

# Pain and the Providence of God

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*By*

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THE BRUCE PUBLISHING COMPANY

MILWAUKEE


London, 17 Red Lion Passage, W.C.1

Imprimi potest:  
JOSEPHUS BOLLAND, S.J.  
Praep. Prov. Angliae

Nihil obstat:  
H. B. RIES,  
Censor librorum

Imprimatur:  
✠ SAMUEL A. STRITCH,  
Archiepiscopus Milwaukiensis

August 12, 1935

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REV. M. C. D'ARCY, S.J.  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## PREFACE BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

If there has ever existed a Riddle of the Universe for the mind of man, left to its own resources, it is the problem discussed in this book. It has led men in the past to devise a dual divinity, one evil and the other good. This was a child's solution, too easy to be true. The same problem has led men today to make of it a plea for atheism or agnosticism. Yet these solutions, in turn, are merely a surrender of the entire issue. They leave unsolved the more serious problems which must thereafter arise. Evidently there is still another answer we can find to the question: "Why does suffering exist in the world, if a God of infinite love created it?"

In approaching this subject the author assumes no dictatorial mood. He fairly submits, under the form of a friendly discussion, all the difficulties that present themselves to the modern mind. An open forum is thus created wherein each significant opinion is championed by its own chosen sponsor, expressing his thoughts unhindered: the Scientist, the Atheist, the Artist, the Psychologist, the Mystic, the Agnostic,

the Priest, and whoever else participates in the general argument. And so, after the whirlwind and the storm, is ultimately heard the still, small voice that speaks the truth to reason.

JOSEPH HUSSLEIN, S.J., PH.D.,  
*General Editor, Science and Culture Series*

## PERSONS IN THE OPEN FORUM

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- The Psychologist ·
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  - The Priest ·

## PAIN AND THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

By luck I attended a discussion a few days ago, which, despite anticipations, interested me so much that I have decided to record as much of it as I can remember. I was on my way home when I met a friend of mine who loves an argument and is of a very different type of mind from mine. He likes to think of himself as representing the man of common sense, of being clear-minded and fair, and this I always maintain means that he questions whatever he dislikes and is ready to box the compass in his beliefs. On this occasion he told me he was going to a meeting of a society to which he belonged — mostly “highbrows” — and he said that the subject promised to be a very interesting one. I pretended at first to be indifferent and forced him to tell me that the subject was Providence. I need not delay on our conversation; it ended, as I soon saw that it would, in my promising to come with him after dinner as his guest. We dined at his club and strolled off to the room where we were to meet. To my surprise the number attending was very small, and I am glad as it makes it much

easier for me to record the discussion. Indeed I shall record it without mentioning names, and as the points can be written down much more easily if I condense remarks often repeated in different ways and the truth does not suffer, I think it will be best to include only what was characteristic of the different speakers.

The reader of the paper was a slim, dark man, advanced in years. He had, I was told, the reputation of being a philosopher, and he was a Catholic to boot. His argument was roughly as follows:

So sensitive are we now that to write a paper on Providence must mean, in fact, a paper on the problem of evil. Peoples' minds are beset by this thought of evil; they resent it bitterly and they resent the idea of a God who can permit such evil. Instead, therefore, of developing the notion of providence, I shall try to tackle this problem. I call it a problem, but we ought to be careful to make quite definite to ourselves what the problem is about. What we ought to mean is, how reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of a God who is good?

Again, we must ask ourselves what is the meaning of evil. Much confusion is caused by thinking of it as something as real and positive as a carbuncle or a row of teeth. While it is absurd to deny its reality after the manner of the Christian scientist, we may analyze it wrongly. Take the car-

buncle. Insofar as it is a piece of human flesh, it is just as good a thing to have as any other part of our body. Where it afflicts us is in being a disorder of the body, an unnatural growth, a defect in the organic system. In other words, we call a carbuncle evil as describing a certain kind of defect or failure. A body which performed its functions perfectly would have no evil in it, and what we mean by evil is a lack of perfection, a falling short of some standard which we acknowledge to be the right one. Once this is recognized we can go forward and dismiss all manner of talk about this problem as fanciful. God is perfect and therefore He cannot be in any way evil, nor can He do evil. Suppose, then, that He creates this universe, how does evil come in? We know of two different levels of reality in this universe, the physical and the spiritual, and it has been usual to distinguish two kinds of evil to correspond with them, the physical and the moral. The former would cover all the apparent distortions in nature, and, if you like, floods and tempests and fires and droughts and jungles and deserts; but these latter are only bad in reference to life, and above all human life, so it is best to confine physical evil to all forms of bodily pain and suffering. Moral evil is the product of human wills, or to speak more correctly, spiritual failure and corruption.

Let us now, he said, put the problem again, and



in a slightly different form. How is it possible to reconcile the certainty of a good God with the co-existence of so much suffering and wickedness? If God were finite, of course the problem would disappear, or at any rate be lessened, and there are some who have taken this line. They see a noble being possessed of finite if indefinite powers who is on our side, a champion of justice, a spirit of high endeavour, a lover of the noblest ideals. This romantic myth I will put aside. It is no solution; indeed it is a doctrine of infinite disillusionment, as we can easily see. It leaves the origin of evil an utter mystery; it leaves the issue uncertain, and spells a *Götterdämmerung*. Besides, it is such an absurd philosophy. It begins with an investigation of ultimates, of final explanations and causes, and cheats us with an invented story of puppets dangled by unseen hands behind the stage. No! God is complete and omnipotent and infinitely good. Why, then, such evil? (At this point his talk livened up and my notes pass to the first person.)

I would have you note that I am not going to try to tell you a secret, the secret of God's plan and providence. Many, I think, want an answer which cannot be given. They go up to God as if He were a mother or the author of some book, and say, "now do tell us all you had in mind," in the full expectation that they will go away understanding and rejoicing. I doubt if we could understand

a divine plan; it would crack our heads, and I am certain that as interested performers halfway through the drama we could not possibly learn now what the complete nature of the story is. Besides, that does not interest me as a philosopher. I leave such things to the theologians and perhaps the poets. They may be able to say something helpful. My part is to answer a simple question, and if I can show that God is just, no matter how much evil you narrate, my task is accomplished, and I don't see that you should want anything more. Very well then, I say straightway that the problem is already answered. We have a universe around us in which we live. Can any of you deny that it is a universe worth living in? Any such denial would be drowned in the gigantic chorus of the infinite millions who have lived and who have loved life. Why, the whole of literature is pierced by the cry of the shortness of life and the misery of death. We have so much enjoyed the days which have been given to us by God that it is with bitter regret that we bid them goodbye — even when religion has put before us the prospect of an immortal life of much greater happiness! I know, of course, that there have been unhappy souls and occasional suicides, but what an infinitesimal bulk they make! They are too exceptional to make an argument, and it would not be difficult to give an explanation of their unhappiness in terms which would excul-

pate God if not their fellow men. You may answer that, nevertheless, God could surely have made a better world in which there would have been less suffering, even none at all. But how do you know this? And even supposing that it were true, why should God be forced to listen to your complaint? You may say, because he is kindness itself. Such an answer betrays a misapprehension of the question. It is not, has God been very kind to you (kindness is a concession to the weakness of human nature), but has God done you any wrong? In other words, has God been fair? To this, as I have said, there is only one answer, viz., that he has provided a life which is desirable and worth having and he has provided the means for every one to be ultimately happy. I am sure that this does not convince you, and it is by no means the whole of the answer; but it is necessary to begin with it, for otherwise we shall begin on wrong premises. I am behaving like the father or headmaster who calls up a boy and takes pains to make it clear to the boy that he is under no obligation to give him a present or a holiday. What the father or headmaster may subsequently do is another matter.

Now let us go further into this subject. We ask whether God could not have made another and better world. Perhaps he has done so, perhaps he has made a countless number of worlds all differing from each other. If that be so, we cannot complain

that our world is not like all the others, any more than a shellfish can complain because it has not all the virtues of the whale or a statue that it is not like a painting. And let it be said that it would be as bad an error to want the virtues of a shellfish mixed with those of a whale as to want to be some other kind of being as well as ourselves. A childish but persistent illusion which we can seldom avoid is that we can be both ourselves and somebody or something else at the same time. We would go about panoplied with the virtues of a Napoleon and Francis of Assisi, a Raleigh and a Thomas More, a Nansen and a Newman, forgetting that not only are their characteristics irreconcilable but that our little self cannot coexist with a dozen other personalities. We can't be saints and take pride in the thought, be sophisticated and simple, savage and tame, secure and fighting for our life, angelic and human at the same time. Nor can we have the reward without paying the cost and reach maturity without growing pains. With bitter and exaggerated irony a Spanish satirist has tried to show that if we got rid of the devil and the seven chief sins we should soon have to send a deputation begging him to return to relieve us from the monotony of existence. Behind the gross paradox there lies the truth that our life draws all its zest from struggle, the physical struggle against sea and air and perilous heights and depths, and the spiritual

struggle against fear and laziness and cheap love. Why, our greatest difficulty in appreciating heaven and the life of God is that we cannot imagine them save as duckponds of stagnant happiness! And nevertheless no sooner does some fretting task await us or some unexpected trial come upon us than we picture a life free from all such hardships and bask in the illusory image! Such an image is purely negative, consisting as it does of the absence of what is unpleasant and nothing more — life being perfect forsooth as soon as it stops raining and when the headache has passed.

The truth about this world of ours is that it is the only world fit for us to live in. To ask for a change is as absurd as a turbot asking to be a humming bird under the water. If the theory of evolution has shown anything it certainly has made clear how intimately connected survival is with favourable conditions. So if you want a different world, be prepared then to disappear and something, perhaps a Caliban or an Ariel, to take your place without your being present to make its acquaintance. One argument, and one only, can be produced against this. It may be said that some of the roughness of life might be smoothed out without any radical change. There is at present a surfeit of unhappiness and pain. To this, I believe, there is an easy and adequate theological reply. But as I am a philosopher the doctrine of Original Sin

does not come into my inquiry. Without it, however, there is this to be said. Man himself is greatly responsible for his own troubles, and so it is only right that he should bear the blame. Moreover, if we glance back at the past, we will observe that a favourite boast is the succession of scientific achievements. We have conquered nature and made it our servant, and there is no reason to suppose that we are now at a period of check. The air is becoming a playground; the means of farming almost all the earth is within sight, and many of the chief plagues, famine and storm and disease, are controlled in a way which holds out the greatest promise for the future. And this gradual victory is no accident in man's development; the struggle has been vital. Where man has relinquished the task, he has, as Arnold Toynbee has so finely shown, dropped back into an almost semi-human condition; and where he has faced the difficulty he has become supremely human and cultured. That the struggle will be unceasing is no doubt a fact, and a salutary fact. Without struggle, as we have seen, the ascent of man is almost impossible, and may it not be that God has been far wiser than our critics in assigning to man a world in which the prospect of defeat must ever be real, the obstacles, too, ingrained in the world's constitution, and happiness always attainable where mutual good will obtains and courage is alive?

That is the answer to be given on the subject of physical evil, and in it the answer also to the problem of moral evil is contained. Hence it can be short. There is evil in this world, evil which men commit, sometimes bringing great unhappiness for the wrongdoers and almost always great unhappiness for the victims. Is such a world a reproach to God? If God were responsible or indifferent, yes; otherwise, no, and an analogy which we have at hand will show this and also show that God is free from blame. In our education we rightly set great store by personality and liberty. We try so to adjust the training of the young that all repression is avoided and force diminished to allow for the full play of the boy's powers. Social harm we prevent because no State can survive without some laws and penalties, but we interfere as little as we can with personal liberty (at least that is the theory), and — notice this — we deliberately and with a good conscience run the risk of wrongdoing out of respect for personal freedom. This, in human affairs, we consider to be the proper form morality must take. In other words, a code of morality is deficient which does not so frame laws that man is left free to choose between right and wrong. Once we admit this — as admit it we must — then we must judge God by the same standard. God having made human nature does what befits it. He leaves it apparently to work out its own salvation, and the as-

sistance he gives, if we are to use the evidence of religion, is principally in and through natural causes and by invisible grace and otherwise only on rare and unusual occasions in answer to prayer. The gift of liberty, therefore, takes away all responsibility from God for the evil done by men. The evil that they do proceeds indirectly, of course, from the very virtue of God; it is the outcome of his generosity, and it is absurd to say that what of its very nature in man spells the possibility of doing either right or wrong can be given by God so as to cause the evil which may ensue. Those who blame God use the word "freedom" but fail to realize what it means and entails. God, therefore, is not responsible. Is he, then, indifferent? Only in the sense of the parable in the New Testament, that he leaves the cockle to grow up with the wheat and reserves his punishment. There are sanctions, however, and punishments, and there is the constant rebuke of evil-doing on the part of religion, and we may even say that nature takes its own revenge for outrages upon it. Evil weakens and corrupts; civilizations fall by their self-indulgence, and pride goeth before a fall.

We have justified God against the critics of him, and in doing so we have supplied the answer to the problem of evil. It is in many respects a false problem, as it invites us to step outside our own skins and be something different from what we are.



Evil is bound up with the condition of human nature and its excellence. Physical trial and suffering which at first sight are such a disfigurement of life turn out in the end to be the necessary accompaniment of our virtue and the stimulus to perfection. Its worst manifestations are passing and can be made to serve our highest purposes, and where at present it may seem to fail and to frustrate good we have the right to wait on the future and have faith in a plan which stretches over thousands of years and has not yet reached its end. And as for moral evil, we have only ourselves to blame. Our virtue springs from freedom and comes to its strength by trial and effort. A make-believe trial could never succeed in generating the virtues we love most and a real trial means real risks and failure. In sighing, therefore, for a halcyon world and release from the strain of our days we are really asking for a museum and not a world, a museum in which we would lie like desiccated mummies sans strength and sans happiness.

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Such was the gist of the paper, so far as I remember it. When the reader had finished there was a short interval and my friend asked me what I thought of it. But before allowing me to say anything he burst out with his own views. "Clever fellow in his own way, but utterly unconvincing.

Too scholastic altogether, and in a real question like this scholasticism gets one nowhere." I dissented, as I always do from my friend. "I think," I said, "that he has left out many of the chief difficulties and forced the issue along one line. But perhaps that is inevitable in a short paper, and he certainly argued his point, a habit far too rare when evil is discussed. Mark my words, before the evening is over we shall hear some of the woolly sentimental pacifist type having their say." The bell now rang and the chairman having thanked the reader of the paper for what he called a provocative treatment of a grave subject called upon a dignified-looking ecclesiastic to open the discussion.

THE ECCLESIASTIC: While I am sure we have all been stimulated and helped by the able paper to which we have just listened, I must for my part express my almost complete dissent from it. I do not believe that this cut-and-dried way of approaching the subject is of any help at all. We are not in a court of law listening to the able defence put forward by a lawyer. The aim of the paper seems to be to prove that God can be legally acquitted of murder and cruelty. Such a negative conclusion is infinitely unsatisfying. It neglects both the horror of evil and the demand we can make of God. God, if he be God, must manifest himself to us as adorably good and loving. If we shudder at the spec-

tacle of pain and sorrow which so many have to undergo, he must abominate it far more, and the trouble is for us believers in him that he does not come up to our expectations. We have heard the reality of evil denied. No doubt the reader will say that he has not taken up the position of Christian science and some eastern philosophies and called it an illusion. That would be too absurd in face of the suffering we have seen others endure, but is it any better to call it a privation? To be afflicted with cancer may mean a loss of health, but the pain is there to be felt — and we don't feel a negative. When the Lindberghs lost their child we could talk of privations, but the brutal treatment of the child and its parents was positive enough. This talk of privation is verbiage. Evil lives and thrives and is the most striking and grim fact in this world of ours — and yet God permits it! For my own part I think that there is no answer to the problem, certainly no rational answer, and the only way of meeting the difficulty is in the teaching of Christianity. Christianity says, have faith! Faith is finer than doubt, and if you do not yield to doubt you will find that experience tends to justify you. There is a company of men and women who have refused to yield to despair; they have embraced pain willingly, and at the end of their experience they have declared that it was worth while, and that somehow — words here fail

them — God is in his heaven and all is right with the world even though the appearances are so black. And since the human being in whom above all the divine has taken shape has set the pattern of the cross before us as the best and noblest ideal of life, we are left with an assurance which, if not coldly reasonable, is nevertheless strong enough to inspire us and save our faith.

The chairman during the pause which followed this speech asked the reader of the paper whether he would like to answer each speaker immediately or at the end. The reader replied that he would, if he might, use his judgment about this, and on his saying this a man whom I will call the atheist broke in.

THE ATHEIST: As what I have to say will fit in very well with the views expressed by the opener of the discussion I may as well speak now. I must confess that I much prefer the defence of God put forward in the paper to that which we have just heard. But how these theists love one another! They cancel each other out, and all I have to do is to dot the i's and cross the t's of the criticism just made. As to the argument, so to call it, from faith and experience — well, I have never had the gift of faith nor do I want an irrational gift. Experience, too, is a private affair, and there is no monopoly of saints among the theists. There have been

many mystics who never believed in a personal God, and my favourite, Jefferies, found the problem of evil too grim to allow him to believe in a religion. John Stuart Mill is another whose testimony cannot be lightly put on one side. Ecclesiastics are a little too fond of appealing to the evidence of saints. Not only is the evidence remarkable for its omissions but they also leave out all those who have not survived the combat with evil and have fallen by the wayside. A system in which the millions perish to provide manure for a few heroes does not seem to me a very creditable one.

