

The Philosophy  
of Courage  
or The Oxford Group Way  
by Philip Leon

With a new foreword by Glenn F. Chesnut

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## FOREWORD

by Glenn F. Chesnut

Philip Leon finished writing *The Philosophy of Courage* in December 1938, with a publication date in 1939.<sup>1</sup> So it was not a direct influence on the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, which was completed (basically anyway) slightly before that point, a bit earlier in 1938. But Leon puts down in print some of the most important of the Oxford Group ideas which had so greatly influenced the early A.A. people, and he also gives an illuminating philosophical discussion of a number of the basic ideas and principles which A.A. learned from the Oxford Group. As a consequence, people in the twelve step movement will find a good deal of interesting and very useful material in Leon's book.

Leon was associated with one of the new British universities—University College, Leicester—which had been founded right after the First World War. The city of Leicester is located right in the center of England, only sixty miles or so from Oxford. Three years earlier, he had written a very successful philosophical work called *The Ethics of Power or The Problem of Evil* (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1935).<sup>2</sup>

### NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION

#### **Courage**

The title of the work we are looking at here—*The Philosophy of Courage*—is significant in itself. It places Philip Leon, in his own way, in the context of the famous existentialist philosophers and theologians of that period. Most of those figures were, like Leon, reacting to the ideas of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and his nineteenth century followers. Kantianism proclaimed that our human minds were imprisoned in a box of space and time, where we had no access to the eternal, absolute, unlimited, and unconditional divine realm which lay outside the box.

The atheistic existentialists said that all that lay outside that box of space and time was an infinite abyss of Nothingness, and that even within the world which our human minds could grasp, human existence was absurd, and the only certainty we could state was that our lives were inexorably lived towards death. The closest human beings could come to living with dignity was to face the absurdity and death *with resolution and courage*. Philosophers and writers like Nietzsche (1844-1900), Sartre (1905-1980), and Camus (1913-1960), along with existentialist psychiatrists like Fritz Perls (1893-1970), all saw our basic human problem as one of fear: the fear of emptiness and death, but also the fear of change and novelty, and above all the

fear of being creative and being ourselves instead of trying to be what other people wanted us to be. In Fritz Perls' metaphor, we needed to develop the *courage* either to spit out what we detested about our lives, or to chew it up and swallow it and digest it and make it our own.

Among the Christian existentialists of that same period, one of the most important figures was Paul Tillich, who taught with Reinhold Niebuhr (the author of the Serenity Prayer) at Union Theological Seminary in New York City from 1933 to 1955, that is, during the formative period when A.A. was born. One of Tillich's most important books had the simple title the *Courage to Be* (1952). Existential anxiety (what Philip Leon called "the great Terror") was what destroyed our souls, and *courage* was the remedy which would heal our disease.

### **The Oxford Group "spirit of the tables"**

It was at the ancient medieval city of Oxford however that Leon had his first encounter with the Oxford Group. As he describes this in his own words: "On July 8, 1935, I went straight from a philosophers' congress to an afternoon meeting of an Oxford Group house party held at Lady Margaret Hall" there at Oxford University. "As speaker after speaker rose and spoke briefly about his experience of God ... All I had ever heard or read of wisdom and of truth seemed to be concentrated in those speakers, who more and more assumed for me the semblance of pillars of light."<sup>3</sup> This took place only three or four weeks after Dr. Bob's last drink, over on the other side of the Atlantic—that last bottle of beer Dr. Bob drank on June 10th (or 17th) 1935—so Leon's discovery of the Oxford Group and the start of his enthusiastic immersion in their activities was contemporaneous with the beginning of A.A.

What struck Leon so powerfully was what the early A.A. people would call the spirit of the tables, and he accurately described this as his direct experience of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. It turned Leon into a completely different kind of philosopher. As he explains in the introduction to *The Philosophy of Courage*, he attempted in this book to talk about the personal experience of God in the language of philosophy. Both parts of this statement are equally important—*The Philosophy of Courage* is a book on philosophy but also a book based on personal experience. Leon was the first philosopher to attempt to talk about some of the most important principles of the Oxford Group, and hence the first philosopher to attempt to discuss some of the most important ideas underlying the twelve step program. But he also attempted to base his philosophical musings, not on some set of abstract theories dreamed up by an armchair philosopher, but on his own direct personal experience of the explosive power of God erupting forth and turning the world upside down.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER 1. UNDENIABLE FACTS

### **The God of power, energy, creativity and novelty**

In the Middle Ages, there was a tendency to turn God into a static entity called the Unmoved Mover, which attracted all of reality towards it as a distant ideal goal. We see this kind of concept of God coming out above all in St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) and his First Proof for the existence of God, the Proof from Motion.<sup>4</sup> The very fact that Aquinas' God was referred to there as the Unmoved Mover gave the basic picture better than any other words one could conjure up. This medieval God of the philosophers was regarded as an almost completely impersonal absolute, perfect and unchanging, which was so completely transcendent that it was far removed from all the things of this universe, where we human beings lived our lives.

Philip Leon was part of a rebellion against that kind of concept of God which came to a peak during the first half of the twentieth century, and involved a number of other excellent philosophers. This rebellion began with the Boston Personalists: Borden Parker Bowne's *The Immanence of God* came out in 1905, and his successor at Boston University, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, published *The Problem of God* in 1930. The process philosophers then took up the same crusade, with Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality* (1929) and *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), followed by a string of books by the prolific author Charles Hartshorne: *Beyond Humanism: Essays in the New Philosophy of Nature* (1937), *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (1948), *Philosophers Speak of God* (edited with William L. Reese, 1953), and many others.

Just like the Boston Personalists and the process philosophers, Leon insisted that God was not some rigid, impersonal, and static reality. That was certainly not the biblical notion of God, he argued, nor the experience of the Oxford Group. The God of the Bible (and the Oxford Group) was above all a God of power and energy (in Greek, *dynamis* and *energeia*), exploding into the world and working miracles within the human spirit. God was the power of creativity and novelty, by which (Leon said) he meant "positive or constructive power or efficiency and not negative or destructive and obstructive power." Forces that were purely negative and destructive came from a different kind of power, one which was opposed to God. [Chapter 1, section I]

For Leon, this was not just a philosophical theory. It was something which could be *felt* and *experienced* at a meeting of the Oxford Group (A.A. people called it the spirit of the tables, while traditional Christianity called it the presence of the Holy Spirit). When Leon went to his first house party at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, he experienced an atmosphere which was electrically charged, magnetized, and dynamic. It was filled with the spirit of the new, the uninhibited, and the fearless. Everyone had stripped off their masks and disguises, so that you could see who people

truly were. There was also a spirit of divine calm, where conflicts healed themselves and the knots in people's lives came untangled, and everyone present could relax and feel true peace at last. But it was the energy and the creativity which most struck him after the meeting had begun.

### **God as the supreme Personality**

Also, just like the Boston Personalists and the process philosophers, Leon stressed that God was the supreme Personality. "In calling God personal I do not mean that He is thought, feeling, will. He is spirit, and spirit is not thought, feeling, will, but the source of these." All spiritual beings necessarily had to be personal beings. A being's personality was the unity of its power, love, wisdom, and so on, which in turn gave rise to that person's thought, feeling, and will. [chapter 1, section I]

### **"Self" is bad but "person" is good**

In Leon's philosophical vocabulary, being a "person" is good, but acting in terms of "self" (that is, being motivated by *selfishness*) is the root of all evil. That distinction in the way he used those two words is essential to understanding his thought. Since selfishness, Leon said, is the cause of all of our unhappiness and misery, the pursuit of the Oxford Group's Four Absolutes (Absolute Love, Absolute Purity, Absolute Honesty, and above all, Absolute Unselfishness) is the only real answer to the fundamental human problem.

Those who know something about the history of philosophy will immediately recognize the strong influence of Arthur Schopenhauer and his famous work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation, 1819). In Schopenhauer's pessimistic view of the world, the will-to-life drove human beings with continual desires for goals which could never be attainable (to live forever, never suffer ill health, control and dominate everything around us, and so on). Life was ultimately futile. The stronger the self, the more suffering and pain that person would end up experiencing. As the little student jingle goes, "he who wants a gloomy hour, should spend a while with Schopenhauer."

Schopenhauer was strongly influenced by Hindu thought. He kept a copy of the Hindu scriptures by his bedside, and named his pet dog Atman (the word in Hindu philosophy for soul or life-principle). He also particularly treasured an ancient statue (covered with gold leaf) of Buddha dressed as a beggar. He believed that asceticism (the kind of voluntary self-sacrifice and self-denial which one sees in the life of a Buddhist monk) could bring a kind of salvation from suffering, by removing some of the pain-producing effects of our selfish desires.

One way perhaps of describing Leon's philosophical system would be to call it an effort to give a Judeo-Christian answer to the problem raised by Schopenhauer and the kind of Hindu and Buddhist tradition which he represented. It is important to remember however, that in Leon we see not a denial of the problem, but rather an attempt to give a different kind of answer, one that is world-affirming instead of world-denying.

## **The human self is necessarily diseased: the Kingdom of Fear and the great Terror**

Philip Leon stated bluntly that the human self was inherently and inescapably *diseased*. Our natural instincts, our dispositions and characters, and our acquired habits drove us to desires and ambitions which were of necessity diseased and impure. What we called the “self” was a collection of desires based ultimately on the fear of death and the fear of insecurity. We desperately want to live forever, but also much more than that: “except on the occasions when he is threatened with biological extinction, existence means for [the self], not just being alive, but having a certain income, status, reputation, etc.” [chapter 1, section II] In our sickness, we want it *all*.

The cause of our human selfishness may appear (on the surface) to be insatiable *desire*. In classical Buddhist teaching, for example, *tanha* (the desire, craving, or thirst for sensory pleasures, life, fame, love, and so on) is regarded as the root of all human misery. But Leon said that the true driving force behind this selfishness is a kind of raw *fear* which lies underneath these desires. It is the fear which is the real driving power. The self therefore always and inevitably turns the world into a Kingdom of Fear, ruled by Fate and Karma. As long as I am looking at the world from a purely selfish standpoint, I will always eventually start falling into what Leon called the great Terror.

Those who have a little bit of goodness are terrified when they are forced to look at other human beings (such as the truly outstanding members of the Oxford Group) who have achieved the true optimum. Those who are diseased, even if only in part, are terrified by what they see there of true health. Those who are tainted by impurity, even if only to a degree, are terrified by absolute purity.

Absolute Love, Absolute Purity, Absolute Honesty, and Absolute Unselfishness are terrifying to those who have settled for just getting by with a minimum of mechanical surface morality. *The good is the enemy of the best*: “One fear says: ‘So much knowledge, but no more’; another: ‘So much love and health, but no more’; a third: ‘So much power, but no more.’ Together they shout: ‘We have everything, we are everything. Beyond us is nothing, beyond us is the great Terror!’”

The real God is the infinite power of true creativity and novelty. But those who cling to the finite are terrified by this vision of the infinite. Those who repeat the same things over and over are terrified by the revolutionary, and frightened to their depths by true creativity and novelty. To the depths of our being, *we fear change*.

And above all—and this is one of Leon’s most interesting comments—“The fear at the bottom of each individual is that of recognizing himself, and of being recognized, one day, as a son of God.” The true God appears and offers us salvation and true sonship and daughtership, and we shut our eyes and put our fingers in our ears and run away as fast as we can run. [chapter 1, section II] We resist the saving message because we are too scared of becoming good and holy people ourselves, people who shine with the divine light within. And among all the tragic consequences of human fearfulness, this is the greatest tragedy of all.

### **Comparison with Bill W. and A.A. on the “corroding thread” of fear**

In the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous the fourth step was an inventory of our resentments and our fears, for the twelve step program teaches that these are the two things which cause all the truly unbearable human pain and suffering. In the Big Book, Bill W. told us in 1939 that fear “was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it.” This fear arose, he said, because the self got in the way: our attempts at total self-reliance turned us away from God and thereby ultimately made our fear grow even worse. At that level, Bill W. and Philip Leon agreed for the most part: trying to live on the principle of selfishness and self-interest produced soul-destroying fear, and eventually cast us down into the inner hell which Leon called the great Terror.<sup>5</sup>

### **Nausea: salvation through becoming sick of ourselves**

In the introduction to his book, Philip Leon says that real religion “makes us sick—sick of ourselves. Only self-sickness will cure us of our mania.” For the sake of American readers, it needs to be pointed out that Leon, who was living and writing in England, used the word “sick” in a different way from American usage. Down to the seventeenth century, the word sick in England meant “ill” in any kind of way. The American colonists continued to use the word in that fashion, and it is still the ordinary American usage today. But in England, in the modern period, the word sick has come to be restricted in meaning, so that by the twentieth century it referred only to feeling nauseated, to feeling ready to vomit. That was the way Leon was using the word.<sup>6</sup>

And that in turn points us to the continental European existentialist philosophers of that period. Jean-Paul Sartre published his famous existentialist novel *La Nausée* (Nausea) in 1938, around the time Leon was writing this book. We “feel sick” (become nauseated) according to Sartre when we confront the absurdity of human existence and all of the existential anxieties that are an intrinsic part of that.

Anxiety (*angoisse* in French and *Angst* in German) is a kind of dread or anguish which goes far beyond ordinary fear. Fear is the human reaction to a specific threat: for example, let us say that I am out driving and another automobile crosses the center line on the highway and starts hurtling head on at the automobile I am in. But anxiety in the language of existentialist philosophy is the human reaction to an all-encompassing reality which is woven necessarily into the basic fabric of human life. Anybody who *exists* will at times be cast into situations where that existential anxiety will surge up into consciousness: for example, the realization that I (like all human beings) must someday die.

There are a number of different kinds of existential anxiety. There is the anxiety, for example, of fate and death: the feeling of being in the grip of implacably hostile

or uncaring forces which I cannot control, and the horror I feel when I contemplate my own death. There is the anxiety of guilt and condemnation: the awareness that I can never be perfect (at an absolute level) in meeting all of the demands which life will place on me, and that I will always be guilty of not having been good enough, along with the closely associated anxiety of rejection and abandonment. Each period of human history tends to have its own dominant form of existential anxiety, which overshadows the others in importance for a century or so. Images of the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness filled many of the artistic, literary, and dramatic expressions of the twentieth century: one can see it appearing in the apparently meaningless drips of color which made up the paintings of Jackson Pollock during the 1940's, in Albert Camus' formative novel *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and in the works of the playwrights who were associated (in the 1940's, 50's, and 60's) with the theater of the absurd—Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Edward Albee, and so on.

### **Being sickened by my own inner rottenness**

When he attended the Oxford Group house party, and felt God powerfully at work in that gathering (what the twelve step program calls the spirit of the tables), Leon discovered that there was no way of becoming conscious of God without also becoming conscious of self. And the rottenness he discovered within himself made him sick to his stomach and nauseated. He started to become aware of all the falsity and phoniness which had made up his life. He found that all of the things he had had preying on his conscience (things which he had spent years trying to suppress and forget and alibi and explain away) were coming up to the surface of his mind once again: acts of selfishness, cowardice, and dishonesty. He found himself trying to project these feelings of self-loathing over onto the Oxford Group people who were so disturbing him: *they* were the ones who were phonies, *they* were the ones who were bossy and opinionated know-it-all's, *they* were the ones who were out to trick him out of something or other. [chapter 1, section I]

Recovering alcoholics who can remember things like driving an automobile drunk and running into other people and hideously injuring those other people and having to stand there uninjured (with police handcuffs on) and listen to those injured people scream with pain can understand exactly why Leon said that it was a feeling of nausea which we felt when we confronted our true selves. Drug addicts and gambling addicts who think too hard about how their addiction caused them to cast away their spouses and children, find their insides cramping up within them, in the same kind of total visceral disgust with themselves.



## **I must embrace my own feeling of soul-sickness**

If I wish to engage in positive spiritual growth after having had this experience, Leon says, “what happens to me comes about step by step.” (We can compare this to Bill W.’s insistence that spiritual growth occurs in a series of discrete steps.) God is all powerful, but will not work on me until I give him my consent. My first act of consent must come with a willingness to feel this self-sickness instead of running away from it. I must identify each piece of selfishness or cowardice or dishonesty within me, and then let God change me and heal me. [chapter 1, section I]

## **The Cross: surrender and acceptance**

Frank Buchman had the experience which gave birth to the Oxford Group when he went to the Keswick Convention in the Lake District up in the north of England in 1908, and attended a small chapel service where Jessie Penn-Lewis<sup>7</sup> preached on the Cross of Christ. In an overwhelming religious experience, Buchman suddenly realized the necessity of surrendering all his earthly resentments and making restitution (or “making amends” as the twelve step people call it) to those at whom he held those resentments.

Philip Leon talks again and again in this book about accepting the Cross of Christ, but those who find this language objectionable should note how he makes the rather startling statement here that readers who want to test his theories about the centrality of the cross, can begin if they choose by regarding “the whole account of the life, the divinity and crucifixion of Jesus as a fairy tale invented and used by many people through many ages in order to illustrate what they meant by God’s power in relation to the world as it is.” But like all good myths and fables, they need to note that this one has an important moral: “God, it teaches us, is that power which changes degradation into glory, death into life, defeat into triumph, inertia into inexhaustible activity.” [chapter 1, section I] And Leon believes that once I see the transforming effect of this power on my own life, I will begin to realize that I am dealing with something which (at some essential level) is not a fairy tale, but totally real.

Part of me aches and longs for God’s healing and energizing love, while another part—the selfish part—resists God with all its might, because that part of me fears change, creativity, and anything involving real effort on my part. [chapter 1, section I] This is the part which must be crucified, or “crossed out” if you are someone who objects to too much heavily Christian language. I must practice what the twelve step program calls surrender and acceptance—that is, in traditional Christian terms, I must crucify all these selfish fears—or I will never find the new divine life which emerges on the other side of the crucifixion.

**The cure for my evil and soul-sickness:  
its replacement by the Absolute and Perfect**

The Oxford Group people spoke frequently about the Four Absolutes, which were Absolute Unselfishness, Absolute Love, Absolute Purity, and Absolute Honesty. Leon says that speaking only of four absolutes is an oversimplification, because in fact there are an infinite number of positive qualities which make up God's absoluteness. God is absolute power, patience, wisdom, love, efficiency, creativity, newness, harmony, bravery, and so on. As long as human beings ask God for help, they can participate in God's absoluteness, and act, for each moment in which they surrender to God and cling to his grace, with absolute unselfishness, love, purity, honesty, and so on. [chapter 1, section I]

Leon goes on to say: "Absolute and infinite power, wisdom, love, etc.—we may sum all these up by calling them perfection." [chapter 1, section I] What we have in this part of the Oxford Group's teaching, in other words, is a doctrine which holds that Christian perfection is attainable in this life. One can see this sort of teaching appearing in some Quaker theology (both in the early period and in the nineteenth century), and in parts of the Methodist and Wesleyan tradition. There are still some very conservative Wesleyan groups in the United States, the second blessing Methodists as they are called, who not only believe that Christian perfection is attainable in this life, but also argue that no one can be saved who has not achieved Christian perfection.<sup>8</sup>

**I am not God**

Leon devotes an important subsection of his book to explaining why I must come to understand that "I am not God." [chapter 1, section II] A modern skeptic, he says, might well try to argue that all of these Oxford Group claims are the product of autohypnosis and naive self-delusion, and that it is only some part of my own mind with which I am coming into contact when I think I am experiencing God. But as Leon points out, I could likewise use that kind of pathological skepticism to claim that other human beings only exist in my own mind. That would be difficult to disprove, would it not? And yet, if I am in difficulty and need help from my fellow human beings, I can only be helped if I admit that they really exist.

Where is God? Since God and myself-as-a-person (as opposed to my physical body) are not things in space, there really is no "where." But in my experience of God, he is *inside* me rather than *outside*, in such a way that I can talk about "God being in me" while at the same time "I am in God."

## **Alcoholism and addiction as forms of mania (spiritual insanity)**

*The self is a disease*, Leon says, *which results in a mania*. Now this is very interesting, because what he means by this, is that the self (and its greed, selfishness, and craving) is in fact a kind of spiritual illness or malady which will inevitably manifest itself in some kind of addiction.

He uses the old word for alcoholism, dipsomania, which means a maniacal craving for alcohol. Just like the A.A. Big Book, Leon sees alcoholism as arising primarily from what in fact is a spiritual malady. But he also perceptively realizes that alcoholism is only one kind of addiction. We also have what he calls morphinomania (addiction to morphine and other opiate drugs), satyromania and nymphomania (male and female forms of sexual addiction), kleptomania (compulsive stealing), onanomania (obsessive masturbation), along with the all-dominating lust for power, riches, and glory. Setting up a legalistic set of moral rules (whether based on the Bible, the edicts of the Pope, the Koran, or the rules laid out in the Twelve Traditions or in A.A. conference decisions) and then trying to follow these fanatically, only throws us into another kind of mania, Leon warns. [chapter 1, section II]

It is especially alcoholism, however, which he focuses on to show how a spiritual disease can give shape and form to a physical addiction.

### **He talks about eight characteristics of alcoholic thinking and acting**

1. Dipsomania (alcoholism) is a compulsion which makes us feel like *victims*. The dipsomaniac believes that “he cannot help himself,” but is held powerless under the control of some force which always defeats him.

2. It is driven by *fear*: “he must have his drink, or else—so it seems to him—something terrible will happen, the end of the world.”

3. His behavior is marked by *rigidity* (as opposed to variety, novelty, and creativity) and overpowering fear of change. Eventually only alcohol will satisfy his unbearable longings: for joy, comfort, excitement, peace, and the illusion of love.

4. *Pleonectic behavior* (from the Greek word *pleonektikos*): always attempting to take more than one’s share, “asking for more and more of the same thing without end.” Ultimately, there is never enough alcohol to truly satisfy him, no matter how much he drinks, and yet even then, he cannot stop.

5. Increasing *isolationism*: like a Cyclops in the Greek myth, the disease of alcoholism hides in its cave, so to speak, and “leads a solitary existence, neither helping, nor helped by, its neighbors.”

6. The disease of alcoholism is marked by what St. Augustine called the *libido dominandi* (the lust to control and dominate others, what Bill W. on pages 61-62 of the Big Book called the attempt to play the stage director): “like a tyrant, it tends to

subjugate or slay its neighbors.”

7. It becomes a *monomania*, where eventually everything else in the alcoholic’s life ceases to have any importance: family, job, health, or what have you.

8. *It replaces real life*, until eventually all that exists in the alcoholic’s mind is drinking and thinking about drinking. [chapter 1, section II]

The second item on that list of eight characteristics—fear—is especially important. Alcoholism may look on the surface like a desire or craving which has gotten out of control, but in fact the alcoholic’s thoughts and behavior are dominated at all times by an overpowering fear and horror: “His secret is not that he makes for drink and takes delight in it as desirous people make for and take delight in that which they desire. Of delight there is very little in his life, and as his dipsomania grows he cannot be said even ordinarily to like drink, still less to delight in it. But as his dipsomania grows, there is something which does grow along with it and proportionately to it, and it is that something which explains it. It is his *fear or even horror, of life without drink*. That life is a wild beast which pursues him, and his dipsomania is just a running away from it. He desires or makes for drink only in the sense in which we make for a refuge; drink is for him a refuge from life. His repetition of the doses is the action not of a desirous lover but of a coward desperately defending a position with a repeating rifle against an oncoming foe.” [chapter 1, section II]

### **“Desire” is bad but “passion” is good**

When Leon argued that desire plunged us into soul-sickness, terror, and mania, it might seem that he had painted himself into a corner. For how could one desire salvation itself or anything good without being thrown into terror there as well, fear of not achieving that goodness and salvation? Leon attempts to get out of this problem by distinguishing between *desire* in the selfish sense, and what he calls *passion* or “pure desire.” Passion is directed towards the Absolute and the Unlimited, rather than towards some specific, particular goal. In the philosophical idealism of Schelling, Hegel, and F. H. Bradley, the Absolute is the unconditional divine reality which is contrasted with the realm of space and time. Everything within the world of space and time is limited and finite, and conditioned by its ever-changing spatio-temporal context. The Unlimited however is the infinite, and the Absolute lies totally outside the box of space and time.

In Kantian philosophical terms, desire keeps us confined within the box of space and time (and specific, finite physical objects), while passion allows us to rise up into the realm of the noumenon (the pure ideas) and act on the basis of a categorical imperative (such as, for example, “always be honest and tell the truth regardless of the consequences”).

Passion “is the desire that absolute love, or power or wisdom, etc., should be manifested in whatever way it is possible for any of them to be manifested at this moment,” without imposing, in advance, any kind of limits or overly-restrictive

specifications as to how that is to be done. So let us say that I am starting on writing a book. If this is to be a book which will be a genuinely creative and novel piece of work, then I cannot know what it is that I shall write *in particular* until after it has been written. I can only preserve the creativity by writing with a passion for absolute honesty and absolute beauty and so on. The same will be true if I am asked to stand up in front of a group of people and talk about my life and the role of spirituality in my life story. If I am motivated by a passion for absolute honesty and absolute love, I will be freed so that I will be able to talk with true creativity and profundity, “from the heart,” in a way that will be able to liberate other people and communicate real grace to them. That is because there is no selfishness in that kind of passion. [chapter 1, section III]

## NOTES ON CHAPTER 2. DEMONSTRATION BY EXPERIMENT

### **By surrendering the self (and nailing it to the Cross), fear is released, and desire is turned into passion**

In order to act with passion for the absolute instead of acting only out of selfishness, I must take my *self* and nail it to the Cross. I must practice total surrender and total acceptance. “The instinct for self-preservation must be replaced by the passion for the Cross.” I must let the self be annihilated, in order that I may become a person.

But once I have let go of my fear of God, my fear of change, my fear of creative growth, my fear of not being in control, and even my fear of death itself, I will find my selfish desires undergoing a radical change. And in this new *changed life*, my old selfish desire will have been transmuted into a passion for that which is absolute, perfect, and good. [chapter 2, section I]

In apparently paradoxical fashion, I have to surrender to win, and let go of all things in order to receive all things.

### **The Quiet Time**

The place where I can “cross out” and surrender all my selfishness, and overcome my crippling fear, and become truly open to God, is in the Oxford Group practice called the morning Quiet Time. What we do here, Leon says, “is best summed up simply by saying, ‘I appeal to God and He answers me and helps me. I listen to Him and obey.’” [chapter 2, section II]

The practice of this Quiet Time was of course one of the important things taken over from the Oxford Group by the early A.A. movement. In the Big Book for example (on pages 86-87), Bill Wilson describes how this Quiet Time and request for divine guidance is placed at the center of our morning meditation. In Richmond Walker’s *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*, the standard meditational book in early A.A. from the time of its first publication in 1948, page after page talks about the prayerful entry into the divine Quiet and the realm of holy Silence.<sup>9</sup>

This was an ancient concept. One major group of gnostics in the second and third centuries A.D. taught that the two primordial aeons or divine beings, from whom all the other divine beings and godlike and angelic powers had derived their existence, were the male aeon *Bythos* (“Depth,” “the Deep,” that is, the primordial abyss of nothingness which underlies all reality) and the female aeon *Sigé* (the divine “Silence”). In the gnostic divine hierarchy, the goddess *Sigé* gave birth to Truth, Mind, the saving Word, and eternal Life.

The hesychastic monks of the Eastern Orthodox church preferred to use the term *Hésychia*, which meant “Quiet” or “Peace,” the ultimate stillness and rest of

perfect serenity. By shutting off all their disrupting thoughts and concerns, and allowing their minds to float wordlessly within this realm of peace and quiet, they found that they could eventually experience the divine Uncreated Light in an experience similar to the one which Bill Wilson had in Towns Hospital in the middle of December 1934, after he had had his last drink.<sup>10</sup>

### **Guidance and the great Terror**

Although it is called the Quiet Time, whenever I ask God for guidance, that is, when I ask him what it is that I am to do today, God's answer may at first plunge me, not into rest and peace, but into fear and revulsion. What I am asked to do may even plunge me head over heels into the great Terror. Sometimes the act of service which God asks me to perform seems to involve me losing all of my worldly goods, my reputation, and even my life. At other times I may feel God requesting me to make an apology or carry out an amends, in a context which may be quite minor at one level, but which would make me feel totally humiliated. If I have been a person who has been too ambitious and hard driving, and who has worried too much about everything, God's guidance may even tell me that I need to start relaxing and taking things easy for a while. In the case of people who feel as though they have to be busy, busy, busy all the time, that can throw them into what can sometimes be unbelievable terror and rebellion! Me, just sit down and relax? But such-and-such needs doing, and such-and-such absolutely has to be done!

But whatever it is that God will guide me to do in this moment of Quiet Time, it will ask me to carry out the "suicide or the annihilation of the self." And at that point, my natural human tendency will be to reject the Cross, and cry out that this horrid thing which is confronting me could not be God. [chapter 2, section I]

When alcoholics have to face God for the first time, what these alcoholics see does not seem like God at all to them. What they in fact see is the horrible face of their own alcoholism. They see the wasted ruin of their own lives, and all the catastrophes and failures that have dragged them down, and they cry out that not only is this not God, this is proof positive that God does not exist. Or if God does exist, then he is hateful and evil. This is the biggest problem which alcoholics face when they first enter the twelve step program: the overwhelming fear ("the great Terror" as Philip Leon calls it) which sweeps over them the minute the meeting begins talking about God.

Perhaps what they see is not God *per se*—that is true—but it is God's *Cross*, the cross to which they must surrender their old lives before they can receive the New Life. We do not have to put this in Christian terms. We can go back to the Old Testament, and notice how Moses, when he was standing at the bottom of Mount Sinai, saw its top covered only with a black storm cloud. Yet the guidance he received from God told him to start climbing that mountain, right up into the darkness and fear. It was only after he reached the top, that Moses stepped out into the realm

of the Divine Light. Or we can remind ourselves of all the pagan myths in which the sacred and saving presence within the temple is guarded by a hideous monster standing in front of the temple. We must fight our way past the monster's teeth and claws in order to touch the holy goddess who sits enthroned within. [chapter 2, section I]

**In Quiet Time, I deny the self and turn to the  
Absolutes in order to receive guidance**

The Quiet Time is in its essence a meeting between my self and God and the Absolutes. There are an infinite number of absolutes: the 1949 edition of the A.A. classic called *The Little Red Book* spoke of Humility, Honesty, Faith, Courage, and Appreciation; the A.A. *Tablemate* or *Table Leaders Guide* from the early 1940's spoke of Faith, Hope, Trust, Humility, Simplicity, Patience, Fearlessness, Generosity, Justice, and a number of other virtues. But Leon says that the Oxford Group's Four Absolutes (Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love) are convenient examples of the kind of absolute moral demands that we will confront when we enter the period of Quiet Time.

The self is "faced with the impossible when it is presented with a demand for a pure or absolute act," because the self can only desire the impure world of its own most selfish wishes. The self's first automatic reaction is one of resistance. I say to myself that I am a decent person basically, and that these are absurd demands. I give alibis and make excuses. But the fact is that my self not only falls infinitely short of these high ideals, but is totally helpless to achieve them by its own unaided powers. Therefore, until I learn to practice non-defensiveness, I will be unable to get past the self and enter God's full presence. [chapter 2, section II]

Let us look again at how we practice the Quiet Time: "Immediately on waking, then, I give over my mind and heart to God—that is to say, to absolute love and wisdom—and I pray that I be guided towards absolute love, wisdom, power, truth, etc." At that point, ideas will pop into my mind, ideas of two different sorts. Some of these ideas will be impure ideas centering on my own selfishness, and entangled in the strife and tension of cause and effect in the material world around me, the world of space and time. But others will be pure ideas—Absolute, Unlimited, and Unconditioned Ideas from the divine noumenal realm, outside the box of space and time. I must ask God to act as my "psychoanalyst" and tell me which are pure and which are impure. That is how I will receive true divine guidance. [chapter 2, section II]



## **The act of total surrender allows the “pure act” (*actus purus*), the miracle which creates the New Being**

In particular, during this Quiet Time, I have to identify that particular fear which is “the great Terror” or hideous monster dominating my mind at this time, and then *totally surrender to it in order to be freed of it*. Whatever it is, “with the whole of my heart—that is to say, passionately—I say or think ... ‘If it be right, let this thing from which I shrink happen. I will that I preach, lose my job, deal with my calumniator lovingly, deal with the fool patiently, fail to gain the success I desire. I will that my self, which is fear [and] the instinct for disease, be annihilated. Let only the constructive urge, the passion for the Cross, remain in me. Thy Will be done, Father; not mine. Into Thy hands I commit my spirit.’ With this willing I leap into the dark, I fling my self away, I give up the ghost, I commit suicide.” [chapter 2, section II]

Then and only then will I be able to act on the pure Absolutes—absolute and perfect love, unselfishness, and so on—where the motive power of my action is coming not from this world (from within the realm of my own selfish desires), but from the higher divine world (since my action will be impelled by the Unconditioned, the Unlimited, and the Absolute Ideas). So when I act properly on guidance, my action (though a human action) will be what the medieval Catholic theologians called an *actus purus*, a “pure act,” that is, a living *miracle*. [chapter 2, section II]

St. Thomas Aquinas for example, in the thirteenth century, said that all we can know about who and what God really is in the literal sense, is that God is that *actus purus* (that pure act) in which New Being is brought into being out of nonexistence. In modern terms, we would say that God is the source of all that is truly creative and novel and revolutionary. When a human life is suddenly transformed from an evil life into a good life, in a way that seems impossible in terms of ordinary human science and understanding, that is God at work, and the proof that God does indeed exist.

But we must remember the famous warning at the beginning of the chapter on “How It Works” in the A.A. Big Book (on pages 58-59): for all of this to happen, I must not only surrender myself to God, it must be an act of Absolute Surrender. “Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go *absolutely* ... Half measures availed us nothing ... We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.” Those are my italics on the word *absolutely*, but Bill W.’s choice of the word absolute is very important in understanding this passage, for the echoes of Oxford Group language are very clear.

### **Examples of guidance**

A woman who has been reading the Bible without receiving any help from it is guided to go to the public library and take a particular book (on the psychology of total surrender) off of a particular shelf, and read it. It ends up bringing the real

presence of God not only into her own life, but into her whole family's life. A man is guided to go see another man on business at a particular time and place, and to his surprise, ends up explaining to the other man how to surrender his life to God, which that other man does right there on the spot. An ambitious man is guided into making a big and very humiliating material sacrifice, but ends up being given an important position where he can do God's work. [chapter 2, section II]

### **Testing guidance to make sure that it is not self-delusion and blind fanaticism**

People are afraid to teach the idea of divine guidance because they are afraid that it will produce fanaticism. But there are ways of testing guidance, which will help keep this from happening.

1. *By its fruits:* True guidance produces love and health. Fanaticism produces terror, torture, death, and fear.

2. *By motive:* People who are truly guided begin by confessing their own sins and their need to correct their own defects. Fanatics try to deal with their own fears and resentments by blaming others and attacking the sins of others instead.

