SPECULUM MENTIS

or

The Map of Knowledge

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPE TOWN BOMBAY
CALCUTTA MADRAS
GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

First published 1924
Reprinted photographically in Great Britain at the
University Press, Oxford, 1946

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or

The Map of Knowledge

by

R. G. COLLINGWOOD

βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

TO

MY FIRST AND BEST TEACHER

OF

ART, RELIGION

SCIENCE, HISTORY

AND

PHILOSOPHY

CONTENTS

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PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of a long-growing conviction that the only philosophy that can be of real use to anybody at the present time is a critical review of the chief forms of human experience, a new Treatise of Human Nature philosophically conceived. This is a project which in itself is not new; but its possibilities are very far from being exhausted. We find people practising art, religion, science, and so forth, seldom quite happy in the life they have chosen, but generally anxious to persuade others to follow their example. Why are they doing it, and what do they get for their pains? The question seems, to me, crucial for the whole of modern life, and I do not see the good of plunging into the systematic exposition of logic or ethics, psychology or theology, till it is answered.

Nor can I, even at the outset, conceal my suspicion that a philosophy of this kind—a philosophy of the forms of experience—is the only philosophy that can exist, and that all other philosophies are included in it. In the present state of opinion, I hesitate to acknowledge a belief in the possibility of a philosophical system, and to confess the crime of offering the reader, in the present volume, a crude sketch of such a system. I do not expect the critic to spare his blows: I only say 'strike, but hear me'. The hatred of systematic thought is not in my opinion a fault; it is based on recognizing two important truths, first, that no system can ever be final, and secondly, that a coherent system is so difficult a thing to achieve that any one who claims to have achieved it is probably deceiving himself or others. I do not claim to have achieved it. I only confess that I am aiming at it as at a counsel of perfection, and that

IV

RELIGION

§ 1. *The Transition from Art to Religion*[1]

THE life of art is an error. But no error can be purely and simply erroneous; and the claim of art to be an expression of profound and ultimate truth is not a false claim. In art the very secret of the universe is laid bare, and we know those hidden things for which the scientist and the philosopher are painfully searching. In good art we apprehend

[1] I may perhaps be permitted here to refer to a book called *Religion and Philosophy* which I published in 1916, and in which I tried to give a general account of the nature of the religious consciousness, tested and illustrated by detailed analyses of the central doctrines of Christianity. With much of what that book contains I am still in agreement; but there are certain principles which I then overlooked or denied, in the light of which many of its faults can be corrected. The chief of these principles is the distinction between implicit and explicit. I contended throughout that religion, theology, and philosophy were identical, and this I should now not so much withdraw as qualify by pointing out that the 'empirical' (i.e. real but unexplained) difference between them is that theology makes explicit what in religion as such is always implicit, and so with philosophy and theology. This error led me into a too intellectualistic or abstract attitude towards religion, of which many critics rightly accused me; for instance, in the interpretation of religious symbolism I failed to see that for religion itself the symbol is always an end, never a mere means to the expression of an abstract concept. Hence I failed to give an account of the uniqueness of Christ, of miracle, and of worship; I failed to discover any real ground for the concrete distinction not only between man and God, but between man and man; and I confessed my inability to deal either with the problem of evil or with the all-important question of the relation between religion and art. In these and kindred ways I would offer this chapter as a correction of the book in question, out of the recognition of whose shortcomings it has in fact grown. But, as required by the plan of the present book, the whole subject is far more briefly treated.

the secret of the universe in its truth, in bad art we are mocked by a lying revelation. Yet, since the work of art is only our own imagination, there is no way of settling the disputes concerning the merit of a particular work, though just because art reveals truth these disputes are inevitable.

But however truly the secret of the world is expressed under the form of beauty, the expression is always formally imperfect. It is of the essence of truth that the mind should be able to say what it is, to state it in explicit terms, subject it to criticism and attack, and watch it emerge strengthened from the ordeal. The secret revealed in art is a secret that no one can utter, and therefore not truly revealed; in the actual aesthetic experience we clasp it to our bosom in an ecstasy of passion and try to make it inalienably ours:

Nequiquam, quoniam nil inde abradere possunt . . .

At the crowing of the cock it vanishes from our presence and we are left to face the dawn of another day in the knowledge that we have lost it. The soul does not want a ghostly lover; she asks for the fate not of Margaret:

Is there any room at your head, Saunders,
Is there any room at your feet?
Or any room at your side, Saunders,
Where fain, fain I wad sleep?

but of Janet:

They shaped him in her arms twa
An aske but and a snake;
But aye she grips and hauds him fast
To be her warldis make.

They shaped him in her arms twa
But and a deer sae wild;
But aye she grips and hauds him fast,
The father of her child.

The secret of the universe, in its own right nature as rational truth, is to the soul no weird visitant from beyond

the grave, but husband, father and son at once, a lamp to her feet and a rod and staff to comfort her. Yet, as the old ballad-maker knew, it reveals itself to the soul in this its true shape only after strange and terrible trials of faith. Of these trials, which together make up the dark night of the soul—that dead hour of the night when Janet heard the bridles ring—the failure of art is the first, and, because the first, the most heartrending.

The failure of art is, as we have said, not a complete failure. Substantial truth is revealed to us; we are not cheated of that; but it is revealed only in the equivocal form of beauty, submerged, so to speak, in the flood of aesthetic emotion. It is only because truth is revealed in it that the emotion is aesthetic; but emotional truth, truth in the guise of beauty, is not truth at all in the formal sense. Art asserts nothing; and truth as such is matter of assertion. To be itself, it demands logical form. Art fails us because it does not assert. It is pregnant with a message that it cannot deliver.

To overcome the failure of art, it is necessary to introduce into it a logical element. Now we know already that art, as pure imagination, is a thing that cannot exist, for any and every experience as such must already contain a logical element. The true way of overcoming art's failure is the discovery of this truth, the discovery that what we have been enjoying all the time is not mere aesthetic experience but aesthetic-logical experience, which means, as we shall see in the sequel, philosophy. What appeared as art turns out to be philosophy, and thus the analysis of experience travels direct from art to philosophy, as we saw in the last chapter.

But in point of fact people become aware of the break-down of art long before they are able to effect this new analysis of the so-called aesthetic experience. They find

that the life of art (that is, the life built up on the erroneous belief that imagination and assertion are distinct and separate activities) does not satisfy them. It fails to satisfy them precisely because of this separation between imagining and asserting ; for this separation is the root of the instability and insecurity which are the bane of the aesthetic life.

When the artist becomes aware of this, when he achieves in some sort the diagnosis of his own disease, even if he does it no less instinctively than a dog eats grass, he must find a remedy. We have already indicated the true remedy ; but that can hardly be discovered without deep reflection and long experience. The simplest remedy, and therefore the one which is likeliest to be adopted in the blind gropings of a soul which as yet knows little of its own nature, is to reunite forcibly the activities which have been divided : to assert what it imagines, that is, to believe in the reality of the figments of its own imagination.

This is the definition of religion, so to speak, from beneath : the purely abstract or formal definition whose purpose is to give the minimum account of the lowest and most rudimentary religious consciousness. It is the mere armature on which our concrete conception of religion is to be built up, and the reader need not trouble to point out its inadequacy as a description of the higher religions. Here and elsewhere, in fact, the reader is earnestly implored to resist the vice of collecting ' definitions ' of this and that and the other, as if any one but a fool imagined that he could compress a thing like art or religion or science into an epigram which could be lifted from its context and, so lifted, continue to make sense. Giving and collecting definitions is not philosophy but a parlour game. The writer's definition of religion (as of art and so forth) is coextensive with this entire book, and will nowhere be found in smaller compass. Nor will it

be found in its completeness there; for no book is wholly self-explanatory, but solicits the co-operation of a reasonably thoughtful and instructed reader.

Religion, relatively to art, is the discovery of reality. The artist is an irresponsible child who feels himself at liberty to say exactly what comes into his head and unsay it again without fear of correction or disapproval. He tells himself what story he likes and then, at the bidding of a whim, 'scatters the vision for ever'. In religion, all this irresponsibility has gone. His vision is for the religious man no toy to make and mar at will; it is the truth, the very truth itself. The actual object of imagination, which in art obscurely means a truth that cannot be clearly stated, in religion is that truth itself: the secret of the universe is revealed, no longer merely shadowed forth in parables but made manifest in visible form; and this revelation makes explicit for the first time the distinction between reality and unreality, truth and falsehood.

