



# Voices of Hope

HORATIO W. DRESSER

# Voices of Hope



# Voices of Hope

and Other Messages from the Hills

A Series of Essays on the Problem of Life, Optimism, and the Christ

Horatio W. Dresser

YogeBooks: Hollister, MO

YOgeBooks by Roger L. Cole, Hollister, MO 65672  
© 2015 YOgeBooks by Roger L. Cole  
All rights reserved. Electronic edition published 2015  
ISBN: 978-1-61183-284-6 PDF  
ISBN: 978-1-61183-285-3 EPUB  
2015:10:15:10:30:24  
[www.yogebooks.com](http://www.yogebooks.com)

*The text of this ebook is in the public domain, but this ebook is not. Please do not distribute it without authorization.*

"Defeated day by day, but unto victory born."—BROWNING.

To my Friend HENRY WOOD

## Preface.

---

ONE OF the most beautiful scenes in Nature is the reawakening of the mountain summits after the darksome days of a summer storm. Slowly and hesitatingly at first, great masses of clouds roll along the lower slopes and rise from the deep ravines. Then a long gleam of sunlight falls across great reaches of forest and rock in earnest of what is to follow. Here and there a snowy peak looks out, but immediately withdraws, as if in doubt as to its right to reveal its wintry purity. But, after a time, the lingering clouds disperse with surprising rapidity; and the towering heights stand out in all their glory. What words can picture the beauty of the scene now spread before the eager vision of one who has for days awaited its coming? The time is too sacred to spend in ordinary occupations. One must ascend some neighboring hill, and yield the senses to receptive enjoyment. There is an inspiration in the atmosphere which gives wings even to the feet; and one is drawn irresistibly higher and higher, until an entire horizon of ice-clad peaks is defined against the cloudless blue of heaven. No record of facts could reveal the charm of such a day. Then only can every feature of the landscape be accurately observed, and the mind delights for a time in mere contemplation of details. But, when the soft light of evening falls upon the mountain heights, and the brighter glare of day gives place in

blending succession to gold and pink and the marble-like whiteness of twilight, all details are lost in the harmony of the whole,—the oneness of mood of Nature and the beholder. The soul has absorbed somewhat which it shall never lose. Neither prose nor poetry could tell what. It was Nature's exhibition day, her smiling mood, her optimism. It was the stern dignity of resistless law, touched by the soft beauty of the ideal whose servant it is. It was life attaining its proper level, pausing for a moment, then plunging into the uncertainties and triumphs of another day.

The mind detects a close analogy between this climax of Nature's attainments and the successive aspirations of human life. Of such transformations all experience is compounded. The world loves mystery, if not darkness, with all that its obscurity conceals. But there is an instinct which seeks the clear visions of cloudless thought. One cannot tear the clouds away. These displays of Nature's supreme beauty never come when one most urgently seeks them, but in her own secret way; and you must quickly observe while the vision lasts. Yet even a cloudless day will not admit us to the full perception of the meaning of life. In these days of scientific daring we have learned much about the mere configuration of existence. Life is as mathematical as the sternest could demand. Pay its price, and you shall have what you seek. The prudent will sometime learn to live here in perfect health by obeying Nature's mental and physical laws. For action and reaction are equal. Action emanates from within, depends on the state of development, and may be improved indefinitely by sharpening the wisdom of choice. Yet exactness is only the prose of beauty. "Life is real, life is earnest." But the way to live it successfully is to be alive also to its poetry. Agnosticism has peered at the sharp summits of life, until it is blind to the transfigured light which alone reveals their true worth. Life is to be contemplated, enjoyed, as well as analyzed and rendered exact. At times it is simply to be observed appreciatively, as one gazes in rapture at the mountains.

Without assuming to know life's secret, I shall address myself to the sceptic, the lonely soul, and the troubled heart, and try, as an observer of

our human world and a lover of Nature, to share some of the facts and beauties gathered along the way as I have watched the glorious awakening of the mountain summits of life. The following essays and papers, written at different times, seem to throw light upon one another, and to voice the optimistic mood. The volume contains the substance of courses of lectures delivered in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; and some of the chapters have been in part published in the *Journal of Practical Metaphysics*, but the revision has been such as to make the book practically new, as well as the expression of a greater hope. The sceptic may object that the mind easily conceives false hopes, and that it were wiser to describe life at its worst. But the author sincerely believes the optimistic mood to be the only one which reveals the fulness of life. Pessimism is ignorance, cloudland, and sleep. We are awake when we are hopeful, when we stand upon the mountain top and enjoy a commanding view. Pessimism is a sign of disease: it withers and blights. Optimism beholds all that pessimism saw in the gloomy vales, and more,—even the source of the dark rivulets which wear away their wooded slopes. But the author does not insist on just his optimism. Nor does he wish to preach,—only to return to the universe some measure of the beauty it has bestowed upon him, to express the joy of living in this well ordered world. In other volumes he has worded this faith before. It is a delight to express it again, almost a necessity to share it. He believes, too, that the “wicked world” will sometime respond. It is neither incurably pessimistic nor pernicious. It still has much to learn from the enjoyment and study of nature; and these lessons shall sometime teach man how to be not only happy, but good. Persons are frequently disappointing, the mountains never. But the world is awakening to the beauties of the perfect mountain day. We can prepare ourselves for its coming by giving ourselves over to the contemplation of beauty, by making its realization an end in life, by cultivating beautiful thoughts, and by being true to hope. The world was built in beauty. Every day, every hour, is full of revelation of truth and beauty—for him who has eyes to see it. The entire responsibility is therefore placed upon the

individual. A man might stand unawed before a glacier-covered mountain, if absorbed in the pessimism of self. Pessimism is but another name for egoism: it has a truth to teach; but it is barely the beginning of the fullest beauty and truth of life. There is a way out of misery to the heights of happiness and peace. But they are the heights of virtue and the Christ. We need not complain of the universe. We need not charge evil to some god of our own creation. The trouble lies within, and every atom must be purified. There is no half-way solution. There is no easy road to the Alps of thought. But the goal is worth all efforts to attain it. Down the steep slopes, from the beautiful pasture lands, the voices of hope are carried to the toiling traveller. The joyous babbling of the brook, the gentle beauty of the flowers, and the happy jodel of the peasant, all seem to express this hope, this merry optimism of Nature, and to be in keeping with the dignity of the mountains. All the universe rejoices in glad recognition of its Maker. All the music of the spheres is attuned to the key-note of hope. Out of the heart of humanity arises the response of love.

MÜRREN, SWITZERLAND,

July, 1898.

## Contents

---

PREFACE.	VII
I. THE PROBLEM OF LIFE.	15
II. THE BASIS OF OPTIMISM.	33
III. CHARACTER-BUILDING.	51
IV. A SCEPTIC'S PARADISE.	65
V. THE OMNIPRESENT SPIRIT	73
VI. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.	87
VII. THE ESCAPE FROM SUBJECTIVITY.	95
VIII. LOVE.	101
IX. THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.	111
X. THE CHRIST.	129
XI. THE PROGRESSING GOD.	139
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	151



# Voices of Hope



## I. The Problem of Life.<sup>1</sup>

---

This passing moment is an edifice  
Which the Omnipotent can not rebuild.

*Emerson.*

WHEN ONE looks forth upon the fair world of nature, marvellously wrought and bearing numberless evidences of the wisest foresight, or considers the great realm of mind where the beauties of nature are transformed into literature, art, and science, the question inevitably suggests itself: Whence came it all? What does it all mean? Whither is the great stream of life tending? This is an old, old question,—the problem of life. Each of us has proposed it again and again. Each of us has again and again been thrown back in deepened scepticism or apparent defeat. Yet we continually look out on life in the same spirit of wonder, marvelling at its strange assemblage of joys, sorrows, surprises, doubts, and victories; the coming and going of its odd specimens of humanity; its throngs of hurrying, laboring, or pleasure-loving people; and its ceaseless movement toward some far-away goal. Each time our wonderment inspires greater eagerness

---

1. A paper read before the Lothrop Club, February, 1898.

to master and publish its secret. Each time a fresh answer to the baffling question brings greater satisfaction than the solution of some time-honored system. Some way of meeting the problem is implied in the attitude each of us assumes in daily life. The belief haunts us that the meaning of our individual struggle may yet be known. And thus, ever relentlessly, and with unwavering hope, the human spirit sends itself forth, once more and yet again, essaying to interpret both the beauty and hardship of the universe.

The great problem has been variously stated, and is probably suggested to each observer in different terms. To some the question comes forcibly, Is life worth living at all? For many the matter resolves itself into this: Must we take life as we find it, passively accepting circumstances as they come? Or, if we conclude that man is an active agent in life's evolution, how are we to play our part most successfully? How may we attain the greatest amount of happiness or amass the most wealth? While the philosopher asks, What is life for? his interest is usually technical, with slight regard for the demands of practical life; and nearly every way of putting the great question suggests an equal neglect of some phase of life which to another is of foremost importance.

The thesis I shall maintain is that for all these aspects of life's problem there is but one adequate solution. The way to know if life be worth living is for each to live and understand it in its fullest sense, sound its hopes, and try its possibilities. To become happy or spiritual, one must not seek these ends alone, but round out all sides of human character. The philosopher shall not understand the laws which govern the living universe, nor can he interpret its full beauty and meaning by sitting apart and observing life's changing play. He, too, must live, must have a rich social experience. To comprehend its harmony, he must become in harmony with it, since to know means first to be, then to think. *A priori* reasoning is likely to lead one astray. We may think we know what life will be before we live it. We construct beautiful theories. But the test alike of faith and of theory is experience. Hence to know what beauty is, what love is, what the Christ is, man must

himself become beautiful, he must love, must fashion his conduct after the Christ ideal. The richest experience shall then give birth to the truest theory, and he only shall be competent to speak whose life exemplifies the truth he utters. There is no solution of life's problem short of this, either in its intellectual or its practical aspects. It is a problem which must be solved by actual life carried to its ultimate stage, where each soul has lived, suffered, overcome, thought, and been perfected, until, true to the universal will and strong on all sides of his nature, word, deed, head, hand, and heart shall tell the same beautifully consistent story.

The starting-point is to take ourselves as we exist to-day, and gradually realize this grand ideal as applied to our particular mind and heart,—to begin first with knowledge of one's own lower and higher nature. Our situation in life is somewhat like this. We awake to consciousness to find ourselves played upon by a universe of conflicting forces. Irresistibly, as the tide rolls in upon a sandy shore, the incoming stream of sensation is brought before the mind. Marvellous is this flow of the great river of consciousness, bearing into the inner world, where the soul sits in contemplation, its interplay of pains and pleasures, the frivolities and shows of the world, its joys, its strifes and crimes, its sympathies, its eccentricities, and its tales of heroism. Remarkable, too, is the endlessly varying play of thought and emotion aroused by this incoming tide. The soul sits in wonder, or in doubt and despair, long before it can begin to see any meaning in this ceaseless interaction between the world without and the mind within. We are plainly left in ignorance, not only of the reason why we are here, but of the wisest way to live. Evidently, the God who put us here loves us with a devotion so great that he is willing even to let us suffer that each may know from first-hand experience what life is, how best to live it and what it means. Despite our ignorance and suffering, despite the confusion which attends this successive interplay of comfort and discomfort, of doubt, happiness, and defeat, one fact stands out clearly from the moment we begin seriously to think. We desire to have some experiences triumph over others. We long for freedom from pain,

for happiness and peace. Just this baffling ignorance prompts an insatiable desire to know; and almost before we are aware of it we have made of life a problem which we intend to solve, though it take eternity.

Each of you would, I suspect, make the same confession if questioned in regard to your special problem. Here you are, living and thinking amidst this great strife of forces which carry you ceaselessly forward. You have a measure of happiness, yet you are dissatisfied. Sometimes you halt by the way. Then you find a definite clew, and follow it for a long time. Again and again life seems burdensome. You would gladly drop the cares of maturity, and return to the unconsciousness of childhood. But a superior power bears you resistlessly on. If you do not move on good-naturedly, you are made to feel the sharp spur of necessity. With each, also, this power takes an individual turn; and herein consists your problem. There is in each a special longing, a dissatisfied or undeveloped side. Around this undeveloped part all your trials and pains centre. The question is: How can your weakness become your strength? What is the superior power accomplishing through this unfinished portion of your life? Why are you still dissatisfied? Why do you still complain, lose your temper, and add to the misery of others? Why do you possess two selves, or natures, in conflict?

For example, take the man of exceedingly sensitive temperament. He is finely organized, his aspirations are spiritual, he is kind, thoughtful, affectionate, morally upright, and strong; but he is also extremely susceptible to outside influences, and these influences do not always take the highest form. For, besides his spiritual nature, he possesses a strongly marked animal nature. Here is the mystery. Why is it that side by side with the will to do right, the strong desire to become spiritual, there is a nature which his will apparently cannot conquer? Why is he easily influenced on the lower plane, while for every higher attainment he must pay a heavy price?

Is this not a fair statement of life's problem,—the conflict of two selves, the question what to do with the weak or undeveloped side, the animal, and how to adjust ourselves to the forces of evolution, that we may be

receptive only to the highest? For, if you search deeply enough, can you not trace disease, sin, crime, evil, back of their effects to this undeveloped nature, where their cause is located? Or let us be frank for once, and confess that selfishness is really the root of it all. The vital problem, then, is, How shall selfishness be overcome? For every problem at last centres about this. This difficulty lies back of all questions of moral, social, and political reform, the problems of wealth and poverty, of war, sin, and crime. Yes, it is the real question at issue in disease. This is the great obstacle put between man and the realization of the Christ ideal. This it is which he must overcome, and, by paying this tremendous price, earn the right to be at peace, be happy, and know the meaning of life. And, since all problems reduce themselves to this, all time spent upon other solutions is to a certain extent wasted; for, if the philosopher in his garret has failed to solve life's problem, if it be still a mystery to the invalid and the financier, here is the reason,—that self still stands in the way.

My proposition, then, is that the universe is ultimately a harmony; that a divinely beneficent and all-wise Power is its origin and life, and that each of us is a particular phase of this great Power, or Life, but that each is given this weak side, this great bulk of ignorance leading to misery and selfishness, that he may have fullest experience, that this divine ideal may have the opportunity to unfold, that we may become strong through contest and beautiful through victory.

This is no new proposition, and the reader fears I am about to weary him with a restatement of some time-worn theory. But, old or new, people show by their conduct that they are not yet ready to try this solution; for they are still trying to remedy effects, they still blame one another instead of looking to their own natures as the cause of all trouble, they continually attribute their misery to God. I maintain that the essentials of the true solution are just these trying personal experiences at which we rebel and from which we seek freedom. The man who is easily influenced is each day meeting just such difficulties as afford him the best food for philosophical thinking. The

remedy is to think, to understand one's self, to overcome the selfishness of the world by first becoming unselfish. Moreover, it is evident that one's perplexing personal problem will continue until it be understood, the weak side strengthened, and self overcome. This is the solution of the mystery. This is why the animal survives so long, because, if it did not, we should not learn our lesson. Man will cease to sin only when he understands the creative pressure from within. It is hopeless pessimism to deem him perverse. He continues his selfish life only because he has not thought enough, because he has not yet grasped the beauty of altruism. He will choose the Christ life when he fully appreciates the joy, the rich opportunity for service, which it offers.

What, then, is the motive power behind these conditions,—the selfishness, misery, and happiness through which we evolve into wisdom and virtue? Is it not the real ego, or soul, which goes forth from the great creative life, freighted with special powers and possibilities of thought and action? If so, then each soul has not only its individual message, but the power to attract the conditions essential to full self-expression. It is sent into the dark world of ignorance and trial with a latent Christ locked far within. Thus equipped, it attracts the parentage and environment necessary to the fulfilment of the creative purpose. It may or may not have successive incarnations. On this point our knowledge of the soul's history is most obscure.<sup>2</sup> I am laying stress rather on the motive power than on the process.

All growth proceeds from a centre. Essential to growth is a favorable environment. Throughout the history of thought, authorities have been divided as to which was the real power,—the external conditions or the life manifested through them.<sup>3</sup> Some say, Work upon effects, and the inner life will express itself. Others say, Assume the right attitude within, and the outer

---

2. I have discussed this question at length: "In Search of a Soul," Chap. V.

3. On this point see an able discussion on "Great Men and their Environment," by Professor James: "The Will to Believe." Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1897.

circumstances will change. But both sides are essential. We may unfold from within and co-operate from without: it is not enough to have a large soul and a poorly developed body. Rounded development is essential to the full expression of the soul; for, if man is to come into harmony with the universe, the union must be physical as well as mental, and a well-developed body makes this possible. Consequently, the way to become unselfish is not to sacrifice, but develop self. When I am most fully myself, I shall be of greatest service to society. There is no real conflict between self and society. The power of selfishness in the world is the power of individual service in course of evolution, it is good in itself.

The problem of life, then, is not to be taken as a burden to be pondered over with a weight of seriousness: it is to be taken as a blessing and privilege, as much as to say: Here I am existing in this beautiful universe of law and order. I am needed: otherwise I should not be here. There is but one power in the universe. Consequently, nothing can defeat me if I do my part. The friction I feel is due to the effort of the soul to come forth to freedom. I am still conscious of friction because my will is not in harmony with the universal will. But I shall conquer, I will trust, be faithful and patient, because I see the law, because I know that, as inevitably as the apple falls when it is loosened from the tree, my soul will draw the conditions requisite for its growth.

If, then, a higher wisdom adjusts all means to a supreme end, it follows that the present conditions, just these problems which seem so hard, have not only come to us in wisdom, but in response to our own attitude. If we rebel, if we blame others, and do not try to think or develop, then we remain where we are without learning our lesson, still in ignorance and misery.

What is the law which regulates the coming of these conditions? It is obviously action and reaction. "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap." Here is the basis of all activity. If we return anger for anger, we must take the consequences. If we worry, we must expect to be miserable. But, if we love, others will love us. Is this not the essence of Jesus' teaching? Is it not the substance of all common-sense moral and spiritual doctrine, the lesson

of our entire experience, the substance of the teaching of the ages? If so, experience is a series of opportunities which one may take or lose. We mount higher in the scale of life by our own acts only, by the occasions we take to do good, to strike the note of harmony, to love. All that is demanded of us that our individual problems may be solved, is that we shall choose the wisest way,—of two movings, select the one which makes for character, the disinterested guidance, the altruistic prompting, stop this mad rush of impulse and habit, and think, consider the consequences, and follow the most rational course.

Let us now apply these principles to daily life. Suppose the case is that of a woman who is compelled to do work that is irksome. She aspires to better things. Shall she try to break off from it when it is most irksome? No, say all who regard life from the point of view of character-building. That is a part of her problem. If she were to free herself from it when most irksome, she might have it all to go through again. At this hardest point her work will do the greatest good. The open door to higher work is contentment with the task at hand, while still keeping in mind the higher ideal. No work will be given us except that which is needed for our development. We have what we deserve, for the law of action and reaction ultimately means that justice reigns at the heart of things. If we hold the ideal in mind, we may know that the conditions favorable to its realization will come the moment we are ready,—*never before*; for we can omit no step in evolution.

Again, suppose the problem is that of domestic inharmony. Here surely is a splendid opportunity, for the place in which to work out a problem so that it shall mean most for the soul and the understanding is the place where the problem arises. One cannot run away from one's problem. It will pursue one to Europe. It insists upon just the solution which you alone can give it. The trouble, so far as one is personally concerned, is in one's own nature. The opportunity is open to make things harmonious, to learn the lesson which precisely that trying situation offers. And usually half of the problem is solved when we cease to blame others, and begin to remedy

our own attitude; for it is not environment which makes for character, nor what others do for us. It is the way we take circumstances. And "no change of circumstance can repair a defect of character." "The problem of life," says David Starr Jordan, "is not to make life easier, but to make men stronger. The essence of tyranny lies not in the strength of the oppressor, but in the weakness of the weak." If I am down-trodden, I must blame myself for submitting. "Only thyself, thyself canst harm." The sensitive man who suffers from the unkind remarks of others, or from contaminating atmospheres, must learn that his nature is the cause. The one who rebels must see the wisdom of the circumstance at which he rebels. If circumstances do not change at once, there is sufficient reason. The important point is to take ourselves where we are, try to understand the principles involved, come to judgment, and discover how we have built character by the way we have taken circumstances.

A close analysis of such a situation shows that deep within the mental world lies the primary cause of all the outer life brings us. If we penetrate deeply, we may observe the mind in the act of changing from one attitude to another. Our mental attitudes may in fact be divided into two great classes,—those which tend to draw in and those that are outgoing and expansive; in other words, the selfish and the unselfish. With the attitude of giving is manifest the outgoing spirit. Anger and fear contract, love and trust expand; happiness sends an expansive, awakening thrill through the body, depression tends to draw one into self, into trouble and sensation; morbid conscientiousness and introspection have the same result. We may safely say of all long-faced and gloomy religion that it is wrong. The beauty of life is not seen by looking into a pit. The eyes must be turned outward and upward. We are not in an attitude to see clearly while we look only into self. We cramp or enlarge the life according to the attitude of mind and body, for the body follows where the mind leads.<sup>4</sup>

---

4. For suggestive thoughts in this portion of the discussion I am indebted to A. G. Dresser.

Here is a physical reason for happiness, a method of self-help and cure. Observe closely enough to see how everything responds to the outgoing spirit, or, if it be a mean act, how the soul itself is shut in by the very smallness of your conduct. When you are depressed, you may know that you are not loving enough, that you are thinking too much of self. Grief is the selfish thought of personal loss. The selfish person loves only for what he may acquire for personal development. Then he drops his friend, and passes on to the next: whereas the unselfish one is ever loyal, well knowing that, when the limitations are discovered in another, the time has come to be of greatest service. To the unselfish one development comes incidentally. He does good unawares: the selfish man wishes his deeds published abroad. He is parasitic, ungrateful; while the unselfish one has an immediate prompting to share with others.

Again, if I am disappointed in people, I should know that I am thinking too much of self, of what others can do for me instead of what I can do for them. The habit of judging others by self is another indication, also egotism, superiority, aristocracy, and the method of studying life wherein the tenderest emotions are subjected to cold intellectual analysis. Is there not a profoundly selfish element in the human intellect, that grasping, arbitrary, proud, frigid master, which crowds the spirit, and is willing to sacrifice anything and everybody to science? Its rigidly accurate descriptions are not life. Life is warm, pulsating, outgoing; and one must live, sympathize, love, in order to know it. "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." The Highest refuses to be trapped and imprisoned. It speaks when the heart speaks, and you cannot force it into the formula and crucible.

Another deviation into selfishness is the withdrawing into our shell when circumstances are unfavorable and people displease us. But, when others are unkind, when they misjudge and send out hatred, then we should send forth more love. It is our fault if we become subjectively imprisoned, if we have few friends. The flesh is selfish, and he who would rise to the altruistic plane must first learn self-control,—master impulse and let the spirit govern.

All the passions are reducible to selfishness in different forms,—envy, spite, revenge, impatience, jealousy, hatred, sensuality; and so, to strike at the root of these, you must conquer self. One would not worry unless one thought too much of self. No one need fear who loves enough. Exclusiveness is selfishness, and “the exclusive excludes himself.” Selfishness not only lays the blame elsewhere, but finds excuses for itself. It masquerades as altruism; it is the false Christ; it schemes; is self-deceptive, pretending; puts its best foot forward, uses pet names to conceal its real motive; it is two-faced, overbearing, expecting all things to give way before it, demanding that people shall move to suit its convenience; it will not discommode itself, but will allow another to become its slave; it permits itself to be flattered, idolized, and accepts unlimited favors without a word of gratitude; it uses influence, pressure, even hypnotism; it lives in and encourages sensation, demanding that others shall coddle it, even lead a life of self-sacrifice, in order to maintain the selfish life. Thus invalidism, aided by medical skill, becomes a fine art. Selfishness masquerades as love when alleged love desires possession of another. Is not marriage in many forms simply licensed selfishness?

It comes in the guise of friendship, claiming to be impersonal. Rather than see itself fail, it will stand between people, create discord, and adopt even degrading means to its end. Its poisoned darts of retaliation and persecution are hurled into the bosom of a peaceful household, and it would rather die than see a rival occupy the place it sought to fill. In a word, it is the devil himself, the tempter, the evil in the world. It presents a solid front to the spirit, inert, indifferent, irresponsive, a wall to be broken and overcome, if one would pass into the realms of health, happiness, and peace. Yet it is so subtle and sly that it steals into the mind a thousand times after one thinks the larger part is conquered.

○ grinding taskmaster, tyrant, aristocrat, thief, thou art the fiend whom the world has pursued, until, in the bitterness of thy spirit, thou hast ever resorted to subtler schemes, determined at last to wreak vengeance on the

god of love! The world hunts thee as never before. In vain are thy plots laid, in vain that, driven from many of thy strongholds in the outer world, thou hast made even the mysterious power of the psychic realm thy instrument of cunning. We press hard upon thee; and, though thou dost assume the guise of the Christ, the mask will be torn from thee, and love, not hate, shall prevail.

But why do we dignify Satan with the title of thee? Why is he the most fascinating character in life's great play? Is it not because he is an angel in process of becoming, because selfishness is misdirected God-power turned toward self and used for self? No one cares for mere goodness. It is the energy, the enterprise of the world which awakens interest and calls forth admiration. The life and hope of the world lie within just this passion, this activity and deviltry which we call evil while it is turned toward self. It is that only which keeps us awake and active. Otherwise we should fall into the eternal stupidity and doziness of mere goodness which has nothing to conquer, and is not sufficiently animated to care whether it lives or dies. What other reason can you assign for the existence of passion in a world bearing so many evidences of perfect wisdom? What other solution to the problem of life, which is really the problem of evil?

If you look through history, do you not find that this strongest side is the active factor from the dawn of life? It appears first as the struggle for self-protection, the survival of the fittest, pushing the weaker side. Might was right for ages. But long ago the wonderful process of transmutation began. The presence of human beings in groups gave opportunity for the birth of altruism, already latent in animal life. The power once expressed as selfishness began to be turned outward instead of inward, and this change in the directing of our forces is the secret of the marvellous process of transmutation. There are not in reality two selves, or powers, in conflict, but one power turned now inward to self, now outward to humanity.