3. *By the end:* Fanatics have limited particular ends, specified rigidly, to which they will sacrifice everything and everyone else. Things must be fit by force into mechanical creeds and formulas and systems of legalistic rules and political and economic theories. Those who are truly guided, on the other hand, see that true goodness usually expresses itself in novel and creative ways, which may break or transform all the old rules. They do not say, "what mechanical rule or theory must we slavishly follow?" but leave their minds totally open and say instead, "let us pray, and see if we can discover what will be truly loving, unselfish, and caring." [chapter 2, section III]

### **What is the "spiritual experience" we need to have?**

1. It is not a kind of experience which we are supposed to have only at particular times. Some modern writers, Leon says, try to portray it as some sort of special feeling which we can only have when we are engaged in a certain kind of ritualistic prayer, or when kneeling in church and looking at stained glass windows and listening to organ music. But the true experience of God is something we can feel continuously through the day, for it is the experience of *the health of life*. My old life was sick and diseased, and I felt the misery of that soul-sickness inside me continuously. The new life is the experience instead of health and vitality permeating everything I sense and experience and think and feel. [chapter 2, section V]

2. It is not a kind of experience which only certain kinds of specially talented people can feel. There are very few people who have the ability to write fine poetry or compose great music or paint a beautiful painting. Only great geniuses can do

this. But you do not have to be any kind of extraordinarily gifted “saint” or a “mystic” or anything else of that sort in order to have genuine spiritual experience. If the experience of God is the experience of the Cross, then “you do not have to be a very special or rare person to be lifted up on the Cross.” All that is required to do this, is for me to quit trying to defend my own self and stop giving alibis and excuses for my own continual selfishness and self-centeredness. Or to put it in other words, the kind of spiritual experience which saves us is the experience of genuine humility before God. In this light, Leon quotes from Chapter 13 in the fourteenth century English spiritual work called *The Cloud of Unknowing*, where Absolute Humility is described as “nought else but a true knowing and feeling of a man’s self as he is.” [chapter 2, section V]

3. It is not inexplicable. There is a long tradition in works on spirituality, where true spiritual experience is described as an “inexplicable mystery.” It is indeed an entry into a realm of mystery, but “a true mystery is not that which cannot be explained, but that which can be explained in countless ways.” Those who have listened to a group of A.A. oldtimers talking about spiritual experience will understand exactly what Leon is talking about here. Each man and woman uses different words and different metaphors and images, but those among the listeners who have had real spiritual experience themselves, understand that all these oldtimers are talking about the same thing. [chapter 2, section V]

4. Likewise it is not ineffable. That term refers to something which can be felt or experienced, but cannot be put into words. There is also a long tradition in works written about spirituality, of saying that real spirituality centers on some kind of ineffable experience. That is not so, Leon says. Genuine spiritual experience is not ineffable, or perhaps we could better say, that it is not “more ineffable than any other state of mind.” It is difficult describing a state of mind, and the words we use can only be fully understood by others who have experienced being in that kind of state of mind. But people speak about their spiritual experiences in Oxford Group and A.A. meetings, and other people in the meeting do in fact understand what they are talking about. [chapter 2, section V]

### **Philip Leon’s description of his first spiritual experience**

Philip Leon described his own first spiritual experience as a revolutionary change in his whole way of looking at the world around him, bringing with it a new sense of freedom, a birth and rebirth, a radical personal experience of what the Gospel of John calls the vision of the Resurrection and the Life:

“But a while ago, and in my world a curtain hung in front of me which shut out the air, so that I choked for breath [but] now—O miracle of miracles!—the curtain has vanished! ... The curtain has vanished and I breathe freely, generously. I breathe for the first time! ... and beyond the curtain? Miracle of miracles! There is no Be-

yond! The Beyond is here! Its miracle is here, is everywhere! ... Where before everything was vagueness, uncertainty and perplexity, everything is now clarity, certainty, simplicity. Where there was drifting, now there is direction ... Where there was ... staleness and routine, there is now newness and magic.” [chapter 2, section V]

Suddenly he could see the presence of God shining forth in some strange fashion in the trees and flowers, and hills and skies, and all the world around him. In my book *Images of Christ*, I refer to this as “nature mysticism,” a way of feeling God’s numinous reality which was a recurrent motif in the Romantic tradition in literature.<sup>11</sup> Philip Leon modifies a famous stanza from the English romantic poet Wordsworth’s *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* to describe this spiritual experience.

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

In 1917, the German theologian Rudolf Otto gave a detailed philosophical account of how we can apprehend God in this way, in a book which is still one of the truly great theological classics, *The Idea of the Holy*. Otto was a Kantian, just like Leon, but used a different strategy for describing the human mind’s contact with God and the realm of the sacred: after toying (in an earlier book) with the theory that we became aware of God’s presence at the level of the Absolute and the Unlimited, Otto argued in *The Idea of the Holy* that the numinous sense of the holy or sacred was instead one of the basic categories of the human understanding.<sup>12</sup>

**Coming to see the Truth in all religions, as well  
as the falling short of all religious systems**

In this kind of spiritual experience, Philip Leon said, he came to see the Light of Truth shining forth in all the religions and philosophies of the world. He gained a new understanding of the doctrines taught by Judaism, Islam, ancient Greco-Roman paganism, and all the many varieties of Christianity. He was also able for the first time to recognize the truly profound discoveries made by philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel. But he did not mean by this that everything all of those systems said was true, or that any of those religions and philosophies had the whole truth. He was able to see where each of these religions and philosophies had valid things to say, but also where each of them fell short of the full truth, or even denied an important measure of the truth.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER 3. SHARING OR SPREADING THE WORLD REVOLUTION

### **I must become a revolutionary, and a missionary to the diseased human society which forms the “larger self”**

Just as the individual self is formed by its diseased fears and desires, so the thousands of fearful selves which at present make up the bulk of human society combine together to make a world dominated by hatred, envy, rigidity, authoritarian rules, and the fear of any kind of novelty, change, or revolutionary new approach to problems. This is Nietzsche's herd mentality, where the cowardly masses attempt to destroy the *Übermensch* (transcendent humanity). A social system which is institutionalized selfishness and fear will necessarily oppose any courageous individuals who try to be genuinely creative and think for themselves. [chapter 3, section I]

And contrariwise, to keep my life healed, my only recourse will be to put my full time efforts into changing the society in which I live, by working to change other human lives and bring them out of sickness into health. There is no static defense which will ultimately work; the only effective defense is to throw myself into taking on the rigidity, hatred, fearfulness, authority systems, and selfishness which dominate the world around me. I must be a *missionary*, and I must be a *revolutionary*. [chapter 3, section I]

### **The coming of World War II, and the Communist, Fascist, Nazi, and labor union movements**

Let us remember that Philip Leon finished writing this book in December 1938. In his introduction, he made the ominous statement: “The world is going mad, we are all saying ... A tide of homicidal mania is rolling towards us.”

And indeed, the world did seem to be going mad. The Fascist leader Mussolini became Prime Minister of Italy in 1922 and soon began calling himself *Il Duce*. The Spanish Civil War, which began in 1936, ended up putting the Fascist General Franco in total control of Spain on April 1, 1939. Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, which started the Second World War after Britain and France responded by declaring war on the Germans. On the other side of the globe, Japan occupied Manchuria in 1931, and began invading other parts of China in 1937. The United States responded with an oil embargo on Japan and other measures, which ultimately led on December 7, 1941, to the Japanese attack on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor which thrust America into the war also.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 ended up with the Bolsheviks taking over that country and then imposing a dictatorial Communist system. In America, the

Communist Party USA was formed about the same time, during the years 1919-1921, and had periods of enormous influence in the United States until Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president in 1932. Roosevelt began working to encourage the formation of labor unions which rejected Marxist doctrines and were linked to the non-Communist AFL movement instead. Roosevelt's brilliant solution quickly began destroying the power of the Communist movement in the United States, but we must remember that many people in the Oxford Group were factory owners or otherwise connected with the capitalist class in ways which made them often so anti-union, that they failed to appreciate the skillful way that Roosevelt had prevented a Communist takeover of the United States. So the Oxford Group would put on plays, for example, which attempted to portray labor union leaders as simply trouble makers who were trying to raise up strife and hatred amongst the working class.

In May 1938, Frank Buchman began describing the Oxford Group in a different kind of way, referring to it as a movement of Moral Re-Armament.<sup>13</sup> They began to see their major goal now as one of remaking human society as a whole, and trying to bring a new spirit of peace and love to all of the world's governments and social institutions.

Was this an insane goal? Philip Leon responded by saying that, when we have God's power to draw on, "defeat comes from limiting expectations." Poverty and war are only symptoms of selfishness. If we can change individuals, then we can change whole societies. [chapter 3, section I]

### **Defeating the larger self through confession and sharing**

The larger self—that is, the combined force of all of the fear and selfishness which infects all of the human selves around me—is the enemy. I will be defeated by this enemy if I allow myself to fall into fear, such as for example, the fear of self-exposure. I may feel fear at the thought of standing up before others and honestly admitting my own fear, sin, and trouble. [chapter 3, section I] But confession, that is, honestly sharing with others who I really am, and exposing my own self for what it really is—a mass of fear and diseased selfishness—is the only way I can communicate my own God-consciousness and my own spiritual experience of God to other human beings.

If the other people begin accusing me of "hypocrisy, cowardice, immorality, stupidity, unreason, etc.," instead of becoming defensive, I should simply let them keep on talking. Perhaps some of their charges are true, or at least partially true. These I need to admit immediately. But most of these charges will be the other people trying to project onto me what are in fact their own guilts and inadequacies. If I avoid defensiveness and let them keep talking long enough, I will be able to carry out the work of a good psychotherapist, and eventually lead them into seeing that their greatest problems really lie within themselves, not with me or other people.

[chapter 3, section II]

If I am successful in working with another individual, there will be produced a kind of “triple consciousness”: God-consciousness, self-consciousness, and other-consciousness. This will produce a kind of magnetic field of multiplied power. Another human being will be drawn into our group, and then another, and another. [chapter 3, section II]

### **Confession and restitution as a way to change the past: a new kind of psychotherapy**

Confession and restitution allow us to actually change the past. It breaks the chain of karma (“the summed-up self” as Leon calls it) and releases us at last from the rigid automatic reactions and compulsions which dominate our lives. It starts by releasing us from compulsions like dipsomania and morphinomania (alcoholism and drug addiction we would say today), and then begins to liberate us also from habitual reactions such as a tendency to fall into anger or resentment or despair, and other similar destructive compulsions. [chapter 3, section II]

How is the past changed? Let us take as an example, an English colonial administrator who “on surrendering his life to God, first wins freedom from a humiliating and disabling sex impurity which obsesses him at the moment, is next enabled to deal with his narcissism, then gains successively release from his pride of family and pride of race, and his arrogance and lovelessness towards the subject population which he has to rule, until one day, through sharing with someone whom he is trying to change, he traces the formation of his character to the fear inspired in him by a governess who used to beat him as a boy with a ruler.” [chapter 3, section II]

What is the difference between this and what the psychiatrists do? The psychiatrists believe that they can heal their patients by showing them how they can blame their present problems on what someone else did to them in childhood. The problem is that the real freeing effect of that, if any, is usually not very great. The Oxford Group says instead that an early childhood trauma is not a *cause* but simply the *beginning* of some chain of karma. I can free myself from it only by accepting responsibility for who I have become, instead of trying to shift responsibility onto someone or something else.

### **Forgiveness of the past**

The phrase “forgive and forget” states an impossibility, for “whatever is forgotten is never forgiven, and whatever is forgiven is never forgotten.” Confession and making amends opens up the graves which litter the past, and displays all of the unholy contents of those tombs. When I make amends to other people for things I did to them in the past, this brings the light of truth to part of that ancient scene, which in turn puts a powerful kind of pressure on the other participants to see what

they also did in that situation. It gives them a chance to redeem themselves too, if they choose to, without name-calling or condemnation or blaming from my side, which is a very precious gift to give to other people.

And when the graves are opened, and the rotting, festering deeds of the past are finally exposed to light and air, it then and only then becomes possible for me to confront the fear and surrender it to God. Then and only then does it become possible for me to act in the present without my action being a blind reaction to the past. I no longer have to attempt to get revenge, to do something to “show them,” to brag and bluster, to close myself off from other people to hide my shame, or whatever the reactive responses are which I have been compulsively carrying out. [chapter 3, section II]

There is a word of warning here too. There are those who would like to practice censorship, and prettify the history of the Oxford Group and the life of Frank Buchman, or who would like to leave certain things out of the history of the rise of A.A. and the life of people like Bill Wilson. If we do this, we will destroy the power of forgiveness and redemption, and will defeat any possibility of transmitting a higher God-consciousness and spiritual experience to other human beings, because the message we preach will no longer have the power to blow the mighty trumpet which opens up the graves of the past and brings the resurrection of the dead. That is, we will find ourselves no longer having the power to change the past, but will be compelled to repeat our old mistakes over and over forever.



## NOTES ON CHAPTER 4. CHANGING SOCIETY

### **Social problems are not the fault of “the system”**

Leon believed that it was a great mistake to think that social problems could be corrected by changing the whole system (the political system or the economic system) in fanatical fashion, or by passing punitive laws. Communists falsely believed that everyone would be happy if only the capitalist system was destroyed, while prohibitionists foolishly thought that alcoholism would cease to be a problem if laws were only passed forbidding the sale of alcohol. But the true causes of class warfare, drunkenness, and so on, lay with individuals, not with society. An individual self which has no real God-consciousness and is dominated by selfishness will pervert any system of government or laws. To change diseased institutions, we first had to change diseased individuals. That was the route which the Oxford Group had decided to follow by the end of the 1930's. [chapter 4, section I]

### **Childhood education and sex**

But it was also true that we could alter the way we did certain things in human society in a fashion which would help produce changed individuals, starting with childhood education and the whole matter of sex and marriage.

Traditional education, both in the church and in the secular world, focused on “the inculcation of fear.” Children were given mechanical rules to follow, and threatened with punishment (even with eternal hellfire) if they broke any of these rules. They were taught to fear their teachers and to regard them as perfect human beings who never broke the rules and never made mistakes. As a result, each child would be turned into a chain of Karma, a chain which arose during early childhood, but whose series of interlinked selfish and fear-based reactions would decide the course of that child's whole subsequent life, all the way to adulthood and old age.

In changed education, however, teachers who had themselves undergone the kind of life-changing experiences which the Oxford Group taught, would share with the children. They would not only share their God-consciousness, but also would admit to their own fallibility. From teachers such as these, children could develop real personalities. [chapter 4, section II]

On the issue of sex, Leon spoke against “sex impurity” without really explaining what he meant by the term. For the Oxford Group in general, this tended to mean homosexuality, transvestism, and masturbation, all of which they frequently preached against vociferously. Leon's ideal was the kind of marriage which was a partnership between a man and a woman who had both surrendered their lives to God. [chapter 4, section III]

## Economics and the political world

Leon's solution to the world's economic problems was that people should be taught to stop focusing on *consumption* (a selfish desire which was destructive of human personality) and turn instead to thinking about *productiveness* (which encouraged creativity and innovation, the fruits of true personhood). Economics needed to be personalized, where employer and employee (and even business rivals) started regarding one another as persons. Absolute Love was the only power which could truly heal economic conflicts. [chapter 4, section IV]

Traditionally, politics was the art of manipulating human fears. But a changed human society would use Quiet Time and group guidance to discover God's will, based on the principles of Absolute Love, Absolute Unselfishness, Absolute Honesty, and Absolute Purity.

On the topic of crime, Leon argued that it did no good to punish criminals just for the sake of punishing them. Criminals, like those who suffered from other forms of mania and insanity, were people just like us, only more so. We might indeed have to place certain kinds of criminals behind a *cordon sanitaire* (quarantine line) where they could be prevented from entering the rest of society and harming people. But we then needed to send people with changed lives in to work with these people and teach them about Absolute Love and so on, until their lives had been changed, and they could be allowed to reenter normal human society.

The only way to eliminate war—the ultimate mania or insanity into which a diseased economic and political system fell—was to produce a changed society in which total holiness had permeated every human heart. [chapter 4, section V]

## Philosophy and art

The proper task of philosophy is not to not engage in endless argument, but to expose error. Truth does not need to be discovered, because it stares us in the face once error has been removed. The primal errors are denying the existence of God, believing that the self (and its selfish desires) is real, and refusing to face the reality of the Cross: the path of surrender and acceptance which leads to true God-consciousness.

Bad art—the kind of art which Leon believed dominated the modern world—glorified sex impurity, protest for the sake of protest, scorn and contempt, meaninglessness and absurdity, and every other variety of negative God-feeling. The changed artist would pray instead, and attempt to portray true God-consciousness and the nature of the Cross. But the changed artist would be above all “the artist of laughter,” who celebrated the ability to laugh at ourselves, which signified the defeat of that old soul-destroying fear which kept us locked in blind selfishness and egotistical self-centeredness. [chapter 4, section VI]

## **The Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous**

As we can see, the Oxford Group in 1938 was turning into a movement with a different set of goals, symbolized in their renaming of the group as Moral Re-Armament. Their desire to concentrate more and more on the attempt to bring about world peace and a changed society led them in a direction which the newly formed Alcoholics Anonymous movement did not wish to travel. The only way to treat alcoholism, A.A. had discovered, was through a group which had a singleness of purpose, where the group focused all of its efforts on that task alone.

But the A.A. people took what they had learned from the Oxford Group about the soul-destroying power of fear and selfishness and the way in which the practice of Quiet Time, surrender, and acceptance could allow God's grace to change and totally remake the human soul, and remained forever grateful, through all the generations which followed, to those fine and good people in the Oxford Group who had first taught them how to find God.

## END NOTES

1. Philip Leon, *The Philosophy of Courage or the Oxford Group Way* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939).

2. The great American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr quoted that work in his own masterwork, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941), in Ch. 7, “Man as Sinner,” p. 204, note 2: “Philip Leon, in an invaluable study of human egotism, analyses self-deception as follows: ‘The self-deceiver does not believe ... what he says or he would not be a deceiver. He does believe what he says or he would not be deceived. He both believes and does not believe ... or he would not be self-deceived.’ *The Ethics of Power*, p. 258.” This passage shows Leon already coming out with important philosophical ideas which the French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre was going to make famous in works like his *L’Être et le Néant* (“Being and Nothingness” 1943).

3. Lady Margaret Hall (founded in 1878) was the first women’s college established as part of Oxford University. It is located only a couple of blocks south from where I lived at Park Town when I was a student at Oxford. I arrived at Oxford to begin my studies in 1965, exactly thirty years after Leon went to that house party—a generation later, although there were still many similarities to, and reminiscences of, Oxford in the 1930’s.

4. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.13.3. Eng. trans. as St. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Garden City NY: Image Books/Doubleday & Co., 1955). The same argument was given in briefer fashion in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, q. 2, art. 3.

5. Big Book = *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001; orig. pub. 1939) 67-68. But Bill W. later explained in more detail in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1952, 1953), in the chapter on the fourth step, what he had meant in the Big Book (on page 65) by the natural instincts (“our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations”) which were producing this fear, and how they had to be handled. Contrary to what Philip Leon argued, Bill W. insisted that freedom from the great Terror came, NOT from totally eradicating the self and replacing its natural instincts with absolute (that is, perfect) virtues, but from producing more balance among the natural instincts. So for example, working hard at one’s job in the hopes of perhaps achieving a promotion and a raise was not evil in and of itself, unless and until it started driving us into unbearable resentments and fears. Some alcoholics, who had not held a real job in years, needed to be pushed into developing a much greater drive for finding some kind of honest employment, so they could have a roof of their own over their heads, and food on their families’ tables—developing a little bit of fear of starving to death in the gutter was not an unhealthy growth in these persons.

6. Zoltán Kövecses, *American English: An Introduction* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broad-

view Press, 2000) 28. “Sick originally meant ‘ill’ in the seventeenth century ... The meaning of the word was not limited to ‘nausea’ alone, which is the predominant meaning in Britain today. When used predicatively (i.e., with verbs like *to be* or *to feel*) the new British sense of the term is ‘ready to vomit, to feel nauseated.’ American English still retains the earlier, more general sense of the word, and it is used of illness in general.”

7. Jessie Penn-Lewis was a very interesting figure. An Englishwoman, her father was a Calvinist Methodist minister. She herself was deeply involved in the great Welsh Revival in 1904-1905. She wrote a book entitled *The Centrality of the Cross*, from which we could get some suggestion of what she was preaching about at Keswick when Frank Buchman heard her, but was more famous (or notorious) for a book which she and Evan Roberts authored, called *War On The Saints* (1912), about the dangers of Christians becoming possessed by demons and evil spirits if they were not continually alert. She blamed the ultimate collapse of the Welsh Revival on the work on Satan.

8. Such as the Free Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Church of the Nazarene, the holiness churches, the people who run Asbury College and Seminary near Lexington, Kentucky, and so on.

9. Richmond Walker (1892-1965), *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*, “compiled by a Member of the Group at Daytona Beach, Fla.,” rev. ed. (Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden, 1975; orig. pub. 1948). Rich first got sober as a member of the Oxford Group for two and a half years (from 1939-1941) before he went back to drinking for a year and a half. He got permanently sober in May 1942, after he joined the newly founded A.A. group in Boston.

10. The experience of the white light was described by Bill W. in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of A.A.* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1957) p. 63. This happened on December 13 or 14 probably. See *Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1984) p. 104 for a picture of his discharge slip, which shows that he was admitted to Towns Hospital on December 11, 1934 and discharged on December 18, 1934.

11. Glenn F. Chesnut, *Images of Christ: An Introduction to Christology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row/Seabury, 1984) pages 57-62.

12. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 2nd ed., trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950; 1st English trans. 1923; orig. pub. 1917). The earlier book was Rudolf Otto, *The Philosophy of Religion Based on Kant and Fries*, trans. E. B. Dicker (London: Williams & Norgate, 1931).

13. The group continued to go by this name all the way down to 2001, when they changed their name yet again, to “Initiatives of Change.”

# The Philosophy of Courage

## INTRODUCTION

The world is going mad, we are all saying. We are all of us right. A tide of homicidal mania is rolling towards us.

The men of ideas are sitting like Canutes\* on their thrones, watching the tide and protesting, protesting, protesting. They are telling the empty skies that the sea is a very naughty sea indeed.

Slowly the men of arms are marching up. They lift each little Canute upon his little chair and quietly put him away. They themselves line up along the shore. They clench their mailed fists and fling them out towards the sea. With bloodcurdling threats they dare the tide to come on.

A few months pass by. The men of ideas have nearly all been removed to the rear. They are still protesting, this time, however, no longer against the sea but against the men of arms for not having dared it enough. For now, with their feet almost wetted by the flood, the warriors themselves have recoiled in horror and are busy raising up walls of steel and digging, digging, digging.

What shall cure us of our mania?

Religion?

I and many like me have grown up to look upon religion as dope.

Much of what passes under the name of religion is dope.

The real thing, however, is not dope. It is an emetic. It makes us sick—sick of ourselves.

Only self-sickness will cure us of our mania.

I myself came upon the real thing just over three years ago.

On July 8, 1935, I went straight from a philosophers' congress to an afternoon meeting of an Oxford Group house party held at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. I came prepared for the worst, and for the first fifteen minutes, during the preliminary proceedings, I found what I was prepared for. I was filled with a vague but strong distaste, which only my would be scientific caution and academic fear of falling short of the standards of the impartial and impassive judge prevented from developing into sheer horror. But, as speaker after speaker rose and spoke briefly about his experience of God, my attitude changed to a crescendo of approval. "What sanity!" "What humor!" "What power of self-criticism!" these were the exclamations which rose up in my mind and which, in this order, corresponded to that crescendo. Then from approval I passed to a deep absorption—a kind of listening which was with the whole of my body as well as with the whole of my mind and heart. All I had ever

\* stepstudy's note: Canutes the Great was a Viking king who died in 1035. His kingdom included England, Denmark, Norway, and some of Sweden. A story is told of Canutes that he placed his throne by the sea and commanded the tide to stop. As the story goes, he was upset when the sea did not obey him. (All other footnotes, unless otherwise indicated, are those of the author.)

heard or read of wisdom and of truth seemed to be concentrated in those speakers, who more and more assumed for me the semblance of pillars of light.\*

I was still plunged in the same absorption about an hour and a half later as I was pacing up and down the lawn of the college quadrangle. “Well, what do you think of them?” asked the companion by my side who had been with me at the meeting. Out of the depths into which I had been plunged only one thing came up into consciousness—the story of the Japanese alleged to have said that he knew what God the Honourable Father and God the Honourable Son were, but did not know what the Honourable Pigeon was. And so, “*This is the Honourable Pigeon!*” I replied.

Those words, which sprang to my lips at that precise moment because of their quaintness, expressed exactly the flavour which the most catastrophic event that can befall any human being had for me. For me, to whom God had been successively a being infinitely remote, though longed for, in my childhood, the wicked invention of priests in my adolescence, an idea to be philosophically analysed in my undergraduate days and later, and most recently Goodness of which the notion was immanent in all genuinely moral intuitions—for me to come thus suddenly upon the reality and familiarity of God was, above all, a *strange* discovery. Indeed, when subsequently I tried to give the peculiar quality of all that I had been through for about a year starting from that afternoon, what I wanted to say seemed to me to be summed up best in a jingle modelled after another jingle:

So this is God!  
How very, very odd!  
So this is God!  
How very, very odd!

Such was the personal aspect of an experience which must for everyone have very personal characteristics indeed. Everything about that experience is interesting and helpful, even its most private peculiarities, which, therefore, deserve not only to be mentioned but even to be described at length. But because this experience is, as I shall show, such that it can preeminently become the possession of Everyman, it has also a preeminently public aspect. It is the latter that I propose to give in the following pages in the language of Philosophy, of Psychology and of the imagination.

In doing this I shall be offering Everyman the prescription for the medicine the taking of which by him will save the world by making it sick and sane.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, Leicester, December 1938

\* As I look back upon this first experience and ask myself what in it was the special mark of extraneous saving grace, it is of this listening that I think. It was like something that came and took hold of me from outside myself. At the same time, since it was a listening, and a very philosophic listening at that, I felt and was more intimately I in it than I had ever felt and been in anything else. This same kind of listening has all the time helped me to grow in the experience.



## TRUE RELIGION

Why are you cowards, possessed of little trust?  
Jesus to his disciples frightened in the storm.

MATTHEW VIII, 26

And getting down from the boat, Peter walked on the waves to go to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he became frightened. And beginning to sink, he called out: "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him and said to him. "You man of little trust, why did you hesitate?"

MATTHEW XIV, 29-32

We must demonstrate that it is for our highest good fortune that such madness is sent to us as a gift from the gods. Our demonstration will be held untrustworthy by the clever but trustworthy by the wise.

Socrates on inspiration and passion in Plato's *Phaedrus*, 245 b.c.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love  
Is God our Father dear,  
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love  
Is Man His child and care.

BLAKE

Love is longsuffering and kind; it does not envy; it is not proud, puffed up or offensive; it does not pursue its own Interests, it is not irritated, it does not reckon up evil or gloat over the sinfulness of others, though it takes delight in their goodness. Its forbearance, trust, hope and patience are unlimited.

I CORINTHIANS XIII, 4

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee, this day, shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be frontlets between thine eyes, And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon the gates.

DEUTERONOMY VI, 4-9

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.

ISAIAH XL, 31

But when religion is that which it should be, not a notion or opinion, but a real life growing up in God, then reason has just as much power to stop its course as the barking dog to stop the course of the moon. For true and genuine religion is nature, is life, and the working of life; and therefore, wherever it is, reason has no more power over it than over the roots that grow secretly in the earth, or the life that is working in the highest heavens.

WILLIAM LAW, *The Way to Divine Knowledge*

And if God and heaven and hell, and the devil, the world and the flesh, were not all of them self-evident in you, you could have no more good or hurt from any hearsay about them, than from the hearsay of pleasant gardens, and dismal prisons, in the world of the moon.

*ibid*

For neither God, nor heaven, nor hell, nor the devil, nor the world and the flesh, can be any otherwise knowable in you, or by you, but by their own existence and manifestation in you.

*ibid*

**THE OXFORD GROUP WAY:**

Let God change you, guide you in everything along the lines of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, and use you to bring others to Him. When man listens, God speaks. When men obey Him, God acts. When men change, nations change.

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## Chapter 1

### UNDENIABLE FACTS

Undeniable facts are inescapable facts.  
God and myself are for me such facts.

#### I

### GOD: THE ABSOLUTES OR PURITIES

#### STARTING POINTS

It is the ambition of every philosopher to start his discussion with some fact or facts which no one can deny. The facts with which I propose to start here as undeniable are God and myself.

A fact to me in the fullest sense of the word is that which acts on me, which I comprehend by my thought and which in some sense I see and feel. An undeniable fact is one from which I cannot get away.

I cannot get away either from God or from myself. Being unable to get away from them, I consider it the part of wisdom and, therefore, of philosophy, which originally meant the love of wisdom, to start with them as well as to end with them.

God and myself are, like father and child, correlative terms: one cannot be properly understood apart from the other. What is more important, in the case of God and myself my consciousness of either is profitable for my life only in so far as it is also the consciousness of the other and of the relation between the two. This will be demonstrated and illustrated almost at every step in the following pages.

#### DEFINITIONS

It is possible to define or to give the meaning of a term without maintaining that the term stands for anything real. Thus, I can say what is meant by “pixies,” while at the same time declaring that there are no such things as pixies. What immediately follows is given as mere definition of the term “God.” But, because I believe that philosophy should all the time deal with experience, I will draw even my definition from experience—the experience, in fact, with which this book will deal all the time. Nevertheless, the unbelieving reader, to whom the term “God” is like the term “pixie,” may discount all allegation of experience and take it that in the definition I am merely inviting him to consider certain notions for which the term “God” has stood or stands and the connections between these notions, just as I might ask him

to do the same for the term “pixie.” To this consideration I am inviting him because only after it will he be able to decide whether the term “God” stands for anything real, and if it does, whether it is necessary for denoting that reality or whether the reality is already adequately covered by some other term.

#### GOD AS POWER

From the most primitive times men have thought of God as power. In the New Testament also “the Power,” *Dynamis*, is a synonym for God,\* while the chief proofs of Jesus’ special connection with God are considered there to be his “powers,” as his miracles are called in the Greek. It is significant that they consist chiefly in the healing of mental diseases (cases of possession) and of physical ills, and that they are most striking and disturbing as evidences of the divine precisely to those people who do not believe in Jesus and have no love for him. In all ages, primitive or late, unless men already love God, they must be faced with the notion of Him as power. For then the only reason they can accept for concerning themselves with God is, to put a crude fact crudely, that they have got themselves into a mess (mental and physical ills) and that they need some extraordinary power to get them out of it. In our age there is a particular need to recall men to this idea of God as power, because, while the mess is greater than it has ever been, in proportion as the world of men is a vaster and more complex thing than ever before, at the same time, even when men believe in God, they have practically ceased to think of Him as power and, instead, associate with the name only the ideas, of duty, idealism, mild benevolence or sentimental kindness. So much is this the case that in speaking about God to most believers it is necessary, if we would make an impression, almost to avoid the word “God,” certainly to get away from familiar language about Him and to borrow one’s terms from medicine, or the science of electricity, or anything rather than religion. If this produces a shock, the shock is no greater, and no less beneficial, than the one we get when we pass from the language of the English Bible, excellent but made comfortable by the mere force of custom, to the original Hebrew or Greek.

When I speak of God as power, I mean positive or constructive power or efficiency and not negative or destructive and obstructive power; I can judge best of the power of God from that of the men who are inspired by Him: just as inefficiency, impotence, destruction and obstruction are more evident in many men thrown together but failing to cooperate than they are in one man, so this constructive power is best seen in many men together, in the smooth running of life between them or in the perfection of relationships. I will try and give a picture of what happens when two or three or more are gathered together under the control of that Power. If the reader cannot recognise it as a description of anything that he knows from experience, he can treat it as my idea of what is possible or at any rate

\* Matt. xxvi, 64; Mark xiv, 62; Luke xxii, 69.

desirable, or simply as an attempt to make graphic my definition of constructive power.

There is produced by such a gathering an electric atmosphere—an atmosphere magnetised, purified, sensitised to the utmost, dynamic,\* charged with the nth power. It combines the maximum of concentration with the maximum of ease. In it you are always doing something, always giving the whole of yourself to something or some person, but always ready for some thing new, always busy, always at leisure, always hastening, always unhurried; you feel as though you were walking on air. In this atmosphere you see far and you see through. Everyone is transparent. All pretences, masks and pomps have been stripped off. All eyes are wide open, seeing what is in front of them and showing what is behind them. Everyone is like a modern building—all window, Everyone is brand new, young, uninhibited, fearless and carefree. All go about like very happy and very wise children, They are listening to an invisible leader and, in listening, sense and meet each other's needs. Complexities are simplified, conflicts harmonised, knots untied, tangles unravelled. Without any arguing, persuading or scheming, everything fits into a plan, a plan preconceived by none.

Quietness, special insight or wisdom, mutual interpenetration, freedom—these and other features I would single out in analysing the power. But at one's first meeting with it, one does not analyse it at all. It impinges upon one as a unitary atmosphere. One breathes it in as one breathes the air. Once it has entered one it begins to work. It works like a ferment.

The operation of that ferment is by no means some thing with which one falls in love at first sight. It causes in one unease, dissatisfaction, inferiority feeling in short self-consciousness. Right at the start we have an illustration of the statement made above. Consciousness of God brings up consciousness of self. One becomes uncomfortably aware of all sorts of things in oneself that one generally tries to cover up—inadequacy and falsity, fear, everything that one has ever had on one's conscience and has sloughed off. In proportion as one desires to preserve one's comfort, to rest undisturbed in one's present condition and to choke down that resurgent awareness, one rebels more or less violently against the dynamic atmosphere. The people from whom it emanates arouse in one the strangest and richest variety of suspicions and dislikes with their slightest word or deed. Instead of acknowledging as one's own the faults in one which are struggling up to the surface of one's consciousness, one projects them and fixes them or others on these people individually or collectively, while the atmosphere as a whole begins to irritate one as crude and violent, glaring and overbearing. "It makes me, sick!" is the eloquent phrase, far deeper than he suspects, with which many a man sums up his rebellion against that atmosphere and with which he ends, for a time at least, his contact with

\* Cf. the use of "dynamis," just alluded to, in the New Testament.

the power which is God or from God.

That phrase is eloquent because it sums up the real crisis which each man has to face. To be or not to be sick, that is the question—the question of life or death, the question whether we shall choose God or self.

#### GOD AS PATIENCE OR CREATIVITY

We will suppose that I welcome the sickness in the hope that it leads to help, and that I allow the ferment to go on working in me. There begins then a strange and unending process of growth which is also a voyage of exploration. It is in this process that are verified the various notions which have been held about God and which I am offering here as my definition of God.

First, then, I notice that the power operating in me is not a power over anything or anyone. So far is it from being overbearing or from forcing me to anything, that I rather feel that I myself am a force against it. Once more, the consciousness of God provokes the consciousness of myself, and I am conscious of myself as a power of resistance or obstruction. Nothing happens to me through God's power without my consent.

If I give my consent, what happens to me comes about step by step. My consent begins by my accepting the self-sickness or feeling of dissatisfaction instead of running away from it or suppressing it. I feel then that I am a mass of rotteness. But, however readily and sincerely I acknowledge the whole of me as rotten, what emerges of this rotteness clearly into my consciousness is one detail only at a time. At any particular moment I see this or that definite act of selfishness or cowardice or insincerity. Looking back over the "readings" thus made of my character over a period of some length, I notice that they are in a definite order, each coming only when I was ready to profit from it and preparing the way for its successor even as the way for it was paved by its predecessor. The order is not the same as I should have chosen myself if I had sat down to take myself in hand by the light of Psychology. There is a supreme and unexpected wisdom in it. It resembles the order observed in the growth of anything—plant or animal—and experienced in any planning of an enterprise or composing of a poem, play, painting. I am reminded of the fact that growth and "creative" work have been particularly associated with God and that poetically He has been called both the Gardener and the Garden, He who makes things to grow and that in which they grow

All these things—the waiting instead of forcing, the gradualness and the wisdom—I sum up by saying that the power which is God is patience.

