectual discipline. The absence of that discipline may mark a man for life and render all his work in the world ineffective. He has missed a training in criticism, in analysis, in open-mindedness, in the resolutely impersonal treatment of personal problems, which no other training can compensate. He is, for the most part, condemned to live in a mental jungle where his arm will soon be too feeble to clear away the growths that enclose him and his eyes too weak to find the light.

To me this deliverance is distinctly disquieting, for I am myself one of the unhappy persons who never had a religion to "wrestle with," and who have consequently missed a training in criticism, analysis, open-mindedness, and I know not what else. All unconsciously, I have been "condemned to live in a mental jungle," and Mr. Ellis will perhaps tell me that my unconsciousness of the fact is the clearest proof of it. But I remain unconvinced. I can understand that my poverty of religious experience disqualifies me from entering sympathetically into the fervours of the saints and the ecstasies of the martyrs. It debars me from attaining any profound insight into a doubtless interesting domain of morbid psychology. But not by the utmost effort of humility can I succeed in regarding it as an all-round disadvantage to have brought to the contemplation of life a mind unbemused by myth and unbenumbed by dogma.

My religious history can be very briefly told. I was forced, as a child, to read the Scriptures and memorize choice passages, but was subjected to no definite religious teaching. All the long hours of Bible reading have resulted in nothing but a rather exceptional ignorance of the Bible, which I have often, but ineffectually, striven to correct. My premature familiarity with Biblical language has robbed it of all power to bite upon my mind. Of personal dealings with the Hebrew Deity I have had but one solitary experience. At the age of eight or thereabouts, I struck up an intense friendship with a boy a year or two older, and conceived a burning desire that he should

be allowed to spend a week-end with me at my home. I thought I would try offering up a prayer to this intent, and did so as I walked to school. The prayer was ineffectual the first week, and the next week I fancied it might perhaps meet with more acceptance if I stood still while praying. Even this act of devotion was apparently overlooked by the All-Seeing Eye, and again my hopes were disappointed. I made no third experiment on that or any other occasion. I remember reflecting that I probably lacked the faith which moves mountains; but I also reflected that I really couldn't help it, and that other people seemed to labour under a like disability. The idea of kneeling occurred to me, but I put it aside. I should be glad to think I was inhibited by a sense of human dignity; but perhaps the mud of the roadway helped to stiffen my sinews.

Here end the short and simple annals of my "mysticism." The awakening of thought was the awakening of disbelief. It cost me no struggle, no regret. The only emotion I can recall was the pleasant sense of re-assurance with which I discovered that many of the wise and great were no more Christians than I was. Mill's *Autobiography* was one of the first books that brought this home to me; but it only confirmed what I had been telling myself for years.

"The history of a crudely self-sufficient, arid little soul," it will be said; and indeed there was nothing sentimental, nothing poetic, in my *Weltanschauung*. But at the same time I was far from lacking in realization of the beauty of the world, the wonder of the universe. Dogmatic Atheism was as foreign to my mind as dogmatic Theism. I thought, as I think now, that the question whether there is or is not a God is a perfectly idle one, depending entirely on the definition of the word "God." I realized intensely that the very existence of the world, and of the consciousness which apprehends it, was a stupendous mystery; and if that be Mysticism, I am an inveterate mystic. But, for my part, I call it Rationalism.

Apologizing for this egotistic excursus, I return to Mr. Ellis. So determined is he to establish a harmony between Science and Mysticism that he would fain make "conversion," if not a necessary, at any rate a normal and desirable, incident in the development of the scientific mind. Here again he appeals to his own experience. By the age of sixteen "all vestiges of religious faith had disappeared"; but not till nineteen did he attain, through conversion, to what I suppose he would call spiritual peace. The instrument of his salvation—he uses this word seriously, though not in the present context—was James Hinton's *Life in Nature*. Hinton, he says,

> carried the mechanistic explanation of life even further than was then usual. But.....as he viewed it, the mechanism was not the mechanism of a factory, it was vital, with all the glow and warmth and beauty of life; it was, therefore, something which not only the intellect might accept, but the heart might cling to. The bearing of this conception on my state of mind is obvious. It acted with the swiftness of an electric contact; the dull, aching tension was removed.....and my whole attitude towards the universe was changed. It was no longer an attitude of hostility and dread, but of confidence and love. My self was one with the Not-self, my will one with the universal will. I seemed to walk in the light; my feet scarcely touched the ground; I had entered a new world.
>
> The effect of that swift revolution was permanent..... I was not troubled about the origin of the "soul" or its destiny.....Neither was I troubled about the existence of any superior being or beings.....There was not a single clause in my religious creed, because I held no creed..... I had sacrificed what I held dearest at the call of what seemed to be Truth, and now I was repaid a thousandfold. Henceforth I could face life with confidence and joy, for my heart was at one with the world, and whatever might prove to be in harmony with the world could not but be in harmony with me.

This is an extraordinarily interesting piece of autobiography. In any future collection of "Varieties of Spiritual Experience" it must certainly hold a prominent place. But is the experience normal or typical? Is it

even entirely desirable? Does it place the mind in a sane relation to the facts of life? Is there not something a trifle neurotic about it? Something verging, perhaps, on hallucination? These questions force themselves upon me, and I am not prepared with an offhand answer to them.

Mr. Ellis's account of his experience very naturally sent me to Hinton's book. Only a hasty perusal of it was possible; but that seemed to me sufficient. So far as I could make out, the gist of it lay, not in the author's mechanistic (and often ingenious) exposition of the vital processes, but in his attempt to juggle away what we recognize as evil in existence by insisting that experience tells us only of phenomena, behind and beneath which lies a (consoling and heartening) spiritual reality. It is not easy to put this point clearly and briefly. The following passage from Hinton states it characteristically, if incompletely:—

> The physical world, known to be an appearance (or phenomenon), is the appearance of that spiritual which we also know. It is not the phenomenon of a merely unknown existence therefore, but of that "spiritual" which has a moral nature with which we associate the thoughts of love, of righteousness, of true necessity.

A few pages further on Hinton tells us that "our heart asserts the true; science reveals to us the apparent." These, and such as these, seem to have been the arguments which enabled Mr. Ellis to "face life with confidence and joy, because his heart was at one with the world."

Now, Mr. Ellis is deeply read in philosophy, in which I am the veriest smatterer. But the value, or justification, of life is, after all, a matter on which the plain man is entitled to have his say, for on such a point the philosopher who leaves the plain man wholly unsatisfied philosophizes in vain. Sincerity, then, forces me to confess that I have seldom come across a less satisfactory

argument than this of Hinton's. It leaks at every joint. What is this "spiritual" which we "know"? If we know it, we ought to be able to define it, or at least to suggest its nature; but for such definition or suggestion we look in vain. It is not suggested, but asserted, that it has a "moral" nature; but no shadow of proof of this assertion is offered us. Does it really mean anything—anything that the intelligence, as distinct from the "heart," can grasp? What, indeed, are we to understand by the "heart" in this context? Not, surely, the indefatigable muscle which pumps the blood through our system; and, if not that, what then? Does "heart" in this sense mean anything but an inextricable tangle of sentimental prejudices, a habit of mind which begs all the questions which we are supposed to be rationally discussing? What is the use, in sum, of offering us metaphysical plasters for physical sores? We live in a world of phenomena, not of noumena; and if that world cannot be justified in terms of phenomena, it cannot be justified in terms of terrestrial experience. It is possible to conjecture that our adventures among phenomena are only a necessary training, so to speak, for another life of pure contemplation; but I am not aware of any evidence for this conjecture which would satisfy even an intelligent "heart," and much less an intelligent brain.

Perhaps I dwell too much on Hinton's book. Though it had such a profound and perdurable influence on Mr. Ellis's mind, it does not appear that he attaches great importance to the details of its argumentation. He says he has not read it again, and does not even possess it. What it did was to provide the electric shock which crystallized certain elements held in solution in his mind; and this shock might quite well have come from elsewhere. Let us, then, look a little into the results of this shock, apart from its cause, or rather its occasion.

