

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE RELIGION OF ATHEISTS

1. THE SCIENTIFIC ATHEIST

It is a curious thing that while most organised religions seem to drape about and conceal and smother the statement of the true God, the honest Atheist, with his passionate impulse to strip the truth bare, is constantly and unwittingly reproducing the divine likeness. It will be interesting here to call a witness or so to the extreme instability of absolute negation.

Here, for example, is a deliverance from Professor Metchnikoff, who was a very typical antagonist of all religion. He died only the other day. He was a very great physiologist indeed; he was a man almost of the rank and quality of Pasteur or Charles Darwin. A decade or more ago he wrote a book called "The Nature of Man," in which he set out very plainly a number of illuminating facts about life. They are facts so illuminating that presently, in our discussion of sin, they will be referred to again. But it is not Professor Metchnikoff's intention to provide material for a religious discussion. He sets out his facts in order to overthrow theology as he conceives it. The remarkable thing about his

book, the thing upon which I would now lay stress, is that he betrays no inkling of the fact that he has no longer the right to conceive theology as he conceives it. The development of his science has destroyed that right.

He does not realise how profoundly modern biology has affected our ideas of individuality and species, and how the import of theology is modified through these changes. When he comes from his own world of modern biology to religion and philosophy he goes back in time. He attacks religion as he understood it when first he fell out with it fifty years or more ago.

Let us state as compactly as possible the nature of these changes that biological science has wrought almost imperceptibly in the general scheme and method of our thinking.

The influence of biology upon thought in general consists essentially in diminishing the importance of the individual and developing the realisation of the species, as if it were a kind of super-individual, a modifying and immortal super-individual, maintaining itself against the outer universe by the birth and death of its constituent individuals. Natural History, which began by putting individuals into species as if the latter were mere classificatory divisions, has come to see that the species has its adventures, its history and drama, far exceeding in interest and importance the individual adventure. "The Origin of Species" was for countless minds the discovery of a new romance in life.

The contrast of the individual life and this specific life may be stated plainly and compactly as follows. A little while ago we current individuals, we who are alive now, were each of us distributed between two parents, then between four grandparents, and so on backward, we are temporarily assembled, as it were, out of an ancestral diffusion; we stand our trial, and presently our individuality is dispersed and mixed again with other individualities in an uncertain multitude of descendants. But the species is not like this; it goes on steadily from newness to newness, remaining still a unity. The drama of the individual life is a mere episode, beneficial or abandoned, in this continuing adventure of the species. And Metchnikoff finds most of the trouble of life and the distresses of life in the fact that the species is still very painfully adjusting itself to the fluctuating conditions under which it lives. The conflict of life is a continual pursuit of adjustment, and the "ills of life," of the individual life that is, are due to its "disharmonies." Man, acutely aware of himself as an individual adventure and unawakened to himself as a species, finds life jangling and distressful, finds death frustration. He fails and falls as a person in what may be the success and triumph of his kind. He does not apprehend the struggle or the nature of victory, but only his own gravitation to death and personal extinction.

Now Professor Metchnikoff is anti-religious, and he is anti-religious because to him as to so many Europeans religion is confused with priest-craft and dogmas, is associated with disagreeable early

impressions of irrational repression and misguidance. How completely he misconceives the quality of religion, how completely he sees it as an individual's affair, his own words may witness:

"Religion is still occupied with the problem of death. The solutions which as yet it has offered cannot be regarded as satisfactory. A future life has no single argument to support it, and the non-existence of life after death is in consonance with the whole range of human knowledge. On the other hand, resignation as preached by Buddha will fail to satisfy humanity, which has a longing for life, and is overcome by the thought of the inevitability of death."

Now here it is clear that by death he means the individual death, and by a future life the prolongation of individuality. But Buddhism does not in truth appear ever to have been concerned with that, and modern religious developments are certainly not under that preoccupation with the narrower self. Buddhism indeed so far from "preaching resignation" to death, seeks as its greater good a death so complete as to be absolute release from the individual's burthen of KARMA. Buddhism seeks an ESCAPE FROM INDIVIDUAL IMMORTALITY. The deeper one pursues religious thought the more nearly it approximates to a search for escape from the self-centred life and over-individuation, and the more it diverges from Professor Metchnikoff's assertion of its aims. Salvation is indeed to lose one's self. But Professor Metchnikoff having roundly denied

that this is so, is then left free to take the very essentials of the religious life as they are here conceived and present them as if they were the antithesis of the religious life. His book, when it is analysed, resolves itself into just that research for an escape from the painful accidents and chagrins of individuation, which is the ultimate of religion.