It is patience in the etymological sense of the word also, that of bearing or suffering. For of the rotteness which I feel myself to be there is not a single item which that power does not take on, as it were, to bear or suffer it. The bearing or suffering is a positive thing. It is a healing and changing. This healing and changing is, I see, what real forgiveness means. I feel it also to be the, supreme function of love.

God, I remember, has been called Love and Lover, Health, Healing and Healer.

Reflecting on this process of healing or changing, I get some comprehension of another common notion about God. By very many, though not by all, the power which is God has been considered throughout the ages a unique power. According to some He has at one time made, while according to others He is continually making, everything there is. I may on many grounds come to believe either of these assertions to be true. But as far as the physical and biological world is concerned it is not a fact which as yet I can say I have experienced. I can, however, say that I have experienced God's making of *myself*. For I have experienced this healing or changing, and it is a process which I have every reason to describe not only as a remaking, but as the making, of me. It is "making" in the sense in which the word is used when we say "this will make a man of him" or "it will be the making of him." The sense is a very deep one, for that phrase, like so many colloquial expressions, contains the germ of a whole philosophy and of a very sound one. God, we may say in that sense, is the making of us.

#### GOD AND THE CROSS

God, then, is power, which is patience, which is wisdom and love, which are the healing and making of personality. The nature and degree of the power which is God are most fully symbolised in the Crucifixion. The Crucifixion, it is true, is often interpreted very negatively. By some it is regarded, though never officially or quite clearly, as something which was meant to make life easy for us: whatever we are and whatever we do, it is implied, we have been saved once and for all by it, provided that by a ritual act and by an assent of the intellect we acknowledge it and the Crucified. By others, on the contrary, it is held up to us in order to urge us to the acceptance of suffering, frustration and unpleasantness, while the sole reason for our accepting these appears to be, at any rate ever since harps and angels have gone out of fashion, that if we do so, we shall be able to consider ourselves good boys or noble men. Because of the negativity or sheer meaninglessness into which the symbolism has in many minds degenerated, and also because through the power of custom, even the Cross, however interpreted, has come to spell comfort, so that its mention, like that of any familiar thing, serves only to keep the inactive believer asleep, one is tempted to omit all reference to it, hoping to give the substance without the word. But to denote the message of these pages in any other way than by calling it the doctrine of the Cross would be to tell a lie. For that message the Cross is a fact as undeniable that is to say, as inescapable as God and myself. Besides, dangerous as are the degenerative and soporific effects of any custom, there is also an advantage in linking up with what is sound in custom, and this we can do only by using customary language. It is for us to guard against the danger and to profit from the soundness by making clear the meaning which we attach to the language, and this is what I shall now endeavour to do in bringing the Cross into my definition of



God. The reader who is asked to consider at this point definition only is at liberty to regard the whole account of the life, the divinity and crucifixion of Jesus as a fairy tale invented and used by many people through many ages in order to illustrate what they meant by God's power in relation to the world as it is.

The Crucifixion is an illustration of the Omnipotence of God which is the same as love. God, it teaches us, is that power which changes degradation into glory, death into life, defeat into triumph, inertia into inexhaustible activity. (Jesus as God took on the degradation, imperfection and sin of humanity, was degraded on the Cross, died and descended into hell and then rose into life again and ascended in glory into Heaven, from where he is helping and will always help us to do what he did.) The omnipotence of God is also asserted when we call Him the First Cause and Creator of all things. But that assertion is, as I have already said, one to be got from reasoning or inference only, and its discussion would involve the consideration of many logical difficulties as well as of those still very obscure phenomena which constitute the physical and biological world. Here what philosophy of God we are offering is a philosophy of experience. Such a philosophy is the philosophy of the Cross. If, sticking to experience and avoiding mere inference, I wish to illustrate what I mean by God's omnipotence, I must refer to the Crucifixion. For whatever is illustrated by it, with the exception of the triumph over physical death, I can vouch for from my own experience. In the growing-changing-making process to which I have been referring all the time, I experience the transmutation of the death (degradation or inertia) of my imagination, intellect, will and affection into a life endowed with that intensity, poetry and capacity for constant renewal which are denoted by the term "Heaven."

From the side of God the Cross stands for the exercise of omnipotence in relation to a world of imperfection and evil. What is it for me and why should I lift it up and carry it? For, once more, reflecting on God involves reflecting on myself. The Cross for me is any constructive possibility which runs counter to my inclination or nature, that is to say, to my inertia (for inclination or natural proclivity follows the path of greatest ease which is the path of inertia). I am part of the universe of inertia which, at every point in space and every moment in time, both resists and aches for God's healing and energising love, while God in turn waits for admission with a patience commensurate with His omnipotence. At the point and moment occupied by me, I, and only I, am the door through which He can enter. If, following my inclination, I act as resistance or inertia, then I prolong the reign of feebleness and death. If, on the other hand, I go against my inclination, deny myself as inertia or resistance, take up the Cross, then I become the point at which omnipotence manifests itself. My reason for taking up the Cross is that by so doing I participate in, or become the instrument of, the omnipotence which is God.

The teaching of the following pages is simply an expansion of this statement.

## ABSOLUTENESS

God's power, patience, wisdom, love—these are qualities that also belong to a man. But all qualities that have been attributed to God have always been supposed to belong to Him in a special way—in a more eminent degree. This greater eminence is partly pressed by calling God omnipotent and saying that His qualities constitute His omnipotence. But partly because omnipotence is a notion which involves difficulties when you start to define it, I propose here to denote the special eminence of God's qualities by saying that they are all absolute all the time. By absoluteness I mean the same as purity. A quality is present in an absolute or pure form when it is present without any admixture of its contrary. God's power is absolute because there is never any fainting or failure in Him; His patience (in both senses of the word given) is absolute because there is in Him neither hurrying nor shrinking or rejection. His love is absolute because it is that kind of patience or forbearance and also a generosity without reserve; His wisdom is absolute because He is all the time light without any particle of darkness.

In thus distinguishing God from men I do not mean that a man cannot be absolutely loving or wise or efficient in a particular act with the absolute love or wisdom or efficiency which the particular moment allows or requires. He can be any of these things in the same way in which God can. In fact it is in the man's being any of them that God manifests His absolute love or wisdom or power at that moment and that the man participates in the omnipotence which is God. But if a man is absolutely loving or wise or efficient at one moment, he is not so at the next. There is no necessity for this to be so; its being so is merely what in Philosophy is called a brute fact and what in ordinary speech we may call an unpleasant but fortunately, with God's help, an alterable fact, which, so long as it lasts, makes of the world the sorry thing it is.

## GOD'S ONENESS

God is not just a collection of qualities—power, patience, wisdom, love, health, creativity. In language which I have already used, having carefully chosen it, He is power, which is patience, which is wisdom, which is love, which is health, which is creativity. In other words, all these qualities, in the form in which they constitute God, are one.\* They are one because they are absolute. As we commonly meet them in life, they are, it is true, different from each other. We find, for example, power which is not wisdom or love, wisdom and love which are not power nor identical with each other. But we also find that the power is not wisdom or love just in those respects in which it falls short of being power, that if the wisdom were only more wisdom it would be love, while if the love did not stop short of being absolute love it would be wisdom, and that then either would also be power. The more we reflect on

\* Cf. the remarkable statement of Lady Julian that she saw God "in a point."

these qualities and on the relations between them, the more certain we feel that at bottom they are one. They are one, it seems to me, when they are absolute or pure. In other words, power, patience, wisdom, love, etc., are different names given to the many ways in which one and the same Perfection is broken up by an imperfect world, God is like white light broken up into different colours by different surfaces or resistances.\*

#### THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

We can now answer the question whether God is personal or not. What is a personality? I should define a personality exactly as I have defined God, viz. power, love, wisdom, etc. I should say that these qualities are unified in a personality and that it is, in fact, their unity that constitutes a personality. Now, we have seen that in God, these qualities, because they are absolute, are one in a way in which they are not one in a man. God is therefore personal in a more eminent sense than a man, because He is more a unity than is a man, who is largely a set of disconnected qualities, purposes, thoughts and feelings. Further, God is not only personal. He is also the maker and making of personality in the sense in which I have said He is the making of us. He is this because, besides being one Himself, He also makes me one or whole. For the process of changing, healing, making me is also one of unifying me or making me whole.†

I shall often speak here of God, as I have already done, as power, love, wisdom, etc., instead of as “He.” This is because I am addressing myself to thought and therefore must perforce speak analytically—that is, in terms of qualities. Personality is apprehended, not by thought only, but by the whole man, with his imagination, feeling and will, in concrete experience. The personality of God is apprehended in the changing-healing-making experience I have already referred to, and it is when we try to conjure up that experience and when we are addressing ourselves to the imagination, feeling and will that it is more natural to speak of God as “He.” Nevertheless, even then it is a great help to speak of God more abstractly, as power, love, wisdom, etc. The fact is that even in the most intimate communion with God abstract thought can be a great help, and it is partly because of its absence, and also because through the excessive use of personal language we begin attributing to God the imperfections of personality as we know it, that ideas about God tend to degenerate so quickly.††

\* Cf. Shelley’s:

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

† In calling God personal I do not mean that He is thought, feeling, will. He is spirit, and spirit is not thought, feeling, will, but the source of these.

†† The main reason is of course that we refuse to live the Godlike life or the life of the Cross.

Perhaps we should say that those who are used to abstract thinking are bound to apprehend God as

## GOD'S INFINITY

Infinity is another notion by which God has commonly been defined. Here I am using it in two senses.

God is infinite in the number of His qualities—that is, in the number of ways in which the Oneness is manifested to the world. I have chosen power, patience, wisdom, love. But I could have pointed out that the absolute patience is absolute gentleness, that the absolute love is absolute generosity or—as casting out all fear and shrinking from nothing—absolute courage; and that the absolute power or creativity—since it works by taking on utmost degradation and rottenness—is absolute humility. Nor can I see any reason for bringing my analysis to an end. An account of the absolutes would be the Odyssey of that voyage of exploration which, I have said, begins when I allow the power of God to start working in me as a ferment, and that voyage has in it the promise of unendingness.

Secondly, God is infinite because each manifestation—absolute power, absolute love, absolute wisdom, etc—is infinite. In that same voyage I am discovering not only absolute after absolute but more and more of the same absolute. In seeing that the exploration must in the nature of things be unending I see both that the number of the absolutes is infinite and that the revelations of each absolute must be infinite. Also, just as I see that every absolute is the same as every other absolute, so I see that each revelation of absolute love, or absolute wisdom, for example, is a revelation of the same love and wisdom, or comes from the same source.

Reflecting on the change or evolution which has taken place in me since I let in the power of God and also on the ideas suggested by the theory of evolution that life has developed from mere matter through the stages of vegetable and animal to man—I am led to sum up pictorially God's infinity in relation to the world as the infinite Cross lifting up an infinite number of worlds of inertia (death, sleep, defeat, arrested development and repetition, conflict and destruction) and changing them into pure energy (absolute love, patience, wisdom, creativity, newness, harmony). It is through His infinity, rather than through His absoluteness, that God is essentially distinguished from man. It is possible for me, with God's help, to be absolutely loving, wise, brave, etc. But even if I were this every time, I should still be only becoming and unfolding piecemeal the infinity which God is in its totality all the time.

## PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Absolute and infinite power, wisdom, love, etc—we may sum all these up by calling them perfection. I have drawn for the notions of all these upon the experience of perfection—the experience of the changing or healing or making of personality

Power, Love, Wisdom, etc., and so should accustom themselves to think and speak of God as “He,” while those who are not used to abstract thinking should make a special effort to think and speak of God as Power, Love, Wisdom, etc.

by the power of God. But it is not necessary to have this experience in order to have some notion of perfection. Everyone can and must have some notion of absolute power or wisdom or love, for example, for everyone decides about this or that particular action or man that it or he is not absolutely or infinitely powerful or wise or loving, and in thus judging he must be said to have in some sense\* the idea of absolute and infinite power, wisdom, love, without which his judgment would be impossible. Even the preacher who said “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” had an idea of that which was not vanity. He had, in fact, an idea of the perfection of God, and meant largely that, judged by that perfection, all *else* was vanity.

But to have a notion of something is not to prove that that thing is a fact or exists. We can all have a notion of a pixie or a centaur and yet this does not constitute a proof of the existence of either. But it is to be noted that the notion of perfection is very different from that of a pixie or centaur. Amongst other differences, it is a light by which we see Our way and a standard whereby we judge, and, in fact, judge everything. So unique, indeed, is the notion of perfection that some have held that the mere fact that we have the notion is itself a proof that the perfection exists. I agree with these thinkers, but to pursue this line of thought would take us too far from our purpose, which is to describe and make clear an experience.†

Here it will be enough to see how far God or perfection answers to the definition of fact which I gave at the beginning. A fact, I said, is that which acts on me, which I comprehend by my thought and which in some sense I see and feel.

#### SEEING GOD

I see God, or at any rate I have a glimpse of God, every time I see an instance of absolute (that is to say, of pure or unmixed) constructive or creative power—that is, of absolute love or wisdom, or courage, or humility, etc. This seeing is not a physical seeing. It is an intuition. Everyone has glimpses of God. He has them in individual acts of absolute love or wisdom or unselfishness which he either sees done or which call to him for the doing of them.

#### FEELING GOD

I feel God in the self-sickness, the stir or fermentation set up in me by such a glimpse and preeminently by the impact of the dynamic atmosphere I have tried to describe. This stir is the creative urge. In view of the fundamental change it can start we may also call it the revolutionary urge. I can react to it either positively or negatively. I react positively when I am willing to be dissatisfied or sick with

\* He at least knows and tells us what absolute and infinite power, wisdom, love, etc., are not, and his judgment is governed by the idea of approximation to absolute and infinite power, wisdom, love, etc.

† I have pursued the line of thought in “Immanence and Transcendence” (Philosophy, January 1933) and in *The Ethics of Power*, p. 300.

myself, to learn and to be corrected or changed. My attitude is then one of docility, intense attention, expectation, hope. I will call this attitude positive Godfeeling. I react negatively when I reject the self-sickness because I wish to stay “put” and, as a means of doing so, proceed to cover up my actual state both from myself and others. I then defend myself by direct or indirect self-explanation or self-laudation and by fear, suspicion or scorn of whatever provokes the revolutionary urge in me. My self-defence may consist of any one of an infinite number of negative attitudes ranging from flagrant self-assertion and violent destructiveness at one end of the scale to boredom or pathological *taedium vitae*\* at the other. Any one of these I will call negative Godfeeling.

Everyone of us at every moment has either negative or positive Godfeeling.

### COMPREHENDING GOD

We comprehend God when we understand such truths as those embodied in the statements which have here been put forward in the definition of God. That is to say, when we understand that all instances of absolute love or wisdom, for example, are instances of the same love or wisdom, that all the absolutes are one, that their number is infinite and that each of them is infinite. This is the comprehension of the unity of God—of the fact that all the many glimpses are revelations of the same perfection—and of His infinity. It is got by reflecting on and comparing many intuitions of absolute love, power, wisdom, etc., and is an affair of the intellect or the “head” rather than of the “heart.” Nevertheless, it comes to us clearly only as we progress in that changing-healing-making process in which God purifies our hearts, perhaps because only in that process do we attend enough to instances of absolute love, power, wisdom, etc. To behold God even intellectually we must be pure of heart.

I may sum up by saying that so far I have shown that God is a fact because we see Him, because we feel Him and because we comprehend Him. To show that He is also a fact because He acts on us we shall have to look closely into the changing-healing-making process to which I have up to now only referred. Before we can do this we must examine the term correlative to God, namely myself, since, as I said at the beginning, either term can be understood only by the side of the other. To this examination we shall now proceed.

\* stepstudy’s note: “*Taedium vitae*” means “weariness with life.”

## II

### MYSELF

#### I AM NOT GOD

The objection likely to be most commonly brought against what I have said will probably run as follows. "Of course what you have defined as God stands for a fact, but that fact is something in yourself and other selves. There is no need to suppose a power outside yourself. It is yourself."

Now, the fundamental distinction between man and God is, I have already said, that man is finite and God is infinite. But to work out that distinction we should have to examine the notions of finite and infinite and of time and eternity, and this would take us away from our purpose of describing in order to help men understand, desire and make progress in, the changing-healing-making process which is the experience of God. Here it will be right to confine ourselves to those distinctions the making of which will forward that purpose.

With that experience in view, then, I will say that, since God (that is, absolute love, wisdom, etc.) and myself (as distinguished from my body) are not things in space, God is neither in me nor outside me, literally speaking. Speaking metaphorically, God is certainly not outside me: the experience of Him at its best is best described by the phrase "God in me, I in God," the meaning of which can only be understood if we have had the experience.

The part of the objection which calls for consideration is the statement that God is just myself. (I pass over the possibility of His being my fellowmen but not myself, because, if I am convinced that he is not myself, I—resembling in this everybody else—will have no difficulty in believing that He is no one else amongst human beings.) Now, much as it would flatter me to be taken for God, I must decline the compliment in the interest of intelligibility. For I can only describe my experience of God by saying that I appeal to God and that He helps me in a way in which I cannot appeal to myself or be helped by myself. What is more, I cannot have that experience, or at least not to the extent to which it is possible to have it, so long as I have at the back of my mind the inhibiting idea that that way of speaking about God is only metaphorical and that God is really myself, just as I could not have full and satisfactory relations with my fellowmen if I thought that these were really myself or projections of myself, in which case my relations would be so unsatisfactory that I should probably be put away in a lunatic asylum. I must therefore emphatically insist that God is not myself, in the sense that I can appeal to Him and that He can answer and help me, just as I must insist that another human being is not myself, in the sense that I can appeal to him and that he can answer and help me.

## I AM THE LIMIT

God is not *Myself* in another very important sense—in the sense that I am a power over against Him, the power to resist and exclude Him. It is in that capacity that the self has so far emerged as the term correlative to God. It is the limit to absolute and infinite power, love, wisdom, etc.

## SELF CONSCIOUSNESS

We may arrive at the same conclusion if we merely consider the ordinary meaning of “self-consciousness,” once more drawing deep philosophy from common speech. The self of which I am conscious, when I am what is commonly called “self-conscious,” is not absolutely efficient or loving or wise. In so far as I am any of these things I am not conscious of myself at all, being wholly taken up with whatever I am doing or with the person I am attending to. When I am self-conscious I am conscious of something wrong; or, at any rate, there is something wrong when I am self-conscious.

Self-consciousness has, in fact, been called a disease of consciousness. That is why so many counsel us to avoid it, urging us not to be morbid, not to dwell on our own emotions, motives, faults, but to turn our gaze upon the world about us and become extravert. An admirable counsel this would be if the people who are “extraverts” in this sense were not the most easily wrecked by some of the most elementary motives or emotions, of which they are as ignorant as they are powerless to deal with them when at last they become aware of these unfamiliar phenomena, and which finally bring them to the extreme of morbidity, namely disastrous “nervous breakdowns.” The truth is that self-consciousness is not a disease of consciousness but the symptom of such a disease (hence it is also self-sickness); and the thing to do with a symptom is, neither to ignore it nor vainly try to cure it, but to study it so that we may find out and cure the disease. Therefore, instead of running away from self-consciousness, so long as we have anything left to cause it—that is to say, so long as we are not yet perfect—we should rather seek to deepen it so that it may become self-knowledge and acuter self-sickness. It is, however, true enough that self-consciousness and self-knowledge are useless by themselves, just as the knowledge of physical symptoms and diseases is useless by itself. Just as the latter knowledge requires to be supplemented by the knowledge of health so the former consciousness and knowledge need to be made correlative always to the consciousness and knowledge of God—that is, of absolute health. This is what we are trying to do in these pages.\*

\* Self-consciousness is, of course, the same as the consciousness of sin. But I prefer the former to the latter term, partly because my thought came to me in the former, but largely because, whereas no one can deny his own acquaintance with self-consciousness, the consciousness of sin, on the one hand, is something which most men regard as the concern of “religious people,” while, on the other hand, the sin of which most “religious people” are conscious is that of the irreligious.



## DISEASE OR FEAR: MANIA

What is wrong with the self? To this question most people would reply, “Just the self. It is so selfish.” If they were asked what constituted selfishness, they would say, “Greed,”

Now, greed is a certain kind of desire. What kind it is we shall best see if we look at it in its extreme form—namely, when it is a craving or mania. A mania is admittedly something diseased. But according to this reply the self qua self is something diseased or wrong; that is why the consciousness of the self makes us sick. We may therefore expect to find the self qua self maniacal or something like maniacal.

What are the characteristics of a mania, say of dipsomania? The desire for drink which is called dipsomania is, in the first place, compulsive: the dipsomaniac is its victim; he cannot help himself, he feels; he must have his drink, or else—so it seems to him—something terrible will happen, the end of the world. Closely connected with the compulsiveness of the desire would seem to be what we may call its narrowness or rigidity or inelasticity or lack of plasticity. By this I mean that there is little or no variety in the modes of its satisfaction. Whereas ordinary thirst, for example, can be satisfied by water, tea, coffee, etc., the drunkard’s “thirst” can be satisfied by alcohol only. Being incapable of seeking for variety, as most desires do, it replaces variety by infinity of repetition: it is marked by what I have elsewhere\* called a *pleonectic* characteristic—the characteristic of Oliver Twist of asking for more and more of the same thing without end. Lastly, it is Cyclopean and tyrannic: like a Cyclops, it leads a solitary existence, neither helping, nor helped by, its neighbours, the other desires; like a tyrant, it tends to subjugate or slay its neighbours. It ends by infecting the whole of its victim’s life with its own characteristics, or rather by reducing the whole of his life to itself. Every activity becomes for him merely a means to satisfying his desire for drink; it becomes for him something which is not itself real living, real living being just drinking.

We understand, however, the inmost nature of greed only when we see that it is a fake or disguise. It *seems* to be very strong desire, so much so that often it is called by the name of what is desire *par excellence*, namely passion (so people speak of a “passion” for drink, for gambling, etc.). But, when we look beneath the surface, we discover that in reality it is largely made up of what is the contrary of desire. Desire is a seeking or making for life more abundant, an adventuring forth, an expanding; its contrary is a shrinking or running away from life, a rejection, a clinging to or defending of a fixed position—in short, it is fear, for fear consists in just these things, namely shrinking, running away, rejecting, defending, contracting. Now greed, to judge by what we have seen so far, is clearly a contracting of life (it contracts the drunkard’s life to one point, drink, or to a series of repeated points, drinking bouts);

\* *The Ethics of Power*, especially pp. 113-14 and 228-9.

hence, indeed, its apparent strength the violence of a compressed force. If we look more closely at the dipsomaniac, we shall see that it is also a rejection and running away—in short, unmistakable fear. For his secret is not that he makes for drink and takes delight in it as desirous people make for and take delight in that which they desire. Of delight there is very little in his life, and as his dipsomania grows he cannot be said even ordinarily to like drink, still less to delight in it. But as his dipsomania grows, there is something which does grow along with it and proportionately to it, and it is that something which explains it. It is his *fear or even horror, of life without drink*. That life is a wild beast which pursues him, and his dipsomania is just a running away from it. He desires or makes for drink only in the sense in which we make for a refuge; drink is for him a refuge from life. His repetition of the doses is the action not of a desirous lover but of a coward desperately defending a position with a repeating rifle against an oncoming foe.

We may sum up by saying that greed is diseased desire. Diseased desire is impure desire—that is, desire mixed with its contrary, fear. In its extreme or maniacal form it is almost wholly fear masquerading as desire. The marks of disease are: compulsiveness, violence, narrowness, repetitiveness, monotony, inelasticity, pleonectic grabbing, isolation, tyranny, defensiveness, contraction, withdrawal, rejection.

#### SELLING ONE'S SOUL

Dipsomania, kleptomania, morphinomania, onanomania, nymphomania, satyromania—these and some other diseased desires like them have received the title of mania officially or technically.\* But common speech, which is largely moulded by the common perception of resemblances important for ordinary life, has fixed upon the similarities between these and far more widespread desires, and has extended the title to the latter.

Commonly we may call a mania any desire when we are “attached” to its object, or have “set our heart” upon its object, or have “sold our soul” to or for it. We may sell our soul to or for anything—power, riches, glory, skill, knowledge, “goodness” even, in the sense of a fixed code deciding what shall stand for goodness. The life resulting from selling our soul may be a very rich one reckoned quantitatively—that is to say, it may cover a very large field of manifold activities. But somewhere or other in it there is something that is starved, or subjugated, or treated merely as a means to that for which the soul has been sold. That something may be the imagination in the busy man of affairs or in the scholar; or it may be the intellect in the man of feeling; most generally it is something in the affections. Whatever it is, it marks a shrinking from developing to the full all the possibilities of that life; it is a sign of impurity or of the admixture of fear, and acts like a piece of dead flesh upon a large and fine body, gradually infecting its quality or lifeblood. It is that infecting

\* For an illuminating account of them see Fritz Kunkel in *Charakter, Leiden und Heilung*, section 17.

impurity which is denoted by the sinister phrase “selling our soul.” What we sell is our very life; what we buy comes to stand for life and becomes, like drink, a refuge from life.

#### PARTICULAR DESIRES

But every particular desire, whether called mania or not, is by its very nature, it would seem, diseased or impure because mixed with fear. A desire, I have said, is a seeking or making for life more abundant, an adventuring forth, an expanding. I must modify that statement by pointing out that a particular desire (a desire for a particular thing or class of thing) is only a making for those possibilities of life which include its own particular satisfaction; it is at the same time a shunning or rejection of all those possibilities, far greater in number, which do not allow of its satisfaction, and it is a rejection of them however excellent they be in themselves. Thus, if I have the desire to do something (say to climb a mountain or obtain a job) or to be something (say to be a scholar), I naturally tend to make for those conjunctions of circumstances which mean the realisation of that desire; but, unless I am corrected by something else, it may be by another desire, I no less naturally tend to shun, fear, deplore all those conjunctions which mean that my desire will not be realised. Since the number of these conjunctions is vast, it is notorious that every particular desire is attended by a mighty train of fears, worries, suspicions, anxieties. Further, every particular desire, in excluding a vast number of conjunctions, by that very fact is at war with a vast number of other desires—all those which make for these excluded conjunctions—and seeks to establish a tyranny over them.\* Thus, to take one example, if I desire to obtain a professorship, I am apt to shun all activities and thwart all desires, however excellent, which might interfere with my success. I tend also to be afraid, jealous or suspicious of all possible rivals and to thwart their activities and desires.

If fear, a negative thing, is present in desires which present themselves as positive, and constitutes their negativity, it is still more likely to be operative in attitudes which do not even claim to be anything but negative—attitudes like dislike, hatred, anger, annoyance, indignation, resentment, scorn. That there is fear (as the term has been defined here) in them when they are what I have called negative Godfeeling, is obvious, for then they constitute preeminently a running away from life, since God is absolute life. But do they constitute a running away from life when they are directed against evil, disease, death itself? They do, for they constitute an abandonment or rejection of the effort to heal or quicken what is diseased or dead, and that effort is the attribute of absolute life or omnipotence. It is notorious that the strength of the feeling in these attitudes is in direct ratio to our shrinking from exertion, and in inverse ratio to our readiness for effort and to our confidence. It is true that when we

\* What I have called the impurity of particular desires is the phenomenon which is covered, but also largely misinterpreted, under the term “ambivalence” in textbooks of Psychology.

are negative we plead, in excuse of our feeling, that we are not running away from curing but that there is no cure—that the situation is hopeless, But hopelessness, properly speaking, is never in a situation but only in us, and instead of being, as it pretends, to be, the result of the impossibility of action, it is simply the surest method of running away from action; it is, in the significant Latin phrase, an *ignava ratio*, a reasoning of fear.\*

#### THE INSTINCT FOR SELF-PRESERVATION

We have shown so far that every particular desire is diseased. But earlier on we adopted the saying that the self itself is diseased. What justification is there for that?

What constitutes the self? The self is made up of a number of inherited habits (instincts and congenital dispositions and capacities) and acquired habits (including acquired aptitudes and inclinations), and these produce appetitions and ambitions, which I shall designate together as particular desires. We may define the self, then, as a group or pattern of particular desires. Now, since each desire is diseased, the group is likely to be diseased also, unless together they produce a unity different in quality from each constituent. But the unity may be said to exist in the tendency to defend, or to maintain in being, or to repeat, the group or pattern as a whole and to ensure those conditions which will satisfy all the desires; or, since there is nearly always war, or only an uneasy peace, between them, the unity may be said to exist in the tendency to maintain and to satisfy the desires which prevail. This tendency, being the tendency to preserve the self, is called the instinct for self-preservation. Like the particular desires which it tries to preserve, it is itself diseased or impure. For, in the first place, it is largely constituted by the fear of, or shrinking from, the immense number of possibilities which involve or seem to involve the biological extinction or death of the individual; in other words, the basis of the instinct for self-preservation is the wide and deep fear of death.

This fear, more than any other fear, effects, first of all, an immense narrowing: the infinite number of possibilities which together make up the whole of life is reduced to the comparatively tiny group of conditions which the race has come to regard as compatible with biological existence, and thus we are kept from evolving, as a race, towards other states of biological existence, while the individual is kept from other modes of existence than the biological when he should pass on to them.† But this tiny group is still further reduced for each individual; for, except on the

\* We should certainly not be in any doubt about this in the case of a doctor who urged that disease or disease of a certain kind should be treated with indignation and contempt; we should say he was shirking his job.

† These words are not, of course meant to justify physical suicide, which is a running away, any more than they justify murder, which is another running away. A man may reasonably decide that the moment may have come for him to pass on to another sphere of life than the biological when absolute love requires him to risk death in the carrying out of something constructive.

occasions when he is threatened with biological extinction, existence means for him, not just being alive, but having a certain income, status, reputation, etc., and his instinct for self-preservation is a shrinking from all those conditions which threaten him with the loss of these; hence, the instinct for self-preservation may be said to be constituted in the second place by the fear of insecurity. The second effect of the double fear is a certain compulsiveness: each man feels he *must* save his life or secure his possessions or status just as the drunkard feels he must have his drink. The third effect is repetitiveness and monotony, for the most varied life that we know is full of sameness and repetition as compared to the infinite variety which life might be; indeed, since the self is a set of habits, repetitiveness or automatism is of its very essence. In short, we have all the symptoms of disease, and the highly impure desire which is the instinct of self-preservation, mixed as it is with the double fear of death and insecurity, may be fitly called the instinct for disease-preservation.

#### THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

Nor are Cyclopeanism and tyranny lacking to complete the diagnosis. For the self, which is largely fear, finds itself over against other selves which are also largely fear. (Here again we are helped by common speech: “self-consciousness” denotes a state which we experience in the presence of or in relation to others, when we measure ourselves against them and find ourselves either superior or inferior to them.) Towards these other selves it pursues sometimes a Cyclopean policy of isolationism, but more often a tyrannic one of conquest, so that the war within the self, between desire and desire, is reflected without, between self and self. The striving for self-preservation becomes the struggle for existence, in which struggle the desire for my own existence becomes largely the fear of the existence of others qua threatening or imagined as threatening mine, while what might be the infinitely rich life of many cooperating individuals tends to be contracted to my own poor life, to which the lives of the others are regarded more or less as mere means. The natural state of war between self and self is tempered by natural affections and civilised courtesies and amenities, duties, conventions, laws. But these are all largely pretences and compromises, constituting a diplomacy which is itself largely the product of fear—the fear of mutual annihilation. In the relations between larger groups of selves—that is, between nations—in which the self is written most large, these pretences are almost completely removed and the nature of the self—fear leading to war—is most clearly revealed. The “normal” state between nation and nation is war, with peace as the preparation for war.

#### THE SELF SUMMED UP

Just as it is its negativity or fear that makes a mania maniacal and a particular desire particular, so it is negativity or fear which makes the self self. We may define the self in brief by saying that it is habit or automatism,\* which is fear, which is impurity, which is disease, which is sin.

## THE KINGDOM OF FEAR

What we know from experience to be true of the self we may apply by analogy to the whole of organic and inorganic nature. The inertia which has kept so much of it mere matter and has not allowed the rest to progress beyond the vegetable and animal state, we may look upon as fear—the fear of, or shrinking from, the possibilities which have been realised in man, while the immense destruction and slaughter that goes on in nature we may interpret by the light of our own wars.

The whole spatiotemporal cosmos is the realm of inertia or automatism. Since automatism is law, we may say that it is the realm of law. Since its laws constitute necessity or fate, we may call it also the realm of Fate or Karma. In fine we may designate it as the realm of the larger self or the Kingdom of Fear.

## THE ULTIMATE FEAR

What is this fear at bottom?

It is the fear inspired in the good enough and big enough by the optimum and maximum, in the diseased by health, in the inert by creation, in the repetitive by revolution, in the finite by infinity, in the impure by purity. We may think of the disease which is the self as a set of fears, some inherited, others acquired. One fear says: “So much knowledge, but no more”; another: “So much love and health, but no more”; a third: “So much power, but no more.” Together they shout: “We have everything, we are everything. Beyond us is nothing, beyond us is the great Terror!”

The fear at the bottom of each individual is that of recognising himself, and of being recognised, one day, as a son of God.

\* Habitual or automatic behaviour is routine behaviour, or according to law, whether a “law of nature” or a law prescribed by man. The self may therefore also be called law.

For a fuller treatment of the whole question of the self I must refer to *The Ethics of Power*.

### III

## HEALTH OR PASSION

### PURE DESIRE

Since disease is impure desire or desire mixed with fear, health, we may expect, is pure or absolute desire—that is, fearless desire. Being fearless, it must be—to borrow from common speech another significant and summing-up word—*selfless*, since self is, we have seen, fear, or is largely composed of fear. Being selfless, it must be Unlimited, or at least without the limit which we have seen the self to be. I will call pure desire “passion.”

### THE NATURE OF UNLIMITED DESIRE

Being pure, fearless, selfless, unlimited, passion cannot be particular desire—that is to say desire for a particular thing or for a particular class of thing. For we have seen that it is its particularity which makes desire impure, fearful or limited: being a desire for just this thing or class of thing, a particular desire is *eo ipso*\* the fear of all those possibilities which exclude just this thing or class of thing. Passion, then, is not a seeking of this or that particular thing or class of thing on behalf of this or that particular self. It is the desire that whatever is the optimum or maximum for this individual moment should be realised. In other words, it is the desire that absolute love, or power or wisdom, etc., should be manifested in whatever way it is possible for any of them to be manifested at this moment. But we have seen that not only is the number of the absolutes infinite, but the number of the possible manifestations of each is also infinite. The object of passion is, therefore, an infinity of infinities. To meet this infinity it is desire infinitely plastic, flexible or adaptable, instead of rigid as we have seen a particular desire tends to be; it is infinitely expectant, or hopeful or confident, instead of being, like a mania, fanatically hypnotised by a narrow circle of possibilities and unseeing or despairing beyond this circle; unlike mania, it is power evenly distributed, “stretched to the utmost,” or “all out,” instead of acting with the violence of a compressed force; it is infinitely quiet, peaceful and patient, instead of being clamorous, feverish and compulsive.