The first thing that strikes one is the almost complete lack of analogy between this experience and the pheno-

menon usually described as "conversion." That, I take it, falls into two parts: conviction of sin, and assurance of redeeming grace. At all events, it is entirely based on the idea of sin—that cruel superstition which has caused such untold agony in the world. When the will of God, not the well-being of man, is made the basis of morality, and when hideously inhuman pains and penalties are denounced against every breach of an often arbitrary and irrational law, what wonder if a sort of mental convulsion is necessary before the "sinner" can imagine himself reconciled to such an inherently repulsive order of things! Nine times out of ten, I take it, conviction of sin, with its sequel of conversion, is little more than a terrified recognition of the obscure promptings of sex. It is incident to a "mysticism" based on perfect ignorance of, and contempt for, science. In other words, it is a characteristic by-product of Christianity.

How different is the conversion recounted by Mr. Ellis! The sense of exhilaration which he describes did not arise from anything remotely resembling an assurance that he had been washed clean in the blood of Christ. It was not Mr. Ellis who felt himself acquitted; it was rather he who acquitted God, and joyfully bade him leave the court without a stain on his character. Now this sort of reconcilement with God, the "Not-self," the "universal will," or whatever you like to call it, is no doubt a thing we should all be glad to attain; and many "noble paths" of mysticism are reputed to lead to it. But, unfortunately, the mystic is unable to persuade the rationalist that he has really put God on trial, and sincerely marshalled and weighed the evidence for the prosecution. In Mr. Ellis's statement of his own case there is no trace of such a trial. If Hinton's book served as a speech for the defence, then all we can say is that counsel for the prosecution did not know his business. Is it possible to believe that, because the Great War and the Japan earthquake (to name two recent eddies in the flux

of things)—because these happenings were phenomena, not noumena, therefore Mr. Ellis's "heart clings to" that ordering of the universe which begot them? I dare-say I am very dense, but I can see no great difference between this all-forgiving optimism and the abject self-abasement of the cleric who intones his thanks to God for some "crowning mercy" in which a hundred thousand men have died in torments. I wish Mr. Ellis had given us some hint of the philosophic basis for the "confidence and joy" with which, from his nineteenth year, he has "faced life." Perhaps he has explained his position in some writings unknown to me. If so, I wish he had given the references.

As between man and man "tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner" may be an excellent principle; but as between man and God it obviously does not come into play, since "tout comprendre" is, certainly as yet, and probably for ever, impossible to man. Or does Mr. Ellis mean that, in the shock of mystical revealment which proceeded from Hinton's book, he did actually understand, and rationally approve, the divine scheme? If so, Hinton must have been the greatest man that ever lived, and "Life in Nature" ought to be the Bible of the religion of the future. Yet Mr. Ellis, I repeat, seems almost to make light of it. In my sincere endeavours to comprehend the incident, I "find no end, in wandering mazes lost."

On the whole, then, I am inclined, in the Spanish fashion, to place a large mark of interrogation before and after Mr. Ellis's tripartite classification of our spiritual activities, set forth in the following passage:—

> Religion or the desire for the salvation of our souls, "Art" or the desire for beautification, Science or the search for the reasons of things—these conations of the mind, which are really three aspects of the same profound impulse, have been allowed to furrow each its own separate channel, in alienation from the others, and so they have all been impeded in their greater function of fertilizing life.

In the first place—though this is a detail—Mr. Ellis seems to me to belittle both religion and art. It is perfectly true, of course, that in 999 cases out of 1,000 religion *does* mean the absurd and pitiful "desire for the salvation of our souls." But Mr. Ellis obviously uses the phrase, not in the fire-and-brimstone, General Booth sense, but with some wholly different, esoteric intention. Probably, if one could get at it, he has some quite reasonable idea in his mind; but why talk sense in the language of nonsense? "The desire for beautification," again, seems a singularly misleading definition of art. The art which merely "beautifies" is surely a low order of art: great art is that which expresses and interprets. It may do so through forms of ravishing beauty; but that is no essential, inevitable part of its function. These, however, are verbal cavillings. My true objection to the passage is that it belittles science in placing it on a level with religion and art, especially as above defined. Even the definition of science might surely be amended: it is the search, not so much into the "reasons," as into the nature and essence of things; again a verbal cavilling, perhaps, but not quite unimportant. It is to science, or, in plain language, to knowledge, that we must look for "salvation," to speak in Mr. Ellis's language. In spite of its splendid achievements, there is every reason to believe that science, far from having told its whole tale, is only entering upon its higher functions. Art, except in its merely decorative and recreative aspects, is, in fact, contributory to science: not its handmaid, but rather its collaborator. What should we know of the possibilities of life, for instance, without the magical illumination of music, which is probably destined to reveal to us things as yet far "beyond the reaches of our souls"? As for religion, though nothing can be more futile and hopeless than the attempt to reconcile Judæo-Christianity, or any historic creed, with science, yet it is scarcely rash to predict that the religion of the future—not of this century

or the next, but of the immeasurable ages that lie before humanity—will be the consummation and poetic interpretation of man's perfected knowledge. It may not, indeed, "justify the ways of God," but it will at any rate enable us all to do what now the greatest can but doubtfully achieve—"im Ganzen, Wahren, Schönen resolut zu leben." Matthew Arnold defined religion as "morality touched with emotion"; had he said "knowledge touched with emotion," he would have been nearer the mark.

THE SUPERSTITION OF "SIN"

The *Times Literary Supplement* for January 24 [1924] contains a review of Dr. B. A. G. Fuller's *History of Greek Philosophy*, from which I extract the following passage :—

> In a very interesting chapter Dr. Fuller reviews the various forms of Greek religion, and traces their origin, development, and meaning. In this matter there is a striking difference between the Greeks and ourselves. For Christianity the origin and seat of moral evil lies in the will, whereas for the Greek it lay in the intellect. The Greek would have said that we did wrong primarily because we did not know the right. "The very word for sin," says Dr. Fuller, "meant originally 'a missing of the mark.'"

Oh, what a wise people the Greeks were! And what a reversion to barbarism is the whole Judæo-Christian ethic! One may wonder, indeed, whether the words quoted do not slightly flatter the Greeks—whether some tinge of the irrational, theological conception of wrong-doing did not now and then creep into their thinking. In the main, however, there is no doubt that the superstition of "sin" which has darkened the minds of men for twenty centuries, and fatally impeded the evolution of a sane morality, is of Hebraic origin. It is the outcome of that "genius for righteousness" which Matthew Arnold attributed to—of all the people in the world!—the Jews. If we could only get the conception of "sin" eradicated from the minds of men, there would be some chance of bringing the human race, in the course of a few centuries, into unforced and instinctive harmony with its environment.

What is "sin"? What do we specifically mean when we use the word? We mean, according to the Imperial

Dictionary: "The voluntary departure of a moral agent from a known rule of rectitude or duty prescribed by God: any voluntary transgression of the divine law." No one, I fancy, will quarrel with this definition; "sin" means, in brief, disobedience to the will of God. And what has Christendom, from its very inception, meant by "God"? Simply a "magnified and non-natural man," jealous, vengeful, capricious, short-sighted, avid of adulation, resentful of slights, careful and cumbered about arbitrary rules and ceremonies, blankly ignorant of the nature and mechanism of his own universe. What a calamity that the merits and demerits of human conduct should ever have come to be estimated by reference to the will of such a godhead? I don't want to be declamatory, or to use unmeasured terms; but is it anything short of appalling to think of the misery that has been endured by innumerable millions of human beings, not because they had done anything inconsistent with human well-being, but because they had transgressed or neglected some trumpery by-law of the imaginary tyrant in the skies—perhaps because they had merely admitted into their minds some "wicked" thought which they were wholly powerless to exclude? Think of the mothers who believed (as many mothers, I suppose, believe to this day) that a baby's soul went straight to everlasting torment if it had committed the sin of not getting itself christened! Think of the madhouses peopled by gentle souls (of whom William Cowper may be taken as the type) who had been guilty of no sin except that of not having manhood enough to reject and despise a black and savage theo-mythology! Think of the myriads of men and women who have conceived themselves alienated from God and devoted to perdition on account of obscure processes of their organism which they could no more control than they could control a fit of sneezing! Observe that these instances (which might be multiplied indefinitely) do not trench at any point on any rational

problem of conduct. That such problems exist, and are often very complex, I am the last to deny. I do not maintain that we should all have been perfectly wise and virtuous if the conception of "sin" had never come into the world. What I do assert, and profoundly believe, is that that conception has greatly retarded, and rendered immeasurably more painful, the necessary adjustment of man's instincts and impulses to the conditions of his life on earth.