If we are to arrive at the truth about this matter we must, as the reader of the paper did, stick to argument, and let me admit the skill of that argument and try to point out some of its flaws. It begins with the adroit assumption that God's existence is not in question. The problem, properly stated, we are told, concerns the reconciliation of one certain fact, God, with another certain fact, evil, and the solution is obtained by minimizing the latter and freeing the former from responsibility. But to me the one certain fact is the widespread and deep-seated evil in this world. I will not stop to harrow your feelings by recounting instances of it. Anyone who took part in the war and has seen some of its after-effects in the broken men who survive and the broken-hearted mothers and the hates whose end is not yet will know of what

we should talk. These are God's handiwork, for in the theological argument nature and human beings are described as creatures and God as the first cause. Effects proceed from a cause and for all that they are and have the cause is responsible. Hence in the best scholastic fashion I conclude that God is responsible for the evil as much as for the good. Moreover, just as in the argument from design we should not be allowed to select our evidence and talk gaily of the marvellous intelligence shown in the design of the eye or ear and the goodness of some of the human race without mentioning the many messes and the hideous cruelty of animate nature and our fellow men, so in erecting a first cause of the world we must in fairness derive our notions of that first cause from the ugly and bungled effects as well as from the good. An attempt to meet this point was made in the paper, and I admired its ingenuity. It came to this that we human beings love liberty so much that we willingly take the risk of evil for the sake of liberty, and hence if God does the same we have no right to cavil. It was furthermore said that freedom implies that responsibility rests with the human agent and not with God. But, first, the case of man and God is not the same. We did not make man. The task of educators is to make the best with what is given to them, and being given boys and girls with a right to their freedom, all they

have to do is to advise and train them to use it as well as possible. But God, it is claimed, created the nature and the freedom and he should have weighed the consequences. Hence, secondly, if he knew what would happen he must be held responsible for it. I do not think that I agree with the theory of freedom implied in the argument. Philosophy and science have now shown that that view is a false and childish one, the theory, namely, that our actions are not determined by character and circumstances. We can talk of self-determination, if you like, but we can no longer hold that our choices are arbitrary, that they spring forth, like a Jack-in-the-box, arbitrarily from some mysterious faculty called free will. But never mind! Whatever be said about free will it remains true that God is supposed to be the cause of it and to know the uses to which it will be put. This is a fatal admission, as an illustration will prove. Suppose that a child asks me for a revolver and I know for certain that it will choose to turn that revolver on itself; can I, when the child is lying dead at my feet, honestly salve my conscience on the plea that the child committed suicide of its own free will? Yet this is what the theologians do. They say that God left man to his own devices, though he knew full well what he would do, and that therefore God is free from guilt when man employs his freedom in the foulest and most mischievous way.

Take one other argument before I end. It was said that perhaps this world was only one among many myriad worlds, and the reader suggested that a shellfish would have no right to complain if a whale of a universe had also been created. If I were the shellfish with my own troubles I would not be in the least appeased by hearing fairy tales of whales and Loch Ness monsters — but as neither science nor common sense provide any evidence for such worlds the less said about them the better.

THE READER OF THE PAPER: I should like, if I may, to defend myself on one or two of the points just raised. The first speaker thinks that I have made a mistake in trying to give a rational solution to the problem. That may be so. It may be true that the only explanation is to be found in the supplementary lights about himself which God has revealed in the Christian religion. That, I admit, is a tenable position. We owe to the Christian revelation good tidings both about the nature of God and his relations with the human race. One example is the Fatherhood of God — as taught in the Sermon on the Mount and another is the love of God as manifested by the Redemptive act of Calvary. As a Christian I admit all this, but you must remember that as a philosopher I have to address the whole world and only part of it is convinced of the truth of the Christian religion; and



there were many who lived before Christianity. Secondly, it seems to me only right to try and see what reason can tell us before falling back upon religion. I hold that religion throws a new and remarkable light on the nature of man, but I do not confuse that with what I can learn from psychology. The proper method which all of us should accept is to proceed in a calm way looking at the facts and trying to reach some conclusion, and I protest most vigorously against this silly modern way adopted by so many of the clergy of surrendering all the reason to the enemy and flying behind some obscure evidence from religious experience. Of course there is religious experience as there is moral experience; but because I feel strongly on certain moral questions that does not absolve me from trying to understand the objections of those who disagree with me in thinking out the truth. Truth is arrived at by reflection on various data, external and internal, and there is no good reason for surrendering it in the twentieth century. If I fail to make out a strong case for the position I hold, then let us see whether there is no other help. For heaven's sake let us not yield the front line trench without firing a shot, or to change the metaphor, if water will suffice to quench the intellectual thirst for truth on this problem I am not going to bring out the champagne I happen to have in my cellars.

The truth is that you and many others have been spoilt. Having been given a vision of what God might out of his liberality do for you, you think far too highly of yourselves and the obligations which God has toward you. It is a significant fact that this problem of evil has taken on a new aspect in modern times. Compare, for instance, the classical treatment of it in Job with Bishop Blouhram's apology and the bitter reproaches we now hear against Providence. God is now no longer accepted as alive unless he can minister to our comforts, whereas in former times the majesty of God so filled mens' minds that their own claims sunk into insignificance. It may be that the past exaggerated, and that we are more conscious now of ourselves as persons; nevertheless we have lost the beginning of wisdom, which is to see ourselves as we must appear in the sight of God. Has it not been said by Otto that you cannot understand religion without understanding the words: "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes"? This you will find taught in all the books of spiritual training whether in the East or the West. Instead, for most of us the idea of God is very dim, and with the growing blindness to the central figure of the universe our attention has been more and more concentrated on ourselves and our happiness here and now. Of course, if we assume our present happiness as the one end of our

existence, our feelings will be outraged by what constantly happens and we shall have a bitter feeling of resentment against the author of the universe. Being pure humanists, if not hedonists, we are bound to have a problem of evil, but, as I maintain, a problem out of all perspective. We are like the heir of noble stock who has never heard of *noblesse oblige* and thinks his advantages are a privilege to waste.

I would ask you to reflect for a moment on the assumption that man is such a divine being that he deserves paradisaal treatment from God. If I were not a Christian I confess that I should find little evidence for it. It is common knowledge that there are vast multitudes who are so stupid and simple as to have no understanding of your trouble at all. Tribes in Central Africa and South America, peoples living in Mongolia, races which have slave minds and even herds of men and women in so-called civilized countries of the West who can hardly take in an abstract idea. Such folk are with us now. If we turn to what the historians and anthropologists tell us we have to extend their number indefinitely. They have never been humanists; they have never had the power to think your thoughts, and hence to imagine a world for them of the kind you want God to provide for you is to be blindly selfish and narrow. Indeed I sometimes think that God had to keep a certain portion of

the human race in primitive barbarism and stupidity to remind us of what we are and can become, and for the same reason any change in the hardship of life and its humiliating conditions would have been fatal by producing that smug self-satisfaction which is felt by the relatively small coterie of educated humanists. At any rate, this can be said that the really educated and the high-minded would not be in the condition in which they are were it not for the long struggle of the past against that very adversity which you denounce. You curse the rod which has made you great, and in doing so you pronounce the doom of the multitudes who still are as savages and can only be brought to greatness by the means you would destroy.

But to return, I say that there is less evidence than you seem to suppose for the inherent dignity of man. Quite apart from the primitive savages who are our brothers, if we were to examine the daily thoughts of those around us, I wonder whether we should find their substance to be trivial or profound. Do men spend their time dreaming of noble enterprises and having visions and playing the immortal so far as possible? The Sunday papers which are most popular hardly suggest this. Again, is God their chief preoccupation, the fount of beauty, truth, and goodness, as the preachers tell us? It is you who are the romanticists and I am the realist, and I would press this last point in this

way. There are some who say with Augustine that our hearts were made for God and they will be uneasy until they rest in him, and with these, enlightened by my Christian faith I agree; you say that God and human beings are so much each others' concern that God should give us a life of pleasant enjoyment with him; and I say that this second demand looks absurd on your premises. There is little trace of men loving God spontaneously; the majority scarcely give him a thought and live quite contentedly to all outward appearances without his love. God's love is heard faintly over the hills by the prophet and comes like spring after a long winter of neglect into the soul of the saint. The multitude is thinking of the fleshpots of Egypt and has to be reminded again and again by spirits of rare excellence of the will of God and his providence. If, then, this be history without trimmings, what right has a philosopher to argue that man deserves love from God or that man in the bulk is capable of understanding and appreciating such love? I have tried to argue from facts. Man has not cared for the love of God. (Even now what some call love seems to mean merely indulgence of their wishes for peace and ease.) The ancients were afraid of the friendship of the gods. They preferred a recognized status. So too with other races in other times. Religion is a moral duty, the duty arising out of the condition of our nature. We

are bound to reverence and serve, and we expect from God that he should show the care appropriate for the well-being of what he has created. This has been in fact the primary note of religion as practised, and I have maintained that God has shown all the care we have a right to expect. I might add that this same conclusion, of an abyss between God's cares and ours, is confirmed by pagan philosophy generally, and I quote as typical the theology of Aristotle.

I know that in saying this I am not pouring oil on troubled waters, and, to those of you who take this problem to heart and are wounded by suffering, my remarks must be intensely irritating. But our object is truth and the consideration of a difficulty with calm and detachment, and therefore it is necessary to separate your religious convictions from what should be bare philosophic certainty. It is sheer weakness to give a man a pound if he claims it as his due when he really only has a right to a penny, and so, though I myself believe that God's love governs all and is the ultimate explanation, I insist that we should begin on a foundation of justice. One of you dismissed justice by means of a word. He damns it by calling it legal, and I suppose that I am a pettifogger. Words, however, do not affect realities, and all that this comes to is unwillingness to adjust claims by reasonable argument. When we have weighed the facts as we know

them about God and man I maintain, as I did before, that God should be acquitted of all injustice; and there the matter might end. There are, however, one or two addenda before I proceed to examine the criticism of my arguments. First, it is an odd thing that we who do not try to love God should be so cross because we think the evidence of his loving us lacking. No doubt you will say that I have understated the attitude of man to God, and you will quote examples from all ages of history of those who have written and spoken of God as love, and lived their lives on this belief. Yes, quite true, but in bringing this objection you have given me a weapon to crush you. Certainly there have been lovers of God, bacchants and not mere wand-bearers, but it is not they who bring this objection of evil against God in the way you want. Those who have risen above the ranks of the many and loved instead of serving in a mercenary or desultory way are the first to cry out about the immensity of the wisdom and love of God. That is to say they cease, as soon as they become lovers, to be witnesses on your side.

To answer all the criticisms would, I fear, take up too much of your time. I must, however, defend myself against some of the attacks. Atheism generally tries to make a scoring point by emphasizing the differences among those who defend God and religion — as if disagreement made any difference

to truth. Nobody would dare enter into controversy were it to imply a doubt of the very existence of the subject debated. I might retort that as atheists differ among themselves there can be no truth in atheism, but easy as it is to refute atheism I will not use such an argument.

In my paper I maintained that the problem of evil concerned two facts, God and evil, and I analyzed evil as meaning a privation of some sort of good. Neither of these views has been accepted by the two speakers. Evil is said to be positive and to be a more certain fact than the existence of God, and indeed to be an insuperable objection to a God. We were not told how, then, evil presented a problem, and I should very much like to know. We cannot, so far as I can see, have a problem unless evil interferes with some pattern which we think ought to be present. On a naturalistic plane there is no problem at all; facts are as we find them. Physical objects suffer change, and according to the science of biology the body must grow by laws which imply waste and repletion. All organisms decay, and our instincts and emotions are by their very nature connected with fears and anxieties and struggle for existence. Why, then, complain against it? I can see no reason for doing so unless we have some idea that it could be changed, and that someone is responsible for the present state. In other words, your very interest in this



problem attests your radical theism, and as all feel the problem we have proof that the world is incurably sure of God and knows him as first cause or creator. It has been said that the existence of God is not certain. At any rate, I hope you see that his existence comes before evil and that evil is to be interpreted in the light of his existence. You cannot get away from "the principle on which the heavens and earth depend," and our mind is just as sure that there is something or some person on which all things hang, as that there is something hanging. You don't get a thought without a thinker, nor a thing without a maker, nor a child without a parent. To develop the argument for the existence of God lies outside the scope of this meeting. But to ignore the blazing fact of his reality which is assumed whenever philosophers are silent and implied in so many of the most vital beliefs of man, in his morality, in his hope and patience, in his acceptance of others as persons with rights and responsibilities, is to make the world a flatland and our life a shadow and a mockery. I say that God's existence is certain, that it can be proved directly and indirectly; directly by proofs which have never been impugned, though Kant and many another thinker has done his best to destroy them, and indirectly by the inability to think away the divine principle as the beginning and the end of what we spontaneously

believe. Now, if God's existence can be proved, it is futile to bring evil as an argument against it. You produce a difficulty but not a doubt, for a doubt affects the value of a formerly held argument, whereas a difficulty is felt about what is independently certain. If I know that twice two is four I may, when young, be puzzled on finding that four raindrops make only one; I ought not, however, give up belief forthwith in the multiplication table. There are plenty of difficulties in the mutual adjustment of mind and matter, but do not let us doubt of the existence of either of them. I maintain, therefore, that we start the discussion of evil wrongly if we make it a reason for doubting God's existence. The only means to upset the latter belief is to invalidate the proofs.

What people for the most part have in mind is not the existence of God but his goodness, and the attitude of disbelief shows this. A man who has been embittered by misfortune, his own or friends', or by apparent indifference on the part of God to prayer, may become bitterly hostile to God; he takes his revenge by violent attacks on religion, by blasphemy and by ridicule of all that he thinks God may hold dear. He may call himself an atheist, but his actions are a confession of revolt against a living person. One does not curse a mirage or banshee or lead a campaign against the dead. You may say that the atheist is fighting against a false

belief and a superstition which others believe in. This may be so at times, but it does not explain the personal rancour and the grudge against the disposition of the universe. More often than not it is resentment against one's lot or some cosmic slight to one's pride or scandal at the apparent injustice of God which lies at the origin of the denial of God.

Mill and Jefferies were quoted as examples of secular saints. If indeed they had been saints their evidence would stand against that of believers. But our admiration for these and their like must not blind us. Mill was high-minded and also very limited. It cannot be said that he was a passionate lover of these ideals which have made a Francis of Assisi or Curé d'Ars or even a Socrates or Epicurus. He never threw his heart out of his ken to find his heart's desire; he never, like St. Paul, embraced the whole world and vibrated with its sufferings and its joys. He never thought to lose everything for love and be crucified with his love. The difference between him and the saints is that he thought of his fellow men and was genuinely interested in their status, whereas the saint does woo God himself and comes to see this world and all its inhabitants *sub specie aeternitatis*. Mill was a liberal, a social reformer, and being sensitive to human injustice became a partisan. Jefferies too had his ear to the earth; he was a man of delicate sensitiveness to physical suffering, and his imagina-

tion made him into a mystic at one with a world animistically felt as alive and tender to his feelings. But this too is one-sided and far from the devotion of the saints. Quote me one man or woman who has taken the love of God as the supreme reality and given themselves to the nuptial holocaust, and been disappointed or deserted, and I will cry you quits. But I challenge you to bring forward such an example.

MY FRIEND: Yes, yes, but you do not touch the substance of what has been said against your view. You have minimized evil and tried to free God of the responsibility for it, though in your own favourite arguments for God you call him the first cause.

READER OF THE PAPER: I am sorry for delaying so long over what may appear the less important of the criticisms. You will remember, however, that I have to judge of the relative importance of remarks by the amount of emphasis put upon them, and my experience is that feelings decide these questions more often than the intellect. Particularly is this so when evil is debated. Just as we bear with equanimity the news of a stupendous loss of life in a remote part of the world whose name is scarcely known to us and are seriously upset by the death of one single person near by; similarly,

if our own prayer or expectation be unanswered by God, we may become fatally prejudiced against him, though with the dry intellect we are aware that this experience has happened to millions of others and has not affected their or our belief.

There are two charges to answer. One that God is the cause of evil; the second that God does not compare favourably with us in his attitude to suffering and vice. Before answering these charges I must clear up some confusion introduced on the subjects of evil and free will. I said that evil was not positive and you cry out against me that it is hideously real. My statement may have been misleading, for I confess that its full meaning depends on some general conception of the nature of reality. If we take any artificial product, whether a chair or motor car or picture or symphony, you will agree, I am sure, that one judges it by its failure or success in embodying some definite design or ideal. I say "definite design or ideal," because the design may be defective, or the design may be successful but a very poor one. For instance, the first motor cars look now to us astonishingly clumsy and ill made; they were, on the other hand, usually well made, so far as conformity with design was concerned. A successful 1906 model, therefore, is in one sense good and in another sense poor; in other words, we judge a product of industry or art by the actual execution and also by the ideal it em-

bodies. By the same standards we judge nature, and we take for granted that there are things in nature which are specimens of a universal type and ideal. There is good and bad gold, there are corn and cats and human beings. Each of these may be defective individually or in its realization of the ideal. It is worth noticing, however, that we do not call gold poor because it cannot walk like a cat, nor a cat defective because it cannot write like a human being. Obvious as this is I have to mention it, as it marks the difference between the absence of some character and the lack of what should belong to some definite kind of object. When I said that evil was not positive I did not mean absence but defect, and if this had been understood most of the criticism directed against my view would have been changed or dropped. Of course evil is not just a negative; of course it is a curse and a horror, but the only possible explanation of this, I suggest, lies in the fact that it is the loss of what is our very nature, what we are or should be. This is the worst thing that could happen, and I am not underrating in any way evil by so explaining it.