The friction is due to the fact that the outward turning is in harmony with the creative moving, the inward against it. Man must discover the almost

numberless subtleties of the indrawing emotions and thoughts, then, as a consequence of each discovery, face squarely the other way. This changing process has been going on for ages. It is everywhere going on among nations and individuals to-day. What we wish is to see the power behind selfishness and all its derivatives turned toward the light, so that the bold spirit of enterprise, which has cleared the forests and built up modern civilization, shall be focussed on the moral and spiritual planes. Hitherto it has been physical. To-day it is triumphantly intellectual, scientific. The centre of activity is thus shifted from lower to higher planes. Eighteen hundred years ago it was earnestly focussed at the spiritual centre. Each time it is lifted it arouses into opposition the conservative power of habit. The Christ spirit has tried for eighteen hundred years to overcome the habits of the world.

The same struggle is apparent in each of us to-day,—the shifting of the creative centre toward the highest plane, and the obstinate resistance of the old. Each must solve the problem of transmutation in his own life, because man is a free moral agent. I must choose before circumstances respond, and, in order to choose wisely, I must understand myself; for selfishness is due, not to perversity, but to ignorance. The cure for selfishness is wisdom. For untold generations people have tried the method of fighting, suppression, force, aggressiveness. But, the greater the force applied, the more hostility is aroused. He who schemes and uses pressure does not know the law.

If you take what you believe to be yours, and make people stand aside, you may indeed have what you seek. Man is free to be selfish, if he will. If God forced us to be good, there would be no moral world, and consequently no individual existence. But he tells us with a patience which knows no fatigue that there is a higher way, the method of the outgoing life, the pathway of the spirit of love, peace, and happiness. You may search in vain for happiness and peace along the byways of egoism. Here alone is joy to be found, here alone are health and harmony; and he who would enter must no longer impose his way and his plan upon the universe, but seek out the

way the universe is going. Thus shall the prayer of the Christ be answered in minutest detail,—“Not my will, but thine be done”; for it is a universal law.

The supreme test of one’s faith, therefore, is its application to daily life. It is the little thoughts and emotions that make or unmake us, according as they are outgoing or ingoing. Let us put this fact strongly enough to remember it: that, as selfishness is hatred, so unselfishness is love. The one tends toward insanity, the other toward sanity. The mind is like a sensitive plant which opens and closes in response to the least change of feeling or thought. In the egoistic attitude, one is buried in the flower, in sensation, in one direction of thought. In the altruistic, one looks outward and upward to the sunshine.

Look, then, at the tormenting passion within you, and rejoice. Never again deem it evil or low. It is the highest in disguise,—the prompting of God to your soul to become creative by turning it to the centre where you are best fitted to be outgoing. Within your body as well as in your mind and heart, I repeat, the great process of transmutation is going on. Always, when a new experience comes, regard it as the activity of the creative spirit. It calls for readjustment and assimilation, just as a new idea is at first combated, thought over, accepted, and finally given forth as one’s own. The incoming of power from the highest touches the lowest, and sets it in motion. If we do not understand it, we look down into it, think we have lost ground, and become discouraged. If we know what it means, we are thankful and rejoice. Thus one learns to be grateful for every evolutionary opportunity, well knowing that without regeneration and a severe test of faith the greatest spiritual gifts can never be ours.

Another important point is due recognition of individual rights. The father and mother think they know so much better what the son should become, that they find it almost impossible to let him have his experiences. They forget that he, too, is an individual soul with a work in the world, and that just because of that work he necessarily has ideas and methods differing from their own. It is futile to think we can spare another the test experiences of life.

It is the order of nature that each soul should start out from the paternal home to seek the experiences essential to its development. The soul can be trusted to seek such condition as it needs. No parent can own a soul, any more than there can be ownership in true marriage. That parents have given a soul physical birth should be esteemed a privilege. They have not made the soul. Their part, however great, is secondary; for the primary cause is the God-given individuality. He who understands this in himself, and recognizes it in others, has the key to the solution of life's problem.

Let me see clearly that my inner self attracts its like, and no one else is to be blamed or praised, and then let me understand that every soul is so situated, and is to be treated with respect, and all will be well. The environment affords the condition essential to the development of the soul, just as a university governed by the elective system places every opportunity before the student, without compelling him to study what every one else studies. The student under such a system is supposed to understand himself well enough to know what he wants. He is to take what belongs to him, and discover his own method of obtaining it.

Every one, to be sure, is dependent on parents and friends for a time; and much depends on the start in life. In the same way men and women are long dependent on lectures and books, certain physical comforts, and the like. "But books are for the scholar's idle hours," says Emerson. They are essential only until we can do without them by thinking out life's problem for ourselves. So with physical surroundings. The day comes when one is no longer bound by them. It matters little where one lives, if only one be meeting life's problem, and learning the eternal principles involved.

The march of life, therefore, means for each soul, progress toward freedom of the powers of thought and the mutual helpfulness whereby souls free one another. The problem of life is the problem of education enlarged to cover the entire scope of human existence. We graduate and pass to the next grade only as rapidly as we free the true self, and learn the beautiful lesson of service. Suffering shall accompany us until we understand the law

by which we create it. But, if the theory advocated in this chapter is in any measure true, it is within our power to overcome suffering, to learn life's wisdom through harmony instead of through discord. Unless each soul should pass through life's varied discords and melodies, it would not know the perfect symphony. The lost chord is the unity wrought by love between soul and soul. The Christ life assimilates in new relations all that has gone before.

The majority apparently lack faith to try this solution of the problem of life. But the law is plain. We can harmonize where we love. We can love where we put self aside, for love is ever unselfish. We can love when we cease to criticise and blame, when we recognize individual rights and the needs of the soul. Love fulfils, unifies. Its opposite, or the state of mind which draws one into self, takes away from, depletes, brings discord. Closing in and opening out, hating and loving, this is the story of life until the last bit of selfishness is transformed. The problem is easy or difficult according to our view of it. Each time our analysis compels us to return to the inner attitude as the essence of it all. "As man thinketh in his *heart*, so is he," not as he thinks superficially. While we go on living and thinking, the conservative forces will run out if we pay no attention to them. The creative life is with the new. The old will struggle, but heed it not. Hold fast to the ideal, work and wait.

The unfailing remedy is to understand. Know yourself, know your most individual ideas, and be true to them. Understand your friends and your environment, philosophize about life, think out the relationship of man with God. Fear, anxiety, pessimism, disease, evil, and selfishness are the children of ignorance. Knowledge of self is power over self. Knowledge of people gives freedom from people, so far as they enslave. The only repose which neither calamity nor enemy can destroy is the calm reserve power of the man who understands, he who sees the law and governs his life by it. For such knowledge as this is not understanding of self alone, but perception of the Power which the law reveals.

We are not alone in solving the problem of life. We have not only one another, but the Power that equipped us to think and live is with us each moment. Our individual problems are but so many phases of the great problem of the universe. The problem of race evolution is to be worked out by the solution of the enigmas of each individual soul, and the social problem is the great question set before himself by the Thinker of the universe. That which each soul shall contribute to the infinite consciousness is the only problematical element of life from this larger point of view. The one Power moves through all, granting to each the inestimable joy of co-operation. Let life be imbued with the realization of this truth of truths, and the problem will seem lighter forevermore. The Supreme Power will not help when we can aid ourselves. But it is ever present with us while we think, loving with us while we love.

Selfishness is antagonism and hatred. Unselfishness is co-operation and love. To look outward and upward is to receive unfailing help. To look inward and downward is to burden ourselves with our own weight. He who runs may read the solution of the riddle of life, written in plain characters on every circumstance. Each soul contains a secret clew to the heart of the Sphinx. Life is just the enticing play it is because it takes us so long to find the golden thread. But patience and trust, whate'er betide. To each shall be measured out just that portion of wisdom and virtue which his own deeds have merited.



## II. The Basis of Optimism.<sup>5</sup>

---

Whose faith hath centre everywhere,  
Nor cares to fix itself to form.

*Tennyson.*

**T**HE MOST hopeful reformation that can take place in the human mind is the escape from bondage to dogma or authority, and the discovery of the rich possibilities of a broad and unhampered philosophy of evolution. The philosophies of the past have been chiefly doctrines of absolutism or fatalism. The Church has been the receptacle of well-established creeds, conservative, retrospective, and formalistic. The world has been deemed either the work of a Creator who foreordained its ways, or the expression of some philosophic Absolute, in whom its harmony was forever pre-established. Man, too, has been looked upon as the victim of this same deadly pessimism, where life is simply the unfolding of that which is latent within, or the dreary working-out of ages of bygone Karma. The philosophies and religions of the Old World, especially, are of this authoritative, conservative type. In recent

---

5. This chapter was suggested by Professor James' profound dogma-freeing book, "The Will to Believe."

years their exponents have sought more and more to bring the New World under their sway. Custom, convention, authority, dogma, whatever it may be called, is in fact the most dangerous enemy, which threatens not only the growing generation, but the life of a nation as well. It is easy to move with the tide of established society. It is deemed almost heretical, and demands great courage, to break from it.

But, beginning with the Reformation of Martin Luther's time, the people of the West have gradually won their freedom, one department of learning after another has advanced beyond the confines of the Church; and modern science stands to-day the proud monument of the glad escape of intellect from the thralldom of priest and dogma. In the New World, especially, the banner of freedom has been raised; and man has claimed not only the right to govern and worship as he pleases, but even think as he wills. It is essentially the land of liberty, the land of belief in individuality, of self-reliant enterprise and daring progress. Long ago it broke loose from the bonds of conservatism in material things, and became the home of modern mechanical invention. The time will come when it will have a distinctive art and literature. Last of all, as the crowning intellectual achievement of life, it will have a philosophy which will include the doctrines of freedom, individuality and optimism. As a stepping-stone to this wider and maturer national philosophy which is being developed by our progressive thinkers, I propose in this chapter to consider some of the practical doctrines by which each individual may work out and contribute his share to the general mental evolution of our time.

First, the philosophy of evolution is a doctrine of unbounded hope and unlimited possibilities. It does not assume to know the ultimate nature of the God, or Power, of the universe. It states nothing definite in regard to the outcome of human development. The universe is accepted as found,—a live organism, the field of varied forces, the general tendency of which is toward progress. Nothing is decreed, nothing established, save that the sum of energy is held to be the same; and law is deemed universal. Certain

definite stages of growth are discovered, certain types are deemed relatively fixed. But, in general, the outlook of evolution is toward the limitless future. Chance is one of the gods of evolution as truly as is the survival of the fittest or the power of unalterable law. There is no factor in the problem of life, even selfishness, so serious as to cast a pessimistic light upon the future; for the remedy lies in understanding it, and there is abundant reason to believe this great wisdom may come to all. There is, in fact, no limit placed upon speculative hope. The bright prospect is open before us of a world whose future life may become largely what we collectively make it. Human nature, as we know it to-day, may be not only selfish, but cruel. Life may seem scarcely worth living, but the splendid opportunity is ours to make it worth living. "Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact," says Professor James. Human society may at present be immoral and unethical. Yet ours is the privilege to help make it ethical. There is absolutely no ground for pessimism from this point of view.

The most material evolutionist must include these glorious possibilities in his philosophy. He who believes also in the existence of a higher or spiritual nature has a still wider basis of hope. Moreover, the philosophy of evolution is a wonderful appeal to life. It adds a zest to living, is a source of happiness such as could never be found in the time-worn philosophies which it is rapidly displacing. This philosophy says to man: "Never mind yesterday. To-day may be made better by the way you live it. However many times you have failed, you know of no decree whereby you are doomed to eternal failure. Salvation is for all who earn it."

There is no ground for believing in an unjust God, who saves only his chosen people. The field of evolution is an arena on which each may prove his worth, and, so far as Nature is concerned, believe, worship, and disport himself as he chooses; for Nature is ever tolerant, broad, and fair. Over the door of her temple one great word is written,—Opportunity. Time is at her command, for she does not hesitate to take ten thousand years for a geological age. Space she owns without limit. The fact that nations have come

and gone, and still man is not perfected, means nothing to her. It required millions of years to prepare the earth for his habitation. Why should it not take thousands upon thousands of years to make him fit to enjoy it? Surely, there is no reason to despair at this early day. We have barely begun to exhaust the material products of our marvellous world. The age of intellect bids fair to be many times as long as that of mechanics; far ahead lies the time when a higher epoch shall begin, and altruism reign where now egoism holds unquestioned sway.

"Patience!" Nature seems to say. "Learn of me, and you shall have all you desire." Nay, more, life is not the mere realization of desires already latent. It doth not yet appear what we may wish to become. The more we know, the more fields of investigation open before us. Every desire leads to another; and, fortunately for his welfare, man is never satisfied. "Every action admits of being outdone." What appears to be our work in life may sometime lead to a far nobler occupation. Ideas which we expect to hold for a lifetime may seem puerile to us in due season, if we maintain an open mind.

The fact that I tell you with all the emphasis of my soul that I believe a certain doctrine to-day is no reason for assuming that I may not sometime inculcate its reverse. If I am a true evolutionist, "I am an experimenter with no past at my back." I owe allegiance to no system, I bow to no convention, I am not a slave to the hobgoblin consistency. I swear by no philosophical Absolute, I refuse to believe I am to become one with an "ocean of infinite bliss." I am ever on the alert for new ideas, ever ready to exchange a good method for a better, I am pliable, hopeful, happy, and thoughtful. In short, I am a citizen of the universe, and not only heir to all the ages, but in part the maker and owner of the destiny of men. Mine is the opportunity to rise where man has never before dreamed of ascending, to reverse the fate of nations and bring to naught the prophecies of the wise. Imagination was not given me in vain; but I may give freest play to fancy, with the possibility that even what I deem almost too good to be true will sometime be mine. Mine is the chance to awaken men to the same great wealth of possibilities, and

thus to play my humble part in hastening the disappearance of suffering, disease, and degradation.

Truly, the hope of the world lies in this broad philosophy of evolution, with its possibilities of altruism and the Christ. Here is the doctrine, which, if it be not yet as lofty and spiritual as we would have it, at least possesses the merit of being unhampered. Here is the real fountain of youth; namely, the opportunity of ever renewing life by the thought of fresh possibility. Here, too, is the method whereby ambition is to be realized.

For the inexorableness of natural law, the apparently stern fate which couples cause and effect, is at the same time the solid basis of the great hope which the philosophy of evolution inspires. While we are still ignorant and thoughtless, it seems harsh and cruel that one must reap as one has sown. But, when truly apprehended, law is found to be the basis of all our trust in the world. It gives us strong reason to believe in the integrity of Nature. It shows us what to depend on; namely, that under similar conditions the same effects follow similar causes. Law, therefore, instead of being a hard taskmaster, becomes our willing servant. It brings us close to the heart of the universe; for law is the regular mode of activity of the one Power, or Life. It puts the mind in sympathetic relations with the creative force itself, since creation, according to the philosophy of evolution, is a process continuously going on around and within us. Moreover, it is a process which uses every slightest occurrence, whether intentional or accidental.

In fact, it makes little difference to Nature whether an event be accidental or within the established order. So rigid is she in the insistence that effect shall be like cause that you must always describe her phenomena thus: Certain results follow from certain causes, unless something intervenes, in which case you should expect something different. When, therefore, you apply this law, try to realize its full significance in daily life. *Every thought, every emotion*, registers its effect as truly as the greatest cataclysm in the external world. For are we not, each and every one, parts of the same great system? Is not activity of thought governed by the same law that regulates

the whispering of the wind in the tree-tops or the beating of angry waves upon a desolate shore?

If this is so, our destiny is not fixed, but is in our own hands to shape, thought by thought and deed by deed. "Permanence is but a word of degrees."

"For all experience is an arch wherethrough  
Gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades  
Forever and forever when I move."

Why should one regard inheritance, environment, or even temperament as fixed factors in evolution? Is there any decree whereby we are doomed to suffer from disease and poverty all our lives? Is the span of life unalterably limited to threescore years and ten? Must man always grow old, lose his faculties, and die? Perhaps even death may be overcome, despite the fact that it has ever been the unconquered enemy of humanity's youth. It may be that the expectation of these ills and the servile sway of convention have had much to do with their continuance.

If we are ultimately to triumph, we must first dream, then hope, expect, believe, and finally affirm that these ideals of ours shall be realized. It is important also to note that we are not to triumph because we are fated to succeed. No one knows this to be decreed beyond all question. We are rather to triumph because we will to triumph, perhaps even to be immortal because we choose immortality, and, having chosen it, endeavor to make ourselves ethically worthy of it. Has any one been able to set bounds to human choice? Have the limits of freedom ever been discovered?

Freedom of will is a myth, say the fatalists and pessimists of old. There is no rational basis for belief in freedom, say the logicians. Yet we go on serenely believing. We are at least free to believe, even if we fail to find it as a fact. Belief is often creative. We are not to be put down by argument. While there is the faintest loophole, we will look out upon the fair world of

idealism. Call us children, if you will, illogical and credulous. Your scepticism has failed to touch our belief, while enthusiasm is all the more lively because of this joyous triumph.

“I am named and known by that moment’s feat.”

The human spirit is the great unquenchable spring of the ever new life of the universe. Deep in its heart it cherishes the belief that in due course it will be the ruler of all living things. Deep in its heart it says: “These are but the days of my youth, the age of apparent slavery and defeat. But I am quietly observing and learning. Some day the universe may discover what I am made of. Then let all the gods beware. The fact that I haltingly sit here amid the folds of physical sensation is no reason for believing me impotent, though I choose to repose a thousand years.”

Before one can conquer, one must know well the enemy, and discover the lines of least resistance. That the spirit is sent to school in the theatre of storm and pain is no sign that it is to be cowed by the villain of the play. The higher and stronger the product of evolution, the longer must be its apprenticeship, its period of infancy. The fittest that is to survive must be made fit through contest. Power comes only through use: nothing is made perfect upon the first trial. Sometimes, when we see a perfected invention, we wonder that it was not made so at once, the finished machine seems so much simpler than the cumbersome one it superseded. But it is ever so. Evolution through trial, failure, and mistake, to betterment and victory, is the law of the universe; nor can the intermediate steps be omitted. Try to leap over them, and you must return and proceed, step by step, in orderly succession.

Besides teaching the lessons of hope and patience, of the reign of law and the utility of chance, Nature, as interpreted by evolution, also emphasizes this principle of orderly succession. If we are ever to bring human beings into the world without pain and misery, so that health and sanity shall be the rule

of life, we can attain this end only by passing through, understanding, and mastering all the stages of the suffering from which we would be free. Peace can come only as the reward of victory; beauty, only from the reconstruction of chaos; and poise, as the triumph over immoderate extremes. The longing for peace, beauty, and poise may be considered as an earnest that these fruits of toil are to be ours. We may therefore take courage from the fact that we have such desires. Yet these possessions are ever fruits, not gifts. No gifts are bestowed upon us through partiality or at random, but always that which comes to us comes because our own activity rendered us worthy of it.

Here, once more, we discover ground for hope,—yea, for confidence; for we know, with ever-deepened assurance, that what we work for must come. Are not these aspiring thoughts diminutive stepping-stones toward the goal of our desire? On the other hand, is it not true that every doubt, every fear, all anxiety, worriment, depression, counteracts these happier thoughts, since every state of mind registers its impression? If so, *we move toward the goal in proportion as the sum total of optimistic thoughts exceeds the sum total of the pessimistic.*

Thus we continue intermingling the hopeful and the depressing, the sane and the insane, the good and the bad. A gloomy thought may not be without compensation. At any rate, we are compelled to recognize that we are the resultant of all we have wrought, be it good or bad. The law may be learned as well from one kind of conduct as another. The law is this,—that we are ever making and remaking ourselves according to thought and deed. Each stirring of the thought impulse is a seed sown in the willing soil of our productive mind. Many a seed is choked because we give it no time to grow. But Nature has told us how to make every action effectual; namely, let the seed have its period of rest and germination, and do not be impatient while it is in the quiescent and darksome stage.

Half our misery, nearly all our fear and worriment, is caused by neglect of this great fact. The period of transition, of unsightly or painful gestation, is ever a necessary stage of evolution. Nature has told us this again and again.

But we heed her not. We go on complaining, doubting, and apprehending. We try to understand evil and suffering while buried in their throes. We make repeated mistakes, and reap wisdom therefrom. Thereupon we forget; and, the next time a trial comes, we act as though the law of compensation were naught. Yet ever, if we heed Nature's mandates, we take the broad view, trying to understand events in the light of their outcome.

Throughout the realms of nature all growth comes from small beginnings. First, the cell, or life sent out in a new direction, then the steady accumulation of substance and force. Everywhere in the mental world the principle is the same. Every great invention sprang from a single idea. Every great discovery was first a thought in some courageous mind. Trace the natural history of any of your moods,—fear, hope, love,—and you will find that it started with a single thought or emotion which grew upon you because you gave credence or attention to it. If you wish to eradicate a mood, at once end its growth. If you seek to avoid a habit, do not let a state of mind continue; for you can hope to destroy a habit only by slowly building up a new one, until the life be sapped from the old.

Everything depends upon its beginnings. If a line of development starts rightly, it will end well. If it be wrong, you must continually reap the consequences or start anew. A business undertaking depends for its success upon the motive, the energy put into it. Friendship and marriage depend upon the plane on which they begin. The philosophy which we are considering of course admits the encouraging possibility of reforming that which started wrongly. But the principle is the same. Every reform begins at home, or, in other words, with a change of mind, a new determination, a single idea. If you would save time and energy, seek the line of least resistance and trust the laws of growth.

If I have many ideas, some of them in conflict perhaps, some sensual and some spiritual, I know that the strongest will survive. If I have a strong aspiration for the spiritual life, this desire acts as a continuous creative force to bring all things in correspondence. It is a right beginning, destined to

attract its like. "Seek first the kingdom," and all else shall follow. Choose first your ideal, impress it clearly and forcibly upon your mind, and know that, unless you desire something else more than that, what you desire shall come. You may wait many years for the fulfilment of certain ambitions and desires. But such is the beautiful law of their coming. Circumstances must be in keeping. We must be inwardly ready. We must confidently hold to the ideal, knowing that a way of attainment will be found.

Therefore, to discover the basis of evolutionary optimism and live as optimists, we must rouse from the sleep of sensation and conservatism, and breathe the free air of hopeful speculation. We may, it is true, fall into error, and imagine wild fancies never to be realized. But we must make bold strokes, in order to break down the barriers of conventional thinking. Forms of worship and belief quickly become fixed. It is easier to be imitative and fall into habits than be original and progressive. We must sometimes take vigorous measures; if need be, break from our surroundings, depart for a while from our friends, and go where a new set of sensations shall drive out the old, and an influx of new ideas quicken the mind.

"Nach ewigen, ehrnen,  
Grossen Gesetzen  
Müssen wir alle  
Unseres Daseins  
Kreise vollenden."

If a man really love truth, if he be a disciple of progress, he will not permit himself to state his belief in the same terms year after year. As every year brings new experiences, so should it offer fresh interpretation of life. The genuine truth-seeker is more eager to keep the mind open than to arrive at some established conclusion. He hopes never to have any permanently settled beliefs, for he contemplates an eternity of intellectual progress. What a glorious prospect,—the everlasting pursuit of truth! The determination

to progress cannot be too strong, for it must meet and master the vast resistance of custom and dogma. As the body needs vigorous exercise to stir the sluggish life into quickened activity, so the mind needs the tonic of ever-renewed ideas. Every day is not too often to send out the thought afresh into the glorious future of evolutionary idealism. Every day is none too often to have some invigorating, recreative experience which shall tend to lift one out of the thralldom of physical sensation.

It is easy to come under the spell of the flesh, to be absorbed in painful or pleasurable sensation. The enticements of society make this especially true of those who have leisure, while the monotony of his labor tends to make the workman mechanical. Suffering exerts a power which compels attention. Although we know that pain is increased by dwelling upon it, we seem incapable of turning the mind elsewhere.

Yet some do not even know of the possibility. Man knows not when he is a slave. Tell him he is one, and he rebels. Yet for those who have even the dimmest insight there is the great possibility of awakening ourselves from this lethargy of sensation, through the realization that the man is a greater power than the feelings and thoughts which enslave him. Let a man come to consciousness, and there is boundless hope. Even then he must exercise continual diligence. Ever alert, ever active, must be the progressive man. With him the hope of the coming ages resides. With him the youth of the world is born anew. The old shall rebel, but it will not be for long. Out of the chaos of the old the new shall arise. Every time we have a fresh experience, new vitality is imparted to our past life. Each time one has a new insight, it lights up all we have thought before, as if it were a fresh revelation.

"Every ultimate fact is only the first of a new series," says Emerson,<sup>6</sup> voicing this progressive optimism. "Every general law [is] only a particular fact of some more general law presently to disclose itself. There is no outside, no enclosing wall, no circumference to us. The man finishes his story,—how

---

6. Circles.

good! how final! how it puts a new face on all things! He fills the sky. Lo! on the other side rises a man, and draws a circle around the circle we had just pronounced the outline of the sphere. Then already is our first speaker not man, but only first speaker. His only redress is forthwith to draw a circle outside of his antagonist....Men walk as prophecies of the next age."

Thus on and on is ever the word of evolution. Do not tarry until you can see naught but fixed fact. Hard facts are wholesome in their place. But let one never be exclusively realist or critic. Look merely at the actual, and you will become discouraged, and see nothing else. You must give a fair share of thought to the ought-to-be, the may-be, the shall-be. The rounded-out vision simultaneously beholds the ideal and real, and sees the one actually becoming the other. Not that the new is necessarily better than the old, but that it is different. Is this not the great wonder of wonders, the endless reappearance of the old in new form, the coming of spring, the rebirth of enthusiasm, the statement of ancient doctrine in modern form? There is in reality little sameness in nature. Always there is slight modification. Nature repeats her performances as if she had never given a like display.