Need I point out that when wrong-doing is regarded as an offence, not against God, but against Man, the whole difficulty of "fixt Fate, free Will, Foreknowledge absolute" falls to the ground? "Sin," as we saw above, is a "voluntary transgression of the divine law"; but the very theology which is most ruthless in the penalties it attaches to sin declares that there can be no "voluntary" transgression; while the theology which clings to "free-will" struggles in vain against man's instinctive tendency to ask: "Who put me here to be tempted?" and "Who made temptation so irresistible?" But when we substitute a rational for a theological ethic, we can reasonably hold a man responsible for any "voluntary" act, defined as an act not due to outward constraint; and the well-being of society justifies the attachment of certain penalties to certain anti-social acts. The only difficulty is to prevent society from letting its irrational instinct of vengeance seduce it into cruelties unjustified by its rational desire for self-protection.

Here I see the irrationalist adversary lying in wait for me. "All this diatribe," he says, "starts from, and leads to, nothing but a base and grovelling Utilitarianism. In a moment we shall hear of our old friend 'The greatest good of the greatest number.'" Yes, that grovelling principle defines (very roughly, I admit, and subject to certain difficulties of interpretation) the aim and end of all morality. So it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. The Ten Commandments were, in their

essence and intention, absolutely utilitarian. They were no bad finger-posts for a primitive people; and seven of them, at any rate, are, roughly speaking, valid even to the present day. The trouble is that the sanction claimed for them is not that of their inherent wisdom and sanity, but that of their provenance from the cloud-capped summit of Mount Sinai. If the idea of sin had been strictly related to breaches of the Commandments, and had not been associated with monstrous pains and penalties, it would have done no particular harm. But definite breaches of the Commandments have had a comparatively small share in begetting the nightmare which has brooded over Christendom. What thousands, what millions of people who had never broken a commandment in their lives, have tortured themselves about "original sin," the incurable naughtiness of the human heart, grace, election, reprobation, and all the other figments of theology! Nor has the evil lain solely or mainly in the actual suffering involved in this abasement before a bugbear. What is finally and utterly deplorable is the deviation of so many good minds from the endeavour to arrive at a rational morality, to establish a just balance between the claims of the individual and the claims of society, and, in short, to come to a reasonable understanding with the nature of things. The obsession of sin has warped into a narrow and morbid egoism unnumbered souls which would otherwise have been capable of sane and enlightened altruism. It has focussed the minds of men on the idea of a difficult and problematic personal "salvation" in another world, and has thus incalculably retarded the "salvation" of this world, which is the great task proposed by the nature of things to the human reason. And if, for "the nature of things," you choose to read "God," I think you will come as near a rational use of that term as the human mind can attain.

It passes as a sort of truism that "nature is non-moral"; the implication being that morality is a distinc-

tion conferred upon man from somewhere outside terrestrial nature—a meteorite picked up on the peak of Sinai. But this is a great error. Nature is not compassionate or sentimental; but she is all the time on the side of those restrictions on rampant egoism which lie at the very root of morality. From a very early stage in the process of evolution, she (the personification is, of course, a mere figure of speech) has awarded the prize of a larger, fuller, more desirable life to those organisms which can, in a reasonable measure, subordinate the claims of the individual to the welfare of the race. In other words, she has declared for altruism as against unlimited egoism. But nature is no irrationalist. The creatures which rushed into an unrestricted and (so to speak) fanatical altruism—such as the ants and bees—have stood arrested for untold ages at their particular stage of mechanical and soulless discipline. The lordship of the earth has been reserved for a species which somehow secreted in its brainpan (along with other valuable gifts) the faculty of Reason—the power of measuring, weighing, comparing, judging, choosing, adapting, and regulating, which, though a thousand influences have made war against it, has patiently led its possessors upwards from bestiality and barbarism to the semi-civilization of the modern world. Again and again it has seemed as though Reason were definitely defeated—drowned beyond recovery in an upsurging flood of primitive and degrading superstition. But the nature of things was fortunately on Reason's side; which practically amounts to saying that Reason had a distinct and efficient survival-value. It is manifest that a reasonably ordered world can support not only a far greater quantity, but a far higher intensity of life, than a world given over either to chaotic savagery or to blind superstitions and cruel fanaticisms. And, explain it how you may, the nature of things exhibits, so to speak, a very decided prejudice in favour of quantity and intensity of life. There

can be no doubt that the world we live in has not only a much larger population but a much vivider and more diffused self-consciousness than the world of any previous period; and it is equally indubitable that this increase in the quantity and quality of life has been mainly, if not entirely, due to the triumphs of Reason over ignorance and obscurantism, which have marked the past three centuries. At several points, indeed, the quantity of life is increasing so rapidly, to the detriment of its quality, that Reason has to step in and (again in the teeth of obscurantism with its shrieks of "sin") point out that, in Bentham's formula, "the greatest number," biologically interpreted, must be conceived as meaning, not the largest possible quantity of life, but the greatest number capable of enjoying the greatest good. Reason must (doubtless by patient "trial and error") teach us to establish a fair balance between quantity and quality.

How enormously would the political problems of Europe be simplified if the idea of sin, with its concomitants of salvationism, priestcraft, and sectarian hatred, could by some miracle be eliminated from the minds of the various populations! Unfortunately, such miracles do not occur, and different interpretations of Hebrew folklore will doubtless for many a year add enormously to the difficulties of the League of Nations, or whatever other device Reason may adopt to stave off the lunacy of war. If superstition, studying "the will of God" instead of the well-being of man, had not been at constant odds with Reason throughout the centuries, war might long ago have been relegated to the limbo of dead insanities. For it springs from the same root as all other crimes: the craving of the human species to feed and breed in an unorganized world where, at any given place and time, the opportunities for the gratification of these instincts are apt to be painfully restricted. Hunger is the real "original sin"; it, and not money, is the root of (almost) all evil. It assumes, no doubt, a thousand

disguises; some of them idealistic, others mere caricatures of its own essential nature; for in a world in which there was no starvation there would be no inordinate and insensate greed. War, robbery, swindling, money-grubbing—the conqueror, the bandit, the sneak-thief, the miser, and the millionaire—are all begotten, directly or remotely, of the pressure of the species upon its means of subsistence. The other great source of difficulty and mal-adjustment is, no doubt, sex. The merely law-made "sins" of sex will vanish with the advance of Reason: they are daily becoming of less account. But sex rivalries and incompatibilities may well be, for many centuries, the last survivals of savagery in an otherwise rationally-adjusted scheme of things. When a world-wide balance is established between production and consumption of the necessaries of life—when crimes of cupidity have vanished from a social system in which no one need fear to have less, or crave to have more, than his fair share of its material satisfactions—when it is fully and finally recognized that the legal relations of the sexes are not to be controlled for all time by the *obiter dicta* of a Galilean revivalist—it is likely enough that sex-insanity and sex-violence will still, from time to time, ruffle the smooth surface of life, and that crime will still rear its head in the form of the *crime passionel*. But even in the mal-adjusted world of to-day, crime would be much easier to deal with if it were not complicated with the idea of sin. Once let it be clearly recognized that there is no supernatural test of good and evil—that wrong-doing is, in its essence, an encroachment by the individual upon the rights of his fellows—and we may reasonably look for a far rapider development of the social conscience than is possible to-day. The experience of centuries has shown that theological reprobation—even the fear of Hell—is a pitiably feeble deterrent from wrong-doing. If we want to root out crime, we must show, at least, an earnest will to organize any given society for the good of

all its members, and then bring home to each member, by all direct and indirect educative influences, the fact that the social order is something which, even for his own sake, he ought not wilfully and perversely to shatter. There is no such thing as crime against God; for manifestly—if, and in so far as, there is a God—he is an accessory before the fact. But crime against man—against the well-being of the social organism—is palpable and easily demonstrable. It is only the manifest imperfection of the existing social order that disguises from many people their interest in its maintenance and amendment, and tempts them to adopt towards it an attitude of anarchic enmity.

