

THE COSMIC
COMMONWEALTH

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LONDON
CONSTABLE & COMPANY LTD.

1920

*The author wishes to thank the Editors of the
"Nineteenth Century and After" and the
"Hibbert Journal" for permission to reprint
articles which he contributed to their respective
periodicals.*

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The Cosmic Commonwealth

CHAPTER I

OUR NEED OF AN IDEAL

THE Great War has revealed to us the hollowness of the materialistic civilization on which we had prided ourselves. The social order which our armies and police forces had maintained is breaking up. In many lands settled government is giving place to anarchy, and the semblance of prosperity to the reality of misery and want. Even in those which are more fortunate the turmoil is great, and there is a growing sense of insecurity and a vague foreboding of disaster. We are being borne hither and thither by swirling cross-currents of hatred, jealousy, greed, ambition and self-will. There are other currents than these—larger, deeper, saner, purer. But in this world-wide crisis the more turbulent currents have risen to the surface ; and human society has become a veritable Maelstrom, strewn with the wreckage of many institutions and traditions, and threatening shipwreck to many more.

No wonder that the idea of social reconstruction is in the forefront of our thoughts. The theme is one which touches all interests, and attracts all classes and all types

of mind. Those who have suffered under the old order of things clamour for a new order. Those who have profited by the old order are beginning to realize that things cannot remain as they were, and that their own tenure of "the good things of life" is, to say the least, insecure. Politicians promise us a better and a happier world. Statesmen are busy with schemes of practical reform. Each clique, each party, each group of enthusiasts or faddists—Trade Unionists, State Socialists, Guild Socialists, Syndicalists, Anarchists, Individualists, Teetotallers, Tariff Reformers, Currency Reformers, Land Reformers—has its own formula for reconstruction. Opinions and proposals are many and various; and such features as they have in common are negative rather than positive. In particular, there are two factors in the great problem which all the builders seem to have agreed to ignore—Education and Religion (the essentials of each, not the externals). Yet to reconstruct society without regard to education is to build without laying foundations; and to reconstruct without regard to religion is to build without a plan.

How can we best repair these vital omissions? Let us begin with religion. Religion controls all things, including education. Without a ground-plan of our proposed edifice we cannot so much as stake out its foundations. When I speak of building without a plan, I am thinking of an architect's plan, not of a speculative builder's. The speculative builder works to a plan, no doubt; but his plan is planless. His aim, in running up a house, is to sell it at a profit as soon as possible, and then forget all about it. The plan, as such, has no interest for him. What does interest him is to get a quick return

for his money. For the architect, on the other hand, if and so far as he is an artist, the plan is everything. His aim, in designing a house, is to realize an ideal—an ideal of comfort, convenience, durability, inward harmony, outward beauty. If our reconstruction of society is to be successful, we must work as architects, not as speculative builders. We must not be content to meet immediate demands, to satisfy conflicting claims, to provide this thing here and that thing there. We must try to embody an ideal in our social structure—a spiritual ideal, a dream of a perfect world.

Now our architectonic ideals are all in the keeping of religion. For what is religion? From one point of view, a struggling science. From another, a struggling art. The subject matter of religion, as a science, is *supreme reality*, the popular name for which is God. When man's vision of supreme reality becomes the object of desire rather than of thought, it transforms itself into his *ultimate ideal*. And to realize ultimate ideals is the function of religion, as an art.

Religion, then, whether we accept or reject it, whether we reckon with it or ignore it, is in command of the whole situation. If, and so far as, our religion is false, our vision of supreme reality will be defective, our ultimate ideal will be inadequate, and the structure of our social life will be badly planned. But the structure will be still worse planned if we do what we are now intent on doing,—if we ignore religion in our attempts at social reconstruction, and think to dispense with its inspiration and guidance. For then we shall be building without a plan,—building as speculative builders, not as architects. And the result of our labour will be an ill-built, inconvenient,

insanitary, perishable structure, not the realization of a high ideal, not an enduring monument of vision and forethought and skill.

That the existing social structure was badly planned, that it embodies an inadequate ideal, is proved by its present collapse. If the ideal which it embodies is inadequate, the architect's vision of supreme reality must have been defective, and the central conceptions of his religion must have been at fault. These considerations point to one momentous conclusion. *The reconstruction of religion must both precede and accompany the reconstruction of society.*

What form will the reconstruction of religion take? We must go back to first principles. We have been the victims of an unworthy conception of God. We have thought of God as the supernatural Creator and therefore as the autocratic Ruler of the Universe. And we have gone on to think of him as the fountain-head of irresponsible authority; as the Overlord of a feudal hierarchy which is secular as well as spiritual; as the guarantor of the "divine rights" of kings and princes—and multi-millionaires; as the arbitrary dispenser of property, power, position, and privilege, and all the other "good things" which the feudal magnates and their modern successors have claimed for themselves and denied to their fellowmen. The social structure which embodied this vision of supreme reality, after having long shown ominous cracks and other signs of decay, is now tumbling to pieces. What course, then, is open to us, if we are to build a better structure, but to revise our conception of God?

CHAPTER II

A WORD TO THE ORTHODOX

WHAT course is open to us, if we are to rebuild society as architects—that is, as artists and idealists—but to revise our conception of God? We have too long thought of God as the autocratic Overlord of the Universe. Has not the time come for us to think of him as the symbol and centre of Cosmic unity, as the Presiding Genius or President (if we are to continue to use the notation of political life) of the Cosmic Commonwealth?

I mean by God what is supremely and ultimately real—what is supreme in man's vision of reality, what is ultimate in man's search for reality. Those whose interpretation of the root-idea of God differs materially from this will do well to read no further, for I shall be using a language which they will not understand.

Those who accept this definition of God, but who still cling to the conception of God which I am asking men to abandon, the conception of an omnipotent autocrat, who governs the world from without instead of directing its vital processes from within, may read this book if they please—indeed it is my earnest desire that they should do so—but I warn them at the outset that they will almost certainly approach the study of it with postu-

lates which I cannot grant, and that it will therefore be very difficult for us to meet on the same platform of thought.

For high thinking is necessarily circular. The conclusions of the thinker are latent in his primary assumptions. If they were not, he would have undermined his own foundations in the course of constructing his so-called system of thought. The outcome of his thought will be a particular conception of life and destiny, which will be the realization in consciousness of a particular way of looking at things, a way which has always been his. And that way of looking at things will have both furnished him with the data for the solution of his problem and determined his whole line of approach.

It is the same, *mutatis mutandis*, with those whose conclusions have been dictated to them by "authority." When their beliefs are called in question, they will bring those beliefs with them, as fundamental assumptions, to the study of the arguments of their critics. The "orthodox" believer, for example, will assume at the outset that the truth of things has been supernaturally communicated by God to man, and therefore that scepticism is the outcome, not of an honest search for truth, but of wilful rebellion against God; and his analysis of the sceptic's arguments will be controlled by this instinctive assumption. It will be difficult for him to realize that the idea of a supernatural revelation is one of the postulates which the sceptic has found cause to reject.

From first to last, then, I, who plead for a revision of our conception of God, and those of my readers who believe that the current or orthodox conception of God has been dictated to us by God himself, will be moving

along different lines of thought. And they will be even less able to enter into my line of thought than I into theirs. For their point of view is familiar to me. From my earliest days I was taught to look at things from it ; and I did so for many years, not as a child only, but also as an adolescent and even as an adult. Before I finally abandoned it I passed through many stages of perplexity and doubt. But because the process of my conversion (or perversion, as they would call it) was slow and painful, the outcome of it, when I had gone through with it, was final. I cannot, by any effort of mind or heart or soul, go back to the orthodox point of view. I have abandoned it for ever. Yet I can understand and sympathize with it as one understands and sympathizes with one's own past life. It is otherwise with those who stand where I once stood, whose faith (as they call it) is still unshaken. They cannot understand my point of view, and their attitude towards it can scarcely fail to be one of indignant protest. Therefore, while I ask them to hear what I have to say, I warn them that it will be easy for them to make nonsense of it ; and if this warning will not deter them, I will ask them to realize, or try to realize, that of the things which they take for granted there are many—and they the most important—which I can no longer grant.

For example, to those who take the orthodox view of revelation, who hold, in all seriousness, that religious faith should be based on "theological information," the suggestion that man should now revise his conception of God may seem to savour of blasphemy. Yet it is in a spirit of reverence that I make it, and out of the depths of my faith in God. For, if we mean by God what is

supremely and ultimately real, then we must regard the Universe (if its being is a life) as the self-revelation of God. And inasmuch as growth is the counterpart of life, we must regard the Universe (if its being is a life) as still in process of development, and must therefore think of Creation and Revelation as alternative names for the same evolutionary movement. It follows that the ever-changing conception which man, in the dawning light of his consciousness, forms of God—the conception which makes and unmakes his “thousand creeds”—is the self-revelation of God to the mind of man; and it follows further that whoever will take the trouble to think, honestly, freely, and adventurously, about God, is an instrument both of God’s gradual unveiling of his essential nature, and of his creative will. And so, when I say that the time has come for us to make a revolutionary change in our conception of God, I mean that a revolutionary change is taking place in the communal life—and therefore in the inward and spiritual life—of man, and that in that change we are witnessing a new phase in the process of God’s creative self-revelation, a phase which we shall help to bring about by becoming conscious of its advent, and which will present itself to our consciousness, if we will keep our minds open and expectant, as a new conception of God.

I need not shrink, then, from asking men to change their conception of God. For, in the first place, I shall be asking them, not to learn of me or any other teacher, but to become aware of a change in their own inner consciousness, which has long been in progress. And, in the second place, if they do change their conception of God, it will not be they who have accomplished so

great a revolution, but “the grace of God which is in them.”

Let us now see what are the leading features of the conception of God which has swayed the hearts and minds of men for so many centuries, and from which, as it seems to me, they are now beginning to turn away.

CHAPTER III

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

I HAVE based my own theory of revelation on the assumption that the being of the Universe is a life. This is my starting point in the adventure of thinking. It is also, as it happens, the goal of my thoughts. Have I not done well, then, to remind myself and my readers that those who exercise themselves in great matters are predestined to move in (logically) vicious circles, and that "where there is no common measure of minds there is no common measure of arguments." What is to me a self-evident truth—that the Universe is a *living whole*—the religion which I am supposed to profess implicitly denies. For the orthodox theory of revelation bases itself on the assumption that the being of the Universe is not a life, or even a process, but a *state*, or at best a succession of states.

Have I misinterpreted the teaching of Christianity? I do not think so. When I use the word "Christianity," I am thinking, not so much of the formularies of the Church or the theories of theologians, as of what the people, the rank and file of the faithful, have made of the religious instruction that they have received and the religious atmosphere that they breathe. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This

is the first sentence in our sacred Scripture. What happened before the beginning we are not told. But it seems to be taken for granted that God dwelt in a *state* of self-centred perfection and glory. Why did he create the Universe? We are not told. Perhaps he felt lonely. Perhaps he wished to see how his handiwork would behave. What we are told is that when he had created the Universe, he placed it, in the person of Man, in a *state* of probation, and that it will remain in that state till the Day of Judgment, when its framework will pass away, and Man, in whose being it centres, will enter into one of two alternative *states*, salvation or perdition, Heaven or Hell. In fine, popular religion, in presenting to us the drama of existence, divides it, not into Acts and sub-Acts but into three States—a state of divine solitude before the first day, a state of probation between the first and the last day,¹ and a state of everlasting salvation (or perdition) after the last day. It is true that the act of Creation (with its predestined sequel, the Fall) comes between the first and the second states, and that the act of Judgment will come between the second and the third states. But the duration of those acts is so brief as to be almost timeless, whereas the first state occupies the whole of “from everlasting,” the third state the whole of “to everlasting,” and the middle state the whole course of time.

¹ The state of probation may be divided into two sub-states—(1) A state of innocence, or potential salvation, with the possibility of perdition through disobedience. This ended with the Fall. (2) A state of wrath, or potential perdition, with the possibility of salvation through obedience. This will last till the Day of Judgment.

It is to this tendency to think statically, rather than dynamically, about the world in which he finds himself, that man owes that conception of God as an omnipotent and irresponsible autocrat which has so long satisfied him, but is now ceasing to respond to his vital needs. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the static view of the Universe and the orthodox conception of God are so intimately related that each may be regarded as being at once the cause and the effect of the other. If this is so, they must both have sprung from the same root. What is that root? Let us try to go back to first principles.

Of systems of philosophy there are many. Of philosophies, of ways of looking at things, there are, in the last resort, only two. There is the philosophy of man's conscious thought. And there is the philosophy of his sub-conscious vision. We call the former *materialism*. We ought to call the latter *spiritualism*; but the word has contracted other associations, and *idealism* has taken its place. The basis of materialism is acceptance of the outward or material world as intrinsically real. The basis of idealism is acceptance of the inward and spiritual world, the world of soul-life, as intrinsically real. If matter is intrinsically real, then the deeper we descend into it, the nearer we are to ultimate reality. If soul-life is intrinsically real, then the more spiritual, the more complex, the more highly organized the life, the nearer we are to ultimate reality. In order to descend into matter we must follow the path of analysis, of disintegration. We must break things up into their constituent elements. In order to ascend to higher levels of soul-life, we must follow the path of

synthesis, of integration. We must build things up by the process of our own growth, or by the grasp of our thought, or by the sweep of our vision, into complex wholes. In the last—the very last—resort our choice lies between ascribing reality to what is ultimate in analysis, and ascribing it to what is ultimate in synthesis, between deifying the atom, or the electron, or whatever else may seem for the moment to be unanalysable and ultimate, and deifying the living Whole.

There are few men who are not both materialists and idealists,—materialists on the surface of the mind, idealists in the depth of the heart. Torn asunder between these conflicting philosophies, man has tried to reconcile them by inventing a third. The third philosophy, the philosophy which mediates between materialism and idealism, is *supernaturalism*. Believing, as he does in his heart of hearts, that life, soul-life, the life of which he is dimly conscious in himself, is supremely real, man must somehow or other reconcile this sub-conscious conviction with his conscious acceptance of the intrinsic reality of the outward world. There is only one way in which he can do this. He must think of the outward world—Nature, as he calls it—as having been *created*, called into its present state of being out of the void of nothingness, by a Spirit akin to his own, but a Spirit which is above and beyond Nature, and dwells apart from it, enfolded in its own transcendent glory, inaccessible to human imagination and thought. In other words, he must divide the Universe into Nature and the Supernatural world, and must place between them an unfathomable and impassable gulf. As the source of Nature's life, the dynamic principle of its being, is on

the far side of the gulf of separation, Nature itself becomes, under this conception of its origin, a finite state instead of an infinite process, a manufactured product instead of an eternally self-evolving life. The material world is real, but only because God has made it so. It is in itself what it seems to be, but only because God has willed that it should be so. The source of its reality is the will of the supernatural God ; and the supernatural God is the projection into an invisible and immaterial medium of the spirit of man. Thus there are two kinds of reality in the Universe, the delegated reality of the natural or outward world and the self-dependent reality of the spirit of God.

Let us see what this attempt to reconcile the materialism of the mind with the idealism of the heart involves. In other words, let us try to follow the philosophy of the supernatural into some of its necessary consequences.

CHAPTER IV

THE AUTOCRAT OF THE UNIVERSE

FROM the supernatural Creator of the Universe to the autocratic Ruler there is less than a single step. The former conception carries the latter with it. The world which God has made is at his mercy. He can do with it what he pleases. The consequences of the worship of an autocratic Deity—spiritual, moral, political, social—are momentous and far-reaching. The ideal attitude of each of us towards the order of things in which he finds himself is, in any case, one of loyal submission. “In his will is our peace.” But there is a profound difference between the will which declares itself in and through the evolution of Nature in general and human nature in particular, and the will which is communicated to man by a supernaturally accredited envoy and imposed upon him from without. The pressure of the former will is freedom, and submission to it is life. The pressure of the latter will is despotism, pure and simple, and submission to it may well prove to be living death.

Let us first distinguish between the being of Nature (in the popular interpretation of the word) and the being of Man. Below the level of human life Nature is left in the main to its own devices. Freedom of choice having

been denied to it, it is a complex of automatic machinery rather than a living whole. Its Creator endowed it with a fund of energy which will neither increase nor decrease till he chooses to withdraw it, and with a system of laws which he and his chosen delegates alone have the right to suspend. Born into maturity, it will never grow up, it will never grow old. Such as Nature—the outward world, the framework of the Universe—was when the process of creation was over, such it is now, such it will be to the end of time. Its being is static, not dynamic.

“The world’s unwithered countenance
Is bright as at Creation’s day.”

The world of which this could be said, exists, but it does not live.¹ When the Last Day comes, its existence will be cancelled, and it will melt away into nothingness.