In calling evil a defect or privation I am going to the root of the matter. Gold is something real and sufficiently definite; all that is of value in the piece of matter I see before me is in its being gold. Very well then. If it be impure or alloyed, accord-

ing to the degree of that impurity, the gold has lost value; it is defective as far as its nature is concerned, and if I came across a better specimen I might well call out: "Ah! that really is gold and no mistake!" Notice that what has spoilt the purity of the gold may itself be something quite positive and good. This perhaps is still better seen in some of the other examples. Some microbe may be the death of you or me, and that microbe is something positive and good in itself; it is in its relation to you or me that it does harm, and the harm it does is in depriving me of my health. It is a perfect little thing of its own kind, and if only one could forget the result of its activities, one would, no doubt, admire it very much. And you cannot call it bad because it lives on my body to my destruction, no more than you can call a kingfisher evil because it lives on fish, a swallow because it thrives on flies, or a man because he likes chicken. They and we do harm and the harm consists in the damage or destruction of other things. Once again evil is in the damage done, in the want of form or character or life, and that is why damage or decay is the greatest evil in the physical order. I do hope that is clear, otherwise what I have still to say will be misunderstood. Pain and pleasure are to us so vivid that we think of evil in terms of them. But if what I have said be true this is inaccurate. It is sufficiently right for ordinary inter-

course, and evil and good are so intimately connected with pain and pleasure that we can use them as equivalent. When evil is happening to the organism a sensitive and conscious being is aware of it by an accompanying sensation or feeling of pain, and when the organism is functioning perfectly and a man is in good health he is happy and feels in good trim. Please observe that in both cases it is the well-being or bad condition of one's body or self or life or whatever you like to call it which is important. That is why the best philosophers and psychologists insist that pleasure is not the end of life. A perfect life will be accompanied by pleasure, as a kettle hums on the brew. Aristotle, as you know, compared pleasure to the rosy look which accompanies the perfect health of a young person, and hard as it is to analyze we can all see that it is a kind of resultant in consciousness. A lover does not seek for the pleasure when he is carried away by desire for his inamorata; he wants her and it is because she is so goodly to look upon, so perfect in his eyes that he feels the intensest pleasure. So too the theologian tells us that in loving God for his own sake in heaven we shall derive the greatest happiness conceivable. It is not the occasion to try and analyze the exact nature of feeling any further, as my whole purpose is to show you that pleasure and pain are not what constitute good and evil so much as the accompani-



ment of them. Pain makes us aware of the presence of evil in the system and it is a most useful detective for us at times. Just as the sense of uneasiness can prove a most valuable warning of impending evil so the awareness of pain teaches us that we should take measures for our health. Indeed were it not for pain we should be infinitely less careful of our health. We should not know what our bodily state was and if the awareness were not so uncomfortable it is probable that we should be much too lazy or pennywise to take suitable remedies and stop the evil at its beginning. Moreover — and this brings out forcibly the difference of evil from the feeling of it — evil may go on for a long time in our body without our being affected by any pain, and even when we drug ourselves with morphia or pass into unconsciousness under an anaesthetic the harm may be continuing in the body and bring about our death. Here we have evil happening to us in the loss of strength and destruction of our body, and at the same time no awareness of it. This shows decisively what evil means and the distinction we ought to make between what makes the trouble and the accompanying sensation of it.

A PSYCHOLOGIST: I think what you say is very plausible and I interrupt only to confirm one point

and prevent a possible objection. I am not sure that you can separate the source of illness and the suffering as sharply as you have done. In a manner very hard to describe the sensation or feeling and the object of it are one. We do not have a smack in the eye, then a sensation of it and then an awareness of the sensation, though I acknowledge that all these can be distinguished. But whatever the truth about this may be it is important to emphasize their close connection, and for the following reason. An antagonist might argue that the sufferings entailed by disease and accident are far in excess of what they ought to be, and therefore God is blameworthy for permitting so much pain to accompany bodily decay. This objection has no worth from a scientific standpoint. To the scientist it would be ridiculous to separate the nature of nerves, bone, and fibre and the organism they make up from the pain to which they are susceptible. A body is such a unified structure, its laws and habits are so closely interwoven, that nerves and nervous energy and depletion and their delicacy and susceptibilities must be reckoned as one. To think and act otherwise would produce chaos in biology and medicine; it would bring crashing down all the empirical truths discovered with the help of the theory of evolution. In other words you do not pay sufficient respect to the

unitary plan or design which reigns in every organism if you think that you can have the same organism without corresponding delicacy of reaction and strain.

READER OF THE PAPER: I thank the speaker for his support. Assuming, then, what I have so far said meets with agreement I have to show that it applies also to moral evil, that is, to wrongdoing and vice. The argument is less easy to sum up shortly, and I shall be obliged to omit much that would illuminate the subject. Physical evil consists in this that an individual is defective in itself or in relation to the ideal type. It falls short of what should be expected. In human beings the ideal is not comprised in the perfection of the body; for the soul is not merely an animating principle of the bodily organism but in essence spiritual with a perfection of its own. That perfection can be gauged from experience in the interest man has in the discovery of truth, the struggle for virtue, and the passion for beauty. These three are all spiritual, and so I shall assume — what could indeed be proved — that just as the physical organism of living creatures has a unity and end, so too the soul of man has a definite ideal which its nature is capable of realizing. Just as, to repeat, the child's body, or a kitten, grows into a man or a

cat and if they got mixed up with each other it would be very unfortunate for both (i.e., evil), similarly the soul with its faculties of desire and reason should develop properly through perfect love and wisdom. We must say, therefore, in accordance with our definition, that insofar as it falls short of what it should be it is evil. There are, however, two differentiating marks to be noted. One is that evil cannot destroy the soul in the way disease destroys the body; its effect is more like to a perpetual distortion. Iago is as undying as Desdemona, but the one is a monstrosity, an outrage to human nature, whereas the other is near to being a perfect wife and woman. The second is that the evil is culpable; it proceeds from within and the cause is not something external like the microbe but the soul which determines itself. That is the reason why moral evil is concerned with vice, with bad actions which are motivated and with habits formed within. Certainly evil is also done to others and we think often of the effects of actions and call men ruffians and vile on that account. We do this, however, because we naturally take for granted that wrong done was intended. One who embezzles or robs the poor or defrauds his employees or neglects his family or betrays his friends and his country is supposed to understand what he is doing. As soon as we find that he is acting in

ignorance or by mistake or under the influence of some disease we acquit him. The harm done remains but the man is not evil.

Moral evil, therefore, comes to this that we ourselves, in the self-determination which ought to fulfill our destiny, do scathe to our own nature. We twist it awry, we swing off the high road and follow devious paths which end in a morass; we choose what is bad for us and so deform our own nature and personality. One of my critics challenged my assertions of free will and said that it was enough that the determination came from within without adding the absurd proposition that at the moment of choosing we were free. He called this "absurdity" a Jack-in-the-Box theory. I, on the contrary, assert that his view is fatal to morality, is against the facts, and comes from a superficial analysis. Human beings are distinct from animals in this that they can stand away from themselves and direct their path by the light of their own ideas of what is good for them. Their desires are manifold; every object of the senses has its own delight; imagination and association and memory play their part in making the prospect before us pleasant or hateful, and our thought can travel over limitless regions of beauty. If, then, the soul is drawn by desire to so many things, and if the habits formed by heredity and circumstance make some objects appeal to us more than others and contest the victory over

us, we must either succumb to temptation always or else have a power, at any conscious moment of our lives, of judging the candidates for our choice. I maintain that we have many inclinations and that each of these inclinations or desires expresses what we are at the moment we conceive them. Whichever we choose is, therefore, a determination of self and a reasonable ground for acting, but not one of them is coercive. If it were coercive, we should feel impelled to do an act. This sometimes happens, but when it does we always contrast it with a free act of which we are also conscious. Now, if two opposing actions are both within our power and attractive to us, it is nonsense to say that we must be determined by our character to one of them, and it is nonsense again to describe the freedom we possess to choose between them as arbitrary or Jack-in-the-Box. The truth is that at the moment of choice the conscious movement of our will and life can flow in different ways; the end or ideal appeals to us in varying guises, one of them really the true and good way and the others only apparently good and right. If we choose the wrong way we do evil and we become evil because we take the wrong turning away from perfection and so deform ourselves.

But you may say that in this view we are not evil at all because evil is in the will and I have turned it into a mere mistake. No! this is not so, and for a very

subtle reason. In wrongdoing, as contrasted with mistakes, we ourselves positively cause the error and are responsible for it. Examine the two cases! In calculating or adding up a balance sheet I may make a slip, and when the slip is pointed out to me I correct it willingly. That is a mistake. But suppose I am short of money and by calculating wrongly I can put some in my pocket. Then I can persuade myself so strongly of the importance of having money that I can judge here and now that it is better from one point of view to write out an incorrect balance sheet. Notice that I use the word "judge." My practical decision cannot be irrational; I must have persuaded myself that the best thing to do is here and now to steal or embezzle; I have let the present advantage so take possession of my mind that it dazzles me and is stronger than the cold and abstract knowledge of my real duty. I hope that this makes the difference clear. We are always in process of making our own gods to our own wishes and likeness, and that is why it is so important to educate the young to admire what is noble. I am here only re-echoing Plato and Aristotle in his *Ethics*. Whereas a mistake is like a misprint or typewriter's slip, a practical judgment may issue from the concerted action of desire and will and intellect, and at its worst is due to a lie in the soul. For examples of the latter I refer you to those "whose God is their belly," the careerist and the usurer. They could have been different; at no moment before the habit had

been formed were they forced to act according to the tendency growing within them. They chose to be what they are and they have dug their own grave, unless the grace of God saves them.

THE SCIENTIST: But you are not ignoring a modern discovery? Is it not almost definitely established now that our actions are the result of unconscious motives?

READER OF THE PAPER: Thank you for the interruption. I did not dare to mention "the unconscious" myself. Not because I am afraid of it — for I am not afraid of ghosts — but for the reason that it suggests all sorts of possibilities which stick like burrs in the mind. I am sure the statement you have just made is exaggerated and I am sure that it is wrong. The appearance of truth in it is due to the fact that we certainly do not always suspect the motives of our actions and we have the evidence from psychoanalytic practice that suppressed desires do work mischief at times. Most of this, frankly, we knew before. What psychology has done is to arrange more methodically and usefully an age-long experience. The terms it uses are convenient descriptions, if not fictions, and in no sense real definitions. Strictly speaking there can be no such thing as an unconscious desire or an unconscious thought, no more than there can be a bung-



hole without a barrel. A thought is what is being thought of, and thinking must be conscious. Hence what we really mean is that something unknown produces effects which are similar to those produced by thoughts or desires, and to save time and worry certain psychologists call the causes desires and thoughts. Now, is it possible that it is these unknown forces which determine all our conduct? That they play a part let us grant. Everybody knows that what he knows of himself at any moment of consciousness is not all that is in him. There are habits and ways of judging, which belong to the formed character and are ever present though not before the mind's eye. We know this and take it into consideration when assessing the freedom of an act, and nevertheless we leave plenty of scope for free will. We can, if necessary, pull out from behind the mind's eye what is relevant to a problem and set it before us, and we can at times be sure that we are deciding on the evidence before us and nothing else. Were the unconscious to be king then the conscious would have to resign all its prerogatives, and the believer in the unconscious never does, in fact, do obeisance to the unconscious alone. He would have nothing to say if he did, since his conscious thought and expression and conclusions would be irrelevant and abortive. The unconscious, whatever it is, can only play a secondary role for the obvious reason that

we decide on it with the conscious mind and test its value, and if possible bring what is latent into the sunlight of the conscious life.

So much, therefore, for the two disputed points, evil and free will. My explanation of them has taken a long time, but I am not sorry, as it does help to that solution of the problem of evil which I first gave. There are two difficulties still left over. The first concerns God's causality, the second his goodness. God, so the argument goes, is the cause or author of the Universe. He is therefore responsible for all that happens in it. But there is much evil; therefore God is the cause of evil. To that I made some kind of answer, but it did not satisfy one of the speakers. To quote the actual words used: "In erecting a first cause of the world we must in fairness derive our notions of that first cause from the ugly and bungled effects as well as from the good." I notice that my friend does admit that there are some good effects, and I would remind him that he is on his own argument equally bound to attribute some goodness to the author of them. It is my answer, however, which is declared to be fallacious. I said, according to my friend, that on the analogy of human conduct God is justified. Man in education and in government takes the risk of evil for the sake of liberty. If, then, we think it nobler that boys should be freed from apron strings to adventure their lives and character

and that citizens of a State should be given a degree of freedom, why should not God have created a Universe in which similar conditions hold? For a very decisive reason, says my critic; for God and man are not in similar case. Man has to make the best of what he finds in the world, whereas God created the world; and that means that God, knowing beforehand the consequences of creating the world, nevertheless opened the Pandora box. He is, therefore, even less justified than a man would be who gave a pistol to a child knowing that that child would use it to blow his own brains out.

This is a plausible rejoinder and merits examination. I admit that the action of God and that of man are not completely parallel, but I do not think that the difference makes any vital difference to the argument. The action of man shows that he sets the value of personal choice and freedom very high, so high that the risk of evil following does not compare with it. The fact that man, the wiser he grows, fights more and more for freedom and esteems slavery among the worst of evils confirms this. Ask any ordinary man, ask the greatest and wisest of any generation, would they have goodness ready-made and happiness at the expense of personal freedom! Rob man of the joy of personal victory, of finding his own soul, and he would not call his soul his own. If this be so, man shouts out against you and sides with me. You will say that

man does not know the future and the consequence of giving liberty and so differs from God who knows all that will happen. I say in answer to this that such knowledge does not make a vital difference, that the prize lies in the will and its freedom, in the power to achieve goodness. You talk of free will and then leave it out; you say that God is the author and cause and so responsible for the effects, and in such a description you do, as so many do, use a word and calmly ignore its meaning. There is no meaning in free will if the responsibility does not lie with the agent. God may be a cause and indeed in some sense must be a cause, but he must also be a kind of cause which leaves the full use and reality of free will intact. If, then, I do something wrong I cannot, if I know that I was responsible, blame somebody else. Weaklings do this occasionally because they refuse to face the facts. Man could only blame God if his nature were determined; if he were sure that he were fatally bound to run the course he is running.

Or put this point in another way. If God is the cause of our free acts in the manner you suggest, it will follow that he is the cause not only of our evil choices but of our good. Hence whenever a man takes some credit for overcoming evil, when he rejoices at his victory over self and for others, he must give himself the lie and deny that the act was his own and that the credit lies with him. Do

not here be misled by the language of religion. Christianity teaches that man needs grace to be perfect as God would have him perfect, but this perfection is one which lies outside his natural powers, and everywhere where grace is mentioned it is also taught that the free will is present too and operative. God is not, therefore, the cause of evil in the glib way you think and your argument is plausible only because it leaves out the principal character in the drama of life, namely free will.

Lest, however, you still feel a little uneasy at the thought that God knew all the consequences of creating the world and are troubled by the image of the little child and the revolver, I will remind you that the morality of such an act is frequently decided by persons around us. In the twentieth century of the Christian era we know something about human nature, the good and evil each child born into this world must expect, and the general worth of life. This being so, how do you account for the fact that there may be thousands who do their best in marriage to have children. They know what life the children are likely to lead; they are not bound to have children; they are therefore in a position similar to that of God insofar as on their act depends the life in this world of a child. Nevertheless it seldom if ever enters into their heads that it is immoral to have

children. If what you say were true they ought to say to themselves: "These children of mine, no matter how well endowed they may be, no matter what opportunities we can give them, will, all the same, be bound to do some wrong in their lives and to cause some suffering to others and suffer themselves; therefore we should do evil if we produce what is certain to mean some evil."

To prevent misunderstanding of this illustration I have just given, I beg you to observe that it refers to normal parents and normal children. Of course there are occasions when owing to disease or some misfortune a woman or a man may ask themselves the question of the morality of having children. My point is that every woman or man must know now that the life of their heirs is bound to be a mixture of good and evil. They know what will happen just as you have said that God knows what will happen, and I say that if the objection were sound the world ought to make a self-denying ordinance and let the human race die out. If we do not like this conclusion then let us have done with sentimentality. The illustration of the child and the revolver was soaked in sentimentality and unworthy of its author. Why choose a little child? A child is least able to exercise free will and it is our duty to protect it and train it. If God had created a world with one child in it or a race with the

weakness and mentality of a little child and put a world of revolvers, loaded of course by himself, or poisoned food, there would be truth in the objection. But the idea is fantastic. Let me choose one. God knows that a child will fall into the fire owing to the carelessness of its parents. Is God to be blamed? Is he to say beforehand: "No! we won't have any fires. They are too dangerous and I won't have people writing to the papers about my cruelty. I extinguish fires." And so coal and flint and this physical world of ours fade out, or a deluge comes down compared with which the Scriptural one was only a child's bath and the glory of Prometheus is departed.