What is true of the relation of the individual to his own social unit is equally and even more obviously true of the relation of states to the world-unit, the world-society, to which, willy-nilly, they belong. They cannot as yet realize the solidarity of their interests; nor, indeed, is the world so organized as to make that recognition easy. All men of intelligence and goodwill are striving to promote an organization which shall attest and vindicate this community of interest; and supernaturalism, far from lending them aid, is, I repeat, a lion in their path.

Before closing these desultory reflections, I should like to point out an often overlooked but far from negligible evil consequent upon the superstition of sin. For men of a certain type, the word possesses a morbid fascination, or, as they themselves would put it, a glamour. The most characteristic and unfailing symptom of decadence in modern literature—English, French, or German—is a glorying in, and gloating over, the idea of sin. The word is used as a sort of honorific mask for what in plain English is called vice. Intemperance, incontinence, uncleanness, are idealized and magnified as "splendid sins," "scarlet sins," "flowers of sin," and I know not what else. Men of the histrionic temperament love to play at

defying God and outraging his commandments, well knowing all the time that God pays no heed to their antics. But this play-acting has the effect of partially disguising from themselves the fact that they are degrading their manhood and forming a plague-spot upon society.

"Man is the measure of all things." Conduct which makes for man's well-being, in the widest sense of the word, is moral, and conduct which does the reverse is immoral. There is no other test of good and evil; and the word "sin," with its implied appeal to supernatural standards, darkens counsel, confuses issues, and is a weapon in the hands of priestcraft and reaction.

SIR OLIVER LODGE AND GENESIS

As my present purpose is to remonstrate with Sir Oliver Lodge regarding one of his recent utterances, I wish to begin by expressing my profound respect for his character. He is a man of serene courage and limpid sincerity. His services to science, narrowly so-called, I am totally incompetent to estimate; but it is manifest that he is passionately devoted to science in the largest sense of the word—to wit, the Discovery of Truth. I utterly dissociate myself from the bad philosophy and worse manners of men who see in his so-called Spiritualism nothing but a theme for denunciation and scoffing. I am not a Spiritualist. I am far from being satisfied with the hypothesis regarding the origin of supernormal phenomena which apparently satisfies Sir Oliver Lodge. But that a great number of the alleged phenomena are real, and that they point to the existence of an immense unexplored margin to our everyday experience, I am satisfied beyond peradventure. I am not speaking of "physical phenomena"—"ectoplasm," "materializations," "spirit photographs," and so forth. Of these I know nothing, and I am fully aware of the manifold possibilities of fraud and illusion. What I know beyond all doubt is that certain persons possess the power of arriving at knowledge without the intervention of any of the senses. Where the knowledge comes from nobody can say. Sir Oliver Lodge believes that part of it, at any rate, comes from disembodied spirits; and, having formed that belief, he stands to it in the face of ridicule and obloquy, like the honourable man he is. Some of us, on the other hand, see in most of the facts no satisfactory evidence of survival after death, but rather of a power possessed by certain "mediums" of plunging

into the very depths of the subconscious minds of living people, and extracting therefrom miscellaneous fragments of knowledge—often of the most trivial description—which are then dramatized in the medium's brain by a process not at all dissimilar from the dream dramatization so familiar to all of us. I am far from saying that this hypothesis is adequate; but it seems to cover some of the facts, and may be capable of indefinite extension. All I assert is the genuineness of a great number of the facts, and the evidence they afford of powers in the human mind wholly unrecognized by scientific orthodoxy. I further declare that Sir Oliver Lodge has proved, rather than impaired, his claim to rank as a great man of science by yielding to evidence in regard to the facts, and endeavouring earnestly, even if erroneously, to account for them.

One other word before I pass to my immediate subject. It is only fair to Sir Oliver and those who believe with him to recognize that the a priori arguments by which they are constantly met have no logical validity. We are told, for instance, that the glimpses they offer us of another life are profoundly unsatisfactory and even repellent—"add a new terror to death" is the stereotyped formula. The Spiritualists' answer is that communication is extremely difficult and imperfect, that messages come through in garbled forms, and so forth. I suggest that these pleas, even if valid in point of fact, do injustice to the strength of their position. They ought to ask by what right it is assumed that another life (supposing it to exist) will satisfy our tastes, desires, expectations? Were we consulted as to the characteristics and conditions of this life? Does it satisfy either our reason or our aspirations? Many of us—most of us—contrive to accustom ourselves to it, and settle down to a sort of grumbling content. But to many of the finest spirits it has proved an unendurable torture, and to the vast majority it is at best a doubtful boon. Nor is there any real weight in the a priori difficulty of conceiving life dissociated from

matter as we know it. Consider for a moment the position of those who take their stand on this argument. What account do they give of their own existence? They tell us that, unimaginable ages ago, the universe—or let us say the solar system—was an immeasurable ocean of incandescent matter. Whence it came, how it arose, they know not: they simply make this astounding postulate. Then, little by little, the nebular mass disintegrated into certain vortices: the nuclei gradually cooled and consolidated into rotating spheroids; on one of these spheroids portions of lifeless, inorganic matter somehow organized themselves, became sentient, became conscious, became intelligent; until in the fullness of time, from the primal expanse of shapeless, seething incandescence, there has developed the brain of Plato and of Newton, the eye of Rembrandt, the hand of Michael Angelo, the imagination of Shakespeare, the passion of Beethoven. What could be more repugnant to reason, more starkly inconceivable, than this account of the origin of life? Yet, because we have daily experience of life *associated with matter*, and because there is a certain amount of evidence for certain stages of the alleged evolutionary process, we accept it as a trifle less incredible than any of the other "Stories of Creation." What right have we, then, when Sir Oliver Lodge offers us evidence of life *dissociated from matter*, to reject it a priori as impossible and absurd? It is no whit more impossible and absurd than the fundamental assumptions of the men who jeer at him and his co-opinionists. The superior prestige of these assumptions arises from habit, not from reason; and the one thing absolutely unreasonable is the rejection of evidence without examination. Having examined some of the alleged facts, I declare a certain number of them to be indisputably genuine, and not to be explained away by any facile assumption of trickery and credulity. Sir Oliver's interpretation of them is another matter; but to reject the facts on the ground that they are unpalatable and disturb-

ing to our established beliefs is, I submit, unscientific, unphilosophical, and short-sighted in the extreme. Science will never get rid of the "Spiritualist" thorn in its side until it has sifted fact from delusion and found a place for the facts in its system of things.