### PASSION IS FREE FROM IDEOLOGY

Passion has for its object, I have said, an infinity of infinities. But I have also said that it seeks whatever is the maximum and optimum for this individual moment. Now, the maximum and optimum for this individual moment is one definite thing

\* stepstudy’s note: “Eo ipso” is a Latin term that means “by that very fact.” Leon is saying that because a desire is focused on one particular outcome, it *is* the fear of all other outcomes.

and only one. Passion must, therefore, be very particular in one sense, or else it will be merely vague aspiration or even nothing at all. What, then, is the difference between it and a particular desire?

The difference is this—and it is very important to grasp it, for in it is summed up the whole difference between the free and inspired or original life and the slavish, imitative or repetitive life of the kingdom of fear. A particular desire is preceded by a particular idea of the end to be attained (the climbing of this mountain or becoming a scholar). It is this idea which guides and rules the desire. It also enslaves and limits it with all the limitations which we have seen (rigidity, compulsiveness, fear, etc.). In short, it is the particular idea which makes the desire particular. Passion, on the other hand, is not preceded, guided and ruled in the same way by a particular idea of the maximum and optimum. It is preceded only by infinite and absolute love, wisdom, power, etc., and is guided and ruled all the time by a feeling for these; it is, in fact, itself the feeling for these. The idea of the maximum and optimum emerges, properly speaking, only step by step, along with the fulfilment of the maximum and optimum, and the idea is not clear as a whole until the act is completed, if it is clear then. Of course, all the time that we are acting under the influence of the passion, we may have many ideas of the action as a whole, and even ideas which go far beyond what the action turns out to be in the end, but we change these freely and are not attached or committed to any of them.

This is best illustrated for some by the case of writing. When we are engaged on writing (at least on original writing), we do not know fully what we should write until we have written. If what we have written turns out not to be the right thing, we try again still without knowing what the right thing is and guided only by the feeling for what is right absolutely and universally. What is right to be written here and now we know only when we have written it. Indeed, all that I have said on this point is a truism. For if we already know the right thing to be written, then our work is already finished and our “writing” is a mere copying.

Passion, then, is in touch with infinity, explores infinity, and keeps all its own infinite characteristics (infinite plasticity, etc.) to the end—until, that is to say, it is fulfilled and its act stands accomplished and revealed, when it passes on to a new act, that is to say, to another exploration of infinity. For passion does not repeat. It is, indeed, distinguished from particular desire in nothing more clearly than in the fact that it makes for all the characteristics of infinity, including that of perpetual newness, while particular desire degrades the infinity of renewal to the infinity of repetition. Since it makes always for infinity, we have every reason for saying that passion has for its object infinity. We may distinguish its definiteness from that of a particular desire by saying that passion is individual and makes for individuality, while a particular desire is particular and makes for particularity.



## PASSION AND PARTICULAR DESIRES

Not being particular, passion is not simply a desire alongside of the other desires, which are all particular. Its relation to them is neither that of a Cyclops nor that of a tyrant. It is that of a physician and liberator: it purifies them and frees them from the element of fear, leaving only that of desire. Thus, taking hold of my particular desire to climb this mountain or to become a scholar, it removes merely the attachment, fixation and shrinking—the idea that I must climb this mountain, must become a scholar, and that life without this climbing or without scholarship is not worth living. My vision being opened to the possibilities which have hitherto been excluded, I can now begin to see whether it is right for me to climb or to go in for scholarship, while, if I decide that it is right at any rate to make a start with climbing or scholarship, my efforts, being released from the paralysis of anxiety (the shrinking from the life which does not admit of the climbing or scholarship), will be more likely to succeed.

In thus freeing them from their limitations or particularity, passion really transmutes particular desires into itself. In thus purifying or healing them, it proves its utmost purity or fearlessness. For the only thing we could have imagined that it might shrink from is evil or disease. If it does not shrink from that, there is nothing it can shrink from. But so far is it from shunning disease, that its chief function is to cure it.

## PASSION FOR THE CROSS

Since passion is not particular, there cannot be many passions. There is only one passion. Passion or pure desire is, in fact, the same as absolute love, and the account of its work—that is, of health—was really given at the beginning of this chapter in our definition of God.

But the work of absolute love, that for which it makes, we have represented there under the symbol of the infinite Cross lifting up an infinite number of worlds of inertia (i.e. of fear or disease) and changing them into pure energy (or health). We may therefore say that the object of passion is the Cross. Passion is always passion for the Cross.\*

This does not mean, of course, that God or absolute love desires disease (evil) to be and seeks to bring it about. It means simply that as long as there is disease—that is to say, as things are now—the function of health is to heal. For us it means that we are not healthy as long as we are merely resigned to the Cross. We are healthy only when we passionately seek and pray for it, exult and rejoice in it. Health is the Cross and the Cross is health.

\* Another way of putting the same thing is to say that it is always passion for the supernatural. For the Cross *for us* is whatever transcends our nature or inertia or system of habits and so “Crosses” it.

## WHY GOD ALLOWS EVIL

It means also that it is part of the fearlessness or purity of absolute love to suffer evil (that is, resistance or rebellion against absolute love) to be. This we can understand only from experience. When we try to help on the work of absolute love, which is to bring people to God or help them to become absolutely loving, we notice at every step that it is necessary to let them have full liberty to be unloving or evil. For, as soon as we use any compulsion or thwarting, we see that not only do they become more unloving, but that the love in us, with which alone we can hope to change them, becomes constricted or impure—in fact, that instead of our changing them, they are changing us.

If absolute love did not allow evil to be, it would be shrinking from something—that is to say, it would not be pure or absolute.

## THE IMPURE SEPARATE FROM THE PURE

The consideration of God sent us to its correlative, the consideration of the self, and the latter in its turn has just sent us back to the former. It is now time that we glanced once more at the relation between God and the self in the light of what we have found out.

The real harm, and as will be maintained later, the real purpose, of maintaining that God and the self are the same is that thus we are asserting that there is no such thing as purity—that is, as absolute love or wisdom, etc. and through this assertion we are preventing ourselves from even looking for purity, still more from trying to be pure. For if God is the same as the self, which is impure, then God Himself is impure and there cannot be purity anywhere. The same result is attained by asserting that the self *qua*\* self, or the whole cosmos or kingdom of fear (which is simply the self writ large), is an expression or part of God, for that which has the impure as its expression or part cannot itself be pure. All the more, of course, do we impugn the purity of God when we maintain that He is a part or expression or function of the self or the cosmos—that is, of the impure.

All these doctrines we must meet with the conviction that impurity and purity, the impure and the pure, are not only different but separate, though not, of course, in a spatial sense. The self maintaining itself as the self, or the self as the instinct for self preservation, is separate from God. The separation is, in fact, identical with the selfishness, the fear, the impurity, the disease. We must transcend the separation not by denying it in words—which only serves to increase it—but by changing the facts. The facts are changed when we ourselves are changed, that is, purified by pure desire or passion. This purification takes place in the changing-healing-making process which is the experience of God. It is the final proof of the existence of God, showing Him as a fact which acts on us. This proof is a demonstration by experiment. It is one which everyone must carry out for himself in all the minutiae of his life. The following chapter will be an account of the experiment.

\* stepstudy's note: "Qua" is a Latin term that means "as" or "in the capacity of." Leon is saying that self *as self* cannot be an expression of God, for self, as he defines it, is fear.

## Chapter 2

### DEMONSTRATION BY EXPERIMENT

I experience God as a fact in being changed by Him.

#### I

#### THE PROBLEM OR GETHSEMANE

##### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The account of the experiment I have, of course, already been compelled to give largely in the preceding pages for the simple reason that all the time I am trying to give a philosophy which is just description of experience, and the only experience of God I know is this experiment. What follows will deal in the main with the conditions necessary for it and with the question of how we start and maintain it.

After all that we have already written we may sum what is involved in the experiment in a few phrases. The self must be lifted up on the Cross. In common parlance, "the self must go"; it must be annihilated. The instinct for self-preservation must be replaced by the passion for the Cross, and the struggle for existence by the giving of my life. This will constitute the changing, the healing or the making of me.

##### WHAT MAKES A SOLUTION POSSIBLE

Now, if I were just the self, the experiment would be impossible, since what is just the fear of the Cross cannot be induced to accept the Cross, and what is mere disease cannot be healed; or, if the experiment were possible, it would be mere annihilation and not change. But the experiment is possible and is not mere annihilation, since I have made it, go on making it and am now describing it. The truth must therefore be that I am more than the self. And, indeed to describe the experiment I have to speak of myself as more than the self. In the first place, if in virtue of being the self I am the power which resists, excludes or shrinks from absolute love, wisdom, power, etc. that is to say, from God—I am also the power which can be sick of the self, stop resisting, excluding or shrinking from God and can, instead, admit Him. Besides being the self I am also personality or potential personality, that in which the creative or revolutionary urge can be started, which urge is simply the passion for the Cross as it first shows itself. The experiment is made possible by the cessation of the resistance, while the ousting of the instinct for self-preservation by the passion for the Cross constitutes the change and the making

of my personality. In the second place, though the correct definition is to say that the self is just fear and, therefore, mere negativity, and that, as fear, it must simply be annihilated or cast out by passion or perfect love, yet the desires composing the group or pattern called the self are themselves positive, and they are not cast out or annihilated but simply released from the fear or negativity.\* In being released they are changed into passion, and this change constitutes the ousting of fear by passion and is such that we are tempted to speak of the self itself as being changed, though, strictly speaking, we should say, “the personality is changed,” or “I am changed,” or “he is changed.”

#### THE PROBLEM IS TO GET PARTICULAR GUIDANCE

How can this change begin? How, in so far as it depends on us, are we to set about the change, our own or that of others?

Let us first realise precisely what the problem is. It is not to get people (others or ourselves) to “believe in God” in general, but to get them to recognise and accept Him in an individual act here and now, that is, to seek the manifestation of absolute love, wisdom, power, etc., for this precise moment—in other words, to recognise and accept God’s will or particular guidance. It is possible to believe in “God” all our life, to philosophise and preach about “God,” to missionise for “God,” to worship, even to make great external sacrifices (that is to say, sacrifices which are not really sacrifices of that particular self) of time, money and comfort for “God,” and yet when God really presents Himself, that is to say, when He presents to us a demand for a real, even though it is sometimes a trivial, mortification to our particular pride, vanity, inertia—in other words, when we are presented with what is the Cross for us—we may fail to recognise Him and may spit on Him and treat Him with indignation and contempt. This has happened not once in history only; it is constantly happening and makes of history the sorry tale it is.†

#### THE CAUSE OF OUR BLINDNESS TO GUIDANCE

If only God always appeared to us as that which we have defined Him to be, namely as pure love, power, wisdom—in short, as pure health! Then we should perhaps choose Him every time and life or history would all the time be as simple as it undoubtedly was meant to be. But for health to appear to us as health all the time we should have to be healthy ourselves all the time, or at any rate we should have

\* All the desires which are simply forms of the desire to preserve the separateness or negativity of the self are, of course, not positive but negative and have to be annihilated. I have described them under egotism in *The Ethics of Power*.

† Of course the same thing is happening when there seems to be no question of God because the word “God” is never used—when, as is so often the case, we champion “Liberty,” “Equality,” “Fraternity,” all our life and yet when a real instance of any of these comes along are as blind to it as bats.

to desire passionately to be healthy. The day will surely come when all that is left in us of fear or death—that is, of self—will in the words of the saying so mysterious and terrible to the self, have beheld Jehovah and have died, and then the absolute health—absolute love, wisdom, power—in us will see without any distortion the absolute health which is God, the sons of God will look upon the Father face to face and God will behold Himself mirrored and multiplied. But meanwhile, through the fog of disease which we largely are, health sees health only darkly, brokenly and remotely. We look mostly with the thousand eyes of our fear, a veritable Argus, and all that those eyes behold beyond the narrow circle of our limited desires is—the great Terror.

### GOD AS THE GREAT TERROR

The great Terror is different for every man, and although what is terrible for one may be terrible for all, yet often one man's great Terror is another man's great joke. For one man it may be an act which seems to involve the loss of all his possessions, power, position and even life—all his opportunities of doing good or of service, as he would most likely put it himself; for another it may mean some apology or reparation humiliating through its very triviality; for a third, we will suppose, has been devoured by whose soul, ambition and worry, it may even mean taking things easy. Whatever it is, it goes “against the grain,” against his nature, inertia or self, and for each it is precisely what it looks and feels—namely suicide or the annihilation of the self. Therefore it is that, looking at God as He appears in that act, each says, according to his nature and antecedents, either bluntly: “God or not, I don't care! I am not prepared to face *that*”; or self-righteously: “I have known and served God all my life and I'm sure that isn't God”; or modestly: “I don't know much about God and I'm not sure I believe in His existence, but I know that *that* can't be God.”

For the fearful (that is, the self-ful) God hides His face in a black storm cloud; or He dwells far withdrawn in the holy of holies of a temple whose outer gates are guarded by a terrible monster.\*

### EITHER GOD'S GUIDANCE OR THE BETRAYAL OF GOD

But it may be that we have lived with God for some time under the same roof and partaken of bread and salt at the same board as He—that is, we have really lived under His guidance; and yet, because the self has not been wholly cast out or because it has returned, a sudden mania may enter us, we may look upon Him with estranged eyes and, seeing in Him nothing but a futile or pernicious fellow, we may begin to think of selling Him for a few pieces of silver. Then, unless we wish to be driven by our mania to hang ourselves, we must repeat, but with even bitterer

\* My language is chosen so as to suggest that all “imperfect religions”—i.e. all those that do not come from the experience of God as absolute love crucified—are modes of the self's shrinking from God and the Cross.

pangs, the act of suicide which was our first introduction to God.

Indeed, if we would leave no interstice through which the mania may enter, we must repeat the introduction constantly, we must live every moment not only dangerously but suicidally—in other words we must seek God’s guidance for every feeling, thought and act of our lives.

It follows that the account given of the introduction to God, whether we call it conversion or change, will also be an account of the spiritual life or of its heart and core. We must go on being converted or changed all our life.

#### THE GRAVEN IMAGES

The outer gates of the temple, I have said, are guarded by a terrible monster. But the approach to God is barred even more effectively by certain beautiful graven images, which stand by the monster’s side. For, unless we love the real and living God—that is to say, absolute love—then, whether we speak of God and of worship or not (and most often, perhaps, when we do not speak of these), worship we do, because we must, and what we worship are gods or idols—these graven images that hold us enthralled before the gates. Our idols are all those things for or to which we have sold our soul—wealth, position, science, art, a code or custom, an idealism or panacea, even a traditional notion or sentiment about God: they stand for the whole of life to us, for all that matters and, therefore, for God. Hence it is that each expects variously to see God as a Croesus, or conqueror, or philosopher, or artist, or liberal, or conservative, or socialist, or vegetarian, or like the image of Him evoked by the worship or religious art and phraseology to which he is accustomed. Besides knowing what God cannot be, each one knows what He should be, and as God is none of the things which according to these notions He should be, each fails to see Him.

Before I can advance a step further, every graven image standing in my way must be smashed. Until that happens, all that God or absolute love can do for me is to allow falsity to work out its own disillusionment through experience—either the experience of the success desired or of frustration—aided by the influence of the reality working in those who have admitted God into their lives. As long as I put my faith, and have any hope, in idols—and in a sense the object of any particular desire is, we may say, an idol\*—I have no eyes for anything but them. To be able to see God I must be helpless and hopeless and, therefore, willing to face even the monster. We find God, who is “a jealous God,” only when we seek for Him *faute de mieux*,† because there is nothing better.

\* Because a particular desire does not differ fundamentally from a mania, and a mania, technically or popularly so called, is that which makes us sell our soul to an idol.

† stepstudy’s note: “Faute de mieux” is a French phrase that Leon defines in his sentence. It means “because there is nothing better.”

Conformity with the commandment against graven images is the first presupposition of the experiment which is the experience of God.

#### THE FELT ABSENCE OF GOD

Let us suppose, therefore, that I (i.e. Everyman) am at the stage where the iconoclastic work of mercy has already been completed, or all but completed, so that only the monster hinders me from penetrating into the holy of holies.

I have desired and sought many things. In some of these I have failed, in others I have succeeded. The former kind have become broken idols for me through the fact that I have been broken in my lusting after them. If there still hangs about them the charm of the might-have-been, I can exorcise it by the thought of the idols of the second kind—the things in which I have succeeded. For it is these that are the real disappointments. One after another each promised to be the real thing, until I got it. Each in turn beckoned as a miracle and proved a mirage.

What is this miracle which I desire, I now ask myself. It is something, it seems, which is above being and beyond knowing. Time and place, at least my time and place, have invariably been fatal to it. Its golden tomorrow has always become my leaden today, its ample there my cribbed here. Its transposition from its own dimensions to mine has always proved a diminution or devaluation. Perhaps it must be allowed to dwell always, in the poet's words, "a mile beyond the millionth mile."

Life, I feel, is a parenthesis between an exploded and an expected miracle. It is the aching absence of miracle, a void, a dream assuming more and more the quality of a nightmare. In front of me is a curtain and behind the curtain is the magical, the miraculous Beyond. But this Beyond, I have now concluded, is merely the realm of the imagination—we can have the miracle only in thinking and talking about it, in producing and appreciating poetry, music, art.\* I smile or sneer at those who express a different view. But, whatever the doctrine which I lay down to others and myself officially, unofficially and irregularly I am haunted by fancies. One of these is that, if I could only catch one of those visions from the Beyond, which now come like the ghost of the shadow of a dream and in a second are gone, if I could arrest it and dwell on it long enough, it would somehow stay here in the world of flesh and blood. Another is that, if there were only something which I could believe in and desire passionately, desire and desire and desire till I were lost in desiring, I should become different, and something different would happen—the miracle. But there is nothing for me to desire in that way.

\* I want to suggest that all philosophies which identify beauty with art and hold that art can give us a reality which life cannot give (a view expressed by myself also in the past), or which, like Plato's, hold that the Good is beyond being, or, like Kant's, that the thing in itself is unknowable, as also all "negative theologies," are generalisations of the experience of the absence of God which I am trying to describe.

I am told and read about prayer. But prayer suggests to me preaching and missionising, and from this the whole of my past and present, the whole of my education and environment—in short, all that has gone to the making of my self—makes me shrink. It is bad taste, silly, vulgar. It is my particular great Terror, my Abomination, my monster.

I must learn, I tell myself, to take life as it is and not cry for the moon. I try and settle down to it. I increase the number of my duties and espouse more causes. But I have to flog myself, to take myself to task and remind myself of the state of the world, and no act ensues such as I have glimpsed in the Beyond an act which is a singing and shouting and clapping of the hands for joy. I protest more and more against the evils of poverty, war, intolerance, oppressive government. But my voice rings silly even to myself in the void. To whom is my protesting addressed and what is the use of it? What does protesting make anyone do? What does it make me do? I shut myself up in a silence from which I come out only to protest against the silliness of protesting.

O God, how sick I am of myself! I if only I were other than I am! If only I could change! If only I could fling myself away! If only I could give up the ghost!

How can I fling myself away? How can I give up the ghost? Can it be by physical suicide? But one of the fancies which haunt me is that if I committed suicide, I should wake up to find myself more with myself and more intolerably bored than ever.

#### THE COMING OF THE SAVIOUR

I am ready for anything, ready even to face the monster, since nothing can be worse than what I have now. It is at this point that, meeting some people in whom there is working the power of God and from whom there emanates the dynamic atmosphere which I described at the beginning of this book, I am able to recognise and receive it.\* They both attract and repel me. They sing and they shout; “they laugh and are glad and are terrible.” They have, it appears, penetrated behind the curtain, to the magical, the miraculous Beyond, the realm of the imagination, and from there have brought back something with them into the world of flesh and blood. From them I learn the secret that will admit me into the Beyond, the art of flinging myself away, of giving up the ghost, of becoming different.

\* This, at any rate, is how salvation came to the writer.



## II

### THE CRUCIAL EXPERIMENT OR THE QUIET TIME

#### ITS SIMPLICITY AND ANALYSIS

This secret is the Quiet Time. It is the experiment which is the introduction to God. Since the act which introduces me to God is, as I have shown, also the act which, by being repeated, keeps me bound to Him, I will describe here the Quiet Time, not as it was the first time I tried it, but as it is now when I have practised it for some years. Afterwards I will describe what happens the first time we let God invade our life.

The Quiet Time is best summed up simply by saying, "I appeal to God and He answers me and helps me. I listen to Him and obey." For it is an essentially simple act, being the meeting between that which can be simplified and absolute simplicity. In fact so simple is it that it can be best understood when we see it kept by a child. For in that case the sudden descending upon the child of an ageless wisdom and of authority makes it plain that the inspiration is from God and at once rules out of court all explanations by reference to "the better self" or to the "unconscious," which only complicate the point at issue. Nevertheless, that which is simple can yield a very complex analysis, which may be a useful and even necessary aid towards simplification for beings who in their natural state are, after all, not simple but only simplifiable. Yet an analysis of the two correlative terms, the self and God, into the imagination, feeling, thought and will on the one hand, and absolute love, wisdom, power, etc., on the other, makes the transaction between the self and God appear a "weird ballet of bloodless categories" in which nothing could happen, whereas in fact it is the most real act there can be and one in which everything happens. If, on the other hand, we analyse, as we have done hitherto, one term only, namely God, into love, wisdom, power, etc., while speaking of the other term, the self, unanalytically as of something that does this or that, then the action seems to belong wholly to the self which appears to be sampling and choosing and combining a bit of wisdom, a bit of love, a bit of power, etc., that is to say, to be carrying on its customary work of limiting, whereas in reality the action is a miracle which consists in transcending the self or in unselfing ourselves and in which the sole function of the self is to acknowledge its helplessness and to cease to resist—that is to say, to cease to be. While, therefore, analysing more than ever, I must at the same time speak more concretely than I have done hitherto, and say repeatedly, "I pray to God and God helps me." In short, the description of the experience of God must be what that experience itself always is—namely, a reconciliation of opposites.

## THE POWERS OF THE SELF TRIED

The self must cease to resist. It must cease to act, therefore, since its sole action is resistance. But it can only be brought anywhere near to giving up acting if it is faced with tasks which it cannot accomplish. Every self, however, can accomplish many tasks (one self more and higher tasks than another)—all those, in fact, which fall within the circle of automatism or habit, whether its own circle or that formed by the conventions or demands of its environment. To be faced with the impossible it must be taken beyond that circle. Every self is taken beyond every conceivable circle of automatism and is faced with the impossible when it is presented with a demand for a pure or absolute act (an act of absolute love or wisdom or power, etc.), since, being impure, the self is incapable of pure action. The Quiet Time must, therefore, be first and foremost a confrontation of the self with the absolutes or with God. For general purposes—that is, for detecting the most general sins of most of us at most times—the most convenient absolutes are absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. Confronted with these or other absolutes, I realise the utter inadequacy, impurity and helplessness of myself, and the more intense and detailed is my awareness of the absolutes the deeper does that realisation go. The Quiet Time is the development, concomitantly and correlatively, of God-consciousness and self-consciousness. It is my crisis or critical moment, my trial or hour of judgment. The more critical I feel the moment to be the more my attitude is likely to be that which, whether we believe in God or not, we all know must be the attitude denoted by the expression “facing one’s Maker.” The Day of judgment will be that time when we all feel that everything is critical. The art which I have to learn, the art of the Quiet Time, is the art of making the whole of life critical and so of bringing near the Day of judgment.

## PURPOSIVE OR DEFENSIVE THINKING

At this trial the self must give up defending itself, although defending or preserving itself is its sole function, since it is the same as resisting. Now, the self defends itself by limiting effective or serious thinking to a limited system of purposes or ends of particular desires. In connection with this system thought is controlled and “means business,” while thought which does not serve these ends or which contradicts them is either vagrant or suppressed, forming part of what is popularly called the unconscious.

We will say that my system of purposes can be accurately expressed by saying that I desire to preserve in my own eyes and those of others the picture of myself as a “decent person”—a decent professional nun, friend, husband, father, citizen. All my effective thinking will be organized so as to impel me or enable me to do all the things, good or bad, which come into that picture and to refrain from all the things, good or bad, which do not come into it. Thoughts such that the picture is not worth preserving because it is a fake, that the “decent person” ideal is sheer silliness

and hypocrisy, that judged by absolute standards I am dishonest, impure, selfish and unloving, that there are such standards, that even by conventional standards many people would judge me far from decent if they only knew certain things about me, that many do judge me anything but decent; thoughts also which, if looked into, would reveal certain desires in me condemned by myself and others—all such thoughts are not, in my eyes, “thinking,” but only “ideas” or “fancies,” “serving no purpose.” What is generally called thinking is organised, controlled, limited thinking, purposive in the sense of subserving particular purposes or desires. Even when a man’s business is just “to think,” or “to discover the truth” and make it known—when he is a writer, teacher or preacher—his thinking is limited by the purpose of expressing and publishing. Even if he is free from the fear of producing what may prove to be unacceptable and therefore unremunerative, it is extraordinary how much limitation, distortion and suppression are effected simply by the inert conformity with, or equally inert reaction against, accepted beliefs, or even by the mere influence of traditional divisions of thought (by the fear that “this is not philosophy,” or that “this is not drama,” or that “this is not religion”).

Whenever, therefore, we are about our work and only about our work, determined to shut out all that is irrelevant to it, whenever our thinking is purposive and only purposive, we can be sure that the self has on its armour of defence.

#### THE TRIAL AT DAWN: NON DEFENSIVENESS

There are, however, moments when the self has doffed its panoply or, at any rate, is off its guard, when the imagination and feeling have free play and mere “ideas” or “fancies” get a look in. These are the moments of dreaming, ordinary dreaming or daydreaming, or simply idle moments when we are “thinking about nothing” or “about nothing in particular.”

Most important of all for the freedom of the imagination and feeling is the time when we first wake, especially if this is early morning, when the mind is still in a state between sleeping and waking and has not yet started purposive thinking, before the self has put on its armour for the ensuing struggle for existence. It is then that our chief Quiet Time should be kept. Its purpose is in fact to prevent the self from arming for the struggle for existence and to render it not only inoffensive but nondefensive for the day—that is to say, courageous and creative instead of fearful.

#### FREEDOM OF THE IMAGINATION

Immediately on waking, then, I give over my mind and heart to God—that is to say, to absolute love and wisdom—and I pray that I be guided towards absolute love, wisdom, power, truth, etc. On the ground of experience, mine and that of others, clarified by thought, I confidently expect that something will happen. At the same time I resolutely and persistently demand that something *shall* happen.

This confident expectation and resolute and persistent demandingness attune

my attitude; they give it the quality of extreme concentration and wakefulness. This quality, however, is united with its opposite, that of extreme relaxation; for I am not engaged on any particular work but out on an adventure, ready to meet and greet vagrant thoughts and welcome whatever may betide me. There being no set purpose to control, inhibit or exclude them, ideas come up according to the laws of the free association of ideas, and as they come up I make notes of them.

Now, no ideas are just “ideas” or meaningless. All ideas and all connections between ideas are symptoms of desires. By scrutinising the ideas which freely rise up in my mind a good psychoanalyst could always give me useful information about my self. In the Quiet Time God is my psychoanalyst and I rely on Him to point out the special significance of any particular idea and to prompt me to dwell on it. From my side as material and instrument through which He may work, I bring a growing store of experiences and reflections in connection with the Cross and with absolute love, honesty, purity and unselfishness, and also a sensitiveness, which is being perfected by prayer and practice, for any idea which tries to elude me, any idea which is the ghost of the shadow of a dream, a mere breath or momentary pulse in the mind. For such an idea, I have learned, is either a prompting from absolute love, which my fear is trying to prevent from reaching me, or it is one of my sins which that same fear is trying to guard from the scrutiny of absolute love.

#### THE DETECTION OF FEAR

What I have to be on the look out for behind ideas is always the fear or shrinking connected with them. For even if what is behind them is a desire, then, provided it is a particular desire, it is still fear that is the significant factor, since, as we have seen, a particular desire is made particular by the fear which attends it. Let us suppose, then, that there rises up the idea of my preaching, or of my losing my job, or of an unjust accusation brought against me, or of a fool who tried to assert his folly against my good sense, or of a success to be won. What is significant in connection with these is, respectively, my abhorrence of preaching, my anxiety about the loss of my job, my anger against the accuser (which is really a way of shrinking from dealing with the situation constructively), my impatience with the fool (another shrinking or shirking), my compulsive desire for the success (which is really a reluctance to face life without the success).

Having detected the fear, I must next beware of the rationalisations it adopts to defend itself. It may try to justify itself by pleading disinterestedness, by arguing that my keeping my job is necessary for the good of my family or of society, that my anger and impatience will benefit as a salutary lesson the unjust accuser or the fool, that my success is indispensable as an opportunity for service. Or it may endeavour to preserve itself by contending that it is not there, even supporting its contention by arguing that there is no reason for it to be there, It may reason that to lose my job may be a blessing in disguise—that I don’t really fear the loss; that the accusation is

not meant; that the fool was not assertive, or not a fool, and that I am not angry or impatient since in any case anger and impatience are bad; that I don't really mind not obtaining the success.

#### ABSOLUTE HONESTY

All these shifts on the part of my fear I must counter by facing every fact, idea and motive with absolute honesty. For absolute honesty is another name for this free play of the imagination and feeling with which I have been dealing. It is the foundation of the whole experiment which is the experience of God, just as, on the other hand, concealment and dishonesty (religious cant and hypocrisy) are the commonest temptations of those who seek that experience. For our very ambition for perfection tends to drive our sins to hide their ugly faces in the neglected corners of our unconscious; or it turns them into pale ghostly creatures whose unsubstantial presence escapes our notice. We think to help on the work of God or absolute love by using our will to suppress our sins, whereas in the life which seeks the experience of God there should be no suppression but only release; for suppression results from an attempt to cast out fear (i.e. sin) by fear (through the power of the will), while release comes from the casting out of fear by absolute love. Finally we complete the ruin of our soul by trying dishonestly to present even to God that picture of ourselves which we think He desires to see; for to do this is to damn our soul, i.e. to confirm in us sins or fears, which can only be cast out by being exposed with absolute honesty to absolute love.

#### SELF-SICKNESS

The fundamental cause of this most insidious and poisonous dishonesty is our shrinking from one feeling more than from any other—that with which we are filled when we see ourselves as we really are. This is the feeling which I have called self-sickness. I have chosen the word “sickness” of set purpose, although it is not a pretty word, for the state I mean to denote by it is not a pretty state, and that, in fact, is why we shrink from it. I might have used “contrition,” which originally was also not a pretty word, signifying the condition of being ground and pounded. But, in the first place, “contrition” has now become for many an unreal and romantic word, and, in the second place, the state I have to describe is only sometimes that of being ground and pounded. Generally it resembles vomiting, and the more closely it resembles that, the more it is a “sicking up of the self,” the greater is the release or liberation it brings. It is the feeling for which above all others we should pray and which in the Quiet Time must more than any others be given free play. It is the negative self-feeling which is the correlative to positive God-feeling and it accompanies the self-consciousness which is correlative to God-consciousness. The more I feel the purity of God enveloping me, and the more I exult and delight in it, the more do I want to cry out “Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.” On

the other hand, the deeper the feeling of my own uncleanness grows, the nearer do I approach to the state where God, from being an enveloping atmosphere of purity and health, becomes a personal presence, standing before me as the Cleanser and Healer. Self-sickness is the surest harbinger of healing. It is also the purest guarantee that my exulting in God is not an insidious form of my exulting in self or not tainted by such exulting.

#### DESIRE OR PRAYER

Throughout I desire passionately—that is to say, with confident expectation and resolute and persistent demandingness, with concentration, quietness and patience. I desire to see, to feel, to think, to will without any limitation by fear or unwillingness. I desire to desire purely. I desire the optimum and maximum for this moment, whatever it may turn out to be. This desiring is prayer proper. It is passion calling down passion, love invoking love, health drawing down health. To the extent to which the self has been removed it is a son of God praying to God.

#### THOUGHT

Throughout the Quiet Time I meditate, or at least I keep my hold, on the kind of truths about God and the self which I have been trying to expound here. When there is need, I explicitly remind myself that, although my mind, being now clouded by fear, does not at present adequately realise these truths, yet in its clear moments it cannot reject them, since they are not only proved by experience but are also self-evident, while their rejection means the acceptance of mania. I tell myself that it is self-evident that if fear is yielded up, absolute courage, which means absolute health, love, wisdom, is bound to prevail, since there is no third alternative beside fear and absolute courage. Finally I tell myself that, if only I will now let go of my fear, I am bound to see with purged eyes the constructive act which is needed for this moment and is part of the plan of absolute courage.

#### WILL OR SURRENDER

With that I grip firmly the particular fear which has stood out as significant in the Quiet Time—the great Terror or monster of the moment, whether that be my abhorrence of preaching, my anxiety about the loss of my job, my anger or impatience, or my compulsive desire. With the whole of my heart—that is to say, passionately—I say or think (and I know full well now from experience that my saying or thinking in this way will help the thing to happen if it is right for it to happen): “If it be right, let this thing from which I shrink happen. I will that I preach, lose my job, deal with my calumniator lovingly, deal with the fool patiently, fail to gain the success I desire. I will that my self, which is fear, I will that the instinct for self-preservation, which is the instinct for disease, be annihilated. Let only the constructive urge, the passion for the Cross, remain in me. Thy Will be done, Father, not mine. Into Thy

hands I commit my spirit.”

With this willing I leap into the dark, I fling my self away, I give up the ghost, I commit suicide.

#### SURRENDER AND THE GREAT TERROR

This act of the will is the culminating moment of the Quiet Time. It is the act of surrender. “Surrender,” like “sickness,” is an unpleasant word. But, once more, it is an unpleasant thing that has to be denoted. However much experience and reflection may have taught us that God is very love, patience, gentleness, mercy, yet when it comes to letting go of a particular fear, especially a deep-rooted one (and the deep-rooted fears may often concern trivialities only), God appears to our diseased feeling or fear like nothing so much as a particularly unpleasant kind of highwayman, who calls out, “Your money and your life!” and to whom we have to surrender, expecting nothing in return for our surrender. He appears, in short, as the great Terror or the monster. Very commonly we identify this monster with some particular person or persons known to us, whom we accuse of having put into our heads the idea of the action we shrink from, and against whom we gnash our teeth until we have surrendered.\* Hence we may learn from our own experience that we are doing no service to others when, wishing to bring them to God, we try to reason or exhort them out of the fear (or abhorrence or distaste or contempt) with which God, when He really presents Himself, inspires them. The best help we can give them is to tell them that they must frankly face their fear as well as the fact that it is God, and nothing and no one else, whom they are fearing, disliking, detesting or scorning. We must tell them also that they must take Him as they find Him before they can find Him better. It is the only help, because, so long as there are sins or fears left in us, God—either God as such or God in His individual manifestation in relation to this or that particular fear—is bound, as we have seen, to appear a monster, and it is in spite of our fear of Him as a monster that we must accept Him if we accept Him at all. The world being what it now is, the only way for us to Heaven necessarily passes through our hell.

\* We may even do them serious injury, for when we struggle against God we are no longer rational creatures but become unscrupulous maniacs. Whoever, wittingly or unwittingly, is instrumental in facing men, even the best of men, with the demands of God risks the fate of the prophets and of the Crucified. It is astonishing to see how much worse these best of men—the gentlest, decenter, most intelligent, rational and scrupulous people we know (e.g. a Paul)—can become before they become better by obeying God’s call. It is a truly “daemonic” sight, a sight of the exorcising of devils—i.e. of manias as here defined.