To reach the truth about this foreknowledge of God is perhaps beyond human power. We can, however, avoid thoroughly misleading illustrations. There is not one child, but the whole human race. There is not a child but that vast body of men and women who include those whose deeds have warmed our hearts with love and admiration as well as the weak and vicious. There is lastly this vast company endowed with free will which can only be exercised in real danger and with real risks, and we can be fairly confident that the majority of men and women have performed innumerable small acts of love and heroism which make up far the larger part of the vision which God has before him.

AN AGNOSTIC: You must forgive my interrupting and you must forgive also my stupidity. I acknowledge a certain force or logic in what you are saying and I do not want to be accused of being a sentimentalist. But why is it that your argument seems always to be a case of special pleading? Many of us remain unconvinced and feel that there is some catch or that you are not doing justice to all the facts. You are so assured in your philosophy, almost cocksure. You settle the question of the existence of God in a few concealed syllogisms; you get evil between your thumb and finger and squeeze all the poison out of it. Say what you like, the problem remains and we are not so convinced of the existence of God as to be unmoved by the spectacle of pain. From whichever side we look at the question we are met with difficulties and uncertainties. Why do the evil prosper and the good suffer for their virtues? Why is God so mysterious, an unknown Figure in the background wrapped in darkness, silent and unresponsive to our needs? Your arguments for his existence are, I admit, difficult to refute. You have your answer to all doubts and objections, but the fact remains that many a great thinker, yes, and many a sincere inquirer has failed to be moved by them. I grant, however, that they do prove something, for they not only have a certain logic which cannot but impress; they have as well a general assent from the human race. The



conclusions, however, are not worthy of your brief. The God they give us is an abstraction, a far-off deity who is so near to nothing that everything you say of him slips away from its proper meaning and ends by being everything else as well. All that is left to us is a sense of far-distant issues and a shadow mysterious and fear-inspiring. When we turn for light to the so-called creation we are met with intellectual difficulties or inexplicable injustice and suffering. As an example of intellectual difficulties I can go back again on what you have been saying about God and his responsibility for evil. Only the other day I read in a Sunday paper a review of a play by James Agate. There he wrote as follows:

“The morning after the play at the Royalty I read the following: God is love. Why does He permit evil to exist? And why does He permit pain to exist? These are hard questions. As God is omnipotent, He could have created a universe without evil and without pain. Why has He not done so? I know that this is the oldest puzzle in the world, and that the human intellect has in all ages vainly endeavoured to solve it, because it is an imperfect instrument, working with only a fraction of truth as its knowledge.”

READER OF THE PAPER: Forgive me for interrupting, but I too remember that article, and if I

remember rightly Mr. Agate does not accept that quotation. His point is that this posing of the question is foolish, that there are several answers and that it is foolish to expect the kind of answer the question sets out to ask. He then suggests that, for all we know, to allow man to perfect himself through pain may be the highest form of benevolence and that we can't at any rate think of our universe of good without there being in it the victory over evil.

AGNOSTIC: I am not so sure that this is what Mr. Agate means, but let that pass. I take just this one point that we know far too little to argue one way or the other. You lay such stress on reason and yet it is here that reason breaks down. We are playing with counters which are unsuitable and our descriptions are as far from the reality as the lotions and purgings of ancient medicine from the proper science of the human body. The antinomies of reason are too great to overcome and I plead that a reverent agnosticism is the most fitting attitude to assume.

Take now the fact of suffering. In the past, mankind seems to have been strangely indifferent to it, whether animal or human. We have now, thank God! awakened to its horror, and there are various societies to prevent cruelty, and the State takes much more care that children and women should

not be brutally treated. I do not deny that there may be at times need of the rod, but what must shake all our faith is to see the amount of wanton pain in the world. The suffering of childbirth, the multiple forms of disease to which the body can be a prey, the waste of life so heartbreaking in the late war. Even more perplexing perhaps is the cruelty which is a permanent law of living things. The birds of prey among winged creatures, the hawk swooping on innocent chaffinch and sparrow, the carrion vulture, the cobra and tarantula, the filthy flies and insects which feed on rotting flesh, and, almost the worst of all, the shark and cuttlefish and those cruel raiders of the deep sea which can tear a large-sized body to pieces in a few seconds, these and their like are according to you the creatures of a good God, and not all your philosophy will ever persuade me of that truth.

THE SCIENTIST: We have just heard what I think is the most telling of all arguments against God, at any rate a good God. I say "argument" though I am sure that the theist will refuse to give what has been said that title. I confess that I am half in agreement with him. To draw evidence from the sufferings of the animal kingdom is very dangerous; it is a slippery slope which leads to an abyss of sentimentalism, if we are not careful. It is also often used very inconsistently. Bertrand Rus-

sell, for instance, has, as you know, flirted for many years with extreme forms of materialism and in more than one book he has showed the utmost ingenuity in reducing what is commonly thought to be spiritual to physical sequences. Nevertheless, to his honour, there is nothing which stirs his wrath so much as cruelty. My own view on these matters is unimportant, but I must remind you that there are many schools both of philosophy and of biology which are definitely materialist. In philosophy I need only refer to the Behaviourists and to the school of Vienna. In biology many of the so-called psychical experiences of animals have been shown by the experiments of Pavlov and others to be susceptible of a simpler explanation. I do not say that these explanations suffice for all the sensations of animals; what I do say is that science gives no warrant for taking pain at its face value and that there is far too much uncertainty in this quarter for us to dogmatize. The simplest experiment with a dead frog, if seen by some sentimentalists, would make them write copious letters to the papers.

The sober conclusions of science on this matter will not be welcome, and for a very simple reason which in many ways is a blessing. As the behaviour of animals follows our own we naturally tend to interpret them as in all respects similar. It is good that we should do so and that we should give our domestic pets the benefit of the doubt. We have

only our own internal experience; we have no way of getting inside the mind of a rabbit or a cat, that most mysterious of beasts. It is certain, however, that their experience cannot be the same as ours. Our experience is one, a unified whole made up of understanding, desire as well as memories, associations of all sorts, and bodily feelings and sensations. What a naked bodily sensation would be like we have no fully adequate means of discovering. No doubt we should pull a face, jerk our hand away, clench our teeth, and emit sounds of agony if a flame were applied to our skin; yet without human attention these signs would be completely misleading. Think again of the influence which apprehension plays in our suffering, of the difference between a pain we have been expecting and a blow by surprise. The second sometimes does not begin to hurt us greatly before we realize it. And in the suffering itself, as some great writer has pointed out, it is not each single sting of pain taken by itself which makes up that intensity of suffering we feel, but it is the second as coming after the first and the third as succeeding the first and the second; we carry all the past into the present and find that present in the expectation of the future becoming rapidly unendurable. To follow what I mean, put yourself in imagination in the dentist's chair and hear the sinister throb of the instrument as it eats its way into the tooth. The dentist himself

knows well that only by pausing and starting the crescendo of pain many times can the sufferer bear with it.

To be fair, therefore, on this question you must remove all that makes our suffering specifically human, the kind of consciousness which is ours, the intelligent anticipation, the peculiar consciousness of stress, of piled-up agony, and I would add the sorrows which come from brooding on the past and future, the depressions and bleak despairs summed up in the common interpretation of the phrase, *Heu, lacrimae rerum!* If we must have an analogy I think we can best find it in a certain type of man or woman we sometimes meet. They are essentially light-hearted and live in the present. They are quick to feel sorrow and joy but it leaves no lasting impression owing to an extraordinary resilience or power of responding to new situations. We envy them their happiness even if we sometimes wonder whether they are capable of entering into the deeper tragedies and comedies of life. These happy-go-lucky folk are like children continually diverted and distracted, and in this I suggest that they resemble the lower animal kingdom which lives from bliss to bliss with momentary pains.

AN UNKNOWN: As, for instance, the cow with its cud and the cat which seems to sleep all day!

THE SCIENTIST (slightly nettled): Oh! of course I am generalizing as one must do in such a mixed company as this. The cat and the cow seem contented enough, and if you think I meant the word *bliss* as signifying high excitement I will use another. But I hope my point is sufficiently clear. I should like to add that the world as we know it is too closely knit together to allow the sentimentalist to remove one kind of unpleasant insect or beast and keep only the pets. We have suffered enough from interfering persons who want this or that obnoxious fly or bird or animal destroyed. Too late we discover that the destruction is responsible for some new pest or disease and we have to do our best to retrieve the mistake.

THE READER OF THE PAPER: I am in a real difficulty. If I try to answer my last critic by argument I shall be told that argument is of no avail, and if I say nothing it will be assumed that I have nothing to say. Moreover, there is no way, so far as I can see, of persuading a man who takes up the attitude we have just heard stated. We are flesh and blood as well as mind and to imitate my scientific friend's liking for a classical tag, *mentem mortalia tangunt*. In all issues we feel strongly, more strongly than we think, and the trouble of human society is that it is made up of resentments, irritations, repugnances, and passions which are seldom

smoothed out by reason. But I do beg you to acknowledge this weakness of human judgment and to allow for it in the problem of evil. There are some who are, as it seems, by nature rebels in feeling against convention, others who are suffocated by indignation at any mention of unfairness or suffering. They cannot weigh the pros and cons or listen to explanations. The same happens when those who are dear suffer; we go about, like the proverbial Irishman, longing to knock somebody's head off. Many, too, are impatient for an explanation or answer; they spoil a carefully worked out scheme which takes time by rushing in and making an end of the matter.

All I can say in the face of an attack such as the one to which we have just listened is that a calm survey of nature does not justify the rage against its author. I refer here to creatures below man. Moral evil I regard as constituting quite a separate problem from suffering. But about human suffering — do let us be honest and not go about laying the blame of war upon God. It is man who makes war and the evil of war and all the sufferings it entails are to be laid to our doors, to our own refusal to overcome our passions, ambitions, and selfishness. I remember a book by Galsworthy called *Saint's Progress*. It is the fashion now to decry Galsworthy, and I want you to accept from me that I have no axe to grind and that I hold him in far



higher estimation than these critics. In this book the saint is a dear clergyman who never has any reasonable reply to make to the somewhat childish arguments of daughters and doctors. The war and suffering at home are made to decide the issues. Listen!

“There is no God, Dad.”

“My darling child, what are you saying?”

“No God who can *help* us; I feel it. If there were any God who could take part in our lives, alter anything without our will, knew or cared what we did — he wouldn’t let the world go on as it does.”

. . . “If there’s a God who can help, it will be a wicked shame if George dies; if there’s a God who can help, it’s a wicked shame when babies die, and all these millions of poor boys. I would rather think there’s no God than a helpless or a wicked God. . . .”

We ought all to be able to sympathize with a mood in which such words can be spoken, but to put them into a novel as impressive and telling does no credit to Galsworthy’s intellect. His genius did not lie there, and it is a pity he attempted such a line. I regard this as a coward’s philosophy. It is a surrender to feeling, to the present; “I feel it.” Everybody when attempting anything worth while must have moments of discouragement and feel inclined to hang up his harp remembering Sion:

the lover when love does not keep a steady course and the stars seem fighting against it, when even the beloved appears to be inconstant; the leader who is thwarted by desertions and disloyalties; the mountain climber and explorer exhausted and forlorn with what look like insuperable obstacles ahead. These are the moments when we are desperately inclined to give in, and I believe that the doubt in Galsworthy is a surrender of this kind. He does not inquire whether what he wants is impossible, whether he would rest satisfied with a God who never let Georges die or misfortune come or men and women quarrel, who turned this life of ours into a tank of goldfish. He bursts into tears and wrings his hands and blames providence instead of facing pain and fighting evil and trying first whether courage and self-sacrifice may not bring an answer. As well cry out at the first pricks of pain against the surgeon who hurts to cure.

The sufferings of men are in a different category from those of other living things. Man has a will and a soul. He can wrap himself round in his own virtue if he be a pagan agnostic or stoic, or he can support pain in the knowledge of an after-life when all tears will be wiped away. Of the bearing of the after-life on the problem of evil I have so far said little or nothing. In this I follow the bad habits of philosophers who write books on morals without a mention of a life to come. I hope that

this gap will be filled up by some theologian before we end this evening. Now, the animal has so far as it is concerned neither interior virtue nor an immortal life. Perhaps it is for this reason that we are so much moved by the sight of their suffering. I cannot believe, however, that we should let our metaphysical and ethical views be swayed by this natural sympathy we feel. Most certainly certain types of crawling things, savage beasts, and loathsome insects can upset us. How relative all this is can be judged from the effect of the stench of certain animals upon us. It is only with an effort that some people can endure them. The sickly, diseased colour of others has a like effect. And yet we must recognize that these impressions are relative to our sensibilities and are quite untrustworthy. By some law of our nature the fastidious spirit in us cannot help at times disliking the physical part of us and even feeling a disgust at some of its functions. The offensive words of language are drawn from these lower operations and in some societies it is not polite to refer to them. Our senses, too, are obedient to the spirit and suffer at certain sights and smells and tastes. Nevertheless these operations are wholesome and good and our judgment of them is relative and biased. Inevitably we tend to form judgments about nature on the same relative standards and we are led, as the last critic was led, to form a judgment about nature and God on

them. But I see no reason to suppose that horse-flies and spiders and cuttlefish are ugly and abhorrent, and I will go further. Were it not that we were sensitive moral beings looking out at nature and seeing it as almost human we should not be so shocked at the jungle life and the cruelty of the deep seas. Just as man feels his insignificance when confronted by the starry heavens and the prospect of milky ways and invisible constellations which have moved in their appointed courses for thousands of years, so in the presence of the animal kingdom he is moved by a compassion and feels a cosmic affliction. In both we fall into a pathetic fallacy. The stars are but blobs of matter; their length of existence and their size mean nothing at all save to those who read into physical size a real greatness and into length of time a real superiority. It is we who by our contemplation of them become great, and it is we who by reading our own souls and our own ideals into animals confess our likeness to God.

I wish that we were able to consult living creatures themselves and take their vote. After all it is they who are affected. The problem is theirs, not ours, and I fancy that their plebiscite would be even more unanimous than that of the Saar. Mind does not enter into their experience. There are no Hamlets among them. Their destiny is fulfilled by living and handing on life or providing it to other

species. The vitality of animals — save those which have been artificially bred — is beyond anything which we know. So much energy in us is devoted to the stoking of the material for thinking and to repair the waste. Intellectual work demands a heavy toll and draws on the resources of all the body. Experience shows that normally intellectual pursuits mean a sacrifice of physical vigour and excellence, and the senses are overworked in some ways and atrophy in other ways through waste. The animal and the bird and the insect are better specimens, as the gorilla is stronger than the man. This vitality, this living in the present, means a life of continual happiness, a fleeting and unreflective happiness quite different from ours, but one so desirable in itself that poets and dreamers have longed to share in it. And death to them is no spectre at the feast, no long-feared visitant. The violent death usually comes with a flash and all is over in an instant. Many tiny creatures have but a few hours to live; their life is a quick passing rhapsody and how the end comes matters little.

THE MYSTIC: I am sure you are right in saying that the life of creatures is one of joy, that for them to be is most certainly better than not to have been. It seems to me a ridiculous question to raise. Imagine Francis of Assisi asking the birds of the air or Anthony the fish of the sea whether they

hate life. Besides, they do not live for themselves. We cannot think of a world in which there was no intelligence to ponder over nature and life. Before man there was God and perhaps other powers, and now there is man who spells out the meaning and intentions of the book of God, the meaning of himself, his destiny, the evil which might be his if he a spirit did as creatures below him did and the good which can light up the dark ways of his own soul's journeying. The world must be a mirror; man must see reproduced there all that he might be, the evil and the good, so far at any rate as his instincts, feelings, and passions are concerned. Certainly each human being learns most from his fellows, but they cannot be a *corpus vile* for experiments no more than they can serve as mere means to his physical wants. This is the service of the animal creation. More and more obviously is the world a servant, obedient or to be trained to man's ideals. I know it is the fashion now to ridicule the old idea that man was lord of the universe, the centre to which all converged. The telescope and the microscope are supposed to have changed all that. The truth is that they have confirmed it, for it is man who has made these instruments, who has extended the frontiers of his knowledge, and with that knowledge increased his mastery over things. Knowledge itself is a gain and a mastery and objects of knowledge are in a sense ours. We are lords of all we

survey, constitutional and limited lords, and not absolute, and the proof is that we have in time turned to use so many of the forces of nature in electrical devices and intercommunication by the radio.

I would call myself an agnostic, but for an opposite reason to that which has been given by one who has already spoken. He seemed to have such little trust in human nature and its gifts that I would regard him as a sceptic. I, on the contrary, think that we are blinded by the vision which is ours, that we are dazzled by excess and not sufferers from cataract. We are forever standing on peaks in Darien, and one of our greatest privileges is to look upon the many-splendoured panorama of reality now at dawn, now at noontime, and when the sun at evening glorifies the sky and the sea and the earth before departing. The visible cordon of beauty is an expression of an invisible pattern or unity in nature. The more one enters into this unity the more absurd does it appear to abstract a part and say "we shall improve the music of this richly orchestrated theme by leaving out all minor chords." The pattern is too intricate; there are secret rhythms and cadences and interdependencies. The Hebrews and ancient races believed in the influence of the moon and the stars, and one can without going to the lengths of the astrologers admit some secret interplay, less strict than the

orientations — evolution if you like — which mark the upward movement of nature and is experienced so mysteriously in the unexpected sympathy of matter and spirit in our own human frame. Everything is engaged on its work, inanimate things as much as ants and bees, and the truth which lies behind the myth of an *anima mundi* is that the whole of nature simulates in a lesser degree the co-operation which marks the working of a living organism.