A famous actor who had acted the same play for more than a score of years was once asked the secret of his success. He replied that it was his endeavor always to give the play as if it were his first appearance, to listen to each speech as if he were hearing it for the first time, and to speak his lines on Saturday with as much enthusiasm as on Monday. Is not this the secret of all successful living? In all occupations there is much routine, if not drudgery. Yet the spirit with which work is done may be perennial. It is a fresh creation, if it be truly done. It is performed with joy that one can play one's part in the great organism of the universe.

Always, too, one has the opportunity to form a fresh estimate of life, count one's blessings, rebuild hopes, and start as into a young world. The true gentleman is as glad to see his friends at one time as another. The genuine teacher considers it a privilege to inculcate the same doctrine to many people. True love is at least as strong years after marriage as in its

awakening. That which is dearest to the human heart never ages. It finds something to say or do which it never said or did before.

There is an invigorating and youth-bringing spirit in this view of the world, which looks out upon the fair landscape of nature with as much joy morning after morning as in days of long ago. Does not all nature bespeak this freshness? Do you detect signs of age in the scenery of a sunset or the green fields of summer? The landscape is made new every time it rains. If rock and tree appear old, it is only because they are hastening to furnish new material for the soil. Nature has learned the secret of renewing her entire organism through short periods of rest and relaxation. Why not we? May it be that all this aging in mind and body is a mistake? Why are we serious and old before our time? Is it not because of our habitual gaze into the past and into sensation? Awake! arise! hold up thy head, O man! The world is not coming to an end to-day. Over-seriousness never helped a man to solve a problem. If we are creatures of routine, we surely cannot blame the universe.

Another reason for giving the universe the benefit of all doubts, and placing our hope with the future of evolution, is found in the working of events to a common end. We grow anxious and troubled lest we may not have what we deserve. But, even while we are questioning, through some unexpected channel the object of our desires moves toward us. A wiser power has steered the bark of life; and at the right time, at a time whose scope our broadest foresight could not compass, all has turned out well. Doubt it as we may, there is forced upon us the conviction that a Power owns all events, yet is dependent on the choice which makes us the "architects of fate." Trust, deep and lasting, is inevitably inspired by such a discovery. This optimistic trust is in turn the door to greater blessings.

Even the pains of mental and physical growth prove richly suggestive of optimism, when viewed in the light of their outcome. We grow tired of moral opportunities, wishing we might rest a few years from character-building and the like. Yet in our sincerest moments we are glad, indeed, that life is constituted as it is,—that we have just these troubles to overcome, this

animal nature to transmute, and these unruly minds to control. For we know that without such conditions we could not grow strong, without a universe which should tax to the utmost our ingenuity and endurance, we would not have the longed-for power.

Apparently, then, the universe is constituted for the realization of even greater ideals than we had supposed. We can become not only all that we have aspired to be, but more and more. We have not aimed high enough. The conditions are here, and Nature has told us how to take advantage of them. Dream, aspire, reach out as you will, there is always the possibility that we have but begun to take what has awaited us for ages. We may sometime not only control nature's forces, but even regulate them anew. The mere suggestion of the possibility may be a step toward its realization. Desire itself must have an evolution. Everything has a beginning in something that began before. Immortality itself could be possible only through continual change. Yet that which we value most may become a continuous possession through constant change or renewing.

It may seem absurd to a physical scientist to talk about the visions and experiences of the soul. Such things are not to be found in the world of fact, he says. Very well, we will create them. If he will not let us believe in a soul that has lived forever, we will believe in one whose immortality shall begin *now*, whose supremacy shall sometime be recognized even in the physical world; for we refuse to cease believing.

The basis of optimism is man's own power of achievement, the hope, energy, enthusiasm, spirit, ever-renewed vigor, which he puts into daily life, his educational thought and work. It is no longer the belief in some supreme power who decrees that all shall go right, nor in some established world-order by which evolution is bound to have a moral outcome. The world, from the evolutionist's point of view, may thus develop, if men combine to bring it about. It is still only a possibility. There is every reason to be awake to the danger of failure. We are not simply to sit upon the bark of life, and watch it float. We have no definite knowledge that it will float forever. We

have only the assurance that as we think, as we work, so shall be the result,—the most practical law the universe has taught us. When we regard the facts in all seriousness, could we ask for more?

Remember, however, the conditions that bring the fulfilment of this tremendous promise. We must break away from the moorings of dogma and habit, we must become mentally and spiritually free, realizing, in the fullest sense, the glorious ideal of individual liberty. We must be willing to change our opinions, in the light of greater evidence, give play to intuition and creative imagination; hope, despite all scepticism, so long as we remain dissatisfied; overcome our ills by understanding them, triumph by the superabundance of healthy, happy, hopeful, wise, good ideas and deeds; trust that the calm, strong ideal will win realization through the contests and transformations of natural evolution; and ever approach our daily occupations with as much vigor of thought and action as though we had never failed.

The most productive possibility is the altruistic ideal, the glorious hope put before the world by the life of the Christ. Can we affirm that life is not worth living until we have tested that ideal? Yet, again, hope lies not in the fact that we are to be saved because some one died for us, but because there is salvation from sin if each man, personally, accepts the opportunities of the unselfish life. Freedom is for those alone who pay its price. We have no assurance that the heathen are to be lost unless they accept Christ, as Christians believe. We know nothing about an infallible Scripture. We know only the hope of evolution and the power of the human will. Let us place no restrictions upon our religious faith. Boundless are the possibilities of life, even as we know it. But the glories of life, when love shall triumph, are scarcely dreamed of. Who shall say that all other stages of existence are not introductions to this fulness of life? Who shall say that these ideals may not be realized, despite the prevailing selfishness of human nature?

I repeat again, and once again, the universe is young; man is an infant. Have patience for a million years, and believe forever in the power of hope.

If uncounted millions fall by the wayside, ere the victory be won, let us hope that they may enjoy rich compensation. Hope is not genuine unless it includes the race. It must be as broad as thought can suggest. Indeed, the universe will not be a success unless all who wish may reap its richest reward.

The same hope must help me in the details of daily living, if my optimism is practical. I am to rise after every failure with indomitable faith. I should deem nothing I have accomplished of permanent consequence. I have not sounded my possibilities. If I permit the world's praise to affect me, my progress will be retarded. Every success should teach me greater success. I should consider criticism only to learn improvement, and be neither flattered nor discouraged. I decide once for all never to be discouraged, come what may. Yes, I will persist, though all possible obstacles be placed in my way. Hope shall be my watchword, though the house over my head be burning, though I have not a dollar in the world.

But, says the sceptic, your optimism is temperamental. I frankly admit it. It is my nature to hope that evil itself is powerless to defeat the swelling tide of evolutionary optimism. I believe most heartily in the ultimate triumph of the beautiful, the true, the good. I believe the time will come when men shall care as much for ideas as they now care for things. Have I not a right to be a man of firm faith? Should I not cling to my hope until I discover reason for doubt?

Moreover, hope, not despair, lifts the world, and has a sublime ethical value. It is the voice of health. It is the tonic of the soul. One cannot too highly estimate the power of high ideals, the practical worth of beauty. One cannot too often lift the mind to the plane of loftiest possibility. This is the supreme wisdom of righteous living: it is the opportunity *par excellence* of life. It is a duty I owe my fellow-men to put myself in a healthy condition, and then inculcate practical philosophy. Philosophy aims to understand the normal nature of the world. The abnormal is of value only so far as it throws light on the normal. The normal holds the universe sane and sound. The optimistic mood enables the mind to see through the distress of evolution

---

to its joyous outcome. However far we may be from the assurance that the good is to triumph, we find a tendency which points that way. We find it in our lives. We discover it in society. We recognize it in history. Each time we are constrained to give the universe the benefit of the doubt, and adopt hope as the basis of our daily living. Hope remains when scepticism has uttered its last word. The will is untouched. The universe persistently smiles. And, out of this persistent hope and this perennial smiling, who shall say what wonders may come? who shall limit the beauty and possibility of the universe and of the human soul?



### III. Character-Building.<sup>7</sup>

---

"But waves swept on, I learned to ride the waves,  
I served my masters till I made them slaves."

WHEN ONE awakes to thoughtful self-consciousness in this great world of physical law, order, and necessity, where events follow according to a sequence which we did not arrange, and where we seem to be involuntary observers of pains and pleasures which are forced upon us, the inevitable question is: What may I do? Am I a helpless spectator cast about by nature's forces, a mere centre of reflex action at the mercy of rigid fate and changeless law? It seems so at first. One is almost appalled by human helplessness. Nature has been here for ages, and perfected her organism. We are born into an environment where physical habits are already fixed. We would have preferred better physiques and better parentage, but we must take ourselves at this late day as fate has chosen. Social customs, educational methods, and intellectual pursuits are established so that there is little opportunity for innovation. Human nature itself has a character determined by a higher power, and is the same the world over. Even our

---

7. Read before the Metaphysical Club of Haverhill, January, 1898.

desires and tastes seem to be not quite ours, but rather tendencies which we find ready-made and almost thoughtlessly live by.

An appeal to psychology gives but little more satisfaction. Our feelings or perceptions are distinctly ours, but we are compelled to feel and be conscious. I do not choose to perceive the world of nature, nor will to be self-conscious. All this I find as a gift of existence. The power of paying attention is voluntary, to be sure. I can give immediate direction to my mind, and turn from a painful thought to a pleasant one. Yet even attention is not always at command. Sometimes pain is so intense that one is forced to pay attention to it, even though one knows that by so doing one's suffering is increased. When I speak, the process is largely mysterious and involuntary, whereby thought gives rise to the movement of vocal chords and lips. Nor am I quite certain that even the desire to speak is voluntary, for something suggested it. During the thinking process, do we not rather observe ideas as they come into the mind than compel them to come? And they come from past involuntary perceptions stored in the memory, ideas we have heard or read, feelings we have enjoyed or suffered despite our wills.

If I have an emotion or thought, I must wait until a word *occurs* to me before I can express it; for words refuse to come simply at my beck and call. Language itself I find ready-made. I seem to be a sort of involuntary spectator of my own involuntary self, engaged in a drifting process of feeling and thought, in which one idea leads rapidly to another. Sometimes one can recall an idea. Again, one has no power over it; and, if I try to create, to imagine, I may seek in vain for one fancy or air-castle not in some way suggested by this great stream of involuntary experience. For even if I think of a dreamy realm among the clouds, peopled by beings with fluid bodies, where time runs backward and space has five dimensions, I still draw my materials from knowledge of present life.

If, in despair, I turn at last to the realm of inmost emotions, I learn that my pains and pleasures, my hates and loves, are called out by some external incident or some person, and not by this inmost self. Who am I that thus

loves, observes, and seeks something voluntary in human life? Did I make myself in any respect? and would my conduct really be voluntary after all, even if I could at this late day choose what to perceive and ignore, if I could imagine with no food for fancy to play upon?

What is your purpose in all this? some one asks. Are you trying to show that the world is a machine where every event is fated, where the effort to build character is an illusion, and where we are not ourselves at all as we now believe? I reply that I am trying simply to state facts which every one may verify,—facts which seem to me of the profoundest significance in interpreting human life. I ask you to pass with me in thought one stage beyond the point where introspection usually goes. I ask you to consider the ego itself, behind the great stream of consciousness; for, before we can build character intelligently and permanently, we must know what the self is that builds.

I shall try to show that these facts concerning our inner life are just such conditions as are needed for fullest moral and spiritual development. But I have not yet fully stated these facts. This is but half the story. The other half is the untold history of the soul. This has been the neglected factor in human thinking. We have laid too much stress on environment. Nowadays it is the fashion to lay emphasis upon the thought process. But even this is insufficient.

So much has been said and written in recent years about the power of mind over the body, the influence of mental atmospheres, and of harmful and helpful thoughts, that many have grown weary of the subject, and are earnestly seeking to gain this more fundamental knowledge. In the first burst of enthusiasm the importance of mere thought has been overestimated, as if it were possible to accomplish anything we desire simply by thinking or affirming it to be so.

Experience does not confirm this belief. There is a vast difference between thinking and accomplishment, between merely believing or affirming, and living the virtue we believe. One might sit for hours wishing one's self in

the next room, and thinking about the steps necessary to take one there. Yet until one should not only will to move, but also start, one would remain in the same position. To accomplish anything in the external world, we know that work must be done. The same law holds in the inner world. A large percentage of our thoughts pass in and out of mind without making much impression. Ideals are affirmed, and good resolutions without number pass through consciousness. But a resolution alone is of little consequence. We must *do* something. We must so think and act that a deep and lasting impression shall be made upon the life and character. In other words, there are three stages through which we must pass,—knowing, doing, being. In this discussion we are concerning ourselves as far as possible with that part of us which can really act and be, and I shall have to ask your indulgence if I encumber the discussion with the uncertainties of the experimenter.

Let us turn once more to the stream of consciousness which we have found involuntary and baffling. Let us try to catch the process of activity in its inception, that we may learn what deeds make for character and what acts unmake us. Note that in this baffling thought process all that we hold dear is present,—personality, love, attention, choice, the soul, companionship,—but in a different sense from that formerly believed when it was thought that God existed apart from the world and man was independent of him. When closely scrutinized, the facts simply mean that not even in our most sacred experiences, not even when we seem to be alone or most truly ourselves, do we possess one thought or volition independent of our environment, apart from the Life of which all movement and all consciousness is a sharing. Our philosophy must then take account of all these relations. All that we think and do is partly self and partly other than self. Freedom itself would not be free without laws and conditions of liberty. Man is bound by law only so long as he fails to understand it.

What we desire, therefore, when we ask ourselves in all seriousness, What is freedom? is not independence to follow some caprice, but to live at peace and in harmony with what we have; to be wisely and happily adjusted, and

press onward to the realization of higher ideals. It is the man of character who moves the world. And the basis of his power and understanding is recognition of what his inmost life is. This apparently helpless spectator carried down the stream of thought is a man of power because he lives in that stream. Out from the deep soul-centre in each of us proceeds all that regulates life, so far as we play a part in it. It is a little centre, a mere point of energy, yet the most powerful centre of life's activity; and the whole clew to life's mystery is involved in the fact that we exert ourselves there, that potentially it is that part of us which shall in due time master all else.

But to observe the soul in process of activity is like trying to grasp the river as it flows. I therefore ask you to call the imagination into play, and picture yourself as temporarily outside the stream of thought, looking down upon it. Imagine yourself seated on the bank of a river on a beautiful summer's day. You are on a vacation and free from care. There is nothing to disturb you. You have decided to let the future provide for itself. You are seated there in a comfortable attitude, peacefully watching the rapidly flowing stream, its little eddies and rivulets, its calm spots and its rapids. You are for the time being like a great sage upon a mountain top, forever gazing out upon the play of the world,—simply the observer, calm, restful, and at peace.

I lay much stress upon this first stage, because without inner calmness one may not hope to develop character in this deepest sense. One must reach the stage where one can inhibit impulse, where one can calmly pause before an angry man, resist the temptation to pay him back in his own coin, and send out instead the spirit of love. To do this means that one has attained self-control, that one can say to one's lower self, Peace, be still! and be obeyed. For the man of character is the one who concentrates and regulates his forces. The basis of this self-regulation is this calm centre within, and this may be developed by cultivating the power to observe in the quiet manner above described.

At present, for example, become this calm observer looking out on the play of the world. Say to yourself, Peace, be still! then wait and watch. This

mass of sensations—of light, heat, cold, sound, hardness—coming from your immediate environment represents the superficial layer in this ever-changing stream of consciousness on whose banks you are seated as the observer. This is the consciousness which makes us aware that we live in a world among beings like ourselves. Then comes the realm of thought about these feelings, the ideas suggested by our life with each other. We not only feel, but know that we feel, and have ideas or beliefs distinctively our own.

Out from the great realm of memory come the ideas which you have read and thought, and you are carrying on a sort of semi-conscious thought process, independent of the one this essay suggests. Finally, the thought becomes more quiet; and you reach the plane of deep conviction, beneath this realm of passing thoughts and emotions. Always you find yourself there, if you look. Deeper still you find individuality, ambition, the restless pressure of a self that is only partly evolved. Deeper yet, what do you find?

Is it not the great omnipresent Life of the universe itself, welling up within and seeking expression? Is it not the presence of this Life within you which accounts for your ambition to develop character and do work of consequence in the world? If so, then you have touched the deepest level. Character is not built out of nothing. The secret of life, when you have sounded the stream of consciousness, is to move harmoniously with the current which you find there seeking expression. The best result that can come from the cultivation of these moments of calm contemplation is the discovery of this under-current of life. Ordinarily, the mind is too active to perceive it. But by quietly observing, by turning away from physical sensation and the active pursuit of ideas, one may quietly settle down to harmony with it.

How can one thus harmonize the thought with the deep moving of the Spirit? How can one take the current of life when it serves?

This question leads us to a consideration of the second stage in our introspective process. You are not only an observer of life's play, but also a chooser. Always in the marked experiences of life you are conscious of

alternatives. When the angry man comes to you, you may return anger or send out love. When you see a person in suffering or in danger, side by side with the prompting to hasten to his relief comes the temptation to wait and let some one else do it. All through the day, opportunities come before the observer for decision. How easily the choice is made! How quickly we take the selfish course, and what stupendous results follow these acts of choice! Is not the entire moral life summed up in this series of opportunities which we take or lose? What more could we ask than the ability calmly to wait as observers until we should persuade ourselves to choose the wiser way, take the unselfish course, and thus make every deed tell in the endeavor to develop character? What more could the universe ask than that we should thus be true to the best guidance?

Take, for example, the nervous man. He is rushing at full speed, spending all his energy. Suddenly, in one of those decisive moments which mark a turning-point in life, the folly of the whole procedure comes over him. He determines to be moderate, to take himself actively in hand. Perhaps he has resolved a hundred times to overcome his nervousness, but circumstances once more swept him on. This time he realizes that the whole matter is in his hands, that the circumstances will not change until he changes them; moreover, that his soul has the power to change them, that it is potentially a supreme master, but he has been unconscious of its power. Accordingly, he stops himself in his haste, and, to obtain full control, makes himself walk at first very slowly. He does not accomplish this without encountering much opposition. Always, when we take a great opportunity, there is resistance to be met and mastered,—the resistance of bodily habit and selfishness. The essential is to know that we have the power to step in and control our forces, but have not exercised it, or at least only in part. How is it possible to make any progress until we do thus decisively take ourselves in hand?

Long experience in the endeavor to reform mankind has shown conclusively that the only permanent cure for human ills is the voluntary reformation of the man himself. It affords only temporary relief to doctor

effects, to pass laws regulating the sale of liquors, or use external force. Behind the effect is invariably its cause. Back of the habit, the sorrow, vice, suffering, is always the individual who thinks, acts, and suffers.

With each individual there is a particular capability, an intimately close desire or ambition. To know that individual power and to bring it into full control is clearly the way to bring about all reforms in the world. There must first of all be desire to live a nobler, fuller life. No one can make this change for another. But, the desire once there, the way is open to the highest spiritual attainment.

It is true, many maintain that we cannot change our dispositions. My leading thesis is that we can not only alter our temperaments, but modify external surroundings, if we will thus strike at the heart of things; that real power in life comes through the obstacles we overcome in ourselves; that to him that overcometh shall be given; that, in fact, the only solution to life's problem is to know how we have sinned and suffered ignorantly, how we have created our happiness and misery, and how, by self-knowledge and self-control, we may learn wisely to direct our forces and transmute them into spiritual power.

All our trials, pains, and pleasures centre about the uncontrolled part of our nature. The intensity of the nervous man is revealed in everything he does. If he suffers, he suffers acutely. He is extremely happy or most uncomfortable. The same lack of reserve is revealed in his speech, in his handwriting, in all that enters into daily life. If he finds himself going too far in one direction, he reverses the machinery, and rushes to the other extreme. He is always flying off on a tangent. He has not yet found his centre, because, in a word, he is a creature of impulse. His forces possess him, whereas he should possess and direct his forces.

The development of the calm centre of self-control must ever be the first step in the endeavor to change one's disposition. We can then little by little learn to hold ourselves still, and with a word of command marshal the undisciplined army of forces, tendencies, and impulses. After the nervous

man has stopped himself again and again, every time he finds himself walking nervously, until by and by the walking machinery is under control, he can walk rapidly or slowly without hurrying within, without nervous tension, because he is master of the impulse that controls it. He attains this by developing a counter-activity; that is, he takes time day by day to calm himself. He pauses again and again with the suggestion, Peace, be still! Can we not say confidently that there is not a tendency in the human organism which can resist the power of such persistent endeavor, not a disease that cannot be overcome, no element of self or selfishness which cannot be conquered?

But mere thought, I repeat, is not sufficient. It is not enough to hold and affirm ideals, to say we will change or that some time we will begin. We must take ourselves in the midst of a sentence, whenever we find ourselves nervous or excited or going off on a tangent,—take positive hold, and turn squarely and fairly the other way. If we go to excess and fail, then let us look back, discover our error, and try henceforth to be moderate, taking full advantage of the lessons of our failure. There is sufficient power with us, but we have not rightly used it. It may be that we do not really change our dispositions; but, at any rate, we learn how to redirect our forces in such a manner that the entire life is altered, and we learn this lesson only through repeated failure and gradual evolution.

But let us return once more to the thought stream. How is it that these decisive experiences become effectual? Because the thought is concentrated, the mind is held in command long enough to register an impression, an ideal, or picture on the responsive plate of consciousness. Think of the passing states of consciousness as a molten stream on which the thought is stamped.<sup>8</sup>

The process may be illustrated by looking up an unfamiliar word in the dictionary. One reads enough about it and thinks about it long enough to

---

8. The transition from thought to matter I have considered elsewhere,—“The Power of Silence,” p. 88; “In Search of a Soul,” Chap. I.

grasp its meaning, thereby making it a part of one's vocabulary. In the same way one firmly impresses a confidently vigorous idea upon the mind. Yet it is the quiet thought about an ideal which is effective. Return, first of all, to the point of view of the observer. Calm yourself, and wait. Then think clearly and decisively. Remember that life is co-operative. We are not living to ourselves alone. Recognition rather than affirmation,—this is the way. One has no need to assert the will, if one knows the way, if one understands the law. All doubt, fear, worryment, and nervousness is useless expenditure of energy.

These calm moments in the inner world stamp their impress on the after life. One feels stronger, more self-reliant. Self has been put aside; and the triumph over self,—is not this the essence of the character-building process? If the temptation to follow the selfish dictate is mastered, the power behind the temptation is transmitted to the higher plane. But, if one weakens before it, the next opportunity to learn the lesson may be harder, until it becomes more and more difficult to conquer the rigid front of selfishness.

It is really, then, a matter of economy to take the current when it serves. The quiet, decisive method of mastering self is surely the best way. Do not fight self as if it were a demon to be cast out. Turn your thought toward the higher ideal, and gradually the lower self will lose its power. Every time the selfish impulse comes, the personal aspersion, the sentiment of recrimination, retaliation, of jealousy or anger, pause a moment, become calm. Do not express it, but turn it into its opposite. Do not judge, but calmly wait until you know. Have the broadest charity coupled with wise discernment. Root out sarcasm by refraining from giving it words. Do not make sport of others' beliefs. Be tolerant even of selfishness, knowing that all men are consciously or unconsciously engaged in the same moral struggle. Love even those who condemn, for they condemn through lack of knowledge of the creative process. When praise is given, look toward the highest, whence all your wisdom came, and avoid giving it a personal turn. Take home and apply to yourself the law of reaction, noting that, even while you are observing the

thought stream, you are sowing seeds which will bear fruit according to their kind. Is it not clear that people have neglected these little opportunities largely because they have not yet fully realized the absolute nature of the law of character-building?

Once realize the full meaning of this law, and you will see the tremendous responsibility put upon you. It is true that but a small part of life is voluntary. I would emphasize the fact again and again that we live related lives, depending on one another, and every instant dependent on the Infinite Spirit. But here deep within is the chooser, stamping his choice by every deed he performs.

It takes but the slightest move to turn the mind into self or out of it, into despair or hope, passion or love. All depends upon which way we turn, which set of thoughts or emotions we harbor in the inceptive stage. One must be keenly on the alert not to register fear, anger, passion, or selfishness. If you see the ideal you are to realize, you have nothing to do with faults and mistakes. These are unfinished deeds, aspirations on the evolutionary road to the fuller spiritual life. Throw yourself wholly on the hopeful side; and every time your thought anticipates calamity or failure, bring it back, and send it forth to the realms of success.

The wise man views life as a whole, and regards all errors and failures as means to the higher end. He is contented while doing the best he knows, for the way to enter a more congenial field is not to chafe under present circumstances. The place to meet our problem where its solution shall make one's character strongest is here where the problem arises. Rich or poor, imprisoned or free, ill or in good health, every soul is on the same basis in this respect. Every life may be made beautiful by the way it is lived; and, the more trying the circumstances, the greater the victory may become. Whether we have a poor inheritance or a good one makes less difference than our attitude toward it. If it be good, one must learn how to deserve and keep it. If it be poor, here is an opportunity for self-development. To him

that overcometh, more shall be given. It is not what our parents have done for us, but what we meet and master that gives us power.

If one man is more highly favored than his fellows, then he is given a severer test in some new direction. Every man may be heir to the greatest moral power; but, in order to express it, he must come to judgment, and begin gradually to live the ethical life. Character is never to be built for self alone. It comes at its best while we are living for others. Yet I am trying to show that the inception of all activity is in this deep-lying self-world of moral opportunities.

There is one other aspect of the character-building process on which I would lay special stress; namely, its physical side. As you look within to observe the interplay of thought, you find the spirit ever willing to come forth; but the body is like a prison hampering the spirit on every side. Here, then, is an opportunity for co-operation on the physical plane. Where you find the body stiff and restricted, develop it by careful attention and exercise until it is free. Remember that the soul is like the life of the rosebud: it is pressing from within, but it must have the favorable environment of atmosphere and sunlight in order to expand. And so with the body. If it is dense and compact, the right kind of exercise will free and perfect the instrument, so that it shall no longer be an obstacle.

