

FIELDING HAROLD

THE HEARTS
OF MEN

Harold Fielding

The Hearts of Men

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H. Fielding

The Hearts of Men

DEDICATION

To F. W. FOSTER

As my first book, "The Soul of a People," would probably never have been completed or published without your encouragement and assistance, so the latter part of this book would not have been written without your suggestion. This dedication is a slight acknowledgment of my indebtedness to you, but I hope that you will accept it, not as any equivalent for your unvarying kindness, but as a token that I have not forgotten.

RELIGION

"The difficulty of framing a correct definition of religion is very great. Such a definition should apply to nothing but religion, and should differentiate religion from anything else – as, for example, from imaginative idealisation, art, morality, philosophy. It should apply to everything which is naturally and commonly called religion: to religion as a subjective spiritual state, and to all religions, high or low, true or false, which have obtained objective historical realisation." —*Anon.*

"The principle of morality is the root of religion." —*Peochal.*

"It is the perception of the infinite." —*Max Müller.*

"A religious creed is definable as a theory of original causation." —*Herbert Spencer.*

"Virtue, as founded on a reverence for God and expectation of future rewards and punishment."
—*Johnson.*

"The worship of a Deity." —*Bailey.*

"It has its origin in fear." —*Lucretius and others.*

"A desire to secure life and its goods amidst the uncertainty and evils of earth." —*Retsche.*

"A feeling of absolute dependence, of pure and entire passiveness." —*Schleiermacher.*

"Religious feeling is either a distinct primary feeling or a peculiar compound feeling."
—*Neuman Smyth.*

"A sanction for duty." —*Kant.*

"A morality tinged by emotion." —*Matthew Arnold.*

"By religion I mean that general habit of reverence towards the divine nature whereby we are enabled to worship and serve God." —*Wilkins.*

"A propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are supposed to control the course of nature and of human life." —*J. G. Frazer.*

"The modes of divine worship proper to different tribes." —*Anon.*

"The performance of duty to God and man."

It is to be noted that all the above are of Europeans acquainted practically with only Christianity.

The following are some that have been given me by Orientals:

"The worship of Allah." —*Mahomedan.*

"A knowledge of the laws of life that lead to happiness." —*Buddhist.*

"Doing right."

"Other-worldliness."

INTRODUCTION

Some time ago I wrote "The Soul of a People." It was an attempt to understand a people, the Burmese; to understand a religion, that of Buddha. It was not an attempt to find abstract truth, to discuss what may be true or not in the tenets of that faith, to discover the secret of all religions. It was only intended to show what Buddhism in Burma is to the people who believe in it, and how it comes into their lives.

Yet it was impossible always to confine the view to one point. It is natural – nay, it is inevitable – that when a man studies one faith, comparison with other faiths should intrude themselves. The world, even the East and West, is so bound together that you cannot treat of part and quite ignore the rest. And so thoughts arose and questions came forward that lay outside the scope of that book. I could not write of them there fully. Whatever question arose I was content then to give only the Buddhist answer, I had to leave on one side all the many answers different faiths may have propounded. I could not discuss even where truth was likely to be found. I was bound by my subject. But in this book I have gone further. This is a book, not of one religion nor of several religions, but of religion. Mainly, it is true, it treats of Christianity and Buddhism, because these are the two great representative faiths, but it is not confined to them. Man asks, and has always asked, certain questions. Religions have given many answers. Are these answers true? Which is true? Are any of them true? It is in a way a continuation of "The Soul of a People," but wider. It is of "The Hearts of Men."

Before beginning this book I have a word to say on the meanings that I attach to the word "Christianity" and a few other words, so that I may be more clearly understood.

There was a man who wrote to me once explaining why he was a Christian, and wondering how anyone could fail to be so.

"I look about me," he said, "at Christian nations, and I see that they are the leaders of the world. Pagan nations are far behind them in wealth, in happiness, in social order. I look at our Courts and I find justice administered to all alike, pure and without prejudice. Our crime decreases, our education increases, and our wealth increases even faster; the artisan now is where the middle class was a hundred years ago, the middle class now lives better than the rich did. Our science advances from marvel to marvel. Our country is a network of railroads, our ships cover the seas, our prosperity is unbounded, and in a greater or less degree all Christian nations share it. But when we turn to Pagan nations, what do we see? Anarchy and injustice, wars and rebellions, ignorance and poverty. To me no greater proof of the truth of Christianity can be than this difference. In fact, it is Christianity."

I am not concerned here to follow the writer into his arguments. He is probably one of those who thinks that all our civilisation is due to a peculiar form of Christianity. There are others who hold that all our advance has been made in spite of Christianity. I am only concerned now with the meaning of the word. The way I use the word is to denote the cult of Christ. A Christian to me means a man who follows, or who professes to follow, the example of Christ and to accept all His teaching; to be a member of a Church that calls itself Christian. I use it irrespective of sects to apply to Catholic and Greek Church, Quaker and Skopek alike. I am aware that in Christianity, as in all religions, there has been a strong tendency of the greater emotions to attract the lesser, and of the professors of any religion to assume to themselves all that is good and repudiate all that is evil in the national life. I have no quarrel here with them on the subject. Nor do I wish to use the word in any unnecessarily narrow sense. Are there not also St. Paul and the Apostles, the Early Fathers? So be it. But surely the essence of Christianity must be the teaching and example of Christ? I do not gather that any subsequent teacher has had authority to abrogate or modify either that teaching or example. As to addition, is it maintained anywhere that the teaching and example are inadequate? I do not think so. And therefore I have defined my meaning as above. Let us be sure of our words, that we may know what we are talking about.

In the word "religion" I have more difficulty. It does not carry any meaning on its face as Christianity does. It is an almost impossible word to define, or to discover the meaning of. It is so difficult that practically all the book is an attempt to discover what "religion" does mean. I nearly called the book, "What is the Meaning of Religion?"

In the beginning I have given a few of the numerous meanings that have been applied to the word. It will be seen how vague they are. And at the end I have a definition of my own to give which differs from all. But as I have frequently to use the word from the beginning of the book, I will try to define how I use it.

By "religion," then, generally I mean a scheme of the world with some theory of how man got into it and the influences, mostly supernatural, which affect him here. It usually, though not always, includes some code of morality for use here and some account of what happens after death.

This is, I think, more or less the accepted meaning.

And there are the words Spirit and Soul.

I note that in considering origins of religion the great first difficulty has been how the savage evolved the idea of "God" or "Spirit" as opposed to man. Various theories have been proposed, such as that it evolved from reasoning on dreams. To me the question is whether such an idea exists at all. It may be possible that men trained in abstract thought without reference to fact, the successors of many generations of men equally so trained, do consider themselves to have such a conception. I have met men who declared they had a clear idea of the fourth dimension in Mathematics and of unending space. There may be people who can realise a Spirit which has other qualities than man. In some creeds the idea is assumed as existing. But personally I have never found it among those who make religion as distinguished from those who theorise upon it. The gods of the simpler religious people I have met, whether East or West, have been frankly only enlarged men, with the appetites and appearances and the powers of men. They differ from men only in degree, never in kind. They require food and offerings, they have passions, sometimes they have wives. The early gods are but men. If they are invisible, so can man be; if they are powerful, so are kings. It is only a question of degree, never of kind. I do not find that the God that the Boers appeal to so passionately has any different qualities in their thoughts from a marvellous man. Truly they will say, "No, God is a Spirit." Then if you reply, "So be it; tell me how a Spirit differs from a man, what qualities a Spirit has that are inconceivable in man," they cannot go on; and the qualities they appeal to in their God are always very human qualities – partiality, forgiveness, help, and the like.

Many men will say they believe things which they do not understand. I enter into the subject so fully later I do not want to write more now. I only wish to define that the word God, as I use it, in no wise means more than "the Personality who causes things."

And again about soul. What is soul? The theologian gets up and answers at once that soul exists independent of the body. So be it. Then who has the conception? And what is it like when you have got it? Have Christians it? Then why can they not understand resurrection of the soul without also the resurrection of the body? They cannot. Look at the facts. It is such a fact it has actually forced itself into the creeds. Angels have bodies and also wings. Ghosts have bodies and also clothes. They are recognisable. I know a ghost who likes pork for supper. They sometimes have horses and all sorts of additions. The body may be filmy, but it is a body. Gas is filmy and quite as transparent as a ghost.

Perhaps the people who have put the transmigration of souls as one of their religious tenets really have the conception of a soul apart from any body. I doubt it even here. But this also will come later.