§ 2. *The Growth of Religion*

In our study of art we found it necessary to distinguish between various grades of aesthetic experience: first, the unreflective fantasy of the child who does not ask himself whether stories are true or false, whose life is therefore an undistinguished and confused web of fancies and facts; and secondly, the deliberate aesthetic act of the educated man for whom this confused web has settled down into its component parts, so that he passes from fact to fancy, and back again, in full consciousness of what he is doing. In the first phase the distinction between fact and fancy is implicit; in the second, it is explicit. Thus, it is impossible to give a true account[1] of the experience of a person who sees

[1] Yet, of course, the truth of this account is not ultimate, because it is tainted by the fallacious way in which the distinction is conceived.

fairies without saying 'Now he is perceiving, now he is imagining'; but the person himself does not make this distinction, and the observer must make it for him. But an artist in the ordinary sense does make this distinction, at any rate in the moments of transition from aesthetic to non-aesthetic experience and vice versa. Hence the principle of aesthetic experience is implicit in the child and the unsophisticated seer of ghosts and fairies, explicit in the artist; indeed that is what makes him *par excellence* an artist; he has made a discovery about himself which raises his aesthetic life to a wholly new level.

This distinction is repeated in religion. There is a primitive grade of religious experience in which all fantasies tend to be asserted as real. We have spoken of the *seer* of ghosts and fairies as an example of rudimentary art; the *believer in* ghosts and fairies is the parallel example of rudimentary religion. In this primitive stage it is not easy to distinguish the two. Even the artist, with all his reflective self-consciousness, can hardly give you a satisfactory answer to the question whether he believes in Hamlet or only 'sees' him without believing in him. The point at which a child begins to ask whether stories are true, and passes through the crisis of learning to disbelieve in fairies, is by no means an early point in its development; and when it arrives, it indicates the emergence of religion from art, of the primitive religious consciousness from the primitive aesthetic consciousness which is its soil and its source; till then the question whether a given fantasy was real or unreal had simply not occurred to the mind; that is, art had not yet given birth to religion. For ultimately, religion cannot mean the assertion of all fantasies as indiscriminately real. That is impossible, because they are in open conflict one with another. The assertion of some as real involves the denial

of others, and religion is this polarized activity of assertion-denial as applied to the world of fantasies.

Primitive religion does not yet explicitly realize the full nature of this activity. For it ' all things are full of gods ' ; that is, it begins by trying to assert all its fantasies indiscriminately, and peoples the world not only with gods, heroes, fairies, nymphs and so forth, but with other and less anthropomorphic imaginings, strange energies, impersonal but beneficent or dangerous, the power of the spell and the charm, the mysterious significance of the hearth or the merestone, the creative forces that lurk in the organs of sex or the world of springing plants. Such are the gods of primitive religion, for all primitive religion is polytheistic, in whatever shape it conceives its gods. It is idle, in this primitive phase of the religious consciousness, to seek for distinctions between gods and ghosts, between spell and prayer, between the divine and the diabolical. Religion and magic are here fused in their primitive unity ; for magic is but the shadow of religion, becoming sharper and blacker as religion takes on a more and more definite shape and substance in the self-consciousness of the developing mind.

Just as art solidifies out of the chaos of infantile imaginings into the order and clarity of developed aesthetic form, so out of this primitive welter of gods the religious mind by its own inner dialectic rises to the higher religion. The mainspring of this dialectic is the recognition of the true nature of assertion. Pure fancy is monadic, tolerant : it cares for nothing beside its momentary object, and does not even trouble to find out whether anything incompatible with this object is being fancied elsewhere. But assertion is the transcending of this monadism, for to make any given assertion is to commit oneself to the denial of whatever contradicts it. Now religion is essentially assertion, belief. To believe this

is to deny that. Therefore religion by its very nature is pledged to selectiveness, to a discrimination between the utterances of the spirit, to a dualism between true vision and false vision. At first, when religion in its most primitive phase is as yet ignorant of its own nature, and asserts without understanding what assertion means, it thinks it can assert every fantasy that arises in the mind; and in this phase anything may be an object of worship. Here it is only the attitude of worship that distinguishes religion from art; in the indiscriminateness of their fancy they are identical. But when the religious mind discovers that to assert one fantasy means denying another, primitive religion and its easy polytheism are doomed. The historical steps by which this dialectic has worked itself out in human history are not here our business; we are concerned only to point out the nature of the principle which has been at work.

The effect of this principle is to produce for the first time a world or cosmos of imagination. Art has no cosmology, it gives us no view of the universe; every distinct work of art gives us a little cosmology of its own, and no ingenuity will combine all these into a single whole. But religion is essentially cosmological, though its cosmology is always an imaginative cosmology. Any given religious experience can be fitted by this cosmology into the scheme of the whole, and labelled as an ascent into the third heaven, a temptation of the devil, and so forth. Hence religion is social, as art never can be. The sociability of artists is a paradoxical and precarious thing, and ceases the instant they begin their actual artistic work. But the sociability of religion is part of its fundamental nature. The life of religion is always the life of a church. This is because religion achieves an explicit logical structure. It is assertion, and in its higher forms knows that it is assertion, though even in its most primitive

forms its implicit logic produces the instinctive and unreflective sociability of primitive cultus. Now assertion or the logical function of the mind is the recognition of reality as such, and reality is that which is real for all minds. If a number of minds are engaged in imagining, they have no common ground, for each man's imaginations are his own. But if they are engaged in asserting, they at once become a society, for each asserts what he believes to be not his own but common property, objective reality. And even when their assertions are different, they are not merely different, like different works of art, but contradictory; and contradiction, even in its extreme forms of persecution and war, is a function of sociability.

It is the explicitly rational character of religion that necessitates religious controversy and persecution, for these are only corollaries of its cosmological and social nature. To deprecate them and ask religion to refrain from them is to demand that it shall cease to be religion; and the demand is generally made by those shallow minds which hate the profundity and seriousness of the higher religions and wish to play at believing all the creeds in existence. This religious aestheticism, or degradation of religion to the level of play, for which a creed is a mere pretty picture to be taken up and put down at will, is only one of the enemies which religion to-day encounters, and a despicable enemy at that. There are others, more formidable because they are the children of religion itself.

The development of religion, when it proceeds healthily according to the law of its own dialectic, results in the ideal of a single supreme God worshipped by a single universal church. Within this God all the obscure ghosts and demons of primitive polytheism find their account; within this church the most diverse impulses of savage superstition are

absorbed and transmuted. This transmutation of a primitive formless chaos into an ordered system of belief and ritual is the work, never quite beginning and never quite ending, of the religious spirit in its self-critical development, a work carried out simply by using the logical weapons of assertion and denial. A given element of primitive religion is split up by analysis into elements of which one can be placed on the side of affirmation as an attribute of God, a sacrament, a rite, and so forth, while the other is placed on the side of denial as an attribute of the devil or a form of witchcraft, magic, or blasphemy.

For, just as the aesthetic consciousness in its self-organization distinguishes the positive ideal of beauty from the negative ideal of ugliness, so the religious consciousness polarizes its own self-development into the acts and beliefs which it asserts and those which it denies. And over against God with his hierarchy of angels and saints the very nature of religion requires that there should be spirits of evil culminating in the devil; over against the church there must be an antichurch of idolaters or devil-worshippers whose practices are not religious in the proper sense but magical, that is, not non-religious but anti-religious. The dreadful history of witchcraft is no cruel freak of the world-spirit; it is a necessary manifestation of the religious consciousness, and every religious age, every religious revival, will always produce similar fruits.

§ 3. *Religion and its Object*

The secret of the universe, which to art only appears in the equivocal form of beauty, is revealed to religion in the definite and clear-cut form of God. That which art cannot express except in its immediate intuitive shape, can by religion be stated in words in the form of a creed. This is

because the assertive or logical element in religion has checked the unregulated flow of images which characterized art, and fixed one image to the exclusion of others; or rather, this one image absorbs all others into itself, either positively as parts of itself or negatively as elements excluded from itself, but on that very account implied by it as its own shadow.

Now God, as essentially describable in terms of a creed, is a unity, but not a mere abstract unity. Had he been such a unity, he would not have been describable, for he would have been merely himself, as a work of art is merely itself, and therefore only expressible by saying that he is what he is; this being in fact the only way in which a work of art can be described. Thus a religion which makes of its God a mere abstract unity does violence to its own nature as religion, and falls back from religion into art. This seems to be what has happened in the case of Mohammedanism; and the result, namely the Mohammedan negation of art, confirms this; for that religion, being itself already characterized by an unresolved residuum of art, regards any further concession to art as at once unnecessary and dangerous.