So much premised, I turn to my particular purpose, which is to ask Sir Oliver Lodge respectfully, though a little reproachfully, why he should devote himself so assiduously to attempts to reconcile Science with Christianity—knowledge with ignorance? In a recent address he declares that "the account given by science of the coming of man" differs only "superficially" from the "poetic account" given in "the inspired poem at the beginning of the Book of Genesis." How can he possibly defend such a flagrant misuse of language? We shall hear next that *Jack and the Beanstalk* differs only superficially from *The Origin of Species*, the doctrine of evolution being poetically adumbrated in the burgeoning of the magic beans. And, very earnestly indeed, I beg Sir Oliver to ask himself whether he really means what he says when he talks of "the *inspired* poem at the beginning of the Book of Genesis"? When he says "inspired," does he mean "inspired by God"? If he does not, he is disingenuously playing with words, for he knows very well that this is the sense in which he will be understood by the vast majority of readers. As he is certainly incapable of such verbal trickery, we are bound to assume that he *does* mean "inspired by God"; and, in that case, the next question is: What does he mean by "God"? Can he mean anything else than the power which possibly originated, and certainly informs and sustains, this stupendous and awful universe, some of the marvels of which his own labours have penetrated and revealed to us? And if this is what he means by God, can he possibly conceive God, some 5,000 years ago, sitting down to tell a grotesque fairy-tale to a particular tribe of barbarians inhabiting a particular region of a particular planet

whirling round a particular sun in a rather obscure corner of the universe? Sir Oliver must know very well—for folklore is a science, no less than physics—that hundreds of savage and barbarous peoples have invented their own cosmogonies without any aid from "inspiration," and that many of these fables so closely resemble that of Genesis as to leave no doubt of their being products of the same mythopœic instinct. Cosmogonies are bred by imagination out of ignorance, and the Hebrew cosmogony shows no sign of any other parentage. It is not even an original invention of that particular tribe. If God inspired it, he inspired some other tribe than his Chosen People—a roundabout method of proceeding. The word "inspired," in short, will not bear a moment's rational examination; and it ill becomes a man of science to use words which either mean nothing or mean something quite different from their obvious purport. If it be alleged that Sir Oliver was not talking as a man of science, but as an expounder of religion, then I can only inquire whether he keeps his science and his religion in water-tight compartments? and what reason he has for supposing that the laws of thought which are absolute in one compartment are negligible in the other? I know that we have had men of vast intellect—Newton, for example, and Faraday—whose reason seemed to be paralysed by the very word "religion." Must we class Sir Oliver Lodge as an example of the same infirmity—a case in the same ward?

His pre-occupation with Christian apologetics is, of course, no new thing. His amazing book, *Man and the Universe*, dates from as far back as 1908. But one always hopes for growth in such a mind as his; and the intervening years have thrown into ever clearer relief the hopeless disproportion between the revelations of science and the "Revelation" of Christianity. I say disproportion, rather than contradiction; for the disproportion, I think, is what can least be argued away. The thousand crying contradictions can always be treated, with a little

sleight of hand, as "poetry," "symbolism," "truths adapted to the primitive intelligence," and so forth and so on. Sir Oliver is as dexterous as any other theologian at this pretty sport. What amazes one is not that he should find a certain amusement in these ingenuities, but that he should apparently be blind to the unspeakable disproportion between the petty little local cult—half folklore and half revivalism—which we call Christianity, and the majestic cosmos which science is gradually disclosing to us. In the preface to *Man and the Universe* he wrote: "Every one living in a period of religious awakening, and aware that human beings are among the effective and conscious agents in a process of evolution, is bound to do what he can towards stimulating a keener sense of the mystery and infinitude of the universe"—a noble sentiment, which I, for my part, heartily endorse. What I cannot imagine is how calling the fable of the rib, the apple, and the serpent "inspired" can "stimulate a keener sense of the infinitude of the universe." It is true, no doubt, that, if it could be proved to absolute demonstration that God wrote the Bible and was the inventor and patentee of Christianity, the *mystery* of the universe would thereby be immeasurably enhanced. It is a conception before which reason staggers and the vaunted intellect of man stands abashed. Well might the poet, in that case, call not only life, but the universe,

> A tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

It is true that Holy Writ has anticipated, in that very useful text about the wisdom of man being foolishness to God, any impertinent objection to an imbecile scheme of things. But if this principle be accepted, why does Sir Oliver Lodge, or any one else, bother about science? The less we know, the less we exercise our reason, the better; for Unreason is enthroned at the very core of being, life is only an incoherent dream, and we can but

piously hope that it may not be continued in our next. In that case *The Hunting of the Snark* would be one of the profoundest parables of human destiny ever written. But presumably it is not in this sense that Sir Oliver would have us understand the phrase "the mystery of the universe." The mystery of which he would quicken our sense must surely be understood as something transcending reason, but not insulting and flouting it; whereas it is utterly repugnant to reason that the Framer and Controller of the universe should seek to interpret it to mankind through an instrument so indescribably ill adapted to the purpose as the Christian religion. The mysteries which science reveals to us are beautiful, terrible, overpowering if you will: they are not merely miracles of absurdity.

Dipping almost at random into *Man and the Universe*, I come upon the following passage:—

> Few are not aware that it is a sign of unbalanced judgment to conclude, on the strength of a few momentous discoveries, that the whole structure of religious belief, built up through the ages by the developing human race from fundamental emotions and instincts and experiences, is unsubstantial and insecure.

One would imagine from this that "religious belief" could be figured as a mighty and harmonious "structure," a majestic temple wherein all mankind had from time immemorial found its spiritual aspirations satisfied, and which some crazy iconoclasts of "unbalanced judgment" were now attempting to undermine. How tragically different are the facts of the case! "Religious belief," if it can be spoken of as a "structure" at all, is a house fiercely divided against itself from the foundations upward. Setting aside mere savage fetishisms (which are nevertheless the religion of millions of men), there are four great religions in the world, each despising and anathematizing all the others; which of these four "structures" does Sir Oliver hold to be "substantial and secure"? The question is merely rhetorical: he is mani-

festly thinking of Christianity, and Christianity alone. He may allege that he also finds broken lights of spiritual truth in all other religions; but I am sure he is not really capable of pretending that when he speaks of "religious belief" he means the hundred-times distilled residuum of identity which may be conjectured rather than proved to lurk in all religions. A man who speaks of "religious belief" must, if he be sincere, have in mind some creed actually held by a considerable number of people; and the creed Sir Oliver has in mind is unquestionably Christianity. Sir Oliver's "religion," then, is held, even at this moment, by a minority of the human race; the non-Christian majority of some nine hundred millions is dismissed as negligible. But is the creed of Christendom itself a harmonious "structure," substantial and secure? Again the question is rhetorical: we know only too well that there has been from the outset no one creed of Christendom; that the history of Christianity has been mainly a record of cruel and abominable wars between jarring creeds, and ruthless persecutions of heresies; that even at the present day religious rancours embitter the political distractions of the world; and that the re-union of Christianity is the idle dream of a few sentimentalists. Is this crazy congeries of antagonistic interpretations of a bundle of old documents a "substantial and secure" foundation on which to base the religion of the future? "Ah, but," says Sir Oliver, "I have gone through the Bible and discovered that it differs 'only superficially' from the interpretation of the universe offered by science." The "religious belief," then, of which he speaks is not the creed of any people, or Church, or sect whatsoever, but is Christianity emended and elucidated by one ingenious brain. Really, really, *is* it worth while? Would it not be a thousand times wiser and better to clear the ground of all the accumulated myths, legends, symbolisms, fanaticisms, sophistries, equivocations, hair-splittings, hallucinations, and fever-

dreams, and on the "substantial and secure" foundation of Knowledge to rear a harmonious and coherent structure with room in it for all mankind?

Some such structure is Sir Oliver's own ideal. He assures us that "the extensive foundation of truth now being laid by scientific workers will ultimately support a gorgeous building of æsthetic feeling and religious faith." I am quite willing to join in this aspiration, with the sole proviso that some non-committal word like "awe" be substituted for "faith," which means, and has always meant, "belief without evidence" or "in contempt of evidence." It does not seem absurdly sanguine to hope that Sir Oliver's "gorgeous building" may be recognizably taking shape in the course of three or four centuries; for Christianity, in spite of the brave show it makes, is visibly tottering. But why, in the name of wonder, should a "scientific worker" like Sir Oliver Lodge insist on erecting the new temple on the chaotic ruins of the old? Why should he labour to include in the extensive foundation of truth as much primeval fantasy and falsehood as possible? Does he really believe that any human being five thousand years hence will be troubling his head about the "inspired" Book of Genesis? And surely the religion of science must be one that shall meet the needs of the whole future of the race —a future limited, no doubt, so far as this planet is concerned, yet in all probability vastly more extensive than the fifty or sixty centuries of the historic past. One cannot but doubt whether Sir Oliver Lodge has really a largely forth-reaching imagination, since, even in professing to herald the religion of Knowledge, he can devote so much of his mental energy to playing about with the shreds and tatters of the religion of Ignorance.