Meanwhile, when I use the word "soul" or "spirit," I do not infer that it is separable from the body or inseparable. I mean simply the essence of that which is man; the identity, the ego existing in man as he *is*. I think, indeed, this is the correct meaning. We say that a city has fifty thousand souls. Have they no bodies? When I wrote "The Soul of a People" I certainly did not omit their bodies

or ignore them. On the contrary. And no one supposed I did. I do not either mean to postulate the inseparability of body and soul. Soul means essence.

Finally, there is the word reason. What is that? By reason I mean the faculty of arranging and grouping facts. It is the power of perspective which sees facts in their proper relation to other facts. The facts themselves are supplied as regards the outer world by the senses of sight and hearing and taste, of touch and sympathy; and as regards the inner world of sensations, such as hate, and love, and fear by the ability to feel those sensations.

Reason itself cannot supply facts. It can but arrange them. By placing a series of facts in due order the existence of other facts may be suspected, as the existence of Neptune was deduced from certain known aberrations. The observation of Neptune by the telescope followed.

In other words, reason may be called "the science of facts."

I offer no apology for this introduction. Most of the confusion of thought, most of the mistiness of argument, is due to the fact that people habitually use words without any clear idea of their meaning. A reviewer of "The Soul of a People" declared that Buddhism was a philosophy, not a religion. I asked him to give me a list of what he accepted as religions, and then to furnish a definition of religion that would include all these and exclude Buddhism. I am still waiting. No doubt he had never tried to really define what he meant by his words. Instead of using words as counters of a fixed value he threw them about as blank cheques, meaning anything or nothing.

When you find confusion of argument in a book, want of clearness of expression, when you see men arguing and misunderstanding each other, there is nearly always one reason. Either they are using words in different senses or they have no clear idea themselves of what they mean by their words. Ask ten men what they mean when they say, Art, beauty, civilisation, right, wrong, or any other abstract term, and see if *one* can give a satisfactory explanation.

This is an error I am trying to avoid.

CHAPTER I OF WHAT USE IS RELIGION?

Of what use is religion?

All nations, almost all men, have a religion. From the savage in the woods who has his traditions of how the world began, who has his ghosts and his devils to fear or to worship, to the Christian and the Buddhist with their religion full of beautiful conceptions and ideas – all people have a religion.

And the religion of men is determined for them by their birth. They are born into it, as they are into their complexions, their habits, their language. The Continental and Irish Celt is a Roman Catholic, the Teuton is a follower of Luther, the Slav a member of the Greek Church. The Anglo-Saxon, who is a compromise of races, has a creed which is a compromise also, and the Celt of England has his peculiar form of dissent, more akin perhaps in some ways to Romanism than to Lutheranism. A Jew is and has been a Jew, a Hindu is a Hindu, Arabs and Turks are Mahommedans.

It is so with all races of men. A man's religion to-day is that into which he is born, and those of the higher and older races who change are few, so very few they but serve strongly to emphasize the rule.

There have been, it is true, periods when this has not been so. There have been times of change, of conversions, of rapid religious evolution when the greater faiths have gathered their harvests of men, when beliefs have spread as a flood threatening to engulf a world. No one has ever done so. Each has found its own boundary and stayed there. Their spring tide once passed they have ceased to spread. They have become, indeed, many of them, but tideless oceans, dead seas of habit ceasing even to beat upon their shores. Many of them no longer even try to proselytise, having found their inability to stretch beyond their boundaries; others still labour, but their gains are few – how few only those who have watched can know.

Some savages are drawn away here or there, but that is all. The greater faiths and forms of faith, Catholicism, Lutheranism, the Greek Church, Mahommedanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and many others, remain as they were. Their believers are neither converted nor convert. Men born into them remain as they were born. They do not change, they are satisfied with what they have.

They are more than satisfied; they are often, almost always, passionately attached to their faith.

There is nothing men value more than their religion. There is nothing so unbearable to them as an attack upon it. No one will allow it. Even the savage clings to his fetish in the mountain top and will not permit of insult to it. Men will brave all kinds of disaster and death rather than deny their faith, that which their fathers believed. It is to all their highest possession. The Catholic, the Chinese ancestor worshipper, the Hindu, the Calvinist, the Buddhist, the Jew – their names are too numerous to mention – none yields to any other in this. It is true of all faiths. No one faith has any monopoly of this enthusiasm. It is common to all.

But wherein lies the spell that religion has cast upon the souls of men? The influence is the same. What is the secret of it?

Can it be that there is some secret common to all religions, some belief, some doctrine that is the cause of this? If so, what is it? If there is such a common secret, why is it so hidden?

For hidden it certainly is.

Nothing can be more certain than that no one religion recognises any such secret in the others. It is the very reverse. The more a man clings to his own religion the more he scorns all others. Far from acknowledging any common truth, he denounces all other faiths as mistaken, as untrue; nay, more, they are to him false, deliberately false; the enthusiast believes them wicked, the fanatic in his own faith calls all others devilish. The more a man loves his religion the more he abominates all

others. A Christian would scorn the idea of the essence of his faith being common to all others, or any other. If there be any common truth it is a very secret truth.

Is there any secret truth? If so, what is it?

There is a further question.

There is probably no one thing that we learn with more certainty than this, that whatever exists, whatever persists, does so because it fulfils a want, because it's of use. It is immaterial where we look, the rule is absolute. In the material world Darwin and others have shewn it to us over and over again. When anything is useless it atrophies. So have the snake and the whale lost their legs, and man his hairy skin and sense of scent. Males have lost their power of suckling their young; with females this power has increased. Need develops any thing or any quality; when it becomes needless it dies. Where we find anything flourishing and persistent we are sure always that it is so because it is wanted, because it fills a need.

Religion in some form or another has always existed, has increased and developed, has grown and gained strength.

Therefore religion, all religions that have existed have filled some need, all religions that now exist do so because they fulfil some present use. From the way their believers cherish them the need is a great and urgent one. These religions are of vital use to their believers.

What is this great common need and yearning that all men have, and which, to men in sympathy with it, every religion fulfils?

Can it be that all men have a like need and that all religions have a common quality which serves that need?

Can it be possible that all races, the Englishman, the Negro, the Italian, the Russian, the Arab, the Chinaman, and the Pathan, have the same urgent necessity, and that their urgent necessity is answered by so many varying religions? If so, what is this necessity which religion alone can fill, what is this succour that religion alone can give? What is the use of religion?

These are some of the questions I ask, other men have asked the same – not many. The majority of men never ask themselves anything of the sort. They are born into a religion, they live in it more or less, they die in it. They may question its accuracy in one point or another, for each man to some extent makes his own faith; but nearly all men take their faith much as they find it and make the best of it. It does not occur to them to say, "Why should I want a religion at all? Why not go without?" They feel the necessity of it. Even the very few who reject their own faith almost always try for some other, something they hope will meet their necessity. They will prefer one faith to another. But they do not first consider why they want a faith at all. They do not ask, "Of what use is any religion?"

Yet this is in the main the subject of this book, these questions are the ones I ask, the questions to which I seek an answer. I will repeat them.

Why are all peoples, all men religious? Is the necessity a common necessity? If so, what is it?

Why does one form of religion appeal to one people and another to another people, while remaining hateful to all the rest?

Notwithstanding their common hate, have all religions a common secret? And if so, what is that?

This book of mine is in part the story of a boy who was born into a faith and who lost it; it tries to explain why he lost it.

It is the story of a man who searched for a new faith and who did not find it, because he knew not what he sought. He knew not what religion was nor why he wanted it. He knew not his need. He sought in religion for things no religion possesses. He was ill yet he knew not his disease, and so he could find no remedy. And finally it is an attempt to discern what religion really means, what it is, what is the use of it, what men require of it.

There may be among my readers some who will read the early chapters and will then stop. They will feel hurt perhaps, they will think that there is here an attack upon their religion, upon all they

hold as the Truth of God. So they will close the book and read no more. I would beg of my readers not to judge me thus. I would ask them if they read at all to read to the end. It may be that then they will understand. Even if it be not so, that the early chapters still seem to be hard, is it not better to hear such things from a friend than from an enemy? Be sure there are very many who say and who feel very much harder things than this boy did. Is it not as well to know them?

These early chapters are of a boy's life; they may be, they should be if truly written, full of the hardness of youth, its revolt from what it conceives to be untrue, its intense desire to know, its stern rejection of all that is not clear and cannot be known. Yet they must be written, for only by knowing the thoughts of the boy can the later thoughts of the man be understood?

And I am sure that those who read me to the end, though they may disagree with what I say, will admit this: that, thinking as I do of religion, I would not unnecessarily throw a stone at any faith, I would not thoughtlessly hurt the belief of any believer, no matter what his religion; because I think I have learnt not only what his faith is to him, but why it is so, because I have found the use of all religion.