The existence of a creed is thus bound up with the conception of God as no mere abstract unity, but a unity which contains in itself its own differentiation. Whenever this conception of God tends to be lost, as is sometimes the case in mystical religion, God tends to appear as the unutterable or indescribable, that is to say the value of the creed, which is the sign and guarantee of the rationality of religion, tends to be denied.

God, we are told by theologians, is the ultimate reality, conceived as spirit; spirit omnipotent, omniscient, creative, transcending all sense or immediacy, yet immanent in his church. But this language, well enough in theology, is very

far from natural to religion ; and it is of the utmost importance to avoid premature identifications of religion and theology. From the simple and unsophisticated point of view of the religious consciousness, it is not the spirituality nor the immanence of God that is important, nor even his power or goodness, but his holiness, the necessity of falling down before him in adoration. This sense of the holiness of God is the explicit differentia of the religious experience ; though doubtless there is much that is implicit in that experience, to be discovered there by theological or philosophical reflection, beside that or rather behind it.

This sense of holiness or attitude of worship is so far the centre and nucleus of religion that any account of the religious consciousness depends for its success on the way in which it deals with this feature. It is a feature generally recognized by modern students of religion. We are sometimes told that the essence of religion is a certain feeling for the divine, and that any object which excites this feeling, or (which would seem to be the same thing) possesses this quality of divinity, is a proper object for the religious consciousness. Sometimes, more explicitly, we are told that the feeling in question is the feeling of ' the uncanny ', which seems to be a word chosen in order to embrace both poles of the religious principle : the positively holy and the negatively holy, the divine and the diabolical. But the writers to whom we have alluded make no attempt to give a real account of this feeling, whatever they call it. They simply state it as a curious fact that religion is empirically characterized by this feeling. Yet if it is a universal characteristic of religion, it must be bound up with its essential nature, and capable of being deduced from it.

Holiness is to religion what beauty is to art. It is the specific form in which truth appears to that type of con-

sciousness. As religion, therefore, is a dialectical development of art, so holiness is a dialectical development of beauty. Now religion is art asserting its object. The object of art is the beautiful, and therefore the holy is the beautiful asserted as real. All the characteristics of holiness and of God as holy are found to revolve round this centre. The holy is, generically, object of aesthetic contemplation, and as such beautiful; and this is true of all the objects of religion. Further, holiness, like beauty, polarizes itself into the positively holy (God) and the negatively holy, that which we are forbidden to find holy or worship, the devil and all his works. But specifically, holiness is asserted as real, and therefore God is regarded as not our own invention, not a fancy or work of art, but a reality, indeed the only and ultimate reality. Hence that rapture and admiration which we enjoy in the contemplation of a work of art is in the case of God fused with the conviction that we here come face to face with something other than ourselves and our imaginings, something infinitely real, the ground and source of our own being. It is this fusion which constitutes the sense of holiness, and forms the basis and motive of worship. Neither the real nor the beautiful is as such the proper object of adoration: it is only the aesthetic attitude towards ultimate reality, or conversely the elevation of beauty into a metaphysical principle, that constitutes worship. Thus the enemy of religion is idolatry, or the attempt to worship an object which, however exquisite to the artist's eye, cannot claim to be the ultimate reality. The sin of the idolater is to worship his own works of art known to be such. This is not true religion, because true religion worships the real God, no mere figment of the imagination. But it is easy to slip into idolatry just because the aesthetic attitude and the religious attitude are so closely akin. The difference is

simply that in religion we believe in the reality of our object while in art we do not; and hence in religion the mind becomes aware that it is in danger of illusion.

God and religion are thus correlative; and to doubt the reality of God is to deny the validity and legitimacy of religion. There are no religions without a god or gods: what have passed by that name have been either philosophies, or religions whose gods have escaped the eye of the observer, or a kind of mechanical contrivance put on the market by a deluded or fraudulent inventor.

The life of religion is worship, and because religion is fundamentally social this means social worship. This worship is, naturally, at bottom an exercise of the aesthetic consciousness. All acts of worship, whether they take the form of singing, dancing, speech, or the like, are first and foremost aesthetic acts. Prayer and the ritual of the mass are developments of artistic speech and the gestures of dancing, and bear unmistakable traces of their origin. But worship is no more mere art than holiness is mere beauty. It is a dialectical development of art, and a development of this kind involves the surrender or transmutation of much that characterized the earlier stages of the development. Religion in general parts with that freedom and irresponsibility which are the mark of the spirit's infancy in art, and this gives the clue to the development which art must undergo before it becomes worship. Worship is art whose object is conceived as a reality. This implies that the artist when he becomes a worshipper is no longer free to fancy anything he likes, just because it is beautiful. He must in all his worship glorify God, that is to say he must make his aesthetic acts illustrate the creed of his religion. His subject is given: he is no more free to choose it than to choose his creed. And again, though this really comes to

the same thing, his art must be a corporate art, not one that satisfies his own standards simply, but one that suits the special needs of his fellow-worshippers. The musician gravely misunderstands his place in the church if he offers to overhaul our hymn-books and replace all the ' bad music ' by good. He may be a perfectly competent judge of music, but music and religious music are not the same thing. And this applies equally to those forms of quasi-religious art which express the common aspirations of a nation, a school, or a political party. Songs and poems of this patriotic type are almost always very bad indeed by the standards of art ; but to condemn them for that reason would mean overlooking the whole of the dialectical development which separates art from religion.

§ 4. *Symbol and Meaning in Religion*

Hitherto we have been describing, in the briefest possible summary, the more superficial aspects of the religious consciousness. But we have not yet attempted to understand the inner meaning of its life.

The key to the comprehension of religion is a principle which in religion itself exists only implicitly. This principle is the distinction between symbol and meaning.

Religion is a structure of sensuous or imaginary elements, like art, and—for that matter—like every other form of consciousness. These elements in religion take the form partly of mythological pictures and narratives, partly of acts of worship ; these two being the objective and subjective sides of the same reality. The ritual of a particular festival and its mythology are intimately bound up together, so intimately that it has been possible to argue now that the mythology is the source of the ritual, now that the ritual is the source of the mythology. In point of fact they are

inseparable and come into existence together, sacred act and sacred story; and they attain their highest and most rational form when the sacred story reveals itself as a creed and the sacred act as the solemn recitation of that creed. This combination of an act with an account of the act given by the acting mind to itself, or—to put it the other way round—the combination of a certain idea with actions appropriate to that idea, is not peculiar to religion, though under the name of ritual it is especially characteristic of religion.

Now these acts and stories, with all their developments, form the body of religion, and its soul lies beyond them in their meaning. They are thus symbolic in character. Their value and purpose lie not in what they are but in what they signify. They are but the 'outward and visible signs' of an 'inward and spiritual grace', and are related to this 'grace' as word to meaning. We said just now that this principle was only implicit in religion, yet we have quoted a statement of it from the English Catechism. This statement, when closely examined, will be found to miss the real point; and therefore our first remark holds good. We are told that the 'inward and spiritual grace' is 'the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper'. But in the natural and literal sense of these words, they are simply not true. Whatever view of the Eucharist we take, it is heretical to assert that the communicant partakes of the body and blood of Christ naturally and literally. The sacred body and blood are present only by a miracle, and this implies that, in spite of the 'verily and indeed', the statement that the body and blood of Christ are received by the faithful is not a complete statement. It is not merely that the bread means the body of Christ; the body of

Christ in its turn means something which is not explicitly stated.

To take a simpler case, we tell little children that God is their other father up in the sky. These words are the outward sign of a certain imaginative act (to analyse the case as the Catechism analyses the Lord's Supper), and this imaginative act reveals to the child a more or less elderly person in a tweed suit living somewhere out of sight overhead. But is this the *meaning* of the child's religion? certainly not; it is the mere imagery of it. The imaginative picture of God is a symbol, whose value lies not in what it is but in what it means. And this, which is so plainly true of the pictures of God which we encourage children to form, is equally true of all those imaginative pictures of God which constitute the body—as opposed to the soul—of any religious belief.