But throughout this discussion I have laid stress on the conditions we are born into, the obstacles that stand in our way, and the dangers of introspection. I have emphasized all this in order to show what splendid opportunities lie open before the man of character. From infancy to old age, in the inner world and in the outer, everything possible is done to defeat him. Here is the supreme occasion. Let him seek the inner world where his own deepest conviction abides. Let him be true to it, come what may. Let him calmly, yet decisively, take his stand on the bed-rock of individuality. These conditions are put there only to test him. They are the conditions necessary to call out his power. "The occasion makes the man,"—if he takes it.

Thus we turn each time to the truth that all life is related, that its purpose is mutual helpfulness, that its effect depends on the attitude we take. Every condition may be a help or a hindrance. We faint and weaken under circumstances. We hesitate to express conviction, and haltingly keep back our real sentiments. But the greater power lies in us, and not in our environment. We are bound down only so long as we are willing. When the soul decides to make a change in life, and come forth from its subjective prison, no power in the universe can stand in its way.

In closing, then, I would lay emphasis on the ability to calm the mind and wait for opportunities. Again and again become the observer. When troubles and doubts come, seek the silent realm, and let the activities settle until you can see clearly and calmly. When you are too intense, wait for the commotion to subside. Learn by close scrutiny how you close and open, according to the nature of your mood, and thus acquire the habit of outgoing, hopeful, altruistic thought and life. When supreme occasions arise, be calmly, persistently regardful of the consequences. Choose the wiser way, the unselfish course, the deed that makes for character. Do not falter before any obstacle that stands in the pathway of individual development along unselfish lines. If the task seems momentarily too hard, pause to gather reserve power. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Not the serenity of the good-natured man who lets himself be trampled on, but the repose of the man who comprehends the law, the trust of the man who first of all trusts himself, the dignity and self-protectiveness of the one who has wise self-respect. Through him the power of the Almighty is made known. Through him the gentleness of the Christ speaks. He stands for what he is truly worth. He lives what he believes. He helps his fellow-man by what he is; and character is the fruition of his life day by day, because he is faithful to the ever-present divinity otherwise called opportunity. Such a man can say with John Burroughs:—

Serene, I fold my hands and wait,

Nor care for wind nor tide nor sea;  
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,  
For, lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays:  
For what avails this eager pace?  
I stand amid the eternal ways,  
And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day,  
The friends I seek are seeking me;  
No wind can drive my bark astray,  
Nor change the tide of destiny.

What matter if I stand alone?  
I wait with joy the coming years;  
My heart shall reap where it has sown,  
And garner up its fruit of tears.

The waters know their own, and draw  
The brook that springs in yonder heights.  
So flows the good with equal law  
Unto the soul of pure delights.

The stars come nightly to the sky,  
The tidal wave unto the sea:  
Nor time nor space, nor deep nor high,  
Can keep my own from me.

---

## IV. A Sceptic's Paradise.

---

We give up the past to the objector, and yet we hope. He must explain that hope.

—Emerson.

ONE DAY I awoke to the fact that I was a member of the philosophic society of the world. I cannot tell you how I, the plebeian Albert Hume, contrived to win my way into that delectable world. Nor can I give an adequate reason for disconnecting myself from my paternal moorings to take up a wanderer's life. Suffice it that I found myself in the throes of metaphysical speculation, and could not stop.

I became an insatiable reader of the world's great books. I read, not only from curiosity to know what men had thought, but to master my own thought as well. For the greatest service a book did me was to stimulate thought. I made note of my ideas until I flattered myself that I had a fairly intelligible system. I studied Greek philosophy, and chose Socrates as my hero. I read Hume and Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and their concomitants. I read the later English philosophers, not omitting the voluminous though uncritical Spencer and the suggestively sceptical Bradley. Meanwhile I delved into the philosophies of the East. I heard the Swamis and the Anagarikas, the Gandhis, the Theosophists, Spiritualists, and New Thought devotees. Darwin, Huxley,

and the other great scientists long engaged my attention; and I included the philosophic aspect of the great novels, histories, poems, and the art of all nations. In short, I made myself generally acquainted with the metaphysical wisdom of the ages.

What were the results of these intellectual peregrinations? I could not unqualifiedly accept any system of philosophy, for I found none that comprehended all phases of life and thought. Limitations of temperament, environment, and experience, I found voiced in limitations of doctrine. I found an abundance of diametrically contrasted systems of thought, each possessing its measure of what I pleased to call truth; and I found no two philosophers, even of the first order, thinking precisely alike. This was to be expected, yet it revealed the stupendous character of the philosophical problem, as well as the difficulty of unifying so many phases of truth. In fact, I concluded that a complete philosophical system was impossible, since human experience is incomplete. At all this, however, I rejoiced; for it was a fresh revelation of the beauty and wealth of the universe.

Yet I found myself approaching decided limits in our knowledge. After a time I very seldom had a really new idea. In the enthusiasm of philosophic youth, I had taught philosophy with much confidence. The majority of people are of firm faith, and readily accept a new doctrine. I had taken my doctor's degree, and felt myself competent to teach. But, once started, I had to run through the range of sceptically fundamental problems, and question every cherished conviction. As a result, I found myself in each case wiser than before, but too wise to inculcate a positive doctrine. Much that I once believed established fact I discovered to be founded on mere belief. Theories abounded on every hand, but assured knowledge I could not obtain; and this was what I sought, as it is indeed the aim of every truth-seeker. Every branch of knowledge I found failing where I most eagerly sought enlightenment. Physics and chemistry, for example, are satisfactory to a certain point. But what is the "force" of the physicist, and whence come the chemist's "atoms"? What positive evidence for the

doctrine of reincarnation can the Theosophist give? What philosophy in the world is without its *x*, or term used to conceal ignorance of precisely the most important problem under consideration? What a vast dismantling of ignorance would take place, were every philosopher compelled to set forth his reasons for believing in his *Ding-an-sich*, his Absolute, his "ocean of bliss," Nirvana, purgatory, fate, freedom, Jehovah, virgin, devil, or hell! For, if I turned to theology, the result was the same,—everywhere assumption and dogmatism. The alleged infallible revelation of the Jewish Bible failed to give unmistakable knowledge; and I found innumerable interpretations of its texts. It is easy to quote Scripture. But what of it? It is easy to say, "Obey the Father's will." But how are we to know of a certainty what his will is?

Again, the criteria of ethics are weakest where we would have them strongest. Does conscience tell us infallibly what is right and what is wrong? Have we any definite knowledge of the mind apart from the physical body with which it is associated, and so conditioned that we can have peace only so far as the physical state permits? Have we positive evidence of immortality? We believe it to be logical, and there is some evidence of continued existence; but have we assurance of eternally unbroken life?

Who, if the truth be told, can even say anything definite about the soul? I have looked within in vain to locate the soul. I seem like an imprisoned bird beating against the wires of his cage, when I try to penetrate my mind or extend the limits of knowledge. If I ask in all honesty what I mean by spirituality, I must confess that I have often mistaken physical exaltation for spiritual power. I conclude that many are self-deceived in this regard. I find life beset with illusions, even now that I have eliminated manifold errors and continually seek absolute truth. A haziness surrounds all telepathic and spiritistic phenomena which as yet precludes me from real knowledge. I am open to conviction, but do not find the facts I seek. I find the theological systems of all religions riddled with inconsistencies, though nearly all preachers talk as though they knew all about God and the spiritual life. If I follow a system of philosophy to its logical consequences, I find it ending in

absurdity. Pantheism, for instance, assures us that all is God. Then he is the devilry of the malicious and the filth of the slums as truly as he is the ice of yon snow mountain or the inspirer of a prophet.

If I were asked to believe in ultimate force, I should acquiesce; for I continually observe its varied manifestations. But in the account of its activity I must include all that I find in the universe, and not merely the good, or God. The one force reveals itself to me according to fixed laws, and I believe its tendency to be moral. But that is only my hope, not my knowledge. If I examine the ideas of God held in the past, I find them commensurable with man's state of development. They do not describe ultimate reality, but man's attempt to grasp it. Let them, then, be called man's experiences or beliefs, and not God. Even Spencer's "Unknowable" is his belief. There is no need of such a conception, for the existence of an Unknowable could not be known.

Of one fact, however, I am certain; namely, that the present phenomenon of consciousness exists. I cannot be an absolute sceptic. Though I doubt that the aforesaid Albert Hume really possesses a soul, I am forced to admit that consciousness is here. What the ego is that is conscious I am as yet unable fully to discover. Therefore, I leave this an open question.

Yet I conclude that what I call consciousness is somehow my consciousness, for I am unable to transcend it. This is the chief ground of my agnosticism. The utmost I can affirm of the power that gives me life is what I know through personal experience. I term it a higher power because its activity is brought before me despite my will. But my aspirations I must call mine, because, even if a God revealed them, I could know them only as my temperamental limitations should permit. My friends I know not as they are, but as my acquaintance with them makes possible. I have no assurance that I contemplate the same world another man sees, so widely do tastes, ideas, and organisms differ. My sensations are mine, they are not yours. I do not even see the real world, only my conscious representation of it. I do not doubt that a real world exists, that people whom I love live in it, that I can become more ethical in my conduct. Nevertheless, I know only my side of

the story. Much that I believe external may be in truth subjective illusion. I await further insight.

Meanwhile, be it subjective or objective, I love the fair world of nature. I am happy with my friends. I am happy, too, because I make continual progress. So far as I know, law is absolute. I am likely to sow as I reap, and need only regulate my sowing. In my relations with my fellows, I am concerned only with my attitude toward them, not with theirs, unless they ask my help. Even then, I can teach them only as I personally deem wisest. I shall frankly tell them that I have only hope to give them, for I will not mask as one who positively knows.

I am frank with myself. I would rather know that I am an arrant knave than pretend that I thought myself a saint. If others believed me a saint, my weakness in accepting their praise would be the cause of the harm to myself. I blame no one, for my personal consciousness alone gives cause for blame. Since the ultimate Power has not explicitly told me what to do, I do not know that I can be blamed for mistakes. I blame myself only when I fail to live up to my highest wisdom. I aspire even to live the Christ-life, but it is the Christ as I conceive it. I know not of a certainty who Jesus was.

I find that I have periods of doubting everything. I must be a sceptic until I am sure of my beliefs. Though I pursue absolute truth, but do not find it, I delight in the pursuit. For me the world is an optimistic system just because truth is hard to find. I am ever the joyful sceptic. I would ever carry a cheering word to my fellowmen. I would not cast a grain of suspicion on the beliefs others choose to hold. I hope I am tolerant. But I believe life is ultimately rational; and, undaunted, I shall continue the search for absolute reason. Between the periods of strenuous research, I entertain myself with my imagination, with which I can build as many ideal states as I will.

My mind is to me a paradise; and, although I have eaten all the apples I could find on the tree of knowledge, no one has driven me from the garden. My scepticism gives me no discomfort; for I am a man of faith, and I lose nothing by close scrutiny of my beliefs. I become more sincere as a

result. I am wiser each day and month. I know enough to know that I know nothing. So, with genuine post-Socratic happiness, I look out on the world in calmness, with an urgent word of advice to my fellow-men: Do not be afraid of scepticism, but press onward until you know where you stand, what you know as opposed to what you merely believe, and what a wealth of positive conviction is latent in scepticism itself.

I am, in fine, a listener and an observer in the haunts of trees and men. No one can enter my world unless I open the way. If what I seek fails to come, I will calmly observe and wait, though it be for an age and a day. Why should I succumb to fear and anxiety? I should but disturb my mind, and be no wiser. Why should I yield to the temptations of sense or be severe with my fellow-beings? I know of no way to escape the reaction, and it does not pay.

I try to do my daily share of good in the world. I have a little money, every drachma of which I earned by honest toil. I own no land; for I do not wish the care of property, and scenery is free. I have a wife whom I sincerely love, for whom it is my joy to live. My religion is devotion to truth, the religion of action; my worship is enjoyment of music and nature. My friends call me an atheist; but I love peace, virtue, beauty, wisdom and the boundless Source of these. They complain, too, that I wander from my native land to Alpine heights and the sacred temples of the East. But I must be active if I would forever grow. When periods of intense scepticism come, I find that the only remedy is to rest the mind by a change of scene and mental environment. Then, when I return to active thinking, I am usually surprised at my growth, at the strength of my faith, and the value of the intellectual results already attained. Yet I am still the sceptic. I still seek evidence through wider experience.

I seem to laud myself most audaciously in this frank effusion. Yet my standard for myself is as high as for the truth I seek, and I am far from self-pleased. I am an egoist, if you choose, imprisoned in the confines of my own solipsism. But I am an altruist by aspiration. If I speak in lightsome tone, remember that the world's riddle is not to be read with long-drawn face. I

---

am contagiously happy, and feel no shame. Show me that I am wrong, and I will most gladly listen. All problems will remain open questions with me until I know truth beyond all doubt. I wait, I love and am happy. May the peace which comes only with matured thinking be yours, who read. And again I say, as a parting word: Be not afraid of investigation. Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis happier to be wise.



## V. The Omnipresent Spirit<sup>9</sup>

---

Uttered not, yet comprehended,  
Is the Spirit's voiceless prayer.

*Longfellow.*

**F**EW WORDS ever uttered by man are more deeply suggestive than the text which I have chosen to-day: "In him we live and move and have our being." Only when Jesus speaks of God as the Father do we seem to draw nearer to the source of all life. But in these familiar words the most intelligible and acceptable doctrine of our relationship with the divine nature is expressed, which is to be found in any passage in the Bible or elsewhere. Let us consider how we may realize the divine omnipresence, that these words shall mean not only intellectual nearness to the Father, but open the soul itself to spiritual communion with him even here and now, where we have met in oneness of faith and love.

As we look abroad over the face of nature and inward to the illimitable realms of thought, one fact stands out above all others as the fundamental truth of our observation. We discover that events follow one another in

---

9. The substance of a paper read at the Church of the Higher Life, Boston, February, 1898.

regular sequence. Everywhere we observe the reign of law, and the evidences of system are so numerous that it is a mere truism to argue that behind this steady march of events there exists a first or ultimate cause. The idea of God is, in fact, a necessity of thought, for without it the theory of the universe is "burdened with the absurdity of an eternal succession of events" without cause or basis. Matter and force alone are insufficient to account for the past history of the universe. There must have been some Power to determine the directions and forms of force and matter, since we find that their history records an evolution from lower to higher forms. It is therefore one of the first impulses of human thought to attribute causes to the events of life, and man's progress in mental development may be measured by the kind of God he believes in.

The first tendency, however, is to conceive God as an external cause, far back of present events and necessary only to set the world in motion. But the doctrine of evolution has compelled us to revise our ideas of causation, and has thus laid the foundation of an accurate theory of the divine immanence. Causation as thus understood is a series of minute changes, the gradual accumulation of force through modification and transmission. This gradual development may be illustrated by the acquirement of a trade. We know that it cannot be learned in a moment, but one detail after another in systematic succession. As we look back upon life, we know absolutely that everything was wrought according to this law of gradual attainment.

Look into the world of society, and you see exemplifications of this law on every hand. Every day brings some new event, everything new is a cause. So that the ideas and customs, the governments and methods, of society, are actually changing before our eyes. In the inner realm, for example, while we reflect upon this great theme, the mind obtains a keener grasp of it, and is modified in some degree. Moreover, the process is unceasing. Each thought leads to another, and that one to a third, and, even when we sleep, the process continues subconsciously. One might in imagination trace out series after series of causal sequences running back to the past and lost in

the vastness of eternity. The entire universe is a complexity of interrelated streams of causes and effects. Every great event is resolvable into a vast number of slight changes. It is the minor events that are of consequence. The world is made by them. The universe at heart is infinitely minute. Nothing is made suddenly. A planet is not hurled into space full made in a moment: it is sent forth and completed during millions of years by the rearrangement of atom by atom. And, the more highly organized the creation, the longer and more minute the process,—a process which in man is far from complete to-day.

Consider, then, what this great fact means, this unbroken creative process governed by the law of minute causal sequences. Every doubt or hope, every feeling, is a part of that process. There can be no exception, since no event, no atom, falls outside the creative life. Does it not make life sacred and holy in a new sense,—the realization that the creative power is differentiated into just such apparently trivial sensations and thoughts as we are conscious of to-day?

Here, then, is our starting-point. The omnipotent spirit is present in every thought, in every emotion; and of such events all creation is compounded. Is it not futile to look farther than this for an ultimate cause? Is not the creative life fundamental to every fact? If so, we must take this minute experience in its fulness as the only complete revelation of God.

We really know of the existence of God only so far as this experience and accurate thought about it have carried us. Of a Deity outside of these passing details we have no knowledge. In the Deity's life we live, in the Deity's mind we think, and by the Deity we are moved, or otherwise there is no God at all. The absurdity of the existence of a Creator outside of nature appeals to the mind as soon as we clearly consider the absolute necessity of the presence of the creative power in every detail of life's minutest changes.

Whether we start with a moment in present life or with the great thought of eternity, whether with an atom or a world, our conclusion is the same; namely, that there could be but one ultimate life or being. Out from the

great heart of the All-Father proceeds the creative love in continuous upwelling. Like a mighty river, it bears with its outflow all that constitutes life, each instant sustaining, each moment renewing, atom or star in its course. Cause and effect are like drop and drop in the great mass of the flowing river. Every drop is a microcosm, every cause is the ultimate cause in miniature, every pulse-beat is essential to the existence of the one great life. Whatever springs from that one life must intimately partake of and could in no way be separate from it. Every painful as well as every pleasurable feeling must with equal surety be a part of that life. Even physical sensation, even the energy known as the power of evil, partakes of the same ultimate activity. From this conclusion there is no logical escape, if we agree that all life is ultimately one.

Such are the ultimate facts, stated coldly and emphatically. I put these facts thus coldly and definitely, in order to have a firm foundation for the superstructure of the higher feelings and thoughts. It is unimportant what we call that power, if only we recognize the fact that there could be no other, and that its life is the life of the universe, carried out in detail by these minute acts of causation; that the only real power is to be found in just these passing feelings and thoughts of which we are at present conscious. The only accurate statement of our lives taken in this general sense must then be that this being *lives in us*, lives through us, thinks as you and me, is conscious in each of our sensations. There is no separate life, no other will; but just this life we know is God's life, just these unruly wills are intimately related aspects of the power which knows no opposition. It is in your love and my love: it is the spirit which binds us together.

But are you and I identical? Is this pantheism? Once more let us remember the only means of revelation, namely, experience. Experience tells us that you and I are different, that our relationship with the one life is what we make it. This is just as truly a fact as the existence of an immutable law superior to our wills. The nature of the one life must be such that it can exist or manifest itself through distinct centres of consciousness. I am just as truly myself as I

am a part of God. You are so decidedly yourself that I cannot even know your inmost life and thought.

What, then, is the relationship between you and me? and how can we be ourselves, yet at the same time parts of God?

It is at once clear that we cannot fully answer this question, since only the great All-Father himself knows us as we live in him. Yet we can see some reasons. The All-Father would not be omnipotent, all-wise, and perfect unless he could thus create out of his own being a society of individual souls to manifest his attributes. This is the greatest miracle, and without it the Absolute would not be absolute. This is the great truth of every instant, that you and I are as free as though we alone existed, and at the same time so fully, literally, truly, a part of the one life that there is no part of us that is not also part of God.<sup>10</sup> Let us consider this great thought in detail, and see what bearing it has upon daily life.

Have you ever paused to realize how large a portion of this daily life is regulated by what we call the unconscious, how few details are directly regulated by the human will? At night we surrender to this great unconscious with no positive assurance that we are ever to awaken again. But there is a power there to carry us through the wonderful hours of sleep; and not only is the physical system restored, but fresh thoughts enter the mind and come later to consciousness. When we are ill, how little we do to heal ourselves, how large a part of the wonderful process of recovery is due to what we call Nature! The processes of life everywhere illustrate the same great dependence on something which we are pleased to call vitality or force, but the real mystery of which lies in the unconscious, and ultimately in the one great Life.

In our human relationships the same beautiful law obtains. We are drawn to one another, we can hardly tell why; nor are we conscious of our love

---

10. I have discussed the problem of individuality, "In Search of a Soul," Chap. IV.

until some new experience awakens it out of the unconscious. The effect is conscious, the cause lies in the realm of the unconscious.

Thus one might pass in review all the events of life, and find that the essential, the life, the power, is in that boundless realm of unconsciousness which environs every fact. The history of human life is the story of the soul's progressive awakening out of the unconscious. From merest infancy we are environed by the divine beauty and tenderly cared for by the divine love. Creation has always been continuous, a matter of minute modification; but we are now becoming conscious of it. Is it too much to say that all error and suffering—yes, all evil—is primarily intended to awaken us to consciousness of our relationship to the eternal beauty and the eternal love?

We have long deemed ourselves independent, and so we go on living as if there were no God. But a day comes when supreme suffering touches the human heart, and the soul feels utterly weak and helpless. It is then that theory gives place to reality. It is then that one knows absolutely that there is a closely present spirit; for a sustaining, peace-bringing power comes to carry the soul through its dark hours. One simply gives up to this upwelling stream of creative love, to move with its tide. As we look back upon life, we realize that somehow we have always survived. The burden many times seemed too hard to bear. But without this helplessness and this despair we would not have known the Father. Is it not probable that in every instant of life we are as truly dependent, but have not known it because of our ignorance of the law of creation? Is it not because the Father is intimately near, in the inmost heart of every soul, of every word and deed, that we so often neglect him?

This intimate nearness may be illustrated by human fellowship at its best. It is not in the spoken word, the glance, or the demonstration of affection that we show our deepest love for one another. But love at its best is unspeakable: it shows in the deed, in the life. It may even conceal itself, and do that which is long misunderstood, yet at the same time be so deep, strong, and constant that it would make any sacrifice to be true and

loyal to its own. It is a sacrilege to ask such love to voice itself. The deeper it is, the less one can say about it; and oftentimes it is only at the separation which comes at the close of a long lifetime that some measure of it is known, although it has lived and moved and had its being in every thought and deed of the devoted life.

Is this not true of the relation between man and the Father? Is not the Father's unspeakable devotion revealed in our sorrow and our suffering, even in evil and strife? Have we not doubted him long enough, while seeking to describe his nature by intellectual formulas and ferret out life's ultimate secret in the laboratory? All these things reveal him, too; but, like the discussion of the nature of love, they are cold and secondary. To know what love is, you must love and be loved. To know the real God, you must perceive him down deep in your life, in every moment, in every pang and joy. This outer life of ours, with all its insincerity and conceit, is unwordably superficial as compared with this deep under-current of divine communion. It is not until the soul has passed beyond all this and has been awed to silence that one really knows. There, in that deepest realm of human consciousness, one may truly find the Father.

And so this discovery of the under-current of divine inflow suggests the ideal of a life governed by a higher law than that which generally rules mankind,—a life where one's sole endeavor shall be to do the Father's will, or, in other words, to express through our lives the love, the spirit, the highest tendency, in the great evolution of which we are a part. At first thought, it seems like submission to do another's will. But it is the free choice of that will as it appeals to us individually. It is the relationship of love.

Since it is the warm, loving human God we are seeking, and not some cold abstraction, let us again turn to social life for an illustration of this relationship. Let one of two friends discover that the other has a stronger will and exercises too great an influence. Accordingly, the weaker one—perhaps it is a wife—concludes that she ought to assert her individuality. She therefore takes steps to preserve her freedom. She exerts her personality,

and in the end puts up a barrier which perhaps drives man and wife apart. And so always, when pressure is used, self-assertion and the like, some one must suffer; and the desired object is defeated. But the higher way is love's way. Love knows that all souls exist in equality. There is no high and no low. Each expresses the divine life, each bears a sacred and eternal relation to the Father which nothing can alter, each soul is free to be itself and to hold its place in society. There is no need to assert this individual soul, nor impose the fact of its freedom upon other souls. One needs simply to understand the law, to recognize this sacred relationship. Love grants the same freedom to all. It is the highest degree of freedom which gives the most individuality. It is when I am least self-assertive, when I am thinking least of self and am most outgoing, that I am freest, strongest, and most truly myself. I need not then try to discover if another mind be stronger than my own. If I love enough, I need not guard my rights and privileges, for all this takes care of itself.

Thus it is ever true that he that loseth his life shall find it. He only is free and individual who, forgetting his mere self, lets himself out sincerely, trustfully, in the spirit of love. What discords might be avoided, what joy could come into life, if this law were generally recognized; namely, that freedom, that individuality, is not to be fought for, but that all is put in its right relation when we truly love and understand! Is it not ignorant self-assertion which causes misery and discord? Is it not because we are anxious to carry out some desire of our own that we plan, crowd, and give ourselves so much worriment?

All life is an awakening; and, if we are wisely awake, we need not assert. That love or individuality, that freedom or soul-power, which depends on continual affirmation, is not yet the genuine spirit. When you see a man struggling to defend himself, you may know that he is not free. If I must force myself to do a thing, then I am only partly adjusted to myself. There is a way of thinking, a way of doing and being, which will spare us the friction of life,—an easiest, happiest way. All the sorrow, all the regret, the fear, doubt, and

worrimment which harasses our lives may be spared. But, just because it is the easiest and simplest way, it is hardest to find, the one which man is slowest to adopt; for it calls upon each soul to do the hardest deed,—namely, to conquer self, to let go, to trust, to become receptive, consciously to take the opportunities of life. We are not ready to believe that, if we would trust, all things would be provided. We do not yet see that the realization of individual ambition, the fullest degree of service for humanity, and the at-one-ment with the divine will are the same, and that, consequently, there is nothing to give up.