CHAPTER II

EARLY BELIEFS

The boy of whom I am about to write was brought up until he was twelve entirely by women. He had masters, it is true, who taught him the usual things that are taught to boys, and he had playfellows, other boys; but the masters were with him but an hour or two each day for lessons, and of the boys he was always the eldest.

Those who have studied how it is that children form their ideas of the world, of what it is, of what has to be done in it, of how to do it, will recognise all that this means; for children obtain their ideas of everything, not from their lessons nor their books nor their teachers, but from their associates. A teacher may teach, but a boy does not believe. He believes not what he is told, but what he sees. He forms to himself rules of conduct modelled on the observed conduct of other people. Their ideas penetrate his, and he absorbs and adapts them to his own wants. In a school with other boys, or where a boy has as playfellows boys older than himself, this works out right. The knowledge and ideas of the great world filter gradually down. Young men gain it from older men, the young men pass it to the elder boys, and the bigger to the smaller, each adapting it as he takes. Thus is wisdom made digestible by the many processes it passes through, and the child can take it and find it agree with him.

But with a child brought up with adults and children younger than himself this is not so. From the latter he can learn nothing; he therefore adapts himself to the former. He listens to them, he watches them, unconsciously it is true, but with that terrible penetrative power children possess. He learns their ideas, and, tough as they may prove to him, he has to absorb them, and he has not the digestive juice, the experience that is required to assimilate them. They are unfit for his tender years, they do not yield the nourishment he requires. He suffers terribly. A man's ideas and knowledge are not fit for a boy.

And if a man's, how much less a woman's? A boy will become a man; what he has learnt of men is knowledge of the right kind, though of the wrong degree. But what he learns from women is almost entirely unsuitable in kind and in degree. The ideas, the knowledge, the codes of conduct, the outlook on life that suit a woman are entirely unfitted for a boy. Consider and you must see how true it is.

This boy, too, was often ill and unable to play, to go out at all sometimes for weeks in the winter. He seemed always ailing. Thus he had to spend much of his time alone, and when he was tired of reading or of wood carving, or colouring plates in a book, he thought. He had often so much time to think that he grew sick of thought. He hated it. He would have given very much to be able to get out and run about and play so as not to think, to be enabled to forget that he had a brain which would keep on passing phantoms before his inner eyes. There was nothing he hated so much, nothing he dreaded so deeply as having nothing to do but think. In later years he took this terror to his heart and made it into an exceedingly great pleasure, but to the child it was not so.

Therefore, when he was twelve and was sent at last to a large school, he was different to most boys at that age; for his view of the world, his knowledge of it, his judgment of it, were all obtained from women. He saw life much as they did, through the same glasses, though with different sight. His ideas of conduct were a woman's ideas, his religion was a woman's religion.

Are not a woman's ideas of conduct the same as a man's? Is not a woman's Christianity the same as a man's Christianity, if both be Christianity? And I reply, No! A thousand times no! There is all the world between them, all that world that is between woman and a man.

As to man's religion I will speak of it later. The woman's ideas of conduct and religion which this child had absorbed were these. He believed in the New Testament. I do not mean he disbelieved the Old Testament, but he did not think of it. Religion to him meant the teaching of Christ, that very simple teaching that is in the Gospel. Conduct to him meant the imitation of Christ and the

observance of the Sermon on the Mount. He thought this was accepted by all the world – the Christian world at least – as true, that everyone, men as well as women, accepted this teaching not as a mere pious aspiration, not as an altruistic ideal, but as a real working theory. War was bad, all war. Soldiers apparently were not all bad – he had been told of Christian soldiers, though he had no idea how such a contradiction could occur – but at least they were a dreadful necessity. Wealth and the pursuit of wealth were bad, wicked even, though here again there were exceptions. Learning was apt to be a snare. The world was very wicked, consciously wicked, which accounted for the present state of affairs, and most people would certainly go to hell. The ideal life was that of a very poor curate in the East End of London, hard working and unhappy. These are some of the ideas he learnt, for this is the religion of all the religious women of England; of all those who are in their way the very salt of the nation. Their belief is the teaching of Christ, and that is what this boy learnt. This is what "conduct" and "religion" meant to him.

I must not be misunderstood. I do not intend to suggest that this boy was any better than other boys, that his life was less marked by the peccadilloes of childhood. He was probably much as other boys are as far as badness or goodness is concerned. His acts, I doubt not, did not very much differ from theirs. After all, neither boys nor men are very much guided either by any theoretical "Rule of Life," nor by any view of what is the true Religion. He acted according to his instincts, but having so acted the difference between him and other boys came in. Other boys' instincts led them to poach a trout out of a stream, and rejoice in their success if they were not caught. This boy's instinct also led him to poach a trout if he could, but he did not rejoice over it. Poaching was stealing, and that was a deadly sin. He was aware of that and was afraid.

Other boys' instincts made them fight on occasions and be proud of it, whether victor or vanquished, to boast of it publicly perhaps; anyhow, not to keep it a secret or be ashamed of it. This boy's instincts also led him several times into fights; but whether victor or not – it was usually not – he could not appear to be proud of it. The Sermon on the Mount told him he ought not to have fought that boy who struck him, but should have turned the other cheek, and he knew very well that it would be regarded as a sin. It must be kept secret and he must be ashamed of it, and so with many things. It never occurred to him then to doubt that the Sermon on the Mount did really contain the correct rule of life for him, and that any breach of it must be a deadly sin. Among other results this friction between the natural boy and the rule of conduct he was taught he ought to adopt, gave the boy a continual sensation of being wrong. He knew he was continually breaking the Sermon on the Mount and also other rules of the New Testament. He was perfectly sure he did not live at all like Christ, and he had a strong, but never then acknowledged certainty, that he didn't want to. All this, with the continual reproof of those around him, gave him an incessant feeling of being wicked. He could not live up to these rules, and he was a very wicked little boy bound for hell, so he thought of himself.

It is difficult to imagine anything worse for a boy than this. Tell a boy he is bad, lead him to believe he is bad, make much of his little sins, reprove him, mourn over him as one of wicked tendencies, and you will make him wicked. Perpetual struggle to attain an impossible and unnatural ideal is destructive to any moral fibre. For the boy soon begins to distrust himself, his own efforts, his own good intentions. He fails and fails, and he loses heart and begins to count on failure as certain. Then later he abandons effort as useless. What is the good of trying without any hope of success? It is useless and foolish. To save appearances he must pretend, and that is all. But at the time he went to school he had not quite come to that, for the stress of the world had not yet fallen upon him. He still believed in what he was taught was the ideal of life, and tried, in a childish, uncertain way, to act up to it.

CHAPTER III

IDEAL AND PRACTICE

Such was the boy who went to school, and such was the mental and moral equipment with which he started.

He found himself in a new world. He had stepped out of a woman's world into a man's, out of the New Testament into the Old, out of dreams into reality. For the ideas and beliefs, the knowledge and understanding, the code of morality and conduct, in a big school, are those of the world. This filters down from the world of men to the world of little boys, and the latter is the echo of the former. It is an echo of the great world sounded by childish hearts, but still a true echo. Then this boy began to learn new things, a new morality vastly different from the old. And this is what he learnt: that it is not wrong to fight, but right. Fighting is not evil but good, all kinds of fighting. The profession of a soldier is a great and worthy one, perhaps the highest. To fight men, to kill them and subdue them, is not bad but good – provided, of course, it is in a good cause. A war is not a regrettable necessity, but a very glorious opportunity. Both men and boys rejoice to know of battles greatly fought, of blood and wounds, of death and victory. It makes the heart bound to hear of such things. Everyone should wish to be able to do them – in a good cause. Is not the cause of our country always a good cause? When this boy arrived at school he learnt suddenly that a war was going on. It was a small frontier war such as we often have. He had not heard of it at home. Now he heard of it all day. Masters announced publicly any victory, holidays were given for them, out of school hours the boys talked of little else. The illustrated papers were full of sketches of the war, and the weekly papers of accounts of marches and battles. Boys who had relations, fathers, or uncles, or elder brothers, at the front rose into sudden fame. Big boys who were hoping to pass into Sandhurst or Woolwich were heroes; the school was full of the enthusiasm of the success of our armies. Parties were formed and generals were appointed; hillocks in the play green were defended and assaulted, and many grievous blows were given in these mimic fights. One boy nearly lost his eye. To the boy of which I am writing all this was new, it was new and delightful, and extraordinarily wicked.