Now when we are teaching a child about God, we do not, if we are gifted with ordinary intelligence, say: 'Of course, God isn't *really* your heavenly father, because he isn't literally your father and he isn't literally in the sky: you must interpret these symbols in a spiritual sense.' We know that this kind of qualification would prevent the child from getting anything at all out of our teaching, good or bad, except a certain contempt for the whole subject. Whereas if we boldly say to the child what we know to be literally untrue, that it has a loving and watchful father in the sky, what actually happens is that the child will develop simultaneously two lines of thought. First, it will speculate as to how God ever came there, how he gets his dinner, and so forth ('I expect he has an aeroplane,' and the like). Secondly, it will, perhaps rather to our surprise, start interpreting the symbolism in a spiritual sense on its own account; connect this heavenly father with its own moral

life, with the beauty of nature, with family affection, and other spiritual elements in its experience. These two trains of thought, the superstitious and the rational respectively, the literal and spiritual interpretations of the symbol, develop in a child's mind side by side with no appearance of conflict; or at least, with only minor and occasional conflicts. What the child never does is to say clearly to itself that the literal or superstitious element is mere fiction, and the spiritual or rational element truth. The truth grows up in a scaffolding of fiction within the child's mind; deprive it of the scaffolding and it will never grow, or at best, like an apple-tree that has not been properly supported by a dead stake in its youth, will grow crooked and misshapen, and fail to strike its roots firmly home.

All religion conforms to this type. It is all, from top to bottom, a seed growing secretly, surrounded by an integument which is not itself the living germ but only its vehicle. It is thought growing up in the husk of language, and as yet unconscious that language and thought are different things. The distinction between what we say and what we mean, between a symbol or word and its meaning, is a distinction in the light of which alone it is possible to understand religion; but it is a distinction hidden from religion itself. It is implicit in religion, and becomes explicit only when we pass from religion to science. In science, language is transparent and we pierce through it, throw it on one side, in reaching the thought it conveys: in religion, language is opaque, fused with its own meaning into an undifferentiated unity which cannot be separated into two levels. Lose the symbol, and in religion you lose the meaning as well, whereas in science you merely take another symbol, which will serve your purpose equally.

The distinction between symbol and meaning is implicit

in religion, and this is perhaps the most fundamental thing about religion in general as distinct from other forms of experience. All religious terms, phrases, acts, are symbolic; but if they were explicitly recognized to be symbolic they would be recognized to be exchangeable with others. If churchgoing was an explicit symbol, we should know what it symbolized—the unity of human society as informed by the divine spirit, or whatever it may be—and we should be able to find the same meaning exemplified in other acts, like waiting to be served in a shop or travelling in a third-class carriage. These other acts would then become symbolic of the same meaning, and would be substitutes for churchgoing. If a boy learns a certain geometrical truth, he is taught to symbolize it in terms of a particular triangle. But if he is unable to separate it from this triangle and to see it equally well in another, we say that he does not yet understand it. So a truth which is only grasped under the symbol of a particular act or phrase and cannot be freely symbolized in other acts or phrases is as yet imperfectly grasped.

If, with these arguments in mind, we say: 'To-day I will glorify God by weeding my garden or playing tennis instead of going to church,' and if we defend ourselves by quoting Scripture to the effect that God is everywhere and is not confined within the four walls of a church, our parish priest will reply that God has appointed his own means of grace, which to neglect is to neglect God; that the attempt to sanctify the whole of life can only lead to the sanctifying of none; and that in point of fact our real motives for staying away from church are irreligion, indolence, and spiritual pride. This will be his reply if he is a religious man and knows his business; for we have been trespassing on the implicitness of the religious symbol and so breaking

away from the religious attitude. This is in itself a legitimate act, and a priest will not despise it, though he may disapprove of it. But if it shelters itself under the cloak of religion, it becomes hypocritical and the object of a just contempt. It is irreligion arguing in the name of religion.

But the strange thing is that this very attitude, irreligion appearing in the guise of religion, is typical of religion itself in its highest manifestations. The great saints really do find God everywhere, really do prove their proposition about any triangle that is presented to them, really do transfuse with religion the whole of life. This is at once the perfection and the death of the religious consciousness. For in grasping the inmost meaning of ritual and worship it deprives these special activities of their special sanctity and of their very reason for existing ; the whole body of religion is destroyed by the awakening of its soul. But the awakened soul, in this very moment of triumph, has destroyed itself with its own body : it has lost all its familiar landmarks and plunged into that abyss of mysticism in which God himself is nothing. Mysticism is the crown of religion and its deadliest enemy ; the great mystics are at once saints and heresiarchs.

These consequences flow from the fact that the distinction between symbol and meaning is implicit in religion. Because the distinction is there, is not merely absent, the religious word or act is charged with significance ; it is felt to be burdened with all the weight of an unspoken message, and this sense of oppressive meaningfulness is the true source of holiness and worship. For these are the character of the mysterious and of our attitude towards it. We do not understand or see the truth, but only the symbol which bodies it forth ; and because this symbol does contain the truth we regard it as infinitely precious. Yet the distinction

between symbol and meaning is not explicit, and hence, because the truth and its symbolic vehicle are fused together, the importance really attaching to the truth is transferred to its symbol, and we cling to the symbol, the outward act or image or formula, instead of trying to get behind it, slough it off and reach the truth it conveys.

Thus for the religious consciousness the symbol is sacred. Feeling religious in bed is no substitute for attending the Eucharist; and a philosopher would not be regarded as a Christian for subscribing to a statement which he declared to be a mere paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed in philosophical terms. Indeed, the moment he began talking about the Absolute Spirit, all pious people would unhesitatingly write him down an atheist.

But because the symbolic principle is implicit in religion, it follows that religion itself is in constant danger of explicitly discovering it, and this at the very moment when religion attains its highest and purest form. Ordinary religion maintains its equilibrium, so far as it does so, because of its low potential. It is not religious enough to upset its own religiosity. But an intensely religious person, one who takes seriously the highest and deepest elements of his own faith, is bound to come into conflict with religion itself. Very religious people always shock slightly religious people by their blasphemous attitude to religion; and it was precisely for blasphemy that Jesus was crucified. But here we touch on a subject to be dealt with in section 6.

To distinguish a symbol from its meaning is to put oneself in the way of explaining or translating the symbol. Now it is matter of common observation that religion never explains itself. It states itself in the form of ritual and imagery, and if the catechumen were to ask, 'What does this language mean?' he would get no answer, except

further imagery of the same kind. In point of fact he does not ask the question. He picks up the meaning as best he can, all embedded as it is in the imagery. Anthropologists who have long forgotten, if they ever knew, what religion really is, inquire of savages what they mean by their ritual and get no answer, and jump to the conclusion that they mean nothing. Such a *salto mortale* only proves that there are no limits to the possibilities of misunderstanding; for one would have supposed no frame of mind to be more familiar than that in which one repeats an act or phrase in the conviction that one has expressed one's meaning literally when, in point of fact, one has only uttered a metaphor. This is the normal way in which primitive and unsophisticated thought expresses itself. It neither explains nor asks for an explanation. To ask for explanations is the mark of extreme sophistication; in other words, it is the mark of the life of explicit thought. Thus a professor, asked by a member of the Salvation Army whether he was saved, replied 'Do you mean σεσωσμένος, σωθείς or σωζόμενος?' and conversely the great Dr. Johnson, great in his simplicity of heart, revisiting Pembroke College in his old age, once expressed a doubt to the then Master as to whether he might not be damned. 'What, sir,' said the scientific intellect in the person of gentle Dr. Adams, 'do you mean by damned?' But Dr. Johnson was not to be beguiled. 'Sent to hell, sir,' he replied, 'and punished everlastingly.'

Art is untranslatable, religion cannot translate itself. Art cannot be translated because it has no meaning except the wholly implicit meaning submerged, in the form of beauty, in the flood of imagery. Religion cannot translate itself not because it has no meaning, for it has a very definite meaning, to elicit which is the progressive task of theology and philosophy; but because, although it has a meaning

and knows that it has a meaning, it thinks that it has expressed this meaning already. And so it has, but only metaphorically; and this metaphorical self-expression, this fusion of symbol and meaning, requires translation just because it thinks it does not require it. For literal language is only language recognizedly metaphorical, and what we call metaphorical language is language failing to realize that it is only metaphor. Religion utters formulae of worship and prayer in which it thinks it is saying what it means. But what is said is never, in religion or elsewhere, what is meant: the language never is the meaning. This truth religion has not discovered, and it thinks that its symbolic imagery, blood and fire, sin and redemption, prayer, grace, immortality, even God, is the literal statement of its thought, whereas it is in reality a texture of metaphor through and through.