“Nature” is the stage on which man plays his part while he is in a state of probation. Interference on God’s part with the course of Nature is very rare and is always subordinated to God’s purposes in dealing with man. What God does interfere with is the moral life of man; and the manner of his interference is such that it necessarily affects the whole of man’s inner life. He regulates man’s conduct either by a supernaturally communicated Law, or by a supernaturally commissioned Church; and he calls upon man to obey his will as revealed to him through those channels. In doing this he deprives him of freedom, which is the essential principle of what I

¹ If the “world’s countenance” is (and always will be) “unwithered,” the real reason is that “Creation’s day” has never reached, and will never reach, its meridian. Immortal youth is the counterpart of never-ending growth.

may call spiritual vitality, and which therefore differentiates man from the rest of living things. It is true that man is free to choose between obedience and disobedience to God's will. But what are the motives which determine his choice? Bribes and threats. Hope of reward and fear of punishment. Blessing and cursing. Heaven and Hell. The freedom which takes the form of a choice between obedience and disobedience to certain formulated commands,

“under pain
Of everlasting penalties, if broke,”

and which is limited to that choice, is the mockery, not the reality, of freedom.

If a man bade me sign a certain document, which I might or might not have read, and stood over me with a pistol till I signed it, it could scarcely be said that I had been a free agent in the matter, that my *self*, my real self, was behind my signature. Freedom to know, to understand, to desire, to purpose, to plan,—this and nothing less than this is the freedom which is the counterpart of spiritual life.

The forcible curtailment of freedom by autocratic authority will have grave consequences. When morality takes the form of submission to the will of an autocrat, obedience becomes the first and last of virtues. Let us see what this involves. Obedience to one's own higher self, with the infinite demands which it makes upon one, is indeed the first and last of virtues. But it is not obedience of this kind which supernaturalism glorifies. It is obedience to external authority, to a formulated will, to a series of commands,

whether set out in a dead Law or issued by a living Church. And it is compulsory obedience, obedience which you withhold at your peril. As such, it must needs direct itself towards the letter, not towards the spirit, of what is commanded. For, apart from the fact that when morality is a matter of bargaining, neither party to the bargain can be expected to go beyond the terms of his contract, literal obedience is the only kind of obedience which the passive recipient of formulated directions can safely venture to give. To interpret, or try to interpret, the spirit of his instructions is the work of a free man, of one who is in the confidence of his master. But the autocratic demand for obedience reduces its victim to the status of a slave. It is possible to transgress the letter of a commandment in one's very zeal for the spirit of it; and he who does this lays himself open to the charge of having broken the Law. In the eyes of the Pharisees who accused Christ of breaking the Fourth Commandment, the rejoinder "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath," was no excuse. Nor is this the only reason why correctness of outward action is regarded as all-important. Under the autocratic control of morals only two motives to action are recognized—the fear of external punishment and the hope of external reward. The inward motive, which really determines the worth of moral action, but which happens to be variable and incalculable, counts under this régime for nothing.

Devotion to the letter of a law tends to de-idealize man's life. The ideal is the object of man's highest and purest desire and of his most far-reaching and penetrative vision. Where obedience is the beginning and end of

virtue, aspiration, spiritual desire, recedes into the background, and the selfish desire to enjoy a reward and escape a punishment takes its place. It is not because the heart of man turns towards the ends which are set before him, that he obeys the commands of his Lord and Master, but because obedience will be rewarded and disobedience chastised. The ideal does not admit of being formulated, or the way to it accurately mapped out. There is an element of mystery, of infinitude in it, which at once baffles calculation and attracts desire. When the way of life is set out in a series of commands, each of which is to be obeyed because it has been "so commanded," the true end of life has, we may be sure, been lost sight of. For if the true end of life was behind those commands, their attractive force would be so great that the autocratic demand for obedience would become unnecessary, and bribes would be spurned and threats despised by the adventurous soul. The profound distrust of Nature which underlies supernaturalism, and which has found doctrinal expression in the story of the Fall and the theory of Original Sin, leads of inner necessity to the assumption that it is not in man to desire good, to respond to its magnetic appeal.

This assumption readily transforms itself into another—that it is not in man to think out, that it is not for man to exercise himself in, the master problems of life. I have said that the ideal is the object of vision as well as of desire. There are two elements in vision, each of which should, for its own sake, balance and be balanced by the other—reason and intuition, the critical and the imaginative tendencies of thought. In the atmosphere of supernaturalism both these sovereign faculties are

doomed to wither, for the plain reason that neither is allowed to function. When the way of life is accurately mapped out by high authority, there is no need and no opportunity for one either to see into the heart of things or to meditate on their inner meaning. Even now, in the twentieth century, the orthodox Christian will settle momentous questions, such as that of divorce, or the after life of the soul, by reference to the letter of a text. He will count it impiety to bring either his reason or his intuition to bear on the problems that confront him.¹

¹ A preacher in an Anglican church recently told his audience that if they did not communicate fasting they would go to Hell. The preacher no doubt believed that he was declaring to his audience the authentic will of God. But if so, what an insanely whimsical deity he worshipped! To doom a man to eternal punishment for having broken his fast before communicating would be an act of grotesque injustice, repugnant alike to right reason, to common sense and to the moral judgment. "But God's ways are not our ways," the preacher would answer, "and we cannot go behind his revelation of his will." This is the favourite argument of the orthodox apologist. It is at once the logical working out and the *reductio ad absurdum* of the first principles of supernaturalism. For it resolves itself into the assumption that where conduct is regulated by divine authority, blind, literal, mechanical obedience is the only thing that matters, and that the higher faculties which we sum up under the heads of reason and intuition do not count and have no part to play. But why have those "talents" been entrusted to man if he is not to use them? And how can he do full justice to them if he may not use them in what is presumably the highest field of their activity? And if they have not been trained by appropriate exercise, how can they tell him whether an alleged communication from God is genuine or spurious? That there is something in man which can recognize and respond to the Divine is the only rational basis of belief in a supernatural

Forbidden to energize in the sphere of high thinking these sovereign faculties have sought out other fields of activity. Reason has devoted itself to the investigation of physical phenomena, the field in which it is freest from ecclesiastical interference, and in which, as it happens, it has least need of the co-operation of intuition. Intuition, deserted by reason, has evaded the control of "authority" by plunging deep into the innermost mysteries of things, where it can work beyond the reach of the theologian's inquisitorial eye and beyond the grasp of his commonplace mind. Thus in forbidding reason and intuition to work in the sphere in which each has most need of the other, supernaturalism has driven them apart, as it were, and sowed misunderstanding between them. And so, when they return to the investigation of ultimate questions, instead of combining their forces for the greatest of all tasks, they continue to work separately, and in a spirit of mutual antipathy and mistrust, reason giving us a one-sided interpretation of things which it calls *rationalism*, and intuition an equally one-sided interpretation of things which it calls *mysticism*, while the truth of things lies somewhere between these two, or rather is in itself the resultant of their respective tendencies.

If autocratic control can produce such fatal results in the sphere of high thinking and deep feeling, its action in the sphere of conduct proper will be at least equally harmful. Here the cult of the letter will make for hypocrisy, for evasion, for casuistical hair-splitting, for revelation. To ask that something to accept or reject a revelation as a whole, while forbidding it to criticize its details, is an illogical absurdity which does not admit of serious defence.

dishonest quibbling, for censoriousness, for self-righteousness, for all those vicious tendencies which externalism in morals necessarily tends to generate, and which we sum up under the general head of Pharisaism. And the authoritative debasement of the dominant motive to action from the high level of aspiration and love to the low level of cupidity and fear, will make for selfishness, for individualism, for materialism, for a general lowering of the plane of man's life.

Rightly conceived, the higher life of man is perpetual self-transcendence. In other words, it is an adventure into the infinite. By substituting for this high adventure the deliberate and systematic cult of finality, by laying itself out to satisfy the demand for formulated conceptions of life and codified rules of conduct, supernaturalism has ever tended, and of inner necessity will ever tend, to arrest the growth of the soul. I use the words "of inner necessity" advisedly. Supernaturalism owes its origin to the ascendancy, in the world of ideas, of materialism over idealism, of the static over the dynamic view of life,—in other words, to the soul's reluctance to grow. If it is not to forfeit its charter, it must duly minister to Man's spiritual indolence, to his desire to play for safety, to his reluctance to take up the burden of his own infinitude, of his potential oneness with God. To do this is to arrest his spiritual growth; and to arrest growth is to starve and sterilize life.

CHAPTER V

THE FEUDAL OVERLORD

SO much for the pressure of supernatural authority on the life of the individual. Let us now consider its influence on the communal life of mankind. Man's religious ideas have, on the whole and in the long run, reflected his political experiences. The idea of a divine autocrat who rules or overrules the Universe arose in the East, where the autocratic rule of a "Great King" was a familiar spectacle. In the West, when it had accepted Christianity, the "Great King" of heaven and earth transformed himself into the Feudal Overlord. This brings us down to the present day. The autocrat of the Universe has been the mainstay of feudalism. And how great has been the power of feudalism and how deeply the iron of it has entered into our souls, is proved by the fact that to its dying convulsions we owe the titanic struggle which for more than four years has desolated a large part of the world and profoundly agitated the rest.

The feudal magnate derived his authority from his own overlord, and through him from the king of kings and only ruler of princes. The divine right of kings and sub-kings was one of the cardinal articles of his faith. He was responsible to his overlords, human and divine,

for the way in which he exercised his delegated authority. To the mass of his subjects he recognized no responsibility whatever. Within his own domain his authority was virtually absolute ; and, like the Deity by whose grace he held his fief or sub-kingdom, he combined in his own person the functions of legislator, administrator, judge, and executioner. If he misgoverned his people, they might appeal to his overlord for redress ; and that appeal might or might not be heard. Or they might appeal to God in their prayers ; and their lord, if he was unjust and tyrannical, was well content that they should do so. For his deference to God was a mere formality ; and in effect he held that his right to rule was inherent in his might. By paying the semblance of homage to the divine autocrat, he was able to claim the reality of power for himself. His religion went as far as that, but no further. Against their lord, as their own immediate ruler, the people (apart from the tenants, whose relations with him were contractual) had no means of redress. The rank and file were entirely at his mercy, the serfs being his chattels, while the status of the villein or roturier was but one degree removed from serfdom. Like his horses and his live stock, they came into his possession, so to speak, with the lands which he inherited or acquired ; and he " could do what he pleased with his own." Resistance to his tyranny was rebellion against " the Lord's anointed ;" and if it failed it was punished with atrocious severity.

The feudal system, of which the feudalism of more recent times is the heir-at-law, covered Western Europe with a multitude of petty autocrats, the Feudal Lords or " Barons " of the Middle Ages, and so gave rise to

an aristocracy or ruling caste, which is still with us, becoming, as time passes, less and less dependent on the possession of land for its power over others, and more and more dependent on the possession of capital. Wherever there is a ruling caste which bases its authority and influence on property, arrogance, rapacity, and selfishness may be expected to flourish. In feudal times the ruling caste was deeply infected with those vices, but it had no monopoly of them. On the contrary, they were ever tending to descend, by force of moral gravitation, through all the strata of society. It is but natural that men should imitate, to the best of their ability, those who are high above them, and whom they are compelled to look up to and defer to; and we cannot wonder that the evil example which was set by the feudal aristocracy was faithfully copied, as far as circumstances permitted, by all the social grades below them down to the rank and file of the people. And as it was in feudal times, so it has been in all the intervening ages, so it is to-day. The assumption that power, position, and property are the "good things of life," the things that are best worth working for and fighting for, has led to a general perversion of ideals, from which we are still suffering and must long continue to suffer.

Nor is this the only injury to morals and character that feudal tyranny has wrought. The denial of freedom does two things to its victims, which act and react on each other and produce evil consequences which are not the less evil because, in their development, they are obscure, tortuous, and difficult to trace. It represses natural tendency and it atrophies natural faculty. Psychologists are beginning to realize that though natural

tendencies can be repressed they cannot be eradicated ; that, on the contrary, they accumulate, when repressed, in the subconscious regions of the soul, and there generate explosive energies which may lead at last to their forcing, at whatever cost, exits for themselves. When the time comes for them to break forth, the fact that faculty has been atrophied, and that therefore they cannot be properly controlled and directed, may lead to great social and moral convulsions. The communal self, mediating as it does between the individual and the ideal self, is an essential element in personality ; and a man must take a share in the government of the community to which he belongs if he is to master the art of governing himself. Therefore to deprive the masses, as feudalism did, of political power and responsibility, is to go far towards incapacitating them for the exercise of self-control. The organized anarchy which is now desolating Russia and which threatens to spread to neighbouring countries, like the excesses of the French Revolution, is the aftermath of centuries of tyrannical repression ;¹ and such catastrophes in the life of the community have their equivalents, in the life of the individual, in that disruption of personality which too often issues in madness.

The concentration of power and authority in a few hands has had other consequences. The undue ascen-

¹ The savagery of the Russian revolutionaries has appalled us. Let us remind ourselves, in extenuation of it, that the arrogance of a ruling caste—whether the caste be feudal, as in pre-Revolutionary France, military, as in Germany, or bureaucratic, as in Russia—easily degenerates into brutality, and that brutality brutalizes its victims.

dency of the "State" in the spheres of moral and spiritual life is one of these. When the State is, as it ought to be, the whole community, acting through a system of nerve-centres, the spirit of comradeship will be the main-spring of its activity; and the spirit of comradeship will, sooner or later, transcend the limits of nationality, and the cognate sense of sympathy with and duty towards one's fellow-citizens will gradually expand into a sense of sympathy with and duty towards one's fellow-men. It is otherwise when the State is embodied in an autocratic monarch, ruling "by divine right," or in an autocratic caste, ruling by its own inherited prestige and power. Then there is a danger lest the rulers should infect with their own arrogance, rapacity, and selfishness, not the lower strata of society only but also the community as an organic whole. There is a danger lest, in their desire to aggrandize themselves through the aggrandizement of the community, they should hold up the latter to the individual citizen as the supreme end of action and should use the machinery of the State—legislative, administrative, military, educational, ecclesiastical—to drive him towards that goal. There is a danger lest they should deliberately inculcate anti-human sentiments under the guise of patriotism, should give duty to the State precedence over duty to God and man, should count wrong as right, criminality as virtue, so long as it served or seemed to serve the interests of the community, thereby completing the perversion of ideals and corruption of morals which their own evil example had already begun. That this is no imaginary danger the history of modern Germany has fully proved. The war which has just ended had been systematically pre-

pared for over a long term of years—through the unscrupulous use of all the complicated machinery of an oppressive and inquisitorial government and of all the subtle influences which emanated from the Court and its entourage—by the real rulers of Germany, the General Staff. The corruption of the morals of a great people, by the exaltation of false ideals and the appeal to base motives, was but the means to that sinister end.

The arrogance of the ruling caste in feudal times was, as we have seen, compounded in the main of class selfishness and pride of property, place, and power. But there was another element in it which was even more baneful in its ulterior consequences. The ruling caste looked upon the rank and file of the people as dirt beneath their feet. Having degraded them, by their unjust and oppressive rule, to a level which was but little higher than that of the beasts of the field, they despised them for having sunk to that level, and spoke and thought of them with contempt and disgust. They did worse than this. They assumed that the “lower orders” were an inferior breed to themselves, that they were *by nature* base-born, coarse-fibred, slow-witted, foul-mouthed, mere animals in their habits and propensities. The words that they applied to them—populace, masses, mob, rabble, *canaille*—were so fully charged with suggestions of social inferiority and moral degradation that they became, and still remain, terms of derision and abuse. For this contemptuous attitude of the upper towards the lower orders of society is one of the features of feudalism which have survived to the present day. The educated classes in this and other countries are still apt to assume that the masses—those who send their children to elementary

schools, let us say—are a different order of beings from themselves, congenitally inferior in physique, in mentality, in manners, in morals, and all that goes to the making of the soul. And as the despised masses form nine-tenths of the human race, the current underestimate of their powers and possibilities readily transforms itself into a serious underestimate of the powers and possibilities of normal Humanity. The theological doctrine of Original Sin, with its assumption that the natural man is a child of wrath, that the nature of man is corrupt and fallen, that the best of men are miserable sinners, that the grace which redeems and saves comes down from a supernatural source, has reinforced and been reinforced by this quasi-feudal contempt for Humanity, and the effect of their joint action has been to paralyse man's higher activities and blind him to the greatness of his heritage and his destiny

Feudalism was of two kinds—secular and spiritual. So far I have been dealing with the former. I will now say a few words about the latter. As there was a descent of secular authority from the Supreme Overlord, through emperor, king, and baron, to the villein and the serf, so there was a descent of spiritual authority from the same source, through Pope and bishop and priest, to the lay churchman and the catechumen. Priestcraft, like princecraft, has its characteristic virtues and vices. As there were wise and good rulers, according to their lights, among the feudal magnates, so there were—and are—wise and good teachers and directors in a priesthood. But as the feudal magnates, being (as they believed) a divinely commissioned caste, were exposed to the temptation to hold themselves aloof from the rest of the com-

munity, to look down upon them, to brow-beat them, to oppress them, so the priesthood, being (as they believe) a divinely commissioned caste, have been exposed to the temptation to become—in Luther's words—"the proudest asses under Heaven."