This was not his only awakening, this was not the only subject on which he learnt new rules. Soldiers must fight, and so must boys, if necessary, in a good cause. To a soldier all causes are good when his country bids; to a boy all causes are good when his school code tells him. Turn the other cheek? Be called a funk and a coward, be derided and scorned by all the school, be told to be ashamed, and, worse than all, feel that he ought to be and was ashamed? Not so. Not so. A boy must fight, too, when his schoolboy honour bids. He even learnt more still than this. Battle was not always a disagreeable necessity, it was in itself often a pleasure. "To drink delight of battle with his peers" is no poet's rhetorical phrase; it is a truth. There is a sheer muscular physical pleasure in fighting, as all boys know. True blows hurt, but the blows that hurt most are not on the body, and there is, too, a moral strength, a moral pleasure, that comes from battles. It is not disgraceful to fight, it is not even disgraceful to be beaten, but it would often be very disgraceful not to fight, to turn the other cheek. All wars are not bad things. They are the storms of God stirring up the stagnant natures to new purity and life. The people that cannot fight shall die. He learnt this lesson, not as I have written it. He did not realise it, he did not put it into words as I have done. It sank into him unconsciously as the previous teaching had done – and sorely they disagreed with each other. He learnt other lessons, many of them, in the same way. He learnt that money is not an evil but a good. When he found his pocket-money short this soon dawned upon him, and the lesson did not end there. He found that wealth was almost worshipped, that it had very great power. He found everyone engaged in the race for wealth, everyone. His spiritual pastors and masters were no more exempt than anyone else. They encouraged the race. A boy's schooling was looked upon as his preparation for the battle of life in which he was

to struggle for money and honours. Men who had attained them were held up to his admiration. Not the pale-faced curates of the East End, but the great statesman and soldier, the bishops, the lawyers, the writers, the successful merchants who had once been at the school, were emblazoned on the wall. No meek, struggling curate would find a niche there. The race was to the strong, not the weak. He was learning the law of the survival of the fittest, and he was further learning that the Sermon on the Mount is not a guide to be the fittest, in this world at any rate.

I must try again and guard against misconception. The school was a good school, the tone was good, the masters were all men of high character, of considerable learning. No school could have been better taught; but this was the teaching of the school, as it is and must be of all schools that are worth anything: a boy must be brought up on truths, not imaginings; he must learn laws, not aspirations; he must be prepared for the world as it is, not as a visionary might see it.

Therefore this boy learnt at school the great code of conduct which obtains in the world. Shortly, it is this: not to be quarrelsome, but to be ready always to fight for a good cause, be the fighting with sword or fist, with pen or tongue, by word or deed, and when fighting to hit hard and spare not. He learnt to desire and strive for wealth and honour, which are good things, not in immoderate excess, which injures other forms of happiness, but in due and proper amount. He learnt that he should speak the truth in most things, but not in all. There are worse things than some lies. There are some lies that are not a disgrace, but an honour. He learnt that learning was not a snare, but a very necessary and very admirable thing also, and of all learning that knowledge of the world, the wicked world, the flesh and the devil, was the most necessary. Such in broad lines were what he learnt from his schoolfellows, the code filtered down from above, the code of a public school. A very admirable code, but how different from what he had first learnt. There were worlds between them, the immensity that lies between fact and ideal.

And yet all this time, while this public school code was being driven into him by precept and example, by coercion and by blows, all this while, every morning at prayers and every Sunday thrice, he heard the other code taught in the school chapel. The masters taught it, and the boys were supposed to accept and believe it – during chapel hours. Once chapel was over, once Monday morning came, and the other code ruled. No one remembered the theoretic code of Christ. Boys who brought it forward in daily life were disliked. They were not bullied, no! but they were left alone. The tone of the school would never have allowed bullying for such a cause, but there was an instinctive repulsion to those boys who talked religion. The others inwardly accused them of cant. Boys who alleged religious reasons for refusing to fight, to poach, to smoke occasionally, to commit other little breaches of discipline, were suspected of bringing forth religion as a cloak to hide the fact that they were afraid to fight and poach and that smoking made them sick. That they were very often rightly suspected this boy had no doubt. It was his first introduction to cant, and it surprised him. Was, then, the attempt to realise the precepts of Christ in daily life either a folly or an hypocrisy? As far as he could see it was both.

It must not, of course, be imagined that he thus faced the problem and gave this answer. He no more faced the problem than any other boy does, than the great majority of men do. He simply grew up according to his surroundings, agreeing with them, accepting the rule he found accepted, developing as his environments made him. But although he did not mentally face and enumerate his difficulties, he was aware of them just the same. He was clearly conscious of a conflict between fact and theory, between teaching and example, between reality and dreams. He became year after year also more clearly aware of a repugnance rising within him to religion and to religious teaching. He shrank from it without realising why. He supposed it was just his natural sin. It was, of course, that he was proving its unreality as a guide to life. He began to shrink, too, from all religious topics, from religious services and religious books. They jarred on him. He found himself also losing his reverence for his religious teachers – for all his teachers, in fact – for they all professed religion. Their words had grated on him first, the difference between what they professed to believe and what he knew they did

believe. Unaware of the reason till much later, almost unconsciously there grew up in him a contempt towards all his teachers and masters, a sense that they must be and were hypocrites and impostors. He found himself at eighteen far adrift from all guidance and counsel, shunning religion because he saw that the teachings of Christ were quite unadapted for the world he had to live in, scornful of and contemning his teachers for what seemed to him hypocrisy.

It was not a satisfactory state for a boy, and the less so because it was still almost unconscious. He felt all that I have said, the avoidance, the dislike, but he had not yet faced it to himself and said, "Why does Christianity jar upon me and seem unreal, what are its difficulties?" Nor, "What is it that causes my dislike and contempt of my teachers? They are better men in all ways than I am. They are good men. I shall never be as good. I honour them in their lives. I admit that. What is the difficulty?" He was adrift without compass or pilot, and he did not know it. Yet he was already far from the safe harbour of trust and belief. The storms and darkness of the sea of life were before him, and there was no star by which he could steer. He made no effort, raised as yet no alarm, for he knew not that his anchor had dragged, that he had lost hold, perhaps never to regain it.

CHAPTER IV

SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY – I

About this time he read the "Origin of Species" and "The Descent of Man." This surprised him. It was not only that this was his first introduction to the science of biology, his first peep behind the curtain of modern forms into the coulisses of the world that interested him, but there was here contained a complete refutation, a disastrous overthrow, of all that system of the Creation which he had been taught.

If Darwin was right, and he seemed to be right – nay, even his once adversaries now admitted he was right, if not in his details yet in his broad outline – if he was right then was Genesis all wrong. There was never any garden of Eden, never any seven days' creation, never any making of woman out of a rib; the world was not six thousand years old, but millions. Man himself could count his pedigree back tens of thousands of years. It was a fable; and not only was it a fable, but this fable contained as a kernel not a truth – then it would be understood – but a falsehood. The theory of the whole story was that man had fallen, that he used to be perfect, that he walked with God, but that he fell. Such was the idea. And the continuation was that Christ was required to atone to God for man's disobedience, to lead man slowly back to the Paradise he had lost.

And now it was clear that the garden of Eden was all a fable, that man had never been perfect, that he had evolved slowly out of the beast. He had risen, not fallen, and stood now higher than ever before. The first part was false, and if so, must not the sequence be false also? As a whole the fable held together; destroy the foundation and the superstructure must come crashing into ruin. Oh! it was all false, the whole of it, Old and New Testament together, an old woman's tale. And then suddenly his eyes were opened. He saw many things. His instincts that he had not understood were now clear. Yes, of course, the supernatural part was all a fable, a mistake; nay, more, it taught the reverse of truth, and the moral part of it was all wrong too. The morality of the Old Testament was that of a savage, the morality of the New a remarkable ideal totally unfit for the world as it is now or ever has been. The man who followed it would commit a terrible error. It was therefore untrue also; more than merely untrue, it was dangerous, as a false teacher must be. For long he had instinctively seen that this was so, now he knew why. At the touch of science the whole fabric of religion fell into dust. Christianity was a fraud, and there was an end of it.

But still the church bells rang and the people went there. Priests preached this belief and people held to it. Darwin had written more than ten years before and his book had been accepted, but still religion had not fallen. Men and women, as far as he could see nearly all men and women, still professed themselves Christians. How was all this possible? How could it be that this disproved Jewish fable still held together? It was wonderful. There must be a reason. What is it?

Can it be possible, he thought, that there is an explanation, that religion can justify itself, that it may still have reason? There are people who call themselves scientific theologians. They write books and they preach, and they can be asked questions. What have they to say? So this boy collected some of his difficulties and tried to find out what scientific theology thought of them. Let me name briefly some of them: —

The Fall of Man.— Theology says he fell, science says he rose. What does Scientific Theology say?

The Character of God.— In the Old Testament God is represented frequently as bloodthirsty, as partial to the Jews, as unjust, as given to anger, as changeable. How is this?

Again, God is represented as the only Almighty, the only All-present, All-seeing, All-powerful; yet without a doubt the facts detailed show the Devil to be certainly All-present, and, as far as man

here is concerned, has considerably more power and influence than God. God made the world, but the Devil possesses it. Why?