Hence arises a perpetual misunderstanding. Taken literally, the statements made by religion are often false, or at least doubtful. But religion is committed to asserting them as true. Just as some incidents in Shakespeare's histories are historically true, so some incidents in the Bible are historically true. But—and religion by its very nature cannot see this—neither in the one case nor in the other has this historical truth anything to do with aesthetic or religious value. It is not important in the interests of religion to prove by historical research that the world was really made in seven solar days, or that Jesus was really born of a virgin. But it is intensely important to discover what people have meant by asserting that these things were so. To say they meant nothing except to assert an historical fact is to destroy the whole of religion at a blow. It is to deny the soul of religion in order to have the amusement of quarrelling over its body. The assertion

of such facts as the existence of a person called God, this person's intention of judging the world at some future date, and so forth, is not religion : religion exists only in meaning the right thing by these assertions. But whereas the bare assertions, without the meaning, would be not religion but art, the bare meaning severed from the assertions would be not religion but philosophy.

Something of this kind is symbolized by religion itself in the concept of faith. One aspect of the great paradox of religion is the fact that religion claims truth but refuses to argue. Rational truth—and all truth is rational—is essentially that which can justify itself under criticism and in discussion. But religion always withdraws itself from the sphere of discussion, leaving that sphere to its ally theology, and claims (or at least, permits theology to claim on its behalf) that religious truth is grasped by faith and not by ' reason ' or the argumentative frame of mind. But this claim is a self-contradiction, and critics of religion not altogether unjustly accuse it of trying to ' have it both ways ', of claiming knowledge, which means rationality, as long as the claim can be conveniently maintained, thus inviting criticisms which it then refuses to face, and retiring into a shelter of agnosticism. Such a religious agnosticism is worthy of honour and respect when it takes the form of the mind's self-abasement before divine mysteries in the face of which all our creeds are but childish prattle and all our worship a superstitious mummery ; when, that is to say, it represents the recognition by religion of its own inability to solve its own problems. But when it is flaunted by a complacent religiosity as an excuse for believing anything it likes, in defiance of the protests made by the scientific and historical consciousness, it deserves nothing but the contempt which, happily, it as a rule excites.

Faith is described by the writer to the Hebrews as πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων, an outreaching of the mind beyond that which it immediately possesses. Now in a sense this is simply a generic description of experience as a whole. Experience as such is self-transcendence, and

> a man's reach must exceed his grasp,
> Or what 's a heaven for?

where 'heaven' simply means the transcendent, the goal as yet unattained. The definition quoted, therefore, is of interest primarily as showing that the writer, like the other great writers of the early Church,[1] recognized the self-transcending character of religion, the essentially self-destructive dialectic of the highest religious life. But faith is the specific form of the religious reason. It is that knowledge of ultimate truth which, *owing to its intuitive or imaginative form*, cannot justify itself under criticism. This qualification is important, for other modes of knowledge—science, history—fail to justify themselves under criticism, as we shall see, and yet are not forms of faith. To overlook this is a common source of confusion and sophistry. Religious apologetic, seizing upon the truth that science depends in the last resort upon unjustifiable assumptions, accuses science of being in the same boat with religion, the boat of faith. Nothing could be less true or better calculated to confuse the whole issue. Faith is essentially intuitive and not assumptive. God is the object of faith, not an hypothesis: Euclidean space is an hypothesis, not an object of faith.

[1] I refer to such passages as 1 Cor. xiii. 12, which I have ventured to take as the motto of this book; Rom. viii. 18–25; Rev. xxi. 22, on which I have commented below; and all the passages dealing with the Parousia, which I interpret as, at any rate in part, a symbolic presentation of the same thought. In St. Paul the thought breaks the bonds of the Parousia symbolism and becomes explicit.

Faith is thus the mind's attitude towards a symbol which expresses a truth not explicitly distinguished from the symbol. Hence the truth is something 'not seen', for the symbol, so to speak, occults it, it is hidden behind the symbol, which is opaque to thought and yet is felt to be charged with the significance of the hidden truth. By being so charged, it acquires an intense emotional value, for it 'reveals' the truth, that is, presents it in an intuitive or imaginative form, not a form that can be justified by criticism. We cannot argue about the truths of religion just because they are thus occulted by their own symbols; and it is this hiddenness, this darkness of the glass, that gives religion all its negative characteristics.

The positive characteristics of religion are its illumination, its freedom, its power of saving the soul; in a word, its priceless gift of ultimate truth. Its negative characteristics are that it lives only by faith and not by sight, that God is not known but only worshipped, 'reached' but not 'grasped' by the mind, that it cannot justify itself to reason or rise wholly above the level of superstition, and that therefore in the long run and in spite of all its best efforts it falls back into feeling, emotion—love, awe, and so forth—and therefore, like art, is an intermittent and unstable experience. The division of life into sacred and profane, Sundays and weekdays, is a permanent and necessary feature of religion, though the highest and most positive religion always fights against it and tries to sanctify the whole of life. For this division is the logical consequence of the negative side of religion, that side which makes it a matter of *mere* faith. This negative side reduces religion to feeling, and therefore affects it with the necessary impermanence and instability of feeling.

Its negative side condemns religion to leave something

outside itself, to have an opposite standing over against itself unreconciled. This opposite appears now in the form of body as opposed to soul, now in the form of the devil as opposed to God, now in the form of secular life as opposed to sacred, or the priest as opposed to the layman, but fundamentally and most deeply in the form of man as opposed to God. These oppositions are the fruit of religion's intuitive nature; as feeling is necessarily intermittent, so the intuitive form of truth erects into two concrete and distinct images truths which are really not distinct but complementary aspects of the same truth. Because religion is rational, the specific task of religion is to overcome these dualisms, and to this subject we shall return in the sixth section of the present chapter.

§ 5. *Convention*

The truths expressed by religion are expressed in symbols whose distinction from the truths they symbolize is not explicitly recognized. In terms of conduct, this means that the moral principles inculcated by religion are exemplified through certain actions which are regarded as possessing in their own right the sanctity which really attaches to the principles they exemplify. Hence, where morality says ' act on certain principles ', religion says ' do certain actions ' Religious morality is thus a morality of commandments, a formalistic morality, one in which the spirit in which an act is done cannot be separated from the act itself. This is illustrated by the fact already analysed, that religion requires us to go to church not because hating God in church is preferable to loving him anywhere else, but because religion identifies the service of God with the outward act, namely churchgoing, which symbolizes it:

an identification against which the highest religion, as we have seen, struggles but struggles in vain.

To consider the same fact from the other end: religion is art asserting its object. The object remains essentially an image, but it is now regarded as real. Therefore religious morality is aesthetic morality asserting as real an end which is still essentially an imaginary or capricious end, an end chosen in play. This assertion of its end as real makes religion social; therefore the end is now a common end, no longer the individualistic end of play; but essentially the end is still the same, an end chosen not because it is useful or morally obligatory but just because it is chosen.

Thus from both ends we reach the same conclusion, that the morality of religion is conventional morality. This is the type of action in which the agent does a given thing not because he chooses it, but because his society chooses it. But the reason why he does it is nothing more than this. If he reflects that his society may injure him on his refusing to follow its example, his action becomes utilitarian; if he persuades himself that his society has a moral claim upon him for conformity, it becomes an act of duty. But conventional action is wholly free from these ulterior motives. A man dressing for dinner does not normally reflect on the consequences of dining in knickerbockers or ask himself whether he ought to defy the conventions. He does not raise these questions at all. He dresses simply because it is 'the thing'; and this is the essence of conventional action.

The reader may protest that all religion is in reality a war against conventionality and the assertion of the spirit as against the letter. But to say that is to confuse religion with a special form of religion; excusably, because that form is the highest and truest form; but yet a confusion.

Religion is a world which embraces the highest and most spiritual Christianity, not to mention other forms of higher religion, on the one hand, and the lowest and crudest heathenism and superstition on the other; and in our account of religion we are trying to start from a point of view which embraces all these varieties of experience in a single concept. To condemn this attempt as unduly ambitious is absurd, for we all use the word religion in this broad sense, and thus, unless we are using words quite at random, actually possess just such a concept. Now the conventionality or formalism of the lower religions is obvious enough. It is only when we reach the higher religions that we make the discovery that God is a spirit, and that the spirit of our acts is in his eyes more important than their conventional orderliness. The higher religions always fight against conventionality; but the enemy against which they are fighting is their own conventionality, that formalism which they inherit from the lower religions and which they cannot wholly expel from themselves except at the cost of ceasing to be in any recognizable sense religions and becoming philosophies.