A GOD OF COMPROMISE

When the Almighty, in an idle mood,
  Had casually created Time and Space,
Hatched out the host of heaven—a thriving brood—
  And on the tiniest housed the human race,
"Now for a game of hide-and-seek," said he—
"I'll found the Science of Theology!

"From mortal ken I'll hide myself away
  In extra-spatial night's unplumbed abysm,
Far beyond range of Reason's röntgen ray,
  Of scalpel, microscope, retort, or prism—
And then the sport will be to hear men cry:
'In Heaven's despite, I spy! I spy!! I spy!!!'"

A "CONFERENCE on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship," calling itself "C.O.P.E.C." for short, recently met for the first time at Birmingham. Going straight to the root of matters, it opened its proceedings by "taking as read" the report of a Commission upon "The Nature of God." This is a subject upon which we all long for enlightenment. Wheresoever, from the beginning of time, two or three witch-doctors, medicine-men, priests, prelates, brahmins, bonzes, mullahs, fakirs, shamans, or nonconformist ministers have gathered together, they have instantly formed themselves into a Commission upon the Nature of God. Unanimity, unfortunately, has seldom been attained, except, now and then, by the drastic method of massacring the minority. Most of the Commissions (sometimes known as Councils of the Church) have ended in the formulation of a majority report, or Orthodox Creed, which went forth into the world with several minority reports, or Heresies, yelping, so to speak, at its heels. Some of us, observing these things, have been tempted to envisage theology as a game

of hide-and-seek, in which God, the eternal Hider, invariably baffles the questing posse of Seekers. He has a fairly extensive universe to hide in; and, like the genie of the fairy-tale, he can alternately (or simultaneously) expand into a galaxy, or shrink into an atom. Thus the Seekers are very unfairly handicapped; and spectators of the game have sometimes shrugged their shoulders and said, with Benvolio,

> 'Tis in vain
> To seek him here that means not to be found.

Undeterred, however, by the long series of failures, Commissions continue to assemble, and to hand in their Reports, which, in these Laodicean days, seldom lead to massacres, but are "taken as read" and consigned to upper shelves, visited only, from time to time, by the vacuum cleaner. It is to be feared that the C.O.P.E.C. Report will form no exception to this rule; but before it passes into limbo it merits a brief examination.

The Commission, it may be premised, was eclectically composed; its Chairman was a Professor of Philosophy (sect unmentioned), and it numbered among its members a Bishop, a Canon, one or two other Anglicans, representative Dissenters (including a Quakeress), two Roman Catholics (one of whom, a Jesuit, signed under protest), a Scotch Presbyterian, a lady Mystic, and a Paymaster in the Royal Navy. Thus *Deus absconditus* was, as it were, surrounded at every point of the spiritual compass, and there seemed to be good hope that this time he might not escape. But, alas! as the circle of hunters closed in upon him, their nets were found to contain nothing but a personification of their desires, or rather of those residual elements in their varying conceptions of the divine which remained after the elimination of sectarian differences. The God of C.O.P.E.C. is a God of compromise.

The spirit in which the Commission approached its task is apparent in the very arrangement of its Report. The first chapter is headed "God in Christ," the second "God

and Nature," the third "God and Man." It is obvious—is it not?—that this arrangement begs the whole question. In setting out upon an inquiry into "The Nature of God," the Commission's first step is to assume that, whatever else God may have done, he has chosen to communicate with mankind through an interpreter who is either literally or metaphorically his son—not the man Jesus of Nazareth, but the Christ, the Anointed, the "mashiah" or messiah. On the precise nature of the relationship between God and the Christ the Commission is discreetly reticent. The Virgin Birth is nowhere alluded to. Even the Trinity is masked in adroit definitions, thus: "The Love and Will of God are one, and form together His Holy and Creative Spirit"; and the Church "represents the fellowship of all those in whom is the desire for God, the mind of Christ, and the influence of the Holy Spirit." All this, however, comes later. Our present point is to register the fact that the Commission's first step towards the discovery of God is the assumption of Christ. The Messiah is treated as a self-evident postulate, the pivot on which the whole discussion is to turn. This is much as though one were to prove the beneficent nature of Jupiter by pointing to the familiar circumstance that his son, Apollo, daily illumines the world.

Had the Commission been animated by any sincere desire for the discovery of new truth, or even for the logical vindication of old opinion, it would manifestly have adopted a totally different order of procedure. It would have begun by seeking for "God in Nature," then considering the relations between "God and Man" (which certainly began æons before Jesus of Nazareth was born or thought of), and only when these fundamental topics had been duly discussed would it have proceeded to deal with the chapter or episode in the relations between God and man which treats of the claims of one particular man to be considered as a divinely-appointed Mediator between an offended deity and his sinful creatures. God might,

indeed—and probably would—have eluded even this logical plan of campaign. He is an old hand at baffling the strategy of the finite human intelligence. But even the failure of a well-planned "enveloping movement" might have been instructive; whereas, by throwing logic to the winds at the outset, the Commission deprived itself of all chance of proving anything except the tenacity with which the human mind clings to its emotional illusions.

The true interest of the Report—which, by the way, is quite ably written—begins with the chapter on "God and Nature." The Commission is by no means unconscious of the difficulties which arise when we attempt to identify the tribal God of Jesus (tribal, at least, in his initial conception) with the creator and sustainer of the tremendous universe revealed to us by science. The Report acknowledges the necessity of facing "the vague idea that it is no longer possible for us to live within the same spiritual horizon as Jesus, and to keep his spiritual values." It admits that "to claim that God is our Father and that His characteristic attribute is that of creative love seems incompatible with much that we know of the universe, of the natural world, and of its inhabitants." It poses this question: "Can we, in view of the astronomy and geology, the chemistry and physiology, the anthropology and psychology of to-day, share His (Christ's) optimism and His hope?"[1]—and it confesses "that the question is not quite easy to answer." In these and other passages, our Commissioners show that they are not insensible to the difficulties which beset their path. But are they downhearted? No! Bravely, resolutely, and serenely, they gird up their loins to this thousand-and-first (or rather ten-thousand-and-first) endeavour to justify the ways of

[1] One cannot but remark in passing that the Commission is constantly see-sawing between the man Jesus and the God, or demigod, Christ. Here the conception of him as mere man is obviously in the ascendant; for in no conceivable sense can we attribute "optimism" and "hope" (both of which presuppose uncertainty) to a direct emanation from God and sharer in his counsels.

God to man. With the mien of intrepid explorers, and no doubt honestly esteeming themselves as such, they re-tread the beaten tracks of fallacy and plunge into the ancient slough of self-contradiction.

Jesus himself, they point out, recognized the "non-moral quality" of inanimate nature, and owned that the rain fell impartially upon the just and the unjust.

He saw that if men were to develop it must be under an ordered regime, and accepted the world as calculated to train as well by its seeming ruthlessness as by its generosity the energies and intelligence of mankind. Jesus accepted it, and in fact we can do no other. For though we may be appalled at the consequences of ignorance or tempted to rebellion by the shock of calamity, we cannot conceive a universe in which things were different; if we cannot imagine a worse, at least we cannot imagine a better. A fixed sequence of cause and effect, a reign of law, would seem to be the condition necessary for the evolution and training of character. The alternatives would be the chaos of Bedlam or the cruel comfort of the padded cell. Discipline, the discipline of Nature, is essential to growth.