Prayer.— How can this be necessary? If God knows best what is good for us, why pray to Him? Can He be influenced? The Bible says yes. Then is not this a very extraordinary thing, that if God knows what is best for us, He should have to be asked to do it – that He won't do it unless asked?

About Christ. He was God, yet He died to atone to Himself for the sin of man. What is the meaning of all this? Why did God allow man to crucify Himself in order to atone to Himself for a former sin of man, and what is the meaning of all this? Has it any?

Most important of all, as to the example and teaching of Christ regarding conduct. What did it mean, and why did everyone profess it and no one believe it?

These, of course, were not all his difficulties. There were hundreds of them. There is not a verse in the Old or New Testament, not a dogma, not a belief of Christianity, that does not furnish ground for question. These I have mentioned are but some of the most prominent. They will serve as examples of what he sought to learn.

And these were the answers he received.

The History of the Creation is an allegory. It is not in conflict with science, but in accordance with it. There is no difficulty. The seven days of creation mean seven periods; we do not know how long these were. The chronology of Archbishop Usher was, of course, in error. It is a wonderful testimony to the inspiration of the Bible, the accuracy with which the account of Creation therein fits in with the facts we have recently learnt.

The story of Adam and Eve is an allegory of life. A child is born innocent and pure, and he falls. The knowledge therein referred to, the fruit, means useless questions into the secrets of God, such questions as you are now engaged in. Had you accepted Christianity as a child does you would never have fallen into the slough of infidelity in which you are now. You, like Eve, have been tempted by the Devil with the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and have fallen. But the help of Christ, the knowledge that he died for you, can now save you. That is the answer.

You ask of the character of God in the Old Testament. You say that He is represented by His acts as revengeful, as unjust, as hasty, as very partial. Man cannot criticise the acts of God. He may seem to you so, but are you sure you can judge rightly? God cannot be all these. His injustice, His revengefulness, His partiality were merely effects produced in your mind. They do not exist. He is all-merciful, and all-seeing, and all-powerful. If the Devil seems to have more power in the world than God, it is simply because God allows him. If the Devil seems all-present it is because he has legions of demons to do his will. God is all-merciful, all-powerful, all-just; believe this and you will do well. The answers to your difficulties about prayer are also very simple. God is not influenced by prayer. He is merciful and will always do what He knows to be best for you, whether you pray or not; but He has ordained prayer for you, not because of its effect on Him, but because of its effect upon yourself. Prayer, humiliation, softens the heart of the suppliant. His cry to God will not change God, but will change him. This is the explanation. It is very simple, is it not?

The doctrine of the Trinity can be best understood from an analogy of man. Consider how a man can be a father, a husband, and a son all at once. There is no difficulty here. Where, then, is the difficulty with God? God as the Father of man, the righteous Judge who punishes man for his wickedness, He vindicated His law; but God the Son, the pitying nature of God, had compassion on man, and therefore gave Himself as a sacrifice for man; God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, entered into man's heart and sanctified it. Cannot you thus understand the manifold nature of God?

The teaching of Christ? His example? You do not understand that? Was not His life the perfect life, His teaching the perfect teaching? You say that this teaching cannot be followed now in its entirety. Is it not the wickedness of man that prevents it? Did each man act up to this teaching, to this example, would it not be a perfect world? Let each man try his best and the world will improve. Such as I have written were the answers he found to his questions. I do not say that these are always

the answers that are given. It may be there are others. It may be that in the years that have passed since then new explanations have been evolved.

Although I do not think that is so, as only a year ago I saw some of these very replies written in a well-known Review as the authoritative answer of scientific theology to these difficulties. However that may be, these are the answers the boy received, such were the guides given to lead him out of the darkness of scepticism into the light of faith.

CHAPTER V

SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY – II

What thought the boy of these explanations? Do you think they helped him at all? Do you think he was able to accept them as real? Did they throw any light into the darkness of his doubts?

The boy took them and considered them. He considered them fairly, I am sure; he would have accepted them if he could. For what he was looking for was simply guidance and light. He had no desire for aught but this. If he revolted now from the faith of his people it was because he found there neither teaching he could accept nor help. If the scientific theologian shewed him that the error was in him and not in the faith the boy would, I think, have been glad. So he took these explanations and considered them, and this is what he thought.

They tell me that the seven days of creation are seven epochs. I did not ask that. To my question whether man has fallen, as the Bible says, or risen, as science declares, no reply has been given.

There is only a specious likening of a man's life, saying that man falls from the innocence of his childhood to sin through the knowledge of evil, and requires redemption. My question is avoided, and a new sophism given me which is also untrue. A child is not innocent. It is only ignorant and weak. Its natural impulses are those of a savage. It requires to learn the knowledge of good and evil to subdue these instincts. This symbolism of the child is utterly false. A child is to us a very beautiful thing because its tenderness, its helplessness, its clinging affection awaken in us feelings of love, of protection, which we feel are beautiful. All men should, all men I think do, love children, but the beauty is in the man's emotions that are awakened, not in those qualities of the children that awaken them.

To go beyond this and say that a child should be a model to man is to display ignorance of what children are, to mistake effect for cause, to exalt childishness into a virtue. Theologians use this argument, which is merely a play upon our affection for children, to try and induce us to accept their theology with the same ignorant confidence that a child accepts all it is told by its parents. It would suit theologians for all men to be babes in this sense, in their senselessness. But if theology will bear the light of reason, why ask us to accept it blindly? Why? Is it because it will not bear scrutiny?

And surely of all the answers, this answer about the character of God is the most extraordinary. "God is not really unjust or partial, or revengeful. That is merely the impression His acts make on us." Truly here is an argument. How can anyone, even God, be judged except in His acts? If His acts are revengeful, is not He revengeful? "No!" says the theological scientist, "that is merely your ignorance. Events make a wrong impression on you."

How, then, am I to judge which are wrong and which are right impressions? God acts, as it seems to me, angrily; He is not angry. On other occasions He acts, as it seems, mercifully. How am I to know that this impression of mercy is not an error? How, in fact, am I to know that anything exists at all? If God's anger and partiality and changeableness are merely impressions of my mind, are not all His attributes merely impressions also, and do not exist? In fact, is not God Himself merely an impression and He does not exist? Where are you going to stop? The theologian will doubtless say, "When I tell you." But then he is unfortunately arrogating to himself an authority which does not exist, an authority to twist and turn the Bible to suit his own sophisms, an authority to bind your mind which no one has given him. Impressions forsooth. What impressions can any candid mind have of the scientific theologian? And when the boy read the explanation of the difference between the all-presence of God and the all-presence of Satan, I am afraid he laughed.

But prayer is a serious matter. No one can feel anything but sorrow to see the explanation of God and prayer. The theological scientist again repeats the Bible words and has his own explanation. No, God is not moved by prayer. This is merely another wrong impression of ours, an impression

taken from the Bible words. The action of prayer is not objective, but subjective; its effect is not on God, but on you.

Now mark what he has led himself into. Prayer will purify a man. To ask God for what he wants won't make the slightest difference in God's acts, but will in your own feelings. Nevertheless, as of course no one would or could pray unless he hoped to be answered, man must be told that God does listen. But this is not true. Therefore, according to theological science, the Bible directly tells us a falsehood in order to lead us into a good action. Is there any escape from this? There is none. The whole meaning and reason of prayer is that God *does* listen, that He *does* forgive if asked, that He *does* help us and save us. Unless a man held this belief firmly he would not pray. Try and you will see. Imagine to yourself, as the theologian declares, that God is quite unmoved by prayer, and that the action of prayer is subjective, and see if you can get up any prayer at all. It is impossible. How much fervency will there be in a request you know will not be granted or attended to? How much subjective action will follow that prayer? The subjective action is absolutely dependent on your belief that God does listen and is influenced by your prayer. But the scientific theologian says your premise is false.

Can you imagine this theologian's prayer? Can you see him kneeling and uttering supplications to a god whom he knows he cannot affect or influence, and pausing now and then to see how the subjective effect on himself was getting on? But it is not even a subject to be bitter over, only to be sad. Truly, if I wanted to make a man an atheist and a scoffer, a railer at all religion, at all religious emotions, at all that is best in our natures, I would take him to a scientific theologian and have him taught the scientific theological theory of prayer.

And again, though the boy understood how a man could be the son of his father, the husband of his wife, the father of his son, three different relations to three people, it did not help him to understand how he could be so to one person. A man cannot be his own son and his own father, and have proceeding from him a third person different and yet the same. The argument seemed to him childish.