## SURRENDER = ABSOLUTE HOPE, COURAGE AND FAITH

This surrender to the highwayman, which may appear an act of despair because it can only be made when, all our idols being broken, we are hopeless, and an act of cowardice because when we make it we are at the extremity of our fear, is really an exercise in absolute hope and absolute courage; for it means that instead of going on despairing we hope that the very act of hoping against hope will produce something, though we know not what, and we dare to go through hell trusting that the very act of accepting what we most fear will prove a creative act.\*

Since the life which seeks to be an experience of God, the “surrendered life” as it may be called, is one perpetual exercise in surrender, it is supremely the life of courage, of constantly casting away all security, of cutting one’s moorings, of adventure and exploration. Regarded as action, it is summed up in absolute courage more than in any of the other absolutes.

Surrender being an act of trust in absolute courage, it is, therefore, trust in all the other absolutes also since they are all one. It is therefore trust in God in spite of His presenting Himself as a highwayman. It is faith in Him, for faith in God is an act of the will, like faith or trust in a person, and not, as is sometimes supposed, an intellectual assent to the doctrine that God exists or that He is absolute love, etc., or that He has acted in certain ways. Such an intellectual assent, we have seen, is quite compatible with utter distrust and rejection of God when He calls on us to surrender to Him and acknowledge Him in an individual act—that is, when He comes as the Highway man—while, on the other hand, if we are engaged on the work of bringing people to God, we are repeatedly faced with the sight, which never loses its wonder through repetition, of atheists who make their surrender to God experimentally only, while still unconvinced about his existence and about all the truths regarding Him, and who very soon thereafter attain of themselves and without argument, not only to a belief in His existence and in these truths, but also to a clear comprehension of them.

## FAITH AND REASON

Nevertheless, faith, though an act of the will and not of the intellect, is connected with the intellect or reason. For, when I take my leap in the dark, or surrender to the highwayman, though my feeling of the moment (i.e. my fear) expects nothing, I expect a good deal. I expect, in fact, a miracle. Nor is my expectation blind or groundless. It is grounded on knowledge (either mine or that of others, whose word I am prepared to take for the purposes of this experiment) about God, knowledge which is based on experience clarified by thought or reason and which assures me

\* It is quite possible to come to God, not because one despairs of everything else, but because one is attracted by the God-controlled life simply as something better than what one already has, though of the same kind as it. The disillusionment with what one already has is then brought about gradually by the Spirit and with the disillusionment comes the unconditional surrender to God.



that God the Highwayman is really absolute love, absolute wisdom, absolute health. My expectation is, therefore, faith or trust in knowledge, experience, reason. Hence faith, instead of being something to be contrasted with knowledge or reason or intellect, is always faith *in* knowledge or reason or intellect: indeed, it cannot be anything else, since it is faith in God, Who is absolute wisdom, which is absolute reason and knowledge.\*

#### THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, OR GUIDANCE AND CHANGE

From the depths in which the operation of absolute, love, wisdom, power, takes place I come up again. I come up in light. I see quite clearly and undeniably what I must do. That is to say, I have guidance.† I may be guided towards none of the things I have been fearing but towards an alternative to which I have been blind, and the not seeing of which caused, in fact, all the perplexity and the fear. Or I may be guided to the very same thing that was the great Terror. If so, it is the same and yet not the same. Preaching is not the lifeless sermonising I thought of before; it is literature, philosophy, criticism, art, humour, come alive; it is every form of life made lovely so as to draw men to absolute love. The loss of my job shows itself to me now as salvation from lethargy and as opening up possibilities for new adventure. I see how the calumny of my accuser sprang from a fear in him and how by acting lovingly to him I may bring him to God, Who will free him from fear and release the imprisoned energies of a very potential personality. Patience with the fool is, I perceive, the means to bring him to absolute wisdom, which will cure him of his folly. The success I desired before I no longer want. Whatever the action is which now lies before me, where before with the eyes of fear I saw the monster, I now with the eyes of absolute wisdom or God, see God or absolute wisdom.

If the action is the same and yet not the same, I too am the same and yet not the same. I do not have to use the sense of duty as a scourge wherewith to flog myself on to the doing of the act. I am drawn on to do it as I might be drawn to paint a picture or to write a song, by the force of inspiration. The act beckons to me as a singing and shouting and clapping of the hands for joy, for instead of being fettered by fear

\* The relation between faith and knowledge or reason may be understood by comparing it with the relation between appearance and knowledge when I “see” the moon moving through the clouds. In spite of my knowledge that it is the clouds which move, and not the moon, I still “see” the moon moving. But in spite of my “seeing,” if I had to act, I should put my trust in my knowledge and not in my “seeing.” So at the moment of surrender, in spite of my knowledge that God is love, what I “see,” because of my fear, is just the highwayman. In making the surrender my faith is in my knowledge and reason (or the knowledge and reason of others) and not in my “seeing.”

Of course, when faith is contrasted with knowledge, reason, thought or intellect, these are identified with the blind and superstitious acceptance of a few metaphysical dogmas ignorantly called science. I have never seen any reason for using any other name but “wilful stupidity” for this acceptance.

† Guidance points to the first step. Besides the first step I may see the whole of a long course of action, but experience has taught me that every step has to be submitted for new guidance.

I am now impelled by the creative urge or passion. I am a changed man. I feel God, or have Godfeeling.

#### THE PURE ACT OR MIRACLE

I do whatever I have been guided to do, the optimum and maximum for this moment. That is, I do God's will. My particular desire has been taken hold of by passion or absolute love, which, releasing it from its ear, and hence from its limitation and particularity, has changed it into passion, and now the passion or pure desire becomes in an individual act pure will or God's will, will which is just will without any shrinking or fear in it, will which, being pure, is omnipotent. It is the will which works miracles or pure acts. The act towards which I am guided is a miracle come from the Beyond—from the "realm of the imagination"—to stay in the world of flesh and blood. A miracle is a pure act or a creative act, an act which is pure energy with no inertia or death in it. It is an incarnation of pure love. Being an Incarnation of pure love, it propagates pure love through a long train of consequences, and in strange ways, unforeseen by the human instrument. It is a missionary act. It brings men to God or pure love, or brings God or pure love into their lives, casting out manias, untying knots, straightening out the imagination, intellect and will, heating and cleansing their owners and turning them into pure instruments for other acts of pure love. It joins up with other acts like itself issuing through other human instruments, and with them it forms a pattern which none of the human agents planned and which fills them with wonder and astonishment. This pattern is the plan of pure love or of God for the world. It is the plan of salvation.

#### EXAMPLES

C., after reading through the whole Bible and getting no light nor relief from the feeling of futility, expostulates with God for not showing Himself. She hears, "Ask, and you shall receive," and it becomes quite clear to her that until now she has been unwilling to surrender all. Some time after this she asks to be shown what to do and is guided to go to the public library and then to a particular shelf and to a particular book (unknown to her) on that shelf. She reads the book and through it she both attains comprehension of God and learns of some people whom she subsequently meets. Through these she wins to deeper self-consciousness and God-consciousness as well as to more detailed insight into the psychology of total surrender. She practises what she has learnt and is then taught and helped by her newfound friends to pass on to others what she has found herself. Her husband, coming under her new influence, first reveals, and then puts right, a wrong which he has done her, and which he has been concealing from her for years. The children, too, come under that influence, and a new home is born from which the new life of absoluteness radiates to some neighbours and the priest, to pass from that small group to a large part of the village and then to the neighbouring town, and so on through ever, widening circles.

I obey guidance to go and see a man on some business on a particular day at a particular hour. Almost as soon as I see him, although he has never been intimate before, he unburdens himself of a terribly tangled personal, moral, financial, and legal problem, which has brought him to the verge of despair and which needs to be solved that very day. I tell him about the Quiet Time; he tries it, and faces the fear or disease in himself of which that crisis is merely one symptom. He surrenders to God, and from that moment begins a new life of health for himself and for many about him.\*

An ambitious man in obedience to guidance makes a big material sacrifice and accepts a very galling humiliation. A new life begins for him in which he is used in strange and adventurous ways and rises to a position of responsibility from which he can propagate all that has come to him through his experience of the Cross.

A woman's health is on the point of breaking down through strain and overwork. She faces herself and sees that it is her desire to be thought a success (fear of being seen by herself and others as she really is) that is the cause of the trouble. She surrenders this desire, and immediately receives the offer of work which is just the work she can do most efficiently and in which she can act as a creative or life-propagating power.

One man obeys guidance to deal with his temper, which has been the evil genius of his family, and in his important public position becomes, as a changed man, instrumental in removing friction between two nations. Another, an atheist, complying with guidance coming to someone else, goes to a meeting which he himself despises; he finds God there, and with the change that comes in his life a change begins in the relations between two races.

A weary and disgruntled American clergyman obeys guidance to write and ask forgiveness for his lack of love from the men whose unjust treatment of himself he has been resenting, and with that action begins the release of a power and vision which, if anything can do so, will alone save a world that now, more than at any other time before, seems on the point of destroying itself through its own mania.

The pure act or miracle, propagating absolute love and health, is the test that our guidance or inspiration comes from absolute love and health or God. It is the sign that our experience has really been the experience of God and not of our own ego or of some power other than God; that it has really been the crucial experiment or the experiment of the Cross. The pure act or miracle is the seat of the Cross; it is the authentication of the Crucifixion itself.†

\* I have chosen examples which will best illustrate the transcendent authorship of guidance and of the pure act. But often one is used in a more personal capacity, through the refining and sharpening of one's own faculties which takes place, as it is bound to do, on their being released from fear. Often, on the other hand, one plays an even more passive role than is seen in the examples given: one simply finds oneself doing things because one sees no reason against them, or one finds things happening, and they turn out to be answers to problems which one has prayed about.

† A philosophy of the miraculous, based on a careful study of miracles and formulating the definition of spirit and of event, is yet to come. Necessary as such a philosophy is, what the world most needs at present are more and more miracles to save it, rather than a philosophy about miracles.

### III

#### THE CHECKING OF GUIDANCE

##### THE MODERN FEAR OF, AND LIABILITY TO, FANATICISM

It is high time that some test of guidance were given, many will think, conjuring up in their imagination all the crazy and criminal acts which in history have been taken for guidance and the disastrous and ruthless wars raised by fanatic prophets. Indeed, it is possible so to frighten oneself by pondering over the pathology of religion as to say or think: "Granted that God exists, yet, since men do such foolish and terrible things in His name, it would be better to hush up the fact of His existence, or, at any rate, the fact that He can come down bodily into our lives by guiding us in every act. It is the *certainty* of the religious experience that is so fatal. Let men use man's wisdom only, which is at any rate marked by hesitancy and prudence. If only men were not so certain about conflicting beliefs, the world would be quite a tolerable place."

The answer to this, an answer which experience has brought to our age with peculiar emphasis and bitterness, is a question: "We are now at the point where we have had the cult of hushing up the fact of God's existence or of His guidance, the cult also of uncertainty, for more than a generation. Have we less fanaticism and fanatical conflicts, less mania and ruthlessness, than before, and that too from the very people who have done most to ban the name of God? Is the world now really a tolerable place?"

The cure of fanaticism and the prophylactic against it lie, of course, not in refusing guidance or inspiration, but in learning to distinguish between true inspiration and fanaticism. The distinction, in brief, is that between passion, from which guidance comes, and mania or idolatry, which is what fanaticism is. It has already been stated. But we may here give it again in a slightly different and more concrete form.

##### TESTING GUIDANCE BY ITS FRUITS

The final distinction is, of course, in the act. The guided act propagates love or health. A fanaticism, on the other hand—and we have excellent opportunities for studying fanaticisms, for our age, so far from being free from them, will stand out as preeminently the fanatical age—may arise as a noble ideal in the brain of a theorist; it may for years be the subject of apparently harmless discussion and dreams, gathering enthusiasts about itself; finally, after passing on to men of action, when the favourable conjunction of circumstances arises it becomes the instrument for inflicting imprisonment, torture, terror and death on millions. In contrast to true inspiration, a fanaticism propagates fear or disease and death. But the propagation, whether of health or disease, is a *result* of the act, and the result is not always either

foreseen or seen as I have represented it to be. Very often the guided act, though we still feel prompted to it and still are glad because of it, seems at best only a harmless even if a trivial act, while at other times its immediate results are such as to tempt us to recant. The immediate fruits of fanaticism, on the other hand, often appear more brilliant, more alluring and even more divine than those of the pure act. There may, therefore, ensue a long period of waiting after obedience to guidance, during which we are both tested and tempted. This waiting is, indeed, the athletic training of the surrendered life, exercising our faith, courage, patience and the power of expecting and of persistently demanding, giving that life its muscle as it were. The period of waiting is also the schooling time, during which our self-consciousness is deepened through our constantly questioning, testing and criticising ourselves, while our God-consciousness grows through our learning that God does not always work in the ways in which we expect Him to work. During this period, then, the test cannot be that of results. There must be other tests.

#### TESTING BY MOTIVE

Of these the first is that of motive. We notice that the enthusiasm of the fanatic is closely connected with his sins or fears: for example, his championing of the cause of the poor is connected with his having suffered himself from the oppression of poverty or from some other oppression and with his still resenting it; or his advocacy of peace is connected with his own cowardice or even, as a cloak, with his own quarrelsomeness. But the inspiration of the guided man is also very intimately bound up with his sin. Indeed, the connection is in his case far more obvious, since he proclaims it himself along with his sins, while the fanatic seems to have only the world's sins to proclaim. This is indeed one of the most striking differences between the two men and is one which includes many others. The inspiration of the guided man is a consequence of his recognition of his own sin and of his release from it, while the ideal of the fanatic is a means of keeping him in his sin, of covering it up or of taking his attention away from it (by keeping him busy with the sins of the world). The inspiration of the guided man is a correction of his self or nature—a crossing of it or the experience of the Cross—and is thus proved to derive from a transcendent source. The ideal of the fanatic, on the other hand, is an *expression* of his self or nature or temperament and is inspired by it. In short, as regards motive, the difference between the two is the Cross.

#### TESTING BY THE END

The second difference is in the ends pursued by the two. As far as names go, these ends may often sound identical. For example, the fanatic often speaks in the name of God or, as is more common in our days, in the name of the ideals of His prophets, peace, justice, freedom, equality, succouring the needy and oppressed, etc. The divergence emerges when we get down to meanings, and then the fanatic seems

at first by far the more satisfactory of the two. If you ask the guided man what is God, justice, succouring the needy and oppressed, he would have to say about each of these, that it is a different thing every time, and he would give the impression of being nebulous or an opportunist. The fanatic, on the other hand, replies with a definite creed, formula or programme. This difference in the conception of their ends constitutes a difference in the ends themselves and in the ways of pursuing these. The guided man, like the fanatic, possesses certainty. But his certainty is in God. It is God he seeks and it is God Who guides him all the time. In relation to expression or what he is to do, God, we have seen, is for him an infinity of infinities of manifestations. Hence the guided man's attitude is marked by infinite patience, inventiveness and adaptability. God is not a particular thing, or experience, or quality, along with others, but, as manifestation, He can be the health of every thing, experience, quality, moment. Hence the guided man's end, when he follows a particular piece of guidance, is not a rival to other ends in his own life. Nor is it a rival to the ends of other men; rather it harmonises with, and seeks to develop all that is positive or constructive or healthy in them. If another differs from him, he can either take it that both he and the other are guided in their different steps and that their acts will in the end meet, since all pure acts do meet; or, if the other is wrong and yet they cannot act separately, his original guidance will be modified to that step which will take the other as far as he will go at the moment on his way to absolute health, wisdom or God. That step being the maximum and optimum for the moment, will be the manifestation of God for that moment and the realisation of the guided purpose, however great a departure it may be from the original guidance. In short, the guided man is the passionate man in the sense which we have given to passion here, and the passionate man is the patient man in the sense which we have given to patience here.

The fanatic, on the other hand, has a limited particular end to which everything and everyone is sacrificed. His ideal in consequence begets schism and conflict at a terrific rate (the fissiparousness of contemporary fanaticisms—except where it is restrained by force—is really astonishing). His certainty is in this ideal and is a blindness to everything else. He is in all things the opposite to the guided man, and his hurricane zeal, so much more impressive and apparently successful in the short run than the operation of guidance, is seen, when looked into closely, to show all the characteristics which have been assigned here to mania. This is because, as we have already said, it is mania. Being mania, it comes, therefore, from fear and not from love, just as its work is that of fear and not of love. It is the caricature of inspiration. The fanatic is a prophet without God. Whoever is not guided by God is a fanatic, since he is guided by self or particular desires, and a particular desire, we have seen, is not essentially different from an idol-worshipping mania.

Fanaticism is fear. The way to cast out fear is not by resorting to fear (the prudent hushing up of God's existence or guidance) but by seeking perfect love or God. Our only resource against the Devil is God.

## AN ILLUSTRATION

Because the checking of guidance is so important, it will be right to illustrate some of the things here stated on the subject by a particular instance. I have guidance that I should do a particular piece of writing. The same guidance has come to others independent of me and of each other. This is, then, a *prima facie*\* sign that it does not come just from me. Looking into myself, I see that before receiving guidance I had no particular desire to write, that the guidance was received in answer to long prayer as to what to do, and that my urge to write is like the urge to breathe, as vital and as unhealthy to resist. Looking outside myself, I proceed to what my piety to the ancients leads me personally to call the “taking of the omens”: I try, to discover whether the conjunction of circumstances is such that there is, so to speak, an empty space for the proposed act to fall into easily, instead of its having to thrust its way into history by force, as it were. I decide there is a need and demand for the writing, and at the moment there is no other call on my time, with which, indeed, I seem to have been specially provided for this task. Having settled down to it, I keep on testing myself. I see that, though my urge is as strong as the urge to breathe, it is, unlike the latter, true passion and not an attachment or fixation: I am ready to leave off the writing for any other guided task, and on several occasions I do leave it off and am used in a health-giving capacity. As I write, I explore heights of God-consciousness unscaled by me before, and plumb depths of self-consciousness hitherto unsuspected: all that comes to me has the mark of newness. The completion of the task is marked by a release of energy in myself which gives new light to others, and the reading of the manuscript itself does the same. There is every sign that the writing has been guided. The question of publication, however, is a separate step, about which new guidance is needed. I consult others, and some have guidance that the work should be published, others that it should not. Difficulties about publication arise, and I myself have an inhibition about it, conflicting with my eagerness; I go through a dark period of struggle and of doubt about my original guidance. At last I discover in *Quiet Times* that I tend to emphasize the spirituality of those who are for publishing while I have a vague feeling of pity and melancholy about those who are against. I see, however, that both sides are right: the substance of my writing was guided and should be given to the world, but not the form. The form, I perceive, was dictated not by the substance but by fear about difficulties of publication and has mutilated the substance. I see that the expression has to be scrapped altogether and that this is still a difficult thing for me to do. For at bottom I still like to think that my very words—no doubt because they *are* my very own—are divinely inspired and unchangeable. I see also that I still have a tendency to shrink from venturing on any act about the results of which I am not certain beforehand,

\* stepstudy’s note: “Prima facie” is a Latin term that means “true until proven otherwise.” Leon is saying because the guidance came from multiple people, it clearly is not an invention of his mind.

but that this venturing (on rewriting something which has no certain prospects of publication) is precisely what I now must do. I obey my new guidance and get an enrichment of new thoughts and gratitude for the difficulties that have been placed in my way and the lesson they have taught me. Not only have I learnt more about my own character, but I have been exercised in that surrender of self which is the most difficult of all for those who feel they are engaged in “creative” work: having completed something that I naïvely considered superb, I had to be willing either to abandon or to change it drastically.



## IV

### THE QUIET TIME AND THE WORKING DAY

#### DIFFERENT QUIET TIMES

I have constructed a model of the Quiet Time which I thought would best illustrate the freedom or absolute honesty of the imagination and feeling, prayer, surrender, guidance and miracle. But, of course, not every Quiet Time conforms with the model I have given. Not only do not the results of the act follow immediately on the act, attesting its purity or divinely miraculous nature, but the guidance for the act does not always come in the Quiet Time or soon after it. Often I get it only weeks after I have asked for it and when I am only reminded of having asked by my getting the answer. (Indeed, in such cases the forgetting seems, and is, an actual contribution to the getting.)

Often my Quiet Time is nothing but an experience of intensity and persistence in demandingness, or of love or gratitude to God. It is then that it can be the richest, and, if guidance and pure acts do not come during it, they come abundantly after and in consequence of it. Guidance is a particular manifestation of God, and in the Quiet Time I seek, not for a particular manifestation of God, but for God Himself.

Besides, the experience of demandingness (or prayer) and of love and gratitude to God is itself a manifestation of God. Moreover, one miracle or pure act always takes place in such a Quiet Time—the most important miracle of all for me, namely, the changing of myself.

On the other hand, though the Quiet Time is a seeking of God Himself, and although, as thinking, it must properly be said not to be thinking about anything in particular, since, as I have explained, its essence is that it is not purposive or limited thinking, nevertheless, I do often take a particular problem into the Quiet Time. But the thinking still remains free and unlimited. I demand and expect an answer to my question, but I do not strain after it and do not exclude thoughts because they seem, or are, irrelevant to it. Often I do get the answer, which comes as soon as the straining for it ceases and in consequence of the cessation of the strain, and emerges not uncommonly from the very ideas which in ordinary thinking I might have excluded as irrelevant. But, on the other hand, often I do not get the answer to the question put, but to problems which I have not brought consciously into this Quiet Time at all.

#### THE MAGIC OF THE UNDIVIDED WILL

The Quiet Time is magic of the purest kind—that which seeks inspiration and a miracle from pure love. But magic, or at any rate this kind of magic, pure or white magic, does not depend on the use, in word or unuttered thought, of a formula or on

any merely mental gymnastics such as making thought-forms or even meditating on the attributes of God, useful though such exercises and meditation may be as aids. Pure or white magic depends on the purity or whiteness or singleness of desire and of will. If during the working part of our life the desire and will are rendered impure and divided by sin—that is, by fear—without any reintegration and reparation by acts of purgation, then, when we do try the Quiet Time, it cannot be very effective. It will merely fill us with a general confused sense of impurity, disease or unease—in other words, it will make us feel uncomfortable. That too is a miracle and can be the first of many miracles if we attend to it. But it is a miracle we do not think much of, and from which we want to run away.

#### THE QUIET TIME CONTINUED INTO WORKING LIFE

If the effectiveness of my Quiet Time determines the effectiveness of my working life, the former is itself in turn determined by the latter. My Quiet Time and my working life must be continuous with each other and have the same quality. The attunement of the imagination, feeling, desire and will effected by the Quiet Time must be kept up during the day. Indeed, my working life must be simply a more richly orchestrated Quiet Time than the Quiet Time proper. It must be a symphony which draws into itself, turning them into its components, all the details of the day's work, as they come along, and maintaining itself every moment as a harmonious triple consciousness, God-consciousness, self-consciousness, and other-consciousness (consciousness of the other person or of the thing): all the time I must be aware of absolute love, absolute wisdom, absolute health, of my self or my sins (the real state of my mind at the moment, e.g. vanity, nervousness, worry, etc.) and of the person I am conversing with or the thing on which I am engaged. As soon as there is any discord, as soon as any impurity prevails, even though it be only doubt as to what to do, or a clinging to any thought, however noble, instead of attending to the commonplace need of the moment, there must be a Quiet Time proper, if only a momentary one cathartic pause, during which the God of music, light, wisdom and healing, the Averter of disease and fear, may be invoked.\*

The Quiet Time is the experience of God. But, since God is not a particular thing or a particular person alongside of other particular things or particular persons, the experience of God cannot be a particular experience alongside of other particular experiences. The experience of God is the health of every experience; it is every experience, the whole of life, purged of fear. It is for this reason that the Quiet Time, if it is going to be all it can be, must be coextensive with the whole of life.

\* My language is chosen to recall the Greek cathartic worship of Apollo, the oracular god *par excellence* or god of guidance and wisdom, the god of Socrates. Much in that worship can be of use to us; at any rate it is of use to me. quality.”

## NEED FOR AN ADEQUATE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SELF

But for the Quiet Time or the experience of God or God-consciousness to be all it can be, we must have an adequate psychology of the self or sin—in other words, an adequate self-consciousness. (Once more one of the two correlatives, God and self, sends us back to the other.) At present there is no such psychology current as common property. Instead there is only a vast conspiracy to substitute the self for God and to distort the consciousness of either, ninety-nine percent of what is commonly called unselfishness, nobility, decency, morality, religion, even God and Christ or Jesus, being sheer self or sin.\* An adequate psychology of the self can only be worked out by many persons working together at the serious application to the details of working-life of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love—that is, working out the details of God consciousness. To an examination of this work, the work of forging an adequate self-consciousness, we shall proceed in the next chapter. Before we do so, however, we must complete what we have to say about God-consciousness by considering it, as we promised we should, in the form which it has when it first occurs, or rather when it first becomes explicit, after the first experiment of the Cross.

\* A justification and amplification of this statement is to be found in *The Ethics of Power*.

## THE “MYSTICAL” EXPERIENCE

## KNOWING GOD AND EXPERIENCING GOD

My contention has been all along that no one can help in a sense knowing God, or knowing about Him, or having some kind of God-consciousness. Even the fool, though he may have said in his heart—that is, with his feeling or his fear—that there is no God, yet has a notion and even some comprehension of God, some glimpses and some feeling of Him, even if it is only what we have called negative Godfeeling. But to have a notion, some comprehension, glimpses and feeling of God is not the same as to have the experience of God, just as to have all these in connection with a human being is not to be acquainted with him. Just as we become properly acquainted with a man when we seek him and try to make friends with him and not when we run away from him or try to ignore his existence, so we have the experience of God when we consciously seek God. This we do in the Quiet Time and in the life which is a Quiet Time. This experience is, however, most striking, because most cataclysmic, in the form in which we have it for the first time, when it is generally known as conversion.

The experience of God would seem to be the same as the mystical experience, to judge from firsthand descriptions of the latter. The term “mystical experience,” however, whatever it may have been in its origin, has by now become an instrument of the Devil for spreading various false suggestions all calculated to keep us from the experience.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD IS NOT PARTICULAR

The term means, in the first place, to persuade us that the experience of God is a particular one, like eating or drinking or enjoying poetry, and that, although it should be given its proper place in life when one can have it, it should not be given more than its proper place, since, as of everything else, there can be too much of it. But this we have seen is a lie. The experience of God, when it is real, is not a particular experience but the health of life, of which you cannot have too much. When, however, it is not this—that is, when it is not real—then it is a disease, since whatever is not health is disease, and then you cannot have too little of it.

## IT IS NOT SPECIALIST

In the second place, the term “mystical experience” intends to suggest that the experience of God, or at least the specially intimate experience of God, is a specialist experience, like the writing of poetry, connected with a special faculty or talent and belonging to special people only, the mystics, just as the writing of poetry belongs

only to poets. But to judge from oneself as well as from the many people, belonging to very different types, whom one has helped to the experience, it is the privilege of Everyman, and one which he can have literally for the asking, that is by praying for it. For the only qualification for it is the willingness to see oneself as one really is, and to relinquish the defending, and demand the amending, of the self.\* It is true that one man, more richly endowed or equipped in the imagination and intellect than another, may express the experience in what is to some a more interesting way, by relating it to more things. But, on the other hand, his very powers and his expression may distract him from the simple absorption in absolute simplicity, which conditions the fullness of the experience, and may mislead him into worshipping himself and expression, so that his experience may actually be poorer than that of the man who expresses it less strikingly. In any case, the expression that counts is the pure miracle or health-propagating act, and that certainly does not depend on gifts of the imagination and intellect. But, indeed, we have already settled the question by defining the experience of God as the experience of the Cross: you do not have to be a very special or rare person to be lifted up on the Cross.

#### IT IS NOT INEXPLICABLE

The third false suggestion which the term conveys is that the experience is an inexplicable mystery. A mystery it indeed is, but, precisely because it is a mystery, it is not inexplicable. For a true mystery is not that which cannot be explained, but that which can be explained in countless ways; it is not incapable of explanation but merely inexhaustible by it. So far is the experience of God from being inexplicable, that the science of it has rightly been called the science of self-evident truths. In comparison with it the experience of nature, which Physics, Chemistry and Biology try to explain, is a riddle of the Sphinx. An explanation of the experience of God we have already given by discussing the absolutes and the self and the relation between them.

#### IT IS NOT INEFFABLE

The fourth false suggestion made by the same misnomer is that, as a state of mind, the experience of God is ineffable. It does not seem to me to be more ineffable than any other state of mind. Like every state of mind, it cannot, of course, be

\*This is absolute humility, as defined in *The Cloud of Unknowing* (Ch. 13): "Meekness in itself is nought else but a true knowing and feeling of a man's self as he is." The same definition is given in Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*. It is also found in St. Bernard (*De gradibus humilitatis*, Ch. 1): "Humilitas est virtus qua homo verissima sui cognitione sibi ipsi vilescit": "Humility is the virtue whereby through the true knowledge of himself man is worthless in his own eyes." It is also absolute honesty and absolute courage.

It is a pity that "humility" has become such a negative or meaningless term that one cannot use it profitably. It is generally the virtue claimed by frustrated egotists unpurged of their unsatisfied pride.

exhausted by expression, and the expression of it can be understood fully only by those who have had the experience. Perhaps the belief about its ineffability has gained currency through the fact that so many have tried to write about it who, by their own admission, have not had it, while others, who have had it and have tried to describe it for those who have not, have been baffled beforehand by the expectation that these would be unable to understand their description in exactly the same way as they themselves, and have expressed their bafflement. It is also true that with some individuals the experience brings into play certain exceptional psychic faculties\* when these are already possessed, just because it brings into play all faculties which we possess, and that it is accompanied by certain manifestations of the senses and the imagination which differ in every individual. But after we have made allowance for these things, we have to admit that it presents more common features than any other experience shared by many people (more common features than, for example, the impression made by the same person on his different acquaintances and friends). Moreover, since the experience of God is, as we have already said, the health of every experience, it presents characteristics which all experience has in so far as it is healthy, even though only imperfectly healthy. Most notably it resembles the experience of failing in love or of conceiving and successfully carrying through a creative idea. Hence any man, provided he be healthy at all, even though he has not had the experience of God, should be able to recognise something when he hears it described, just as the man who first comes to it finds much that is familiar in the midst of what is startlingly new. The fact is that the experience of God, instead of being, as it is often said to be a man's most private and incommunicable possession, can be, and is meant to be, the property of Everyman to be shared with Everyman. Indeed, it is of its very essence that, as we go on having it and being developed by it, it turns us more and more into Everyman.

The experience of God, I have said, is the Quiet Time. Therefore I have already described it in describing the Quiet Time. But so far I have dwelt on objective characteristics only—on our relationship to God, on honesty of thought, purity of desire and will, surrender. I have not said what the experience *feels* like. This I will do now† in dealing with its first appearance, namely with conversion, in which feeling can be most striking, although, it should be repeated, every Quiet Time, and not the first only, must be a conversion.

#### CONVERSION = WORLD REVOLUTION

We will say, then, that I have made my first surrender and have sealed it with an act, the act to which I was guided in the first Quiet Time.

\* Perhaps we all have these but do not all develop them.

† I have not done it before because I had no wish to give either preeminence or prominence to feeling. The religion here set forth is not one of feeling but of wisdom—divine wisdom or guidance. Feeling, in the words of Frank Buchman, is its fruit, not its root.

For the first time passion or the revolutionary urge in me has been released. The result is a revolution, but a revolution such as I have never dreamt of before. It is a revolution in me, but, because I am more completely taken out of myself than I have ever been before, I feel it, not as something in myself, but as a revolution of everything outside me—a World Revolution. The old world—the earth, the sea, the sky with the sun, moon and stars—has been wiped out and a new world is being born before my very eyes. It is the hour of the Apocalypse.

But a while ago, and in my world a curtain hung in front of me which shut out the air, so that I choked for breath. Life was a parenthesis between an exploded and an expected miracle, an aching absence of miracle, a void, a nightmare. And now—O miracle of miracles!—the curtain has vanished! The curtain has vanished, the curtain has vanished! The curtain has vanished, vanished, vanished! The curtain has vanished and I breathe freely, generously. I breathe for the first time! The curtain has vanished, and beyond the curtain? Miracle of miracles! There is no Beyond! The Beyond is here! Its miracle is here, is everywhere! The brackets of the parenthesis have been removed and life runs on freely, a rich period of which every letter is a miracle! Where before everything was vagueness, uncertainty and perplexity, everything is now clarity, certainty, simplicity. Where there was drifting, now there is direction. Where there was mere multiplicity, now there is unity. Where everything was out of gear, now everything is in gear. Where there was impotence, there is now power, where staleness and routine, there is now newness and magic. Where everything before was common, now everything is rare. To adapt the poet's words,

This is the time when meadow, grove and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me do seem  
Apparell'd in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

It is the dream I have had all my life! Everything I have ever dreamt of, longed and waited for, is here—everything which I have given up dreaming of, longing and waiting for, because I concluded it could only grow in the garden of the imagination. This is the dream come true. I have woken up to find myself walking in the flesh in dreamland and fairyland become *terra firma*, and at every corner everything I come upon and which I touch and handle is startlingly new and yet hauntingly familiar. This is the abolition, but also the fulfilment, of all my past; the translation and transfiguration, but also the explanation and revelation, of what has always been before my eyes and at my feet:

Yon public sun and unpeccular seas  
(I find), these tame, undragonned trees,  
Are Colchis and the far Hesperides,  
The Empyrean vast and strange  
Hath humbly stooped to kissing range.

I have lost everything. I have been stripped of everything, all my defences have fallen down, I am a bare, defenceless babe. But I have also gained everything, I am the child the poet speaks of—"the Child of Joy, come not in utter nakedness, but trailing clouds of glory from God, Who is our Home." I feel like a young Titan who could blow off the roof of the world. I am power and passion. I am the meeting point of power streaming down and power surging up. I feel I could create worlds. I am the mystery of creation itself. I am birth and rebirth, I am part of the Resurrection and the Life.

#### THE TRUTH AND THE LIGHT

What I have come to is a state and stage, and not a notion. It is like childhood, or puberty or maturity not to be reached, or to be shown to others, dialectically or by means of argument. Nevertheless, what I have reached is the Truth. And the Truth is not a truth—it is not like any of the particular truths I have found hitherto, agreeing with this and differing from that. The Truth is the Light. It is that by which I see the truth of Plato, of Aristotle, of Kant and of Hegel, of idealism and materialism, of paganism, Judaism, Mohammedanism and of all the different particular expositions of Christianity, of Communism and Fascism, and of all the legions of "isms" I have known. With the help of the Light all these are now seen by me far more clearly, and are grasped far more firmly, than they have been up to now. But what is most astonishing of all, instead of seeing them as I have seen them hitherto and as they have seen or see each other, namely, as mostly differing from and conflicting with each other, I now behold them reconciled. But by the same Light I also see where each stops short of, and begins to deny, the Truth, and I see that it is at this point that they begin to conflict with each other. The Truth which I have reached is the Light which confirms and reconciles, but also confutes, all particular truths.

What I have come to is the Light. But it is also the source of all the mysteries. Now at last I see whence it is that, whether they know it or not, the musician derives his music, the poet his poetry, the painter his pictures, the religious leader his religion, the man of action his plan and decision. I see too how each in ignoring the source defiles what flows from it.