At times, indeed, he seems almost wilfully blind to the true solution round and about which his writing goes. He suggests as his most hopeful satisfaction for the cravings of the human heart, such a scientific prolongation of life that the instinct for self-preservation will be at last extinct. If that is not the very "resignation" he imputes to the Buddhist I do not know what it is. He believes that an individual which has lived fully and completely may at last welcome death with the same instinctive readiness as, in the days of its strength, it shows for the embraces of its mate. We are to be glutted by living to six score and ten. We are to rise from the table at last as gladly as we sat down. We shall go to death as unresistingly as tired children go to bed. Men are to have a life far beyond the range of what is now considered their prime, and their last period (won by scientific self-control) will be a period of ripe wisdom (from seventy to eighty to a hundred and twenty or thereabouts) and public service!

(But why, one asks, public service? Why not book-collecting or the simple pleasure of reminiscence so dear to aged egotists? Metchnikoff never faces that question. And again, what of the man who is challenged

to die for right at the age of thirty? What does the prolongation of life do for him? And where are the consolations for accidental misfortune, for the tormenting disease or the lost limb?)

But in his peroration Professor Metchnikoff lapses into pure religiosity. The prolongation of life gives place to sheer self-sacrifice as the fundamental "remedy." And indeed what other remedy has ever been conceived for the general evil of life?

"On the other hand," he writes, "the knowledge that the goal of human life can be attained only by the development of a high degree of solidarity amongst men will restrain actual egotism. The mere fact that the enjoyment of life according to the precepts of Solomon (Ecclesiastes ix. 7-10)* is opposed to the goal of human life, will lessen luxury and the evil that comes from luxury. Conviction that science alone is able to redress the disharmonies of the human constitution will lead directly to the improvement of education and to the solidarity of mankind.

* Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest

under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

"In progress towards the goal, nature will have to be consulted continuously. Already, in the case of the ephemerids, nature has produced a complete cycle of normal life ending in natural death. In the problem of his own fate, man must not be content with the gifts of nature; he must direct them by his own efforts. Just as he has been able to modify the nature of animals and plants, man must attempt to modify his own constitution, so as to readjust its disharmonies. . . .

"To modify the human constitution, it will be necessary first, to frame the ideal, and thereafter to set to work with all the resources of science.

"If there can be formed an ideal able to unite men in a kind of religion of the future, this ideal must be founded on scientific principles. And if it be true, as has been asserted so often, that man can live by faith alone, the faith must be in the power of science."

Now this, after all the flat repudiations that have preceded it of "religion" and "philosophy" as remedies for human ills, is nothing less than the fundamental proposition of the religious life translated into terms of materialistic science, the proposition that damnation is really

over-individuation and that salvation is escape from self into the larger being of life. . . .

What can this "religion of the future" be but that devotion to the racial adventure under the captaincy of God which we have already found, like gold in the bottom of the vessel, when we have washed away the confusions and impurities of dogmatic religion? By an inquiry setting out from a purely religious starting-point we have already reached conclusions identical with this ultimate refuge of an extreme materialist.

This altar to the Future of his, we can claim as an altar to our God--an altar rather indistinctly inscribed.

2. SACRIFICE IMPLIES GOD

Almost all Agnostic and Atheistical writings that show any fineness and generosity of spirit, have this tendency to become as it were the statement of an anonymous God. Everything is said that a religious writer would say--except that God is not named. Religious metaphors abound. It is as if they accepted the living body of religion but denied the bones that held it together--as they might deny the bones of a friend. It is true, they would admit, the body moves in a way that

implies bones in its every movement, but--WE HAVE NEVER SEEN THOSE BONES.

The disputes in theory--I do not say the difference in reality--between the modern believer and the atheist or agnostic--becomes at times almost as impalpable as that subtle discussion dear to students of physics, whether the scientific "ether" is real or a formula. Every material phenomenon is consonant with and helps to define this ether, which permeates and sustains and is all things, which nevertheless is perceptible to no sense, which is reached only by an intellectual process. Most minds are disposed to treat this ether as a reality. But the acutely critical mind insists that what is only so attainable by inference is not real; it is no more than "a formula that satisfies all phenomena."

But if it comes to that, am I anything more than the formula that satisfies all my forms of consciousness?