On this, however, we need not dwell. The evil that spiritual feudalism does lies deeper than this. The real analogue of feudal arrogance is not ecclesiastical pride and pomposity, but priestly dogmatism. We have seen that the pressure of supernatural authority on human life, by depriving men of spiritual freedom, has tended to pervert their ideals, to corrupt their morals, to arrest their growth, to strangle their life. The priesthood has been the appointed channel for the transmission of that pressure. And the more conscientious the priest, the more effectively has he transmitted it. Torquemada was, I believe, an excellent man, according to his lights; but his lights were a lurid darkness.

On the whole it may, I think, be said that the pressure of secular feudalism has been felt by the community more than by the individual, and the pressure of spiritual feudalism by the individual more than by the community. But it is as a member of a community that a man lives the larger part of his life, and what he receives from the community he gives back to it. It follows that secular feudalism has affected the community directly and affected the individual through his membership of the community, while spiritual feudalism has affected the individual directly and affected the community through the reaction on it of the individual's ideals and ways and works.¹ It follows, in other words, that the two

¹ Secular feudalism has affected the individual, and spiritual

kinds of feudalism are vitally interconnected, and that their respective streams of tendency are not two, but one. It is true that they move, or seem to move, in separate channels ; but they flow through the same river valley and belong to the same system of drainage.

Secular feudalism has been dying for centuries, and is now on its deathbed. Its passing is a veritable *agonie*. Convulsion follows convulsion, and the end is not yet. The Great War has been by far the most violent of all its convulsions ; but it is not the last ; and it is possible that it will be followed by convulsive movements which, if not more violent, will be more protracted and on an even vaster scale. What is it that hinders the passing of the old order of things ? Each of its deathbed convulsions is the birth-throe of a new order of things. What is it that hinders the new order of things from being born ? “ The children are come to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth.” It is difficult to interpret the past and rash to forecast the future. Yet I cannot help thinking that what has delayed the passing of secular feudalism, and delayed the social reconstruction which will follow its passing, is its vital connexion with spiritual feudalism, and our failure to recognize that the latter too is dying and that the time has come for it to die.

The only possible successor to secular feudalism is democracy ; and if “ the world is to be made safe for democracy ” and if our democratic experiments are not to be so many grafts on a feudal stock, we must make an end of spiritual as well as of secular feudalism ; we feudalism has affected the community, directly as well as indirectly ; but in each case the direct pressure, though by no means weak, has been less strong than the indirect.

must de-feudalize, not our social life only but our soul-life on all its planes ; we must de-feudalize our first principles, our standards of value, our tests of right and wrong ; we must go to the fountain-head of ideas and ideals ; we must revolutionize our conception of ultimate reality, our vision of God.

CHAPTER VI

THE APOTHEOSIS OF SELFISHNESS

THE supernatural autocrat of the Universe is a partisan God, a God who takes sides. This he is predestined to be. For he exists objectively, so to speak, beyond the confines of Nature ; and from that mysterious world he comes down to earth at his good pleasure, and reveals himself to certain chosen instruments of his will. The recipients of the divine revelation are few—if they were many revelation would be a more or less natural process—but the claimants to the honour of having received it are innumerable.

For different races, different peoples, different communities, different types of mind form different conceptions of the supernatural God ; and each of these will insist that its own conception is the true conception, and that all the others are false. This true conception of God will be personified as “ the true God,” and all other conceptions will be personified as “ false gods.” Strictly speaking, the difference between true and false is that “ the true God ” has revealed himself to his worshippers, whereas the “ false gods ” are mere inventions of man’s mind. But this distinction is not always observed. In their zeal for their own God men are apt to invest his rivals with some measure of objective existence, and to

think of them as rebellious claimants to the throne of the Universe.

To fight for the true God against the false gods and those who worship them is of course the first duty of the "believer"; and in this fight he naturally expects God—his God—to take his side and put his enemies (who are also God's enemies) to confusion. Now it is impossible to give absolutely disinterested service to such a Deity. If you ask God to fight for you against your enemies, who are also his, there is sure to be some taint of self-seeking in your prayer. For in saying that prayer you run two deadly risks. The first is that of identifying your own personal enemies with the enemies of God. The second is that of dedicating your own evil passions and desires—the passions and desires which may be summed up under the general heads of uncharitableness and selfishness—to the service of God.

As long as religions were tribal or national, the Gods dwelt on earth or in heaven, in mutual tolerance or, at worst, in intermittent hostility. But when men rose to the conception of a Universal God the clash of religions began. And, with the clash of religions, came the clash of selfish passions and selfish ambitions. If in the course of their religious wars and persecutions men had thought only of the honour and glory of their God, those wars and persecutions would have formed a dark enough chapter in their history. What made that chapter the darkest of all was that secular ambitions played a large part in the religious wars, and that the horrors of religious persecution were intensified by private greed and private spite.

The truth is that the desire to appropriate the Universal

God, to claim him as one's own, is of all desires the most selfish. Indeed it is the apotheosis of selfishness, the raising of it to the highest imaginable power. We are given a great choice in life. We can try to expand self till it becomes all-embracing, and in doing so intermingles itself, in peace and goodwill, with all other expanding selves. Or we can try to draw down all things—including *God himself*—into the vortex of an ever-narrowing self. The man who seeks to appropriate God to himself will be an egoist in his whole attitude towards life. For to introduce the venom of self-seeking into the head-waters of desire and purpose is to poison the whole stream.

It is a significant fact that in the late war the nation which had wantonly provoked the war and had waged it with conspicuous inhumanity and treachery, was the one nation which openly boasted that God was on its side. The Entente Powers were wisely reticent on this point. But the German Emperor assured his people that God—"the good old German God"—was their "unconditional ally"; and the Lutheran pastors, inspired by the same perverted faith and true to the logic of its implied assumptions, went so far as to say that God had chosen the German people for the express purpose of "crucifying Humanity," and that they must therefore prove their loyalty to him by perpetrating every conceivable atrocity on their enemies. To take our evil passions and lusts to God and solemnly dedicate them to his service is to sound the lowest depth of spiritual wickedness. In the current theology the autocrat of the Universe has a rebellious rival who is known as the Devil. If Hell is reserved for those who openly serve

the Devil, what punishment is due to those who serve the Devil under the pretence of serving God ?

There is always a taint of selfishness in a man's devotion to the divine autocrat. There are traces of it even in the other-worldliness of the saint. Does he serve God for naught ? I doubt it. In "the ages of faith" the main concern of the believer was to secure his own individual salvation.¹ Even the most hardened of sinners looked forward to cheating the Devil on his deathbed by confessing his sins and receiving absolution from the Church. But what of the saint ? Alas ! he could look forward, not merely with equanimity but even

¹ A secondary but by no means inconsiderable concern was to secure material benefits for himself. Wherever the supernatural God is worshipped, the two kinds of selfishness—the worldly and the other-worldly—coexist in varying proportions. The more superstitious the religion—the more deeply it is impregnated with supernaturalism—the stronger is the demand for divine interference in the ordinary affairs of life. And the demand is predominately selfish. In Brittany, for example, God and his deputies are expected to take a lively interest in the ventures of the fisher-folk ; and in addressing prayers to those higher powers each fishing village thinks of itself alone. "With the naive egoism," says the writer of a recent work on Eastern Brittany, "with which religionists of all creeds fancy themselves the centre of creation, the women-folk of Islandais supplicate northerly winds at the same time that those of Terrenewiers are importuning Providence to send them from the west." The selfishness of these petitions is obvious. Nor does it cease to be selfish because there is woven into it a strand of unselfish love. But the selfishness of the believer who is intent on his own salvation is far more insidious, far more deep-seated, and far more ready to mistake itself for piety than is the naive egoism of those who pray for favouring winds or other mundane blessings.

with rapture, to being admitted into a Heaven from which the greater part of his fellow-men would be forever excluded. Nor would their awful fate cast any shadow on his happiness, the sympathetic pity that he might have felt for them being submerged by his blissful assurance that he, for one, would enjoy God for "ever and ever." To win for himself the boon of "salvation" was the end that the believer, whether saint or sinner, set before himself in his religious exercises, in his prayers, in the conduct of his life. That in many cases the devotion which he gave to God was, as far as he knew, disinterested, is possible, and even probable. But in the court of an absolute monarch the line between loyalty and courtiership, between unselfish and selfish devotion, is all too easily overstepped. And selfishness is never so insidious or so poisonous as when a man believes himself to be giving to another what he is really giving, in part at least, to himself. If this is true when the "other" is his neighbour, how much truer will it be when the "other" is God.

I have said that secular feudalism is on its deathbed, but will not be able to die till spiritual feudalism dies with it. What hinders the coming of that vast system of social and political changes—with their far-reaching social and spiritual consequences—which we speak of collectively as democracy, is the selfishness of man's heart. In the ideal democracy, where each lives for all and all for each, there is no place for selfishness. It follows that in a society, which, like that of the feudalized West, is deeply tainted with selfishness, both individual and corporate, in which each member of the community plays for his own hand or combines with others only

for the advancement or protection of his own material interests, in which inequality provokes jealousy, injustice rancorous resentment, and class-pride class-hatred—it follows that in such a society democracy cannot begin to be born. The overthrow of absolutism in Russia was followed, after a brief interval, by the establishment of a tyranny far more cruel, oppressive, and unjust than that which had preceded it, a tyranny which was based on the deliberate exploitation of passion and lust, of class-hatred and industrial greed. Superficial observers see in Russia's desperate plight the failure of democracy. What they ought to see in it is the final failure—the consummation of the pre-destined failure—of autocratic repression and bureaucratic selfishness and corruption.

The triumph of Bolshevism in Russia is a lesson and a warning. If selfishness is to be held in check, so as to make possible the advent of democracy, the constant reinforcement of it from what is supposed to be the highest of all levels—the level of religious faith and devotion—must at all costs be stopped. In other words, if we are to reconstruct society on a sound and durable basis, we must revolutionize our spiritual ideals through the radical transformation of our conception of God. We must worship a God in whose Court there are no courtiers, in whose Kingdom (which is his only Court) patriotism is the truest loyalty—a God to whom it is impossible to give any but disinterested service, to offer any but unselfish prayers. So long as we think of God as a supernatural autocrat we shall be tempted to exploit him for more or less selfish purposes of our own. And so long as that temptation besets us, the spirit of com-

radeship—of which the courtier spirit is the negation, and without which democracy is so much political machinery, the plaything of cliques and caucuses, the happy hunting-ground of wire-pullers and log-rollers—cannot awake in our hearts.

CHAPTER VII

A SECULAR AGE

HOW vital a part religion plays in human life is shown by the fact that even in this "irreligious age" it is in command, though we may not know it, of the whole situation. We have seen that secular feudalism is on its deathbed, but cannot die; and that democracy has come to the birth, but is "still powerless to be born." The reason why secular feudalism cannot die is that spiritual feudalism, its other self, though also dying, is not yet on its deathbed. And the reason why democracy cannot be born is that the religion which is at the heart of it has not yet come to the birth.

We are passing through an age of religious indifference. The supporters of the old order take but little interest in religion; and the advocates of the new order—if not openly anti-religious—take none. The alliance between the squire and the parson, which is symbolical of the alliance between secular and spiritual feudalism, still continues; but the squire, though he goes to church, is probably an agnostic, and there may well be a strain of scepticism in the orthodoxy of the parson. Nevertheless the formal alliance between the two does continue; and so long as it continues it will help to keep feudalism alive.

On the other hand, the democratic movement, which

for the time being has identified itself with the Labour movement, is at present frankly secular. It does not even pretend to have any spiritual ideal. The avowed aim of Labour is to secure for itself higher wages and shorter hours of work. Its covert aim is to destroy what it believes to be its arch-enemy, Capitalism. In the latter aim it makes its nearest approach to an ideal, but it is an inverted ideal, an ideal which is negative, not positive; destructive, not constructive; the outcome of hatred, not of love. How little there is of spiritual idealism in the Labour movement is proved by the fact that it is to a large extent dominated by a clique of extremists,¹ who, while bribing the "labourers" with promises of short hours and high wages, are working unceasingly for all-round "nationalization," in the hope that when Labour triumphs at the polls, they, as its leaders, will be able, through their command of the main sources of production and distribution, to establish a rigid State-despotism of which the capitalists, great and small, will be the first victims. For patriotism, which is the only avenue to humanism, Labour, so far as it is under the control of this clique, would substitute an internationalism, which is at the opposite pole to the pan-humanism of those who advocate a League of Nations—an internationalism of class-selfishness, class-hatred, and intestine strife. The aim of these "inter-

¹ The confiscatory programme of these extremists, their open advocacy of "direct action" and their avowed sympathy with the cruel and inquisitorial despotism of the Bolshevik gang in Russia, are suggestive of what might happen if a Labour Government came into being under their auspices in this country.

nationalists" is to unite the forces of Labour in hostility to Capital in all countries, and so develop a line of cleavage which will cut across all distinctions of nationality and will end by bolshevizing the world. That this is the true voice of Labour I do not for a moment believe. The labouring masses are still inarticulate; but it is a significant fact that a clique which is anti-idealistic, anti-humanistic, and even anti-patriotic, should have succeeded in capturing their collective vote.¹

I do not wish to reproach Labour for its selfishness. For centuries the rich ground the faces of the poor; and it is but natural that the poor, when union has given them strength, should seek to grind the faces of the rich. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." For centuries the upper classes despised and vilified the lower; and it is but natural that class arrogance should be requited by class hatred, and that the memory of bitter wrongs, of injustice, oppression and cruelty, should generate deep-seated suspicion and even a thirst for revenge.² Nor do I think the worse of the Labour movement for being openly non-religious. In one respect indeed its secularism is its salvation. The feudal magnates were selfish and arrogant because they believed that their position, their power,

¹ In the General Election of December, 1918, this clique was "snowed under," chiefly, I think, on account of its anti-patriotic bias; but it seems to have great weight in the councils of Labour, and it is carrying on an active propaganda among the younger members of the various Trade Unions.

² In point of fact there is, I believe, more of suspicion and mistrust than of actual vindictiveness in the attitude of the working classes towards the upper classes in general and the employers of labour in particular.

their possessions and their privileges had been bestowed upon them by God, and that their title to them was therefore indefeasible. And their "aristocratic" successors—landowners, capitalists, bureaucrats and the rest—if they have any religious faith, believe that the class-distinctions by which they profit so greatly have been ordained by God. The leaders of the Labour movement have avoided this deadly pitfall. They have not claimed divine sanction for their materialistic ambitions. On the contrary, they carry secularism to the verge of hostility to religion, partly because they believe, not without reason, that official religion has usually allied itself with property and privilege, and that the Feudal Overlord whom they were taught to worship is the God of the rich rather than the poor.¹ They mean to seize what they can by force—by the force of organized labour—and they will pay homage for it to no overlord, human or divine. The hypocrisy of those who held "by the grace of God" what they had seized by the might of their arms is not theirs.

I have no quarrel with the Labour movement, but I wish to look facts in the face. The body of feudalism,

¹ Pope Pius X, when rebuking the socialism of the Italian Modernists, told them that "it is in conformity with the order established by God that there should be in human society princes and subjects, employers and proletarians, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, nobles and plebeians." The Dutch Catholic bishops have recently issued a pastoral condemning Socialism as incompatible with Catholic Christianity. "To be a Catholic and a Socialist at the same time is impossible." And a Russian statesman is said to have defended autocracy in Russia on the ground that the Universe is ruled by an autocratic Deity. Labour can scarcely be expected to lend a willing ear to such teaching as this.

though worn out, cannot die, because the time has not yet come for the passing of its soul. In the Labour movement, as at present conducted, the converse of this is taking place. The body of democracy is struggling to be born ; but its soul has not yet taken possession of it, and therefore the hour of its deliverance has not yet come. If democracy is to conquer the world it must first find its own soul. It must use spiritual, not material weapons. It must present a high ideal to the mind and heart of man. And that ideal it must find in itself, in the religion which is at the heart of it, in the conception of God which is shaping itself in its subconscious self.

In a secular age, an age of religious indifference, great convulsions and catastrophes may be expected to take place—for such spiritual influences as are at work will be too weak to hold anger, selfishness and rapacity in check—but there can be no social revolution which will permanently transform man's life. The reconstruction of religion must both precede and accompany the reconstruction of society. The indifference of the present generation to religion means that the old conception of God, with the ideals which emerged from it, is wearing out. That being so, our efforts to galvanize into the semblance of life the churches and sects, the creeds and codes, of the old régime are a waste of labour. They are worse than a waste of labour, for they tend to perpetuate and intensify the existing confusion. If the protracted struggle which is from one point of view an agony of dissolution, from another an agony of parturition, is to come to an end, a new conception of God, pregnant with new ideals of duty and destiny, must come forth and rule the world.

CHAPTER VIII

HUMAN EQUALITY

IF the world is to be “made safe for democracy,” we must do more than destroy militarism ; we must do more than democratize the countries which are still strongholds of feudalism. We must destroy the spiritual headquarters of militarism ; we must democratize our conception of God.

How is this to be done ? Behind the democratic impulse there is a certain spiritual ideal. And behind that spiritual ideal there is a certain conception of God. If we could lift that conception of God into the light of consciousness we should have begun to liberate the soul of democracy.