As to the teaching of Christ, of what use is a teaching that is suitable only to an ideal state of things? Is it any use to me to tell me that if everyone agreed at once to follow this teaching the world would be perfect? Even if this were true, what would be the use? The world never has accepted it and does not do so now. No one does except a few people who are called visionaries or fanatics. Even the Quakers only accept a part, and it is well for them that their fellow citizens do not accept even that part, or these Quakers would soon be robbed of their wealth. A nation of Quakers would be a nation of slaves. All this talk of what would happen if at a given signal all the world became perfect is useless dream talk. I want realities. This code of Christ is not a reality. No quicker way of destroying civilization and all that it means could be desired than by attempting to follow it. We must be ready and prepared to fight other nations, we must have armies and navies, and we must honour them. We must have magistrates, and police, and prisons, and gallows.

"I went," thought the boy, "to these theological scientists, for help in my everyday life, for clear directions and explanations, and what do they give me? A mass of words meaning nothing, words and words, and tangled thoughts; evasion and misrepresentation, misty dreams and cloud-hidden ideals. They cannot explain, and therefore the whole thing is false. There is no truth anywhere in it. The whole teaching of the Bible, from the Creation down to the incarnation of Christ and His second coming, is one huge mistake. Why people keep on believing it I cannot say. But anyhow I have found out its falseness, and I will not. Let it all go. It will make no difference and be rather an advantage. What use have I ever had from this religion that has been dinned into me? It gave me false ideas of the world and nature which I have had to unlearn. It gave me an unworkable code of conduct which I never tried to follow, but I got into trouble for it. To call oneself a Christian is merely a way of talking. No one is so really, and the only difference between me and the others will be that while they are not Christians but think they are, I am not a Christian and know I am not."

Was the boy glad or sorry? I do not know. I think perhaps he was both. He felt like a man who has shaken off a burden, a load that contained mere weight and no useful thing. He would step more lightly in future.

But he felt, too, like a man who has skirted a precipice, secure in that a railing fenced him in from danger, when he suddenly discovers that the railing is decayed to the core and will vanish at a touch. He felt dizzy and afraid, and the feeling grew upon him.

May be, he thought, it is a good thing to have a religion. People of all faiths, of all nations, seem to cling to theirs very strongly. It is the one thing they cannot bear to lose. Yet I do not know what they get from it. At least I do not know what people get from Christianity. What I look for in a faith are these three things.

I wish an explanation of my origin, of the origin of man and his relation to this world, and to what there may be beyond this world. I want an explanation I can accept, and that is not contradicted by the knowledge we acquire from other sources than religion.

And I want a guide to life. I want a guide to life as it is. For I have to live in the world as it exists, and I would have help and direction to do so well. I want a teaching and an example I can refer to in my everyday troubles.

Finally, I would know something of the Hereafter. I would desire to hear of the after death. I cannot believe that all non-Christians, including myself and the majority of Christians, go to hell. That is repulsive. Nor can I believe in the heavens they tell us of. If all be true that they tell us, it has no attraction this Christian heaven. To be for ever singing praises is not life but monotony. Did any man in health, and strength, and sanity ever yearn to die in order to reach this Heaven they tell us of? Did not Aucassin say long ago that if he were to believe the monks Heaven was a place for the poor and maimed, the foolish, the childish and silly, the stupid, the cowards, the ugly, the undesirable, the failures of earth, and that he cared not for it? Whoever was unfit for earth was the more fit for heaven. No! If there is another world it must be different from the conceptions of Heaven and Hell as are taught. And I would know. These seem to me the essentials of religion. They are the three things I want. I have not found them. It may be that in the other greater faiths that hold the world I may find what I seek. I cannot say. But meanwhile I must do without. It is better to have no compass than a faulty one. It is better to watch for the stars, even if the night be thick and it be hard to see.

Such, I think, was what he thought. Whether he ever found what he sought, whether any faith can give what he asks, whether indeed these three things are essentials of religion at all, will be found in the latter part of the book. This part is but the introduction to explain why and by whom the search was made, and what was sought.

CHAPTER VI

WHENCE FAITHS COME

From the East has come all our light. All world religions have begun there, have grown there, have mostly spread there.

Brahminism and Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, Mahommedanism and Parseeism, the cult of the Taoists and Confucians, every belief that has been a great belief, that has led man captive, has come from the East. Even the Mythologies of Greece and Rome were from Asiatic sources, from Babylon and Chaldea. In the North we have originated only Thor and Odin, Balder and the Valkyries.

I do not think anyone who has lived in the East can doubt why this has been so. Where is it man's thoughts are deepest and strongest, where is it that his heart responds to the heart of the world until they beat throb for throb?

It is never in the North; for the cold winds and dreary skies, the rain and cloud and gloom, do not draw a man out from himself, but drive him in. Every keen breeze that blows, every shower, every grey day, reminds him not of his soul but of his body. It must be kept warm, it must be fed, it must be housed. He cannot forget that the outside world must be guarded against, is an enemy to be feared.

And man must live in houses with other people. He cannot be alone, he cannot ever feel alone with just himself and the world. Yet it is only in solitude, when alone with Nature, that she will talk to you. For her voice is very low, and there must be a great silence before she will tell her secrets.

But there in the East it is not so. For weeks and months, for half the year may be, one perfect day is joined to another by more perfect nights.

Only there can man be alone. Only there, in the limitless silence of the desert, in the unending forests, can you live and forget all other men, and yourself almost, and be alone with Him who is God.

You want but little, no house to shelter you, no fire, but very little food and drink and clothes. You do not feel that restless desire to do something born of cold winds and skies. Your roof by day is the palm or tamarind, by night you watch the stars wheeling over your head. There is no one to commune with but Nature, and if you love her as she should be loved; if you woo her as she would be wooed; if you can send out your soul to lose itself with her in the wonders of the infinite, then shall you hear the music of the stars.

Thus has all religion come from the land of the sun: light is the fount of faith.

Never till you have been to the East can you know what faith is. Have we not religion, nay religions, in the North? Yes, but not as they have there. Do we not believe in the West? Yes, but not as they believe. Faith lies there in the great distances, in the dawn, the noon, the sunset, in the holiness of the dark. It has sunk into the heart of man. Consider, what do you see when you land anywhere in the East, what strikes you most, what is most prominent, not in the landscape, but in the people?

It is their religion.

You watch the people in the streets and you ask, Why has the merchant in that shop trident marks on his forehead? Because he is a Hindu and follows Vishnu. And that clerk who gave me money in the bank, why has he those other marks? Because he is a Brahmin. And that money-lender seems to have rubbed his forehead with ashes? He is a Chetty.

They carry their religion about with them, they are proud of it, they desire all men to know it. See that man's beard, he is a Mahommedan; and yonder man with a green turban, he is a Seyid. They would not desire you to doubt it.

Did you ever see Englishmen praying in the streets? Perhaps never. Certainly if ever you have seen it you condemned it as unnatural. "Let him pray at home," you have thought. "He is parading his piety." But here in the East it is different.

Go by the morning train, leave Rangoon Station when the sun is shining on the great pagoda, and you will see men and women and children lean out of the carriage windows to salute it, to murmur a prayer. The Mahommedan spreads his cloth and turns to Mecca, and prays no matter where he may be. He is not ashamed. It does not seem to him strange. He does it absolutely naturally, as all these people do all the things that pertain to their faiths. Neither his fellow-believers nor the adherents of other faiths wonder.

The Hindu may hate the Mahommedan for social reasons, and the Buddhist may hate both, but they do not despise each other for being religious.

It would never occur to a Hindu to despise or jeer at a Mahommedan for spreading his cloth at the street corner and praying. He thinks the faith a mistaken faith, *he* would not have it. But if a man is a Mahommedan it is right of him to pray, of course.

I have never heard, no one has ever heard, one Oriental jeer at another for being religious, for obeying the commands of his faith. But I have heard Christians and teachers of Christianity do so very often. We will jeer at a Mahommedan for praying, at a Hindu for observing his caste, at a Buddhist for raising his hands in honour to his pagoda, at a Chinaman for protecting the graves of his fathers. For in the West we have never known what real religion is. We have it not ourselves, and so we cannot recognise and honour it in others. No brave man will mock at another brave man, though an enemy; no one who has loved mocks at another lover, though he love strange things. Only those jeer who do not know, and the Christians of the West jeer at the faiths of the East, at the simple natural religion of the people, because they know not what religion of the heart can be.

In Europe, what difference does a man's faith make? None. He may live a lifetime with other men and no one know or care what his faith may be. Unless he is a poor man and in need of mission, it is considered impertinence to ask. But here in the East a man's faith is everything. You cannot get away from it even for a moment. It is an essential part of him.