Intellectually there is hardly anything more than a certain will to believe, to divide the religious man who knows God to be utterly real, from the man who says that God is merely a formula to satisfy moral and spiritual phenomena. The former has encountered him, the other has as yet felt only unassigned impulses. One says God's will is so; the other that Right is so. One says God moves me to do this or that; the other the Good Will in me which I share with you and all well-disposed men, moves me to do this or that. But the former makes an exterior reference

and escapes a risk of self-righteousness.

I have recently been reading a book by Mr. Joseph McCabe called "The Tyranny of Shams," in which he displays very typically this curious tendency to a sort of religion with God "blacked out." His is an extremely interesting case. He is a writer who was formerly a Roman Catholic priest, and in his reaction from Catholicism he displays a resolution even sterner than Professor Metchnikoff's, to deny that anything religious or divine can exist, that there can be any aim in life except happiness, or any guide but "science." But--and here immediately he turns east again--he is careful not to say "individual happiness." And he says "Pleasure is, as Epicureans insisted, only a part of a large ideal of happiness." So he lets the happiness of devotion and sacrifice creep in. So he opens indefinite possibilities of getting away from any merely materialistic rule of life. And he writes:

"In every civilised nation the mass of the people are inert and indifferent. Some even make a pretence of justifying their inertness. Why, they ask, should we stir at all? Is there such a thing as a duty to improve the earth? What is the meaning or purpose of life? Or has it a purpose?"

"One generally finds that this kind of reasoning is merely a piece of controversial athletics or a thin excuse for idleness. People tell you that the conflict of science and religion--it would be better to say,

the conflict of modern culture and ancient traditions--has robbed life of its plain significance. The men who, like Tolstoi, seriously urge this point fail to appreciate the modern outlook on life. Certainly modern culture--science, history, philosophy, and art--finds no purpose in life: that is to say, no purpose eternally fixed and to be discovered by man. A great chemist said a few years ago that he could imagine 'a series of lucky accidents'--the chance blowing by the wind of certain chemicals into pools on the primitive earth--accounting for the first appearance of life; and one might not unjustly sum up the influences which have lifted those early germs to the level of conscious beings as a similar series of lucky accidents.

"But it is sheer affectation to say that this demoralises us. If there is no purpose impressed on the universe, or prefixed to the development of humanity, it follows only that humanity may choose its own purpose and set up its own goal; and the most elementary sense of order will teach us that this choice must be social, not merely individual. In whatever measure ill-controlled individuals may yield to personal impulses or attractions, the aim of the race must be a collective aim. I do not mean an austere demand of self-sacrifice from the individual, but an adjustment--as genial and generous as possible--of individual variations for common good. Otherwise life becomes discordant and futile, and the pain and waste react on each individual. So we raise again, in the twentieth century, the old question of 'the greatest good,' which men discussed in the Stoa Poikile and the suburban groves of Athens, in the cool atria of patrician mansions on the Palatine and

the Pincian, in the Museum at Alexandria, and the schools which Omar Khayyam frequented, in the straw-strewn schools of the Middle Ages and the opulent chambers of Cosimo dei Medici."

And again:

"The old dream of a co-operative effort to improve life, to bring happiness to as many minds of mortals as we can reach, shines above all the mists of the day. Through the ruins of creeds and philosophies, which have for ages disdained it, we are retracing our steps toward that height--just as the Athenians did two thousand years ago. It rests on no metaphysic, no sacred legend, no disputable tradition--nothing that scepticism can corrode or advancing knowledge undermine. Its foundations are the fundamental and unchanging impulses of our nature."

And again:

"The revolt which burns in so much of the abler literature of our time is an unselfish revolt, or non-selfish revolt: it is an outcome of that larger spirit which conceives the self to be a part of the general social organism, and it is therefore neither egoistic nor altruistic. It finds a sanction in the new intelligence, and an inspiration in the

finer sentiments of our generation, but the glow which chiefly illumines it is the glow of the great vision of a happier earth. It speaks of the claims of truth and justice, and assails untruth and injustice, for these are elemental principles of social life; but it appeals more confidently to the warmer sympathy which is linking the scattered children of the race, and it urges all to co-operate in the restriction of suffering and the creation of happiness. The advance guard of the race, the men and women in whom mental alertness is associated with fine feeling, cry that they have reached Pisgah's slope and in increasing numbers men and women are pressing on to see if it be really the Promised Land."

"Pisgah--the Promised Land!" Mr. McCabe in that passage sounds as if he were half-way to "Oh! Beulah Land!" and the tambourine.