What is the spiritual ideal which is behind the democratic impulse ? *Equality*. Democracy has been defined as “the government of all, by all and for all,” and this definition can scarcely be improved upon. What is it that qualifies the “all” for government ? That the rulers of a country should be the best of its citizens—the strongest, the ablest, the wisest, the most unselfish—is a truth too obvious to need demonstration. Now it is certain that we cannot all be the best. But is there any *a priori* reason why we should not all be equally good ? It is only on the assumption that men are equal that

democracy can make good its claim. In the famous formula "liberty, equality, fraternity," equality is rightly placed in the middle. There are many critics of the formula who approve the ideas of liberty and fraternity, but ridicule the idea of equality. This is shallow criticism. It is faith in equality which justifies the demand for liberty and countenances the dream of fraternity. As a political theory, democracy is dominated by the *idea* of equality. As a political dream, as a social sentiment, it is inspired by the *ideal* of equality. In fine, equality—the fundamental equality of all men—whether we regard it as an idea or an ideal, is the real basis of democracy.

But are men fundamentally equal? Is it conceivable that they should ever be so? Is not society based on inequality, on a bewildering diversity of gifts, attainments, and achievements, on inequality in material possessions, in social position, in influence, in education, in learning, in culture, in mental ability, in aptitudes, in accomplishments, in moral qualities, in spiritual gifts? So some of my readers will protest; and I will say in reply that they have not overstated, and cannot possibly overstate, their case. In what sense, then, do I use the word equality? In the sense in which Christianity uses it when it teaches us that all men are equal in the sight of God—equal because they have immortal souls to be lost or saved. The notation in which this teaching is set forth may not commend itself to all of us, but the psychology which underlies it is, I think, profoundly true. When we say that all men are equal in the sight of God, we mean, I imagine, that they are intrinsically equal, equal by reference to an absolute and infallible

standard of worth. And they are intrinsically equal because they all have immortal souls to be lost or saved. What does this mean? It means, I imagine, that in each of us there are infinite potentialities waiting to be realized; that so far as we realize these we save our souls, in the sense of finding them; that so far as we neglect to realize them, we lose our souls, in the sense of failing to find them. By comparison with these infinite potentialities, the actual inequalities in which life abounds, and of which we make so much, shrink to zero, and men are seen to be fundamentally equal. And if men are fundamentally equal, the right to share in the government of the community to which one belongs, and to that extent to shape one's own destiny, to give effect to one's own ideals, to order one's own goings, is obviously inherent in the right to live one's own life and realize one's own soul.

"Infinite potentialities." Am I justified in using these words? Actually men are unequal in every conceivable way. On this point there cannot be two opinions. Their equality then must be potential. And if that potential equality can dwarf to zero all those actual inequalities which bulk so large in our eyes, it must be rooted in the infinite. This is the only possible solution of the problem—half riddle and half paradox—which confronts us. Life is self-realization. Actually we are finite. Potentially we are infinite. We realize self in different directions and different degrees. In respect of these we are unequal. But we have limitless reserves of potentiality to draw upon; and in respect of this we are equal. And this equality, being rooted in the infinite, overpowers and effaces our inequalities, which are always measurable and finite.

To prove that man is infinite is beyond the power of human reason. The problem is not amenable to the rules of proof. The infinitude of the soul must prove itself. And this it is ever struggling to do. But, for the process of proof to complete itself, an infinity of time, or perhaps some mysterious transcendence of time, is needed. Meanwhile, the more freely our minds play round the idea of the infinite, and the more successful we are in freeing ourselves from bondage to our experiences of the finite, the stronger will the attractive force of the idea become. We think too much about the actual man, the man who has hardened in the mould of a particular environment. And we think too little of the possible man, of what the man had it in him to become. Is it a paradox—or is it a truism—to say that the normal child at birth has it in him to speak a thousand different languages, to belong to a thousand different communities, to adapt himself to a thousand different environments, to play a thousand different parts, to look at life from a thousand different points of view? Which language the child shall speak, which community he shall belong to, which environment he shall adapt himself to, which part he shall play, from which point of view he shall look at life, will be determined in each case—either wholly or in large measure—by what we call the accident of his birth. But the accident of his birth is one thing; his inherent capacity is another. As he grows up, circumstances will severely restrict his freedom and limit the scope of his activity; and if he is the victim, as most men are, of a narrow environment, we shall probably take for granted that he is whatever he has become because he was predestined to be so in the hour of his

birth, and that the powers and possibilities which he has not been able to develop were never his.

Such an assumption would be wholly fallacious. A single concrete case will disprove it. There is¹ a school in this country—an elementary school for girls—in which the older pupils have a remarkable love of literature, write charming verses, and do prose compositions of various kinds—narrative, descriptive, imaginative, dramatic, and even critical—which surprise all who read them. Wherein do these girls differ from girls of the same age in other schools in their own town and elsewhere. Potentially, they do not differ from them in any respect or degree. And yet, if you went into a hundred elementary schools in succession, you would almost certainly find that the pupils cared little or nothing for good literature, that they could not write a line of verse and that their prose compositions were of a meagre, conventional, all-of-one-pattern type. What advantage, then, do these girls possess? Whatever it is, it is not racial. If it were, if the children in that town had literary proclivities “in their blood,” one would expect to find evidences of literary taste and capacity in other schools in their neighbourhood. But one would, I fear, look for such evidences in vain. The girls live in a third-rate manufacturing town. Their homes are of the type which one usually finds in such towns. Their surroundings are most uninspiring. But they have had one advantage over other girls (and boys). An inspired and gifted teacher (assisted by a staff which she has trained) has brought them into touch with good literature, has helped them to build up a library of books which are worth read-

¹ I ought now to say “was.”

ing, and has encouraged them to express themselves freely in prose and verse. In other words, their literary capacity has been liberated by judicious and sympathetic training.

But the capacity was there, waiting to be liberated.¹ If it had not been there, the teachers of those girls would have laboured in vain. And if it was latent in each of those girls, waiting for some magician's wand to liberate it, we may be sure that it is latent in nearly every normal child. And not that particular capacity only. You will find other schools in which other kinds of capacity have been liberated, with equal skill and success,—artistic capacity in one school, dramatic in another, constructive in a third, and so on. The capacity of the normal child is, in brief, limitless. When I say this I mean that we are not in a position to assign any limits to it. The child's personality is a mine in which there are mysterious and apparently inexhaustible treasures waiting to be explored and developed. To explore and develop those buried treasures, to sink shafts here and drive galleries there, to

¹ A cultured stranger who paid his first visit to an elementary school of the ordinary type, and found that the pupils, even in the highest class, cared nothing for poetry or any other kind of literature, and could not express themselves in prose or verse (their compositions being of a prescribed and formal type and in no sense their own), would probably jump to the conclusion that their incapacity was congenital and was due to their being made of common clay. But he would be quite wrong. We are all made of common clay, but the clay of those children would not be a whit more common than that of the girls whose literary taste and capacity surprise all who know their school. The only difference between that school and a host of others is that in the latter the teachers, enslaved to a bad tradition, have repressed capacity, whereas in the former an original teacher has liberated it.

help the child to realize his infinite potentialities, is the function of education. When will it be able to fulfil that function? Not until men have convinced themselves that the realization of potentialities is life, and that the aim of the educator should therefore be to liberate not to repress.

The infinitude of the inheritance which the child brings with him into the world is of many dimensions. The religious phenomenon known as conversion (if I may be allowed to repeat words which I have used elsewhere)¹ with the sudden transition which it sometimes effects from the very worst in a man to the very best; the winning of V.C.'s and other rewards of courage and devotion by criminals and other "detrimentals" on the field of battle; the up-surgings, in seasons of supreme crisis, of heroism and self-sacrifice from unsuspected abysses in some seemingly commonplace soul; the sudden melting of a hardened heart in the sunshine of sympathy and kindness; the transforming influence of the passion of personal love on a man's whole attitude towards life—these and other phenomena of a kindred nature, which, though necessarily rare (for only exceptional combinations of circumstances can produce them), are not therefore to be regarded as abnormal, seem to show that the unfathomed depths of man's nature are as illimitable as its lateral range. "It is a wonder," wrote one of our newspaper correspondents during the late War, "that never palls, but is always new: the spirit which these men of ours possess, from no matter what corner of the Empire they may have come. One wonders where the grumblers, the cowards, the mean people whom one

¹ "The Secret of Happiness."

thought one met in ordinary life have gone. They are not here. Or, if they are, they are uplifted and transfigured. They doubtless, many of them, could not explain or express it, but some wind has blown upon them; the inspiration of a great cause has come into them, some sense of comradeship and brotherhood inspires them, something has made true soldiers and gallant men of them all." The transfiguration of the "plain average man" which is described in this passage proves conclusively that there are immense reserves of spiritual vitality in his soul, and that though for the most part those forces lie dormant and undreamed of, they can awake and energize whenever some great crisis makes its mute appeal to the man's highest self.

I have said that the real basis of democracy is the equality of all men in the sight of God. When we say that men are equal in the sight of God, we mean that there is an equalizing principle in them which dwarfs to nothingness all the differences and distinctions to which they cling so fondly. We can now see that this equalizing principle—the immortal soul, the infinite in man—is no metaphysical abstraction, no shadowy mystery, no elusive phantom, but an ever present reality, an inexhaustible fountain of potentiality on which we are always drawing, and in realizing which, as we take it up, little by little, into our conscious being, we carry on all but the purely physical processes of our life; a fountain from which spring unceasingly all the higher energies which are characteristic of man as man; a fountain of latent capacity, latent versatility, latent power, latent character, latent will. If men are equal in this sense of the word, democracy, as a principle of government, is founded on

a rock. For the right to share in the government of one's country means the right to control the environment in which a man lives, and into which his children are born : and if every man, without regard to class or position or property or any other source of inequality, had unlimited reserves of potentiality in himself, and if the realization of potentiality is effected through reaction to environment, the claim of the lowliest of men to regulate the affairs of the community to which he happens to belong is as strong as the claim of the mightiest.

Let us now go back to the democratic formula—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. The words have been placed in their right order. Equality is the keyword. Apart from equality there is no meaning in liberty, and no hope of fraternity. If men are equal because there are infinite possibilities in each of them, they have the right to demand liberty for the realization of those possibilities ; they have the right to demand release from needless and injurious pressure. The pressure of government on the individual citizen cannot be dispensed with if social order is to be maintained ; and, with the advance of science and the increasing centralization of social life, it will become more stringent as time goes on. But in the ideal democracy the pressure is less injurious than under any other type of government, because it emanates from all the members of the community ; because it is submitted to by each as being the will of all ; because each citizen, as a member of a self-governing community, has imposed it on himself. Pressure from within is freedom. This is as true of the life of a community as of the individual soul. Equality, again, is the fountain head of fraternity, of comradeship. For the chief hindrance to

the spread of the spirit of comradeship is the existence of those invidious and oppressive distinctions of class and caste, in which selfishness has entrenched itself, and which seem all-important to our purblind eyes. But, by comparison with the infinite possibilities which are in all men, distinctions of class and caste count for nothing; and in proportion as men realize their latent possibilities and become aware of their own infinitude, the social and economic barriers between man and man will lose their sinister significance, and the sense of fraternity, of universal comradeship, will begin to possess men's hearts. Then, and not till then, will it become possible for the government of all, by all and for all, to establish itself on earth.

In conclusion : If liberty is the breath of democracy's being, fraternity is its life-blood. But what of equality, without which there can be neither liberty nor fraternity? Is it not the soul of democracy, its other self ?

CHAPTER IX

DIVINE IMMANENCE

THE problem of human equality may be looked at from a somewhat different point of view. The dream of the democrat is that, instead of being in bondage to social and economic distinctions, men of all sorts and conditions should meet on the platform of their common humanity and there work together, first for the good of their respective communities, and then for the good of the whole human race.

What do we mean by the words "common humanity"? What is the common element in human nature? If we took the first hundred numbers and asked what was their greatest common measure (or, as arithmeticians now call it, their highest common factor) the answer would be unity; and unity is but one degree removed from zero. If we took a hundred sand-heaps, varying in size from a single grain to a sandhill in the desert, and asked what they had in common, the answer would be a single grain of sand. From these examples we see that when we are dealing with abstract or inanimate things the "greatest common measure" is a minimum. When we pass on to things which live and grow, the problem changes its character. If we took a hundred peaches, ranging in size and condition from the minute green

knob which has only just set to the fully ripened fruit, and asked what they had in common, the answer would be twofold: actually, nothing or next to nothing; potentially, the perfection of peach-hood. In the case of living things, what is common to all the members of a given species is the type itself, the ideal perfection which each member is striving to attain. This exists in each member as a possibility, and as such it is their bond of union, the basis of their fellowship in the community to which they belong. It is the same with man. What is common to all men is the ideal of manhood, the perfect man.

We have seen that all men are equal because there are infinite possibilities in each of them. We can now identify the infinite in man with the ideal of manhood. We can see that if we could realize all our possibilities, we should have fulfilled our destiny, we should have found the ideal man. Ideals are always, and of inner necessity, unattainable. Even the ideal peach is still a dream. And what of the ideal man? Is he not a dream beyond all dreams, beyond all possibilities of dreaming? Yet he is in each of us as a dream to be realized—the paradox is unavoidable; and because he is in each of us we are all equal in the sight of God.

For in truth that indwelling ideal, at once nearer to us than breathing and further from us than the farthest star—that ever-to-be-realized yet ever unrealizable perfection, which weighs and measures and judges all our actualities of development and achievements,—is God. If it is not God, what is it? And where is God to be found? The conception of a God who is above and beyond Nature has been tried and found wanting. Its

practical failure is its final disproof. And if God is not above and beyond Nature, where is he but at the heart of Nature? And is not the heart of Nature, for us men, the heart of human nature, the heart of man?

The conception of a God who is above and beyond Nature has, I say, failed in practice. Does it not also fail as a theory whenever we come to close quarters with it and try to determine what it really means? The idea of a supernatural revelation bases itself on the assumption that it is possible for absolute reality to unveil itself to human eyes. This is an obvious delusion. In entering into relation with man, absolute reality at once ceases to be absolute. What the recipient of the revelation sees is not God as he is in himself, but just so much of God as he, being what he is, is able to apprehend. If a supernatural revelation were possible, the words in which the divine message was formulated—the text of the sacred scripture, the clauses of the authentic creed—would be absolutely valid, intrinsically true. But a message from God is no message if it is not charged with spiritual truth. And spiritual truth appeals to the emotional, imaginative side of a man and therefore has different meanings for different minds and says different things to different hearts. The prophet who took upon himself to say, “The word of the Lord came to me,” or “Thus saith the Lord,” had no doubt a clearer and deeper insight into reality than ordinary men; and so far as he had such insight he was the recipient, if we choose to put it so, of a divine revelation. But the revelation came to him from within his own being, not from without the confines of Nature. His thoughts, his visions, his words surged up from the mysterious depths

of his buried life. If they came from God—and the response that they won guarantees their divine origin—they came from no supernatural deity, but from the God who is at the heart of man. At the heart of man, and therefore at the heart of Nature, at the heart of the Universe.

This is the immanent or indwelling God. Is he all that there is of God? I do not say so. No man can see God as he is in himself. Yet some men see far more of God than others; and there are men who, from the spiritual heights to which they have climbed, see so much that the desire to see more and still more merges itself at last in the dream of seeing all. So many and so great are the variations, within the limits of human experience, in man's vision of reality, ranging as they do from almost total blindness to the highest level of spiritual clairvoyance, that they suggest to us that there may be such a thing as *ideal vision*—the counterpart of ideal being—and that somehow, somewhere, in some timeless moment, it may be possible to see God as he really is. Possible—yes, but for God alone. The Universe, the All of Being, seen as it really is, seen by its own all-seeing eye, seen as God sees it, is very God of very God, divine in the ultimate sense of the most ultimate of all words.

This is the transcendent God. Let us leave him in his transcendence, in his Holy of Holies. The thought of him will always haunt us; but we must forbear to hold intercourse with it or we shall run the risk of profaning the most sacred of all mysteries. Transcendent though he be, he is no more beyond Nature than he is in Nature. His Holy of Holies is everywhere. It is in the world without us. It is in our hearts. But wherever

it may be, it is still the Holy of Holies, and we may never enter it. The glory of the transcendent God is for himself alone. If we would see even the reflection of it, we must strive with a lifelong striving to enter into oneness with the source of it, we must strive to become divine. In other words, we must be true, at all costs, to the light that lighteth all men; for it is through the immanent God that the transcendent God reveals himself to man.