There is another thing that strikes one very soon. These Oriental religions have little or no organisation. Here in Europe there is nothing so organised as religion. Consider the Catholic faith and the organisation of Rome. It is a marvel of government, of very strict government indeed. And the other forms of Western Christianity are not much behind. The Greek Church is organised as a branch of Government. So, too, to a lesser extent is the Anglican Church, and if the Dissenting bodies, as we call them, are not connected with the State, they have nevertheless a strong system of government.

These organisations are not now, of course, so strong as they were. They used to drag the men into religion by force, by State aid, they used to insist on conformity and punish laxity of observance. That is now gone, but a strong and continuous pressure still exists, exerted by the Churches in many ways. All Churches in Europe are always having "missions." Our great cities are full of them, and the country is not free of them. There has to be a continual shepherding of the flock or the Church might dwindle sadly. Men have to be preached at and caught one way or another. All through Europe immense sums are spent yearly in Christianising the poor.

In the East nothing of this exists. There is no head of Hinduism; that of the Sultan in Mahommedanism is merely nominal; how slight the organisation is of Buddhism those who have read my former book will know.

Hindus are guided by the race of Brahmins, who in turn are guided by no one. They are a great community themselves, without any organisation or binding authority. They need no Pope, no Acts of Uniformity. They are Brahmins because they are so. And so it may be said in general. Faiths in the East require no strong organisations to hold them together. Religion is innate in the believers. It seems wonderful. And they have no missions. If a man feels the need of faith he will seek it and obtain it. It is there for him if he will come. And all do come. How many millions in Europe, even in England, have no religious usages? Can you in the East find one man?

When you think of Europe and its faiths you seem to be in a garden where the hedges are carefully clipped and the flowers are trained and pruned, and where you may not walk on the grass. It

is all order, and method, and restriction, for the flowers are exotics and would die without the tending, they would vary if they were not kept true to type. But the East is Nature's garden, where the flowers grow wild everywhere; no one tends them or cares for them, but each grows his own way, develops his own power and strength, from the lowest grasses to the gorgeous orchid or the poison lily.

Therefore it may be that in this East, this country whence all religions have come, where the whole air breathes of faiths and all life is full of them, the man who has lost his early beliefs may learn new ones. There is so much to choose from, so many varieties of thought and emotion.

In this Empire of ours are all the great religions. It is the home of Brahminism, of the mystical forms of Hinduism, beyond which it has never spread. There are more Mahommedans here than under the Sultan of Roum. There are the Parsees here, fugitives long ago from Persia on account of their faith, the only sun worshippers who are left. There are Jews who came here no one can tell how long ago, there are Christians who date back may be eighteen centuries, there are Armenians and Arabs. Within this Empire live the only race professing a Buddhism that is pure and without superstition; and beside these there are a hundred other cults, superstitions, or religions, call them what you will.

From the spirit worship of the Shan plateau to the dignified philosophic theories of the Brahmo Somaj is a space as wide as the world can show, yet may it be bridged with religions that differ but by small degrees till the whole be passed.

If anyone want a faith here are enough and to spare. "Therefore," thought the boy, who had now become a man, "I will seek here for what I want. I know what I want. I have it clearly before me. I have even written it down. It is not as if I was undertaking a blind search for something of which I was not sure. These are my three essentials: a reasonable theory of the universe, a workable and working code of conduct, a promise in the after life that gives me something to really desire, to really hope for, to be a haven towards which I may steer. I will take each subject, each section of a subject, separately and read it up. I will read up these faiths from books, I will study them as I can from the people, and I will see what they are. Surely somewhere can be found what I desire, what I desire so greatly to find."

CHAPTER VII

THE WISDOM OF BOOKS

Therefore the man got books and read them. He read books on Hinduism, many of them; he read the Vedas and the sacred hymns. He learnt of Vishnu and Siva, of Krishna and the milkmaids. He found books on caste and read them, of how these were originally four castes which subdivided. He read of suttee and the car of Juggernaut. He then turned to Mahommedanism and the life of Mahommed. He read the Koran. He learned the early history of the faith, of its rise, of the glory of its result, of the fall of its great Empire. He saw it had much to do with Judaism, there were great similarities, there were also differences. He read of Parseeism, that taught by Zoroaster which they call fire worship; he read of Jainism, of the cult of the Sikhs, of many another strange faith; he learned of the spirit worship of the aboriginal tribes among the mountains, of Phallic worship and its monstrosities.

He read of Confucius and his teachings, of Laotze and his doctrines, of ancestor worship among the Chinese, of Shintoism in Japan.

Most of all he read about Buddhism. There was something here that attracted him more than in all the rest. In the life of Gaudama the Buddha he found a beauty that came to him as a charm, in the teachings of the Great Teacher there seemed to him a light such as he had not seen. Mystery and miracle and the supernatural had always jarred on him, they had an unpleasant savour, as of appeals to the lowest elements in the minds of the credulous and ignorant. Truth he thought should not need such meretricious attractions. Here was a faith that needed none of these things. It could exist without them. It contained explanations, not dogmas. It was reasonableness instead of hysteria, it denounced mysticism and the cult of the supernatural.

It took the man several years to read these books, and he lived those years much alone. His house lay half up a mountain side. Below him lay tangled masses of hills clothed with dense forest, with here and there a clearing. Before him was a jagged mountain wall, behind a great bare dome of rock. It was always wonderful to sit and watch, to see the sun rise in gold and crimson behind the peaks, while all below lay in a white mist; to watch the sun rays fall and the mist grow thinner, showing faint outlines of tree clump and hill contour, till all the mist was gone and the world was full of golden light. Daily he saw the marvel of the dawn. He learnt to love it as the most beautiful of things, most beautiful because full of the promise of untold glory. For the most part his life was very lonely. There were the labourers who worked for him, the black, half-nude people who came in gangs in May and left in February of each year. They were not of his world. He directed their work, he paid them, but he did not know them. He wondered at them, that was all, and there were scattered here and there throughout the hills other Europeans, who lived much the same life as he did, and whom he met occasionally at their houses or his, or at the club ten miles away. He liked them, some of them were his best friends, a great part of his life was theirs also.

But there was, aside from his friends, aside from the merry meetings, the games, the chaff, the laughter, another life apart. There was a life he lived to himself, in another world it seemed. His world was of the mountain and the fell, of the brooks that laughed down the precipice, of the giant trees, the tangled creepers, the delicate orchid far above. His thoughts were with them and with his books, for they should be brothers. He read and he watched, and he tried to understand; he asked of nature the meaning of these religions, to tell him the secret that he would know. What is the truth of things – what do you mean? And I – What do *I* mean? What is the secret of it all?

The mountains and the trees answered him and told him secrets, the secrets of their hearts, but not the secret he would know. They murmured to him of many things, of beauty, of love, of peace, of forgetfulness. They sang the world's slumber song.

But of whence, of how, of whither they told him nothing, only they ceased talking when he asked, they ceased their song and there was silence. They could not tell.

So he lay upon the rocks and read, and the hills and trees wondered because they knew not of what he read. "Take care," they whispered; "why trouble? Life is so short, surely it were wise to make the best of it; for no one can answer what you ask. We die and fall and new trees grow again, the hills are newly clad each year. The old return in new forms. We can tell of ourselves, we are not afraid. Our lives are full of delight. Death has no terror for us. But you? Of you we know nothing. We have no echo to your words."

Yet the man read on. He dreamed and read and dreamed again.

"I have three wants," he said. "I would know whence I came, I would have some rule to live by, I would know whither I am going. Religions, many religions profess to tell men these things, surely somewhere there will be truth. Nearly all men are satisfied with their religion, cannot I find one that satisfies me? It is so little that I ask, I have here so many answers. Amongst them I will be able to find what I want." Therefore he read on. But in the thoughts of many teachers there is not clearness, but confusion. In a multitude of counsellors there is not wisdom, only mist, only the strange shadows made by many lights. He found that he did not gain. "Sometimes," he said, "I agree with one, sometimes with another. No one seems to be altogether true. There is Truth, perhaps, but not the whole Truth. This will not do."

At last he said to himself that he would make a system. He would take certain ideas from various faiths, he would put them together, he would compare them one by one and see what he learnt.

There is, he said, the First Cause. What do religions say about this First Cause? There is Brahma, and Jehovah, and Ahriman, with Ormuz; there is the Buddhist doctrine of Law, there is the Christian Trinity. These are some of the chief ideas. What can be made of them? Have they a common truth? Are the great religions utterly at variance about this First Cause, or can they agree? I will take this point and consider it first. What is the First Cause? Then I will pass to another. What does life mean? Why are we here? Is there any explanation of this? For what object does man exist? To what end? He did not mean what is the end of man, but what is the object of man, of life? To whom is it a benefit that man exists? To God – if there be a God? If not, to whom? It cannot be that existence is an aimless freak, that it has no object. But what can this object be? What was to be gained by creating man at all? That was question number two. There is no answer to this question.