## HEAVEN

What I have come to is Heaven. For Heaven is a state of being, and the characteristics I have enumerated above are amongst those which have commonly been attributed to it. (Heaven is notably the “place” where our wishes and dreams come true and where all strife is removed and everything is smoothed out, the “place,” too, “where music and moonlight and feeling are one.”) But the attribute most commonly denoted by “Heaven,” at least in philosophical talk, is that of eternity. Now, the notion of eternity, like the closely connected one of infinity, can only be discussed properly by means of a long and subtle analysis. But here we are not concerned with the notion, but with the felt experience, of eternity, without which all discussion of the notion becomes simply bad or misapplied mathematics because it is an attempt to bring mathematics into a region to which it is really alien.

The feeling or experience, then, of eternity which we have in the experience of God or in the guided life, whether that life consists of an hour, a day, or years of clock time, lies in the feeling of unity, harmony, and connectedness of the parts and in our absorption in every moment. The past seems to be resumed always without any loss in the present and the future is experienced in the present by a kind of creative prophecy; the whole is all the time penetrated and held together by one meaning or one plan and constitutes what is generally called an eternal present. Outside the guided life, the experience which comes nearest to possessing the attribute of eternity and which is generally cited in illustration of it is the aesthetic experience. Let us imagine a symphony or drama which is a perfect unity and which at the same time is so rich and involves us so actively that it absorbs the whole of us, our will and desire as well as our feeling and imagination, all the time. Our absorption, whether it lasted by the clock an hour, or days or years, would be felt as one moment. If it were interrupted by what did not fit into the symphony or drama, it would constitute the experience of the seconds (two, three, four, etc., according to the number of interruptions) of that moment. If it came to an end and were succeeded by absorptions in different symphonies or dramas, the different absorptions would constitute the experience of many moments. If, on the other hand, our absorption were in one uninterrupted, endless, rich symphony or play, there would be no experience of time, but only the experience of one eternal moment. In other words, the experience of eternity is the experience of perfect and rich unity which is neither interrupted nor succeeded by anything, while the experience of time is the experience of interruption and distraction, of gaps, of disconnectedness or mere conjunction—the experience of the mere “and” or plus (of this moment and that moment *and* that moment and so on). But the experience of God, we have seen, is the experience of a perfect and rich unity, being the experience of the oneness and of the infinity of the absolutes, while the guided life, to the extent to which it is guided and so long as it lasts, is the experience of the perfect play or

the miracle play, absolute love's plan of salvation, in which one pure act fits in with another pure act with astonishing inevitability, constantly impelling us to call out "Author! Author!" in that most life-giving and health-giving of all cries, the prayer of thankfulness and jubilation.

In short, Heaven or eternity is absorption in God.\*

#### HELL

I feel in Heaven, because I am in Heaven, so long as I am absorbed in God and, being absorbed in God, absorb everything into Him that comes along—that is to say, so long as I seek and get guidance for every detail of the day's work. But suppose that instead of absorbing the world about me into God, I either try to run away from it altogether and keep myself in my detached Heaven, or else try to keep my Heaven and my world apart, acting according to the laws of Heaven in Heaven and according to the laws of the world when in the world. Then, very soon, to quote Wordsworth again,

Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy.

First there comes back upon me that habit—whether general tendency to anger or despair, or dipsomania or morphinomania or some other mania—my slavery to which was the symptom of the disease devastating the whole of my life, and my release from which was my admission to Heaven; and then, one by one, all my habits (that is, all myself) creep back until "custom" or automatism, both mine and my world's, lies upon me with a weight

Heavy as frost and deep almost as life,

and, staring with dull, unseeing eyes, I ask myself:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

\* This expression has, however, led to grievous misunderstandings through people who have not had the experience thinking of physical absorption and imagining that we are absorbed in God as we might be absorbed, say, in (i.e. by) a lion eating us, in which case the absorption would be a vanishing of the absorbed. We must think, not of our absorption in a lion, but of our absorption in a play. When I am absorbed in the lion I do not absorb the lion but I vanish in him. On the other hand, when I am absorbed in a play, I also absorb the play, and neither I nor the play vanish. So my absorption in God is also my absorption *of* God, which is another way of saying what we have already said, namely, that when I am in God, God is in me.

For Heaven is now no longer a dream come true, but merely a dream. It is now but the memory of an emotional conversion.

It is not now as it hath been of yore:  
Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more

I have fallen out of Heaven. And into what do I fall? Into my old past? No, for that has gone. Or rather, it is there still, but not the same. The aching absence of miracle has now become an evil torturing and fascinating presence; the smell of staleness has turned into the reek of sulphur. My past is not the same, because, although my ancient automatisms are returning, *I* am no longer the same. The intensity, sensitiveness and concentration which I gained in Heaven I carry with me in my fall; but now I want to use them in the opposite direction, for the destruction or disintegration of life instead of for construction and integration. Instead of wanting to create and heal, I now want to smash and infect. In short, from the state which is denoted by the term "Heaven" I have fallen to the state which has the attributes denoted by the term "Hell."

If I am not to drop from Heaven into Hell, my initiation into Heaven must be the commencement of a lifelong fight with the master of Hell, the Enemy.

With is fight we shall deal in the next chapter.\*

\* In the last part of this chapter I have expressed my experience of God with the help of philosophy and literature, once my idols worshipped uncomprehendingly and now through this experience illuminated and loved with understanding. I have done so because, although the experience is Everyman's, yet each man has to give it in the terms of his main interests (i.e., his previous idols); for it is in these that the purifying work of the experience is most striking. By giving it in this way I hope to help especially those whose interests are like mine. But I do not wish to imply that the experience of God is conditioned by, or dependent for its fullness upon, the knowledge of philosophy and literature. I know many a man whose experience of God is deeper and richer than mine because he has had more and deeper experiences of the Cross, but who would simply describe it by saying: "It's great fun," or "It makes life worth living," or "Jesus loves me." But these are merely shorthand ways of giving those characteristics which I have given here at length, and do not connote their absence.

## Chapter 3

### SHARING OR SPREADING THE WORLD REVOLUTION

The world is changed through our sharing the experience of God

#### I

#### THE LARGER SELF THE ENEMY OF CONVERSIONS

##### MEMBERSHIP OF THE LARGER SELF

The self is a self-defending system of habits over against other such systems. It is essentially separatist in relation to these other systems. Indeed, the defence is constituted by the separation, and this separation is itself the effect of the primal separation from God or unifying love. But the separation also constitutes a dependence and even a slavery, and the greater the force of repulsion between the two selves the greater also is the force of attraction between them.

This is well illustrated by hatred. It would seem at first that hatred of another is just a desire to get away from the other or have him removed, and it is, indeed, the strongest separatist desire. But it is also notorious that when we hate a person we are far more haunted by the thought of him, fascinated by him, than when we love him, and even when we want to destroy him we yet want to have him always with us in order to hate him, hatred being one of the most difficult sentiments to part with.

The self, we have said, is either a tyrant or a Cyclops toward other selves. As a tyrant it needs the other selves to tyrannise over; as a Cyclops it needs them either to eat them, as the Cyclops ate the comrades of Odysseus, or to feel its might and independence over against them, as did the Cyclops over against his fellows.\* Each self is tied to all the other selves in that commerce between selves which is a war punctuated by uneasy intervals of peace or pretences of peace, and the conflict itself is a way of snarling up the threads till they are inextricably intertwined. Together they form that tangle which includes the whole of nature, organic and inorganic, and which we have called the kingdom of fear or inertia. They are members of one diseased gigantic body and in being members of that they are members of one another. That body is the larger self.

As self I am part of the larger self by contiguity or in area and by summation or in depth.

\* For the elaboration of this idea see *The Ethics of Power*, p. 134.

I am contiguous with other selves in the sense that I live and deal with them, as a friend or enemy, as a member of a family, as a partner or rival in business, as a member of a profession or trade union, as a citizen, as a national over against other nationals; while to organic and inorganic nature I am related in hunting or tending or using animals, in ploughing or sowing the earth, in all the uses to which I put matter, in eating and drinking, in all my experience by means of the bodily senses and appetitions.

By summation or in depth I am far more intimately related to the larger self, in the sense that at any moment I sum up in my unconscious and my body not only my own past, but also the past of my family and of my people, mankind's passage from monkey to man, the whole evolution of the animal, vegetable, and physical kingdoms, the history of the whole cosmos—in short, Karma, Necessity, Law, Fate.

#### THE LARGER SELF'S ONSLAUGHT ON A CONVERSION

We will say, then, that I have been converted, and deeply, fundamentally converted. I am a changed man; I am in Heaven, I am part of the Resurrection and the Life. But Heaven or the Resurrection and the Life for me is but a tiny spot of health on this diseased gigantic body, a minute speck of light on the surface of this fathomless abyss, and in the midst of this immense wilderness, of darkness. The disease and the darkness, the larger self or the Enemy, will try to swallow up the spot or speck. It will try to do so through laughter and scorn, or incredulity and neglect; through praise or through blame; through contumely or honour; through rejection or pretended assimilation. It will carry on its attack in the sphere of manners and morals, of work and of play, in art and morality, in philosophy, religion and theology. It will carry it on around me and about me but also, far more insidiously and deadlily in my very depths—in my imagination, my habits, my body—in which the larger self is summed up. Its shifts are countless—for it is a very Proteus—and their enumeration would constitute not only the history of religion and of mankind but also the story which has yet to be pieced together by Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

#### TO REMAIN CONVERTED I MUST CONVERT THE LARGER SELF

The existence of the spot or speck is, therefore, extremely precarious. It is precarious in the literal sense of the word—namely, dependent on prayer. To rest in Heaven I must by constant prayer keep myself attached to God, absorbed in God. But God is absolute health whose function is to heal and to propagate itself over the diseased body; He is absolute love which is the passion for the Cross or for lifting up inertia and transforming it into pure energy. Therefore, my “rest” in Heaven means perpetual motion—the ceaseless spreading of the spot or speck outwards and downwards, until it has covered the whole area and penetrated to the bottom of the abyss; the peace of Heaven is a ceaseless war against the Enemy, the larger self or disease or fear. Remaining a changed man means going on being changed myself

and being used for the changing of the world. It means being a missionary, and being a missionary means being a revolutionary. The revolutionary urge in me, once it has been released, cannot stop short at the world revolution for me but must proceed to the world revolution for the world. It is a demand for a revolution of all personal relations, of sex, of the home, of education, of business, of government, of the nation, of international relations. With a far-stretching vision and hope, which give passion and significance to every common act, it expects even the change or transfiguration of the physical universe itself. With a patience which is also the urgency that storms the gates of Heaven it prepares for the Day of judgment, for the all-embracing Quiet Time, the coming of God's kingdom, the hour of the Apocalypse for all.

#### THE LARGER SELF'S VICTORIES: DEFEATED CONVERSIONS

If, however, I limit this urgency, expectation or demand at any point, my resting in Heaven becomes a falling out of Heaven. For every limitation being the work of the self, this limitation is a way in which the self reasserts itself over a conversion; it is a way in which the Enemy scores against Heaven.

Amongst victories of the Enemy, or defeated conversions or arrested revolutions, we may reckon, on the vast theatre of war which is the cosmos, all the stages in evolution which have produced the different natural kingdoms, orders and species. At each point life took a leap forward under the impulsion of the revolutionary passion, then in came inertia again, the grip of the past or old closed over the new, and the result was the deposit of another set of automatisms slightly differing from what had gone before.

Leaving these instances, which we can only understand by speculation based on analogy, and coming to the history of the religious experience itself, on which we can gain insight directly from our own experience, we see that the worst case of a defeated conversion is that in which Heaven itself comes to be looked upon as a rest from activity, as a refuge from the larger self (that is, from the disease which is to be healed), as a peace which is a running away from the Enemy—in short, as a retreat from the Cross. It is in this case that the victory of the Enemy is the most conspicuous, since Heaven itself becomes a funk-hole, like the drink of the dipsomaniac, and is, therefore, the object of a mania; Heaven itself becomes the residence of fear or of the Enemy. From such a defeat result all those religions which are denoted as “mysticisms” when the word is used abusively, or as “quietisms.” Being an escape from life, they are *eo ipso* an escape *from* God also, though nominally they are a fleeing *to* God, just as their opposites—various active pharisaisms or idealisms—being an escape from God, are *eo ipso* an escape from life, though they pretend to plunge their devotees into the business and problems of life.

Next we may reckon the Heaven which is so fractured by the inroads of the Enemy, and in which the interruptions by the self are so much larger than the experiences of God, that these experiences, being cut off from each other by the vast

expanses of self, seem to be experiences of different gods. This gives us polytheism. At any rate it explains the element of genuine experience of God which there can be in polytheism.

As third we may place a whole group of limitations which may be called limitations by area. The limitation of the experience of Heaven to comprehension by the intellect yields the religion of philosophers, of theologians and of those who like to turn over in their minds spiritual truths, "sermon-tasters" as they are sometimes called. The confining of it to the imagination produces imaginative mysticism or Platonism like that of Wordsworth, Shelley and many others. Its limitation to feeling results in emotional religion. Its identification with "conduct," which generally also means with a code for conduct, turns it into what is ordinarily called morality, while the opposite limitation of it to that which is gained by worship and the sacraments makes of it a particular experience alongside of other particular experiences. Last of these truncations we may place the confining by the converted individual of his demand to the realisation of perfection in his own life; this produces the solitary saint.

In another group may be set what may be called limitations by time. Heaven is by some said to be that which can only be attained after the death of the body and not merely the death of the self, and this is generally interpreted to mean that it is useless and even sinful to expect in our lifetime the complete cure of the disease which is the larger self. By others this cure, or the coming of the Kingdom, is relegated to an indefinite future which is really a sort of Greek Kalends. A third lot, using a rather mystifying philosophy of time, instead of interpreting eternity (or Heaven) as that which in relation to the kingdom of fear is a perfecting or healing of the constituents of that kingdom and must itself be an event in time (being, in fact, a perfecting of the time of the kingdom of fear and a bringing to an end of that kingdom), think of it as a "timelessness" which does not necessitate the end of the kingdom of fear.\*

#### DEFEAT COMES FROM LIMITING EXPECTATION

Each of these abatements of our demand has sooner or later meant the end of Heaven and the reinstatement of the self. For the individual it has meant that he has had "an experience" or "thrill," has acquired new virtues and then has perhaps continued to live, at a higher level than before; at the very best it has meant that he did not proceed as far, or with as few interruptions, in his experience of God, as he might have done. For more general outpourings of the Spirit it has meant that after changing the face of civilisation for half a generation or more they have ceased to operate, leaving as deposits merely a new sect or religion or moral code, and joining the class of revivals or religious movements that have had their day.

\* This is rather a difficult subject and cannot be pursued here at greater length. The notion of eternity favoured in this book is that of perfect time, or of the perfection of the temporal, and not of timelessness.

This end has been inevitable and implicit in the abatement from the very beginning. For the magic which is prayer depends for its full and continued effectiveness on unlimited demandingness and expectation (which is also unlimited courage) and on the feeling of crisis. There must be no inhibition or slackness even in the depths of our imagination, in our ordinary unconscious or in that deepest unconscious which is called the body. If you begin your approach to God with a limitation or inhibition on the very surface or threshold, that is, in your intellect or reason, such as are the limitations we have considered, then you are cutting the nerve of your application at the very start.\*

#### UNLIMITED VICTORY THROUGH UNLIMITED EXPECTATION

The history of these arrested conversions makes discouraging reading. Indeed, so discouraging is it, that it is a favourite device of the larger self, in its war against Heaven, to make us undertake such a review as we have attempted here and then to say to us: "There you are! These conversions, even the most effective and enduring, have not come up to your expectations. Why try?" To this each must answer: "Seeing that it has been possible for the course of *my* history to be changed so drastically that something quite unprecedented in it has emerged, it is possible for the course of the whole of history to be changed in the same way." Sometimes the larger self even becomes pious and argues as follows: "Leave everything to God; everything will happen in God's good time. These expectations and prophecies of a cosmic revolution have always had something fantastic in them and have come to nought." To this we must answer: "God's good time is always *this* time, and His way of working is partly through the urgency of my demand. If I abate this urgency, I am not leaving things to Him but resisting Him with inertia. The invitation to wait for God's good time comes from the self's desire to have a 'good time' or an easy time. The only thing wrong with these expectations has been that they limited themselves either by a preconception of what the revolution must be or by a date after which it could not be. Or else you, O larger self, devil that you, are, have poisoned their very soul: you have made of them a running away from the ills that were to be cured instead of a grappling with these, or you have robbed either the urgency of its patience or the patience of its urgency. If we get enough people with the right kind of expectation, that is to say, with the right kind of revolutionary passion, which means people really attached to God, the World Revolution is inevitable."

\*The following should make clearer the intimate connection, which is to some so inexplicable or incredible, between demandingness or prayer and expectation or hope on the one hand and fulfilment on the other. It is not the fact that I ask and expect and that in consequence God grants my request as a reward or favour, because He is pleased with me or because He cannot get rid of me, as the language of imperfect personality used in connection with perfect personality or God so often and so misleadingly suggests. The fact is that asking and expecting constitute energy and the admission of pure energy or God ("he that hath, to him shall be given"), whereas the opposites of asking and expecting constitute inertia or death and the exclusion of pure energy or God ("he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath").



## II

### THE STRATEGY OF THE LARGER SELF

#### GOD'S WORD = THE MIRACLE = OUR WEAPON AGAINST THE LARGER SELF

To save my soul, then, I must save the world. That is to say, I must change it. I must at once sound the tocsin of the Revolution and go on doing so all the time. This I do by spreading the word of God.

The word of God is the same as the act of God, the pure act or miracle, the missionary act which by propagating health and love bears witness to its source, health and love. It is the act of the Oxford don who, in obedience to guidance which was mortifying to his pride because of its triviality and which in consequence he tried to drive away but tried in vain, wrote to his former schoolmaster confessing and apologising for a lie he had told as a boy of eleven in order to save himself from being caned; his letter proved the means of bringing the subject of guidance to the notice of the schoolmaster, who gave his life to God and was enabled soon after to save two men from suicide, who also placed their lives under God and from two self-destroying centres of disease were turned into sources from which flowed and spread life and health. It is the act of the business man who after a struggle obeyed guidance to surrender pride and greed and to yield to his enemy in a dispute involving thousands, although his enemy was legally and morally in the wrong—an act which later proved the means of bringing this enemy to God. It is the act of the man who, feeling that he could not help answering at least with some gentle satire the man who was accusing him unjustly and ungratefully, prayed in despair until his feelings were replaced by pure friendship and interest for the other, who in the changed atmosphere suddenly changed the tenor of his talk and confessed his own ills, seeking and getting help for them.

To be a missionary, therefore, I must primarily lead the completely surrendered life all the time so as to attain, through purity, sensitiveness to guidance for pure acts. Nevertheless, so cunning is the larger self's strategy in its conspiracy to replace God by itself, that it can make even the act of God fit into that conspiracy. We must now look at the main points of this strategy.

#### THE LARGER SELF REPLACING GOD IN PHARISAISM

The larger self substitutes itself instead of God by means of idolising. In the absence of God the cosmos is a madhouse swarming with gods, while the life of the larger self is one long mania of deification.

The form in which that life comes nearest to replacing God by replacing the God-guided life (from which it borrows much and which it caricatures in the attempt to oust it) is pharisaism.\* Its distinction from the guided life we have already

\* See *The Ethics of Power*, pp. 147-55 and 188-218.

pointed out when dealing with the difference between fanaticism and guidance, for pharisaism is a fanaticism. It will be useful, however, to resume that distinction here in two points.

The guided life differs from the pharisaic life in the same respect, of course, in which the guided act differs from the pharisaic act. Now, in the first place, the guided act can never be adequately derived from, or explained by, any number of laws or general rules, while the pharisaic act is nothing if it is not an enactment of the law. In the second place, the guided act comes from love, while the pharisaic act comes from fear. This we have already stated over and over again, both by definition, since we have defined the self as fear, and by illustration. Nevertheless, since the truth that every action which does not come from love or God must come from fear, whatever the name we use for it, is so important and yet so often denied or forgotten, it will be useful to illustrate it here once more.

Take the highest act of which pharisaism is capable, that by which a man deliberately and from a sense of duty lays down his life, whether for another person, his country or a cause. He has been prepared for this act all his life, by reading and preaching and talk about the nobility, glory and immortality of the act. That preparation in itself is symptomatic: it is like the administration of the tot of rum before going over the top. If the prospective hero looked honestly into himself, he would have to admit that the force which propels him is fear—that he shrinks from what he imagines that he himself and others will think and feel about him if he does not lay down his life.\* The fear is ultimately of the larger self, for his standard of measurement and even his self-condemnation and self-abhorrence have been communicated to him from the larger self by heredity and education. Contrast with this the most striking instance of guided action: when a man is ready to give up everything, including his life, and to face ignominy and torture in order to be used as an instrument in developing the personalities of others along the lines of absolute love and health, and when he acts because he is entranced by the beauty and wisdom and sanity of God. The act is a shouting and singing and clapping of the hands for joy, and he no more thinks of it as a sacrifice than the lark thinks of its singing as a sacrifice; he is, on the contrary, grateful as for a privilege both to God and to the human beings whom he serves. In such an act, it is obvious, there can be no self-reference and therefore no fear-reference.†

\* The best illustration of what is here stated is to be found in the *Alcestis* of Euripides. Alcestis lays down her life for her husband and in doing so reveals her motives very naively.

† If the reader is not yet convinced that all pharisaism acts by fear, let him watch himself inculcating any rule of virtue into a child. Even if he merely says, “This is how nice people behave” or “Nice people don’t behave in that way,” he is using a threat or the sanction of fear. At the very least he must admit that it is a habit he is trying to inculcate and that it is on the force of habit he is relying; and every habit carries with it the fear of, i.e. the shrinking from, its own violation.

## FEAR CONCEALS FEAR

Now the procedure of the self, its strongest mode of self-defence, is to refuse to face itself as fear. It hides its face from itself. In its war against Heaven its strongest weapon is its visor. Self-saving is, above all, face-saving. The self hides or saves its face first by means of words. The motive for a pharisaic act like the one discussed above it calls sense of duty, patriotism, devotion, zeal for humanity—in short, anything but fear. Those who insist on calling a spade a spade are dubbed cynics, misanthropes, malicious defamers of human nature—in short, anything but absolutely honest people.

The words, however, are not idle words; they help to keep the visor in position. So strong, indeed, is their influence, that we have the utmost difficulty in seeing our motives as they really are. In certain so-called love relationships, for example, such as that between “loving” husband and wife or that between members of a “loving” family, we do not see that the motive is that of fear, fear of hurting each other’s feelings, fear of seeing ourselves and each other as we really are, fear of not being loving or loved. We try and pump up love out of ourselves and pile up a mountain of pretence and artificiality. Similarly the courtesies of civilised intercourse are nominally expressions of kindly and gracious feelings towards each other, and such is the power of suggestion, that through merely performing the prescribed rites we generate a fictitious kindness and do not notice that the master of the ceremonies who dictates and looks after their observance is the great dread we have, when two or three are gathered together, of seeing ourselves and each other as enemies who fear and inspires fear, who are on the defensive and are manoeuvring for position.

## THE PROHIBITION AND NECESSITY OF SELFEXPOSURE

As a means to this concealment there prevails a kind of terroristic prohibition of any self-exposure, especially before a public. It is supposed to be shockingly indecent, an impious unveiling of the “secret of personality” (it does, indeed, give away a secret, the secret of the vast conspiracy), a desecration, a prostitution, a raking up of filth, an eating of dirt; it is repulsive and offensive to each member of the larger self; it makes each sick, as, indeed, it should. But even in private and in the most intimate relationships the larger self encourages only a self-exposure strictly tempered by reserve and self-respect (i.e. fear-respect); the play must go on always and each actor must act his part and keep on the mask required by that part. Only in front of the mirror and when by ourselves are we allowed to take off the mask.

But this permission the larger self grants only because it knows that the mask cannot come off, kept on tightly as it is by our fear, which fear does not go until we are no longer afraid to show ourselves as we really are to one other self, and even to the larger self (that is, to any self and to many selves). For it is just a psychological truism that, if you keep your fear, sin or trouble to yourself, you keep it—that is, you do not let go of it, but cling to it, even as it clings to you, winding its octopus tentacles

about your soul and dragging it down into the depths away from your own sight as well as the sight of others. Proper self-consciousness is a psychological impossibility without self-exposure to other selves, or at any rate without the willingness for such exposure.

#### SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS SEPARATED FROM GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

Still more impossible is proper self-consciousness without the consciousness and the help of God. For fear's greatest fear being that of facing itself as fear, a miracle—the first and perhaps the greatest—is needed to break through it. Hence the larger self sets itself against God-consciousness even more than against self-exposure.

To the extent, however, to which it cannot avoid having both self-consciousness and God-consciousness, it endeavours to keep either apart from the other and thus to mutilate and falsify both.

Of self-consciousness it will accept only that part which consists of the preoccupation with the symptoms of the self. For example, in our own times especially, men occupy themselves with the problems of poverty and war, vigorously protest against them, form societies and pass laws to deal with them and even fight each other about the right way of curing them. For poverty and war are only symptoms of the self—that is, of fear in its various forms, such as rapacity, anger, vindictiveness, etc.—and to deal with the symptoms is the surest way the neurotic has discovered of never facing the cause, since the symptoms, instead of vanishing, simply multiply through his grappling with them, so that he never has time to get down to the cause. Hence it is no uncommon sight to find people who engage in a vigorous warfare against poverty and war and, through so doing, not only keep but actually aggravate fix themselves the fear, greed, contentiousness, lust for power and conquest from which poverty and war spring. The larger self, being a maniac, is a neurotic par excellence and therefore adopts the neurotic's strategy. And with good reason. For the cause of poverty and war is simply the self *qua* fear or rejection of absolute love, health, wisdom, that is to say, of God. To face the cause is, therefore, to accept complete self-consciousness with its correlative God-consciousness, and to accept this is to accept the fact that the only cure is the annihilation of the self.

The larger self will sometimes even tolerate self-exposure on the part of particular selves before a public; such exposure is, indeed, a favourite form of contemporary literature. But this it will do only so long as there is the admission that human nature is like that and that there is no help for it—that is to say, that there is no God. As soon, however, as you bring in the fact of God—that is, as soon as you introduce God-consciousness—the very people who were so free in their self-exposure before will now recant. The reason for the *volte-face*\* is obvious. The self-exposure without the acknowledgment of God or God-consciousness was no exposure at all. It complained of the absence of help and was an accusation or

exposure of the “universe.” True self-exposure, on the other hand, demonstrates the unwillingness of the self to be helped; it shows the self as a shrinking from God and is self-accusation and not world-accusation.

#### GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS SEPARATED FROM SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Of God-consciousness the larger self accepts that part which consists of the preoccupation with the symptoms or fruits of the presence of God or absolute health—namely, happiness, pleasure, prosperity, success, enlightenment, peace, justice, etc. The pursuit of these may be said to constitute the whole of our life, especially of pharisaism. But this very pursuit is a running away from the complete God-consciousness which brings with it self-consciousness and shows us that the only way to attain these is to annihilate the self and to let in absolute health, from which they flow. In running away from this consciousness the pursuit frustrates itself, becomes a maniacal thing and turns its objects into idols which are escapes from life—escapes even from the very things it is seeking, happiness, pleasure, prosperity, etc.

The larger self will also accept from God-consciousness any truths about God, even such as declare that God’s coming means its own going, provided that they remain general. For then it can apply them in its own way. It can even pretend that it is annihilating itself in the very acts in which it is defending itself. Hence it is that many men we have known have at first maintained that they were engaged in slaying the self because they were missionaries or philanthropists or sacrificed their time and money for some cause; and yet they have afterwards themselves discovered and confessed, when they really met God, that their activity had all the time been nothing but an escape from the task which would really have been the Cross for them, and that so it had in reality constituted a way of protecting their fear.

#### CORRUPTING SCRIPTURE

What the larger self cannot stand at any price is a particular demonstration of the meeting of self-consciousness and God-consciousness, of the self and God, of man and God. From such a demonstration it has shrunk with all its might, not on one occasion only, but always. For it is a demonstration which is quite unmistakable. It is a demonstration of the self’s suicide. It is an irrefutable *memento mori* and it inevitably starts the self upon the meditation of death.

But God’s act, i.e. the pure act or miracle, is precisely such a demonstration.

What, then, does the larger self do when it is brought face to face with it? It tries to interpret it in such a way that the self replaces God. It does the work of the Devil quoting Scripture (for miracles are God’s Scripture) in his own defence.

This is, then, how the larger self at its best, when it does not use simply the weapon of ridicule or denial, puts the miracles which we have cited above. “That don had a very scrupulous sense of honour. True, we must not be over-scrupulous, but we

should remember that a nice sense of honour may lead to important consequences through unforeseeable coincidences. Besides being noble, that don was very wise in allowing for such possibilities. That businessman was a very generous man. His generosity looked beyond his own interest to that of society. The man who refrained from a satirical answer realised that turning the other cheek was only common sense.”

There are many other ways in which it will translate the same fact, and in some of them God even will be introduced, but only as a remote and feebly realised cause. In all of them the self is in the foreground weighing and measuring, picking and choosing, calculating, deciding. If God is brought in at all, it is merely as a constitutional monarch to whom the self is the all-important Prime Minister. The self is exalted, and guidance by the light of the self’s law, virtue and wisdom is justified. Appearances, face, decency, are preserved. There is no questioning of the self’s accepted order, no provocation; everything is in order, nothing need be changed.

### III

#### THE STRATEGY AGAINST THE LARGER SELF: (A) SHARING, (B) RESTITUTION

##### INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

What, however, the larger self will at no price accept, what is perfectly shocking and obscene, are the declarations of the agents themselves. The first of them runs: “I thought it perfectly silly for a man in my position to write a letter like that, and I could not see what good the writing would do. I obeyed only because until I did so I could get no other guidance.” The second states: “I had a hard struggle to swallow my pride and thought the guidance very unbusinesslike, but God repeatedly told me I must obey it. I could only find peace by doing so and I told the other fellow why I did it.” The third is the worst of the lot, for it runs as follows: “I could see perfectly well that my word of gentle satire would ruin everything and that important issues hung upon my not saying it. But I felt I could not resist the temptation to say it. I knew that turning the other cheek was the secret of everything but I felt I could not do it in the proper spirit. I threw Myself upon God in sheer despair.”

All the three declarations are obscene, unfit for the stage of the larger self’s cosmic play, for they spoil this play by representing God as doing everything and the self as trivial, as a nuisance, as getting in the way, at best as simply being got out of the way. They are indecent self-exposures, deadly insults to the self (“to the dignity of human personality,” it alleges), deathblows to it.

Nevertheless, they are the simple truth.

The simple truth or absolutely honest statement is the weapon which the missionary must use against the larger self’s strategy. It is the absolutely true and, therefore, God-inspired commentary to God’s text or miracle in answer to the self’s glossing of that same text.

##### CONFESSION-PROFESSION = SHARING

Absolutely honest description of one’s experience has always two aspects. One of these is confession—the exposure of the self for what it really is (namely fear or disease), the unmasking of the face, the letting down of all defences, the abandonment of the struggle for existence; it is the true expression of self-consciousness. The other aspect is profession or bearing witness to God as light which illumines darkness and shows up disease, health that heals, love that forgives or changes, power that creates, wisdom that guides; it is the true expression of God-consciousness. Confession-profession is the only true expression of experience, which, when free, is always self-consciousness and God-consciousness.

Confession-profession, being the true expression of God-consciousness, is my way of communicating my experience of God or of sharing that experience with

my neighbour. To share that experience is, in the true sense of the word, to share my life with him. It is also to propagate the experience of God or to preach God's word, and to do this is to carry on the war against the Enemy. To be a missionary, then, I must in the first place, have the experience of God so as to be used for miracles and, in the second place, I must share.

#### TAKING ON ANOTHER'S SINS

But how to share and what to share, when and with whom to share, God Himself must show me. The right kind of sharing is itself an act of God. My contribution to it is to be willing to share first the life of the person with whom I am to share my own life. I must take on his sins and fears and make them mine, caring about them and about the healing of them in a way in which he does not care himself, and which confers the urgency and feeling of crisis necessary for the magic to work. That is to say, instead of running away from the condition of being members one of another, I must accept it and make the most of it. I must suffer the union of self-consciousness and God-consciousness, of self-sickness and positive God-feeling, which he will not have for himself, so that these may develop for his benefit in me. To do this is truly to love my neighbour—who in the kingdom of fear is also my enemy, just as he whom I specifically call my enemy in that kingdom is also my friend in the kingdom of Heaven. It is to love my neighbour-enemy as myself. It is when I do this that there springs from me the guided and yet unaimed word, the spontaneous talk, which works miracles.

#### SHARING AS A METHOD OF EXORCISM

One miracle this kind of sharing always works. Since it is the operation of absolute love in me, I grow by it in absolute love, in God-consciousness and self-consciousness—that is, I go on being changed.

But what does it do for the other person? Does it change him? Very commonly it infuriates him. And then the larger self begins to whisper in me: "There is no miracle in this. This is merely a blunder. It cannot be the work of love to stir up rage." But here, as usual, the larger self is suggesting what is false. The truth is that infuriation is the work of love—the way in which its work commonly begins. It is the ferment beginning to work, the self-sickness spreading, the manias or devils stirring and coming to the surface. Soon they come out, and he accuses me, or the truth I have put before him, or the people he associates with it, of hypocrisy, cowardice, immorality, stupidity, unreason, etc. Thereupon the self in me tempts me to defence. If I am guided, however, I resist the temptation, realising that the miracle has accomplished in half an hour what a psychologist might take months to achieve: the patient is projecting and diagnosing his own disease. If I am silent or encourage him to elaborate his diagnosis, and especially if I express agreement with him where the truth allows this, soon he may begin to see that the disease is



his own. The miracle of self-consciousness then begins and “infuriation” is seen to be a misnomer for “exfuriation” or the driving out of the furies—another word for exorcism. If this exorcism is preceded, as in the case of Paul, by the stoning of a Stephen, we may be sure that Stephen thought his life well lost, or rather, well, invested.

#### SHARING AS A SOLVENT

Suppose, however, that the other man is ready to give up resistance. His readiness to give up resistance, to drop all his defences, to have the frost in his soul melt, to know himself, goes a long way towards bringing the miracle of self-consciousness to pass. But it is not by itself enough. Hard prayer is needed and also the help of another human being. If I simply point out his sins for him, I merely harden the automatic resistance of his self in spite of his readiness. Also, I may mislead him by a wrong analysis. Moreover, even if I am right, it is important that *he* should see his sins, not I; the self-consciousness must flower from within, and for that to happen a subtle chemistry is needed, the development of which is merely hindered by the brutal imposition of my more complete consciousness of his self upon his own inadequate self-consciousness. If, however, I begin by exposing my own sins, which, as we have seen, I do inevitably in sharing my experience of God, or for that matter, in sharing deeply and truly enough *any* experience of mine, then the dropping of defences begins with *me* and the example is infectious; the breath of love, having begun in one quarter, blows whithersoever it listeth, and under its influence the crack in the ice of my self spreads to that of his self.