The modern world, with its strong tendency to detach itself from religion, makes a habit of decrying conventional morality. And this is in the main right enough; for conventional conduct is on a lower level than duty or even utility; it is unreasoning and tainted with something of the primitiveness of play. But it has a very real importance and value. It is pointed out in *Tom Brown's School Days*, not without a certain air of pompous self-satisfaction on the part of a society which had invented the noble game of Rugby football, that football is a finer game than fives because in fives you play for yourself whereas in football you play for your side. The end aimed at by a football team

is an end capriciously chosen, but here caprice ends: each of the fifteen members makes that end his own and acts in concert with the others for its attainment. His action ceases in this manner to be mere play and becomes convention, thereby rising to a higher level of rationality, for in reply to the question, 'Why do you do this?' instead of the nugatory answer of pure play, 'Because I do,' he can now answer, 'Because the others do.' But this loyalty to a common purpose is only rational in a low degree, because it is circular: A does so because B and C do, B because A and C do, C because A and B do; and there is no reason why A, B, C all do it, and therefore no reason why any of them do it except collective caprice.

To reduce conventional action to collective caprice is to analyse it correctly according to the letter, but to miss its spirit. It is in fact identical with reducing religion to collective fantasy, which is the aim of that 'rationalism' of which we shall have some hard things to say later on. The letter of the most loyal convention is collective caprice, precisely as the letter of the most harmonious married life is *égoïsme à deux*: for marriage is the conventional aspect of that same activity whose aesthetic or play-aspect is falling in love; but their spirit is loyalty to the ideal of a common good. No good is really common which is the good of one group as against another; but such a competitive good symbolizes something beyond itself, namely the harmonious life of an organic whole which includes all reality. Such a perfect whole may be an unattained and unattainable ideal; at the level of mere convention it must be; yet it is an ideal, and our social institutions have value just so far as they point towards it, as our religious symbols have value in so far as they body forth a reality as yet unattainable by plain thinking.

Because of this symbolic value of convention, the popular revolt against conventions, the commonplace cry that one ought to ignore them and live one's own life, is mere silliness. The people who join in that cry argue that because convention is only collective caprice, they see no reason why on its account they should surrender their own individual caprice. From the ethics of convention they wish to return to the ethics of play. This is a backward step, at bottom identical with that of the people who want to make up a religion for themselves by just choosing what they please to believe. It is a step from a position which is partly, though not wholly, rational, in the direction of one less rational. It is a movement away from sanity and towards idiocy. And it admits of four answers. One is: 'Very well: if you won't play with other people, they won't play with you.' This is the retort courteous from within the limits of conventional ethics. The second is: 'If you annoy people in this way they can and will crush you.' This is the countercheck quarrelsome or verdict on appeal to the higher court of expediency. The third is: 'Other people have a claim on you, which you are a cad to ignore.' This is the verdict of duty or lie circumstantial. The fourth is the one we have already given: 'You are making a fool of yourself; that is, doing your best to become an idiot by your own act.' This is the verdict of philosophy or the lie direct.

§ 6. *The Task of Religion*

We have already described the path by which religion comes into being and reaches maturity. That maturity consists of the ideal of a universal Church worshipping a universal God. But if and when this ideal is achieved, religion has not thereby come safe into harbour and resolved

itself into the heavenly hymn of popular eschatology.[1] It has come face to face with its ultimate task.

This task is the synthesis of opposites, the breaking-down of the mid-wall of partition between man and God, the subject and the object of the religious consciousness. There are other oppositions at stake, for as we have just seen they break out in religion on every hand; but this is the key to all the others. As Christian theology rightly sees, the reconciliation of man to God draws the devil's teeth without more ado; that is to say, the contradiction between God and the devil solves itself automatically, and so with all the other contradictions.

The Christian solution of this great problem represents the high-water mark of religious development, and it is difficult to see that religion in its essential form can ever achieve anything higher and more ultimately or absolutely satisfying than the twin conceptions of the Incarnation and the Atonement In these conceptions the task of religion is accomplished and its problem solved. Man is by them redeemed in very truth from his sins, that is to say from the alienation between him and God. And in these conceptions the worship which all religion gives to God is rightly and necessarily extended to the Son of Man in whose holy and sinless person the redemption of all mankind is effected, in whom 'God made himself man that he might make us God'.

The starting-point of this task is the starting-point of all

[1] An eschatology not, I would remark, warranted by the highest authorities. The hymn of Rev. iv is a prologue to the great judgement, and of the New Jerusalem we are explicitly told (Rev. xxi. 22) that there is no temple therein, that is to say, no act of worship. The self-transcendence of religion has never been more strikingly asserted than in this plain statement that there will be no religion in heaven.

religion. This is the assertion of God as holy, with its implication, that the worshipper is unholy. Unholiness is sin, which is not a moral idea but a religious idea, though no doubt it is the symbol under which moral problems are attacked by the religious consciousness. This antithesis or severance between the subject and object of the religious consciousness is a new thing. In art it does not exist. Not that the artist is a stranger to self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is coextensive with consciousness in general. But the artist's self-consciousness, like his consciousness in general, is specifically imaginative and not assertive. Just as in dramatic art the artist invents objective personages whose existence he does not assert as real, and whose troubles and trials need not therefore shake the foundations of his entire life, so in lyrical art he invents an imaginary self and unlocks a heart which is, in point of fact, not his real heart but only an imaginary one. The griefs and joys of the lyrical poet are not necessarily historical facts, any more than the griefs and joys of other *dramatis personae*. If therefore the artist feels dissatisfied with himself—and the greatest of all artists looked upon himself and cursed his fate,

> Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
> With what I most enjoy contented least——

it is no more than a passing mood; it is overcome even in the act of giving it aesthetic utterance, and is thus only asserted to be denied. But in religion this self is asserted as real, and at the same time as other than the true reality God. Hence the self is by the very presuppositions of the religious consciousness alienated from God and in a state of sin. This is the so-called Fall of Man, or original sin. Here again, there is no question for philosophy as to whether there was an historical fall, and Darwinism has no quarrel with Genesis. The fall of man is his awakening to the

religious frame of mind, and the doctrine of original sin is his recognition, in this frame of mind, of the *fait accompli*, the severance of man as such from God.

The short and easy way of dealing with these conceptions is simply to deny them, to point out, what is perfectly true, that the severance of subject from object is no philosophical truth but an error incidental to 'picture-thinking', to the imaginative form of knowledge. To one who really conceives, instead of imagining, the subject-object relation, it is evident without more ado that this is a relation of correlatives in which each requires the other for its own existence. But to make this point is to pass at a leap beyond the sphere of imaginative knowledge and to short-circuit the whole train of development from the beginning of religion to the end of philosophy. There is no objection to doing this; quite the contrary; if any one can do it, he will save himself a great deal of trouble. But he cannot do it at all unless he is gifted with an extraordinary degree of acuteness and elasticity of mind. In practice, people do not adopt these heroic remedies. They answer, if any one suggests them, 'Need we really scrap the whole machine for the sake of this flaw? can't we get over it, within the terms of our presuppositions, by a little adjustment?' So the adjustment begins, and the length to which it may proceed is infinite; and then suddenly the manipulator turns round to find that his machine has become a wholly different thing. The mind, if one may suggest a portmanteau-proverb, *non facit saltum praeter necessitatem*.[1]

The religious consciousness, then, accepts original sin as its starting-point, and in a sense the whole of religion

[1] The point at which they realize the necessity for a leap is, of course, just what distinguishes minds according to their insight or intelligence.

represents a progressive attempt at self-purification, the sanctifying or deifying of man. Hence the supreme blasphemy is to claim an immediate or natural identity of man with God, to make oneself equal to God ; for that is to deny the whole meaning and value of religion by asserting that one possesses by nature what in religion we are trying to obtain by grace. But this attempt at union with God is futile as long as religion is in its naïve polytheistic state, for the object is here in a state of flux, god succeeding god, and a real union is only possible with that which is itself one. Thus the problem of reconciling man with God first begins to be seriously attacked by the monotheistic religions, and can only be solved by a religion which has achieved a thorough and, so to speak, ingrained monotheism. In such a religion the tension between God's holiness and our sin becomes unbearable, and we are faced with the alternative of either shirking it—declining to recognize it, and occupying our minds with those details of legalistic ritual which are the symptom not of a trivial religion but of one too profound and serious for its devotees to live up to—or else finding a solution for it.