Does that mean that the evil which peers out in nature is intentional and necessary? I do not believe so, and if I indulge in a fanciful belief you must excuse it as Plato excused the use of myth when certainty could not be reached.

There is no sound reason for supposing that all the species which now exist are as old as the world. According to evolutionists there has been progress and extinction. Is it possible that the ugly and cruel types which have been mentioned were not part of the original scheme of the universe, and furthermore that the character, so to speak, of living things and perhaps even of inanimate nature has taken a turn for the worse? On the Christian view of history such a change could find a cause. One need not be a fundamentalist to hold that the Bible informs us of two catastrophes far back in the story of the relation of creatures with God. The one is summed up in the doctrine of Original



Sin and the other is mentioned several times in the Bible in the account of angels. For many years I thought that only credulous and simple folk believed in angels and I scarcely gave them a thought. Then one day I heard an argument on the possibility of spirits, and I was struck by the narrow-mindedness of those who refused to believe in them and very impressed by one of the explanations given of their nature. It seemed to me that there was no adequate reason for denying the possibility of beings with intellects unimpeded by a body and as much superior to us as we are superior to animals. The angel would complete the scale from non-living to living, living organism to organism plus spirit, and finally organism plus spirit to pure and intuitive spirit. What had stood in the way of my belief was the fantastic anthropomorphic image of beings with wings and lovely human shape and now I saw that this image had nothing to do with the true nature of an angel. The explanation I heard took me far away from anthropomorphic images.

I heard that spirits could not be divided up among themselves as we are, each of us a specimen of one common nature which can be multiplied indefinitely. There are men but there can't be angels of one type. Each angel must differ from the other specifically and not as an individual. Arithmetical division depends on quantity, and

quantity belongs to matter. Spirit has other divisions such as by quality and nature. Love and a sofa cannot be added together and yet they are distinct by nature. An angel, being pure spirit, is complete and without a peer in his own order; he sums himself up and all that goes to make his natural state; he is intuitive and without the need of slow discursive thinking and calculation about himself. These are some of the illuminating thoughts which were suggested, these and one other which took hold on me. If each angel was an entire nature in himself, how further describe what kind of nature he would have and its distinction from other spirits? You have a dynamic power or energy more definite and active than electricity. Surely then the description must be along these very lines, in terms of function. An angel is a living operation or work, a dynamism and a dynasty, and we must look to the work to find his name.

On reaching this point my mind leapt to a connection between the Bible and the philosophical account. The part played by the devil in the Bible is very striking and also puzzling. He is there at the beginning to twist good into wrong, as the father of all lies. He is the adversary, and, strange to say, with power, who is to be crushed one day. God in the story of Job allows him to regulate affairs and work mischief in this world against man, and to show that this is no mere primitive

fancy we find that in the New Testament the devil comes still more conspicuously into the picture. He tempts Christ with power; he even offers him all the kingdoms of the world as though they belonged to him and he is described at the most solemn moment of Christ's life when he is about to undergo the ordeal which was to transform and rejuvenate the world and make all things, even the world of nature, God's once more, he is described, I say, as the prince of this world. There are many other sayings in the New Testament and in the expressions of the early Christian writers which point to the conclusion I am about to draw. I will mention only one. It is a favourite habit of the early Christian writers to call Christ's death a ransom to the devil. This must be an exaggeration, but it has puzzled many a modern theologian, the wonder being what could have inspired such odd language? The explanation I suggest leaves, of course, a mystery but it comes pat. In some sense it is correct to call the devil the prince of this world and the clue is given in the philosophy I have already outlined. In the ordered hierarchy of beings we have to suppose that Lucifer was by nature actively concerned with this universe, that his function was to be a directing intelligence, the animated movement in the ordered interconnection of all things under the spell of divine love. The sempiternal "Love which moves the sun and other

stars" has subordinate loves, which in turn play upon what is lower, and thus it belonged to the very nature of Lucifer to look after us. When, therefore, his love due to God turned in upon himself, he became the liar, the adversary, love turned to hate and good to evil but he could not be wrenched without annihilation from his occupation with this world. That was his function, and as we have seen, with an angel the function is his very life and nature. We should expect to see as a result the fair face of nature with a canker in it, a force which seems ever to twist and undo it, as a harmless figure seen in fever turns into a grinning gargoyle and the innocent Pan changes into a leering satyr. I am not surprised that many of the forms of nature seem now to us to be sinister, to hide a face of evil, that a black and evil mystery awaits the traveller in far jungles, and I am no longer incredulous of the tales constantly repeated by missionaries of black magic, devil worship, and diabolical possession. We who sit comfortably here at home in lands where the cross has triumphed can be no judges of what happens in lands where darkness still reigns. At any rate I think it quite likely that we have so far left out something in our explanation of the cruel and horrible forms which can be found among living creatures existing within the memory of man.

MY FRIEND AND HOST (whispering to me):  
What childish, unscientific nonsense!

MYSELF: Clod!

THE MYSTIC: You may ask me among a hundred other questions why, if this be true, the victory of Christ did not change all this. There comes into my mind a text about Satan being locked up but that is not yet. I see his power, personal but so unlike our abbreviated personalities as to appear almost impersonal to us, in all the evil of the universe, in physical as well as moral evil. The scientific explanation of disease is quite correct, but it may not tell the whole story. It gives an analysis of the material presented to it and it leaves out all else. Even with the human body we can seldom be sure where the physical explanation ends and the psychical one begins. The two inter-fuse, and there are all sorts of ways of which we may know nothing whereby personal evil can be imbedded in physical. Still more so of course in moral evil, seeing that it is a truism to speak of an immoral inclination either as a temptation of the devil or as a fault of one's own character. Both may hold true, just as possibly some medical term might have suited those out of whom Christ drove devils.

That, however, is not an answer to the question

I have raised. When reading the orthodox catechism of the Christian Faith I was struck by an anomaly in it, the explanation of which may be easy to you. It was this: There is an original state, that of Paradise; there is a fall with dire consequences, and there is a plentiful Redemption or restoration. So plentiful is this Redemption that the liturgy dares to call sin happy — *felix culpa* — and the adjective is surely well deserved when we think of the love of God himself poured out and the sacrifice made to accomplish it. The state of restoration is at least, therefore, as blessed as the original state. Nevertheless it falls short of it apparently in one regard. The original state was of pure happiness, without molestation from physical evil outside or moral evil within. Instead of this state being restored, the Christian who has been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ's light is beset by concupiscence and called to the utmost tribulation and sacrifice. We are so accustomed to this cross that the strangeness of the contrast may not strike you. An immediate answer is that "the servant is not greater than his master" and that Christ set an example which all must follow. I accept this answer but it still leaves the puzzle why a copious restoration should lack what belonged to the original state. I believe that if we develop the right answer we shall see that it has an important bearing on the

problem of evil. At the beginning of the religious record of the world's history there is placed a momentous act of free will, a choice between good and evil. About this there are two things to be noted; the first is that man's free will is made the determining factor of his own history and is the clue to the problem of evil which we must follow; in other words, the scope of the gift of freedom is so great that God hides his will behind it and reaches his ends through it instead of overriding it. The second point of significance is that man's will is represented cosmically, so to speak, by some representative act of human choice. Adam and Eve are mankind brought to a decision. Their first choice, our virginal human nature expressing its desires, was fatal in that it chose evil — and I have already suggested the consequences of it. But we learn at the end of the story that the evil is not to be left possessing the field, that God in his love will bring a remedy. The nature of this remedy we can surmise. It will depend on a free choice of man and the choice will be a representative act of some persons or people. But how can a choice be made of salvation? The first was of good and evil but we have the promise that God will save, so that this time it cannot be between such issues. What, then, of the alternatives? Since the welfare of each free individual must rest ultimately on himself the salvation of God may be refused by any individual.

That is obvious, but it does not provide the answer we want, for the choice must be of the mode of salvation. It must affect those who accept just as much as those who refuse. God promises that he will not fail to right the wrong and restore man to his pristine condition; the choice, therefore, must lie within that. That means that two modes of happiness were offered to man, and I suggest that if we look at the Old and New Testaments it becomes obvious what they are, joy or suffering, a life like that of Paradise or Calvary.

What is the evidence for this? I will select a few of the more impressive pieces and ask you to re-read the Scripture in the light of them. In the Old Testament God after the Fall promises a redeemer — that is certain salvation — and from then on God's relations with the characters who appear in the pages of the Bible are governed by what is to come. Everything is in anticipation; there are warnings, symbols, rites, and commands which have a partial significance at the time but remain mysterious until the reality of which they are a type comes to be. Everything, I say, is in preparation, and this is seen most of all in the choice of a special race and people, the seed of Abraham. God appoints himself the special guardian of this people; he wishes himself to be their Lord, and when they refuse a theocracy he still guides them by Kings and Prophets. They are to live apart to



be trained and prepared for the great event which is to come. The pedagogy, if I may so call it, of God is received with stubborn ingratitude, but though they are punished and corrected the promise remains with them. The Messiah is to be of their race, and on their readiness for his coming momentous issues hang.

That is one piece of evidence and I conclude from it that this chosen people has been prepared for a purpose and that it is vitally important that they should be ready and able at the critical moment to see what should be for their good and the good of the whole world. This inference is confirmed by the prophecies. The prophets see apocalyptically and cosmically, and before their enlightened vision is unrolled the future of the world. Now, there is this peculiarity about their visions that they are alternative, that two maps of future history unroll themselves before their gaze, one a triumph, the glories which tell of a paradisal state of happiness when the lion shall lie down with the lamb and all unhappiness shall be taken away, the second a sad vision of triumph in defeat when the Holy One, despised and rejected, shall by his very suffering and death see a long-lived seed. Thus what was still in the womb of time has two different courses to run, both at the moment of the vision or prophecy possible of fulfilment and waiting on the free decision of mankind's representa-

tives as to which should be fulfilled in time to come. It is a commonplace of theologians that these prophecies rested on an hypothesis or condition, and that condition was the acceptance or rejection of the Messiah.

Suppose, then, that it be true as man at the beginning chose man's fate, so once more in the reception of the Saviour and the manner of his saving it was to be man who would decide. Such a way of looking at the history of the Jews throws a new and lurid light upon the finale of it. It explains why God should take such infinite pains to educate this race to its responsibilities, should set it apart and appear even to neglect the world for its sake. It explains, too, the curious double character of the prophecies — and it helps, lastly, to throw light on the mission and death of Christ. On the supposition which I am making, when Christ came the 'crisis' had come and all was hushed now in expectation of the choice that was to be made. But alas! the scales were already heavily weighed against acceptance and the end was foreshadowed at Bethlehem and in the action of Herod. Then in his experiential knowledge Christ met with bitter disappointment. His purpose was to abide by the decision of the Jews and his mission was to be their everlasting, heavenly king. That is the explanation of his mysterious words to the Syro-Phoenician woman that he was not sent save to the children

of Israel. On them hung the issue. He was tempted to use his divine power and not submit to their will, and that is surely the meaning of the real temptation we are told of in the desert when he was asked to exercise his power and change stone into bread or cast himself off the pinnacle of the temple or possess all the kingdoms of the world. No! this tiny spot and this spoilt people were his kingdom, and his love for the whole human race and longing to bring it to happiness was to be subject to a human choice by them of him. The pages of the Gospels show how wholeheartedly he strove to win their love, how still possible and how vital it seemed to him that he should succeed, and how disappointment and sadness gradually overwhelmed him when he realized the fatal influence of the Pharisee and the worldly ambition and darkness of their minds. That is the tragic drama in the story of his mission which reaches its climax in Jerusalem and on Calvary. And he himself sums it up when the issue had become all too clear in the words: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which I would have gathered as the hen gathers her chicks under her wing, if thou hadst known the time of thy visitation."

In these words Christ expresses how much he desired and hoped to be accepted by his own people and his anguish at their rejection of him. The final break with the chosen people comes at

the Last Supper; the sentence of rejection has been passed and Christ changes from being a free agent into a victim dedicated to sacrifice, and on the morrow the Jews with a bitter irony announce their own doom in the words: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Thus, what has been done in the green wood will be worked out in the dry, for the disciple is not greater than his master, and the form of the Redemption will be renewed in every son of man with pain and desolation in the dark night of the soul. As all fell in Adam who is ourselves writ large, so all carry the cross and suffer evil with Christ by our decision of death against him.

MY FRIEND AND HOST: Phew!

MYSELF: Ah!

THE AGNOSTIC: Our last speaker has called himself an agnostic. I am afraid that I do not recognize any relationship. All that he has been saying depends upon the truth of the Christian solution, and we have so far tried to discuss the problem of the evening without the help of any revealed religion. It may be that Christianity has something helpful to say on it, and I should be glad if some theologian were to address us before we break up. For the moment, however, I want some of the

earlier problems cleared up, and I am at one with the reader of the paper in holding that philosophy should be left to defend the front trenches without invoking the aid of any other power.

READER OF THE PAPER: I am not insensible to the many interesting points raised since I last spoke, but it is quite true that they take us beyond the scope I set myself. Do not let us, however, ignore them as irrelevant. I think it a grave mistake to ignore light from any quarter and the division of the sciences which is now observed has had, besides its good effects, this singularly unfortunate result that various provinces of knowledge are not supposed to be within hail of each other. My agnostic friend is perhaps right to ask us to prescind from the Christian revelation for the moment; for my part I hope that it will be kept for the end, like the best wine on one great occasion. Let me, however, protest once again against an undue separation of philosophy from theology. If God is, his reality must be such that all questions are affected by him and a philosophical discussion of morals or psychology or nature which leaves him out can be nothing but a torso or torn fragment of the truth.

I was reading the other day an article in the leading philosophical journal of this country and by one of the ablest of the more mathematically

mind of Cambridge philosophers. The article was entitled, "God and Evil," and I expected to find little that would comfort a theist. Judge of my surprise when I found a cold, closely reasoned refutation of the objection that evil and a perfect and omnipotent God are incompatible. I do not say that I agree with the reasoning. I am more concerned to quote the writer as evidence that the presence of evil does not necessarily rule out the existence of a good God, even if his existence be not certain independently. The writer begins by quoting the late Dr. MacTaggart's argument that there cannot be any doubt about the fact of evil. I will not reproduce this. He then goes on to state the problem in his own way. "If God would not prevent the evil that exists he is not *perfect* and . . . if he could not he is not *omnipotent*." This dilemma, however, will not bear examination for the reason that it is ambiguous. The omnipotence of God cannot mean that he can do the impossible. We need a clear meaning of the word *omnipotence* and Mr. Wisdom takes it to mean that God can do anything however surprising and contrary to the laws of nature provided it is not inconceivable and self-contradictory. He now formulates his thesis, that God does not prevent the evil in the world because it is mathematically impossible for him to do so. There follows a closely reasoned argument which it would take too long to sum-

marize, and I shall content myself with selecting some points from it. He is prepared to admit that "a perfect and all-powerful being would allow only the best logically possible world." What he contests is the proposition that a world containing evil could not be the best logically possible world.

Two objections arise immediately against the view that this is the best of worlds. It would seem that we might subtract the evil or substitute something better. Neither of these processes, however, is as simple as might appear for both involve not only the removal of one evil fact or the substitution of something else for it, but whatever is connected with that fact. We must distinguish between different groups of facts; first those which have value of themselves without any consideration of the parts or elements which go to make them what they are; second, facts which derive all their value from the parts; and third, facts which have value not entirely from the parts but are benefited from their presence. This third class should be called a whole or be said to have value as a whole. It is by a consideration of these that we can settle the problem raised by evil. Let us take atomic facts (atomic meaning "not derived") which are causally connected: for instance, the fact that I now remember lighting a fire in June is caused by the fact that I smell wood smoke now, or again the fact that I am appreciating a warm bath now is due to the fact

that my journey was through cold and wet. Here it is logically impossible that I should appreciate the bath because of the journey and yet not have suffered the journey. This causal connection is dependent on the facts, though it cannot be called a derivative from the facts — it is a new fact. This latter will be apparent if we consider that we are saying less in the statement, “I am appreciating this warm bath and I had a cold journey” than in the statement “I am appreciating this warm bath because I had a cold journey.”

The next paragraph is worth quoting in full.

“Perhaps it will be said that particular causal connections have no value as wholes. But consider your love of God. Is it not better that it should be due to your knowledge of God rather than to his volition? Yet this considerable difference of value does not arise from a difference in the value of the facts connected; for the love is there in both cases and your knowledge of God is negligibly, if at all, better than his desire that you should love him; there is more value when the love is due to your appreciation because the love is then due to *your* nature. Thus arises the value of Freedom. It is not that God (like the surgeon) could (causal) not obtain your love or excellence without allowing you to be in sin or sorrow. It is that it is logically impossible for God to obtain your love-unforced-by-anything-outside-you and yet himself force it.”