#### SHARING AS THE MULTIPLICATION OF PERSONALITY

Let us say that we are both willing to share. We may be strangers who are conscientiously endeavouring to feel, and are persuaded that we are feeling, the kindly interest in each other which the laws of courtesy demand, or strangers who are trying hard to conceal the fact that, because of the opposition of our temperaments, education and outlook, we have conceived a hatred for each other at sight and for life. Or we may be lifelong enemies. Or we are, let us suppose, father and a child, or husband and wife, with affection for each other, but with affection which is human only, and which, therefore, as every psychologist will agree, is ambivalent or mixed with its contrary—that is to say, it may be either mutual dislike tempered by a hankering after each other and by a sense of duty, or else combined with all sorts of little mutual irritations, dislikes, suspicions and resentments, which we have been concealing from each other and from ourselves all our life. We now share all these feelings as well as anything else which we are guided to share. But we share while accepting the demands of absolute love, in the faith that these demands can be satisfied through the help of absolute love, and resolved to satisfy them; and our sharing is punctuated by Quiet Times. Then, whichever of the above relations is the

one that exists between us, we come upon the most wonderful discovery of all. We find that love has been there all the time and has not to be generated or striven for; all we have had to do was to allow our fears to be removed. It is a very human love, showing itself in released laughter, uninhibited gestures, fearless look, feeling of ease and fondness for each other's company. At the same time it is love such as we have never known before—not even if we have been in the state known as “being in love with each other.” It is not merely a union, but a multiplication, of personality. It can never come directly from one human being to another, but always comes through love of the two for God or absolute love. Hence it is a multiplication of one triple consciousness (God-consciousness, self-consciousness and other-consciousness) by another triple consciousness.

It constitutes a mystic marriage which, in the sense given to “eternal” here, may truly be called “the eternal triangle.”

This marriage generates a magnetic field of multiplied power—power of sensitiveness, power of vision, power of decision. In it what was before a mere blank or a mere breath or momentary pulse in the mind, or the ghost of the shadow of a dream, comes to life as a definite thought, a thought which reveals itself either as an angel coming from absolute love or as a fury needing to be exorcised. The keener sight penetrates the visor and all my fears are seen for what they really are. Where before there was fumbling and groping, there is now guidance and quick decision. The tempo of thought, imagination and will is quickened. Worlds can be traversed and ages lived in an hour. Hence the multiplication of potency comes to our feeling largely as an impression of multiplied time. An hour in this magnetised field seems an eternity as compared with months outside it. It is, indeed, what it seems, for it is a piece of eternity.

The multiplication shows itself, above all, in the greater force of attraction exercised by this magnetised field. Soon a third person will be drawn into this field to form with the two of us a cell, which will create another cell, which in turn will beget another, all of them working to build up that body of health which will finally replace the giant's body of disease.

#### SHARING AS A PREPARATION FOR COLLECTIVE GUIDANCE

A large group of people living in the intimacy described above with all defences and pretences down, all fears removed, each open to all and all to each, and one and all open to God, owning together a collective consciousness which operates through the mutual interpenetration of personalities—such a group generates that electric atmosphere, magnetised, purified, sensitised to the utmost, charged with the nth power, which I described at the beginning of this book in order to illustrate my notion of the working of God's power.

Such a group is the fitting recipient of collective guidance or of God's plan for a community. This is the guidance we most need in our day—God's plan for

business, for government, for the nation, for international relations. Unfortunately we get only too many plans for these things, nearly everyone having his own plan and fighting against the rest for it. But it is most unlikely that God's plan for any communal concern will be given in this way to one individual. For a common plan has to be carried out by many people, and until these are ready to receive and execute it, its proclamation can only lead to strife and attempts at tyranny. God's plan for communal action, just as for individual action, can, we have already seen, be known only step by step, as it is being carried out. A guided group knows it in each man doing his guided bit and finding that it fits in with the other man's bit. It is given through intuition just as the plan for the hive is given to bees through instinct. It is not imposed as a fixed programme beforehand in the way in which idealisms, pharisaisms or fanaticisms endeavour to impose themselves, nor is it reached as these are reached, by discussion and debate and trying to find out wherein you differ from the other fellow lid from what has gone before.

Hence it is that the guided man, instead of discussing the exact details of the programme for the Kingdom of Heaven, busies himself in changing the men who, after first learning to get guidance in their private lives, will together seek guidance for industry, or government or the nation. Hence, too, it is that the ideologues or pharisees, who are the instruments used by the larger self to delay the coming of the Kingdom by their maniacal programmes, accuse the guided man of wasting time, of running away from the problems of the day, just because he does not spend his time in talking and in quarrelling about these programmes.

#### THE ARMY OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION

Many such groups receiving and executing guidance for industry, labour, municipal and national government, education, together constitute the revolutionary army carrying on the war against the larger self. With the Holy Spirit as their Captain its soldiers march under the Cross and to the Cross. They sweep through the world, spreading God-consciousness, self-consciousness and self-sickness. They sing and they shout, they laugh and are glad and are terrible. They make the world sick.

When this army of the Revolution covers the whole world, it will be the World Church. The World Church will be the Army of the Resurrection. Its trumpet will sound the last Trump, the reveille of the Apocalypse.

#### RESTITUTION THE CHANGING OF THE PAST

Such is the propagation of the light and health by contiguity over the area. Its penetration of the abyss is through restitution or the making good of the past. Restitution is more obviously the act of God than anything else. For none but God can remake the past, and He not only arrests Karma or the summed-up self in its progress, but reverses and unravels it.

The change of a man's life through surrender begins, as we have seen, with

release from some one automatism—dipsomania, morphinomania, etc.—which at the moment constitutes the fixation or arrest of his personality and so forms his present; or the release is from the immediate tangle into which he has been got by several automatisms. What he is released from is something that is felt as a problem or crisis by *himself* at the moment, and about which he has therefore, the feeling of critical urgency which makes prayer operative. The release is generally through some external act which may look either important or trivial. However it comes, the release brings down Heaven for the man who has made his surrender. But his Heaven, we have seen, is only the surface of a fathomless abyss or hell of summed-up self—self which, because it is summed up in him, is more intimately himself than is the self to which he is related by contiguity.

This self consists of, first of all, his other automatisms or habits—his tendency to anger, despair, irritation resentment, for example. These have to be surrendered one by one just like the first, and their surrender is perhaps the more difficult because, unlike that, they are felt by him, not as enemies, but as old friends; or they are not felt at all, certainly not with the critical urgency which leads to surrender. They do, however, acquire that urgency, and are surrendered, as they come up one by one in the daily and hourly problems of life, and come up against the Heaven which the changed man carries about with him. Particularly do they acquire it in the magnetised field generated by sharing, whether between two or more than two, when their true nature is revealed and their rightful names are restored to them.

Their surrenders constitute new conversions which build successively new heavenly surfaces under the earlier ones. In this way the man who continues in the surrendered life relives and emparadises or celestialises all his past, travelling backward from the nearer to the remoter past, sooner or later reaching what was the

beginning of the cosmic Karma for him in his early childhood, then passing beyond that point through the Karma as it developed in his parents, in his remoter ancestors, in the human race, and so on.

#### RELIVING CONTRASTED WITH RETHINKING THE PAST

It is in this way that, to take one example, the would-be proconsul, on surrendering his life to God, first wins freedom from a humiliating and distabbling sex impurity which obsesses him at the moment, is next enabled to deal with his narcissism, then gains successively release from his pride of family and pride of race, and his arrogance and lovelessness towards the subject population which he has to rule, until one day, through sharing with someone whom he is trying to change, he traces the formation of his character to the fear inspired in him by a governess who used to beat him as a boy with a ruler.

The process involved would seem to be the opposite to that aimed at by some psychologists who try by *their* thought to reach the starting point of the patient's fate

and then make him follow its course by *his* thought in the order in which he lived it. The difference would seem to be due to the fact that, while the psychologists seek for a reform by thought, change through surrender is by living. Now, it may not be a very formidable thing to retrace one's past in thought from childhood to manhood for whatever good that may do one. But if a man is plunged straight back into his childhood to relive his childhood (e.g. if the would-be proconsul is brought once more under the rule and ruler of his governess), then, in spite of his maturity and of his newly acquired heavenly reinforcement, he will succumb to the fear and impotence of childhood, and his reliving of his past in the same order in which it was originally lived will be simply a repetition of his Karma and not an unravelling of it. It should also be noted that, whereas the psychologist imagines he has reached a cause of Karma and expects to bring release to the patient by enabling him to shift responsibility for his fate on to this cause, the truth which is demonstrated in the changing of lives is that there is no cause for Karma or self or sin except itself, that what we discover are not causes but merely beginnings, in the individual and beyond him, and that the cure for them lies in accepting, and not in shifting, responsibility, since shifting is shirking, and shirking is fearing, and fearing is a perpetuation of Karma, whose other name is, indeed, fear.

#### RESTITUTION AS REDEMPTION

This emparadising of the past is a forgiving of it. Forgiving is the redemption, and not the forgetting, of the past. Indeed, the common invitation to "forgive and forget" is a contradiction in terms: for whatever is forgotten is never forgiven, and whatever is forgiven is never forgotten. So far is the forgiven past from being forgotten, that it is brought into eternal memory through being raised up into eternal life. This life it exercises in acting as an instrument for curing, instead of as the disease which it formerly was. It does so in the man who shared with the would-be proconsul, whether he shared without knowing why he was guided to that particular piece of sharing, as is often the case, or whether his guidance was through the insight given him by his own sinful—i.e. fearful—past. It will do so in the would-be proconsul who will cure many people, and it will act in the same capacity in them when they cure many others. This redemption is a true raising of the dead and is the most astounding of all miracles.

The redemption of the past involves the quickening of dead relationships, the straightening of warped ones and, not least of all, the taking up of dropped stitches, since every such dropping is a running away or giving up and for this there is no room in the surrendered life. Since relationships with others are concerned, the changing in depth here, as in the curative use of the redeemed past already mentioned, is also a changing of the area, and differs from ordinary changing by contiguity only in the fact that the sharing it calls for is about the past. With the sharing often go apologising and material restitution (of money, of things taken,

etc.). From these the self often shrinks, since they are blows to pride or purse, but the shrinking is so obviously from one's own self, that one knows how to interpret it at once, and one is not misled by it.

There is, however, a shrinking which comes from the larger self and which is more deceptive. This occurs when the confessions or acts called for are painful to the other persons also, because they rob them of cherished illusions about us or themselves or human nature, when (so it seems) they leave them nothing to trust in, when they appear to be nothing but a purposeless opening of old sores or an exhumation of things that it would harm no one to allow to remain buried as "the honoured dead." Most particularly are we tempted to scepticism about these attempts to redeem the past when we see them bring convulsions and explosions where before there was peace, or when they lead to our being forsaken by our closest friends. At such times it seems the most obvious common sense to let sleeping dogs lie: we imagine we can build up a new and improved relationship and simply add it to the old; we will make fresh flowers grow on the grave of the past and thus cover it up, we tell ourselves.

Now, it is true that we should not proceed to any confessions or restitutions by force or by rule, but only under guidance. Nevertheless, we must not allow thoughts like the above to prevent us from seeing, or to cause us to shrink from, guidance for troublesome or unpleasant confessions and restitutions. We should remember that without them we may be trying to continue to live a lie and helping others to do the same, or at best foolishly hoping to be able to build the truth on a lie and to include in Paradise a fool's paradise. The convulsions and explosions, we can remind ourselves, are necessary "ex-furiations," while the friendship of our closest friends must have had something false in it so that it is necessary for us to try and win them now as true friends.

#### RESTITUTION AS RELEASE FROM OLD FEARS

So far we have shown restitution as being the changing of lives and of relationships, or as a means to that. Often, however, it presents itself as a kind of retribution or retaliation which seems an end in itself. When God demands it He seems worse than a highwayman, who is at least romantic; he strikes us then as a mean, vindictive being. It is then that many rebel, and many who do not rebel at least argue very long before they obey.

Take the case of the man who had given up his life, to bringing people to God. At the moment when he had reason to believe that he could be used to change the lives of men who might influence a whole continent he had guidance to restore money to a railway Company for having dishonestly (according to the standard of absolute honesty) abused a privilege to which, however, he could show a perfect right on merely technical grounds. The matter had been forgotten and it was suddenly brought up to him then. It seemed trivial, for the sum involved was of little

importance to the Company. However, he was willing enough to restore the money. But in addition his guidance was that he should confess not only to the railway Company, but also to a large public and in the presence of the very people whom he hoped to bring to God. "Can this be guidance?" he naturally asked himself. "What does the confession matter to the Company, provided it gets the money? And how can it help the people who will lose all respect for me? Can it really be an end in itself?"

Or consider the case of the man for whom restitution and confession meant, as far as he could see, ruin through loss of prestige, so that he would thenceforth be unable to support his family and to do the large amount of good which he told himself he had been doing till then. "The good the few people will get through my restitution," he reasoned, "is nothing in comparison with the good I can go on doing if I keep my position. And, anyhow, why the confession? Who will benefit by that?"

Or who could benefit by the humiliating atonement of the Oxford don who was guided to apologise to his former schoolmaster for a lie he had told at the age of eleven?

Such restitution seems highly unreasonable. But, since there is often guidance for it, it cannot be so. For there are always good psychological reasons for guidance, even though they may not appear at the time. It is important for us to see this principle in general, for otherwise we shall certainly not see the reasons at the time, since this particular kind of guidance, when it arises, is the most repellent of all guidance and hence we are apt to acquire a blindness to its reasons which is invincible unless we are on our guard and prepared against such blindness beforehand.

The statement of the psychological grounds for it is, according to the psychology which has been given here, a mere tautology; for to say that without such restitution, when there is occasion for it, there is no surrender, is simply to say that without surrender there is no surrender. Surrender, we have seen, is always of fear. But what else is such restitution except the surrender of an old fear grown stronger with the years? The fear which had originally promoted the wrong conduct in all those three cases—the fear that honesty is not the best policy, we will call it—had not come to an end just because the conduct had. It was still there and was at that moment, in those particularly awkward circumstances, a hundred times stronger than it had been at the beginning. The restitution *plus* the confession, but not *without* the confession, even if it had done no one else any good, was a letting go of the fear. If, on the other hand, the agents concerned had shrunk from this restitution-confession, that very shrinking on such a critical occasion would have constituted a new and a stronger attachment and act of allegiance to the old fear, which would have grown stronger both because of that act and because, as time went on, more and more would have been involved in the surrendering of it. If we refrain from unravelling, then, by that very refraining, we continue weaving the web of Karma.

## RESTITUTION AS A RETURN TO THE RIGHT PATH

The practical reasons for confession-restitution like the above are no less obvious. The agents concerned had reached their present position travelling by the road of fear or sin. That in itself might be an indication that perhaps they ought not to be there and that God's plan might need them somewhere else. Whether this was so or not could be tested only by consenting to the act dictated by absolute honesty or fearlessness. If a position so reached is lost through such an act, that can be taken as a sign that the position is not consistent with absolute honesty or fearlessness and that it is, therefore, well lost.

## RESTITUTION APPROVED BY MIRACLE

The guidedness of restitution, as of any other act, is attested by its miraculous result. In all the three cases cited above a great fear was removed, and pure energy proportionate to that fear was released, which, in turn, removed similar fears—for few fears are commoner or greater than those connected with such restitution and released equal energy in others. In other words, lives were changed and the act which was seen, and in a sense truly seen, to be an end in itself and was accepted as such, became also a means to many great results.

## SHARING AND RESTITUTION AS THE OPENING OF THE GRAVES

The sharing and restitution, through which the changing of the deep and of the area goes on, constitute an opening up of graves—of whited sepulchres which give up their dead sins.

There they stand: he who up to now has been so well protected by his reputation of the strong, silent man; he whom we have hitherto taken for the self-sufficient, self-reliant man who did not need to go puling before a God; the man whose fear has been disguised as terror, enforcing iron discipline in the home, factory or country; the former terrible captain of hosts, Mars incarnate; the man who had left crude action for the refuge of culture; the man who has been sheltering behind causes, ideals and good works; he who has been posing as the modest, self-effacing man or as the great big hearty; the comedian who used to stalk upon the stage as the dignified scholar, professor, magistrate, or bland ecclesiastic officially warranted pure from sin; the weakling who has been using his atheism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism or Mohammedanism as a shield against the strong onslaughts of absolute love; the coward and sentimentalist who has been protecting his disease from the doctoring truth, beneath the mummified doctrine, of Christianity; the virtuous reformer who, neglecting the reformation of himself, has been warring against drink, gambling, or sex; the intellectual who has been running away from himself by protesting against everything and everyone; the ordinary man in the street who was wont to take refuge in his ordinariness, which at the same time he used as the measure of perfection; the member of the proletariat who has hitherto been a mass



of smugness, self-satisfaction and self-pity, relying on the thought that by definition he could do no wrong, since he was merely the subject of violated rights; last but not least, the star actor in the human puppet show, the disinterested statesman and patriot, the godlike leader of men.

They have been opened up, and from each has come forth a scaly dragon—their character, their role, their career, their Karma—a scaly dragon which, on issuing into the open, has shrunk into a wriggling little worm, the original phobia of their childhood. One and all they hold up these worms to the sun, presenting them to the God of light, of healing, laughter and song. They sing and they shout, they laugh and are glad and are terrible. They praise the Lord. They spread the cleansing fire of laughter. They infect the world with health.

#### SHARING AND RESTITUTION AS THE REVELATION

The opening of the graves begins the formation of the true psychology of the self and the restoration to words of their true meaning, without which we are helpless in the war against the larger self. For he has so corrupted the text of God's Scripture by quoting it, that it has now become his strongest weapon both of defence and offence. Hence it is no use telling men that the cure for the world's ills lies in love, for love has come to denote sentimentality and the propping tip of our neighbours' houses of disease or fear. It is worse than useless to ask them to pray, for prayer, instead of denoting the surrender of all fear, has come to stand for the coward's supplication to be maintained and abetted in his fear. It is fatal to bid them take up their Cross and carry it, for this, instead of being an invitation to demand and expect limitless triumph over all inertia or Karma, has come to suggest the very opposite, namely, the duty of remaining nailed to that Karma.

The opening of the graves, being the emendation of the text of God's Scripture, is a restoration of God's revelation. It brings about what are colloquially or journalistically called "revelations," "These "revelations" are also *the* Revelation. With the opening of the graves the hour of the Apocalypse has struck.

## Chapter 4

### CHANGING SOCIETY

Society is changed through the change of individuals  
and the surrender of all fanaticisms.

#### I

#### THE SIN OF DEPERSONALISATION

##### BLAMING THE SYSTEM

Without this opening up of the whited sepulchres, without this change and resurrection of individual lives, nothing can be done to amend the state of the world. Without it any attempts at curing simply aggravate, as, indeed, they are meant to aggravate, the disease. But so far advanced is this disease or mania of the world in our day, that nothing is so difficult, to make people understand as this simple truth. For the larger self, it seems, has in our day established a more imputed conquest over the world than ever before. This it has done chiefly through the trick of depersonalisation.

For years and years we have been accustomed to Interpret history in terms of movements, systems, laws—of anything, in short, but people or ourselves. So long have we done this that now, when anyone comes along and sensibly reminds us that the world is after all made up of people, that if we would change it, we must attend to people, that is, to ourselves, and that in consequence we must first and foremost obey the injunction of the Delphic oracle and of Socrates “Know thyself,” we turn upon him furiously and accuse him of folly or of maliciously trying to get away from the problem.

We behave in the typical way of the neurotic. We are, in fact, neurotics, and hence we turn against the doctor and with methodical madness look for the cause of the disease where we unconsciously know we shall not find it. Just as the neurotic blames his “ill-luck” or “unlucky stars,” so we blame the “system” and say that if only that were all right everything would be all right. With the unabashed silliness an unwearied iteration of lunacy we are using a formula which, however varied and complicated the forms it assumes, merely amounts to saying, “If the world were all right everything in it would be all right.”

The “we” in question are the men of ideas and ideals, the teachers and preachers and writers—in short, the scribes and pharisees, the brain of the larger self. For the silliness of the larger self, like that of the particular self, is propagated by means of the brain.

## PREOCCUPATION WITH SYMPTOMS

When “the system” (“the economic system, “the capitalist system”) does not, like the neurotic’s “ill-luck,” mean simply “nowhere and nothing in particular” or “anywhere and anything but myself,” it denotes a symptom. To try and locate the cause of the disease in that or in any other symptoms, like war, alcoholism, prostitution, etc., and to endeavour to eradicate these by legislation or some other method of compulsion, while leaving the centre and source—that is to say, the self—untouched, is simply doing on a national or world scale what the individual neurotic does on a smaller scale with his private disease. It is to multiply the symptoms—to propagate class war and bring about civil strife, to make alcoholism, etc., more widespread and the cause of illegality and so to make worse our bondage to the disease.

Exactly the same end is attained, we have already shown, by proposing as a cure that we should seek directly the symptoms of health—peace, sobriety, etc,—without troubling about health itself, namely about God. To do this is to put one’s trust in all idealism or pharisaism or fanaticism. It is to arrest the search for the Kingdom of God by turning the Kingdom into a programme or law.

All the above are ways of escaping from the real problem, namely the self. This we have already said and this we must say over and over again, braving their fury, to all our fellow scribes and pharisees when they ask what we propose to do for society and when, projecting their own disease, they accuse us of running away from the problem and desire us to tell them whether we are communists or fascists or pacifists and what is our programme or law.

## ACCUSING OURSELVES

There is only one cure for society and the world. It is to acknowledge that the trouble lies with individuals. Moreover, it is for each to acknowledge that it lies with *him*, for to blame other individuals is just as sure and as fatal a way of running away from the problem and the solution as to blame the system or ill-luck. Each must say: “In me is the Karma of my family, my people, the human race, the cosmos. With the change in me begins the unravelling of the Karma. It must begin *now*.”

Nevertheless, we can agree that diseased individuals mean diseased institutions and a diseased society, and that changed individuals must mean a change in institutions and society. About this change we can say something. But since, as we have seen, God’s plan, whether for the individual or a collectivity, can only be described step by step as it is being carried out, all we can do in the way of describing the change of institutions and society, is to point out what needs to be surrendered and to indicate such changes as are already taking place through surrender.

The institutions on which all the others depend are childhood and its education and sex\* along with marriage which may result from sex, On these therefore we shall remark first.

\* Childhood and sex may be regarded as natural institutions, while education and marriage may be considered as human or divine institutions corresponding to them.

## II

### CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

#### UNCHANGED EDUCATION = THE INCULCATION OF FEAR

Wordsworth has taught us the truth that the child is father to the man. A child was father to the strong, silent man, to the terrible captain of hosts, to the great big hearty, to the bland ecclesiastic, to the virtuous reformer, to the godlike leader of men—in short, to each of the whited sepulchres that have been opened up. For it is into the child that the wriggling little worm is introduced which will grow up into the scaly dragon of his character; and since it is true that everything that befalls us, even accidents or our “luck,” good or bad, is unconsciously selected, out of all that might have befallen us, by our character through the attractive force of affinity, the child is the author of the whole of the man’s biography. In other words, on each of us his Karma is fixed in his childhood, in so far as he has not already brought it with him through heredity. This fixing is done by means of education, both that which consists of the unaimed impact on him of his environment and entourage and that which consists of training or intentionally directed communication.\* Education is nothing else but the communication of the larger self to the articular self by contiguity and the piling up of it by summation. It is, therefore, an intentional and unintentional contamination by disease or fear. Even the most conscientious of education is this. Indeed, in essence such an education is this especially. For it is the scrupulous inculcation of manias or fanaticisms with their idols or idealisms; it is pharisaism’s imparting of the Law.

#### CHANGED EDUCATION = SHARING

Education is other than this only when it is the development of personality unlimited by any preconceptions. Such creative education is possible only when the child is brought under the direction of absolute love or the Maker of personality, instead of under that of idols, and this happens when the child is brought up by people (its parents or educators) who have placed their own lives under the direction of absolute love. Then the education of the child is effected by that sharing which is also the reeducation of its educators and which brings him into the magnetised atmosphere in which personality is developed. In that atmosphere he gets his God-consciousness from God directly, for children, as we have already indicated, can get their guidance directly from God just as well as grownups and even more strikingly than they; and he also gets it from the God-consciousness of his educators, while from their sharing of their sins he comes into the knowledge, but not, as he would otherwise do, under the possession, of the larger self. Under this regime he can contribute to the common stock of power as well as draw from it, and he can be the

\* See *The Ethics of Power*, pp. 180-3

channel through which collective guidance comes as well as anyone else. Nor, under it, is he ever in danger of putting his parents or educators in the place of God, that is, of idolising them, for from the beginning he knows them as open sinners who refer him to God, the Purifier, and not as whited sepulchres which draw his worship to themselves.

This education makes it possible for the child to be an end, instead of a new starting point, of Karma.\*

Any other education is nothing but a contamination, and soon whatever infection he catches becomes associated with sex, for the reason that sex develops early with children, or, to speak more correctly, because it is always with them.

\* No education can *compel* him to be either.

### III

## SEX AND MARRIAGE

### THE MYSTERY OF SEX

To the man who holds the “rationalist” or pharisaic view of human nature—that is to say, who believes that humanity can guide itself by a number of prescriptions laid down by its “reason”—nothing can be more exasperating than the fuss caused by, and made about, sex. “Here,” he may say, “is something whose role is very limited with animals and which with man is capable of giving a certain amount of pleasure and of serving as a bond of union. It can be used for the propagation of the race but can also be made of less consequence than eating or drinking. It is a function which, in itself and as compared with man’s other functions, is unimportant. Yet it seems always to have been the source or cesspool of every imaginable fear and neurosis; the apple of every conceivable discord, not excluding a Trojan war; the typical object of mania or fascination, capable, if not guarded against, of swallowing up the whole of mankind into itself and of reducing every human activity to sex activity;\* fenced by innumerable taboos and enveloped by the queerest mysticisms; the goal of every kind of aspiration and the heart of every kind of idealisation; the dream of poetry; the bourn of the longing for ecstasy and miracle!”

### SEX THE MEETING POINT OF STREAMS OF SELF

Such, however, are the facts, and the rationalist must accept them. They find their full explanation in the philosophy given here and at the same time provide that philosophy with one of its best verifications. Sex is, indeed, unimportant, something that cannot be regarded as substantial or causative. The fact that it is so regarded in our times and that we are referred to it as the cause or cure of our disease is simply another indication of the neuroticism of our age which, we have shown, is trying to discover every conceivable way of not curing itself. But though it is unimportant, sex is not insignificant. On the contrary, it is one of the most significant things about us. It is so significant because it is a symptom of many things, and it is a symptom of many things because it can be the meeting point of streams of self in a more eminent degree than anything else. It is preeminently the meeting point between body and mind and therefore between the infra-human and the human self or Karma. It has a preeminent power of summing up the past in every one of our senses, so that every atom, so to speak, of the sex experience seems to be packed with the most ancient and mysterious memories, while at the same time sex provides the means for the closest union or conflict between two selves. Hence in each individual it is preeminently the meeting point between his relation to the larger self by contiguity and his relation to it by summation, and so it is preeminently the point at which the

\* Some, indeed, think that every activity *is* sex activity.

abyss and the area coincide. It is because this is so and because self is fear, disease, impurity, that sex can be the cesspool and distributing centre, if not the source, of every kind of impurity (i.e. fear or disease), so that impurity and purity, like morality and immorality, come to be in common speech specially associated with it and sometimes even limited to it, and that in psychology it is the favourite, if not the sole, illustration given of ambivalence.

### SEX IMPURITY

The ramifications of sex impurity and the far-reaching effects of sex traumata constitute a subject which psychology has as yet scarcely touched in spite of all the work that has been done. Indeed, the subject is a closed book to the mere psychologist. It opens itself gradually only to the surrendered man as he grows in the exercise of pure activity in regions which are, or seem to be, very remote from sex, and as his self-consciousness and God-consciousness increase through sharing with many people both on sex and other matters. Then he learns that sex impurity goes far beyond the sex experience and can coexist not only with continence but also with total abstinence, that it can obsess most those who have the least desire or need for the physical experience and that it can work in all sorts of sentimentalities and in peculiarities of the imagination, will and intellect which most people never dream of associating with sex. He understands why it is the strongest obstacle in the way of the adoption of the surrendered life and the commonest occasion of falls from that life, and why it has the strangest capacity of dulling our sensitiveness to particular cases of guidance, and our perception of general truths, which seem to have no connection with sex.

The proof that sex impurity is simply a symptom of general impurity (that is to say, of the tendency of the self to preserve itself against God and to substitute itself for God) is to be found chiefly in the following facts.

Sex, as the instrument of fertility, is for some species (e.g. insects) a weapon, and the sole weapon, in the struggle for existence.

With man it has the capacity more than anything else of becoming a religion.

The dividing line between sex impurity and other impurity is always hard to draw.

The purity that exasperates the unsundered man most is sex purity, even when, as far as one can see, he himself is not practising sex impurity: his objection to sex purity is simply a symptom of his objection to purity as such.

On the other hand, when a man falls from the surrendered life, he often takes to sex impurity simply as a kind of symbol of his secession from purity as such. He also thinks then that the only motive there can be for any sex purity or sex restraint for him now is fear.

He is right, for sex purity which is not a result or symptom of purity as such, comes from the fear of sex invading and wrecking the whole of life. Such "purity" is puritanism, and, being fear, it is, of course, impurity.

## SEX AS THE MARRIAGE OF PURITIES

The potentialities of sex as a symbol of purity are revealed in the partnership between a man and a woman which is undertaken for life and is that total sharing of lives which we have described as the multiplication of one triple consciousness—God-consciousness, self-consciousness, and other-consciousness—by another triple consciousness. In such a partnership sex is the celebration and the multiplication symbol of purity, passion and personality. When an ordinary marriage, even a happy love marriage, turns into such a partnership through the two partners together surrendering their lives to God, the change that comes upon the physical relationship, just because it is so unexpected and unsought for, can be the most striking sign that here is a change in very truth. It is the miracle, unasked and unlooked for, which sums up all the other miracles which have been demanded and expected. It is the tangible expression of all our dreams come true, the material proof that God can be not only the spirit of our spirit, the soul of our soul, but also—a thing which can fill us with the greatest wonder of all just because generally the body serves to imprison us in inertia—the body of our body.

The family which is based on such a partnership, and in which children get their education by being knit together along with their parents into that magnetic field of multiplied power generated by sharing which we have described, is the group which can join the sexes and the different ages in deeper and more constant intimacy than any other. Hence it can, better than any other group, constitute the “natural” cell, so to speak, of the supernatural body of health which is to replace the giant’s body of disease, the “natural” unit in the supernatural army which is to wage war against the Enemy and establish a world conquest over the kingdom of fear.



## IV

### THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM

#### THE ECONOMIC NEXUS—A SYMPTOM

What sex is to the family the economic nexus is to the family of families which is called the nation. Just as sex is unsubstantial and unimportant, and yet all-significant as a symptom of impurity or fear and of purity or health; just as its significance makes it seem to be the cause of causes, the rock upon which everything may be either built or wrecked; and just as it threatens to reduce or enslave every activity to itself and misleads some into thinking that every activity is and always has been sexual, so the economic nexus, when it becomes the struggle for the means of subsistence, is the preeminent expression of the self's or fear's universal and Protean struggle for existence, and threatens to reduce or enslave to itself the whole of life, which then becomes simply a striving for a livelihood. Hence some—those who believe in the “economic interpretation of history”—have been deceived into looking upon it as the supreme or the sole cause, or as the substance and reality of which all other relationships are simply the attributes and appearances.

The economic problem, which in our own day seems more insoluble than ever, which seems, indeed, a web in which we have been caught like flies and in which, without any spider to kill us, we shall die through the inability to extricate ourselves and from mere inanition—this terrible problem can be summed up in two points: the relationship between production and consumption and the departmentalisation-depersonalisation of life.

#### PRODUCTIVENESS (CREATIVITY) AND CONSUMPTIVENESS (INERTIA)

The urge to produce is the same as the creative urge. To some extent it is present in everyone. But in some people it is naturally stronger than in others, at least in a particular direction or department. The preeminently productive people are the natural artists and craftsmen, teachers, thinkers, healers, organisers, administrators, leaders. The ruling passion of these men is to produce art, or thought, or health, or enlightenment, or order and efficiency. In the sphere in which they are productive they are also naturally givers, for even the solitary artist, who is supposed to create merely to satisfy himself, becomes starved in his productivity if he really has no one to whom to give his products or, at any rate, if he has not even the hope that in the future there will be people to enjoy them. But in the kingdom of inertia even these natural producers and givers, especially outside the sphere of their productivity, and most of us in most departments of life, but especially through our body, are most of the time merely passive consumers, enjoyers, takers and possessors, ruled by cravings for certain products and needing to be shepherded, healed, organised, ruled. The effect of fear is to turn activity and productiveness into mere passivity

and consumptiveness, while extreme fear begets extreme greed or mania, which reduces the whole of life to a monotonous indulgence in drink or drugs or sex or something else. Now, in the kingdom of fear, which is also the kingdom of mania, everything is so arranged that consumptiveness has preponderance and preference over productiveness and that productiveness is even made simply a means to consumptiveness. For it is taken for granted that we produce art or goods or whatever we produce, and that we act as organisers, administrators, teachers, etc., for the sake of the rewards—i.e. the things to be enjoyed or consumed or the rights to them. These rewards, when they are not desired in themselves, are insisted on at least as symbols of appreciation, while productiveness pursued for its own sake is looked upon as oddness or madness, or a virtue closely allied to madness. So true is it that in a madhouse only sanity appears insane.

From this preponderance and preference of consumptiveness over productiveness results the excess of demand over supply and the struggle for the means of subsistence, which is really the struggle for the objects of the manias and which constitutes the economic struggle and the economic problem. The masters in this struggle are those who become the possessors of the greatest number of these objects or of the right to the greatest number of these objects, or of the power to keep them from others.

So at any rate the problem might have been stated up to our own times. Now, however, it seems that we are suffering from an excess of supply over demand, at least in some departments. The problem must, therefore, be said to consist in the fact that the number of those who are deprived of the objects of the manias is in excess of the number of those who own them or the rights to them and whose demand alone counts as demand—a state of affairs which is the result of the pleonectic or accumulative characteristic that we have seen belongs to all mania or greed.

#### LIFECHANGING = RELEASING PRODUCTIVITY

The solution for the economic problem is to be found in the change of the lives of individuals because such a change means, as we have seen, the replacement of all consumptiveness or mania (i.e. the need to take) by productiveness or passion (i.e. the urge to act and give). Fully changed men are free even from those primeval manias which constitute the needs, of the body—e.g. the need for food. They are free, that is to say, from anything compulsive in connection with these; there is no must about them. If such men can eat they do so, but if they cannot, they go without eating, and if they must die through starvation they face death in a surrendered spirit, ready to pass on to a mode of life in which eating is not necessary. There can, therefore, be no question of the exercise of any economic power over them, or of any economic struggle between them for the means of subsistence. On the other hand, the capacity to enjoy even with the senses increases with the liberation of personality, so that there can be no question of there being no one for whom to produce if everyone is changed. It is merely the compulsive need that goes, and it is

that need or greed, and not the capacity for enjoyment, which is the source of the economic trouble. Instead of that greed there is a hitherto suppressed urge towards productivity in some special department, and a general sense of responsibility for the whole community, which is a stimulus towards finding out God's plan for that community and the place of one's own particular work in that plan as well as the best way of doing it and of developing all its possibilities in relation to the whole, whether one is an employer or employee, in a subordinate or in a commanding position.

#### PERSONALISING ECONOMICS

Above all, the responsibility of each, whether employer or employee, is for the development of personality in one's fellows, whether these are one's employers or employees, business partners or business rivals, so that they may become fellow soldiers in the army which is to fight the Enemy.