In Christian belief the immanent God is known as the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has fallen into the hands of theologians, who have dealt with it according to their wont. They have de-spiritualized and de-vitalized what is really a poetical idea—true with the deep truth of the soul's subconscious poetry—and transformed it into a quasi-scientific conception. They have presented the Holy Spirit to conscious thought as the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and have taken great pains to set forth in a series of propositions his precise relations to the other Persons—the Father and the Son.¹ And so the faithful,

¹ Official Christianity has always worshipped or tried to worship the transcendent God. It has indeed paid formal homage (as in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit) to the immanent God, but it has not really believed in him. If it had, it would have understood that when Christ said "I and my Father are one," he was speaking for the whole human race. It has left the cult of the immanent God to the mystics, whom it has always regarded with suspicion and mistrust, and whom at times it has denounced and persecuted. The story of Bossuet's persecution of Madame Guyon and Fénelon is familiar to the student of French history. Yet the spirit of Madame Guyon's teaching is summed up in the saying, "It is necessary to love

without troubling themselves about those metaphysical details, have thought of the Holy Spirit as *a* ghostly person, flitting about (in the guise of a dove) from man to man, entering into the hearts that are worthy to receive him, withdrawing himself from the wicked and the worldly, directing the affairs of the Church in the absence of its ascended Lord, and performing sundry miracles such as changing the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper into the body and blood of Christ. And all the while the Holy Spirit has been at the heart of the Universe, at the heart of Nature, at the heart of Man.

For the immanent God is the life of all life and the soul of every soul. He who believes that life is the highest form of energy and that soul-life is the highest form of life, will go on to believe—borne along, as it were, by the impetus of his faith—that there is a higher reality which is to soul-life what soul-life is to life, and what life is to energy. And as he means by God supreme reality, he will call that well-spring of his being—and of all being—Divine. And if you question him further as to his faith, he will tell you that the lines of his desire, his hope, his aspiration, his adoration, his life, all converge on that central altar, on the One which is the fountain-head of all unity, on the Infinite which is the fountain-head of all infinitude, on the Spirit which is the fountain-head of all spirituality, on the Life which is the fountain-head of soul-life, of life, of energy.

God for himself alone, inspired neither by hope of eternal happiness nor by dread of eternal pain.” Did Bossuet ever say anything as true as this ?

CHAPTER X

THE LIVING WHOLE

SUPERNATURALISM is a compromise between the idealism of man's heart and the materialism of his conscious thought. If supernaturalism is rejected we must make our choice between materialism and idealism as rival philosophies and therefore as rival schemes of life.

The basic assumption of materialism is that what is ultimate in analysis is supremely real. The basic assumption of idealism is that what is ultimate in synthesis is supremely real. What is ultimate in analysis is an (at present) unknown infinitesimal.¹ What is ultimate in synthesis is the totality of things conceived of as an organic whole.

To which of these opposites are we to ascribe reality? I do not propose to discuss this question. In the first place, the controversy, as a controversy, is necessarily futile, for the plain reason that the ultimate appeal in it is not to logic but to temperamental or quasi-temperamental bias. I have indeed, in the course of communing with myself, tried to think out the problem, but I know

¹ Or so it seems. But too far east is west; and it is possible that the path of analysis leads to a different goal from this. This, however, is the goal of materialistic thought.

now that long ago temperamental bias decided the issue of my thinking. In the second place, to take part in the controversy would be beside my present purpose. For my object in writing this book is to plead for a revision of our conception of God. But materialism, so far as it is self-conscious and sincere, rejects the idea of God. Could it do otherwise? Materialism makes for atomism in thought, and therefore in life as far as it comes under the control of thought; and atomism is the negation of religion. For the mainspring of religion is the sense of obligation towards what is regarded as ultimately real; and to deify an unknown infinitesimal, or to feel any sense of obligation towards it, is beyond man's power. Besides, as a matter of experience, the thoroughgoing materialist is always either an avowed atheist or one who conceals his atheism behind the conveniently vague name of agnosticism. He finds, or tries to find, the motives and sanctions and principles of conduct in his relations to his fellow-men; but he has no commerce with the idea of God. As I have defined his position for him, I cannot do less than define my own. I have taken the validity of the idea of God for granted; and as the basic assumption of idealism is one of the constituent elements of that idea, I have obviously committed myself to the idealistic view of things.

In doing this I have but lifted into the light of consciousness the subconscious faith of the average man. If I were disposed to argue on behalf of my creed I would appeal to this fact as an unanswerable argument. The materialism of the average man is on the surface only. In his subconscious depths he is an incurable idealist. The supernaturalism which has so long dominated his

life, is, as we have seen, his attempt to set forth idealistic prepossessions and longings in a materialistic notation. As supernaturalism is being discredited by the logic of experience, he must now make his choice between the materialism of his conscious thought and the idealism of his heart, of his subconscious vision. To formulate this choice, to present it to consciousness, is to solve the corresponding problem. When man *realizes* that he has to choose between materialism and idealism as philosophies of life, he will surely choose the latter. Men believe what they do believe, not what they think they believe, still less what they say they believe. The time has come for man to do for himself what I have been trying to do for him. He must become aware of what he does believe. He must lift the idealism of his heart into the light of consciousness and adopt it as his creed.

Let us return to the immanent God. In the doctrine of divine immanence the dynamic view of the Universe triumphs over the static. The transference of creative activity from Nature to a supernatural Deity had reduced Nature to the level of a state (as opposed to a process). With the recall of God from his exile in the supernatural world, Nature becomes a perennial fountain of creative activity—the fountain-head being that innermost reality which we may now call God,—and the being of Nature becomes a life. And because the being of Nature is a life, the world in which we find ourselves, the Universe as we call it, is indeed a universe,—unified by the life which is in it,—an all-embracing organism, a living whole.

But is the Universe a living whole? Who can answer this question? The unity of the Universe is as undemonstrable as is the infinitude of the soul of man. But if,

while rejecting the idea of the supernatural, we retain the idea of the One Supreme God, we commit ourselves to the assumption that the Universe is a living whole. For God, as the fountain-head of life and energy, must needs be the fountain-head of all life and all energy. If he were not, he would be neither One nor Supreme, for he would be exposed to the rivalry of other Gods. When proof (in the strict sense of the word, the proof which warrants one in saying "This is so") is, in the nature of things, impossible, we must be content to approach reality through the medium of our own ideas. But the obligation which our own ideas lay upon us must be accepted. To evade it is to stultify the whole process of our thought.

From the idea of universal life we pass on to that of universal growth. Wherever there is life there is growth, or the opposite of growth—decay; and decay, which is the undoing of growth, ends in death. When the organism is finite, its life has an upward curve which we call growth, a turning-point which we call maturity, and a downward curve which we call decay. But if the organism is infinite, its growth must be eternal. The turning-point is never reached. The upward curve is—or at least may be and should be—for ever.

We have hitherto thought of the Universe as the finished product of a creative will. We must now think of it as the apocalypse of a self-evolving life. We must think of it as being in process of development, as growing towards an unattainable maturity. But growth is the realization, or attempted realization, of an ideal. The type, the ideal, is in the seed; and its effort to realize itself is the efficient principle of the growth and there-

fore of the life of the organism. In the case of plants and animals the pursuit of the ideal, as an ideal, as that which is infinite and unattainable, as the archetype rather than the realizable type, is for the species, not for the individual. The individual arrives at maturity, which is a partial realization of the ideal, and then decays and dies. The species, if it is not trampled down in the general struggle for existence or starved and stunted by its effort to adapt itself to unfavourable conditions, continues to evolve its latent potentialities, and to move towards its archetypal goal.¹ The pursuit of the ideal by the species is spoken of as evolution; the pursuit of it by the individual, as growth. In the case of the Universe, which is presumably infinite and all-embracing, evolution and growth are one. The self-realization of the ideal is an eternal process. There is no turning point, no maturity, no decay.

So at least it seems to us who are in the midst of the process. For us the ideal is indeed an ideal—unattainable, unapproachable, unimaginable—and yet an ever-present reality, the true life of the whole and therefore of each one of us, intimately our own, nearer indeed to the heart of a man than is his own self-conscious self. And our name for the ideal is God.

If these things are so, if the equalizing element in human nature, which is the real basis of communal life,

¹ When man takes a species in hand and aids its development with judicious breeding and culture, the self-realization of its archetypal ideal makes rapid progress. But the movement, though it may go on for ever, has limits which it may never overpass. It is no more an adventure into the infinite than is the arithmetical series $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8}$, which may struggle on for ever but will never quite attain to 2.

is the presence in each of us of the ideal man ; and if the ideal man is the individualization of the immanent God,—then it may be possible for the ideal community to evolve itself on earth, but only because—and so far as—it will have at the heart of it, as its *ιδέα* or principle of development, the ideal of all communities, the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER XI

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

GOD, the self-realizing ideal of the Universe, works in and through each of us for purposes of his own. It is open to us to make those purposes our own. Indeed it is our destiny to do so. But it is also open to us, if not to defeat that destiny, at least to thwart and retard it.

When we say that the Universe is in process of development we imply that the work of creation is still going on, and that—since “in no respect to grow is to cease to live”—it will go on for ever. We, as conscious beings, are taking part in it. How shall we best play our parts? And, to begin with, how are we to think of the Universe? We are assuming that it is a living whole. To what further conception does this assumption open the way?

There are, I believe, men of science who have persuaded themselves that this little planet of ours is the only world which supports life. There is nothing to be said in defence of this theory except that the precise physical conditions under which life evolves itself in this world are probably not repeated elsewhere. To assume that life cannot evolve itself under any other physical conditions is to carry geocentricity too far. In the Kingdom of God there are surely many mansions, as many perhaps as the sands of the sea.

Geocentricity is a particular species of egoism. So is that complacent acceptance of our own positive experiences as authoritative and final, which is responsible for the assumption that the physical plane of being is the only plane, and the kindred assumption that man's life in the flesh is his only life. These are assumptions pure and simple. There is nothing that has been or can be said in support of them which is not either mere assertion or a flagrant begging of the question. Their claim to control our whole outlook on life, to clip the wings of imagination, to limit the range of our speculative enterprises, may therefore be ignored.

There is, however, no reason why we should not argue from the actualities of our life on earth to the possibilities of the cosmic life. Or rather there is every reason why we should. For every adventure into the unknown a base of operations is needed. If we are to investigate, speculatively and imaginatively, the constitution of the Universe, we must make this planet of ours and our experiences on it our base for the most audacious of all enterprises. This is the right use to make of experience. The wrong use is to fall back upon it, as a defeated general falls back upon his fortified base, and shut ourselves up in it and refuse to look beyond its walls.

The planet on which we live pulsates with life. This is the first thing that we can say about it. And where it does not pulsate with life, it is built up of energy. The very *primordia rerum* are dynamic, not static. The "bricks of the Universe," which we once believed ourselves to have discovered, have long since melted away. What seems to us to be dead inert matter is really a storehouse of latent energy. Explosive forces are locked

up in it which, like the explosives that are used in war, can either fertilize or desolate the world,—forces of such tremendous potentiality that the release of them (if that were possible), according to the way in which it was done and the end that was in view, would either transform earth into a garden of Eden or lay it in ruinous heaps. And physical energy is next of kin to physical life, the boundary line between the two being in fact undefinable. And physical life has soul-life at the heart of it. May it not be, then, that the earth, our microcosm, is a living organism, the body of a mighty soul; and that in this respect it is at once a symbol and a sample of the macrocosm, which we have assumed to be the epiphany of the indwelling spirit of God? If we must leave this question unanswered, we may at least conjecture that the greater, like the lesser, cosmos is built up of physical energy and pulsates with life.

Let us now turn to the actualities of life on earth. I am a conscious being and am addressing myself to conscious beings. It is with conscious life, then, that I am mainly concerned. I find that, with the dawn of consciousness, life tends to become communal. The higher organisms come together and form communities, for purposes of mutual help and protection, in such wise that the communal or herd life becomes an integral part of the life of each member of the community. This is true of many beasts and birds—not to speak of bees and ants—the chief exceptions being the *carnivora* and *raptores*, the destroyers of life on their own plane, which pair and rear families but otherwise lead solitary lives.¹

¹ There are, of course, exceptions to this sub-rule. For example, wolves and jackals hunt in packs.

And it is pre-eminently true of man. Here, where we rise to high levels of consciousness, the social instinct is irresistibly strong. And the higher the level of consciousness, the more do communities multiply, and the more highly organized do they become, the growing complexity of a community manifesting itself, of inner necessity, in the outgrowth of sub-communities of various grades and sizes, just as in a highly developed organism the nervous system has many centres and sub-centres, the more vital of which are under the control, direct or indirect, of the ruling centre, the brain. In civilized countries each citizen belongs to many communities, ranging in size from his own family to his own country, besides belonging sub-consciously to two communities which are larger than the largest of these,—the Human Commonwealth and the Cosmic Commonwealth, the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God.

Then again each individual organism is also a community, an organized society of living beings, a commonwealth. My body, for example, is a commonwealth of living cells. And so is every physical organism. Life is built up of life. What is organized, when an organism is evolved, is living matter, not dead.

With these facts before us, may we not think of the Universe, the all-embracing organism, as a social community, built up no doubt of many sub-communities, each of which is a world in itself, yet being in some sort the fatherland of us dwellers on earth, in that as conscious beings we are numbered among its citizens and can play our parts accordingly, if we will but rise to the level of our high calling and take up the burden of our infinite responsibility?

Of all the communities to which a man consciously belongs, the one which means most to him and with which his life is most intimately connected is his country. For to his country, if it is well governed, he owes most of the things that make life worth living,—security from hostile action, legal protection, social order, opportunities for self-development, a tradition which he understands and loves. What is the relation between his country and himself? In the ideal community the people are the State. The soul of the people is the real ruling power. It symbolizes itself in King or President; but it works through the people as a whole, incarnating itself, as it were, in each member of the community, constraining him to identify himself with its aims and plans, its successes and failures, its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears,—to make all these his own, to glow with pride when it does well, to blush with shame when it does ill; inspiring him to dedicate himself to its service, to live for it,—if need be, to die for it. When the life of the individual is dominated by the sense of oneness with the life of the community, when each citizen feels that he owes all, and that he cannot do less than give all¹, to his country, then we have the ideal commonwealth, and the problem which sums up in itself all other social and political problems has been solved.

May we not conjecture that the Universe is organized in some such fashion as this; or rather that it is the

¹ Subject, of course, to the prior claims of the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God. He loves his country best who regards his fellow-citizens as his fellow-men; and he loves his fellow-men best who regards them as his brethren, as the children of his all-loving Father.

archetypal commonwealth, of which the ideal State, when—if ever—it is realized on earth, will prove to be a copy? May we not conjecture that the soul of it, incarnating itself in each member of the community from the highest to the lowest, is its ruler, in the true sense of the word,—no irresponsible autocrat directing its affairs from without, but a fountain of love and wisdom and power controlling its corporate life and guiding its evolution from within? And may we not identify this soul of the Universe,—this “presiding genius of the Cosmic Commonwealth,” this “symbol of its organic unity,” this “source and goal of all its vital energies,” this “central plexus of all its efferent and afferent nerves,”¹—with the All Father, with the Immanent God?

¹ These are extracts from a passage in “The Secret of the Cross,” in which I first outlined the idea of the Cosmic Commonwealth.

CHAPTER XII

EACH FOR ALL

HOW can the citizen of the Cosmic Commonwealth best serve the community? How did the worshipper of the autocrat of the Universe bear himself towards the king of kings and his all-embracing kingdom? For the latter he cared little or nothing. The affairs of the Universe were no concern of his. He may have been taught to love his fellowmen. But he was also taught that all who were not of his faith were outside the pale of salvation—the enemies of God, and therefore (if he and his teachers were true to the logic of intolerance) his own hereditary enemies. Even in his own religious community he did not learn the lesson of comradeship, of disinterested devotion to the common weal. To his Church he owed (as he believed) the means of grace and salvation. What did he give it in return? It was only through membership of it and through obedience to its directions that he could hope to be saved. Therefore he believed whatever it told him to believe, and did (if the world, the flesh, and the devil were not too strong for him) whatever it told him to do. Further than this his loyalty did not go. The Church was divinely commissioned and was therefore in safe hands. Its salvation was fully provided for. He could thus

concentrate all his energies on providing for his own. To secure for himself—whatever might happen to others—the boon of salvation, to be plucked as a brand from the burning, was his first and last concern.

It was as a courtier, then, with all the vices of the courtier, not as a patriot, that he approached the throne of God. What form did his service take? God had given him rules for the conduct of his life. Whether these were elaborated into a Code or interpreted to him by his Church, mattered little. What did matter was that they should be obeyed—obeyed because he had been commanded to obey them, and because obedience would be rewarded and disobedience punished everlastingly, not because they appealed to his conscience and his heart. He was to honour his father and his mother, not because he loved them, but because he was commanded to honour them, and because he would be rewarded for doing so. He was to abstain from adultery, not out of regard for his neighbour and his neighbour's wife, but out of regard for the Seventh Commandment and for the penalty attached to the breach of it. And so on. Under this scheme of life obedience to the letter of God's law took the place of devotion to the spirit; regard for material considerations, of devotion to a spiritual ideal; regard for one's own individual salvation, of devotion to the common weal. The truth is that patriotism, the disinterested surrender of self to the community, presupposes freedom. The worshipper of the Divine Autocrat was a courtier because he was also—and primarily—a slave.