Next, he takes what he calls Tonitions, and by Tonitions he means, "when I observe, imagine, remember, or expect a situation and feel pleased or displeased with it or feel some emotional feeling such as anger or fear or sorrow towards it, then the complex whole made up of (1) the cognitive fact of my observation, say, of the situation, *toned* by (2) my feeling towards the situation, is a Tonition." A tonition is not the mere conjunction of a cognition with a feeling nor is it a particular causal connection for in a tonition one of the facts combined must be a feeling and the feeling must be *directly* caused by a cognition. He distinguishes between ontological and epistemological tonitions. Now, every tonition contains either a fact or what is supposed to be a fact. In the latter case the tonition may have value as a whole, as, for instance, if I imagine and take pleasure in the imagination that B is in pain. B may not be feeling pain, so that there is no fact with value, and again my thinking that he has or imagining it is neither good nor false, but the whole is either good or bad. When there is a fact as object of the thinking then it is easy to see that there may be present evil or good. If I am sorry that B has a headache, there is the headache, and moreover it may happen that a tonition of this sort may have value as a whole.

If this summary of the argument so far seems obscure to you, I will remind you that Wisdom is

attempting to prove that you cannot take away the evil out of life without taking away the good and that there is nothing consequently to show that this is not the best of worlds. I must leave out a part of his argument to bring you to his final arguments. These are shown in one of his examples. "Let us take one more case of joint-tonition: A and B are on an Arctic expedition, blizzard coming on, hunger, intense cold, dogs done, B unable to go farther, A almost exhausted, food depot a mile off. If A tries to drag B to the depot they will probably both die. If he leaves B he will die in the blizzard. A tries to drag B.

"Here again we have loving empathy (empathy is the sense of unity which comes because they are both feeling the same way) and gladness from demonstration of affection. Also we have A's courage — a considerable item. The empathy consists in the unity of common feeling that "we are both in the same bloody boat." This requires that each can speak of *this* hunger, *this* exhaustion, *this* fear. Further, A's courage could not be exercised except against present pains or fears of the future. Here again much of the good cannot be obtained without the evil."

From an example like this and from many others which could be cited we can argue that even though certain tonitions without pain, such as the empathetic listening to music, may be superior to

those containing pain, nevertheless it remains that some painful tonitions may have a good which easily compensates for the evil and the wholes of the best possible sort. Of the latter, reminiscences and friendship are examples. If A and B, the two Arctic explorers survived, one of the happiest possible experiences would be the reminiscence of the episode and for this reminiscence to have its value the episode must be fact. Again, "the excellence of some of the best sorts of friendship depends in part upon the fact that in them are fully manifested all kinds of affection. Yet we could not have sorrowing affection without pain nor lamenting affection without degradation. And without the overcoming of pain and fear and the ignoring of degradation we could not have courageous and transcending affection." Lastly, "even if no friendship containing evil is of the best sort, it might well be that the best possible world would contain a few inferior friendships instead of nothing but continuously happy ones." It follows, therefore, that it cannot be proved or at any rate said straightway that the presence of evil means that this is not the best of worlds, and that therefore God is not perfect and omnipotent.

I do not say that I accept this argument as proposed by Mr. Wisdom and for this reason among others, that it makes this world the best of all possible worlds. One great writer who wrote

on this subject held this view — Leibnitz. But the consequences are too serious for me to be able to adopt it. In the first place, I do not see on what ground it is held except that it provides an answer to the very problem we are discussing. You may say perhaps that it is obvious that God could not have made a better world, for God can only do the best. That is an oversimple argument, as you will see immediately when you examine it. Matter is inferior to mind, therefore I say on your argument that it should never have been created; there are all sorts of men and women, some very inferior specimens, if I may say so with all respect; therefore they should not have been created, and we should have been left with one Admirable Crichton — and, I suppose one woman, a Helen of Troy! The truth is that the word *perfect* is here very ambiguous. It may mean “most perfect creature conceivable,” and I am not sure that that makes sense; or it may mean perfect for its object or purpose. A razor may be perfect for shaving and useless for sharpening pencils; chickens are admirably suited for the purposes of man, and almost every part of a pig can be turned to use. But neither of these animals will serve to add a spice to human conversation, and they were never meant to be the social companions of man. My point is that we are making foolish comparisons and asking of some specific kind of perfection that it should also in

some kind of an *omnium gatherum*, higgledy-piggledy universe have every kind of anomalous or contradictory attribute. You cannot compare a smile and a centaur, the tusks of an elephant and the chorus ending from Euripides, snuff and the ontological argument. You cannot even compare one universe with another except in a very general way.

Spirit is higher in the scale of perfection than matter, and the living than the nonliving. An angel is a nobler creation than man. But a Christian would say that Christ is the firstborn of all creation and that his Mother was by the grace of God the fairest among creatures after the human nature of her Son. It might even be argued that this world was the best of all possible worlds because of the coming into it of the Word made Flesh, and if you reply that what God has done once he can do again I would answer that this would mean a world where only the Incarnation could take place. If this does not seem to you sufficiently absurd, then I would take another line and say that God does not act without an object worthy of himself and that the Incarnation is the divine solution to a specific problem, the overcoming of evil by a divine remedy.

If I digress for a moment it will help to tidy up my argument. I have, following the best apologists for religion, used the argument from free will to

justify the presence of evil in God's world. The force of this argument is, I hope, apparent, but it has one weakness which is not always mentioned. It does not follow because God gives freedom that evil must necessarily follow, as some assume; and the proof of this is the life of Christ and his Mother. It is part of the teaching of the Christian religion that Christ could not sin, and the reason is simple. If Christ had sinned then God would have sinned. In the hypostatic union the human and divine nature belong to one person, and that person is responsible for all the actions of Christ. Christ acting is God acting, and hence if Christ sinned God sinned. I go further and accept the orthodox tradition of Christianity which has ever held that the Mother of Christ could have sinned but, in fact, never sinned. Here we have a human being endowed with free will who nevertheless so lives that no wrong is ever done by her; and this is proof positive that free will can be exercised without sin. We have, therefore, to pick our steps very carefully when arguing about this matter. Freedom, as I have tried to explain, does involve a choice, and the decision between alternatives rests without any excuse on the author. But we sometimes take it for granted that the choice must lie between good and evil or again that a being with free will may want to exercise that freedom. Neither of these suppositions is true. There may

be choice between different kinds of good and there may be a freedom from compulsion without any desire to do more than one kind of action. Our Lady lived a life of freedom but her choice lay always between fair objects, and the saints in heaven, as Dante expressly says, cannot, so to speak, take their eyes off the loveliness of God. They have fallen in love and willingly given their hearts away, and their love is the greatest personal act they have ever performed. We in this life are never so bewitched by beauty that no other object can enter into comparison with it. Our minds are too distracted, too darkened and dispersed to see more than fragments; and this is the reason we love so many and diverse objects and have to choose between them. This is our natural condition, and this leads me back to the main topic we were discussing. For us the life of perfection consists in assimilating our will and desires gradually and by effort to the truly desirable, and so it comes about that the noblest minds by the habit they have acquired cease to look to certain false ambitions and desires. They can distinguish between the counterfeit and the genuine, between the Gonerils and the Cordelias, between the love which contracts the self and the love which expands it. Normally this habit must be formed by our own striving, but, to fulfill a special function for man and in order to be fit for a supreme mission, it may happen

that a human being may start in the ideal state which others work to achieve. This is the explanation of why Mary, the Mother of God, is said in Catholic theology to be without sin. To be worthy of the noblest mission possible for a creature she was exceptionally privileged, and we must interpret her life in accordance with and in the light of this special purpose of God.

If this be so we can draw a useful argument to support our general thesis. In that I maintain that the kind of perfection which this world of ours exhibited was one in which virtue came through the exercise of freedom against obstacles and in the face of evil. It seemed as if I would have to correct this, as we have in the example of Christ and his Mother the exercise of freedom without sin. But on closer inspection it was seen that their sinlessness was exceptional and was due to their special mission in this world—and among creatures who had sin and could sin. Their high condition is to be taken in relation to a world of sin and their special mission to save it. The exception, therefore, instead of upsetting the general thesis goes to reinforce it; the exception proves the rule. Moreover, we are entitled to see in this exception something of the way in which God acts. There is no arbitrary choice of a world and of beings in it who can sin or not sin, and we can ask the question whether there is any sense in imagining more



perfect worlds like our worlds. We know, indeed, that God is not tied to this creation, that in his omnipotence and goodness and his freedom an infinite number of creations is open to him. But this is a speculative question. Knowing that God is free we acknowledge this possibility, but we know far too little to be able to make much use of this knowledge. There are, for all we know, all manner of reasons and factors which render some of these possibilities impracticable. "The best of all possible worlds" is at best a cloudy statement, and hardly more than a way of affirming God's liberty. We cannot think out what a different world would be like. For all our intents and purposes this world is the best, and as regards our happiness and well-being it is constituted as no other could be constituted.

This is the attitude Mr. Wisdom takes. He does not consider the metaphysical possibilities of universes and beings totally unlike us; he takes our standard of values and our possibilities, and arguing from this he is able to show that a world without pain and suffering and the corresponding virtues called out by them would be a less perfect world for us. There are other worlds of goodness and happiness, each of them separate and singular and only comparable as asymptotically approaching toward the divine goodness. But what is better for an angel would not necessarily be so for us. Mr.

Wisdom mentions as pure pleasures without any admixture of evil, the enjoyment of music; we can probably, all of us, think of still higher values, and to an angel the thrill of perfect form, so to say, of exultant life and the nearness in mind and affection to what is most lovely must give a world of happiness which we can conceive as higher in kind than our own. But for us the examples of "conjoint-tonitions," the experiences lived over again with a well-loved friend, the remembrance of sacrifice undergone for our sake and the love which gives its all for a friend, these are inseparable from the world we wish to live in and must not be taken from us.

To the complaints and desire for change which are often expressed we surely can answer with the words used on a greater occasion: "You know not what you ask." It is part of our frailty to be ever dissatisfied with what we have and to compare it with the heaven hidden deep down in our unformulated dreams. We should have learnt by this time to distrust this urge for change and so-called improvement and so remember to leave well alone. Our improvements have had a habit of being eyesores to later generations, and is there not at this very moment a widespread opinion that the nineteenth century in its economics and in its art has served us very badly. In childrens' tales there is a moral we are apt to forget. The boy or maiden is

allowed by the fairy to change his or her condition and the choice is made in favour of riches or splendour or success. The favour is given without stint but has attendant on it so much unhappiness that at the end the boy or girl is glad to return to what had been too hastily abandoned. So is it with this world of experience which God has provided for us. We know not what we ask when we demand that it should be radically changed and improved. It is as if we were in disgust to remove all manure from the earth. Poor birds of the air! They would have new nourishment to seek, and our nemesis would come when the fields which had ripened and filled our granaries lay dark and sterile. Professor Whitehead says in one of his books that an actual entity is influenced by the entire antecedent world, and while this belief seems to me to be exaggerated it does bring out the complexity of nature. For convenience and practical purposes we are forced to take objects and persons we meet in ordinary life as independent and relatively unchanging. The kettle which steams on the hob is a kettle and remains for us a kettle without change until it is thrown into the dust heap; a cygnet looks to us much the same from day to day though it is steadily changing colour; persons we live with grow old without notice and it is only when one of them has been away for some time that we cry out when meeting

them again, "how changed you are!" We ignore the infinite variations in colour unless we be a Gerard Hopkins; we cut up things artificially in order to give them a shape, and we eat our egg at breakfast without reflection on its necessary connection with the hen that laid it. When we investigate nature seriously for the first time we are so surprised by the web of causes and conditions in which every event is inmeshed that we are tempted to go to the opposite extreme and make everything part of everything else. There is no need to do this. What is true is that nature is not haphazard or chaotic. It is pathetic to hear doctors and scientists of one age calling for the extirpation of some pest which in the next age is saluted as the one remedy of a disease or trouble which has arisen in the meantime. For example, not long ago there was an outcry against bats and they were ruthlessly destroyed; we now hear that the death-watch beetle and other insects are spreading in number and working mischief because of the disappearance of the bat.

In the old cosmogonies man held the central position in the universe. It was even said that the world existed for him. The discovery of the age of the world and of the myriad other worlds of stars brought ridicule on this supposedly naive arrogance of man. Nowadays, with a little thought, we can return to the older conception with more

modesty, indeed, and wisdom but with good reason. Man is the highest creature in the physical universe and he makes all serve him. Some parts of it are ready to his hand but by far the greater part demands *improbable labor*, the united efforts of many generations, and even now so much remains to be learnt and conquered. It seems in accordance with Providence that much should be withheld, that in our sophisticated age we should be stunned by the unsuspected size of material creation, "the bright boroughs" of the nightly heavens. In this way knowledge cannot grow stale and there is left for future generations the stimulus of learning and discovery. Moreover, the world, so far from diminishing the spiritual stature of man, ever witnesses to his greatness. The heavens acquire their immensity from the mind which beholds them; they deliver up their secret unknown to themselves and serve as man's pedagogue. Without him nature is only a bonfire and as the poet says, if once we quench the bonniest spark then both "are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark drowned."

It is silly talk, therefore, which because of the size of things lessens the importance of man in the universe. He is by science and exploration still more manifestly the pivot and centre of all, and it is a strange and wondrous thought that so much should have been given to him to educate him and

discipline him and be his plaything. A portion of it has always been there before him — mother nature, as it has been called, a mother and hand-maid for his body. His body is drawn from it and his spirit grows by its ministry. The other portion of the world which has slowly with the years come to our knowledge, whether it be the forces hidden in the earth we see or the strata and stars discovered, suffice to occupy the mind and may in time to come have more specific purposes, but our common world is so close to us that we could as easily do without our skin.

If once we can persuade ourselves that there is a God who loves man, then we can admire and understand the intricacies and the lavish teachings of nature. Remember that it is only to a mind that intricacy and multiform design are interesting and that we are the sole beings who walk this world who have minds and can be interested. If you realize the implications of this you will be astounded by the actual and symbolical service which nature gives us. Let me take two examples, both of them drawn from writers neither of whom can be said to be prejudiced in my favour. The first passage tells us something of the ways in which living tissue works and shows us the solidarity of nature.

“Experiments have, however, immensely in-

creased the wonder. Every form of life as it grows, buds. Fins, legs, gills, all first appear as buds. It is now possible through amazingly delicate experiments, to excise these buds, graft them and get them to grow on different parts of the body. Perhaps no experiments have taught us more about life and its mysterious powers, and the way it works. For if you transplant the bud of a limb to the site where an eye should sprout, what happens? The cells of the bud which is about to become a limb are, of course, in appearance like the cells of most of the body, what we should call so much flesh. The cells of the eye are very peculiar, for they have to make themselves as clear as glass. If our bodies were made completely of such cells we should be, if not like Mr. Well's Invisible Man, at least as shadowy as a jellyfish in the sea. Now, the astonishing thing is that if at the right moment we transplant, say, a limb-bud to the site where an eye should in due time be turning up, the limb-bud ceases to go on becoming a limb. The tissue of cells begins clearing up, growing more and more translucent and at the same time rearranging itself, until, in the end, instead of a limb you have an eye. Some life-force, in the body, some power — called, because we know so little about it, the organizer — has up to a certain point power to change over and perform this recreative act. It can work in front of us that transmutation whereby these

soft cells which seem all the same, are changed, some into brittle bone, others into flesh, hair, nails, and skin, and others into crystalline eye-stuff."

The second passage is about the wild silkmoths of the Indian forests.

"Among them, to name but three species, *Attacus Atlas*, with a wing span of ten inches, has been described as the most strikingly coloured insect in the world; *Actias Selene* wears a swallow-tailed gown of palest green trimmed with bright purple, and yet, for beauty and size combined, the apple must go to *Antheraea Paphia*, whose cocoons, collected by jungle tribes, are eventually spun into the silk known as *Tussore*.

"The females of this species may measure nearly seven inches across the plumy wings, which vary in hue from ashy purple to old gold. In the middle of each is a round window clear as glass and bordered in black and pink, in which, no less than the magenta fringes of the deep and magnificently curved forewing, the owner's kinship to *Actias*, is apparent. This flying *Aphrodite* is no less gorgeous in her larval incarnation. The full-grown caterpillar is as long and as thick as a man's middle finger, emerald green, and studded with glittering patines of gold and silver. Two rows of crimson portholes mark the spiracles of this lordly worm. . . .

"Aboriginals bring him [the writer] the cocoons in April, and he stands them in rows on his draw-



ing-room table. Two months later, invariably long after dark, he looks up from his book and notices that a cocoon has developed a bulge, a bubble at one end. The hard silk casket which no hammer can break and only the stoutest of scissors can cut, melts before his eyes. It bursts under the solvent acid secreted by its occupant, legs wave in frantic appeal, a proffered finger tip is seized, and *Antheraea* drags her dripping, golden, mouselike body into the lamplight. What follows is sheer miracle. The wings are now a thumbnail long, not folded but complete, window and all, in miniature. Within an hour they have expanded by a strange, supposed-pneumatic force, to their full length and *Antheraea*, still gleaming with the dew of that glorious birth, awaits the supreme moment of her life.

“If there is no husband at hand in the big movable bamboo hut outside the bungalow, she is put on a spray of wall-creeper. Her wings, now stiffening, vibrate rapidly but in such a narrow compass that the eye can scarcely discern their motion, though a covering hand can feel their thrill. This is her ‘wireless’ in action. The love-call pierces the tropic night, above roofs and gardens and the squalid environs of an Indian city, and before morning a mate has come in from the distant jungle. He is visible from a hundred yards away, a spot of burning chestnut against the background of dark green. Wing tip to outstretched wing tip

they hang and their union endures till evening."