The creative power may be taking precisely the course through these circumstances against which we rebel, to bring all we desire. But what a hard, hard lesson, that of harmony with the creative tendency! How long it is ere we learn not to interfere with others, but to see the wisdom of life as it is, in process of becoming, and as we may make it! We think we know a better way than the optimism Nature has spread so bountifully before us. We fear that a few million souls will be lost unless we personally save them. We believe our last chance for salvation is at hand. We think we understand other people's needs better than they, as though Nature had bereft some souls of this great possibility, as though she had left some without guidance and had been partial to us. And so we fret and fume impatiently, and reach forth to take a hand in affairs.

Let us shake off this servile distrust, and take home this one great truth of life,—“In him we live and move and have our being,”—and think it out in all its details until we understand the wonderful possibilities which it involves. Then let us show by our lives and thoughts that we really believe it. For this does not mean mere passivity: it is not circumstances which we are to take as they are, but we are to harmonize with the spirit which moves through them. If I depended on circumstances alone, I might wait forever for a change of condition. It is when I learn their meaning, when I feel the uplift or moving of the higher power, that I advance out of them.

I think you will find that man has gone through three stages in his attitude toward God. The first stage is that of belief in a power outside of himself and the world. God is worshipped, feared, or hated as the Creator, the deified man. Man feels himself bound by a power whose will is greater than his own, and he rebels or is awe-struck. In the second stage the idea of a personal God gives place to belief in force, power, or a sort of pantheistic spirit. Man feels himself carried irresistibly forward, and submits. He becomes mild, passive. This is largely the philosophy of the Orient. The third stage is the one which finds special emphasis here in America, the land of enterprise, of belief in individuality. It is the rediscovery of man's pristine enthusiasm, in the light of all that is true in the philosophy of the East. The East believes in spiritual unity; the West, in the power and freedom of the individual soul. We are learning that both philosophies are in part true.

The discovery that in the one spirit I live and move and have my being is the discovery that I, too, am a creative power. We do not know God when we falter and rebel because of the pressure of law. We deny one-half the glory of creation when we accept the pantheistic view. No law stands in the way of the soul, but the soul must harmonize with the law in order to transcend it. The higher law is the soul's method of conduct. The soul will probably make its own circumstance when it is consciously free. Its times for silence, for receptivity, are not the occasion for submission or passivity. In these moments the soul becomes receptive, that it may know how to go forth and act.

In the hurry and strife of daily living, again and again one loses sight of the higher way. Every time we fail, each time the way is obscure, and our problems complex and burdensome, there is this great resource: Return to nature. Return to the unconscious. Sleep, rest, meditate, become receptive as a little child, and once more listen for the chord of the infinite musician, the divine key-note. Seek harmony with the spontaneous prompting, then move forward confidently.

Is not the secret of life involved in the adjustment between our times of silence, or return to harmony with God, and the activity which that communion inspires? Some dwell too long in the silence, and lose enthusiasm; become unresponsive and dead, figuratively speaking. Others are too active, and lose all sense of connection with God. Let us have the gentleness of the Orient combined with the energy of the Occident. Awake, arise, and be true to the ambitions, the ideas and feelings, the hopes and gifts, of your individual soul. But, when you awaken, remember the rights of other souls, remember the power of individuality. It is one and God that make a majority. When I stem the divine tide, I am helpless. When I move with it, I own the universe.

I feel the divine strength when I am strongest in myself. I must take a strong attitude of soul and body, in order to invite the greater power of God. In him I not only live, but I move, I act. So far as I know, I am a free moral agent. God supplies me with life and with opportunities. He apparently gives me all that perfect love and wisdom can command. He has planted within me certain tendencies which, if followed, will probably lead to the highest and fullest life. He is every moment actively present with me. Through every deed he lives, through every emotion he feels. But with all this wealth of helpfulness at my command I make my own life; for I must first choose, I must act. In order to realize my fullest life, I must find my centre, become poised. To find my true centre is to learn my real relation to God; namely, that the soul is an agent of the creative or spiritual life, the heir to boundless hope.

Thus all other revelations of God become secondary to that of the individual soul. If I do not find him there, if I am not true to him there, I must not expect really to know him in the outer universe. God has a message for me alone. When I have first heard that, then I may understand his message to other souls. The point each of us has reached to-day in knowledge of God is precisely the power each has attained to think out for himself these

revelations of which I have been speaking,—the power of the soul to open itself afresh to the great Over-soul.

The supreme test of faith, therefore, is to live during the intervals in the spirit and remembrance of these rarest experiences in life. One is permitted to have them, that daily life may be made nobler. Always, if one has touched the soul centre, there is a feeling of refreshment, the renewing of life. Then one must go forth into the world, take up the problem of life, and infuse into it some measure of this new inspiration. Thus the realization that in him we live and move may become more and more practical. Take this truth into your thought. Carry it into your work, and let it speak through voice and countenance. When fear and doubt come, know that you are not trusting the Father.

When anything happens to agitate and trouble you, turn to this supreme resource, and connect hopefully in thought with it. Above all else, look for the spirit, the love, the unspeakable silence. Higher than the definite thought is the communion with the living essence itself. If you really feel that, you will not be hampered by forms and words; but more and more the spirit will come as the comforter, as love, gently, tenderly, a sustaining presence. More and more one's prayer will be the prayer without ceasing, that deep underflow of spiritual consciousness which is never broken.

If you can hold in thought there for a time, a helpful response will surely come. If it is true that the divine life is immanent in us all, then it is needless to reach forth and away to find it. It is here, concerned with the next step in our development, not with some far-off ideal. It adapts itself to just your need and mine to-day. Is not this the supreme wonder and beauty of the immanent Life, its sympathy with, its participation in all that we are and all that we do, its marvellous diversity of manifestation?

By the omnipresent Spirit, then, I mean more especially the aspiring and directive tendency of evolution. I do not insist on terms, I hold to no hard-and-fast conception of the divine nature, to no fixed Absolute. I willingly sacrifice the conception of personality. I would simply be true to the facts

of life, the tendencies they reveal and the hopes they suggest. Here in the evolving present is the holy of holies. Here in these passing details is the real creative power. Name that power as you please, you cannot dodge its persistent revelation of law, evolution, beauty, and the endeavor to attain a higher goal. Your own life furnishes the data through which you may know this one Life. You find that Life startlingly near when you look, and consciousness fails to discover one fact which is not fairly alive with the omnipresent Spirit.

Yet the supreme revelation of the immanent Spirit is higher than that which the soul thus consciously thinks about or seeks. In the supreme moments of life the Spirit seeks us. In those calmer, more receptive hours when we forget that we are receptive, the infinite Wisdom makes its presence known. The other revelations seem to come from below, they have evolved with us. This comes from above, and the soul is touched by humility in recognition of its coming.

Trust and humility are the supreme essentials. Calmly and gently the spirit breathes upon the soul as if to create it anew. One feels the infinite joy and blessing of existence. An unspeakable peace rests upon mind and heart. Fear, doubt, and antagonism disappear in the spirit of the divine love. The soul is touched to its deepest centre, so that it can say to all else in life: Peace, be still! the hour is holy. The Father is here. In him I live and move and have my being.



---

## VI. The Problem of Evil.

---

“For nothing is that errs from law.”

**T**HE CORRECT statement of a problem has long been deemed an important step toward its solution. If we cannot fully solve the enigma of life, we can at least eliminate unintelligible attempts at its solution by more accurately defining the object of our search. The problem of evil has long been beset with difficulties which never belonged to it, owing to the erroneous terminology in which it has been clothed. In this chapter I shall try to clear away some of these difficulties by more clearly defining the issue.

At the outset it is clear that, if our theory of the universe is to be practical as well as metaphysical, the doctrine of evil which we adopt should leave no excuse for wrong-doing. If it be asserted that “evil is good in the making,” or a means to a good end, the sinner may then take license to do evil, that good may come. There must be moral and intellectual discrimination, or no solution of our problem, either practical or metaphysical. Says Browning:

“All is not wrong, as long as wrong *seems* wrong.”

“Though wrong were right,

Could we but know—still wrong must needs seem wrong

---

To do right's service, prove man weak or strong,  
Choosers of evil or good."

Evil, then, is unconditionally bad. It is not to be played with. It is never to be excused. It must ever be recognized for what it is. But it does not follow because a wrong act—for example, a murder—is utterly vile in itself that the man who committed it is wholly depraved.

There is no escape from the conclusion that there is but one Reality in the universe. All power, therefore, originates in this Life. The misspent power employed in an evil deed must be part of this one Life. It cannot as such be evil, however it is misused by man. By the same reasoning, also, all substances, even the ultimate atoms, if such exist, must be good in themselves; for it is almost a truism to say that harmony, and not chaos, reigns at the foundation of things, since the universe is a system. The most pessimistic statement our logic permits us to utter, therefore, is this, that the universe, both ideally and actually, owns a balance of good.

It might, however, be argued that even a good Creator could create tempters, or evil spirits, as needed factors in a moral universe. But would such beings be condemned to ply their vile calling forever? Would there be no hope for them? If so, the Creator would be unjust. Consequently, if tempters exist, they must, like ourselves, be those who are susceptible of being redeemed. Moreover, such beings would require to be tempted by a worse devil; and we should come at last to the devil of devils. But the prince of tempters would be an immensely clever fellow, whose life would be a careful adjustment of means to ends, and thus far good. An utterly bad devil, then, is clearly an impossibility. And why should we look for tempters outside of ourselves? Even if we were tempted, there would be a side of us left open to temptation; and it would be our fault that we were tempted. Do we not know, as a fact, that it is our lower selves that tempt us? The selfish self is the devil in the world. Would it not be a mere excuse if I should allege that another tempted me?

Evil, then, is brought close home to us. "Let him who is guiltless cast the first stone." We are well aware that, if we had possessed more knowledge of self and more self-control, we would not have sinned. That form of helpfulness which teaches the evil-doer how to *understand* and *possess* himself is the truest kind of moral reform, not that which condemns. We do not know enough about another, and we are not good enough ourselves to condemn. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

That we voluntarily choose to follow temptation, after we have learned that we ought to obey the higher self, may be due to the fact that we are diseased, partly or wholly insane, burdened with an inheritance which we do not understand, overloaded with passion which we know not how to control, and many other personal causes,—all of which point to the undeveloped character of the sinner. The wrong act, inexcusable in itself, may, through the sense of shame or the stirring of conscience, lead the sinner to reflect until he learns its evil character and the beauty of the righteous life. The virtues of one age become the vices of another, when man becomes more enlightened.

Error, crime, and evil—like war, disease, and pain—may then be deemed the frictions of our emergence into an enlightened condition. Considered by themselves, they are as vile as ever. But they are the products of our way of living; and the self that has suffered from them may sometime turn, not the deeds, but their effects on him, into good account by reacting in favor of righteous living. Thus may be evolved in time the sinless life, or perfect type, commonly called the Christ, which, when chosen, becomes the only life of which one can say, unqualifiedly, that it is good. And he who has taught us to aspire toward that life was the most devoted to the unrighteous, with whom he mingled that he might uplift them. Can there be any complete solution of the problem of evil short of this beautiful life of service as exemplified by Jesus?

When, therefore, we state a law or principle, we must know the conditions to which the law applies. One may not safely say to the criminal or sensuous

man, "All is good"; for he needs moral instruction rather than license. But, when one has come into fulness of understanding, and is trying to live the Christ-life, when everything which the inner attitude attracts means soul development, then one can welcome whatever may come, knowing that it is good. To the wise only "All is good." The wise only see the solution of the problem of evil; for evil is to be understood, not by speculating about it, not while we are in its toils, but when we have transcended it by living a righteous life.

But the orthodox critic, who has throughout this discussion scarcely possessed his soul in patience, now bursts forth with a torrent of anathemas. "Away with such a vile doctrine!" he insists. "You have left no place for the atonement. You would fain persuade us that man is good. But it is false, it is false. Man is bad. Only the blood of Christ shall save him."

Thus does the theologian ever retreat upon dogma. He must maintain his creed at any cost. Man must be wicked, or the whole orthodox system falls. Yet what ground can he base his belief upon, when the theologian is pressed to the utmost? It is easy for him to repeat a prayer in which man is called a "miserable sinner"; but, if you call him such, does he not deem it an insult? It may be a theological necessity, to believe in the perversity of the human will. Yet is it not the surrender of all hope, the abdication of all effort and desire? Who would believe it of himself if the question were put in all sincerity? If it be true, one might as well begin a life of mere pleasure at once, since all attempts at self-improvement are in vain. If true, then we have no reason to expect redemption; for there is naught in us worth redeeming. If it be true, then let us show by our conduct that we believe it instead of appearing in public as models of virtue. But, if we have hope for ourselves, if we find two selves struggling within,—one of which we believe will conquer, and virtue become supreme,—then let us hold the same hope for humanity, and throw theological necessity to the winds. Let us be no severer with the basest sinner than with ourselves.

But if the critic, as a last resort, deserts theology, and turns to the facts of actual life, we must admit that there is a nether side of the world. For example, take disease. It is futile to deny that its existence is a grievous burden. Yet it is the natural result of man's mode of life. Each year it is better understood. We are learning more and more about its mental aspects, its hidden causes and spiritual cure. There is reason to believe that by self-knowledge, prudence, and careful sanitation, it may be entirely overcome. And who would maintain that pain is evil, since it is the penalty of excess, the warning to man that law governs all, the intimation of Nature that she is healing our injuries?<sup>11</sup>

Man is still sensuous, and his passion results in sin and crime. But there is hope for him in the philosophy of transmutation, which, instead of condemning his passion as evil, helps him to purify it. Wonderful changes have already been wrought by those who, rejecting the orthodox creed, have approached the problem in this optimistic spirit. Thousands would gladly overcome the animal in them if they knew how. Shall we regard humanity disconsolately, when knowledge of the laws of evolution is so recent, while the fetters of pessimistic theology still encumber our feet? The race is young yet, and the sex problem is fraught with tremendous issues which only the ages can solve. Many a false idea must be rooted out ere the transmutation become universal.

Poverty is a fact which is not so easily comprehended. It is traceable in part to the ignorant and unevolved condition of the larger part of the race. Every pauper one meets shows by his demeanor the reason for his poverty. Nature invariably enforces her laws here as elsewhere, intermingling the usual compensation. One finds a surprising measure of contentment, even among the struggling peasants who know not whence their food is coming. One may give them the clew to success by pointing out the law of action and reaction, by calling their attention to the conditions observed

---

11. In another volume, "The Power of Silence," Chap. V., I have elaborated this theory of pain.

by their more fortunate competitors. It is indeed difficult to justify the selfish severity of their oppressors. Yet factors are at work, even among the capitalists, which must ultimately better the laborer's condition. The contest of capital and labor is obviously a phase of our evolution, and we are at present experiencing one of its dreariest stages. Here again, however, it is far too soon to condemn the universe. The present-day philanthropist is keenly alive to the issue, and is persistently doing his utmost to meet it. There is hope in the fact that we are now conscious of wrongs which once passed unnoticed, hope in the fact that such blots upon civilization as the Kalifate are wiped out, that the villiany of the Spaniard and the Musselman is emphatically condemned, while the power of semi-barbarous nations is dying. The hope of the race lies in the wonderful gain each year witnesses of altruistic sentiments over egoistic. Organized charity makes many a mistake in its kindly endeavor. But it is a joyous fact that it exists; and the lowly state alike of the superstitious, the needy, and the fallen, is the grand opportunity of the wise.

Nations still make warfare upon one another, but the power of arbitration grows apace. War is fast becoming an impossibility through the invention of its fearful agents of destruction. Crime brings with it the power which stamps it out, and society will bear only a certain degree of corruption. Over against every dark fact in life one can put a hopeful sign, foremost among which is the growth of the higher education, which teaches man to *think*, to respect and cultivate his individuality. The thinking world is rapidly freeing itself from orthodoxy. The development of the brotherhood of man and fellowship in religion has received a great impetus since the Parliament of Religions in 1893. The past two generations have witnessed a wonderful spread of interest in metaphysical questions, and everywhere small companies of people have gathered to discuss the relation of practical optimism to the problems of disease and sin.

But it is needless to enumerate facts. If we have defined the issue, that is sufficient. In the discussion of the problem of evil, the first essential is to

free the mind from dogmas which it seeks to substantiate at any cost. It then becomes at once clear that there is no absolute evil;<sup>12</sup> for standards vary from age to age, and evil is such only when judged by the ideal of the age which condemns it. We have before us, therefore, the facts of life as it exists to-day. The issue is left entirely with evolution. The optimistic view of it is the only practical doctrine. There is ground neither for condemnation nor despair, but simply for helpfulness. Man thinks and acts as he does because he has advanced no farther in evolution. His conduct is the exact result of what he is. Change him, and you shall see him living a better life. Do not frighten him into a belief which is to save him from some hypothetical hell. Help him to understand himself, teach him the laws of growth, and elevate his standards. Explain and emphasize the laws of character-building, and show him that his mistakes and failures are due not to wilfulness, but to ignorance of self and lack of self-control. Encourage him by pointing out the method of conquering our unruly selves through moderation, poise, and thoughtfulness, in the deep inner world where all our activity originates. Insist upon no theories, and do not impose your methods upon him, but inspire him to look at the facts of life for himself, the possibilities it contains, and the hope it offers. Here is the way out of the nether world into the superior. Here is true sympathy, charity, and love. Be as fair with all men as with yourself. Offer them the same encouragement, and give them the benefit of your own struggles. The problem of evil is not wholly dark, when viewed in this light. It is not wholly solved. But hope is still boundless; and out of these patient endeavors to lift our fellow-men shall come, little by little, the joy and beauty of a nobler life.

---

12. See "The Perfect Whole," Chap. VII.



## VII. The Escape from Subjectivity.

---

“He that loseth his life shall find it.”

ONE OF the most strongly marked tendencies in the progressive thought of the last quarter of a century is the endeavor to explain life by reference to our inner attitude. The discussion commends itself at once to common sense, for a close psychological analysis shows that the centre of activity lies within. Practical philosophy has received great impetus from this discovery, while the individual solution of the problem of life is greatly simplified. The truth is, in fact, brought home with such force that one is left with no alternative but to begin to know one's self, to practise self-control, develop character and spiritual poise, and take advantage of the possibilities of optimism and the numberless opportunities which ethical thinking presents.

But after a time the mind discovers a difficulty almost as serious as the problem of evil. If one accepts the solution of the great mystery suggested in the foregoing chapter, the subjective world becomes fairly beset with burdens demanding the soul's attention. Philosophical idealism adds its word by showing that all we know of the objective world is acquaintance with our mental representation of it. Scepticism makes a strong contribution

by doubting whether we ever pass beyond purely egoistic consciousness. And the perplexed thinker looks out in despair upon the strange world his surprisingly rich personality has apparently created. Practical philosophy, too, enters its word of protest. It suggests the possibility that regard for the personal attitude alone may cause one to become self-centred and absorbed in contemplation of faults and virtues.

The danger is surely serious. One sees many selfish people who make this their rule. They look within, conclude that their attitude is right, then assume a superior, indifferent, unsympathetic, or critical attitude, which makes them disagreeable companions. Many, too, have practised spiritual meditation until they mistook egoistic emotions for intimations of "the Absolute." There has been much self-gratulation in recent years, due to the endeavor to develop a philosophy of mental causation. There has been a tendency to neglect the outer world, and deem even Nature the product of our mental life. Subjective idealism is carried to such an extreme that one frequently hears of the law and order, the beauty and variety, of the physical universe characterized as so many aspects of man's belief, as though matter had no qualities of its own, and Nature only such beauty as the mind of man projects into it. In his "Grammar of Science," Karl Pearson goes so far as to say that scientific law describes "the routine of our perceptions." But H. V. Knox<sup>13</sup> shows conclusively that there is no routine of our perceptions. "Consciousness of routine is very far," he says, "from being the same thing as routine of consciousness." If there is one fact persistently forced upon human consciousness, it is the objective regularity of Nature. The prudent man ever tries to bring his conduct up to the level of nature's routine. "The universe is invested with inevitable conditions which the unwise seek to dodge." The critic may therefore well take objection to methods of self-help which tend to imprison one in the subjective realm, with all its subtleties and illusions, to the neglect of the laws and actualities of objective nature.

---

13. *Mind*, April, 1897.

The careful reader need not be reminded that the doctrine of this book is the reverse of this. Unless one look within to adjust conduct with due consideration for others, to free others from blame, help them, by becoming unselfish, sympathetic, and loving, to become aware of the splendid possibilities of hope and the outgoing life, one would better not introspect. Self-consciousness is an intermediate, never rightfully a final, stage of development. One is to look within,—not to make life smaller and exclude others, but to make it large enough to include all humanity. In its fulness the adjustment of the inner attitude calls for the largest charity, never for adverse criticism of others. We are to look far within, and trace all activity, selfishness, and evil to their home centre, that we may truly come to judgment. We are to display the characteristics of selfhood in bold relief, that we may discover the ugliness of the egoistic life, and by contrast the beauty of altruism. Nor is self-control really attained until we can thus turn the ingoing life into the outgoing.

Stated in larger terms, the entire process is the search for freedom. Our foes are our habits. For a large part of our conduct we can assign no other reason than custom. In the Old World one is deeply impressed by this tendency toward repetition and imitation,—a tendency as strongly marked as servitude to dogma and authority, which we have considered in Chapter II.,—whereas in the New World man has dared to branch out into unexplored fields. We each have the old world and the new within: our hope lies in the possibility of throwing aside the thralldom of the old. Subjectivity may easily become a habit, but we must take care that it does not. We must constantly rouse ourselves, putting new energy into the day, into our work. We should keep the entire field of life open, free, expectant, and astir. There will then be no danger that “rut-bound” will be inscribed over our door.

So far as purely subjective philosophy is concerned, the slightest reflection upon our relationships with our fellows and with Nature, convinces the mind that no moment of existence is really separated from the objective world. This fact has been persistently forced home to us in the discussion on

character-building. The utmost our subjective self can do is to observe the intimately related world in which it lives, and redirect tendencies which it did not originate. There is, in fine, no valid reason to doubt that we contemplate a real world rising beyond the confines of subjective selfhood.

But the most joyful escape from subjectivity is the return to Nature. There are infinite resources in the psychological world, there are pathways to the sublimest inspirations. Yet they are not to be compared in breadth of thought with the inspiration of Nature. In the library it is easy to speculate upon the subjectivity of matter. But sail upon the stormy sea, stand before a vigorous waterfall pouring its mighty forces toward you, or try to ascend a great snow mountain, and you are at once overawed, not only by Nature's grandeur, but by the aggressiveness with which she makes her presence known. Man cannot control these mighty forces: he can only adjust himself to them; and adjustment through discovery of natural law is the great lesson of life. In the presence of such environments the subjective life assumes its true place as the observer and interpreter, the mental participant in Nature's great mechanism. The mind is inspired with fresh hope to co-operate with Nature, and attain freedom from the burdens of the inner world. Communion with her enlarges the life. It inspires confidence to come forth from the subjective shell. It everywhere invites one to enter the fuller experience attendant upon the free life which existence with her makes possible.

The search for the soul should therefore lead to two important conclusions: (1) the utter narrowness of the self-conscious, subjective, egoistic life; and (2) the impossibility of finding the soul except through the higher life of spiritual love, service, and the Christ. The real way of escape is through the desire to live the altruistic life. Any one who is ready to set self aside can escape from subjectivity. Any one can be free from hampering circumstance and sensation who will place the thought not on the condition, but on the ideal to be realized through it.

What we find within, then, depends upon what we look for,—the spirit with which we enter the sanctuary of the inner world. It may be an

imprisoning sensation or the Christ, the finite self or the infinite God. A certain amount of self-consciousness is necessary to learn discrimination, to find the clew to knowledge of humanity at large. But only the unprogressive will linger there. After a time one learns to think objectively, to take as full account of the inner world, but through the study of other people instead of the contemplation of self.

"Exact science," says Paul Carus,<sup>14</sup> "eliminates the subjective and aims at a purely objective statement of facts. He who wants to think correctly must leave aside the I's and me's. It is no exaggeration to say that the intrusion of self is always the main source of error."

The problem of life becomes more and more an objectively social question. The adjustment of self to society, of friend with friend, in the light of the rich knowledge which subjectivity has brought us, becomes the great study; while introspection is forced to assume its specific place. Henceforth the problem is, How shall man be persuaded to live the higher life, how can altruism become universal? Evidently, each is to play his part by beginning at home. We are to look within to sow the seeds of idealism, with social spirituality as the end in view. We are to test ourselves by the high standards of love and the Christ. We are to consider more in detail what shall be our views on these high themes. True subjectivity shall thus prepare the way for the nobler life of service. It presents its own means of escape to those who penetrate far enough. It is a danger only to the fearful and inactive.

---

14. *The Open Court*, May, 1897.



---

## VIII. Love.

---

“Und was ist reine Liebe?

Die ihre selbst vergisst

Und wann ist Lieb' am tiefsten?

Wann sie am stillsten ist.”

ONE MAY well hesitate before discoursing on the much-abused subject of love. In general, the word means anything you please, except the beautiful affinity, the pure, quickening power and sentiment one would have it mean. Yet, despite the confusion of thought which identifies it with somewhat physical, and despite the ridicule heaped upon those who speak of the soul's love, every one enters its realm sooner or later; and its coming is a revelation of beauty which speech may as well undertake to formulate as any of the spirit's manifestations. Indeed, no philosophy is complete which fails to take specific account of that quality without which life is not life; and no idealism is adequate unless it at least suggests the refining of the baser passion into the bewitchingly intangible spirit of love's true life. One may not, it is true, define love. Forever, “sie redet nicht, sie liebt.” But one may perhaps describe the conditions of its coming, although, in the end, speech

may fail to say precisely what is most needed to distinguish the true love from the false.

In the philosophical sense, love is the universal principle of affinity in nature, the beginning of all development. It is the inspiring, as well as the awakening, transforming, and liberating power of the world. It is not only the theme of every romance and of every life, but of all art and music. Love, or that which aspires to be love, has drawn all people together; and one might narrate the entire history of human life in its terms. But it becomes more truly itself the higher we ascend in the scale of life. Love as Robert Louis Stevenson describes it,<sup>15</sup> always physical and capable of jealousy, is not the sort of which we are speaking. The love which boasts of its impersonality is almost as far from the genuine quality, "for persons are love's world." The deepest love is, in fact, scarcely separable from the heart companions whose unselfishness and whose love have taught us what it means. To know what one means by such love, you must yourself enter as deeply into another's life, in that sacred region where the wondrous beauty of a human soul is made known. Then you will know what personal love is.