In the Cosmic Commonwealth there is no place for the courtier. The first and last lesson which the citizen

has to learn is that of unselfish devotion ; and the ultimate object of his devotion is the Commonwealth itself, the Infinite Whole. He will indeed have to go through a long apprenticeship before he will be able to prove his loyalty to the widest of all communities. Yet in each stage in his apprenticeship that seemingly impossible loyalty will, though he may not know it, sustain and guide him.

He will begin by doing his duty to his neighbour, his fellow-citizen, the fellow-member of this or that community. He will do his duty to him, not because he has been commanded to do so, not because the path of his duty has been accurately prescribed for him, not because he hopes to be rewarded for walking in it or fears to be punished for straying from it, but because the sentiment of comradeship, of fellowship, of loyalty to the community as a whole and therefore to each of its members, is both a constraining force and a guiding light.

In doing his duty to his neighbour he will be learning to surrender self. Self is his great enemy. Selfishness, the vice which is behind all other vices, is essentially anti-social. It tends to isolate a man from his kind. But what do we mean by self ? As the being of man admits of infinite development, we cannot say what self really is. The true, the ideal self has yet to declare itself. The self which makes us selfish is the actual self claiming to be ideal and therefore seeking to arrest the growth of the soul. To subdue that self and keep on subduing it is at once to serve the community and to save one's own soul alive.

Our citizen has broken, for good and all, with legalism, the morality of mechanical obedience, the morality of

slaves. But he is no antinomian. He will cheerfully yield to the pressure of tradition, code, and custom, except so far as, in doing so, he is disloyal to a higher law. Nor is he a mere sentimentalist in morals, a creature of mood and whim and impulse. He realizes, for example, that to give alms to the first beggar you meet is an anti-social act. His neighbour is his comrade because, for one thing, he is a member of the same community; and his attitude towards his neighbour will be controlled, if not determined, by regard for the well-being of the community as a whole.

Duty to one's neighbour, as a fellow-member of a community, and duty to the community as such may almost be said to coincide. The same may be said of the spirit of comradeship and the spirit of loyalty to the common weal. The citizen of the Cosmic Commonwealth who has learnt the lesson of communal devotion will have gone far along the path to his ideal goal. The well-being of this or that community is not, however, an end in itself. If it were, the loyalty of a robber to his gang would be worthy of all praise. Communal devotion may be selfish to the core. A man should be ready to live and die for his country. But he should also be ready, on occasion, to absolve himself from obedience to its orders, and in no case should he allow regard for its interests to determine his outlook on life and his standard of right and wrong. It is the assumption that the claim of the State on the devotion of the citizen is absolute and final which has demoralized Germany and brought about her downfall. A man must serve his neighbour, not only because he is his fellow-citizen, but also because he is his fellow-man; and he must serve his

country, not only because it is *his* country, but also because to serve it is the best way, as far as he can see, in which he can serve his kind.

Does his duty end with service to his kind? Not if he believes in the Universal God. The assumption that the life on earth is the only life and that the physical plane is the only sphere of man's activity is, as we have seen, assumption and nothing more. The positive evidence for there being other lives and other spheres of life is accumulating fast. But there is other evidence; and for some of us this other evidence, intangible and imponderable though it be, will more than suffice. The call of the Infinite is ever ringing through the soul. The stars of midnight have their message for it. "The Eternities and Immensities" claim it as their own. Man feels, in his heart of hearts, that he has laid hold upon the pillars of the Universe and that nothing can destroy him but the downfall of the whole cosmic temple,—in other words, that if he is unreal there is no such thing as reality. And when, as sometimes happens, the spirit of a man grows younger as his body grows older, the sense of his own indestructibility overwhelms him, and he laughs the sophistries of sense-bound reason to scorn.

To look beyond death is to widen indefinitely the sphere of civic duty. If a man is to serve his neighbour, not only because he is his fellow-citizen but also because he is his fellow-man, he must go on to serve him, not only because he is his fellow-man, but also because he is his brother, in a deeper and more intimate sense of the word, because both are sons of the All-Father, the Universal God, and therefore members, through that mystic kinship, of the One all-embracing State.

How is a man to prove his loyalty to the Cosmic Commonwealth? He has some idea as to how he can best serve his neighbour, his country, and his kind. But he has no idea how he can best serve the Universe. He cannot foresee what part will be allotted to him when he has played his part on earth. Nor can he see how the part that he is playing on earth contributes to the welfare of the Infinite Whole. There is, however, one thing which he can do while he is waiting and wondering. *He can try to fit himself for service.* How? By developing himself to the uttermost. By transforming self in every possible direction. Above all, by learning, and never ceasing to learn, the great lesson of unselfish devotion. By learning, everywhere and at all times, to live for the universal rather than for the individual self. The supreme choice, the choice between the Universe and self, has been with him from the very beginning, has been present, unknown to him, in every decision that he has ever made. Consciously to surrender self to the Universe will be the last stage in his spiritual development; and it is a stage which will last for ever. Unconsciously, he has been learning to make that great surrender from the first day on which he subdued self-will.

When he has made his choice between the Universe and self, when he has responded to the call of the Infinite and the Ideal, the greatest of all adventures will await him. Where shall he look for guidance in that adventure? To the Inward Light. To the Holy Spirit. To the Immanent God. The soul of the Universe, the soul of the Cosmic Commonwealth, will teach him how best to fit himself for its service.

CHAPTER XIII

ALL FOR EACH

THE motto of the ideal commonwealth is "each for all and all for each." In the Cosmic Commonwealth the citizen owes everything to the community, and the good citizen does his best to pay his debt. What is this debt which can never be paid in full? What does the largest of all communities do for each of its citizens? It does many things for him. But it does one thing which includes all other things: it brings sanity, perfect health, the health of growth, of everlasting youth, within his reach. This is the best thing that it can do for him. It is also—since perfect health qualifies for perfect service—the best thing that it can do for itself.

What is the secret of sanity? I have just identified sanity with perfect health. This is the final meaning of the word. Let us begin with its initial meaning. We mean by sanity normal health.¹ If we would know what constitutes normality we must study departures from the norm. The more flagrant the departure from the norm the more deeply will it initiate us into the mysteries of normality. In the case of the human psychē, when departures from the norm are flagrant and persistent,

¹ In the last resort the initial and the final meanings coincide. See p. 86.

we arrive at last at insanity. What, then, is the secret of insanity? The question is one for psychology. The latest word in psychology is psycho-analysis; and as it happens, it is to a systematic study of the phenomena of insanity that psycho-analysis owes its origin and the general course of its development. So let us turn to the psycho-analyst for instruction and guidance.

Insanity takes many forms. One of the commonest of these and, from the point of view of psychology, the most significant, is what is known as "dissociation of consciousness." We are told that "a vast number of abnormal phenomena ranging from hallucination and delusion to . . . complicated phantasy production . . . are to be regarded as examples of dissociation."¹ What do we mean by dissociation of consciousness? "We mean that the mind has lost that homogeneity which is the ideal of the normal personality and has become disintegrated into more or less independent portions, each pursuing its own course and development without reference to the welfare of the whole." And this disintegration invariably owes its existence to the presence of a conflict. By a conflict is meant an internal conflict, a civil war in the kingdom of the mind. The parties to this internal conflict are, on the one hand the personality as a whole, on the other hand what is known to psychology as a *complex*.

What is a complex? One authority defines it as "a system of connected ideas with a strong emotional tone and a tendency to produce action of a definite character."

¹ All the passages quoted in this chapter, with one specified exception, are taken from "The Psychology of Insanity," by Dr. Bernard Hart.

Another authority tells us that "when a mass of ideas and emotions collect round a nucleus in the mind a system is formed which will react in a particular way to incoming stimuli," and that "this system is called a complex."¹

A complex is not a thing to be ashamed of. If we had not, each of us, many complexes, we should be less than human; or rather, we should fall below the level of organic life. A complex is nothing more nor less than a sub-centre of the soul's life, analogous (within limits) to a nerve-centre in the body, or to a centre of local government in a well-organized state. A hobby, as psychoanalysts remind us, is a particular variety of complex. So is each of the many sub-selves which each of us is aware of in himself—the domestic self, the social self, the professional self, the commercial self, the artistic self, the religious self, and so on. If a man is deeply interested in a subject of study, a corresponding complex is formed in his mind. If he takes up a cause with energy and enthusiasm, such as the emancipation of woman, social reform, educational reform, the remedying of an evil or an injustice, a mass of ideas and emotions will collect round this centre of interest, and a complex will be formed. Different men take up different hobbies, different subjects of study, and different causes, and the corresponding complexes are therefore not strictly analogous to the nerve-centres of the body, which are common to all men. This differentiation is due to the fact that the constitution of the soul is far more complicated and much farther removed from finality than that of the body and that consciousness extends indef-

¹ "Dream Psychology," by Dr. Maurice Nicoll.

initely the environment of the race, whereas circumstances rigorously limit the environment of the individual, the result being that no two individuals have exactly the same environment or the same opportunities for the formation of complexes. But however great may be the diversity of complexes, however much they may vary from man to man, the fact remains that they are sub-centres of the soul's life.

How, then, does a complex cause insanity? By drawing to itself more than its share of the man's thoughts and emotions and so impairing the inward harmony of his soul. More especially is this the case when the complex has a morbid origin, when it has no right to be a sub-centre, as, for example, when a man broods over a wrong which has been done to him or feels remorse for a crime which he has committed.¹ The loss of inward harmony need not amount to insanity. There are few men whose inward harmony is even approximately perfect. Hypertrophy of a complex is a very common phenomenon. A man may easily ride a harmless hobby to death. His devotion to a worthy cause may amount to fanaticism. He may overdo a good habit (such as economy) till it becomes a bad habit (such as stinginess). He may become a monomaniac, a man of one idea, of one absorbing interest, of one cankering grievance. And yet he may be far removed from the insanity which necessitates

¹ Complexes may perhaps be classified as *essential*, *desirable*, *useful*, *harmless*, and *morbid*. A morbid complex, if not duly controlled, may easily become malignant. But there is no complex which will not, if hypertrophied beyond measure, become first morbid and then malignant, and therefore a menace to the sanity of the soul.

confinement and restraint. He is, however, on the road to that goal; and if he does not keep himself in hand he may possibly arrive at it. When hypertrophy of a complex is carried so far that what ought to be (at most) a mere sub-centre of a man's life becomes, whether permanently or temporarily, *the* centre, or, in its attempt to become *the* centre, disintegrates the man's personality, then we have insanity, in the strict sense of the word. In other words, when a complex becomes a centre of rebellious and therefore disruptive tendency, when it provokes a civil war which will lead to its dividing with the ruling self the kingdom of the man's life, and may even, in extreme cases, end in its forcibly usurping the throne, then its victim is said to be insane, and for his own sake, as well as for the sake of his neighbours, he has to be interned.

According to psycho-analysts, the conflict which produces insanity is, as a rule, one between "primitive instinct"¹ and "herd instinct." I doubt if the problem of conflict is quite so simple as this. The soul is a complex of many complexes; and the civil war which sometimes afflicts it may be expected to have many causes and take many forms. It is not easy to say where primitive instinct ends and herd instinct begins. And it is possible to exaggerate the importance of the part that herd instinct plays in man's life. We are told that "from it (herd instinct) the tendencies generally ascribed to tradition and education derive most of their power." It would, I think, be equally correct to say that from tradi-

¹ Dr. Freud, the founder of psycho-analysis, resolves all primitive instinct into sex instinct; but few of his followers go so far as this.

tion and education the tendencies sometimes ascribed to herd instinct derive much of their power. In any case it is well to remember that in our complicated modern society each of us belongs to many herds. There is the family herd, for example, the clan herd, the class herd, the professional herd, the religious herd, the political herd, the national herd, the human herd. And any one of these, if its claims are unduly insistent, may give rise to a complex which will upset the balance of one's life.

On the whole, then, it is safer to say, in general terms, that the normal cause of insanity is a conflict between a usurping, self-assertive sub-self and the self which ought to rule. Even the enthusiasm of humanity, if the enthusiast brings too much self into it—if, for example, he insists on reforming the world in his own particular way—may become a rebellious and dissociative complex, and may even in the last resort give rise to actual insanity. So may devotion to God, if it is allowed to degenerate into religious fanaticism or into undue concern for one's own salvation. Selfishness, in the sense of absorption in a narrow and ever-narrowing self, is of the essence of insanity. The rebellious complex, if we may for the moment personify it, thinks only of itself and subordinates to its own imagined interests the well-being of the whole personality. And this inward selfishness, this claim of the subordinate part to dominate the whole of the man's life, has its counterpart in outward selfishness, in callous indifference to the claims and interests of others and to the demands of social life. "The patients in an asylum have lost the gregarious instincts of the normal man, and the sanctions of traditional conduct have no longer any significance for them. In the milder cases this shows

itself as a loss of interest in the affairs of their fellows, a tendency to be solitary and unsociable, an atrophy of their affections for friends and relations, and an indifference to the ordinary conventions of society. In the advanced cases the change is much more marked, and the mind is completely withdrawn from participation in the life of the herd. The code of conduct imposed by convention and tradition no longer regulates the patient's behaviour, and he becomes slovenly, filthy, degraded and shameless."

When the conflict between the rebellious complex or sub-self and the self which ought to rule ends in actual insanity, what has happened? The ruling self has not been strong enough to enforce its authority. This is the answer which common-sense and psycho-analysis unite in giving. Psycho-analysis sets forth the answer in its own peculiar notation. In cases of insanity "homogeneity" (which is "the ideal of normal personality") "has disappeared because the mind contains elements which are incompatible with each other, and dissociation has arisen as a means of avoiding the storm and stress which the warring of these mutually hostile elements would otherwise inevitably produce." Is not this equivalent to saying that the ruling self has so far yielded to the pressure of the rebellious sub-self as to consent to divide the kingdom with it, just as in history we sometimes read of a monarch who ended a rebellion by allowing the rebel leader either to share the central authority with him or to become ruler of part of his realm. The monarch who could do this was a weak ruler who had never been firmly seated on the throne; and the ruling self which allows a rebellious sub-self to usurp its authority, either in part,

as in cases of dissociation, or, as sometimes happens, in full, proves its incapacity by its failure to put down the rebellion against its lawful rule.

The antidote to civil strife in a community is twofold—to remove legitimate grievances and to strengthen the central authority. Should it not be the same in the soul? Should not our aim be to relax the pressure of tradition and convention on primitive instinct or on any other natural instinct, so far as that pressure is injurious and provocative, and at the same time to strengthen the authority of the ruling self? Psycho-analysts seem to be more concerned with relaxing pressure than with strengthening authority. Some of them, indeed, go perilously near to suggesting that the only way to prevent insanity is to make concessions to primitive instinct.¹ Yet unless the central authority is concurrently strengthened, the policy of indulging primitive instinct by relaxing the pressure to which traditions and codes have subjected it, can lead to nothing but general demoralization.

The truth is that when we are dealing with problems of insanity we are too ready to assume that what is not actually or approximately insane is sane, and that if dissociation of personality can be avoided, all is well. I doubt if we shall ever really master the psychology of insanity until we have materially widened the scope of the idea of sanity; until we have risen to the conception of perfect or ideal, as distinguished from normal, sanity; or rather until we have realized that in the world of life and growth the ideal is the norm. Between actual insanity and perfect sanity, between disintegration of

¹ See in particular "The Psychology of Insanity," by Dr. Bernard Hart, pp. 171, 172.

personality and perfect homogeneity or inward harmony, there are many intervening stages which partake in varying degrees of disharmony, of want of sanity. If we could find a remedy for all these shortcomings we should have made the best possible provision against the outbreak of insanity, which is the natural goal of mental and spiritual disharmony—a goal which the latter may never reach, but towards which it necessarily tends. The problem of securing sanity covers and far overlaps the problem of preventing (and curing) insanity; and it is to the former problem that the psychologist should give his closest attention and his deepest thought.

I have said that for the cure of the civil strife which we call insanity two things are needed—the redress of grievances by the removal of injurious pressure, and the strengthening of the central authority. The two remedies are really one. To redress grievances is to strengthen the central authority. What causes the growth of a morbid complex is, as a rule, either illegitimate pressure, or legitimate pressure carried too far. In the latter case, which is the more common, the source of the pressure is undue regard for tradition and convention, the authority of which is accepted as full and final instead of as partial and provisional. In other words, the source of the pressure is the weakness of the ruling self, which, led astray by the desire for finality, leans exclusively on tradition and convention, instead of trying to walk, in part at least, by its own inward light. And the effect of the pressure which it exerts is to increase its own weakness. For repression, when carried too far, starves and stunts natural tendency, with the result that if the pressure is evenly distributed, growth is

arrested, and if it is unevenly distributed, certain tendencies only being selected for repression, growth becomes inharmonious and one-sided, and balance and symmetry are lost. But whatever tends to arrest or distort the growth of the soul must needs weaken the central authority, for the ruling self is the whole personality, just as in a well-ordered commonwealth the whole community, acting through a hierarchy of nerve centres, is the State.