You will notice in both these descriptions the intimate and intricate artistry of nature. As one reads it becomes unimaginable that many should think they can better nature by leaving out or by substitution. Lend a helping hand, yes, destroy and change within a limited district and degree; study and grow wise and avail oneself of the agelong experience of those who have sat at the foot of nature, watched the skies and tilled the fields and pruned the forests and accustomed themselves to the habits of birds and insects and beasts of the field, . . . but remove half of the life, its strain, and duress, the evil which is the foster brother of the good, that is, as Hopkins said of Binsey Poplars, "where we mean to mend her we end her." "To touch, her being so slender, that, like this sleek and seeing ball but a prick will make no eye at all." The providence of God is in its way as complicated as the eye and we go meddling with it in our desire to make a new universe with all we dislike left out and as a result, if we were allowed our way, there would be no universe at all. Do you remember the mechanical nightingale that the Emperor of China substituted for the live one, and how when he lay dying with the real nightingale flown away and the great drum of China silent, the mechanical rival lay by his bedside run down and broken.

To me there is nothing in the world which does not provide a story and a lesson. The appearance of pain among the lower creatures is a constant shock and reminder, and all that is savage and brutal in our instincts is curbed by the sight of their vigour where mind and ideals are absent, and the beauty too of so much, the abiding pictures of innocence and fidelity, of obedience and skill, of strength and purposiveness, of grace and glory is the necessary food of our senses and imagination. Think what a part kittens and puppies, dogs and horses, swans and peacocks, to take only a few of our friends, have played in the existence of man — the songs about the swallow and lark, the butterflies and dragon fly, the stories about the snake and the fawn and the eagle! Take these away and there are no longer any players save one, a solitary and enigmatic figure, a Hamlet without any problem to solve.

All that I have been saying is but a commentary on the argument which Mr. Wisdom uses when he says that certain valuable experiences entail the presence of evil. Good and evil in our lives are as connected with one another as right and left, up and down. We know how these spacial terms have served or passed into moral distinctions, the left being sinister and down being down and out. The very readiness with which people of varying tongues have used these terms to connote good and

evil is a proof of their intimate conjunction. This same truth is confirmed by any dictionary you care to consult, for there you will find that sensible experience is the vehicle to convey spiritual values and that many of the most precious of our words bear some relation to pain. Of such are sympathetic, pitiful, long-suffering, patient. The emotions and virtues which these and other words express arise out of evil. It has been said that parting is a revelation of love, and we know that we are brought to the realization how dear another may be to us when we have to lose him or her. Similarly the travail of the mother endears the child of her womb to her, and the illnesses of children and parents and friends bring out the virtues of tenderness and compassion. You may even agree with the somewhat cynical remark of Aristotle that benefactors love those whom they have helped more than the latter love them. At any rate the reason he gives is worth consideration, that the benefactor takes joy in having been kind to another whereas the sufferer or beneficiary is too aware of the debt he now owes.

ARTIST: There is a point none of you has mentioned. Evil cannot be taken as a decisive criterion of the goodness of God's plan. It is not a fatal malady which leaves us without hope. It is not the end, for it may very well be the beginning. Does

this sound vague? Well, what I wish to say is this, that art proves conclusively that man does not reckon evil as a horror without redemption. One of the highest forms of art is tragedy, and in tragedy there is necessarily the appearance of evil. Nevertheless man has made it into a thing of beauty. What could be more baleful than the scene of Clytemnestra waiting for the return of Agamemnon or Lear out on the heath. The breath of evil scorches the audience, and nevertheless they are carried away with emotions which do not shame them. By art evil is alchemised; it is put into a crucible and there comes forth the fairest produce. You may say that art is not life and there is truth in such a retort, but art feeds on life and does not falsify it. What it does is to remove the momentary tension, the agony as it catches us, so that the personal, biased experience is no longer there to prevent us seeing its possible beauty *sub specie aeternitatis*. We are released from the fetters of the moment, and, so to speak, the form shines out free from the matter which has cramped it, and we, we have our emotions cleansed and can contemplate without dismay the struggle of good and evil.

THE LAST DOUBTER: Perhaps, perhaps! Art may have a lesson. What makes me hesitate, however, is just the personal agony and failure. It may purify our vision to cry in excellent poetry,

"Queens have died young and fair, Death hath closed Helen's eye," but for me the question remains, what of Helen and the countless others who have suffered, done wrong and died? As you have insisted throughout, the real problem is that of the goodness of God and not of His existence, though for me a God who is not good is no God.

You have quoted from a contemporary writer, Mr. Wisdom, to show that an unprejudiced philosopher thinks that evil does not provide a logical argument against the existence of a good God. Let me quote you a Roland for your Oliver. Professor C. A. Campbell writing in *Philosophy* argues that no rational justification can be given of evil. He himself follows Otto in a view which involves "an appeal to the 'super-rational' character of the Divine Pefection." You have not chosen in your paper to follow the line of defence given by Otto, and therefore you must meet Campbell's attack, and I may say he attacks many of the arguments which you have put forward this evening. He agrees with you that the hypothesis of a finite God is valueless. It runs, he thinks, against all genuine religious experience. What are the alternatives? The problem, let us remember, is unmerited suffering. The first answer is that no suffering is unmerited. We are "vile bodies," the best of us, and deserve no favour from God. As Carlyle wrote: "Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged (as is most likely), thou wilt feel it happiness to be only shot:

fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair-halter, it will be a luxury to die in hemp." To believe this would make, so Campbell thinks, nonsense of morality, and besides little children who are guiltless suffer.

The second argument can be put in the words of R. L. Stevenson, which are quoted in the article. "That which we suffer ourselves has no longer the same air of monstrous injustice and wanton cruelty that suffering wears when we see it in the case of others." This plea is dismissed after careful examination on the ground that it is not universally applicable. There are cases where the suffering is unfair, and here the case of babies is given once more as an illustration. The third argument appeals to the disciplinary effect of suffering. But once again it is impossible to apply this explanation to children, and moreover there are many who suffer to such a pitch that they are stupified and destroyed instead of bettered. The records of the late war show this with sickening realism. But, it may be said, we cannot think away the latter without also thinking away much that is disciplinary and so destroying the character of this life, "the vale of soul-making." But on what grounds, asks Campbell, do we affirm this? It looks far more likely that God, the perfect craftsman, could have designed a world in which suffering was more conditioned. Hence, another tack must be tried, and one is that the suffering which most afflicts

us comes from man himself. This, however, will not help, because God is ultimately responsible for the world of men and women, and if you say that they have free will, then either God has abandoned the world which he made or he should interfere effectually.

The last alternative is that everything will be made right in an afterlife. Campbell criticizes this by asking whether we have any argument for immortality apart from the moral one. If not, then, the *ad hoc* hypothesis does not help, and at any rate it seems doubtful "whether we can say, after all, that the assurance of a future life, even if it be of a kind which will furnish an equivalence of happiness for sufferings that considerations drawn from this life do not make intelligible, is enough in itself to restore our confidence in the goodness of the Power that rules the universe." Hence, Professor Campbell falls back on religious experience and states that if men do keep their faith it can only be "because this Supreme Being, as he is made known to them through religious experience, is felt so to transcend our finite comprehension that any attempt on our part to grasp and pass judgment upon his universe is repudiated as palpably absurd; if not, indeed, as bordering upon the impious."

My second difficulty concerns ultimate failure and damnation. There may, indeed, be a sentimental and somewhat silly grievance in many peoples' minds,



and again it may be that the present generation is unusually and unduly sensitive to suffering. I have always been puzzled by the readiness of our ancestors to enjoy lurid pictures of torment whether in this life or in the next. Up till recently crowds gloated over the suffering of animals and men in arenas, at executions or in bloody games and mimic fights. Still more surprising is it to find that many of the noblest spirits of past ages countenanced such behaviour and such an attitude. Holy men did not seem to think it inconsistent with a loving God to sentence by far the greater number of mankind to everlasting torment though they themselves were tender to the weak and distressed, and after the example of Christ, also to sinners. Yet God who was most good had created a world of souls and the result of this choice was to be that millions — the greater number of mankind, I repeat — were to suffer in a never-ending hell fire.

That even the Catholic Church, with its intransigence and sangfroid, is sensitive to this problem is proved by the care she now shows in her utterances on damnation and the fate of those visibly outside her fold. We cannot balk this difficulty any longer. I am not of those who would make a debating point. I am quite prepared to say that religion loses when it neglects the rod of fear, and there have been too many great religions and great exponents of religion who have depicted the

grim penalty of sin and evil for me to call it merely savage and brutal. Much of our greatest art in the East and the West has used it for a subject. Nevertheless today the preacher has almost given up the lurid descriptions which so affected our ancestors. Outside the Catholic Church there can scarcely be found one minister of religion who believes in everlasting punishment, and so far as I know the Catholic theologian is loath to discuss that dogma of his religion openly. When he does so he makes reserves, and some of us would say that he tries to explain it all away. The Catholic is full of battle when he has to defend the divinity of Christ and the Catholic Church. He rides, like Rupert, through the ranks of a disunited foe so long as he keeps to these doctrines. But change the field of battle and the dispute, bring him back to the Old Testament and the ways of God as known to us in the Bible, and he is strangely quiet and hesitating. And if one presses the good man still further and puts to him quite simply the question, "Do you believe in a good God who creates a world in which some sensitive human creatures are by his creation to suffer eternally?" then you will see that he is at bottom as agnostic as I am and that all his bravery is unsubstantiated boasting.

READER OF THE PAPER: I think that I have already had my say on many of the points which you

and Professor Campbell raise. What strikes me as surprising is the conclusion. After bringing positive arguments against the possibility of a good God, you end by saying that we can know so little of the Supreme Being that judgment on his ways is impious. Such a belief seems to me very odd. You will say that religious experience justifies it, but you cannot have the rational and the experiential in two such separate and exclusive compartments as that. I do not mind the arguments so much, nor what underlies the position taken up; indeed I have much sympathy with it. But I feel very sure that my position is the right statement of what is muddled here. I agree entirely that we cannot comprehend the ways of God, as we might those of a fellow man, and I believe that much criticism, for this very reason, is anthropomorphic or confined and ignores factors which might make a great difference to our conclusions. I believe, too, in religious experience, if by that is meant that sufficient of the divine nature can be known to us indirectly to fill us with the reverence due to his majesty and the love for his beauty — I say “indirectly” because I would deny any direct acquaintance with God save in the high mystical experience, and I believe we know him normally in and through his works. This being so, we have a right to say that God is of such a nature that he cannot be circumscribed within a finite mind, that he must be beyond criticism. This is what I am sure Professor Campbell

ought to have said, and he could then go on to say that we may patiently and with our limited knowledge try to understand something of God's intentions in permitting evil, even though we have not the wherewithal to give a complete answer. This kind of answer does justice to God and to the legitimate questions which man may ask. I am confident that it is wrong to close down all questioning, as if the Almighty were like a bishop at a prep school who must be heard without criticism. My solution does imply that God is to some extent intelligible, and where he passes beyond our comprehension it is because of excess of light and not because of darkness. I see no reason why we should not say, if God is not reached at all by the intellect, that he is completely unintelligible — and that means the end of theism.

Now let me come to the criticisms. Not one of them seems to me decisive. I have not urged the argument that we are "vile bodies" for this reason that it is bound up with a specific Christian dogma, Original Sin. Without entering on a discussion of that dogma, I think there is evidence of something culpable in human nature. It is not what it ought to be; it is disappointing; it is in exile and has lost the right to seek help except from itself. The more persons come to know themselves and the higher their knowledge of what ought to be, the less do they think of their having any deserts, and if you ask any of the acknowledged saints of mankind they invariably

reply that they are good for nothing and deserving of nothing. But does this apply to children? It could easily be argued that they cannot be an exception. If there has been some cosmic catastrophe at the beginning of history by which man had fallen from grace and forfeited his rights to special protection, then the children of the race of pariahs must suffer the fate of pariahs. I am not saying that this is true, but that until this answer is met the argument of Campbell lacks weight.

Next he says that the suffering of babies destroys the effect of Stevenson's remark. Nevertheless it is worth pondering, and I think that its force has not been rightly appreciated. It can be put this way. The only person about whom I can have certainty with regard to moral experience is myself. Can I justly say that God has treated me with unfairness? Can I put the blame on God for my failure to be happy and to be what I ought to be, and can I absolve myself? If not, then it may be that others about whom I am indignant may have the same experience as myself especially as my own is the only certain criterion. But does this not hold of children? I wonder to what sufferings of children Campbell is referring? Disease or death? The first months and years exclude moral and spiritual suffering. We must then remove by some divine dispensation all illness and death from children. This to me is so radical a change in life that I doubt if it could happen and leave a recog-

nizable world. Again, if there be an afterlife, I for my part think the compensation is more than sufficient. These children are created and after a brief spell of suffering they are to enjoy an everlasting bliss. But I am not to be allowed to escape with this defence. Campbell rejects the suggestion that this world is so complicated and close-knit that part of it cannot be removed without detriment to the rest, and he makes little of immortality. I do not profess to be able to settle the first question apodictically, but I do remember that miracles have apparently happened at times in answer to prayer, and one of the objections of the anticlerical is that such miracles make the world irrational and can't happen. I think it may be that God does help to the limit in his providence which is compatible with the world remaining normal. As for immortality, the general opinion of the world is that it does make up for the miseries of this, for what are the troubles of this short span of years compared to the joys which await us? We have now the trial and at the end the reward, and that seems a very fair arrangement, and one just suited to the kind of experience man enjoys.

These are direct answers to the difficulties which Campbell raises. They must, however, be seen against the background of the general thesis I have endeavoured to maintain. I now turn to a, perhaps, more serious objection which you raised, namely that of ultimate failure and damnation. Please re-

member that your criticism may hit Christianity; it does not touch me. All the same, before handing over the baton to the Catholic priest who is with us, I should like to say something on the question of eternal loss or hell. With some diffidence I should maintain the unpalatable and perhaps paradoxical view that the world would be imperfect without hell. This conclusion seems to me to follow from what I have already said about the nature of man and the intricate interdependence of the various parts of the universe. Just as our human virtue is so closely allied to evil as to rise out of its defeat, so the supereminent glory of man has its opposing shadow of ultimate defeat. It is no light fall that man may make; "the mind has mountains; cliffs of fall frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed." If Icarus had not climbed so high his fall would not have been so fatal; if Lucifer had not been so near to God he would not as the Scripture tells us and Milton so admirably describes, have crashed into hell, the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Do you know that delightful description in a twelfth-century life of St. Margaret, of the devil who "roaring rode ruglingly into hell"?

The somewhat obvious truth I am trying to express can be illustrated by innumerable examples, for it is a law that the more precious a thing is the easier it is to ruin it and ruin it completely. The

precious is fragile, it needs infinite care and must be wrapped up in cotton wool. The servant can knock ordinary things about without breaking them until she comes to a priceless porcelain vase, and then one sweep of the duster and the vase is irreparably broken. Now, I say that if man is made worthy of eternal issues he must have a destiny of his own making which will immortalize him in ultimate gain or loss. He can judge truth itself, and be a loyalist or a liar; he can swear allegiance to goodness or be an anarchist; he can choose himself or he can choose God. In so speaking of man I am all but defining him, for that is what his life means.

Those who scout the notion of hell as a relic of barbarian superstition are, without knowing it, maligning human nature. They are cowards who educate us to think that we are meant to stop at home in swaddling clothes, protected from fresh air and all possible dangers. They would make us soft and effeminate and unfit for the hurlyburly of life. This is no man's life but a tame travesty of it. All that is best in us revolts against cuddling and the denial of all risk and adventure. What we need is some summons to the semi-divine courage which is latent in all of us, some challenge to risk all that we have for love. Imagine a man born of woman ambling along on some old nag or wrapped up in some limousine to conquer the earth and to



conquer himself and make himself fit for the divine Eros. I am tired with this cheapening of stupendous issues, I demand that hell be given back to the world. The ancients, living closer to nature and therefore to truth, knew that they could commit a lamentable apostacy against their high destiny and be judged by a Rhadamanthine judge as final failures. They knew that they were not here to play upon this earth, to skulk in tents or play the paramour; if they played, they played with life and death. The arena was to become the assize where they would be condemned to everlasting infamy or take their seats with the triumphant. Doom followed after them when they had sinned and there was no escape from its penalty without repentance.

This conviction of immortal issues entering into the decisions made in time is a witness to the spiritual nature which is ours. Were we but animals an act of man would come and go with time, but just as our thoughts are fastened to a truth which does not fade, so our moral acts are registered in a region where absolute goodness abides, and when we are summed up it is not as an animal with its growth and decay that we are judged, but as a spirit which is one, which has lost its soul or found it. I think that I have already pointed out how all the best acts of man in this life rise above time, the discovery of a truth, the oath of fidelity to the

spouse in marriage, and the self-sacrifice which gives its life for a friend. If God had not let us know that heaven or hell came at the end of our story, not only should we fail to have a truthful revelation of the nature of sin and the perfection of God, but we should have been at a loss to realize the importance and dignity of the nature which God has created. By seeing how high we can ascend and how low we can fall we are enabled to realize the dangerous splendour of our choices. We can no longer be careless; we are not meant to be sots or creatures of the midden; our fate is to sit at table with God; we are "the eternal brood of glory excellent," and we are like athletes who will run their race into the rising sun.