Were it not for the ten-thousand-and-one examples to the contrary, it might be thought impossible for rational beings to write or read such a passage as this without perceiving that it justifies God by deposing him from the throne of the universe. The plea advanced for him is that he is not a free agent; that, in establishing the material and moral conditions of terrestrial life, he has simply obeyed some ineluctable Necessity, external to himself. The idea is at least as old as the Greeks, who thought of Zeus as being, with all his power, subordinate to Ananké. For aught any one can tell, it may be a true idea. It is quite thinkable that we may owe our existence to a well-meaning but strictly limited Power, indomitably striving to achieve certain ends through the manipulation of a recalcitrant medium which has to be patiently circumvented in obedience to certain Laws or Rules of the Game, invented and imposed by some other larger, and

possibly[1] ultimate, Power. The thinkers who have held this opinion have generally, and plausibly, found in Matter the recalcitrant medium, obstinately adhering to its own laws. Our Commissioners mention that view as "the conviction underlying the Gnostic heresies and the Manichean religion"; and, by implication, they reject it. How is it possible for them not to perceive that it underlies their own argument, which is nothing else than this: that God could achieve his ends only in one way, and is therefore not to be blamed for all the groaning and travail, all the agonies of body and soul, attendant upon that inevitable process? It is true that they do not explicitly designate as Matter the greater God, or the vehicle controlled by the greater God; rather, they wave aside that theory. But we need not dispute about the name to be given to the Power which dictates to God—the God of terrestrial Nature—the conditions under which he must work. The point to be insisted on—the point which the Commissioners, like all other apologists, obstinately ignore—is that they cannot both eat the cake and have it. They cannot ask us to bow down and worship one omnipotent God, the Maker and Ruler of the Universe, and then argue in the next breath that he could not if he would have made the Universe one hair-breadth different from that in which we find ourselves.

The Commissioners certainly cannot be accused of shirking, dissembling, or masking their self-contradiction. They thrust it upon us in its crudest, most violent form. "*We cannot*," they say, "*conceive a universe in which things were different; if we cannot imagine a worse, at least we cannot imagine a better.*" In other words: "God manifestly did his best. It is unfair to accuse him of making a bad job of things, since we cannot point to any other course of action which was open to him." But

[1] I say "possibly" because there is clearly no logical finality in this dualism. When once we begin multiplying Powers, there is no reason why we should ever stop.

if God is omnipotent, unconditioned, unconstrained, there can be no doubt that *every* course of action was open to him—the possibilities were infinite. Whoever denies this postulates some necessity, some Ananké, outside him. And the argument is as false psychologically as it is logically inadmissible. It is a libel upon the universe to say that we cannot imagine a worse one, and gross flattery to say that we cannot imagine a better. The human imagination is not so impotent, so enslaved to the thing that is, as the Commissioners would have us think. Every system of theology which admits rewards and punishments imagines a universe better and worse than this. "But heaven and hell," you say, "are not universes; they are only portions, departments of a universe." We are not talking of what is, or is supposed to be, but of what may be imagined; and it is clearly possible to imagine that the universe might have been all hell—that nothing else might ever have been created. But, putting aside such monstrous fantasies, and concentrating upon the only portion of the universe that directly concerns us, what can be easier than to imagine a world in which the ills that flesh is heir to might have been minimized or abolished? It needed only a slight change in the conditions of nutrition and reproduction to eliminate from life its perils, its agonies, its ferocious egoisms, its temptations to "sin." "But if we had not known evil we should not have appreciated good—that is the law of human nature." And who made that law? If it was God, then it was he who made evil necessary. If it was not God, it was something outside him, something more powerful than he, something conditioning and constraining his actions—in other words, a Super-God. "But, again, to demand a change in 'the conditions of nutrition and reproduction' is to demand a new constitution of matter." And why not? If God is superior to matter, he could have imposed other laws upon it. If matter is superior to

God, then God is not God in the sense demanded by Christian theology, but only one of at least two forces—and possibly many more—that are operative in the universe. If God cannot alter the laws, the sequences, of organic chemistry, then organic chemistry is older and greater than God.

This may seem a very tedious logomachy; but so long as people insist upon talking of the "Fatherhood of God," "the love of God," and all the rest of it, in a world so saturated with painful and preventable evil, they must be called upon to face the cold facts of the case. Apologetic theism, of which the C.O.P.E.C. Report is only the latest manifesto, lives, and has always lived, upon the ignoring of the dilemmas above stated.

Let us, however, do the Commission justice. Some of its members do not ignore the dilemma, but actually admit that if we are to assert the all-goodness of God we must deny his all-powerfulness. The Report deals with this matter somewhat gingerly, yet with sufficient candour :—

> In regard to dualism [it says] the issue is less simple; for it is evident that at certain periods it has in a modified form been accepted by Christians, and the members of the Commission are not in complete agreement about it..... The evidence for the existence of a single and personal power of evil is too strong alike in tradition and experience to be lightly dismissed. None of us would wish to minimize the fact of sin.....or to limit the forces of evil or our individual misuses of choice, or to deny that Jesus and His followers personalized this force under the name of Satan.

We are not told the names of the powerful logicians who saw that, if God was to be acquitted, the Devil must go into the dock. In any case, the majority seem to have held that "the belief in a personal devil as the supermundane rival and opposite to God is at once unsubstantiated by the facts and unnecessary to Christian thought."

The general upshot of the Commission's argument may

be not unfairly stated somewhat as follows: "Christianity is the only great religion which is not antagonistic but sympathetic to the idea of creative evolution"; and the goal of evolution the Commission is "content to define as the creation and development of free personalities capable of glorifying God and enjoying Him for ever." Furthermore, "if the goal is the creation of free volition, the possibility of free development must be inherent from the first in the creative process." In other words, God could not be content with "glorification" and "enjoyment" at the hands of unfree automata, a mere claque; wherefore he introduced pain and evil into the scheme of things in order that man might exercise his free choice, and, if he chose wrongly, might suffer for it. The aim of creation, according to this reading of the matter, is to provide God with an audience worthy of him—an audience capable of appreciating and applauding, with free discrimination, his superb performances.

If the reader holds it incredible that a body of intelligent clerics, and other spiritual experts, should, in the year 1924, arrive at such a naive conclusion, let me quote for his satisfaction one further specimen of the naïveté of which the Commission is capable:—

> It was a Greek Christian of the third century who remarked that if the climate had been uniformly tempered man would never have developed his skill in tailoring and building or his knowledge of the uses of fire; that if there had been no limit to the food supply there would have been no agriculture, no hunting or fishing, no hardihood nor training of body or brain.

This, mark you, is cited as a reflection which does great credit to the Greek Christian of the third century, and is entirely satisfying to our English Christians of the twentieth. Not otherwise may it be argued that if there were no disease there would be no hospitals and no surgeons; if there were no earthquakes there would be no opportunities for international charity; if there were

no war there would be no occasion for the display of the heights of human heroism or the depths of human ferocity. It is a mere truism that "the web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." Unmixed evil —evil which has no compensatory by-product—is almost as rare as unmixed good. But to argue from this that the ills that beset humanity are not ills at all, but simply blessings in disguise, is a monstrous inconsequence. The payment of a five-hundred-pound insurance policy may afford some consolation to a man who has lost both legs in a motor smash; but who can possibly assert that this compensatory by-product converts the calamity into a blessing? And what about the man who is uninsured?

No! the C.O.P.E.C. search-party has succeeded no better than any of its countless predecessors in its quest for an all-good and all-powerful deity. Though they ignore, they cannot elude, the horns of the old dilemma: if he is all-good he cannot be all-powerful; if he is all-powerful he cannot be all-good. And the worst of it is that even the dualist solution implicit in popular Christianity, which makes God an "Invisible King" of strictly limited powers, only throws the difficulty a stage further back; for the real, ultimate God must be the Power which pitted Good and Evil against each other, and gave Good such a slight and slow preponderance. That Power may have up its sleeve a valid defence for its conduct, but no one has yet discovered it; and no one ever will discover it unless he begins his investigation by throwing overboard the self-contradictory jargon of sentimental pietism. The C.O.P.E.C. Commission, far from clearing its mind of cant, merely serves up the old inconsequences, with a mild admixture of modern catchwords, such as "creative evolution."