If, then, the relaxation of injurious pressure is to be accompanied by the strengthening of the central authority, our aim must be, not so much to cure this or that morbid complex, as to secure the well-being of the whole personality by fostering mental and spiritual growth. It is when an organism is making vigorous growth, that the inward harmony of its various vital parts is most nearly perfect; for then all the parts are functioning with one end in view, that of furthering the growth of the whole organism; and as they draw to themselves all the rising sap of the organism's life, there is no opportunity for morbid sub-centres to establish themselves at the expense of the health and harmony of the community. It is to the organism as a whole that the various parts owe allegiance. But what is the organism? The process of growth alone can answer this question. What the organism will be when its process of growth (if healthy and unimpeded) is complete, that it really is. Therefore the parts owe allegiance to the organism, not as it is at the passing moment, but as it will be when it has reached its maturity. In other words, they are sustained and animated and kept in harmony with one another by devotion to a common ideal.

It is the same with the human soul. But there is a difference between the growth of the soul and the growth of any physical organism. The organism does arrive at maturity. It has its moment of consummation. But the growth of the soul goes on, or should go on, for ever. The potentialities of the soul are limitless, and the process of realizing them is a veritable adventure into the infinite. If we would attain to sanity, the sanity of spiritual health, we must pursue that adventure to its limitless limit. We must always, and at all costs, resist the lure of finality. Devotion to an unattainable ideal alone can keep us sane. If we forswear the service of the ideal, and try to content ourselves with finite ends, the worst type of dissociation, dissociation of the actual from the ideal self, may be our doom.

Let us take the case of a man who is neither a criminal nor a lunatic, but who leads a sordid, selfish, self-indulgent, immoral life—an unfaithful husband, an unkind father, a churlish neighbour, a grasping and exacting creditor, a shifty and evasive debtor, unsympathetic, uncharitable, recognizing no obligation which is not legally defined, taking no interest whatever in the deeper issues of life. Such a man is sane enough, as the lunacy laws measure sanity. But he is not sane, in the deeper sense of the word. He has not attained to spiritual health. What is wrong with him? No civil strife mars the harmony of his mean, narrow, ill-spent life. His being, such as it is, is all of a piece. But his very harmony is disharmony. His very sanity is insanity. He has no more attained to wholeness than has a stunted, diseased, misshapen tree. It is true that there is no rebellious, dissociative complex to upset his inward balance. Yet

that balance has been completely and, as it seems, irretrievably upset. For his whole personality, or what passes as such, has degenerated into a rebellious, dissociative complex; and what it is in rebellion against, what it is dissociating itself from, is his own real or ideal self.

Or let us take the case of the miser, a familiar figure in the annals of the human race. Here we have a typical example, not of a personality degenerating into a morbid complex so much as of a morbid complex overrunning the entire field of consciousness and becoming, apparently, the whole man. The miser is a monomaniac, a man of one ignoble but all-absorbing interest. Yet he seldom qualifies for the madhouse. The explanation of this is that, owing to the completeness of the victory won by the complex over the personality, the former is able to annex and use for its own purposes all the psychical machinery of the latter, including its power of reacting to a social environment. In other words, the sub-self has compelled the man, the ruling self, to identify himself with it and devote himself to its service. Hence his apparent sanity. Yet, in the deeper sense of the word, he is insane, and insane in the highest degree. For, in the act of absorbing into itself the whole of his normal personality, the miser in him has dissociated itself, and therefore dissociated him, from his real or ideal self. It has seated itself, a lawless usurper, on the throne of his spirit; and its reign, though orderly to outward view, is really a prolonged riot of insanity. For sanity is health; and health comes with vigorous and successful growth. But the triumph of a rebellious complex means that all the forces which make for the growth of the soul are diverted into one narrow channel, with the result

that the progress of growth—which is nothing if not harmonious and many-sided—is forcibly arrested, and degenerative insanity takes its place.

These are extreme cases. Yet something akin to this is happening to each of us when and so far as we succumb to the lure of finality, and give up that adventure into the infinite which is of the essence of spiritual growth. Self-integration, which is the true antidote to insanity, in every sense of that word, is to be achieved only by realizing the limitless possibilities that are wrapped up in the human embryo, by growing into oneness with that soul of all things which is the true self of each of us. The goal is unattainable. Yet to pause in the pursuit of it is to bring disharmony, or the menace of disharmony, into one's life. The infinite in man is the lawful ruler of all his parts and powers and passions; and it is rebellion against that ruler, it is dissociation of personality, to accept any actual self as the true man.

The secret of sanity, then, is devotion to the infinite and the ideal. Dissociation—disintegration of personality—makes for insanity. If we would be sane, we must take the opposite path, the path of self-integration, the path which leads to wholeness of spirit, to inward harmony. If inward harmony is to be achieved, the whole personality must assert its supremacy over each of the subordinate centres, and so prevent the hypertrophy of any of these, as well as the outgrowth of morbid sub-centres, which cannot establish themselves as long as the legitimate sub-centres are energizing vigorously under the direction and in the service of the whole.

We can now see that in the Cosmic Commonwealth the community renders one service to each of its mem-

bers—a service so great that an eternity of devotion could not repay it. By being infinite, by making demands on us which we can never meet, it makes it possible for us to enjoy the radiant health of never-ending growth. The patriot lives, and is ready to die, for his country, because he has identified himself with it, because he has made, not its interests only but also—in some sort—its very spirit his own; in other words, because he owes to it an immense expansion of his own being. As it is in a human commonwealth so it is in the Cosmic. The loyal citizen of the Universe lives for his country, loses himself in service to it, because in doing so he widens, and never ceases to widen, the scope of his own life. The master aim of his being, though he may not know it, is to find his true self by growing into oneness with the soul of all things, with the Spirit of God. This aim will take him beyond all horizons, known and unknown, imagined and unimagined, imaginable and unimaginable. He may pursue it through an infinity of lives and in an infinity of worlds; but it will still lure him on. So long as he pursues it, so long as his quest is its own reward, so long as his soul continues to grow, the subordinate centres of his being will fulfil their several functions in obedience to the will of the self-evolving, self-revealing whole, and therefore in perfect harmony with one another. This is sanity, in the fullest sense of the word, the sanity of organic wholeness, the sanity of immortal youth. And it is because the freedom of the Universe has been conferred upon him, that it is open to him to enjoy that greatest of all blessings, and to enjoy it—if he will—for ever.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ANTIDOTE TO ANARCHY

IN the Cosmic Commonwealth the relation between what each does for the All and what the All does for each is one of more than mere reciprocity. The two services may almost be said to coincide. What the community does for the citizen is to allow him to share in its infinitude, and in doing this to make it possible for him to outgrow himself unceasingly and therefore to renew his youth for ever and ever. And what the loyal citizen does for the community is to lose himself in its service, and, by ever renewing his youth through self-loss and self-transcendence, to fit himself for further and ever higher service.

In a human community loyal service on the part of the citizen has too often been rewarded by ingratitude on the part of the State. In the Cosmic Commonwealth this cannot happen. There the service and the reward, the reward and the service, are one. The boon of up-surg-ing life, of radiant health, of immortal youth, of spiritual joy, is at the call of each of us. It is for us to claim it. And the Giver asks for nothing more than that we should claim it. We cannot better prove our loyalty and our love. To claim the reward of loyal service is to render a yet higher service than that which earned it.

For the Kingdom of Heaven is our heritage ; but we must make good our title by enforcing it. We must take the Kingdom by force. We must prove that we are citizens of the Universe by making the Universal Will our own. And in order to do this—for paradox leads on to paradox—we must surrender our own wills, wholly and without reserve ; we must lose self—and lose it irretrievably—in the All.

The relation between the citizen and the community in the Cosmic Commonwealth is the archetypal relation, the perfect example of what such relations ought to be. That is why I say that the transformation of religion must in some sort precede and control the transformation of our social and political life. It is in the service of the greater commonwealth that we shall learn how best to serve the lesser. Until we can realize (in the fullest and most intimate sense of the word) that the soul of all things is the true self and the true life of each of us, we shall not be able to master the lesson of disinterested devotion ; and until we have mastered that lesson our political ventures will all founder, or be in danger of foundering, on the rock of *self*.

The old order of things, which was based almost openly on self-assertion, ambition, and greed, is passing away ; but it is leaving a fatal heritage behind it. Men still think that property, position, and power are the good things of life and that the secret of happiness is to acquire these good things and retain them. But it is not the possessions of a man that matter, but the fulness and wideness of his life. It is not what he is reported to be that matters, but what he is in himself and what he is tending to become. And until the instinct to live,

to renew life, to expand life, to transform life, has triumphed over the instinct to grasp and hold and bulk large in purblind eyes, the foundations of democracy will have been laid in vain. Collective selfishness may indeed take the place of individual selfishness. It has already begun to do so. Trade unionism, for example, is stronger and better organized than it has ever been. But what use is it making of its strength? Is it not trying to hold the whole community up to ransom? Trade union after trade union is claiming the right to dislocate the life of the community in order to enforce its own demands.¹ This is a policy of brigandage, or, at best, of blackmail; and it is of course the very negation of democracy. The truth is that collective selfishness is only individual selfishness writ large, and that whatever organization, social or economic, may be dominated by the former will always have the latter, as a principle of disintegration, at the heart of it.

We have reached a grave crisis in the life of mankind. Our vaunted civilization is on trial; and we are faced with the possibility of a relapse into something worse than barbarism. With the downfall of absolutism, whether autocratic or oligarchic, and the consequent dissolution of government, in Eastern and Central Europe; with the widespread dislocation of existing conditions and upheaval of hidden forces which the war

¹ In many cases the strikes and threats to strike have been sectional, local unions and sub-unions having set the authority of their own central organizations at defiance. Unselfishness is always a bond of union. A selfish aim or a selfish policy may hold men together for a time, but sooner or later it will make for disintegration and inward strife.

has produced, and which have generated a deep-seated feeling of unrest and expectation ; with the diffusion of social chaos and economic misery (another result of the war) over a large part of the civilized world)—there has come a general relaxation of social ties and restraints, a general weakening of the authority of tradition and custom, and a general up-surg-ing of primitive instinct and passion. The consequence is that our familiar ideals and standards and sanctions are going into the melting-pot, and that we are threatened with political, social, and even moral anarchy. Never has the need for the controlling and inspiring influence of religion been greater than it is to-day ; and never, since the Christian Era began, have the existing religions been less able to meet that need. The reason of this is that supernaturalism, centring as it does in the worship of an omnipotent autocrat who surrounds himself with sycophants and courtiers, and tending as it does to foster individualism and egoism, which it has even encouraged us to dedicate to the service of God, has been the mainstay of the old order of things and is now sharing in its downfall and discredit.

For so desperate a situation heroic measures are needed. No mere tinkering with old forms, old creeds and old institutions will suffice. A new wine, turbid as yet but surely predestined to clarify, is fermenting in our hearts ; and the old bottles cannot contain it. But if we are to have new forms of thought and new schemes of life, we must have new ideals to vitalize and organize them ; and if we are to have new ideals we must remould our conception of God. For self is to-day, what it has ever been, our great enemy—the enemy of each and the enemy

of all—the negation of sympathy, of comradeship, of love, the centre and mainspring of resistance to the expansion of life, whether in the individual or the race ; and self is for the moment uncaged and unfettered, and freer than it has ever been to work its evil will. A spiritual ideal alone can subdue it ; and if the spiritual ideal is to be effective it must be the outcome of a new vision of reality, in other words of a new conception of God.

I have convinced myself, and tried to convince my readers, that the conception of God for which we are waiting is an inward and spiritual conception—the conception of God as the Soul of the Universe, as dwelling in the heart of Nature and the heart of Man. This conception provides for the subdual and, through the subdual for the transformation, of self, and is therefore an effective antidote to the anarchy with which human society is threatened. For if God is at the heart of man, he must be the true self of each of us, and if we can live to that true self, which we share with all other men, and die to every self which severs us from it and from them, we shall find in oneness with it the reality of selfhood, of life, of health, of wealth, of happiness. Christ taught us this lesson long ago ; but though we have learnt the lesson by rote we have never fathomed its depths of meaning.

Let us begin to do so. Let us try to join Christ in his selfless love of the All-Father, in his selfless devotion to the all-embracing community which he called the Kingdom of God.

Then, and not till then, shall we begin to learn what life means and what it has in store for us. And in the

light of that knowledge the great ethico-social problems which have so long perplexed us, and which are now pressing for restatement and retreatment, will begin to work themselves out to their ideal solution.

CHAPTER XV

THE HUMAN COMMONWEALTH

A NEW day is dawning on the world. Its sun is rising through wild storm clouds, but it may yet climb to a cloudless noon. Never, since history began, have men been so expectant of change or so eager for change as they are to-day. Most of us feel sure that a new social order is about to be built up out of the wreckage of the old. Others go further and believe that a new World-race will arise out of that mingling of all races which is going on in America. Others, again, wait for the advent of a new Prophet, with their faces turned towards India, the land in which men first realized the unity of the Universe and their own oneness with the One Soul and the One Life.

To prophesy while a revolution is in progress is notoriously rash. But it is rasher still to deride all prophecy. Men who idealize the actual and are in bondage to the past think that by using the phrase "A league of dreamers" they have laughed the project of a League of Nations out of court. But those who are in bondage to the past cannot interpret the past or apply its lessons. And one of the first lessons which the records of the past have to teach us is that the world's dreamers are also its makers and its menders. In any case, one need not be a prophet

or even a dreamer in order to feel assured that if in our international relations co-operation does not take the place of competition, and sympathy and good-will the place of envy and jealousy, the world will have been devastated and desolated to no purpose and rivers of blood will have flowed in vain.

Those who aim at establishing a League of Nations wish, for one thing, to police the world and so abolish war. There are many reasons why this should be done; but there is one which is urgent as well as strong. In his mastery of the secrets and command of the forces of material nature man has in recent years gone far ahead of his own moral and social development. To-day he has at his service means of destruction which greatly exceed in scope and power even the mightiest weapons of ten years ago. And it is said that he is on the verge of discovering yet deadlier secrets—secrets so deadly that only the pure in heart can safely be entrusted with them. The “atomic bombs” of Mr. H. G. Wells’ prophetic vision may yet be invented, and it may yet be possible for a single aeroplane to fly in a few hours to a great city, hundreds or even thousands of miles away, and lay it in ruins. With such weapons at man’s command, the next war, if waged on a large scale—and it is probable that in the next war there will be no neutrals—would be one of racial suicide. Civilization would be entirely overwhelmed; human life would be permanently debased and impoverished; and we might even come within measurable distance of the destruction of the human race. The mere possibility of so stupendous a catastrophe is surely an unanswerable argument for the early abolition of war.

At the heart of the dream of a League of Nations there is another dream, of which as yet we are scarcely conscious, the dream of constituting the Human or Pan-human Commonwealth. So far I have said much about the Cosmic Commonwealth and little about the Human. The reason is that unless the foundations of the Human Commonwealth are cemented with devotion to the Cosmic, they will not endure; the structure may last for a while, but when the rain descends and the floods arise, and the winds blow it will fall, and great will be the fall of it. If we would keep a river free from pollution we must purify it at its fountain head. If it is so purified, such influxes of pollution as may invade it lower down will be overwhelmed by the descending stream and swept away. But if it is impure at its source it will be foul and turbid everywhere and to the very end. I have said that devotion to an unattainable ideal alone can keep us sane. This is as true of the community as it is of the citizen, as true of Humanity as it is of each individual man. Our intercourse with the ideal may be largely, if not wholly, subconscious. But the ideal must be there, and we must somehow or other be in touch with it.

If our aim, in constituting the Human Commonwealth, were to provide men with material comforts and improve the conditions under which they lived—if it amounted to this and no more than this, the unity and inward harmony of the commonwealth would gradually be lost. For different peoples would form different conceptions, both of what constituted material comfort and of what was due to them from those who controlled and administered the resources of the

world ; and in trying to secure what they desired they would begin to quarrel among themselves and would at last lose sight, in their quarrels, of the end to which they all owed devotion and service—the well-being of the Pan-human State.

And once this process of disintegration had begun it would go far. The community which appeals to the collective selfishness of its citizens calls into being disruptive forces which it may be unable to control. I have said that collective selfishness is only individual selfishness writ large. It is this ; but it is also worse than this. One knows from experience that men who are unselfish in private life, and who as individuals are ready to sacrifice themselves freely to their country or to some great cause, are apt to become selfish when they herd together and begin to work for common ends.

For this there are two reasons. The first is that the sense of comradeship, of mutual obligation, of working with others for a common end, blinds a man to the fact that if that end is a selfish one, he is really working for his own interests. In the late war individual citizens vied with one another in patriotic devotion and self-sacrifice ; but when they came together in communities of various kinds—political parties, trade unions, federations of employers, joint-stock companies, and the like—they were apt to think more of the welfare of their respective communities than of the safety of their country, even in the supreme crisis of her life. Could anything, for example, be stronger than the contrast between the heroism and self-devotion of the miners who fought—in their hundreds of thousands—for their country, and the reckless selfishness of the sectional

strikes of miners which again and again restricted the output of coal when the Nation's need of it, both for itself and for its Allies, was most urgent? So far, indeed, are men from realizing the essential immorality of collective selfishness, that they accept it as inevitable if they do not actually count it a virtue. The economic aspect of social problems is apt to overshadow the ethical; and men who would appeal to high motives if they were addressing themselves to individuals will come down to an altogether lower level when they are dealing with communities or classes. "The most disquieting feature," says a writer in the "Spectator," "in what is loosely called the democratic advent is that no one, I care not who, ever speaks to the working classes (as such) in the name of honour or duty or unselfishness, or appeals to anything but self-interest."