It is well enough for metaphysical monks to speak of the mother's love for her children as the same as that which she feels for all children; for he is retailing unmarried theory, not recounting the tale of real life. While we are still human,—and who would be so delectably impersonal?—we are sure to love some people more than others. In true love the father, the mother, son, daughter, the brother, the sister, the friend, wife, husband, will ever have their specific places. Full love for one person ought to lead to more outgoing love to all, but the particular must come before the universal. When a dying mother said to her son, "See me in all women," she struck the key-note of the true universal. When the lover beholds all women in his chosen one, he, too, rises to the normal type of love. Love is divine; and, when truly seen, the person becomes the medium of vision from man to God. The greatest

---

15. On "Falling in Love," in his "Virginibus Puerisque."

glimpse of the Father's tender care is seen through the mother's devotion. But each constituent of the family contributes his particular share, and we can ill afford to neglect even one phase of the great revelation.

True love is willing to love, though there be no return, yet in its fulness it is a mutual or reciprocal emotion, in which each recipient helps the other to speak and feel. "Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest," says Browning. We have builded all things in co-operation, and love is the beautiful incentive which leads to mutual labor and the home. Each soul contributes or should contribute, and is contributed to. It maybe "greater to love than to be loved," but we are human enough to expect love in return. Yet love asks in return only love, and not some base reward; for at its best it is ever out-going, altruistic, while egoism is in-taking. True love responds more and more when it meets true love. If you would receive more from another, love that other more. Such love is not self-sacrifice, which implies something negative: it is positive devotion.

By true love I mean that which I should like to see manifested by all people, throughout the universe, when they have found their true centre in God. It wills that at least as much should come to others as has come to self: it is inclusive. Love is steadfast, while its wavering counterfeit is only love in process of evolution. Love has an evolution, and its embryonic stages are not to be despised. But the love of which I chiefly speak is no longer passionate, though warm and tender. Passion is selfish, physical. Love loves, and is spiritual. Passion is impatient. Love endures many tests, and cheerfully waits. Passion simulates the true, schemes, and, when it fails, retaliates. Love is sincere and forgives. Passion's brother, hatred, looks sharply at faults: its kinsman, intellect, puts up barriers. But love, though reputed blind, truly appreciates, looks upon a fault only in the light of the ideal latent within, and melts away all obstacles and restraint. It sends out more of itself when others are unkind, and has no memory for hurts and wrongs. It is reputed to be "woman's whole life," and an affair of man's "occasional moments"; but

man also can love. Love is said to come but once; but this is only in fullest measure, and may truly come many times.

In its fullest sense, love individuates or chooses for all time: "there shall be no other." Upon this chosen one it bestows unquestioned trust and fullest confidence. It welcomes criticism, and gives full recognition to individuality; for "its dearest bond is like in difference." In fine, it reaches the high level of the "Portuguese Sonnets" of Mrs. Browning:

"If thou must love me, let it be for nought,  
Except for love's sake only.  
...Love me for love's sake, that evermore  
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity."  
"I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—  
And, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death."

True love is modest, and shyly waits for its fellow to speak. It does not wear its heart on its sleeve, though it does not conceal itself from the keenly observant. It endures many tests. It is sacred between its partners. It knows nothing higher than itself, for it is the unifier of all that is best. It could not be jealous. To the last extremity, it will deny itself for its mate. It is neither feminine nor masculine, but unites the sexes. It blesses wherever it comes. Without it one only half lives. When all else fails, it comes to the succor of the soul. It is deep, and comes from the heart of the soul. Just as modesty is its gentle hand-maiden, so respect is its strong elder brother. Trust is its illumined companion, and surprise the attendant upon its awakening. We scarcely know how deeply we love until we overtake ourselves telling another. It is love that brings poise and gives centrality. It is the life of character, the heart of intelligent will. Intuition foresees and reports for it,

wisdom is its balance wheel. It inspires all true art, literature, and science, which are undertaken for her sweet sake.

It is a tender flower, and must be dealt with gently when its young awakening comes. It is planted deep within the introspective soul, and is so sensitive that a single word will cause it to close. But it grows hardier with years, and the understanding helps it to mature. Misjudged, it may be neglected for years; and a slight difference of opinion may cause it to be covered with a weight of harsh quarrellings. Yet, if the intellect continually clears all controversy away, it perennially bursts out in fresh dignity and beauty. It is absolutely without age, and knows neither space nor time. The mind sometimes tries to crush or enslave it; but its true mate can seek it out, however cold and intense its imprisoning intellectualism. Many people are narrow and contracted because they have shut love out of their lives. Its full expression is the rounding-out of all that is best in humanity.

A man's power of work is measured by the love he expresses. Those whose life is attuned to its melody, speak and write in rhythmic accents; for there is a fine balance between feeling and word. It is the open door alike to poetry and music,—the very bone and sinew of religion. It is the genius of the moral life and the befriender of the fallen. It knows neither sect nor dogma, but is the one spirit in which the devotees of all faiths may unite in brotherhood. It is the greatest healing power, and in youth especially the strongest incentive to right action. If a boy goes to the bad, the insufficient love of the mother is at least one cause. Love makes a home of a few material possessions; and, where it abides, all things are sacred.

Love begins in the realm of the ideal, and gradually lifts all things to its level. The ideal cannot be too high. The ideal grows with the purification of the life, and one may know the love that is worthy of acceptance from the fact that it is uplifting. Other sentiments and emotions may, it is true, accompany love. When the highest has been touched, the lowest responds; and one runs through the whole gamut of sensation. But hold fast to the pure, the soul's love, the ideal, and true love shall triumph in the end. The

tendency to become self-absorbed and abstracted may be overcome by love, for love instinctively longs to share its joys with another.

In the thought process I seek to understand myself. In the love process I am living for another. Thought alone is insufficient. I must not only think, but act, not only act, but love. Intellect, the man, *knows*. Faith, the woman, *sees, is*. Love connects the two, and *does*. Our receptivity is measured by our love, our power of work by the sympathy or love we receive. Thought lives for science and utility, love for beauty and service. In the fullest life, love and thought go hand in hand, living for each other and for the world.

Love is not, therefore, superior to knowledge in the sense Browning would have it,<sup>16</sup> but is the coequal of wisdom,—love guided by wisdom, wisdom inspired by love. In the outcome of life, love and knowledge, heart and head, are both to triumph. Our philosophy is to be thoroughly rational, yet reserve a place for the spirit.

Love is the only relation in which one may truly know another. In the world men and women are far from one another, cold, insincere, and formal. Love melts away frigid conventionality, and warms the heart through kindness and appreciation. A word of love, and one can labor courageously. One hardly realizes its necessity until the loved one departs for a season. Then all is dark and dismal, and the inspiration of living and working with another soul is at last appreciated at its true worth. Real love is thus seen in what it does more than in what it says. It reveals itself by its presence, its fellowship and cheer. One might almost say that its worth increases the less it says and the more it does. It asks only the privilege of loving.

Love dwells in a region sacred to its own, where the frigid scrutiny of science cannot peer. It is more than the rational life, yet is not antagonistic to reason. One cannot tell fully *why* one loves or how. Love dwells ever in the human world, and appeals to the heart because of its humanity; yet it

---

16. See Chapter VII., "Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher," by Henry Jones, Glasgow, 1896.

owns a realm which it guards so tenderly that its inmost secrets are never published abroad. When it unites two souls in fullest sympathy, their inner life belongs to them, and is not for a third to know. Its finest story cannot be told, and he is rendered speechless who tries it.

Yet the most tenderly beautiful story that was ever told is the romance of love's awakening. Entirely unconscious at first, or beginning in admiration, it deepens into sacred respect, as though touched with the sanctity of heaven. If left to flower unforced and unimpeded, it buds and blossoms until its maturity is irresistible. With the woman it sometimes remains unconscious even until the man speaks, though all along, unwittingly, actions betray, and her face confesses the message of her heart. Fortunate, indeed, are they who can thus love and pay respect to one another, and finally voice their love before their elders lisp a word of what to them had long been evident.

"And wilt thou have me fashion into speech  
The love I bear thee?"

This most beautiful experience in human life is naturally the hardest to describe. Mere prose is emphatically cold and unresponsive. Poetry and music, at their best, may at least suggest the sacred relationship. But one's own soul must be touched to know its deep reality and transcendent beauty. "All the world loves a lover." It is also true that the genuine lover loves all the world. But, alas, how often the world is content with a counterfeit! Many think they have found the reality; but, when it is truly found, one knows it. It is a mighty power when it comes,—the greatest power in the world. Those who know its indescribable joy, its power and beauty, can endure and suffer anything together. Oh that one might describe the joy and beauty of the higher love, so that every one should at least be aware of the ideal! I do not mean the romantic awakening of love, which is supposed to die out when the glamour fades, but the love which is calm and moderate from the outset, which does not idealize, and therefore has no disillusioning

reaction,—that love which is as new, even stronger, month after month and year after year than during the courting and honeymoon. Is there a more beautiful relationship in human life than the tenderness and sympathy, the kindly devotion and happiness, of two who are lovers throughout their lifetime? Such love must endure many tests, and comes in its fulness only when the dross has been burned away. It requires the wisdom of two earnest souls, whose lives are inspired by a pure ideal, those who know that the instinct commonly called love is but the prompting of a soul which longs for freedom and seeks the spiritual fellowship of its mate. But, if more held the ideal and understood the desire, would we not oftener know of such love? And who would be content with the physical conditions of love who had once experienced the calmly sacred joy, the peace and repose of soul, which speak through these conditions?

But he who would know the soul's love must first love unselfishly, whether in friendship or in marriage. Such love comes only with equality, with the recognition of individuality in each, and that noble respect which tenderly cares for the needs of another. Under these conditions love wells up spontaneously and purifies its partners. With it comes the peace which follows conflict, the restfulness of the self-respecting soul. It is the dawning of love's maturity, the uniting of heart and heaven.

In this fulness of love, through the pure, true, sympathetic heart of man and woman, the divinity of divinities is seen, the heavenly Father himself, imbuing his children with his presence and binding them heart to heart with his own eternal essence. The higher Love is always seen and revered as the source of this genuine outpouring of the heart. This unspeakable love for a kindred soul is the making of both man and woman, the fulfilling of the highest and noblest that is in them. Life begins anew, with a higher motive, a loftier impulse, a sense of the divine presence never known before.

"The face of all the world is changed, I think,  
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul!"

"Nevermore

Alone upon the threshold of my door  
Of individual life, I shall command  
The uses of my soul!"

One would no more return to the old life than one would cut off one's right hand. One now has a sympathetic soul with whom to share every joy and sorrow. One has some one besides vague society to work and live for. One knows that a sweet soul is always awaiting one's return. The intervening hours are mere filling: true life is the life of love when the loved one is present.

"The widest land

Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine  
With pulses that beat double. What I do  
And what I dream include thee, as the wine  
Must taste of its own grapes."

Thus it is the human touch first and last which lights up our otherwise dull account of love's life. True love is full love. It omits nothing, and is not ashamed to be warm and demonstrative. It lives and quickens. It refreshes and rejoices. Its coming is the beginning of real life. Nay, is not life itself, in the truest sense, the welling up in the soul of the very being of God? The whole story of life is the tale of love's wooing. Each of us was "loved into being." Each must love in return. To each also the love of God speaks through the liberty he gives us thus to evolve, through passion and selfishness, to love and altruism. That God might love, the world was made. That love's revelation might be complete, all laws and forms exist. Experience is but the tutor of love, and ever the guardian angel of experience. The soul knows only the soul at last, for love has conquered all that intervenes. And in the

---

fulness of the soul's transfiguration God and man, man and man, are united by the bonds of immortal love.

---

## IX. The Spiritual Life.

---

Thou art best known to the childlike, devoted, simple heart.

—Fichte.

IT IS a characteristic of the highest attainment in human life that we are unable fully to account for it. We may describe the external details and in a measure enumerate the factors of its excellence. But the stroke which made it a work of genius is not to be apprehended by the subtlest analysis. Nature is equally shy in regard to her finishing touches. Throughout the universe there is a vanishing point, a halo of beauty. One may behold it, one may feel the inspiration and know its divinity. But to expose the mechanism of perfect workmanship is forbidden both to the genius himself and to the observer. Yet, where the door is barred to the intellect, life itself will reveal the secret to each new-comer. Words may fail to tell what love is, but he knows who loves. The spiritual life is even less a subject for description, since poetry may become the conscious messenger of love, while the spirit speaks only in the language of deeds. It lets not the left hand know what the right hand doeth. That is not yet true spirituality which talks about itself and tells what it has done. This is the sign by which you may know it: it is ever unobtrusive

and quiet, spreading abroad its goods works and leading a life of unsparing devotion.

Still, its laws may be read in the conduct of those who live it; and in each of us the soul at once responds in its presence. If, instead of in some far-off heaven, we seek the spirit in the living world about us, every person we meet shall give evidence of the longing for the spiritual life; and among the lowliest we shall find exemplifications of its characteristics. The unconscious struggle to achieve the great type is marked even in the faces of people in all grades of society. Some unvoiced longing is written there,—a desire for love which has never been met, or a great yearning for a life which shall truly satisfy.

This characteristic of the spiritual life is, in fact, the first evidence of its awakening. The spirit enters wherever there is dissatisfied outreaching or receptivity. It is not for us to say when it shall come. The highest comes to meet and elevate that which has evolved from below. Is not this the profoundest truth of existence,—that a higher love moves us to attain the fuller life? If so, in our co-operation we must take account of this unforeseen factor. "We mount to heaven by the stairway of surprise." There is ever an element of the unexpected in the spiritual life. Out of half a dozen meditations, one stands out above the rest. Out of many days spent in search for truth, one triumphant day is worth more than all others. If we plan a great spiritual day, we are disappointed. If we try to describe such experiences, our words sound cold and prosaic. But, while we continue living and thinking, behold! the divine vision comes when we had least expectation of its quickening presence. For the greatest spiritual gifts come only when we cease personally to seek them. Self-assertive eagerness to attain, obstructs the spirit's way. But, when we cease to plan and strive, so far as self is concerned, the desired opportunities arise, the gifts of peace and love are ours. If the ideal is strong while we are seeking to develop physically, intellectually, and socially, the spiritual shall grow almost "unconscious and unbidden through the common." This is the supreme test of spiritual faith,—to see God even

behind evil, leading the way to higher life. Here is the divine unconscious, the beautiful unexpected, which in its own good time shall relieve us of our passion, and cause it to shine in the countenance as love. Is not this the greatest wonder and beauty of life,—that the lowest is not only a type of, but actually becomes the highest? Yet what patience is required until the transmutation be complete!

Patience, then, is essential to the spiritual character, the willingness to abide in the present, not knowing what may come when one shall be free. The preservation of humility is another requisite. "Not my will, but thine," is the constant prayer. Ever and again one must say, "What wilt thou have me to do?" What further spiritual possibilities lie before me? How can I renew and quicken my life, that I may realize these larger hopes?

How shall one maintain this openness to the renewing life of the spirit, that spirituality may ever be progressive? Spontaneity, or closeness to Nature, is the key-note. As seen in animal life, it is instinct. The poet and artist draw near to and represent it in verse and color. Every one admires it in the peasant, in childhood. It is an unspeakable joy to find it in some measure preserved in later life. The peasant retains spontaneity, because of intimate nearness to Nature as opposed to the artificial life of society. It speaks through the honesty, the unspoiled hearts and simplicity of the country people of all nations. It speaks through the simplicity of Homer's verse and in the vigorous march of the Scandinavian epic. It bursts forth in glad song through the jodel of the Alpine peasant, who seems to voice the perennial gladness of Nature in his joyous song. Its purest type is babyhood, the innocence of untaught purity and unadorned beauty. Is it not possible to preserve unspoiled by the world the simplicity which is the open door to Nature's higher power, so that neither blame nor praise, flattery nor temptation, shall enter the sacred precincts where God speaks to the soul? Yet those who in later life have attained harmony with this spontaneous moving have succeeded through mistakes, trials, failures, and a long struggle with self-consciousness. For the soul passes through three stages in its travail.

First, the period of innocence, enthusiasm, desire, theory; second, the stage of conscious endeavor, analysis, trial, during which enthusiasm is apparently lost; third, the plane of self-abandonment, or artistic performance, when one emerges from the dark hour of trial, with enthusiasm regained, where spontaneity speaks with the authority of ripened experience.

But what is to be our guide? Just this spontaneous prompting. If, for example, you have in mind a project which you try to realize, but cannot carry out, since the plan does not harmonize with your higher self, do not do it. There is a reason why it is unwise. If you are asked to embark in an enterprise and have no moving to accept the proposition, decline, or await further guidance. When you have the right prompting, the project will seem in harmony with your best self. Whenever you are in doubt what course to pursue, put something in motion, then test yourself by this inner sentiment of right or wrong. All wisdom has come forth at one time or another from the great unconscious through its spontaneous welling in some inspired soul. "Denn alles was da kommt ist der Wille Gottes mit ihm, und drum das Allerbeste was da kommen konnte." What other standard do we acknowledge when we pause to consider? We would accept no revelation unless it were confirmed from within.

But how shall we distinguish spontaneity from selfish impulse? By its disinterestedness. The spiritually spontaneous is the gospel of glad tidings. Yet I cannot describe my consciousness when I am thus moved, nor can you tell me what it is to love. Moreover, you do not wish to tell me. You simply say: "Live on: love will sometime come. When it comes, you will know the true from the false." If we could describe the most sacred side of life, our beautiful experiences would cease. We know not when we are accomplishing the greatest good, nor when we are growing most rapidly. "Thou knowest not what argument thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent." In the realm of the unspeakable is that which makes life most worth living. Yet these characteristics are only inner aspects of the spiritual life: its real beauty is service. Spontaneity at its best is the well-spring of love, or creative power;

the recognition of its sacredness, through which one becomes a creative instrument. It is the discovery that every fact in life is holy, that the divine spirit is present there.

From far within, in those sacred moments of companionship with the Infinite which makes the spiritual life possible, there rises a rhythmic motion, an impulse to lift up and out, as though one could mount an ascending wave. To lay all else aside, that one may feel this quickening joy and move with it, this is the essential. It is the glad song of creation, the story of infinite love told ever anew, as it moves upon the spirit of man, and offers the rewarding joys earned through trust and service.

The spiritual life has its Gethsemane, its lonely struggles, its hours of darkness and moments of despair. Endlessly subtle temptations beset the way. The spirit is not ours until it has undergone severe tests. One must be willing to be persecuted, beset, and pursued. Yet with all this comes a peace, a restfulness like the calm which follows a storm. Out of the deep silence of the boundless realm of the spirit, the voice of the Father speaks to bid the troubled soul be at peace. Our burdens almost bear us down, but never quite. The spiritual man is born anew in the heart each time the soul rises from the field of victory.

Wonderfully beautiful and simple is the law, and plain the steps to obedience. The spiritual man is the man of character, the moral or ethical soul transfigured by the glory of the spirit. He is one who has seen the world, knows its temptations, and understands its mysteries, one whose sympathy is so great that his heart is touched by the deepest compassion. He has been tried by fire and looked into the pits of hell, but has had the courage to turn away and be faithful to the spiritual ideal. His life is one of the utmost common sense. It is attained through prudence, reason, physical health, by purifying everything in life, by being helpful, faithful, true. If one has the real spirit, one will instinctively simplify the life, at the same time assimilating all that is best in the planes of development leading to it. One may well afford to wait in serenity and confidence,—the serene expectancy of the

one who knows combined with the active individual thought of the one who accomplishes; for the spiritual man is never the weak, self-forgetful man, sacrificing himself, extravagantly good-natured, imposed upon. Nor is he unresponsive and sad. His is the spirituality of action, yet the tender, loving activity of the Christ spirit, which carries all before it because it is love, the greatest power in the world,—“the high Thought that will never alter.”

But these are only intimations of the truly spiritual life,—this reliance upon the unexpected, the preservation and development of patience, humility, and spontaneity, and the assimilation of common sense. They are but self-conscious aids to the realm where analysis is impossible. “Of that ineffable essence called spirit, he who thinks most will say least.” It is the *life* alone which tells, the life which gives of itself and really feeds the soul. It is quickened within, when one listens to the spiritless humdrum of the ritual, or the sermon which talks about, but does not convey the spirit. A great longing is stirred in the soul to live the life, to inculcate the spiritual ideal. But, when one essays to formulate these longings, one must confess that all is intangible. We have somewhat to give beyond these cold forms and words, but it must wait. Faithfulness to the ideal is the essential, the love for the spirit which adjusts the life in fullest harmony. Our conscious part is to be true to hope, to remember the laws of evolution and the possibilities of spiritual self-control. Then, if we accept our opportunities, if we free ourselves from thralldom to the subjective world, through every altruistic deed the spirit shall speak; and the spiritual life shall be the natural outgrowth of all that has gone before.

There is one problem of the spiritual life, however, which we have not definitely considered; namely, the form in which the spiritual experience comes, and the direct evidences of its coming. There remains somewhat in life still unformulated which, aggrieved while our thought assumes a purely logical form, seeks its place in our philosophy, yet which may be suggested only by reference to feeling. One tries again and again to word this highest vision, that the intellect may take cognizance of it; yet words still fail. What

can it be worth if it be so intangible that you cannot give a full account of it? asks the critic. "You would not think of talking that way to men, would you?" said a very intellectual scholar to me at the close of a lecture in which I had essayed to describe spiritual feelings, as much as to say that I had "descended to meet" the ladies, of whom my audience was in large part composed, because woman gives such prominence to feeling.

Is feeling so despicable a thing that one may not give it due place? The evidence tends rather to show that feeling is far richer than thought, and must ever be so. Reason is surely the test of feeling. But what would become of all that we cherish most in life, were the language of feeling deprived of its place? I am inclined to think that it is feeling, and feeling alone, that makes us aware that we live in a real world, that we exist at all. Some feelings, indeed, are so real that we would stake everything upon them, though we could not give our reasons therefor,—feelings in comparison with which metaphysical systems are stern and cold in the extreme. Am I not justified, then, in giving intuition its place as direct evidence of the spiritual plane?

It surely seems logical to conclude that, if spirit is omnipresent, if ultimate Being is the immediate ground of what we actually feel as the world, Spirit or Being is at some point in intimate connection with the soul, or spiritual centre of activity and will, in each of us. With all possibilities of error taken into account, therefore, it would seem highly probable that we do actually commune at times with the living God, not the God of our belief,—any one may commune with him,—but with the God of love, the divine Father of each and every soul. The seers of all ages testify to this illumination; and, while their conclusions differ, their source of inspiration may be the same.

I offer five characteristics of this spiritual experience as evidences of the existence of a higher realm,—not a realm of divine communion alone, but of spiritual vision: (1) The nature of the experience itself. It comes when one is most receptive, most open-minded and free, or as the result of ardent, outgoing desire. One not only feels freer mentally, but more open physically, as though the whole being were larger. The sensation is much as though

one's consciousness suddenly expanded like a flower, until the great, glad, limitless universe lay in smiling repose beyond. One feels united with a life that is free, boundless, as if the consciousness were extended away from the body, out over the world to the stars and planets. The mind thus seems like a radiating centre, a widening out, a self-diffusion through the universe, as though in a spirit of good fellowship and love one would include all the world in one's heart. What possibilities the experience suggests, what a broadening of life, what an extension of one's sphere of usefulness, what an enriching of feeling, of joy and the opportunities of imparting joy!

(2) Another evidence is the one already noted in part; namely, that these experiences at their best come even when, judging from circumstances, one would have least reason to look for them. Their coming is clearly matter of chance, from our point of view. The Spirit comes sometimes as if in gentle rebuke, sometimes with fresh hope, sometimes with a new message for one's fellow-men. And, when it comes, one seems lifted to the mountain top of life, breathing a purer air, lighter in spirit.

(3) Another evidence of its superiority to the experiences we commonly know in life is that one cannot regulate its inspirations. Not only do the highest experiences come spontaneously,—that is, not at the time when we will their coming,—but one tries in vain to hold the Spirit that it may abide longer. It comes for a few moments only in its fulness, and then is gone.

(4) Yet another evidence is that, when it comes, it will not remain even this short time unless one will to receive it. The Spirit not only does not coerce the soul, but the slightest unwillingness will send it forth again.

(5) Finally, at times, perhaps only thrice in as many years, there are moments of illumination when the veil seems entirely drawn aside, and one can not only look at life in the spiritual light, but ask whatever one will, and receive answer. Time and space are of no consequence at such a moment; and one seems in immediate relation with living truth and living ideals, already visible in the light of their outcome. For a moment all things seem fair, sacred, divine. The light of divinity touches up the universe as in an

ideal sunset. But, when the vision fades, there are the scarred cliffs and dark abysses again; and what can one do but view them as they are, yet inspired by the hope of what they may become? After all, the spiritual vision is only a foreglimpse of what is yet to be. One is filled with a new eagerness to live the blessed life, to abide forever with such beauty, love, and peace. Yet the higher realm may be united with the lower only through gradual achievement. The mistake of many who have had the spiritual vision has been to disregard moral distinctions, to regard the spiritual vision as alone true, while the rest was *maya*, or illusion. Consequently, the attempt has been to make the world fit the conclusions reached on the spiritual plane, to exalt intuition to undue prominence, and decry intellect. But it is the actual world we are concerned with. That must engage our thought, that must be given evidence, if possible, of the existence of a real spiritual world; and it is futile to begin by outraging the moral law and denying reason. I therefore take these visions to be of value only so far as they are rational, only so far as they help to solve the problems of practical life. We have a right, then, to demand both valid evidence and rationality.