The solution can only come from the side of God, for we in our fallen state are powerless. It must, that is, be an act of unmerited grace. God must give himself to us. Now the gift is to consist precisely of the abolition of the gulf which separates man from God: God and man, once separate, are to be fused in a new unity, God becoming incarnate as man, and man becoming by redemption and adoption the child of God. But by becoming incarnate, God does not become sinful ; for sin is precisely the separation of man from God, and the negation of this is the negation of sin. He takes the burden of sin upon himself ; that is, he himself, and no other, faces the situation of the existence of sin and

triumphs over it. But this very triumph is achieved only by his own sinlessness. And this result is foreordained before the beginning of the world: it was an integral part of God's plan, that is to say, the inevitable dialectical result of the very presuppositions of the religious consciousness, though its inevitability can only be seen by us *ex post facto*, because there was never any guarantee that the religious consciousness of a given race would have the vigour and steadfastness to work out its salvation aright.

This solution of the problem of religion was actually achieved, as was indeed necessary, by and within religion itself, unaided by philosophy or science. But the very religion which had produced it repudiated it, and repudiated it specifically as blasphemy or irreligion. The solution of the religious problem came to its own, and its own received it not. And this, again, had to be. It was as necessary that Christ should be rejected as that he should rise again on the third day. For his message was the death-warrant of the religious consciousness itself, and all that was strongest and most vital in the religious consciousness rose up against it to destroy it. The religious consciousness in its explicit form is simply the opposition between man and God, an opposition perpetually resolved in the actuality of worship and perpetually renewed as the intermittent act of worship ceases. The Christian gospel announced the ending of that opposition once for all, not by the repetition of acts of worship, by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the very act of God which was at the same time the death of God. The one atoning sacrifice of Christ swept away temple and priests, ritual and oblation and prayer and praise, and left nothing but a sense that the end of all things was at hand and a new world about to appear in which the first things should have passed away. In the death-grapple between

religion as a specific form of experience and the Christian gospel which by solving its insoluble problem annihilated it, it was necessary that the representatives of the Christian gospel should be put down by force; but it was equally necessary that their message should prevail, just because it was the truth, in a world which at bottom desired the truth.

If the reader is tempted to reply that the view here set forth makes Christianity not a religion at all, and thus stultifies the implied definition either of Christianity or of religion, he must be reminded that Christianity has here been defined not as something different from religion in general but as the solution of the problem whose existence constitutes religion in general. To find this solution is the work of the religious consciousness, not of any other form of consciousness; and the solution, being correlative to its own problem, only continues to exist as long as the problem continues to exist. The very existence of the religious problem in any phase, however primitive, implies some kind of dim and instinctive solution of it. Hence even the darkest heathenism is, as Christians have always said, an implicit, blind or caricatured Christianity. On the other hand, the origin of explicit Christianity marked, not the disappearance of religion, but the discovery by religion of the answer to its own questions. Now a question whose answer is given logically ceases to be asked; and that implies the end of religion on the coming of Christianity, and that in its turn implies the end of Christianity also. But what is true in the logic of explicit reason is not true in the logic of implicit reason, reason in its intuitive form. Here the problem and its solution present themselves, not in the form of logical question and answer, but in the imaginative form of an enacted drama or sacred story. Logically analysed, the whole point of this drama is the overcoming

of its own initial error; but in religion, logical analysis is only implicit; it solves problems, it gives knowledge, it reveals truth, but without knowing what it is doing. Hence religion can only satisfy itself that its problem is really solved by restating both it and its solution in their imaginative form: the cosmic mystery-play of the fall and the atonement. Thus Christianity, which is implicitly the death of religion, is explicitly the one true and perfect religion, the only religion which gives the soul peace and satisfaction by solving the specifically religious problem.

This brings us to a question with which we cannot now refuse to deal—the place of religion in the modern world.

Religion is a hybrid of the literal and spiritual, of superstition and truth. Far more than art, it conveys to man real knowledge of himself and of the world; for whereas the message of art is wholly obscured by its imaginative presentation, in religion the message takes definite, though as yet only mythical, shape. But religion is not the highest or final form of truth, even though the truth which it reveals is substantially the highest and final truth. Its message is formally imperfect, tainted by the displacement of assertion from the truth to the symbol, so that religion can never say what it means. This inability to express its own meaning is grasped by religion itself in the form of the conviction of sin, of alienation from its own ideal.

The philosophical error of asserting the reality of an image instead of asserting the reality of the truth which that image means may not be a necessary error, in the sense of a phase through which by some law of nature every mind must pass, but it is an error into which it would appear that every human mind actually does fall. Mankind, it has been said, is incurably religious. Not incurably, perhaps, for Christianity is there to witness the contrary;

rather endemically. Superstitions of all kinds break out on all hands even at this enlightened stage of the world's history; and there is no reason to think that they will soon become extinct. Now superstition of every type is the fuel on which Christianity feeds; for Christianity would seem to be the only agent by which the human mind has ever yet succeeded in liberating itself from superstition. The direct passage from superstition to philosophy has been tried, and it is a passage so choked with wrecks that a wise man will hardly venture to attempt it. Christianity, the *via purgativa* of the religious mind, will become out of date for any given person or society only when in the mind of that person or society superstition has vanished for good and all. At that rate there are not many persons, and certainly not any societies, that can afford to despise the teachings of Christianity.

§ 7. *The Transition from Religion to the life of Thought*

No more pitiable manifestation of thought exists than that kind of anti-religious polemic which is known as 'atheism' or, as if *per antonomasiam*, 'rationalism'. Its method is to take any assertion made by religion, to assume that it means what it says, and then to show, which is always easy, that so interpreted it is false or at least doubtful. Great triumphs have been won over religion by showing that the world cannot have been made in seven days, that Eve was probably not made out of one of Adam's ribs, that the age attributed to Methuselah and other patriarchs is certainly exaggerated, and that no known species of fish can have swallowed Jonah and cast him up three days later. It has also been forcibly argued that there

must be one God or three, and that you can't have it both ways; that the fictitious transference of our sins to Christ is a legal quibble quite unworthy of a righteous Judge; and that if God were really both powerful and good he would have made short work of tuberculosis and the Borgia family. Just at present this type of thought is chiefly concerned with the birth, miracles, and resurrection of our Lord, and we may leave it there.

The interest of this 'rationalistic' thought, for us, is the question of its origin. No one confutes Swift on the ground that Lilliputians are physiologically impossible,[1] and on the other hand no one accuses Cecil Rhodes of lying on the ground that even if he had owned an apple-cart, Dr. Jameson during his raid was far too busy to upset it. In the former case every one realizes that Swift was only fancying, and not asserting, the Lilliputians; in the latter, it is clear that the upset apple-cart was only a metaphor. But religion is neither art nor explicit metaphor; it is implicit metaphor, metaphorical assertion mistaking itself for literal assertion. The early Christians, when they said the end of the world was coming, genuinely thought that they meant what they said, and the rationalists of the day were doubtless taken in by this and consequently, when the end of the world did not come, condemned Christianity as a fraud. In point of fact, the expected Parousia was only the imaginative symbol of a spiritual event which really did take place; so that what the early Christians implicitly meant by it was true, though what they said was false. Similarly the Christianity of a century ago said, and thought it literally meant, that the world was created in seven days. It has now learnt not only that, so understood, the assertion was untrue, but

[1] Though there is the story of the sea-captain who closed *Gulliver's Travels* with the remark that he didn't believe a word of it.

also that it was never really meant to be so understood, but was always a symbol of something else.

Religion, in short, as by now we have abundantly seen, always mistakes what it says for what it means. And rationalism, so to speak, runs about after it pointing out that what it says is untrue. The mistake of rationalism is to think that by doing this it is refuting religion; but that is a mistake first made by religion, and rationalism only errs through accepting the account given by religion of itself. Rationalism would be justified in doing this if it claimed a place within religion; but in fact it claims a place in philosophy, and if it is to deserve this place it must not naïvely accept religion at its own valuation but study it afresh and work out a new theory of it. It is this elementary misunderstanding that makes rationalism so contemptible a thing. If the rationalist had any intelligence he would see that his attacks on religion are too easy to be sound, and that there must be a catch somewhere.