Hence the change in individuals' lives which brings about this sense of responsibility does away with that other sin which constitutes the economic problem as well as many other problems of communal living—namely, the division of life into separate departments in each of which we are related to each other, not as brothers responsible before God for each other's total welfare, but only in ways belonging to that department. In the economic sphere this means that our relations to each other are limited to those of employer and employee, foreman and workman, competitor and competitor, buyer and seller. If anything arises in those relations which is contrary to absolute honesty or unselfishness or love, we shrug our shoulders, we say that "business is business," we blame the system or the laws of economics and wait for laws of parliament or a revolutionary cataclysm to change the system on the Greek Kalends. On one thing we are all agreed, that it would be not only futile but fatal for any one individual to try and initiate a change by himself and to call a halt to the progress of Karma at the point where he himself now stands. The result of our agreement is that no one ever makes a start and, indeed, we are all leagued never to make a start; no one becomes a recruit in the army which will vanquish Karma or the larger self but, on the contrary, we are all sworn to serve under the banner of that larger self, and this departmentalising and depersonalising of life, whereby we explain everything by "the system" and cast off all responsibility on to "the system," is the surest way devised by the Enemy of preserving himself indefinitely.

In contrast to this, the changed man cares for no laws of the system and waits for no laws of parliament due to be passed on the Greek Kalends, but seeks guidance according to the laws of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love for a total situation which includes not only economic relationships but all sorts of human stresses and strains (maybe, for example, his competitor's conflict with his wife or his employee's anxiety about his child, or the need of either for absolute love

or honesty or purity—the need for God). The economic man cannot be severed from the missionary, and the missionary expects guidance for the missionary act or miracle, and not merely for business success, or for security and promotion as an employee. Such success or security and promotion, when sound, are, he knows, the fruits or symptoms of finding God and of guided action. Since he does not waste his time on symptoms, he does not seek these directly but expects them in so far as they fit into God's plan for himself, his family, the whole community and the whole world, which is all he cares about.

## POLITICAL SCIENCE

## UNCHANGED POLITICS = THE ART OF MANIPULATING FEARS

The neurotic attempt to change or restrict only the symptom, namely economic evils, while leaving the cause of the disease untouched, results (as has been made very painfully plain by contemporary events) in the transference of power from the master of the purse, that is, the man who manipulates the buyable objects of the manias (food, comfort, luxuries, services, honours, etc.), to the master of the police, that is, the man who, through commanding power, manipulates the fears connected with the manias (fear of being deprived of wealth, of comfort, of food, of life). The master of the police is ultimately the politician, who is also the man who passes the laws which the police enforce. Politics in the kingdom of fear is the art of tampering with the symptoms (both economic and other symptoms) of the self while leaving the self alone as being inviolable and unchangeable. It is, therefore, the larger self's art of self-preservation. Human nature, we say, is human nature—selfish, greedy, bad; it cannot be changed, but it can be made tolerable by a system—a system of checks and controls embodied in laws. We therefore set about the business of legislation—that is to say, we engage in politics. We balance the fear or pressure of one group against the fear or pressure of another group within the community, and the result is a system of laws which maintains the equilibrium between many fears and pressures, including the mutual fears and pressures subsisting between the politicians or rulers and the ruled.

The secret of diseased government, as is revealed by the admission of changed rulers and subjects, lies in the relationship between the “natural” leader or ruler and the “natural” follower or subject, both of whom are corrupted by fear. Fear turns the former's power of decision, organisation and provision into a lust for intriguing and domination, while it provides him with millions of slaves to dominate, the natural subjects or followers, whom it causes to shrink from decision, leadership, responsibility, daring, initiative.

The changing of individuals, which is a removing of fear, does away with the possibility both of domination and of slavery and, since it leaves nothing as it is by nature, it does away also with the distinction between the “natural” leader and the “natural” subject. In a group of changed individuals each takes responsibility for the whole and each is leader and led in turn, not naturally, but through supernatural guidance. Politics or the art of manipulating fears and pressures is replaced in such a group by collective guidance. The changed society towards which smaller changed groups point is an absolute democracy which is also an absolute aristocracy of kings subject to the absolute dictatorship of the Holy Spirit, who guides the society along the lines of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love.

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Crime is both a symptom of social disease and the punishment which a diseased society brings upon itself, criminals being the cancer cells of the body politic; while the punishment inflicted by society on criminals—a cutting off or covering up of the cancer cells—is the means whereby the disease perpetuates itself. To do away with crime and to cure criminals we must first change deeply the ordinary law-abiding members of society or at least a sufficient number of them. For criminals, along with neurotics and the insane, are people in whom the phobias and manias which are present in all of us are more deeply seated than in the rest. For the exorcism of these devils, as well as for the subsequent up-building of personality in the beings whom they possess, there is needed the electric, magnetised, purified, sensitised atmosphere emanating from a whole changed society. The “imprisonment” to which life-changing points is that by means of a *cordon sanitaire*\* of prayer, purity, power and patience formed by changed individuals possessed of special psychological knowledge and devoting their lives to sharing with these patients, which means in the first place taking their sins upon themselves. Such a *cordon sanitaire* can only spring from a changed society and will work within that wider electric atmosphere which will be ready to receive the patients when they are fit to bear the massed impact of its purity upon them.

The healing of criminals, neurotics, and lunatics is the highest test and reward of health or holiness.

## WAR

War, which is the life of the self within one individual, between individual and individual, and within the unchanged nation, is preeminently the punishment which a diseased family of nations brings upon itself.† What impure sex is to the family or to what might be a family, what the economic struggle is to the family of families which is the nation, war proper or international war is to the family of nations, or rather to what might be the family of nations. It is a symptom summing up and giving vent to multitudinous diseases, fears or manias which afflict the individual, families, and nations. It is a symptom which most markedly in our own age is swallowing up or enslaving every activity of life. The day is fast approaching†† when a nation’s whole existence will be concentrated in the effort to produce more aeroplanes, shells, guns, bombs, boats, children for cannon-fodder, and talk and writing for war propaganda, than any other nation or than its particular rival. This state of affairs, if it has not been produced, has certainly not been prevented, by those of us who, while declaring the attempt to change human nature useless and impracticable, have thought to change or abolish its symptom, war, simply by declaiming against

\* stepstudy’s note: “cordon sanitaire” means something like “quarantine line.”

† Cf. *The Ethic of Power*, pp. 509-12, 545-7, 237-8.

†† This was written a few months ago. At present we can say that the day has already arrived.

it, by blaming other people instead of ourselves, and by calling upon thousands to league themselves against war, but not against fear, selfishness, greed, ambition, in their daily lives, which are the things that make war, or rather of which war is simply the ultimate expression. In acting thus we act like neurotics or rather like maniacs. We act in the service of mania, being the choice priests of the larger self, whom our propaganda leaves unscathed and even enables to carry on more securely, by drawing men's attention away from his devices.

Our folly is hidden from ourselves and others by an infantilism which consists of first falsely simplifying the problem and of then finding a few scapegoats, who are generally the politicians or rulers. It is these, the charge runs, who want war and who make war. If, however, we approach the rulers themselves, these very cogently throw the blame upon the ruled. "What can *we* do?" they protest. "We are willing to renounce war, provided we have public opinion behind us. But there is no public opinion to support us in doing this." And, indeed, what after all are rulers? Their position, whether they are autocrats or leaders of democracies, depends, as we have seen, upon a very unstable equilibrium of multitudinous fears. The rulers are, in a sense, the expression of these fears. But war itself is nothing else but an expression of the same fears. The rulers make war, or rather they declare war (for that is all they really do), only because their function is to express these fears. Remove the multitudinous fears of the multitude by changing the multitude, and the leaders, being now the expression of fearlessness and non-defensiveness, will be peace-makers instead of war-declarers.

In relation to the problem of war it is important always to bear the following in mind. An admixture of impurity, even if slight, is important in direct proportion to the number of people involved and the complexity of the relations obtaining between them. Given a small and fairly simple society, life can be fairly tolerable with no more than a very ordinary morality. But given a large and elaborately organised society, any impurity will act like grit which gets into the cogs of a vast and delicately adjusted machine and causes a vast breakdown. Through the ease of communications the world is now, even in spite of our efforts to the contrary, becoming one vast, complex society. To save such a society from total ruin through war nothing less is needed than total holiness. If we would ensue peace for such a society, each one of us, holding himself responsible for the vast mechanism, must every hour not only prepare, but wage, war—the war against the larger self.

#### ON THE WAY TO THE CHANGED SOCIETY

We have touched upon the main problems of communal living—education, sex, economics, Politics, crime, war—and have given such answers to them as are suggested by what has already been accomplished. But the pharisee in us is not satisfied. "What is the law," he asks, unabashed by what we have already said against him, "which will bring your changed society about and maintain it in being when it

has come? What will be its institutions, its system? What is your programme? What “ism” do you believe in? Is it socialism, communism, or fascism?”

We must answer once more that to attach ourselves *to* an “ism” is just the way to stop ourselves from bringing the changed society to pass and from seeing it come step by step. For, once we have sold ourselves to an “ism,” we no longer seek guidance for individual situations; in fact, we no longer do any real thinking, but instead go on applying and defending our “ism.” The changed society will not be the expression of any “ism” and therefore will not be brought by any “ism.” It will be like the changed man. The changed man has no “character”—that is to say, no stereotyped pattern of reactions—but is simply a new man every minute. So the changed society will have no system which is the realisation of any “ism,” but will be in a perpetual state of transition; it will be not only a changed, but a constantly changing, society.

This does not mean that to bring about the change of society we abolish all existing institutions and drop all social activities or plans for ameliorating society, starting to build on nothing and in the void. Society becomes changed through the change of individuals and in the same way as they are changed. Just as every individual has many positive desires, and ideas for realising them, which are not abolished when he is changed but merely purged by passion of their fear and of the attachment resulting from that fear, so, as a society becomes changed, its existing institutions and the programmes canvassed for ameliorating them can remain, retaining all that is constructive and dropping only the fanaticism with all the negativity, rigidity and conflict that accompany fanaticism. When men are changed they are not, it is true, converted to a new “ism.” But often they keep their old “isms,” if both these and their espousal of them were sound (the soundness of the former does not necessarily involve that of the latter). They do, however, drop all fanaticism, look for the realisation of their plans only to the changing of lives and not to arguing or fighting, and expect to see their “ism” itself change completely in the process of their changing of lives. Acting in this way, they find themselves in complete agreement in individual measures with men who are carrying through in the same surrendered way a different “ism,” and who, so long as the question was merely about the merits of the “isms,” seemed merely diametrically opposed to them.

The pharisee in us will not, however, be silenced until he has been exorcised by confession. To this confession we must therefore proceed. Since by education and occupation I may call myself a pharisee, this confession will be the confession of my own chief sins, at any rate of those that concern the general public, and will, therefore, according to what has been stated before, be the necessary complement, as well as the fitting conclusion, of this essay which has been my profession of God.



## PHILOSOPHY AND ART

## THE SINS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

To the class of scribes and pharisees belong, I have said, all of us who are teachers and preachers and writers. It is we who form and spread the various “isms,” idealisms, fanaticisms, codes, programmes. It is convenient to refer to all of them, as we have already done, as “the Law.” Our sin is always the same—namely that we try to replace God by the Law. We commit this sin, whether our pharisaism consists, as has been predominantly the case in our age, of atheism, agnosticism, secularism, humanism, libertarianism and even a certain kind of antinomianism,\* or of religious practices and a code of morality supported by the sanctions of religion. We replace God by the Law whenever we lead men to place their hope in anything else than the making and changing of personality by absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love—that is, in anything other than God incarnate.

How we sin as pharisees has already been shown. It is we who, as the users of the Word, so corrupt God’s Scripture that it becomes the larger self’s chief weapon. It is we who by our various “isms” turn men’s attention to symptoms of disease or of health away from the causes of these, the self and God. It is due to us that to mention God, unless “God” means in effect one or other of our “isms,” is to render oneself liable to be treated either as a lunatic or as a criminal. In what follows my confession will consist of trying to see or show the role and cure of pharisaism.

As long as we move in our own world, the world of books, more especially when we read histories of thought and literature, we get the impression that the world was made for, or even by, us the scribes and pharisees, and that it is certainly guided by us. If God does not exist, then (so we think) we act instead of Him. If He does exist, then we practically make Him through interpreting Him. Man, it almost seems, lives by ideas alone. If, however, we move out of our world and honestly face the facts, we get a very different impression. Constructive thinkers, we see, have influenced the mass of mankind very little either in a particular age or through many ages. But each age needs to crystallise its own particular mania or inertia; for by crystallising it it can keep it, and so it seizes upon some idea or ideas of some scribe or pharisee which will serve this purpose. Thus it comes about that the scribe or pharisee used seems to be the maker of that age. In other words, as I have already said, we are the brain of mankind, and our function as the brain of a mad mankind is to spread mad or silly ideas. Our qualification for the task consists in the fact that we can think

\* It took me a long time to discover that the pharisees of our age were to be found, not amongst the religious people, but amongst the “free thinking,” “progressive,” “advanced,” “enlightened,” left wing people, to whom I belong myself. Very few of them have discovered this truth just as very few of the original pharisees realised that they were pharisees in our sense of the word.

consecutively and consistently—in other words, that we can furnish the method for the madness. Nothing can so efficiently exclude sanity as a really able intellect; it can hypnotise both its owner and many others into lasting unhealth. We are, if not the leaders, the parasites, of mankind, as a contemporary poet has said of poets. As parasites we can be of greater and more disastrous consequence than leaders, when we are disease-carriers. We can, however, also demonstrate the most impressive miracle of God, when we become parasites who are health-carriers.

#### THE SOURCE OF ERROR

The mad ideas we propagate constitute error. We are disease-carriers by being purveyors and conveyors of error. Error comes from the will or the emotions—from the corrupt will or emotions; it is the smokescreen, the defence-mechanism, the organon, the logic and philosophy, of sin or fear. The first error, which is the support of all the rest, consists in the denial of the last proposition, and that denial we, as ministers of error, do our utmost to maintain. Error, we declare, does not spring from the will or emotions at all; it is due to a defect of the mind, a defect which is not to be amended by any purification of the will or emotions or by anything else. By making people believe this, which they are only too willing to believe, we help to perpetuate Karma, whose chief implement, error, we proclaim invincible. According, however, to the philosophy given here, the proposition denied is a mere truism. For error must come either from God or the self, since there is no third possible source either for it or for anything else. It cannot come from God, since He is perfect wisdom and truth. It must therefore come from the self, which is fear, which has to do with the will and emotions.

#### PHILOSOPHY AND ERROR

The instrument for exposing error is the same as the instrument for propagating it—namely, Philosophy. The business of Philosophy is not to discover truth, but to expose error. For truth does not need to be discovered, but only to be uncovered. Remove error and truth looks you in the face.

Since, however, error is, as I have said, madness, the changed Philosophy which will go in for exposing, instead of for propagating, error will have psycho-pathology or the science of madness as an essential part of itself.

One thing this Philosophy will not be, that which Philosophy mostly is at present, namely, argument. For argument is directed to the error and this is only a symptom. The cause of the error is the self or fear, and the self delights in argument because it is a means of diverting the attention away from itself to the symptom. Argument is fruitful only when a man is already in love with truth and in touch with it and desires to comprehend it further.

If we find a man wedded to some error, the best service we can do him is, instead of contradicting him, to help him express it as well as it can be expressed.

For expression or projection is the first step towards diagnosis, which, in turn, is the first step towards a cure. After helping him to expression we can go on to share with him our own errors and their correction by the Truth.

To be able to share we must first look into our own thought and its history. The doing of this will be the first act of the repentant pharisee *qua* pharisee, an act of restitution to thought. For the wrong that we do to thought is to divorce it from self-consciousness and thus to make of it a running away from reality into the void, a means whereby the self can hide its face. Redeemed thought, even though it be of the most “abstract” kind (e.g. Logic or Metaphysics), is always autobiographic—i.e. connected in the thinker’s own consciousness with some incident in his life, or some need or characteristic of himself, which stimulated it or which it at one time illuminated, expressed or corrected. Given autobiographically, any thought, whether true or false, provided the biographic connections are truly stated, is always useful, for it is a contribution towards the enrichment of the general self-consciousness.

#### THE CONFESSION OF A PHARISEE

Looking into my own past, then, I find the following. I espoused Philosophy saying that I cared for the truth and nothing but the truth; that I would accept no comfort but would face stern reality—the coldness, the harshness, the bitterness, of truth. I inveighed against those whose philosophy was simple, and, indeed, I did not understand it; I said that truth might be naked but could never be simple. If their philosophy held out hope, I called it dope and said that they did not want to face the truth. If it had any bearing on life, I sneered at them for being preachers and maintained that Philosophy should merely analyse and classify meanings and propositions, I advocated the view that miraculous reality existed only in the realm of the imagination. I proved that only sad art could be beautiful and praised only those novels which showed goodness as lovely and pathetic indeed, also as inefficient and defeated and all success and triumph as gross and brutal. Throughout I expressed myself with such complexity and subtlety that neither I nor anyone else could see the precise nature of my error.

If asked why I did any of those things, I replied that it was because I was out for the truth without any compromise. If anyone tried to refute me, I replied with ingenious and subtle arguments and an impressive array of facts, taking great delight in the debate. If I had been told that I was out to destroy life and was possessed by the devil, then, although my business was to analyse the soul, I should have understood this accusation as little as would a disease microbe.

To bring this understanding to me far more was needed than argument. The understanding came, in fact, with the miracle of the world revolution in me, which was a revolution of my thought only because it was a revolution of the whole of my personality. It was through that miracle that I saw that I had been doing all the above-mentioned things because Philosophy had been for me largely my particular mode

of running away from God and myself, a running away which began with, though it was not caused by, a simple childhood fear like the countless other childhood fears which are the beginnings of countless methods of escape for countless men from God and themselves.

#### THE PRIMAL ERRORS

The primal errors which are the fathers of all other errors are those which concern God and the self and the relation between these. They may be called theological errors or heresies. They are primal because, as we have seen, the whole strategy of the larger self is to prevent adequate God-consciousness and self-consciousness and particularly the union of the two.

#### DENYING GOD

God, I have said, is an undeniable fact. Everyone has intuitions of God—that is to say, of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love. But if a man runs away often enough from the absolutely honest, or pure, or unselfish or loving act—that is, if he runs away from the Cross—these intuitions begin to lose their force for him and he begins to doubt them. Then he says that honesty, purity, unselfishness, love, etc., are only relative, or that in their absolute form they are impossible to man or to him in particular. It is the thinking and saying of this that really constitute the denial of God's existence, however much we may otherwise profess belief in Him. Full certainty returns with the doing of the absolutely honest, pure, unselfish or loving thing. Remove the self—that is to say, the fear—and God is self-evident.

The Cross cures scepticism.

#### DENYING THE SELF

It would seem even more impossible to deny the existence of the self than to deny the existence of God. But if we are afraid to face that which self-consciousness reveals, that is precisely the denial we make. We say that sin, or evil, or imperfection—that is to say, the self—is not real, but only an illusion, and that God alone is real or, which is the same thing, that only what is good exists. By denying the reality of the self we in effect make the self alone real, for it is the self only that we allow to act, while God, Who is a reality for us only if we allow Him to act as the revealer and healer of the self, is represented simply by a smoke-screen which hides the activities of the self. The cure for this error is to face the demands of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love in relation to the details of our daily life—in other words, to face the Cross.

Once more the refutation of heresy is in the Cross.

## DENYING THE SEPARATION BETWEEN THE SELF AND GOD

If we shrink from the labour of definitely deciding between good and evil—that is to say, between God and the self—or if, having chosen the wrong way, we shrink from the restitution which alone will set us once more on the right path, then we seek to escape from the sickness consequent upon facing the reality of God and the self and of their separation. We deny the possibility of this separation. This denial can take many forms. We say that, God being all, we are inevitably and inseparably part of Him; or that He is impersonal and, therefore, neither good nor evil, or above good and evil; or that good and evil are both necessary and complementary to each other and part of one great plan. Whatever the language we use, the important thing is that, instead of seeing God as absolute love, pure will, and decision, as creative agony, with ourselves as the thorns on His brow and the pain in His side, we have a misty, melancholy feeling of a great All, or of the might and vastness of physical nature—a feeling which is sometimes called the religious emotion or mysticism, and which is always accompanied by a vagueness or perplexity of thought in which it is easy to escape from responsibility and decision. The cure for this is to shoulder responsibility and to make the right decision or restitution.

The confutation of this error, too, lies in the choice of the Cross.

## PERVERTING THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS

The Cross crosses out all errors. Hence it was only to be expected that the larger self would spawn most of his errors upon the doctrine of the Cross itself, in order to cover it up and stifle all the life in it. This is what has in fact happened.

In comparison with the paganism of Greece and Rome, Christianity—that is, the doctrine of the Cross—has provoked an incredible number of crazy philosophies, sickening sentimentalities, slimy hypocrisies and astoundingly prolific, subtle and tangled literature and art, so that coming from the ancient into the modern world is like entering from a sacred grove—an “asylum” in the Greek sense—into an asylum in the modern sense, that is, a madhouse. The explanation of this is simple. Christ brought unto the world a light such as there had never been before and, with that, a truth which needed to be stated in a few words only: “God and the Cross are one. Be crucified. Be Christs.” After this there was nothing more to be said. Instead of talking we should have got on with the work, the work involved in the crucifying and changing of human nature by living in accordance with absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. But from this work we have constantly shrunk and have constantly harked back to the ways of the heathen. Nevertheless, in our dishonesty, impurity, selfishness, lovelessness, we have never been like the simple heathen. We have not been simple in them because we have always needed to make a song and philosophy about them. We have wrapped them up with all the heresies of Christianity and with the philosophies, literature and moralities influenced by these. In our own times, instead of the heathen’s simple wooing and whoring, we

have a bit of the mystical romantic sexuality of the last age along with the self-conscious would-be scientific or brutal sexuality of our own; instead of the matter-of-fact ruthlessness of the Greek's and Romans we have the brutality of our times which foams at the mouth, glories in itself and philosophises about itself; instead of the Roman's frank claim to world dominion we have British cant and hypocrisy, instead of ancient patriotism we have modern mystical patriotism with its "sacred" egoism. That is to say, we have had and we have the same things as the heathen, only complicated by *ideas* or "isms," eked out with talk and talk and talk. The reason is that, having a light which he never had, but not having accepted the love which would have enabled us to follow that light, our fear has produced these ideas in order to hide itself from the light. In other words, we are mad. For madness is just the smokescreen put up by fear against light.

The world which, having been shown the Cross, has refused it, goes mad. Our world has been going more and more mad for nearly two thousand years.

#### CONTEMPORARY ERROR

The above primal errors are, of course, not always enunciated explicitly in theological or moral terms as they have been here. They gain, in fact, their greatest success when they are disguised through these terms not being used at all. Such success they have won not least of all in our own day. They owe it partly to the fact that Ethics, which is supposed to be the science of good and evil, does not deal with good and evil at all, but with something else or with nothing at all. The one and indivisible science of health which Ethics should have been has been so parcelled out into watertight compartments—Theology, Metaphysics and Ethics—that each is scarcely better than a science of nonsense and that we spend most of our time in fighting about the exact dividing line between one nonsense and another. What further was wanting to the triumph of error has been supplied by various kinds of monism (each of which helps to deny the reality either of God or of the self or the distinction between God and the self)—a materialistic monism which has affected with particularly disastrous consequences Psychology, an economic monism (the "economic interpretation of history") which has affected our view of the past, present and future and has been an instrument for the sin of depersonalisation with which I have already dealt, and a political monism which makes the State everything and subordinates every activity to the art of manipulating fears. However, to enumerate all the various forms in which these errors have been enunciated would be to give a complete history of thought—an endless task.

#### THE SIN OF ART

In the class of scribes and pharisees we place the artist also. It is true that *qua* artist he does not teach or preach anything, whether true or erroneous. He can, however, do something far more potent than that. He can hypnotise us into the state

which the errors are designed to produce and maintain, and he is helped to do this by the errors themselves, which give his imagination its direction and limit its range of exploration. Art can keep us imprisoned in mere formalism, in meaninglessness and futility, in narcissism, in despair and defeatism, in various subtle forms of sex impurity, in the attitude of mere protest, in pride and scorn, in every species of negative Godfeeling. At its very best, when the artist is not surrendered it can turn us away from loving God to worshipping itself. This it does particularly in our times, when so many who will not hear of God or religion are ready to worship art or the artist, often even religious art.\*

#### THE TASK OF THE CHANGED ARTIST

Such are the sins of us scribes and pharisees—that is to say, thinkers and artists. What, however, is our part in bringing about the changed world? It is that of every man—namely, to confess the self and to profess God. It is our especial task, however, more adequately to confess the larger self as well as our particular selves and to profess God in relation to that larger self.

The surrendered artist will pray and pray and pray, till he becomes a prayer. He will be crucified with his own self, and then he will take on, and repeatedly be crucified with, the self of every man, woman and child he meets, the self of beast, flower and stone, of meadow, grove and stream, He will unite in himself every mode of self-consciousness with every mode of God-consciousness. A hundred and a thousand times purged of self, he will approach to being the simple mirror of all there is—namely, of the world of fear as it is in God's consciousness, the crown of thorns upon His brow, the pain in His side. He will make us sorrow with the sorrow of God for that world, be heavy with His sickness, weep with His tears, sweat with His sweat, bleed with His bleeding, hope with His hope for the world, desire with His desiring and dare with His daring for it, imagine with His imagining its glory, its triumph, its resurrection:—He will make us suffer, hope, desire, dare, imagine the World Revolution.

As the Revolution proceeds on its way, he will be, above all, the artist of laughter. In the world of fear there is very little laughter, and what little there is is mostly the grimacing, cackling, smirking and sneering of fear. Pure laughter depends upon the ability to laugh at oneself. This ability comes with the liberation from self or fear—the fear of losing one's dignity, of not being able to keep up a part or to defend oneself against the other fellow. Laughter is the sign of grace, the seal of the Cross. The Marseillaise of the army of the World Revolution will be laughter. The Shakespeare of the World Revolution will be the poet of the divine comedy.

\* I have done this myself.

#### THE TASK OF THE CHANGED PHILOSOPHER

The surrendered philosopher confesses the errors which the larger self produces and disseminates. He has, however, also a more positive function. If he does not discover the Truth, he helps us to its comprehension. Through his purified intellect he coordinates the various intuitions of God which the purified heart enables us to have, and he shows their unity. He professes the unity of God. He is the Revolution's cosmic map-maker. He maps out the land of the Enemy and the Heaven towards which we are travelling. He restores Philosophy to the place which one of its fathers, Pythagoras, assigned to it. Philosophy becomes with him once more the way of life, the purification of life, the music of life.

#### THE TASK OF CHANGED EVERYMAN

Scribe and pharisee, tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, confessing our sins and professing God, we can all join in one and the same task, the task of speeding the world on in the last stage of its crucifixion.

For nearly two thousand years the world has struggled in that stage. Hence it is an ugly world—distorted with pain, gashed with wounds, bleeding, bespattered with mud. It is nearly two thousand years since in spite of itself it was nailed to the Cross, and during all that time it has shrunk from the last gasp and sigh, shrunk from giving up the ghost—shrunk, that is, from absoluteness of living and loving, daring and doing. Hence for nearly two thousand years it has kept the writhings, and refused the resurrection, of the Cross. The hour of the Resurrection is striking now.

Scribe and pharisee, tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, confessed and delivered of our fears, we shout and we sing, we laugh and are glad, we hymn and profess our one and only Leader, the King of Valour, the Exemplar of men, the Fuehrer, the Duce, the Dictator of the World Resurrection.



## A PERSONAL NOTE

The philosophy given here is the same as that in *The Ethics of Power*. Only, here it is a description of things seen, whereas there it was, in its positive part, a prophecy of things foreseen, a John the Baptist vision of the “realm of the poetic imagination.” After I had written *The Ethics* I felt very sick, because I knew in theory that the miraculous reality which I did not have could be had. It was then that at the invitation of a friend I went to an Oxford Group House Party. There I found in the Oxford Group the army of the World Revolution, and the World Revolution itself in full swing. On the same day the Revolution broke out in me too.

The Oxford Group did not change my philosophy. Rather it confirmed it by living out that which I had merely guessed and written about. But it changed me. The change, as reflected in the philosophy itself, can be indicated as follows. *The Ethics of Power* was a confession of the self (egoism and egotism) with the belief in God as the inevitable concomitant of such confession, for, like the sceptic who came to discuss his scepticism with the Cure’ d’Ars, I found that once we confess our sins we believe in God soon enough. The present work is a profession of God, issuing from the *experience* of God, with the confession of the self as the inevitable concomitant of such profession. The first book gives the negative, the second the positive aspect of the same philosophy. The difference, even when I cover the same ground, is reflected in the terms, which in the present work are, in general, more personal and human. Where before I spoke of Goodness or God I now speak of God or absolute love, wisdom, patience, etc. What I called before the moral *nisus* I now call passion. What I referred to as “the subject” I have here called sometimes “personality” or “the person.” In the present work I have used “power” in the sense of efficiency or service, and “absolute” in the Platonic and Oxford Group sense of pure or perfect. In *The Ethics* I used “power” for “position,” and “absolute” in the Hegelian(?) sense of “all-inclusive.” In these senses, which are philosophical rather than general, my opinion both about power and the absolute remains unchanged, But it must have been the unpurged defeatism in myself which made me abandon two good words as debased coins, and which has, I think, helped defeatist readers of my book to hug the notion to themselves that all power (even efficiency) as well as everything absolute (even in the sense of non-compromising) is to be distrusted. This is a good illustration of the way in which, if we do not allow ourselves to be purified, we act as poisons in all sorts of ways which at the time we do not see because we are not looking at them.

A change of terminology, provided meanings are made clear by the context, needs no apology. On the contrary, it can be claimed as a good thing because it prevents the formation of linguistic petrifacts, which make of Philosophy the rocky desert it largely is. What, however, does demand an apology—at any rate a confession-profession—which I wish to make here, is the blameful way in which I

spoke there of certain movements of which I disapproved, and that too although I had shown at great length that all blaming is egotistic. So true is it that merely seeing that a thing is wrong cannot in itself stop us from doing it. I indulged in blaming or protest for the same reason for which people always indulge in it—because I saw no help or hope. One of the most useful pieces of work the Oxford Group is doing is to show what miracles can take place—wonderful friendships with far-reaching effects between members of conflicting parties, races and nations—when men confess their own sins or the sins of the group with which they are identified, instead of each other's sins or the sins of each other's groups. With these miracles to inspire one with hope, one has no desire to waste one's time in protesting. But, of course, such confession of our own sins, instead of that of the sins of others, is itself the greatest miracle of all, which only comes about through men surrendering their lives to God.

In this book I have been exploring fear, subsuming under it both egotism and egoism as they can be subsumed while keeping such distinction as there is between them. In *The Ethics* I examined pride and gave it such prominence that the tremendous problem of fear was scarcely allowed to raise its head. Where it does peep forth (pp. 122 and 183), I notice that I cover it up and assert myself in a patronising way over Adler and Kuenkel who might have taught me better. It is also symptomatic that there is not a single reference to fear in a fairly copious index. Further self-searching, carried on this time by means of the Quiet Time and helped by sharing with many people, has led me to see that this was due to my own cowardice trying to strut before me as magnificence. My discovery proves what a difference the Quiet Time and sharing can make even when one has practised self-analysis and has attached every importance to it.\*

This book may be considered a philosophy of the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group consists of people united by sharing or by the common work of propagating the experience of God. There is no membership of the Oxford Group and no common articles of faith to subscribe to. There are the common principles which I have summed up at the end of my list of quotations,\* and a common language to denote them. But the principles are not “subscribed to” or debated about. They are worked out in living, and we help each other to the realisation of their meaning, not by exchanging opinions about them, but by sharing concrete experiences and so enriching each other's self-consciousness and God-consciousness. Moreover, these are principles which, so we maintain, are not peculiar to the Oxford Group, but are common to all real religion. As for the language, though common terms (guidance, surrender, sharing, life-changing, checking, the four absolutes, God's plan, are the chief) are helpful and inevitable, we are guided to vary them constantly, thus avoiding

\* I now think that fear and pride are two aspects of one and the same separation—the separation from God which constitutes the self. Which is prior to the other I have not inquired yet.

the formation of sacred stereotypes. The “we” who try to put into operation these common principles belong to every sect or to no sect at all, and we often use the language of our different sects. It is through our living and the sharing of our lives, rather than through our common language or beliefs, that we realise that we all have one God. This being so, there can be no question of treating the philosophy given here as a theology or creed to which every “member” of the Oxford Group subscribes and agreement with which entitles one to belong to the Oxford Group. The philosophy is one individual’s formulation of the experience of God.

Nevertheless, it may be considered also a group result in the following senses. The experience or experiences it formulates are common: the reader whom my account of sharing has helped to realise what the shared life means will easily understand that for anyone living this life there can be little or no experience which is just his own or which he would desire to be just his own. Common also are the intuitions about God and the self: the philosophy merely coordinates them (chiefly with the help of two correlative concepts, that of fear and that of purity), though it is true that in the process of coordination many new ones arose. Most of the common terms which have at various times been used have been incorporated here, although in general the turn of thought and the expression are, perhaps, even markedly individual. The original manuscript and the proofs were checked by a number of people and their corrections and suggestions have been incorporated in the final version. Last, but not least, I have written with the help of the Quiet Time; and although in one sense we may say that in the Quiet Time one is alone with the Alone, in another sense it is the time when we are never alone, never “just ourselves and ourselves only,” but are reinforced partly by the prayers, partly by the consciously recollected deeds, words, and gestures of our fellows. Yet with all this which makes it a group result, I must repeat that this philosophy is an individual *product\**, as every philosophy is bound to be, even when it is a formulation and interpretation of a set of common dogmas. Hence, if the reader finds anything in it to quarrel with, he should understand that his quarrel is perforce with me and not with the Oxford Group. If, having read to the end of the book, he asks, “But what, after all this, is the philosophy of the Oxford Group,” my answer is: “Try the Oxford Group way, share, formulate your own philosophy and compare it with the one offered here, and then you will know.”

I have not given here all that I myself believe or have experienced. Still less have I given all that has ever been believed or experienced by anyone, whether “in” or “outside” the Oxford Group. Whatever I have not given I do not therefore deny. This I say with a special view to theologians, who seem to be quicker even than

\* From the section “True Religion”: Let God change you, guide you in everything along the lines of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, and use you to bring others to Him. When man listens, God speaks. When men obey Him, God acts. When men change, nations change.

\* I am constantly finding it true that the more one seeks guidance instead of individuality the more individuality is bound to ensue.

philosophers to scent out dissent and to seize upon any chance for controversy. Personally I have found that as soon as the spirit of controversy comes in the Holy Spirit departs. Hence, if anyone presents me with a positive statement about God which I have not yet verified by my personal experience, I merely store it up in my memory, hoping that at some future date I shall be able to verify it. If anyone, whether theologian or not, believes he has some truth which I have not got and which will show me more of God and of my own sins, he may take it that I subscribe to it beforehand; if he will share his knowledge with me as a personal realisation by confession-profession so as to change me more, he will make me a better soldier of the army of the World Revolution, and in so doing he will become a “member” of the Oxford Group in the only sense in which it is possible to be a “member” of it.