What is the main point at issue? The question has been summed up thus: "Does mystic emotion assure us of contact with a spiritual object? Had it not been for Hudson's book, I should have said 'yes' with certainty; but this dreadful law of hypnotic self-suggestion (which is true) always leaves a doubt....Can we know with certainty that we are in communion with God?...Dr. Maudesley says that the mystic is mad. Ribot says that mysticism is a disease....For myself, I *believe* in mysticism. Can you help me to *know* it?"

This summary of the question from a letter by an English clergyman well describes the attitude of many inquiring minds to-day. Can the doubt be answered? Hudson says:<sup>17</sup> "There is one insuperable obstacle in the way, which must forever prevent the construction of a conclusive argument, and casts a doubt upon the verity of the premises....In other words, the soul,

---

17. A Scientific Demonstration of the Future Life, p. 211.

so long as it inhabits the body, is never exempt from the operation of the law of suggestion. Hence it is impossible to know whether its supposed perceptions are veridical or are merely subjective hallucinations, resulting from auto-suggestion or from a suggestion imparted to it from some extraneous source....The salient phenomena of the Yogis,...the impressions felt while in the ecstatic condition, were thought to be revelations of divine truth....Until the law of suggestion was discovered, there was no other rational hypothesis which could explain all the phenomena....These discoveries have changed the whole aspect of the questions involved, and relegate the vision of ecstasies to the category of subjective hallucinations induced by suggestion."<sup>18</sup>

Granting that, in large proportion, mystical experiences are illusory, it does not follow that they are *all* hallucinations. It may be true that physical exaltation is mistaken for spiritual illumination, that in many cases of mystic emotion there is nothing in consciousness which may rightly be said to represent anything beyond it. Swedenborg may have been largely mistaken in regard to his visions; and the Hindu Yogi who declares himself to be the Absolute, because his superconsciousness reveals this fact, may also be mistaken. But, admitting all this, there is nothing in the recent psychological discoveries which leads one to be entirely sceptical. If the law of suggestion were absolute and all spiritual experiences illusory, God could *never* act upon the soul. Our knowledge does not permit us to make this sweeping statement, assuming as it does that God himself is limited by the "dreadful law." We should not be frightened by terms. Hudson's auto-suggestion is but another name for prayer. If God is present, why should I not be able to suggest to myself that I will be receptive, that I will listen for him? And why may not this suggestion open the subjective door, so to speak, through which God may enter? Am I bound to believe that I have conjured up my

---

18. A Scientific Demonstration of the Future Life, pp. 278, 279.

own God, that he is an hallucination of my own consciousness, by which I am imprisoned?

To be sure, that which becomes a part of my consciousness is my own feeling or thought. My idea of God is necessarily different from yours. I do not say with the Swami that "I am the Absolute." But why may not the Divine Spirit touch my consciousness in such manner at least as to set up spiritual thought or emotion? There is surely no reason in the nature of things to prove this impossible.

To the objection that the spiritual experience may be merely psychic, or clairvoyant illumination, I reply that this indeed may be one aspect of it; but we have simply shifted terms. What caused the soul to be illumined?

The critic may answer that some advanced spiritual being illumined my mind. Very well, I admit this possibility. I see no reason why we may not receive spiritual help in this way. But the critic, in proposing this compromise, has admitted that mystic emotion does come in contact with its object. If the soul communes with a spirit, why not with God? Why may not the law of suggestion as well apply to communications coming to us from a higher source as to the prayers which on our part invite them?

The critic objects, however, that such an experience is of a "phenomenal" nature only: it is only an affair of personal consciousness, and not immediate contact with "noumenon," or reality. Yet this objection might be urged in regard to all experience. We are not sure that we really know the physical world as it is. We know only our conscious representation of it. We, nevertheless, believe that something real gives rise to our physical experience. He who should deny this would believe himself the absolute prisoner of his own consciousness. We believe, on good evidence, that our organisms actually come in contact with natural forces, that our senses report to us actual changes in Nature.

Why, then, may we not come in contact with spiritual nature through the spiritual sense? Why may not this experience be far more direct and real if

Spirit is both the basis of nature and the soul, while the soul is nearest like Spirit?

The real touch with God may be noumenal, while the words in which we formulate it are the images of phenomena only. In fact, the most trustworthy seers, those who come closest to nature, whose experiences are most spontaneous, declare that there is just this aspect of the mystic emotion, transcending what is ordinarily classed as phenomenal experience. We may not, it is true, have ideas independent of experience. Yet reality lying beyond experience may plausibly be conceived to give rise to ideas *in* experience.

But is there any organon, or test, of the reality of such experiences? There is evidently no test but reason, sharpened by the severest scepticism in regard to repeated experiences. We are unable to transcend consciousness to know what this superconscious power may be. We know superconsciousness intellectually only so far as it becomes conscious. But in that calm moment when the rush of intellectual inquiry is stilled, and the soul feels itself one with all Being, may it not be possessed of a kind of experience differing from the conscious, of which the intellect shall later report only so much as becomes conscious? If so, the only proof of the experience is the experience itself. One can propose no organon, or test, but that of sanity. One can only say, the experiences come despite all doubts. Hudson has not driven them away. They come when they will. They come with some new message. They insist that one shall take philosophical account of them. They are their own evidence; and, if one who has never had such illuminations says they are impossible,—because he, perchance, has not had them,—he has a right to his opinion; but he can speak only for himself.

It is well, therefore, for the critic to consider the limitations of our knowledge, even in regard to so-called physical reality, that he may not make unreasonable demands. All our ideas originate through experience. Yet experience may conceivably be grounded in a reality lying beyond what we know as consciousness. Of this reality we know in general only what our organism permits. It does not, however, follow that the limitations of our

organism dictate terms to reality. To affirm this would be once more to go too far toward the subjective side, from whose illusions we have tried to escape.

Law is objective, even the law which regulates our most subjective experiences. The utmost we can claim as purely subjective is volition,—the power of choosing and reacting upon the data of feeling and thought. But will itself, at least, *refers* to objective reality. Its activity implies and means a “beyond,” which it therefore already possesses in part. When I will to commune with God, I mean not my own idea or thought, but the necessary Reality, without which my imperfect thought, my whole consciousness and aspiring will, would be impossible. Unless I already possessed him in some degree, I should not will to commune with him. Unless he were immediately present in every moment of consciousness, I should not be conscious at all. When, therefore, I desire to commune with him, I suggest, or will, that my over-active consciousness shall become as quiet as possible, that I may give direct attention to that which, in some form, is always present in consciousness. I am never saner, more wide-awake, never under better command, than at this moment.

If imaginative, I might have conjured into being a thousand airy shapes; and, if I believed psychic phenomena worthy of cultivation, I might in time have become a genuine, self-deceived psychic. Or, if naturally a mystic, I might easily fancy myself to be the living God. But I am now supposing myself thoroughly rational.

I avoid these subtleties and illusions, and command myself *not to make suggestions*. I make that persistent effort, or will, or suggestion, if you must have it so, which experience has shown most likely to produce receptivity in its simplest form. I do not know what word is coming. If I did, I could suggest it. (I am speaking now of voluntary meditation only.) I desire light where all is darkness, otherwise I should not render myself receptive. The process is quite unlike ordinary intellection. Instead of reasoning from premise to conclusion, instead of seeking hypotheses, I ask, “What *is?*” expecting to

see rather than to think. This method of acquiring knowledge is, in fact, like immediate, instantaneous touch. Am I deceived by what I see? Its application to life, reason, further experience, alone shall tell. Am I to deny it absolutely because the vision is not always clear? Not if I am rational; for it is reasonable to believe, as long as the most stringent doubt fails to annihilate belief. I try to doubt; but *there* is the fact, the intuition, the feeling.

Does the critic now object, as a last resort, that the man with a spiritually quickened nature is the one who believes in communion with God, while he in whom intellect is the more prominent characteristic doubts this fact? The objection would be a mere begging of the question; for it stands to reason that he whose nature is best prepared to receive it will be made the object of the most spiritual revelation, he will know how to make the sanest suggestion. The argument for divine communion, then, is at least as strong as the contention against it.

As the matter stands, therefore, it is the right of each soul to believe in direct communion with God, yet the command of wisdom to use all possible effort to avoid illusion. If the soul is in immediate touch with God, no argument can destroy this relationship. There is nothing to fear from investigation: there is everything to be gained by closest scrutiny of our beliefs and of all alleged facts. Accordingly, that portion of our experience which is most subject to illusion should receive the severest examination. Try all hypotheses. Believe Hudson's law infallible if you can, asking yourself if all parts of your nature are satisfied. If not, consider the reasons for belief in divine communion, re-examine the above argument, and endeavor to find the residual element of your spiritual experience which outlives all scepticism.

There is surely a splendid field for investigation here, always remembering that we are considering self-consciously attained spirituality, and not the spontaneous life of self-forgetful service which we have placed in the foremost rank. The entire self-conscious experience is thus only introductory to the highest spiritual plane. It is the requisite preparation from the finite side. It is the endeavor to meet science on its own ground that the mind may

be set at rest. It is an effort to free one's self from all psychic encumbrances and side issues, that one may at last enjoy unimpeded union with God.

If now, in the endeavor to avoid mere telepathic phenomena and psychic delusion, we ask, What is the difference between psychic and spiritual? we find the question beset by many difficulties, owing to the inaccurate use of words and the hypersensitiveness of those who are interested in spiritistic phenomena. The term "psychic" as scientifically employed usually means the mental factor in the whole course of evolution. But, as used by those who ask to have it distinguished from the spiritual, it applies to that plane of consciousness which includes clairvoyance, telepathy, clairaudience, visions, communications real or imaginary from departed spirits, and the projection of the astral body.

Its proper place may perhaps be understood by comparing the various planes of consciousness to the floors of a house. On the lower floor one is made the percipient of physical sensation. The second plane is that of intellection, or definite thought about the other planes; and one who has gone no higher than this plane usually ignores the existence of the higher planes. On the third floor one looks out into what may be called another kind of space. The mind seems to project itself to other minds, and to receive messages in return. But all this is still within the house of personality, and may be largely egoistic. Then one ascends to the observatory to look out on the broad life of universal consciousness. This is the spiritual plane, the realm of outgoing thought and emotion of an essentially altruistic character. Its ruling motive—love—serves, in part at least, to distinguish it from psychic power which is so often used for hire. Its insights and its power fit one to live better on all the planes, whereas psychic experiences often unfit one to live a normally physical life, since they involve so much that is uncanny and morbid,—the dangers of mixed mental atmospheres, of communications from unfriendly minds, and a thousand and one delusions. The imagination is particularly prone to play us false on this plane. If one chances to feel a psychic atmosphere, it is easy to project it into some form, give it a face, and

make it talk, so that for every genuine experience on this plane there are probably a thousand which are wholly imaginary.

In general, therefore, it is better to avoid all such experiences, and ascend to the spiritual realm. However valuable it may be to receive psychic messages, there is always the possibility of receiving the same wisdom in a purer form from a higher source. It is not clairvoyant power due to psychic control by other personalities that we desire, but the development of all power in our own individuality, taking the clew from the great All-Knowledge itself. As an aid to this attainment, it is advisable to cultivate the powers of concentration, and to bear the following considerations constantly in mind.

Always, upon "entering the silence," it is necessary to know what one is seeking. If the eye is single to the Spirit, there is no likelihood that one will enter into unpleasant psychic experiences or become involved in physical sensation, since all other channels are closed. The desire for the Highest is self-protective. This is concentration in its simplest form. If one can turn immediately toward the Highest, there is no need to pass through successive stages.

Concentration is not a relaxation process: it is a process of exclusion of all thoughts but the chosen object of meditation. It is a combination of activity and receptivity. It is exemplified by every well-directed effort in life. The best way to acquire it, therefore, is through our ordinary occupations; for the kind of self-control one wishes to obtain is that which one can command under all conditions. Those who practise artificial methods are apt to be bound by them. They seem unable to concentrate unless the crystal be at hand, or only at a certain time and under precise conditions. In those, too, who have long contemplated according to Hindoo methods, one detects a forced self-restraint and over-serious, inactive, if not morbid, tendency. The "remedy is worse than the disease," unless it develop that form of optimistic spirituality which one can realize among the lowliest of one's fellows and in the home life. If I am to commune with a warm and loving God, I must be

warm and loving, avoiding deadened stoicism as well as cold speculation, egoistic indifference, and self-hallucination.

Thus broadly considered, concentration is a universal law,—the gathering of forces at a point, the involution which precedes evolution. Psychologically, it is based on the act of attention. We pay attention where we are interested; and, if we are not sufficiently interested, the mind wanders. Any act may be made a lesson in concentration by placing the mind fully upon it. If the thought wanders away, bring it back, and focus it once more upon the chosen idea, and continue this process day by day until concentration becomes a habit. Those who become masters of any art or trade acquire great powers of concentration almost without knowing it. Any persistent intellectual pursuit accomplishes the same end. To acquire a language, for example, one must *think*; and the training of the powers of thought is but another name for concentration. Systematic intellectual study is therefore strongly recommended to those who would learn fullest self-control. Particularly is it advisable to develop one's individual ideas systematically, since the effort puts the individual himself in self-command. It clears the brain, and is beneficial physically. It also helps one to overcome the habit of dreaming.

Intellectual self-control thus becomes the basis of greater quiet of mind, and prepares the way for healthy spiritual meditation, which is simply persistent thought upon some high theme. It is advisable to put one's self in a comfortable physical attitude, and it is of course easier to meditate in a quiet environment. But, if sights and sounds intrude, learn to see and hear without being inwardly disturbed, and thus learn superiority to intruding circumstances. If concentration is at first difficult, let the mind think for a while as it will. Do not force yourself to be still, for some part of you will rebel. Do not make the mind a blank, but, as it becomes calmer, give it conscious direction by centering it upon a single idea. Or picture a peaceful scene in nature, and enter into the spirit of its calmness.

As an aid to this latter process, it is helpful, when away from home, to return in thought, and try to visualize familiar surroundings: look mentally

at the faces of the dear ones there, see the pictures upon the wall, or try to locate the books on the bookcase. This experiment not only helps one to become more observing, but gives greater command of thought. The mental picture furnishes material for the imagination; and the definite thought gives play to the intellect, leaving the higher nature opportunity to enter into the spirit of the meditation. Then, too, the ability to send the thought elsewhere and visualize other surroundings is of inestimable value when pain and trouble come.

But do not merely look within. Do not look down: look up and out, thankfully, joyfully, expansively. All other meditation is in part harmful. Do not examine self and sensation alone. Look beyond all this to the ideal. Aspire calmly, moderately. Do not make nervous affirmations, but quietly *recognise* the highest truth and ideal of life. Become more objective by opening out from within, and freeing the unexpressed self. Think actively for a time, then listen expectantly that you may receive. Or, in other words, first become the observer, then take hold of yourself, gather in the scattered forces, and direct them toward the chosen ideal. Think about your problem for a time: then dismiss it, and let it think itself. If your meditation has been successful, it will leave you refreshed and calm. If you fall asleep, it is probably because you need rest or because you were too passive and not intellectually awake. If you feel constrained and tense, it is because you have held yourself tightly. It is better to move occasionally and relax than to concentrate long in one position. Concentration at its best is a comfortable attitude of calm, restful self-command. It ought to be acquired naturally, gradually, and happily. Thus attained, it becomes a part of one's very life, enriching and enlarging it a thousand-fold.

---

## X. The Christ.

---

Jesus was true to what is in you and me.

—Emerson.

**W**HAT THINK ye of the Christ? This is naturally the crucial question proposed, in our Western world, to the writer who undertakes to inculcate a philosophy of hope. For is not Jesus the hope of that world? Does not salvation depend upon belief in him?

The answer to this question is in part implied in the preceding pages. Hence it is needless to undertake a complete refutation of the orthodox position. The point of view maintained throughout is that of the independent truth-seeker, outside of all sects, yet in sympathy with the truth in them all and tolerant of all differences in terms. It is the point of view of one who would above all else know and be true to the simplicity of the Christ, purified from the dogmatic encrustations of ages, of one who would tell what the Christ means for him, and who would be as free from preconception as one reared outside of the Christian faith.

Since the genuine truth-seeker searches for eternal principles and has no historical or ecclesiastical traditions to defend, he need not be concerned with the vexed questions of the authorship and date of the Gospels, the

variations in the texts and the like; nor need he discuss the troublesome problem of the Fourth Gospel. Suffice it that the Christ ideal exists, and that it attained a wonderful exemplification in the historical Jesus. This much admitted, we may derive such help from the recorded sayings of Jesus as shall throw light upon the universal ideal. For the Christ is not to be accepted because of historical authority, and not because Christians have so long believed their religion to be the highest, but for what we find it worth as a universal principle.

The Christ-life, if developed from within, independently of Jesus' teaching, has as much authority as the Church could give it. One may experience the agony of Gethsemane who has never heard of Jesus. The principle is universal, or it is not true. Particular illustrations of it can at best point out only the grandeur and worth of the eternal law.

Yet much is still to be accomplished in the understanding of Jesus' sayings. The theologians have hypnotized people to see just their interpretation, so that it is almost impossible for the average man to read precisely what is written. Certain students of the new or higher criticism have done much to take from Jesus' character all that makes it dear. The living spirit conceals itself from all who approach it with the sharp weapons of criticism.

Again, the reaction from orthodoxy has gone to great excess until one hears many irreverent and depreciating comments upon Jesus' life. It is customary among certain exponents of Oriental philosophy to speak as though they had long ago outstripped Jesus, and could tell all about him; while the self-complacency with which many disciples of the New Thought expound the Christ-life causes one to tremble for an age which has so little of the profoundly religious spirit. With these and with the other commentaries on the life of Jesus we shall have nothing to do. Enough has been said and written on this score to last through all the centuries. The inmost spirit of the Christ is to engage us, the simplicity and beauty of a thoroughly sincere soul. Knowledge of this comes only to those who in the same spirit are faithfully and reverently Christ-like.

First, then, the life of Jesus can have no universal meaning unless it be regarded from the human point of view. If his life be deemed sinless or supernatural, there is nothing further to be said. Dogmatically assume that he was perfect, and you must harmonize everything he said and did in the light of the arbitrary standard thus raised. But free him from this weight of deification and exalt him to the level of true manhood, and even the imperfect record of his life becomes aglow with genuinely human incidents. The human Jesus seems to come to one almost appealingly, because of the great injustice done him. Despite the marvellous power for good his influence has had in the world, the chief glory of his life is lost for all who thus put him in a category by himself. He seems to reach out in earnestness and love, with the hope that at last his true life may be known. No genuine soul likes to be idolized. Every soul knows in its sincere heart that it is human. Its wisdom has been learned through mistakes, failures, and sins. It is instructive as an example to others because it has triumphed over these, and would share its knowledge with its fellows.

So with Jesus. His greatness unquestionably lies in what he overcame. He stands where he does to-day because he took the supreme opportunity of human life. His life is to be justly apprehended only when seen in the light of its imperfections, when considered as a progress which would have been impossible, had he been perfect from the outset. Its transcendent beauty is due to its distinctively human side, its divinity to the fact that, as a man, he overcame more, thus becoming more receptive to the Father. Its greatest lesson is the possibility opened to the entire race, as the first of a type some time to become universal, the beginning at a centre of a new phase of evolution, the exemplification of principles which are to perfect mankind, not through belief in Jesus as a saviour, but through the personal effort of each to be true to the wisdom he taught.

Throughout this discussion we are distinguishing the man Jesus from the Christ, or ideally spiritual life, which may have other incarnations, and may become the universal ideal of humanity. We still employ the term Christ, or

“the anointed one,” because of its wonderful suggestiveness. We mean by it the highest attainment open to the human soul; namely, complete realization of the law of love, that love which includes all humanity in its charitable and forgiving heart, a love so deep that it will endure any sacrifice for its own. It is an ideal to be attained only through natural law and evolution, where the human part of us is active throughout, where, as in Jesus’ case, the man begs to have the cup taken from him, and even cries out that he is forsaken. Is it not this essentially human touch that draws the heart so close to Jesus, and makes us love both him and his great ideal?

Viewed in the light of evolution, therefore, the Christ-life is seen to conform to the laws of growth exemplified throughout the kingdoms of nature. It is the third or artistic plane of human achievement, the stage of full self-abandonment. It is Nature attaining her highest level. It is the universe realizing its full justification for being. It is the finishing touch of the rounded life each of us is striving to realize. It is the love of the perfect, the leaven of a higher power sown in the lowest that is in us, and destined to lift all things to its level. It is the ultimate meaning and beauty of life, the glory of divinity made flesh as the supreme accomplishment of creative power.

Naturally, that which is to be of such consequence must have the longest evolution. Yet Jesus, as well as his parents, must have begun life at a high level. A life which was to be a supreme triumph must also have been beset with unusually trying experiences, unusual temptations and conflicts. Jewish religious life in the past undoubtedly made possible the great receptivity of the mother, and the Jewish law became the early schoolmaster of Jesus. Then came, in a happy hour, the vision of the higher law; and Jesus had the courage to choose it as his rule of life. With the choice there were aroused into opposition all the rebellious forces of the world, and these have been rampant ever since.

The history of the Christ power in its struggle with the world is repeated in the life of each individual who becomes conscious of the same aspiration. One who chooses the ideal must meet every possible test. The Herod in

us will try to steal away the Christ. Judas will come forward to betray, and Peter to deny. One must face not only the enticements of society, those who profess friendship and flatter, those who criticise, persecute, and betray, but everything that makes one obstinate, sensuous, and selfish. Infinite patience is required to walk in the straight and narrow way, and one may hope to become Christ-like only by gradually winning the right through repeated victory. The essential is to desire the Christ above all else. One's trust must be perfect. Without plans, without knowing what may come nor how one's needs may be provided for, in all humility and readiness, one must be true to the present prompting, while holding in mind the great ideal. The true Christ will then be born again with each renewal of the ideal, with each receptive aspiration. We may help every one who is drawn to us for sympathy by seeing the Christ in all men, by charitably regarding all failures and sins as efforts to actualize the type. We are not to be helpful by affirming that we are the Christ now, nor by condemning men because they fail when judged by this high standard, but because there is that within which aspires to become the Christ, by concerning ourselves with the next step in evolution.

But one cannot enumerate all the stages of this transcendent evolution. If one has the clew,—namely, the spiritual simplicity which Jesus' life exemplifies, the desire for the Christ,—the New Testament record will then reveal its treasure of spiritual wisdom. Moreover, each must work out the problem in an individual way. Each is to find the Christ within through profoundest understanding of self, and then make it the leading factor in daily life. No one can be a guide here. No one can take the place of individual thought and effort. The trouble in the past has been that men accepted guides and interpretations instead of learning at home.

But one may venture to suggest that the Christ-life shall be a life of joy and thanksgiving. If one has put off the dogmatic Christ and discovered the universal spirit, the life will reveal the glad tidings; and the hyper-serious

face of the passing religious generation will give way to the radiance of spiritual optimism.

Is it rank heresy to suggest the possibility of a fuller realization of the Christ ideal than that attained by Jesus? Jesus was the one who realized it in single life. It is easy in single life to do that which is difficult after marriage. What, then, of the cares and the trials, the tests and triumphs, of the man of practical affairs, who must earn his daily bread, provide shelter for his family, and educate his children? Is there a higher possibility in the home where two souls are united in the Christ-spirit—heaven's marriage—with the glorious opportunity of realizing the ideal together, of helping humanity by bringing Christ children into the world? This must follow, if the Christ-life is as much for woman as for man. Surely, no truly human philosophy, no genuine altruism, could exclude woman, nor any of the functions of woman. The Christ-life exalts to the highest level all that is tenderest, purest, and most characteristic in woman. The Christ-life is, in a sense, the dawning of the divinely feminine in man. It opens the way for him to become truly one with woman. May not woman's love in turn open the way for man to attain the fullest love for humanity? Is she not by nature capable of contributing the supreme example of self-sacrifice?

In the Christ world there may be both giving and taking in marriage. There will be no unpardonable sin in that world. There will be no bitter denunciations. It will reveal the results of the ages of evolution since Jesus' time. Perhaps the fuller life will show that Jesus made serious mistakes. At any rate, one must leave room for the possibility of greater attainments than those made by the prophet of the Christ-life, although to him must ever belong the glory of being the first to enunciate the law, to give shape to the ideals and spiritual evolution which reached their highest expression in his life.

But what words can do justice to the beauty and dignity, the wealth and simplicity, of the Christ ideal? In rare moments of enlightenment one intuitively feels its transcendent power. The records of heroism and self-

sacrifice of the ages help to formulate the type. All about in daily life one witnesses sublime examples of self-sacrifice and devotion, of willing faithful service, of unselfish love. The tenderness of fatherhood and motherhood, at their best, is a type of the fatherly solicitude of Jesus; and one sometimes witnesses afresh that most beautiful scene where Jesus blesses the children. The earnestness of orthodox believers is at heart the sincere Christ love. It is mistaken rather in belief and method than in spirit. Although the church so often does precisely what Jesus told people not to do, one must admit that a profound spirit of worship is found there. The Christ is in the world, though probably not embodied as it was in Jesus. The mouth is silenced that would criticise the untold thousands who are doing the best they know to be true to their Lord. It is only because one believes there is a higher ideal that one can venture thus audaciously to speak of the subject so dear to the hearts of our Christian world, because the world shall know the true Christ only when it is freed from dogma, when it finds the Christ spirit within.

It is a grandly simple ideal,—this higher law which the gentlest, kindest, and most faithful man enunciated. He believed first of all in a Spirit whose wisdom has provided for all needs, so that we need not anticipate nor be anxious, only seek receptivity in that kingdom within, where this Being is so near that we may call it Father. The inner is therefore the real, the cause: the outer is its manifestation or effect. No man by being anxious can change the effect. Yet the outer world is the precise reproduction of the inner, returning to us what we sow, depending upon ourselves,—our faith, judgment, and love.