One way in which we might be able to realize the necessity of a doctrine of hell would be to wipe out the thought of it from the minds of man. Without reflection you might say that that would be an unmixed blessing; but I am sure that on second thought you would revise that first impression. It is so easy to underrate the pernicious character of moral evil. We know theoretically that moral evil is worse than physical pain and sorrow, but the latter is so vivid to us that we tend to dwell on it to the exclusion of the greater evil. That means to say that we will easily stoop to wrongdoing, indulge ourselves and neglect the virtues of innocence and purity, of justice and unself-

fishness. To be told that vice is very evil but that, no matter how foul we become, all will be well with us in the end, is not likely to act as a brake. To learn truth we have to be educated, to appreciate the highest forms of virtue and beauty needs a long discipline. That means to say that there are different levels of appreciation, and all our life we are seeing the world according to our own moral and spiritual altitude. There is nevertheless one cosmic evaluation, one perfect standard to the perception of which we must be raised. We are like children who must be taught that evil cannot be done with impunity or like gossipers who sow feuds, or war-mongerers who stir up hatred between nations. We are so taken up with the present, so earth-bound that God has to show, as it were, on a screen or in another dimension the true character of our deeds. That is why we must measure evil by hell and the death of the Son of God instead of by the opinion of our fellow men or our own casual judgment.

THE PRIEST: I am so much in agreement with the reader of the paper that I have little to say, and might have nothing were it not that he has for the most part excluded the religious answer to the problem of evil in order to examine it from the point of view of cold reason. To judge from some of your reactions, reason has not been wholly

persuasive. I think that is your own fault. You will insist on asking for something which reason is not able to provide. You pride yourselves on being reasonable and when you are taken at your word you grumble because your hearts have not been warmed. One of you had recourse to religion as the only argument and then gave up the religious argument in order to work upon your feelings. Let me say that an appeal to religion as a substitute for reasoning is to me an insult to God. The Christian religion, at any rate, moves upward from the land discerned, perhaps through a mist, by reason to what is higher, and its light enables us to be far more reasonable and to see a further horizon. But I would regard myself as an imposter if I offered a substitute for what the reader of the paper has argued.

Before recounting to you what I believe to be the unique contribution of the Christian religion to this problem, let me point out a fact which it has revealed which philosophy necessarily leaves out of account, and then add one or two considerations on the limitations of our philosophizing. This may involve some repetition of what has already been said, but I know that you will forgive me. When we argue philosophically about evil we are bound to take the nature of man as consisting of soul and body, and from our definition of man we begin to work out the purposes and place of man

in his destiny. We cannot, of course, neglect the abundant evidence of something wrong in him, but we use this evidence and meet it with a solution drawn from his free will. This has been admirably done by the reader of the paper. Something, however, is missing. If soul and body so belong to each other as to be one thing, a human nature, it is surprising that they suffer such conflicts one with another. There is a surd in our human reckoning, and the answer to that is supplied by the doctrine of Original Sin. As many a writer has told us, Original Sin, or something like to it, is empirically evident in the life of every man. I would not, for my part, accept this statement without qualification, as it often leads to a confusion of concupiscence with Original Sin. But in order not to take up your time with a purely theological discussion, I will concede the fact that some wrong twist is obvious in the lives of men. Something has gone wrong which makes the good, when left to itself, turn rapidly into evil; which makes the reason so weak in its direction and leads to such blind choices. In other words, the natural constantly betrays us and shows itself as unnatural. Now, if this be true then we are immediately held up in our attempts to solve the problem of evil. One vital piece of evidence is missing. If, then, we consult the authentic story of man's life on earth, authentic, I mean, for those who accept Chris-

tianity, we learn that God's intention was originally that man should live in felicity, and that it was the fault of man himself which made his lot different. The way of happiness, instead of being through peace and the companionship of God, changed into the one which man chose, a way in which man preferred to follow his own devices, work out his own salvation, and depend upon himself. God took man at his word, accepted his wishes, and when human nature had been desecrated saved it by love.

Now please notice that this new fact not only disturbs our calculations but opens up possibilities which we could not have surmised. It is clear that man, as he is at present, is not the original intention of God; it is also clear that God's design was to keep evil away from man and that man brought it and all the trouble of this world on himself by fighting against the desire of God. There are a number of other inferences which I could mention, but if what has been said sets you thinking about the magnitude of the question we have been trying to decide tonight, it will suffice. The Christian philosophy stoutly maintains that it can make true statements about God, but those who know this seldom add that it is also part of the Christian philosophy that we can know exceedingly little about the divine nature. We take a flying leap into the empyrean off the ground which we know, and

we soon come to earth. The eagle soars whereas we, like the robin, make swift little sorties and just skim about the garden that suffices for us. The objects of sensible experience are commensurate with the strength of the human mind, and it is with an effort we raise ourselves above them. Having a mind we are dazed but not blinded, and we interpret the intellectual world and spirit in terms of our familiar sensations. Guess, then, how hard it is to track down the Almighty and to ask Him intelligible questions. There are some who talk about the thickets of infinity as if they were in Trafalgar Square. It is hard to have patience with such trivial thinking. A solution of the problems which belong to God, if easily given, is sure to be wrong, and we are silly and illogical to complain of mystery and to be scandalized at divine problems which do not bear their answer on their face.

I agree with the reader of the paper in first using all the resources of our reason to find out how near we can draw to the Burning Bush. Then, when we find that we are still almost out of sight, we can leave Vergil and turn to Beatrice for our guide, and ask of the Gospels and the saints why it behoved Christ and all of us to suffer. The saints with one voice inform us that high endeavour carries the mind with it from the valley of mists to mountaintops, whence the beauty and goodness of God shine clear, and they are emphatic that dis-

trust and blindness of vision are diseases of the soul. In saying this they re-echo the Gospel. There we read that darkness is a culpable state, that it is the beam in our own eye which makes us notice the motes in those of other people. Moreover, to intellectual questions which savour of idle curiosity Christ seldom, if ever, gives an answer. The would-be philosopher is told to take up his cross and so find the way of life.

Whenever we ask questions it would be wise for us to ask ourselves whether we want to hear the right answer, and again, whether we are in a state in which we could catch its significance. In the actual working of human judgment around us we rarely find that it is permitted to work uncoloured by temperament, passion, or prejudices. Provocation and resentment distort it, and pain, whether personal or endured by those we love or even by a stranger, is equally upsetting. We can with difficulty look at a far-off end when the present is filled with suffering and distress. If, then, children misjudge their parents, and citizens misjudge long-sighted statesmen, and each and all find themselves almost constitutionally incapable of trusting their own judgments save in very impersonal matters, how can we be so foolish as to think that God, whose plans gather up in one the thousands of years of the earth's existence and the countless individual lives of succeeding generations, can be



circumscribed by the passing judgment of men, especially when they are tempted to expect nothing but blessings from his hand and have the world conducted for their own private and exclusive benefit? The disproportion, therefore, between the Infinite and the finite mind is too great to allow of a neat and comprehensive answer to the problem of evil, and that is one of the criticisms I would urge against the acute reasoning of Mr. Wisdom which the reader of the paper quoted. He tended to make it into a mathematical sum or rather dilemma, that either this is as good a world as could be created or God is not good and omnipotent at once. It is difficult enough to weigh the relative worth-while-ness of two utterly different kinds of creation, and we do not know enough about the nature of man to say decisively what kind of life at this stage of his growth would best serve his purposes. We can offer a form of living which we know from divine authority will perfect men, but within that form what differences exist: a Paul, a Celestine, a Teresa, and a Curé d'Ars. You will realize how limited our outlook is if I ask you would a world in which everyone was a Socrates in mind and character really be better than the one we know, and would a world of such an identical type be possible without opposing types?

I grant, then, that the philosopher in his library should be able by looking before and after to jus-

tify the ways of God to men, but I believe that the practice of the Sermon on the Mount invites mankind to a better school of wisdom. Not all can be philosophers, and it does not concern us to know all. Our own particular life and destiny are our care, and we must work according to our powers to bring peace and the love of God upon earth. But the Father's will is one of which we have no revelation in detail, and those private confidences which some claim to possess with the Almighty seem to me generally a delusion. When, therefore, we grow inquisitive about the fate of others and alarmed at their pain and anguish, it is good to remind ourselves that no one appointed us judge in Israel and that our alarm may imply a foolish distrust of God. "Do I dream in my impotent yearning to do all for this man, and dare doubt that he alone will not help him who yet alone can?" It is sufficient that we should do all that is in our power for others and leave the issue to God who loves others as we can never love them. The one problem for us is that all should be well in our own personal relations with our Maker, and if we wish to know not only His special providence toward us but his designs for those around, we shall be asked as St. Peter was asked: "What is that to thee? Do thou follow me?"

However far human philosophy may go then, it must leave the question of evil an open one. We

are asking for an explanation of God's inner counsels and we have to suppose that we know something about possible, alternative worlds. Such worlds can exist, but of their nature and conditions we are completely in the dark. Even of this world, we are not spectators but actors in it confined to a tiny corner and set to work at one moment of its history. Our job is to do what we have to do as well as we can, even if it look as unimportant as the part of the grave digger in Hamlet. As a well-known writer has remarked, we have to get our heads into heaven and not necessarily heaven into our heads. And as to the difficulty of hell, we know little about it and still less of the number who go there. It was not intended for man, and if we must suffer like the angels, then we also know that the punishment will not strike us as unfair. Nobody can go there who does not deserve it, and we have a right to argue that the condemned will never be able to raise a protest or bear any grudge against providence. Free will and the possibility of failure are synonymous for the generality of mankind, and if God's work seems to end in failure, the failure is in the individual and does not touch God. The individual chose sin and chose also the consequences. Those consequences attach to him and are not arbitrary; they are no less personal and private than the sin, and they provoke a definite response from God. God would not be

God and personified perfection were he to show himself indifferent. A lie cannot look different from what it is in the presence of truth, and truth remains unchanged. Hence, understood rightly, it can be said that hell manifests God's nature and redounds to his honour.

We have spoken much tonight on the frailty of man and his failure in many circumstances in decadent tribes to answer to the ideals laid down by Christian philosophers. Like to an old tree, layer after layer has hidden the central core. Nevertheless, there is this central core, and I firmly believe that man is made for fine issues and, in fact, that there is only one issue for him, which is that he should be or not be. He can make or mar himself, and the marring is not annihilation, like the death of material things, but a twisted and scarred nature. To refuse good is no light thing; to refuse God is an everlasting loss. All attempts, therefore, to remove hell or its equivalent from morals and religion is consequently a slur on the dignity of man; it is the sign that he is rated as nothing more than an animal. It is part and parcel of the same philosophy which makes light of divorce, as if it were not the supreme gesture of man to bid defiance to mortality and swear an everlasting fealty which no rust or moth will consume. Think of Shakespeare's sonnets with their bold denial of mutability of time where love is concerned; think

of the splendour of a vow which promises perpetual constancy, and of all that that implies. I would as soon think that a syllogism running richly to a conclusion of truth can develop measles and sicken, as that man's spirit is prevented from constituting himself an heir to complete and unchanging goodness. And if he can have such rights, he must also have corresponding risks. A spirit, even if it be allied to matter, keeps its prerogatives, and one of those prerogatives is to settle once and for all, and by an all-or-nothing decision, what it shall be.

For the rest, as St. Augustine says, "God Almighty would in no way permit evil in His works were He not so omnipotent and good that even out of evil He could work good." He works good out of wickedness because his Nature becomes more intelligible to mankind by his response to it and the more intelligible he becomes the closer is man's union with him. He makes use also of that wickedness to point the moral to men and helps them to happiness by a salutary fear. Again, out of suffering he works good. The presence of ugliness and pain in the world must not blind us to the fact that the good far outweighs the evil. It is ugliness which strikes the eye because it is glaring and exceptional, but goodness is normal and ordinary and the very staple of common life. Were it otherwise, family, education, laws, and institutions could have no permanence and civilization

would be nothing but a survival of the strongest. What we do find is a life where pity, gentleness, mercy, and courage are everyday affairs dominating evil and enhanced by it, and the pathos and the heroism that are the outcome are so far from being regarded as a grievance or reproach that they have been emphasized in fairy tale and romance, and given typical expression, for example, in a Song of Roland. Only the jaundiced mind, then, would grumble at life as a whole. Or, to put this truth in another way, the recognition of value is, to some extent, proportionate to the nobility of the onlooking mind. "Two men looked out from their prison bars. the one saw mud, the other stars." For a true estimate of life, as of art, a stern discipline is needed. To the sensualist the purity of an Agnes or a Joan of Arc conveys nothing, just as the Gospel of the Cross was folly to the self-satisfied Athenians. Now, if we consult those who have tested life whole-heartedly, those who can be ranked as its highest examples and most attuned, so to speak, to its message, their answer, we shall find, is almost unanimous in proclaiming it good and fruitful and happy.

Can we, then, in face of the problem of evil, not merely excuse God, not merely defend the goodness of the world and vindicate his ways, but build a song of triumph such as we find in the Psalms of David and the liturgy of Christendom? These latter immediately supply the answer, for in the poetry of

Israel and still more in the Christian spirit is the attitude of praise verified. To attain it we must put aside fear and grasp the nettle of evil firmly. Appreciation, as has been said, depends on discipline and effort, on substituting for downcast thought a soaring desire for life and that more abundantly. "Seek and you shall find." And straightway in the midst of us is found the solution of all difficulties — Jesus Christ, the most intimate Revelation of God's goodness and of His dealings with men. For while it is true that Christ does not explicitly argue the goodness of God in creating this particular world and in permitting evil, nor prevail over adversaries with philosophical arguments, he gives, nevertheless, a more significant answer in the portraying of God as the Father and himself as the suffering Redeemer. Before this vision the hard surface of the Problem of Evil disappears. No longer can we harbour the suspicion that God's choice of this world was a light one, seeing that it involved the agony and death of the Son of God himself. The Cross of Christ takes away the sting of suffering and transforms resentment at the inexplicable pain into reverence and affection, for it bears witness to the companionship of God in suffering, to his being the supreme victim of sin and its physician through self-sacrifice.

May it not be said, then, that it was excess rather than defect of love that led to God's choice of this world? Love is found most strong where weakness is

its object — the lost sheep calling for more care than the ninety-nine safely herded. This pathetically weak world has, at any rate, this glory, that it has served to manifest the infinite resources of divine love. And it is characteristic of this virtue, as of all other virtues, to be its own reward, to be independent of success or failure; in fact, it is seen in its most sublime form where it meets with rejection. This we know to be true from the many heroic acts of devotion in history, which profited nothing save that they left an imperishable memory. It is the spirit of such acts which we value, not the recompense — the cause, not the effects. Dimly, then, we may discern creation and still more the Incarnation as the service of love. This was the supreme and, in a sense, only motive which led God to act. It mattered not that this love might be foiled; there could be no excuse for its rejection, for killing it, and the blood would be on the head of the slayer. No blame, therefore, can rest on love for the utter folly of those who reject it. They could be saved by coercion alone and coercion is incompatible with love, which is of the nature of an offering, a pleading through self-sacrifice. We see this in human life, where the union of free spirits is attained not by force, but by sympathy, the mutual shouldering of burdens and glad co-operation, And just as a federation of mankind can be expressed only in terms of freedom and mutual affection, so too the Divine scheme is a heaven constituted by love, where God



can point to his own Cross as the symbol of his unsparing solicitude and goodness. If this be so, we can understand in part why this inferior world was chosen and why evil casts no shadow on God, but rather — “where sin abounded there most of all did Love abound.”

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This précis of mine gives, I think, a very fair account of the whole discussion which went on at the meeting. I daresay that I have introduced my own way of talking into the summaries, but that is of no importance. After the meeting my friend and I left together, and, as I knew would happen, he began immediately to criticize what had been said. Incidentally, I detest the habit of those who have contributed nothing to a discussion but look like wise owls, talking ten to the dozen afterwards to a harmless audience of one. A form of funk, I suspect. My friend, however, took a rather surprising line. He is generally a highbrow, but probably owing to the reason that he got out of his depth in the discussion he told me the whole argument was too academic. Before I had time to answer we turned a corner and saw close by a poor man wrapped up in what looked more like a sack than a suit of clothes, slouching along — one of the flotsam and jetsam of humanity evidently making his way to the Embankment. Standing looking at us were two overdressed women, whose calling was obvious. When we had passed them, my friend

seized me by the arm and said: "There, that is what I mean! All that stuff is so unreal which we have been hearing. Those three people are the problem. What did our answers mean to them, and how do you reconcile their lives with that thin and bookish optimism you seem to admire?" "Hell!" said I, shaking off his hand, "You make me swear. Do you want to think out an answer or do you not? And if you do, how, in heaven's name, could you go about it in any other way than we did? If you had meant to say that we should not be content with words but do our best to alleviate suffering and prevent sin, of course that is true. I don't see any new difficulty in meeting a derelict and two unfortunate women. They are not necessarily doomed, and we have no right to judge them or judge the universe of God by them. So far as they themselves are concerned this life, run as it is by persons like ourselves, may never have given them a chance. If they are to blame I still seem to remember the power of forgiveness of the Son of God. The story of Magdalen and Dismas, the thief, silences your blasphemy and translates your picture of misery into a different dimension. It transfigures sorrow. It is not poverty or frailty or helplessness which misses the happy ending. There is no ultimate failure except where self-satisfaction exclude's God's mercy and love. And that is why, my good friend, neither the harlot nor the good-for-nothing is the problem, but you yourself — and with that I wish you good night." I got home in peace of mind.