This 'catch' is the root of theology. The task of theology is to convert the implicit thought of religion into explicit thought, by disentangling the symbol from its meaning and making clear the merely metaphorical character of religious imagery. Theology is thus the answer to rationalism. But just because it makes terms with rationalism, because it so far agrees with the rationalist as to admit that the symbol is not literally true, theology is always looked upon with some suspicion by religion itself. The rise of theology is inevitable, for otherwise religion lies helpless under the guns of the most idiotic rationalist; and yet theology is to religion a wolf in sheep's clothing. The theologian has crossed the line which separates religion from philosophy, and he is only tolerated by religion as long as, wolf though he is, he conscientiously plays the sheep-dog. There is no

help for this; he must be tolerated; for rationalism is no external enemy whose attacks will perhaps never be repeated, it is at bottom a manifestation of the religious attitude itself. We saw that religion, as intuitive and therefore a matter of feeling, was necessarily unstable and intermittent. Every religious man has his irreligious moments, and in these irreligious moments he is either a rationalist or a theologian. Either the bread and wine are, in these moments, for him just bread and wine, or else he has schooled himself to regard them as symbols: that is, he has turned theologian. Hence religion, by its own inner dialectic as an intuitive form of consciousness, creates within itself first rationalism and then the antidote to rationalism, theology.

But theology is the negation of religion. To distinguish between the symbol and what it means is by definition to pass outside religion, to recognize that religion by itself is not sufficient to ensure the permanent peace of the soul, and to condemn religion as a confusion of thought. The task of theology is to carry on its analytic work while rebutting the inevitable accusation of irreligion. The actual life of theology (is there any theologian who does not know this?) is a life of compromise. It is taken up enthusiastically, in the belief that there are in religion just a few unexplained metaphors—Jonah's whale and the seven days of creation and so forth—and that by expounding these we can clear all difficulties from before the feet of honest doubt. But metaphors multiply as the theologian looks at them. He finds that they infect the whole length and breadth of religion, and then, if his eye is sufficiently penetrating, he begins to see them in depth as well: when he has expounded one metaphor, he finds that the terms in which he has expounded it are themselves metaphorical. But he is committed to the defence of religion, and therefore he must

take religion's word for the point at which she finds his analysis intolerable. Jonah's whale and the seven days of creation, very well; but what about the resurrection and the virgin birth? It is easy to condemn as inconsistent those who cry 'hands off' at this point. But perhaps they have right on their side. For—this is what the enthusiastic young theologian does not know—theology, if it is to remain theology, must stop somewhere. The young theologian thinks that religion has a kernel of literal truth which, if only his bishop will let him go on digging, he will in time bring to light. But religion, as Goethe said of nature, has neither kernel nor husk;[1] and those who are bent on peeling it will some day exemplify the parable of the onion.

The ultimate logical conclusion of theology is the explanation of the entire mass of religious imagery in terms of the concept of God. The concept of God is the nucleus of literal truth which theology assumes religion to possess. In the last conceivable resort, the theologian might explain every single clause of the creeds as metaphorical except 'I believe in God': that is the literal fact of which all the following clauses are, so to speak, metaphorical illustrations and expansions. I do not say that any theologian now advocates such a position, but it is obviously the conclusion to which much of our theology is tending, and therefore it closely concerns us to investigate it.

[1] 'Thought growing up in the *husk* of language,' we said on p. 125; but there is no inconsistency. To distinguish the language from the thought, the husk from the germ, is, as we have throughout maintained, possible; but it is the destruction of religion and the affirmation of science. In this very destruction the spirit and truth of religion are not quenched; they live on, and at a higher level; but it is a level at which the theologian is certainly not consciously aiming—a level at which the chalice becomes a crucible and the church a laboratory.

The assumption is that God is a concept, an object of thought, the ultimate reality of philosophical analysis. Now is this identification of God with the absolute legitimate? All theology assumes that it is; but it cannot be. God is the holy one, the worshipped, the object of faith. The absolute is reality, the demonstrated, the object of reason. No one can worship the absolute, and no one can prove the existence of God. It is true that people have tried to do both these things, but they have uniformly failed. The proofs of the existence of God form a long and glorious chapter in the history of human thought, but they have always ended by proving something that is not the existence of God. The attempt to worship the absolute has been a not uninteresting chapter in the history of religion, and it has always ended in the worship of something that is not the absolute. The simple religious consciousness is here our best guide. It knows that God is revealed not to the intellect but to the heart, which means not the 'practical reason' or the 'emotional faculty', but simply the religious consciousness. God is not known, he is adored. We cannot think him, we can only love and fear him. The simple religious consciousness knows that when philosophers call their ultimate reality by the name of God they are taking that name in vain and pretending to be what they are not. They are, in fact, as insincere as is a religion which talks of the Supreme Being.

God and the absolute are not identical but irretrievably distinct. And yet they are identical in this sense: God is the imaginative or intuitive form in which the absolute reveals itself to the religious consciousness. We are accustomed to recognize that the gods of the heathen are but mythological and perverted presentations of the true God; we know well that the father up in the sky of whom we

talk to children is likewise at bottom a mythological figment. But we do not sufficiently realize that all religion, up to its very highest manifestations, is mythological too, and that mythology is finally extruded from religion only when religion itself perishes and gives place to philosophy. God as such is the mythological symbol under which religion cognizes the absolute: he is not a concept but the symbol of a concept. However hard we try to purify our idea of God from mythological elements, the very intuitiveness of our attitude towards that idea mythologizes it once more.

'I believe in God' is therefore a religious statement, never a philosophical statement. It is a statement which challenges the philosophical reply 'What do you mean by God?' and when that question is asked nothing but a deliberate stopping of the wheels of thought will arrest the conversion of theology into philosophy. No attempt to save theology, under the name of philosophical theism, can resist this process

In point of fact, we have long ago left religion behind. Theology is a manifestation not of the religious spirit but of the scientific spirit, and to that we must now turn. In taking this step, we leave the world of imagination and enter upon the world of thought. The world of imagination is thought implicit; the world of thought, so called, is thought explicit. In art and religion thought is present, but it is deceived as to its own nature. In art it is so far deceived as to be ignorant of its very existence, and to suppose itself mere imagination: yet even in that error it is thought, for nothing but thought can err. Thus art is the last possible degree of the implicitness of thought. In religion thought knows that it exists; religion asserts and knows that it asserts. But though here thought knows that it exists, it is so far ignorant of its own nature that it mistakes

imagining for thinking, and asserts the reality of what is really only symbol. Hence the truth is in religion only intuitively known, not logically known, and its real nature as truth—as concept, as object of thought—is concealed. Religion, like art, is a philosophical error. It is specifically the error of mythologizing reality, of taking language literally instead of metaphorically. But in spite of this formal error, religion is an infinitely precious achievement of the mind and an unfailing revelation of truth. It is the giver of freedom and salvation, because it liberates the soul from the life of imagination, of semblance and unreality, and leads from the things that are seen and temporal to the things that are unseen and eternal. And in that passage the visible world, the world of semblance, is redeemed and made the fit temple of the spirit ; for in the very negation of this imaginary world as the supreme reality, it is invested with its true positive value as the vehicle of the supreme reality, the Word of the Spirit.

SCIENCE

§ 1. *The Life of Thought*

ART and religion, to the superficial observer, are forms not of thought but of language. Art, it has been said, is simply language itself, language in its pure form apart from any meaning. Mythology has been called a disease of language, a development from language in its purity to language claiming a function which it does not rightly possess, the function of thought; and thus declaring itself in a morbid condition. Both these descriptions we should reject if taken as serious definitions of art and religion, for they are descriptions of the surface instead of the solid, definitions of the letter substituted for definitions of the spirit. Art is not pure language, but thought failing to recognize that it is thought, mistaking itself for imagination. Religion is not a morbid growth of language but a dialectical development of art, art realizing that it is not bare imagination but assertion, and then proceeding to misinterpret its own assertions and to suppose itself to be asserting the image or word when it is really asserting the meaning of the word. In a special sense both art and religion are thus linguistic functions, forms of expression rather than forms of thought; for though, properly understood, they exist only to express thought, yet the thought in them is concealed rather than expressed by their language, the language becomes opaque and presents itself as if it were the real aim and end of the activity. And thus in a sense it is true to say that the artistic consciousness is