There were many other questions that he asked. And when he had framed a question he sat down to his books to find the answer. He worked at them as problems to be solved. He sought in the various faiths described in his books the answers to these problems. What he found will be shown in the next few chapters; but let it be understood again how and why he sought.

He had been born in a faith and brought up in it, and had abandoned it. He left it because he sought in it certain helps to thought and to life that it seemed to him religion ought to give. More, it seemed to him that these answers were of the very essence of religion. His fathers' faith gave him answers he could not accept, it gave him a rule of life he could not follow, that seemed to him untrue. Yet would he not be satisfied with ignorance, he would search further. He wanted a religion, a belief, and he would find it.

For I want it to be understood very clearly that he was no scoffer, no denier of religion. It was the very reverse. He so much wanted a faith, it seemed to him such an eminently necessary thing, that he would not be content till he had one that he could really accept and believe. He hated doubt and half acceptance. He wanted a truth that appealed to him as a whole truth, that held no room for doubt.

"All men," he said, "have religion. They love their faiths, they find in them help and consolation and guidance, at least they tell me so. Why am I to be left out? Men say that religion is a treasure beyond words. Then I, too, would share in the treasure. But I cannot take what has been offered me. It does not seem to me to be true. I *cannot* believe it. This religion repels me. I cannot say how greatly it repels me. They say it is beautiful. It must be so to some. It is not so to me. Its music to me is not

music, but harshest discord. It is not surely that I have no desire for religion, no eye for beauty, no ear for harmony, I know it is not that. No man loves beauty more than I do. There are things in this faith I have rejected that appeal to me. I see in other faiths, too, ideas that are beautiful. But no one seems all true, and none answers my three questions. Yet will I look till I find.

"And meanwhile there are the hills and the woods. These are my dreams.

"But surely in my scheme I shall discover something."

CHAPTER VIII

GOD

Sitting on the hillside when the hot season was coming near its end he saw the thunderstorms come across the hills. From far away they came, black shadows in the distance, and the thunder like far off surf upon the shore. Nearer they would grow and nearer, passing from ridge to ridge, their long white skirts trailing upon the mountain sides, until they came right overhead and the lightning flashed blindingly, while the thunder roared in great trumpet tones that shuddered through the gorges. The man watched them and he saw how gods were born. It was Thor come back again – Thor with his hammer, Thor with his giant voice. Thus were born the gods, Thor and Odin, Balder God of the Summer Sun, Apollo and Vulcan, Ahriman and Ormuz, night and day.

So were born all the gods. You can read of it in Indian, in Greek, in Roman, in Norwegian mythology, in any mythology you like. You can see the belief living still among the Chins, the Shans, the Moopers; for them the storm-wind and earthquake, the great rivers and the giant hills, all these have causes, and they who cause them are gods. From these have grown all the ideas of God that the peoples hold now. They were originally local, local to the place, local to the people, and as the people progressed so did their ideas of God.

It seemed to the man lying on his hillside easy to follow how it all arose; for, indeed, was it not going on about him? Did not the forest people speak of a god in the great bare rock behind him? Were there not gods in the ravines, gods in the hidden places of the hills? It was so easy to realise as he watched the storm-cloud bursting before him, as the lightning flashed and the thunder trumpet sounded in the hills, that men should personify these. Nay, more, he saw the wild men about him actually personifying them. He could understand.

God was the answer to a question; as the question grew so did the reply.

The savage asks but little. He does not ask "Who am I?" "Who made the world, and why?" Such questioning comes but in later years. He fears the thunder; it is to him a great and wonderful and overpowering thing. It forces itself upon his notice, and he explains it as the voice of a greater man, a God. He lives in the heavens, for His voice comes from thence. The giant peaks that swathe themselves in clouds, the volcano and the earthquake, the great river flowing for ever to the sea, with its strange floods, its eddies, its deadly undertow, in these too must be gods. These are the first things that force themselves upon his dim observance. He wonders, and from his wonder is born a god. But as he grows in mental stature, in power of seeing, in power of feeling, he observes other forces. How is the heaven held up, the great heavy dome as he imagines it? It is Atlas who does so. There is a god of the Autumn and Spring, of the Summer and Winter. So he personifies all forces he perceives but does not understand. For he has no idea of force except as emanating from a Person, of life which is not embodied in some form like his own or that of some animal. Whenever anything is done it must be Some One who does it, and that Some One is like himself, only greater and stronger.

There is not in the savage god any conception differing from that of man. There is not in any god any realisable conception different from that of man. The savage god is hungry and thirsty, requires clothes and houses, has in all things passions and wants like a man. That makes the god near to the man. With later gods is it different? God can be realised only by means of the qualities He shares with man. Deduct from your idea of God all human passions, love and forgiveness, and mercy, and revenge, and punishment, and what is left? Only words and abstractions which appeal to no one, and are realisable by no one. Declare that God requires neither ears to hear nor eyes to see, nor legs to walk with, nor a body, and what is left? Nothing is left. When anyone, savage or Christian, realises God he does so by qualities God shares with man. God is the Big Man who causes things. That is all.

To say that God is a spirit and then to declare that a spirit differs in essence from a man is playing with words. No realisable conception does or can differ.

The conception of force by itself is but a very late idea. As one by one the phenomena of nature attract man's observation he personifies them. It will be noticed that unless a force intrudes itself on him he does not personify it. What people ever personified gravity? And why not? Surely gravity is evident enough. Every time a savage dropped a stone on his toes he would recognise gravity. But no. That a stone falls to the ground because a force draws it is an idea very late to enter man's brain. It seems to him, as he would say, the nature of a stone to fall. And then gravity acts always in the same way. It is not intermittent – like lightning, for instance. Therefore he never conceives of gravity as a force at all. When men had come to perceive that it was a force, they had passed the personifying stage. But the savage personified each force as he perceived it. First the sun and storm, till at last he came to himself and began to study his own life. He had good and bad luck; that was Fortune. Evil deeds are done, and good; he is beginning to classify and generalise; there are gods of Good and Evil. He has come to Ormuz and Ahriman little by little; as his power of generalising progresses, he drops the smaller gods. They disappear, they are but attributes of greater gods. And as he grows in mental grasp and makes himself the centre of his world, so does the God of Man become the God of Nature too. The greater absorbs the lesser.

The God who cared for man, the God of his past, of his present, of his future, is become the great God. He rules all the gods until he alone is God.

So it seemed to the man that God arose, never out of reason, always out of instinct. There was no difference. It is all the same story. There is innate in all men a tendency to personify the forces they cannot understand. Because they want an explanation, and personality is the only one that offers at first. To attribute effects to persons is aboriginal science. To attribute them to natural laws is later science. Each is the answer to the same question. Men personify forces in different ways according to their mental and emotional stature, to their capacity for generalising. They express their ideas in different ways according to their race and their country. The Hindu began with a god in each force, to represent each idea, and so the lower people still remain, afraid of many gods. But those of mental stature gradually generalised, till at last they came to one God, Brahm, and the lesser gods as emanating from him. This was a hierarchy; and then finally the greatest thinkers came to one God only, and the idea that the lesser gods are but representatives of His manifold nature. You can see all the stages before you now. It is simply a question of brain power, and the sequence remains the same. First the lesser, then the greater. It is never the other way on.

So does Christian mythology personify three ideas of God, as a Trinity, as three Persons in One, and a Devil. The Hindu would express such a conception of God by a god with three heads. Christianity, rejecting such crude symbolism, does so by a mystical creed. The Devil is being dropped. But the Jew and the Mahommedan have only one God. All force emanates from Him. He is the Cause of all things. He is One.

And yet it is not a reasoned answer, but an instinctive one. The savage, no more than the Christian, does not reason out his God. The feeling, the understanding of God is innate, abiding – never the result of a mental process. The idea of God is a thing in itself; it grows with the brain, but it is not the result of any process of the brain; just as a forest tree grows the greater in richer soil.

As the idea of gods increased in majesty, as the numbers decreased and became merged in three, in two, or in one, so did their power increase. The gods were at first but local, local to the place, local to the tribe. So was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was jealous of the other gods. And gradually their local god or gods grew into the God of the whole world. It was only a question of mental development, of the power of generalisation in conception. Man conceived a ruler of the world in the Roman Emperor before he conceived an all-powerful God. The man as he meditated, as he watched, would see the stages before his eyes. There was the savage, the Kurumba and Moopa with his many gods in the hills all about; there were the Hindus, the traders whose temples shewed white

in the groves beneath, many steps higher in civilisation with their supreme Brahm and minor gods emanating from him; there was the Moslem with his "God is God." He had the stages before his eyes.

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