The manifestations of the Father are therefore according to law. Imperfections result from failure to move with the Father's outgoing life. Even sickness is a sin. It is our personal "missing of the mark," or failure to realize the Christ ideal. There is no exception to the law. There is no partiality. No man can serve both the Father and himself. He must fully love the Father, must wholly conquer self, either to be free from misery or attain the perfect life. Love is thus the fulfilling of every law, and the sovereign remedy for

pain, disease, sin, sorrow, and death. Love is the key-note of the divine harmony. To feel that love within is to attain the highest subjective level. To express it to our neighbor and even to our enemy is the greatest attainment in external life. This it is to do the Father's will. This it is to know the Father. This it is to be worthy of our sonship and our brotherhood. The way is plain for all who care to walk in it. There is no need of theological complications. There is no need of ritualism and formality. The law is unmistakable; the result, assured and clear. It remains but to do and live, to trust and love. All things shall be possible to him who thus faithfully works and loves. The greatest joys of service shall be his, the greatest power of accomplishment and of command over nature's forces. The sick shall be healed. The dead in the old law shall be raised. One shall have the rare privilege of quickening the Christ in humanity at large. Supreme agony may come, also the worst temptations and trials. But with the transcendent glory of untrammelled communion with the Father shall come the peace of perfected love and companionship.

Such is the law,—simple, clear, and all-inclusive. The Christ ideal is a life, not a theory; a world of deeds, and not of spiritless words. As inculcated by Jesus, it may have been in part impractical, tinged by the limitations of the Jewish temperament, and involving disappointed hopes in regard to the coming of the kingdom. But the principle is there. Its solution of the mystery of life is unmistakable, its power in the world of unprecedented worth. Jesus may have been only a representative man, as was Cæsar, Shakspeare, or Kant. The martyrdom of Socrates may deserve to rank with his, while Kant's ethical teaching may have attained a higher level than the ethics of the Golden Rule. Our inherited love for him may still be so strong that we cannot eliminate all deification, and see him as he truly is. But, however this may be, in unprejudiced moments a distinct personality stands out in the New Testament record, a soul without guile, a gentle spirit, a helpful elder brother, whose compassionate, appealing face reads the inmost longing of the heart, and meets it with full response. Oh, the marvellous beauty and sweetness of that noble life! It seems a sacrilege to speak of

him except in terms of utmost reverence and love. Who shall criticise? Who shall even understand until he shall have lived the Christ? Jesus' apparent mistakes may be due to the imperfections of the record and to the stories of supernaturalism and miracle circulated after his death. He may have been far wiser than he spoke, but have had no worthy listener. But, if he could speak to us now, would he not plead for a common-sense interpretation of his life? would he not urge us to be his disciples by following his example, not as a god, but as a human being whose life involves the same struggles and principles as our own? If so, here is the true Jesus,—the one who self-consciously attained the type, the simple man, the earnest soul, the one who above all others proved his doctrine by living it. If we can come to no other definite conclusion concerning him, this much appeals alike to reason and to our humanity. And this much agreed upon, we may accept the Christ with all the enthusiasm Orthodoxy itself could summon.

The Christ, then, is a possibility open to every human soul; and, as such, we must give it place in our philosophy of hope. Yet, in so doing, we must, as lovers of universal truth, include all phases of life. Life's problem is to be solved, we concluded in Chapter I., by fullest personal experience,—not through theory, but by actual life. But this is not all. The ultimate test of experience is reason; and he shall know the truth at last who not only has lived, but comprehends, he who masters the intellectual development of the ages. The universal man, therefore, puts himself in harmony not only with the world of nature, of social and spiritual life, not alone with the marvellous development in Palestine, but also with the culture for which the other great nations stand. The Christ-life is the clew to the fuller wisdom all our scholars are seeking. The time may then come when, after all these ages of intellectual growth, a more highly developed Christ shall appear.

Thus conceived, the Christ is the hope of the scholar as truly as of the solitary or sinful soul. For we are considering an attitude toward life which has outgrown all particular attainments and become the universal type. As such, it is entirely unselfish love,—love for humanity, for art, science, the world at

---

large. It is entire sympathy of self with the universe. It is the ideal manhood for any and all occupations, the harmony of the universe individually attained. It is the mature spiritual man as opposed to the spiritual childhood of the race. It is the full triumph for every human being over ignorance and evil, without which the universe cannot be said to be truly worthy of the Christ. It commands because it understands. It is the master of possibility because it loves. It is man made perfect in God. It is God made complete through man. It is the glory of the universe, the heart which makes all things one. It is the peace of perfected labor, the joy of the immortal soul. Out of the bosom of the infinite it comes to the motherhood of men. Out of man's supreme act of devotion it rises transfigured to God. Peace, be still! Be of good cheer, and be comforted. The Christ is the hope of the world.

---

## XI. The Progressing God.

---

The most exact calculator has no prescience that somewhat incalculable may not balk the very next moment.

—Emerson.

LET US now summarize the steps by which we have reached the conclusions of the foregoing chapter. That the universe is in some sense a harmony is clear from the fact that it continuously exists as a law-governed system. What that ultimate harmony is, human experience and thought are not yet sufficiently comprehensive to reveal. It may be undivided Spirit, or it may be a complex of individuals, ultimately distinct. It may be in the minutest sense a harmony, or harmonious only because the universe owns a balance of good over evil. On this point, omniscience alone could enlighten us.

Yet, although we cannot know positively that there is not an ultimate struggle going on in the universe, the evidences of design are such as to lead to the conviction that all apparent conflict is a part of the central purpose, which may therefore rationally be deemed the true basis of unity. The aspirations of men also point to this conclusion,—faith in the moral law and the existence of spiritual ideal, the potential supremacy of the good. Moreover, since all phenomena imply a reality, and all life, laws,

and tendencies must have an ultimate ground, the conception of God arises as the sufficient, harmonious, and unitary basis of the total universe. The mind, therefore, seems entirely justified in assuming that in some way the world was built in beauty, is evolved through purposive order, and is so to continue that harmony shall eternally prevail.

This reasoning, however, applies only to life's ultimate ground and to the sphere of the ideal. Harmony may be said in a general way to reign in Nature, but in the human world it is far from being either individual or universal; and our chief concern, after all, is with the actual world, with the endeavor to make the ideal real. Suffering, strife, and evil should therefore be recognized for what they are in respect to moral and spiritual standards, and not denied because, forsooth, the universe is, philosophically speaking, a harmonious world-order.

Acute analysis shows the real cause of inharmony to be in the mind of man. Generally speaking, man is ignorant of the forces that play upon him, unaware of the nature and purpose of his real self, consequently a sufferer from the results of his own acts. The problem of life is thus found to be a matter of individual solution, of personal responsibility; and freedom from trouble must come through the discovery of our ignorance. Our inharmonies are reducible to selfishness in various forms,—to lack of adjustment to the harmonies or forces of nature, to unconsciousness, to sin against the moral law, and to unawareness of omnipresent spiritual guidance. The remedy is to understand all these relationships, to escape from undue subjectivity, from bondage to convention and dogma, from pessimism, disease, and wrongdoing, by means of all-round development through physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual harmony, through the transmutation of passion, the development of individuality, character-building, the cultivation of the outgoing spirit, optimism, hope, love of the beautiful, the contemplation of nature, altruism, the spiritual life, love, and through the attainment of full self-control, the preservation or renewing of spontaneity, the full dedication of self to God. The attainment of this rounded harmony shall lead to complete

knowledge of life. For experience is the price of knowledge; and he shall fully know who fully lives, who truly is, who nobly does.

Such a man is the perfect Christ, he whose total life is in harmony with the beauty, law, will, constitution, of the universe. He is not God. He is not omniscient. He is not supernatural. On the contrary, he is, at the utmost, only an individuation of God, an incarnation of love, the product of God working through natural evolution. There may be innumerable Christ-men, all equally great, all individually different. Each may in his special sphere be in harmonious relation with the universe. Yet each may be mutually supplementary; while all, taken together, may constitute the Christ republic of God. God alone can experience, and therefore know, universal harmony. God can become fully manifested or complete only through the separate individual incarnation and perfection of each soul as the Christ. Jesus attained that which must become common to all mankind, to give place, it may be, to yet greater attainment, when the soul shall look upward from the Christ level to greater heights beyond.

Thus endless progress is the message proclaimed by the strongest voice of hope. The universe is a hopeful world-order just because its apparent permanence may be but "a word of degrees." All our customs may vanish, all our creeds be changed. The time may come when, in the words of Francis E. Abbot, we shall look upon Christianity and all other present religions as "superstitions of the past"; for, when the truth of religion is freed from dogma and formalism, it may seem entirely new. Man dares not question these "sacred mysteries" now. He cares more for the soft light of haziness than for the full glare of day. But the clear, cool wind of science is blowing from the westward. We are destined to view the splendors of Alpine distinctness of thought; and woe be to him who in that day shall try to take refuge in the vales of conservatism, dogma, and despair! As surely as one's horizon is enlarged from a mountain summit, so surely shall the petty theories of today prove puerile in the broader vision of manhood's thought.

We grovel in the depths of subjective caves. We live in the imprisoning structures which our own hands have erected. We boast of our wisdom and smile with pride at our spirituality. Yet much of it is the wisdom of uncritical belief and the spirituality of self-complacent egotism. Our prospects are limitless. The universe is at our service, and we have naught unconquerable to fear. But we have only begun to live and think, only begun to hope and dream. The majority of men live in almost incredible mental servitude. The few who think, scarcely dare to say that which may prove unpopular, or gainsay the cherished religious convictions of the race. Still, the time must come when men shall have true courage, when even Jesus' life shall be assigned to its true place. Then there shall be a fearful crashing and falling of tradition, until the conception of God shall be the last idea to stand. But that even this idea shall be still more seriously questioned, at once becomes evident, if we try to fit the old ideas of a fixedly perfect Creator, or fate-imprisoned Absolute, upon the progressive universe of the larger hope, the universe of evolution. The two prove mismated, and only the omnipresent God of evolution shall remain.

The mind turns back, awed and silent, at the suggestion of a Being of sufficient power and wisdom to be the basis of life's ultimate harmony, the energy behind and within all evolution, and the love embodied in the Christ. Far be it from me to attempt a definition. The task is rendered far more difficult than ever by the addition of the great hope suggested above, the possibilities of progress, and the universal Christ. The endeavor to define God has been made times enough, and always with the same result,—man's nature and thought enlarged to fit God. If I should describe him solely in terms of progress, I should do injustice to some other aspect of the divine nature. All I will venture to say, as the logical conclusion to the argument of this book, is that a progressive universe, one which owns possibilities, and is not fixed, but fluid, points to the existence of a God who moves forward with his universe. This must be true of him in one aspect, at least, since we find progressive change in the actual universe.

If ultimate Being were a fixed Absolute or eternally perfect All-hood, that Being, or God, would be fettered by his own unalterable nature, the dupe of the fate he himself had by some impossibility chosen, the dreary tool of his own monotonous mechanism. There would then be no reason for the existence of a universe. There would, in reality, be no real universe, only an illusory one such as the Vedanta conceives.

On the other hand, the possession of possibility, the ability to give rise to novelty and to create individuals,—each of whom may lead a new life,—the power of self-mutation through progress, would alone seem sufficient reason either for deeming God omnipotent or conceiving him as the ultimate ground of life.

The presence of chance would not imply weakness, but strength, on the part of God; for we know of no other God to come in and play a trick upon him through this loop-hole of chance. There may still be unruly members in the republic of God; but we have no reason for saying that they are always to be unruly, that they may not sometime choose the moral ideal. And would such a God have any less hope than we? Rather say that his hope is infinite, and that in his all-patience he is willing to wait, hoping that all may choose the moral opportunities he puts before them, that all may prefer to become the Christ.

Instead of Leibniz's theory of pre-established harmony, instead of the motto, "Everything is for the best in the best of possible worlds," we therefore have the idea of progressively realized harmony. Everything is making for the best in the best of possible worlds; namely, the world where opportunities are infinite, where hope is young, and the Christ our future ideal.

"Why, then, should not reality be considered or analyzed by philosophy as what it proves itself to be? If evolution be rational, reality must be what it proves itself to be."<sup>19</sup>

---

19. William Caldwell, "The Philosophy of the Activity-experience," *International Journal of Ethics*, July, 1898.

Does not this conception of a moving, progressing God, who may sometime add to his universe, enjoying possibilities, expecting novelty, with a free, hopeful love, accord with what we know of our life and the soul? Have we any valid reason, judging from life as we witness it to-day, for positing the existence of a fixed Absolute? Rather, our thought would seem to lead us from the thought of a morally potential and progressing universe to the conception of a Being only potentially absolute, at least one whose ideal for us may indeed be perfection itself, but who is dependent upon us to choose that perfection, and thus make him absolute or perfect through moral progress, through the attainment of the Christ. Or, possibly, God's ideal itself may be modified or enlarged by the contributions of his society of souls. If so, why may not the possibility be infinite, so that improvement itself shall be endlessly improved upon? In that case, perfection, like absolute truth, may be endlessly striven for, yet possibly never attained, since every advancing tide of achievement shall, without ceasing, bring its contributing share, only to give place to a greater possibility coming from the fresh life beyond. Only so would the fresh life of the universe seem ever to be assured. Only so would fatalism seem to be avoided, that dismal time when all movement should become a habit, all life the prisoner of mechanism. Only so would the life of God seem to possess continuous joy, only so would he seem to be eternally glad that he had called us into the world.

Is this a startling idea,—the thought of a progressing God? Does it imply that God is dependent on man? If so, logic is surely on our side; for we are conceiving of a God who shall be the source of life as we actually find it. There is no valid reason for affirming more than this. And, in actual life, do we not find progress, novelty, chance, the moral law, and distinct finite individuals? Unless God is dependent on us, why should we exist at all? If finite moral individuals are of worth,—and life has no meaning unless they are,—then, surely, God is dependent, he lives, acts, even suffers with us; and

the old idea of a fixedly perfect God, unaware of our struggles, is proved illogical.

It might seem more plausible to say that laws and ideals only are permanent, the moral law and the Christ ideal; while ever new possibilities give perennially fresh expression to the archetypes, the central law of unity amid variety ever revealed anew. The joy of life to the infinite, the opportunity for life to the finite, would then be ever-changing exemplification of the type. For what could be more beautiful, more perfect, than the laws and ideals already known, the universal Christ ideal of which we are now speaking? Yet our first form of statement seems the broader. If these ideals do not change, others, at least, may appear, thus rendering life essentially new. We have thus secured for our universe a boundless horizon of possibility, an unrestricted field of ever-new combinations of Eternal Power.

This conception by no means interferes with belief in the conservation of energy nor the universality of law. By making room for possibility, it adds to the wealth of ideas already possessed. Take, for example, the belief that through the goodness and justice of God I shall have what I deserve. I invite it, because I will that it come to me. When it comes, I need not accept it unless I choose. But the universe has done its part by bringing it.

Justice is therefore perfectly consistent with this idea of a progressing God. The possibility that justice may sometime be done even in our law courts is one of the glad hopes of the ethical man. Because God has not decreed that justice be done in all cases, because we may judge unethically if in our ignorance we so choose, is another evidence that fate is not absolute, but that freedom prevails,—the freedom which makes the Christ-life possible. Is not the existence of disease and evil, of poverty and crime, evidence of this same freedom? Then it is blasphemy to say he “sent it upon us,” or “permitted it to come by his inscrutable will.” He permitted us to be free, and by this act made us responsible for our own deeds, our illness, and our sin. If the Christ-life has any ultimate meaning, we are free to be slaves and sufferers as long as we will. God would be a God of fate indeed, if he

compelled us to find our freedom and health before we learned either how to keep them or how we caused our misery and slavery, if he forced us to accept the Christ.

“The childlike theist says, ‘The world is governed by a good Father.’ The atheist says, ‘The world is governed by law.’ Both are wrong. There is no governing at all. The term ‘governing’ is a pure allegory, which in its literal significance does not apply to the processes of Nature. The truth is, there are uniformities of Nature which can be classified in universal formulas describing all possible happenings of a special type. Thus the law of gravitation does not govern the motion of falling bodies and of the coursing planets, meteors, and suns. The law, so called, is a descriptive formula which states in the tersest way possible the mode of action which things of a definite quality will take under certain conditions. That which makes the stone fall is the stone’s gravity, which is an attribute of its mass; and the action of the stone’s gravity depends upon the stone’s position in the universe,—mainly upon the gravity (*i.e.*, the mass) of the earth. There is no God and no law which dictates the course of action, but the things act on account of the inherent qualities which constitute them. The world is not a world of slaves, but a free play of uniformities. There is not a metaphysical or theological power that forces things, be they animate or inanimate, to pursue a certain course; but all things act in a definite and determinable way by virtue of their own nature. A thief steals when the occasion arises; and an honest man pursues the straight path of righteousness, as the cat will jump at the mouse and the oxygen will combine with the carbon.”<sup>20</sup>

The free play of uniformities is such that progress results. Man moves forward because it is his nature to grow, and because, so far as he is enlightened, he is willing and eager to progress. Instead of governing, in the sense of fixedly decreeing, there is perpetual flux, continuous possibility put before us by the Power that moves with us, and is ever ready to help.

---

20. Paul Cams, *the Monist*, October, 1898.

Progress is an entirely natural result,—as natural as the Christ. And, if all things make for progress by virtue of their own nature, we are led once more to the conclusion that that which gives things their nature is itself progressing,—understanding, by this term, forward movement, continuous out-going, the causation and consciousness of change, ever-renewed activity.

Still, some one may object that there is no progress, that we simply awaken to or become conscious of perfection and the Christ, as the fruits of ignorance vanish. But this is Oriental pessimism again,—a fixed Absolute, with no room for possibility or freedom. On such an hypothesis, I repeat, there is naught left for God to do. But if there is progress, and God moves with us while we progress, if he is intimately close to us, this life may truly be said to have an object, to have reason for being. He is not a cold, distant Being, everlastingly the same. He is the warm, loving, living Father, the immediate source of the ever-varying combinations of life and mind which make our universe an increasing object of wonder and joy.

It follows, therefore, that pantheism and pessimism are as untrue as fatalism; for pantheism implies that the universe is one fixed piece, while pessimism declares it the worst piece of work that could ever be. They are both untrue, if there are finite individuals. They are false, if there is possibility either of change or improvement. It matters not that the pessimists have declared the universe to be as bad as possible, and that the desire to live is equally vile. We go on clinging to life, we continue to believe in the goodness of things; and we have a right so to believe. It matters not that the Theosophists tell me I attract conditions like my inner state, or Karma. The more important fact is the power of choice,—that which I may make out of my Karma. The free man exercises the right to be either receptive to, or take a firm stand against, what his inner condition attracts, as the wisdom of the occasion may decide.

In the endeavor to conceive of God, therefore, we are led rather to start with the liveliest power in us. The moral law, the presence of freedom, of possibility, of spiritual ideals, and the existence of individual souls,

contributing fresh ideas and aspiring to become the Christ, point logically to the existence of such a Being as I have tried to outline, without assuming completely to define his nature. This is the logical evidence; and I offer it as fresh proof of the existence of the divine nature,—the free, possibility-owning, live, progressing God, actually aware of our struggles.

Are not the possibilities of divine communion and guidance, the opportunities of spiritual accomplishment, marvellously enlarged by such a theory of ultimate Being? Belief in law, design, teleological power, is surely as well founded as before. But, instead of a fixed Designer (whose existence was, after all, a mere assertion), we now have an achieving Designer, an evolving system into which incidents are introduced before our very eyes. The special design or ideal for each of us is dependent upon just these divine promptings which come to us day by day, to be accepted or put off according to our enlightenment at the time. The entire universe is viewed as the advancing experience of ultimate Being. As such, only our own advancing experience can know it. We are compelled to be empiricists. There is no fixed "eternal now." The universe is still viewed as one experience, yet one whose parts are not, so far as we know, fully unified, either in actual life or by thought.

Is there any sound reason for doubting that ultimate, progressing Being is good, that it really means to help each soul to become the Christ? If not, there is every reason to believe in the ultimate triumph of the good. The entire progressive system is good, including chance and the freedom it permits us to do wrong. After all, we are simply stating optimism in another form. It is the belief that "all things work together for good for them that love the Lord"; that is, for those who love the moral law and the Christ ideal, for those who have learned to move in harmony with the Cosmos.

Behind the finite basis of optimism, therefore, we have found this infinite progressing Being, whose nature is optimistic because he is not fixed, but living. I do not insist upon this statement of even one aspect of his nature; for

it is inevitably pervaded by temperamental limitations, the temperament of one who loves novelty and progress.

But may not this love of change, the fondness for novelty which the American people display, be precisely that quality of thought needed in order rightly to apprehend the divine nature? If so, the chief contention of this book is proved. On the shores, among the rugged mountains, and amid the great natural wonders of America, a philosophy of individuality, progress, and optimism, shall be developed which shall sometime interpret the harmony of the universe. The philosophy of hope, the ever new thought, shall prevail. Stern absolutism and dismal fatalism shall be discarded. The human mind shall become truly free. The God of progress shall be worshipped, and the noble work of our Puritan forefathers shall be repeated on the Christ-plane. At best, the philosophical and spiritual life of America will indeed be but a contribution, yet as such this knowledge shall be the clew to the treasure-house of truth. Out of the vague confusion of voices of those who now assume to possess the clew, the voice of hope speaks to the soul of the attentive. Listen and think and hope; and, when the clouds of ignorance roll away, the mountains of virtue shall be revealed. God is progressing with us; and we have naught to fear, who trust. Possibility is infinite. Out of the deeps of his eternal selfhood God forever sends forth the spirit, the love, the Christ power which, with our co-operation, shall in due season perfect the world.



---

## Bibliography.

---

- Dresser, Julius A. *The True History of Mental Science: A Lecture Delivered at the Church of the Divine Unity, Boston, Mass., on Sunday Evening, Feb. 6, 1887.* Boston, MA: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1887. Copyright, 1887 by Julius A. Dresser.
- Dresser, Annetta Gertrude. *The Philosophy of P. P. Quimby with Selections from His Manuscripts and a Sketch of His Life.* 2nd Ed. Boston, MA: Geo. H. Ellis, 1895.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Immanent God: An Essay.* Boston, MA: Horatio W. Dresser, 1895. Copyright, 1895 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Power of Silence: An Interpretation of Life in Its Relation to Health and Happiness.* Boston, MA: Geo. H. Ellis, 1895. Copyright, 1895 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Perfect Whole: An Essay on the Conduct and Meaning of Life.* Boston, MA: Geo. H. Ellis, 1896. Copyright, 1896 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Heart of It: A Series of Extracts from The Power of Silence and The Perfect Whole.* Boston, MA: Geo. H. Ellis, 1897. Copyright, 1897 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *In Search of a Soul: A Series of Essays in Interpretation of the Higher Nature of Man.* Boston, MA: Geo. H. Ellis, 1898. Copyright, 1897 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *Voices of Hope and other Messages from the Hills: A Series of Essays on the Problem of Life, Optimism and the Christ.* Boston, MA: Geo. H. Ellis, 1898. Copyright, 1898 by Horatio W. Dresser.

- Dresser, Horatio W. *Methods and Problems of Spiritual Healing*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899. Copyright, 1899 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *Voices of Freedom and Studies in the Philosophy of Individuality*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899. Copyright, 1899 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *Living by the Spirit*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900. Copyright, 1900 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *Education and the Philosophical Ideal*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900. Copyright, 1900 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Power of Silence: An Interpretation of Life in Its Relation to Health and Happiness*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901. Copyright, 1895 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Christ Ideal: A Study of the Spiritual Teachings of Jesus*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904. Copyright, May, 1901 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *A Book of Secrets with Studies in the Art of Self-Control*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. Copyright, 1902 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *Man and the Divine Order: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion and in Constructive Idealism*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903. Copyright, 1903 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Power of Silence: A Study of the Values and Ideals of the Inner Life*. 2nd ed., rev. ed. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons. Copyright, 1895, 1904 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *Health and the Inner Life: An Analytical and Historical Study of Spiritual Healing Theories, with an Account of the Life and Teachings of P. P. Quimby*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons. Copyright, 1906 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Horatio W. *The Greatest Truth and Other Discourses and Interpretations*. New York, NY: Progressive Literature, 1907.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *The Philosophy of the Spirit: A Study of the Spiritual Nature of Man and the Presence of God, with a Supplementary Essay on the Logic of Hegel*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908. Copyright, 1908 by Horatio Willis Dresser.

- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *A Physician to the Soul*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908. Copyright, 1908 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *A Message to the Well and Other Essays and Letters on the Art of Health*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910. Copyright, 1910 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *Human Efficiency: A Psychological Study of Modern Problems*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912. Copyright, 1912 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *The Religion of the Spirit in Modern Life*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914. Copyright, 1914 by Horatio Willis Dresser.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *Handbook of the New Thought*. New York, NY and London, GB: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917. Copyright, 1917 by Horatio W. Dresser.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. ed. *The Spirit of the New Thought: Essays and Addresses by Representative Authors and Leaders*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1917 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *The Victorious Faith: Moral Ideals in War Time*. New York, NY and London, GB: Harper & Brothers Publishers. Copyright, 1917 by Harper & Brothers.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *A History of the New Thought Movement*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1919 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *On the Threshold of the Spiritual World: A Study of Life and Death Over There*. New York, NY: George Sully and Company. Copyright, 1919 by George Sully and Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *The Open Vision: A Study of Phychic Phenomena*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1920 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Horatio W. ed. *The Quimby Manuscripts: Showing the Discovery of Spiritual Healing and the Origin of Christian Science*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1921 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *Spiritual Health and Healing*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1922 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *Psychology in Theory and Application*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1924 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *Ethics in Theory and Application*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1925 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *A History of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1926 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *A History of Modern Philosophy*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1928 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *Outlines of the Psychology of Religion*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1929 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *A History of Modern Philosophy*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Copyright, 1928 by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Dresser, Ph. D., Horatio W. *Knowing and Helping People: A Study of Personal Problems and Psychological Techniques*. Boston, MA: The Beacon Press, Inc. Copyright, 1933 by The Beacon Press, Inc.