"PUBLICITY AS AN EVANGELISTIC MEDIUM"

SOME weeks ago, when the idea was first mooted of using Wembley as the springboard for a great united effort to "boost religion," the *Literary Guide* commented on it in terms which were thought by some to savour of flippancy. Now that the idea is no longer a mere vision, but is in process of active realization, the time for levity is past. The congregated "boosters" have been solemnly blessed both by Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral. In the latter edifice Father Ronald Knox spoke as follows:—

> The first thoughts which would come to most people when the suggestion was made to advertise religion would be: How vulgar, how American, how almost blasphemous! But there was no harm in advertising anything—there was no harm in advertising a particular kind of religion—as long as they were sure it came up to sample.

Now, Father Knox is, I believe, the brother of "Evoe," of *Punch*, and is the author of works which are strongly suspected of a humorous tendency. Had there been anything ridiculous in the notion of enlisting the modern science of advertisement in the service of religion, Father Knox might have been trusted to "see the joke." In the face of his assurance from the pulpit that there is no joke in the matter, the veriest scoffer must stand abashed. The subject is one to be treated in all seriousness, and it is hoped that no flicker of a smile will detract from the impressiveness of the following reflections.

Let us at once realize and admit that there is no essential incongruity between the seemingly disparate ideas of religion and advertising. It is true that the word "advertisement," in its present-day sense, is of modern origin (not more than two centuries old) and of purely

secular associations; whereas the origin and the pristine meaning of the word "religion" are alike enveloped in a prehistoric haze. At the first glance, then, it might seem as if religion, in seeking the aid of advertisement, were allying itself with a parvenu, and one, moreover, of questionable antecedents. But this is an entirely superficial view to take. When we come from words to things, we discover that advertisement, though not, indeed, as old as religion, is precisely as old as Christianity. The earlier religions did not, as a rule, advertise. Their policy was rather to discourage customers, to reserve their goods within a narrow and privileged circle, and to impose prohibitive duties (rites of initiation and so forth) upon admission to that circle. But with the coming of Christianity—the only true religion—advertisement became a sacred duty. If I stock a line of goods which is essential to salvation, and for lack of which my fellow creatures stand in imminent peril of the judgment, shall I not do my best to advertise it? Shall I not adjure customers to "beware of imitations," implore them "when they ask for salvation to see that they get it," and warn them on pain of perdition to have nothing to do with opposition establishments? Assuredly the Apostles were the first advertisers. Was it not in virtue of his gifts as an advertiser that Paul was co-opted (or co-opted himself) into their body? It was the success of Christian advertisement among the riff-raff of the great Mediterranean cities that attracted the unfavourable notice of the Roman emperors. But persecution was itself an advertisement, and Nero's living torches secured for the new creed a lurid notoriety. Then, when Christianity had advertised itself into power, its various sects advertised in blood the respective merits of their metaphysical dogmas. At last the Catholic dogma succeeded in impressing upon the public its superiority over its Gnostic, Arian, Manichæan, Donatist, and other competitors, and the Church of Rome became the best-advertised firm in the Western world.

Did it therefore rest upon its laurels? By no manner of means. Every one who knows his Rome must remember the gloomy palace of the "Propaganda Fide," not far from the Piazza di Spagna. It is true that the "Congregatio de propaganda fide," which gave the building its name, was not established till 1622, and that the use of the word "propaganda" as a noun is of still more recent date. But the propagation of the faith was from the first one of the leading activities of the Church; and propagation or propaganda is only the ecclesiastical term for advertisement, just as advertisement is the commercial term for propaganda. What is the function of the poster, the incandescent sign, the flaunting "full-page," and the insidious halfpenny-circular? Simply to propagate the faith in So-and-So's soap, What's-his-name's pills, Blank's baby-food, Dash's beef-tea, and MacThingumbob's whiskey. What is the function of a propagandist campaign, whether conducted by Teutonic knights, by Jesuit missionaries, or by General Booth, William J. Bryan, or Billy Sunday? Simply and solely to advertise the saving properties of the Blood of Christ. The first condition of initial success for a sex-novel, an eleven-thirty revue, a patent medicine, a religion, a super-film, or a hair-curler is that it shall *attract attention*; the first condition of permanent success is that it shall, by tireless iteration, *hold the attention* once attracted. If it "comes on in rubbers" it is lost; if it neglects the duty of insistent tub-thumping it will very soon find itself a "back-number." Some articles, such as sex-novels and super-films, are in their very nature evanescent; they are born and they perish in one glorious burst of advertisement. But patent medicines, religions, and hair-curlers may quite well go on for ever, if only there be no let-up—how the American language imposes itself in this connection!—if, I say, there be no let-up in the supreme duty of propagating the faith. It is not surprising to find a Roman ecclesiastic foremost in declaring *urbi et orbi* that "there

is no harm in advertising a particular religion." This is a truth which his Church has, from of old, "grappled to its soul with hoops of steel." Sometimes, indeed, its propaganda has taken the form of the actual or approximate extermination of believers in another "particular religion." But this method has much to recommend it. What a magnificent thing it would be for the proprietors of (say) John o' Groat's whiskey if they had the power to massacre, burn, or break on the wheel every one so benighted as to express a preference for any other brand!

To the thinking man, indeed, it must seem as though Providence had been at no small pains to single out advertisement as one of the most imperative and sacred duties of religion. It would have been so easy to have dispensed with it altogether! What was to prevent the one true God from announcing Himself to mankind at large in some such positive, impressive, compulsive way as should leave no possible doubt as to his existence and his designs? We are promised a spectacular end to the world, when Christ shall come in his power, surrounded by legions of glittering angels, to demonstrate the truth of His gospel, and hurl into the pit those people who rejected it or who never heard of it. Thereafter, of course, there will be no further need for advertisement. No one advertises the sun at noonday. But why, we cannot but ask, should not Christianity have anticipated this spectacular consummation by a no less spectacular and belief-compelling annunciation? Why should there not have been a first trump, instead of a last trump, to attract universal attention to the good news? Why should the Redeemer have come like a thief in the night to an obscure province of the Roman Empire? Why should He, instead of performing one transcendent and world-shaking miracle, have contented himself with trying the effect upon Galilean rustics of a few slight and inconspicuous essays in thaumaturgy? There can be but one answer to these questions: God deliberately refrained from advertising

Himself, and left to man the duty and the privilege of propagating the true faith. We, in our blindness, may think that an immensity of trouble and suffering would have been saved had the opposite policy been pursued. We may even tell ourselves that life would have been comparatively livable if religious Truth had been made self-evident, self-advertising. But the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. Who can doubt that some stupendously beneficent purpose has been served by leaving the drummers (in a double sense) of contending creeds to beat their drums and cry their wares in the world-market place? It may be that God, the great Evolutionist, was determined to let His religion vindicate itself by the supreme test of the Survival of the Fittest. If that be the design, this Wembley "congregatio de propaganda fide" may indeed mark an epoch. The religions of "the brooding East" (Mohammedanism included) have as yet a large numerical superiority over Christianity. But to the genius of the West we owe the modern science of advertisement, and when it throws itself wholeheartedly into the service of the true faith, who can foresee the results that may ensue? Vishnu and Shiva, the Buddha, Confucius, and Mahound himself (a good propagandist in his time) may very soon have to hide their diminished heads before the rising sun of Advertised Religion.

But if quick returns are to be aimed at, a decision ought at once to be reached as to the particular brand of Christianity which is to be pushed. The pagan world will not know what to think if the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and General Booth each asserts the exclusive efficacy of his own Elixir of Salvation. What is required is "a long boost, a strong boost, and a boost all together." If that can be engineered, at Wembley or elsewhere, the mills of God will be enormously speeded up, and the slow designs of Providence will be manifestly nearing fulfilment. After that, the millennium.