The second reason why men are apt to be more selfish collectively than individually is that the selfishness of a community tends to react upon the characters of its members and infect them with its own poison. In pre-war Germany, for example, the State, which was on principle self-centred, aggressive, rapacious, and indifferent to the claims of Humanity, infected the citizens with its own selfishness and went far towards materializing their aims and demoralizing their lives. And it was Germany, the most selfish of all nations, which set the world on fire. Let her fate be our warning. If peace is to prevail on earth, each nation in turn must aim, not only at aggrandizing itself and enriching its people, but also and above all at playing a worthy part in the Human Commonwealth, both by working for the establishment of international law and order, and by training

its people for citizenship in the greatest of all earthly communities.

But if this aim is to be effective, the Human Commonwealth, in its turn, must aim at something beyond itself. What is true of the lesser community is true of the greater. Unless devotion to a community or a cause has devotion to a yet greater community or a yet greater cause at the heart of it, its own tenure of life will at best be precarious. The Human Commonwealth must aim at developing the material resources of the world, with a view to diffusing material well-being among men. But it must also aim at educating its citizens, in the true sense of the former word, at developing to the uttermost their higher powers and capacities, at fitting them to play their parts as citizens of the Universe, at dedicating them to the service of God. And the latter aim must come first, not second.

If we are to be happy we must learn the lesson of complete self-loss, for if we allow ourselves to be dominated by self, life will sooner or later become a burden and a curse. The passion of personal love can teach us this lesson; but the passion of personal love is both incalculable and transient. The wind bloweth where it listeth; and the greater its violence the shorter its duration. Where, then, shall we learn the greatest of all lessons? Where, but in the service of the All? We know from experience that however far we may travel along the path of self-loss and self-transcendence, self still confronts us. We cannot get away from it. The very word self-loss savours of paradox. What shall we do, then, to be saved? We must enrol ourselves as members of the one community in which a man becomes self-

less, of inner necessity, in the very act of living to self,— in which self, as we try to realize it, recedes for ever and ever into the Infinite and the Divine. We must become citizens of the Cosmic Commonwealth, of the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER XVI

EDUCATION FOR COSMIC SERVICE

WE must dedicate ourselves to the service of the Cosmic Commonwealth. And not ourselves only. We must also dedicate our children. Or rather we must make it possible for them to follow the bent of their real nature and dedicate themselves. If the grown-up man finds it hard to enter the Kingdom of God, the reason is that he was not allowed to enter it while he was still a child.

Devotion to the Cosmic Commonwealth is of inner necessity disinterested. If there is any taint of self-interest in our service, we may be sure that we are not rendering it to the infinite Whole. We cannot serve God and Mammon. Still less can we serve God and self. Absolutely disinterested service is an ideal which we can never hope to realize. In other words, it is a true ideal, an end which we must never cease to pursue. It is in order to learn the lesson of disinterested devotion that we are living our lives on earth; and we cannot begin to learn the lesson at too tender an age.

The world is sick of a grave malady, and it is now passing through a dangerous crisis. The symptoms have already been described. They amount to this, that the old ideals are worn out, that the old restraints have lost

their power, that a flood of selfish desires and lawless passions has been let loose and that we are nearer to moral anarchy than we have been for many centuries. For so desperate a disorder there is but one remedy—a new ideal or hierarchy of ideals, a radical change in the inner man. Apart from such a change, our attempts at reform are so much patchwork, and our schemes of reconstruction are the idlest of dreams. We may alleviate symptoms. We cannot cure the disease. But to make such a change—the change of being “born again”—when one has reached adult life, is a task of almost superhuman difficulty. “Conversion”—the sudden transformation of the inner man—is a very rare phenomenon. It presupposes an exceptional combination of circumstances. It is not always a healthy movement. It is sometimes hysterical or otherwise morbid. The new life does not always endure, the violent change being sometimes followed by an equally violent reaction. If a change in the inner man is to be permanent and effective, it must be evolutionary rather than revolutionary, the outcome of a secret process of growth rather than of a sudden reversal of the current of one’s being. In other words, it must, as a rule, be begun in the nursery and carried on through childhood and adolescence into adult life.

The cult of the transcendent God has been the evil genius of education in Christendom. The parent and the schoolmaster have played the part of the God whom they worshipped, in the little worlds which they ruled. And they have reproduced in the life of the child, and therefore of the man, all the evils which the tyranny of the omnipotent autocrat has wrought in the life of mankind.

They have applied to the child—applied, that is, to the growing man, at the time when his growth ought to have been most vigorous, when the sap of his life was rising most strongly—a steady and relentless pressure which has had behind it a heavy weight of ignorance, prejudice, and “will to power.” The result of this pressure has been, in part to arrest, in part to warp his growth; and as growth, if healthy and harmonious, is the most emancipative of all forces, as it concentrates in itself all emancipative forces, the further result of the pressure of dogmatic education has been to imprison the child in himself. And as the child, animated by the instinct to live, has passively resisted this deadly pressure, the autocratic controllers of his destiny have tried to overcome his resistance by alternating rewards with punishments, bribes with threats. In doing this they have lowered the whole plane of his effort and activity and de-idealized his whole outlook on life. And when bribes and threats have failed them, they have gone further along the path of compulsory demoralization. They have forced the child to compete with his classmates for prizes and other marks of distinction, and have thus tempted him to regard his comrades as rivals and possible enemies, to pride himself on his petty achievements, to look down on those whom he may have happened to surpass. In other words, they have deliberately exploited his selfishness, his ambition, and his vanity. They have done more than this. They have made him dependent on themselves for instruction and guidance, and have thus paralysed his faith in himself. They have weakened his will, partly by trying to break it, partly by giving him no opportunity for the exercise of self-discipline and self-

control. They have made him blind, or at least dim of vision, by assuming that he could not see. They have sterilized his intellectual, his artistic, and his constructive capacity by wilfully narrowing the field of his development; and when his tastes and powers have died of inanition, they have taken for granted that they never existed, that he was by nature as stupid and helpless as he was vicious and perverse. Above all, they have taught him to look without instead of within for his ideals, his motives, his standards of value, his tests of reality, his proofs of failure or success. And, as the crowning injury, they have tried to make him religious, not by helping him to discern and follow the light which lighteth all men, but by requiring him to take part in ceremonial observances which have no meaning for him, and by forcibly dieting him on their own scriptures and creeds.

The whole scheme of his education seems to have been framed for the express purpose of turning him out into the world with few or no interests which can take him away from himself, the victim of arrested or at best of one-sided mental and spiritual development, imprisoned in a narrow and conventional morality, dominated by the prejudices of his own social class, absorbed in selfish aims and ambitions, destitute of any sense of human fellowship, a materialist, an individualist, an externalist, asking from life too much of comfort and pleasure, too little of that deeper happiness which is at his service if he will but claim it. There are many lessons which his pastors and masters have omitted to teach him. But there is one which they seem to have deliberately prevented him from learning—the lesson of disinterested

devotion, of self-realization through self-forgetfulness, of losing the world that he may find his soul.

Yet he was ready to learn that lesson before they took him in hand. The pioneers in education who have based their schemes on trust in the natural goodness and the all-round capacity of the average child, have proved this to the full. There are schools in this country which are ideal social communities—schools in which the children, released from needless pressure, allowed to express themselves freely in many ways, allowed to develop themselves in many directions, have found, in the joy of “unimpeded energy,” the sense of oneness with their fellows through partnership in a common life; schools in which material rewards and punishments are unknown, in which honest effort is its own reward, in which the success of each is a matter of rejoicing for all, in which the spirit of comradeship has killed the spirit of competition, in which the whole atmosphere is electrical with life and happiness and good-will. At present such schools may be counted on one’s fingers; but if the basis of education could be changed they would multiply, and as they multiplied there would be a corresponding change in the basis of our social life.

The cult of the transcendent God, involving as it does profound distrust of human nature, is, I repeat, the evil genius of education. Let us now base education on the cult of the immanent God, and on the inexhaustible trust in human nature which is at the heart of that cult. It is not for me to suggest how this is to be done. The immanent God “fulfils himself in many ways”; and in the sphere of education, if in no other, exclusive devotion to any “custom,” however “good,” will sooner or

later "corrupt the world." The "orthodox" type of education has been a failure, not only because its aims and ideals have been at fault, but also because of its blind belief in stereotyped methods, which it has forced on the teacher as well as on the child. In this it has been true to its own master principle, for if the immanent God fulfils himself in many ways, the transcendent God reveals himself in only one. Let the new education be equally true to its master principle, the principle which is inherent in its faith in divine immanence. At present the new education is a heresy. Let it take care that it never degenerates into orthodoxy. Let it give freedom and responsibility in generous measure to the teacher, and through the teacher to the child. Its confidence will not be misplaced. What matters it if each of a thousand pioneers in education takes a path of his own? If they are all animated by reverence for the indwelling Spirit of God, and therefore for the unfolding nature of the child, they will all arrive, in the fulness of time, at the same goal.

For they will have taught their pupils, or rather they will have helped them to learn for themselves, the great lesson of disinterested devotion, the great lesson of loyalty to the community—to an ever-widening community—in and through loyalty to one's own higher self. When this lesson has been widely learnt and practised, the reform of our social life will become something more than a politician's promise or an enthusiast's dream. It is through its action on the child, even more than through its action on the adult, that the cult of the autocrat of the Universe has corrupted man's nature and demoralized his life. The adult is what his upbringing

has made him and it is not easy for him to become anything else. But the child may become anything. The Kingdom of Heaven is as open to him as is the prison of self. We have hitherto gone out of our way to drive him into the prison of self. Let us now help him to enrol himself as a citizen of the Kingdom. Then, in the next generation, we shall perhaps have a better and a happier world.

CHAPTER XVII

POSSIBILITIES

LET us now take the wings of imagination and pass beyond the confines of this world and this life. The triumph of the dynamic over the static conception of life and destiny will revolutionize our eschatology. Official Christianity teaches us that after death comes Judgment, and after Judgment either Heaven (with or without its anteroom, Purgatory) or Hell. Of late years the belief has grown up that men will be judged and sentenced directly they die. The more orthodox view is, I believe, that the dead will have to wait (whether awake or asleep I cannot say) till the Last Day dawns on earth, when they will be clothed again in their earthly bodies and appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Beyond the grave there is neither progress nor deterioration, except, indeed, so far as the former is provided for in the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. But this exception does not affect the general principle that the destiny of the departing spirit is fixed at the moment of death. The duration of Purgatory is limited and may be materially shortened by the due performance of purchased masses. When it is over the saved will enter into a state of perfect happiness and will remain in that state for ever. For the lost there is no equivalent of Purgatory,

no place for repentance or amendment of life. When their doom is pronounced they will pass at once into a state of hopeless misery which, like the counter-state of blessedness, will endure for ever.

Such is the eschatology which has satisfied the worshippers of the transcendent God. It rests on the hollowest of all foundations, on the literal interpretation—and therefore the radical misinterpretation—of a Master's words. The Gospel story of the Last Judgment is not a prophetic narrative, not a mine of "theological information," but a parable, which was obviously spoken for no other purpose than that of glorifying unselfish love. The defects of the orthodox eschatology,—its infinite injustice; its separation of the two worlds or states by a great gulf into which the reality of each unceasingly drains away; its debasement of the supreme motives to action; its tendency to paralyze spiritual effort by the very vastness of the stakes for which it compels us to play; its *reductio ad absurdum* in the easy-going belief, now widely prevalent, that all men will be saved, in the sense of "going to Heaven" when they die,—these defects, and others which fall into line with these, are too glaringly obvious to need exposition.

For those who worship the immanent God the vision of the after-life differs widely from this. As we live by the grace of Nature, so we shall continue to live by it. If we are to realize our limitless potentialities, if we are to exhaust the resources of our cosmic environment, we shall have to pass through many worlds and many planes of being, we shall have to live an infinity of lives. Life is education; and education is life. Here on earth we are probably in the nursery school of a vast educational

system. Death may possibly transfer us to a higher school, or at least to a higher class. In any case we shall have to pass on from class to class and from school to school. And while we are continuing our education, two processes will be carried on in our souls—two processes which are really one—the awakening of consciousness in the hidden depths of our being, and the transcendence of self. The immanent God is at the heart of each of us. In his life we live. In his infinitude we are infinite. In his eternity we are eternal. But he is a hidden God—his light is for us a great darkness. The dawn of consciousness in our souls has admitted us to citizenship of the Cosmic Commonwealth. To awaken consciousness in deeper and still deeper strata of our subconscious being is the task that awaits us in this and in all future lives. It is an arduous task and one which will never be completed. The chief resistance to be beaten down comes from self—self which would fain find rest in finality, the actual self claiming to be ideal. Therefore, what is from one point of view the continuous awakening of consciousness, is from another point of view the continuous transcendence of self. The nearer we get, as we awake consciousness in our subconscious depths, to that central core of darkness which is the Infinite Light, the nearer we shall get to the real self.

The life of self-illumination and self-transcendence will be a life of service and preparation for further service. The affairs of the Cosmic Commonwealth are administered, we may well believe, by a hierarchy of great intelligences. To dream of being admitted into a lowly grade of that august hierarchy is a worthy ambition, which opens up infinite vistas to aspiration and love.

There is no reason why we should not entertain the dream. But we must not at present look beyond it.

And what of God and the worship of God? Is the immanent God a substantial reality? Or is he merely an idea and a name? I have already given my answer to this question.¹ Far from being a mere idea or a convenient name, the immanent God is the innermost core of reality. In an ideal community the soul of the people, symbolizing itself in King or President and working its will through an organized system of administrative nerve-centres, is the true, the only lawful ruler. In like manner the true ruler of the Cosmic Commonwealth is the Soul of the Universe, and our name for the Soul of the Universe is God.

Does this conception of God content us? Or do we crave for a more intimate experience of the Divine, for an experience which will partake in some degree of vision? Christ has told us that the pure in heart shall see God. He spoke, we may well believe, from his own sublimely mystical experience. In any case he pointed out to us a path which cannot lead us astray. If we would see God we must purify the heart till the last dregs of self have been strained away from it, till self has been wholly transcended, wholly lost and wholly found. This purification of the heart, this infinite transcendence of self, will be accompanied by an infinite inward illumination, by the awakening of consciousness in the inmost depths of our being. Then we shall be on the threshold of the Holy of Holies; the curtain that veils the Real Presence will become strangely luminous, and the Beatific Vision will perhaps be something more than a dream.

¹ See Chapter IX.

But I am looking far into a time-transcending future. How shall we worship God while we are still on earth? The essence of worship is the dedication of the heart to God. The temple of God is everywhere. The worthiest offering that we can lay on the altar is service. And the medium of communion with God is selfless love. But the externals of worship will always count for much; and it is possible that cosmic emotion will give us, in due season, nobler temples than any that we have yet built or planned or dreamed of, a mightier sacred music, and a more glorious plastic and pictorial art. The temples, feeding the higher emotions with their own majestic beauty, as well as with the beauty of music and art, would be mostly used for private meditation and prayer. But public services too would be held in them, when a ritual, divorced from dogma and priestcraft, and stately in its very simplicity, would help to unite men in a common aspiration or a common joy.

And what of prayer? "We have had ducking and deprecating enough." We have too long mistaken servility for adoration. In prayer, when we pray aright, the waters of life are seeking their own level. But can I pray to the immanent God with any hope of my prayer being heard? A poet has well said that

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed."

If the desire of the soul is towards God, life will be an unending and self-answering prayer. And if this or that desire of the soul should be so strong and so urgent as to compel one to kneel in prayer and offer up petitions to the Most High, may not one believe that if the petitions

are disinterested, if they are dictated by unselfish love, they will be caught, like wireless messages, on a sympathetic "receiver" and dealt with according to the wisdom of the august recipient?

These are possibilities. What is certain is that love of the All-Father is the beginning and end of worship, and that desire to serve him and his children is the beginning and end of prayer. Here we are on safe ground; and we can remain on it, if we will, for ever. We have seen that devotion to a community must have devotion to a larger community at the heart of it, if it is to be purified from any lingering taint of selfishness, and if its tenure of life is thus to be made secure. But when the community is infinite in all its dimensions, the supreme reward of service is the demand for further service, the "glory of Virtue" is "the glory of going on and still to be," and devotion to the community is therefore an end in itself. The end beyond all ends. Devotion to the Cosmic Commonwealth is at once the fountain-head and the fulfilment—from everlasting to everlasting—of duty, of destiny, of life.