That "larger spirit," we maintain, is God; those "impulses" are the power of God, and Mr. McCabe serves a Master he denies. He has but to realise fully that God is not necessarily the Triune God of the Catholic Church, and banish his intense suspicion that he may yet be lured back to that altar he abandoned, he has but to look up from that preoccupation, and immediately he will begin to realise the presence of Divinity.

3. GOD IS AN EXTERNAL REALITY

It may be argued that if atheists and agnostics when they set themselves to express the good will that is in them, do shape out God, that if their conception of right living falls in so completely with the conception of God's service as to be broadly identical, then indeed God, like the ether of scientific speculation, is no more than a theory, no more than an imaginative externalisation of man's inherent good will. Why trouble about God then? Is not the declaration of a good disposition a sufficient evidence of salvation? What is the difference between such benevolent unbelievers as Professor Metchnikoff or Mr. McCabe and those who have found God?

The difference is this, that the benevolent atheist stands alone upon his own good will, without a reference, without a standard, trusting to his own impulse to goodness, relying upon his own moral strength. A certain immodesty, a certain self-righteousness, hangs like a precipice above him; incalculable temptations open like gulfs beneath his feet. He has not really given himself or got away from himself. He has no one to whom he can give himself. He is still a masterless man. His exaltation is self-centred, is priggishness, his fall is unrestrained by any exterior obligation. His devotion is only the good will in himself, a disposition; it is a mood that may change. At any moment it may change. He may have pledged himself to his own pride and honour, but who will hold him to his bargain? He has no source of strength beyond his own

amiable sentiments, his conscience speaks with an unsupported voice, and no one watches while he sleeps. He cannot pray; he can but ejaculate. He has no real and living link with other men of good will.

And those whose acquiescence in the idea of God is merely intellectual are in no better case than those who deny God altogether. They may have all the forms of truth and not divinity. The religion of the atheist with a God-shaped blank at its heart and the persuasion of the unconverted theologian, are both like lamps unlit. The lit lamp has no difference in form from the lamp unlit. But the lit lamp is alive and the lamp unlit is asleep or dead.

The difference between the unconverted and the unbeliever and the servant of the true God is this; it is that the latter has experienced a complete turning away from self. This only difference is all the difference in the world. It is the realisation that this goodness that I thought was within me and of myself and upon which I rather prided myself, is without me and above myself, and infinitely greater and stronger than I. It is the immortal and I am mortal. It is invincible and steadfast in its purpose, and I am weak and insecure. It is no longer that I, out of my inherent and remarkable goodness, out of the excellence of my quality and the benevolence of my heart, give a considerable amount of time and attention to the happiness and welfare of others--because I choose to do so. On the contrary I have come under a divine imperative, I am obeying an irresistible call, I am a humble and willing servant of the righteousness of God. That altruism which

Professor Metchnikoff and Mr. McCabe would have us regard as the goal and refuge of a broad and free intelligence, is really the first simple commandment in the religious life.

4. ANOTHER RELIGIOUS MATERIALIST

Now here is a passage from a book, "Evolution and the War," by Professor Metchnikoff's translator, Dr. Chalmers Mitchell, which comes even closer to our conception of God as an immortal being arising out of man, and external to the individual man. He has been discussing that well-known passage of Kant's: "Two things fill my mind with ever-renewed wonder and awe the more often and deeper I dwell on them--the starry vault above me, and the moral law within me."

From that discussion, Dr. Chalmers Mitchell presently comes to this most definite and interesting statement:

"Writing as a hard-shell Darwinian evolutionist, a lover of the scalpel and microscope, and of patient, empirical observation, as one who dislikes all forms of supernaturalism, and who does not shrink from the implications even of the phrase that thought is a secretion of the brain as bile is a secretion of the liver, I assert as a biological fact that

the moral law is as real and as external to man as the starry vault. It has no secure seat in any single man or in any single nation. It is the work of the blood and tears of long generations of men. It is not in man, inborn or innate, but is enshrined in his traditions, in his customs, in his literature and his religion. Its creation and sustenance are the crowning glory of man, and his consciousness of it puts him in a high place above the animal world. Men live and die; nations rise and fall, but the struggle of individual lives and of individual nations must be measured not by their immediate needs, but as they tend to the debasement or perfection of man's great achievement."

This is the same reality. This is the same Link and Captain that this book asserts. It seems to me a secondary matter whether we call Him "Man's Great Achievement" or "The Son of Man" or the "God of Mankind" or "God." So far as the practical and moral ends of life are concerned, it does not matter how we explain or refuse to explain His presence in our lives.

There is but one possible gap left between the position of Dr. Chalmers Mitchell and the position of this book. In this book it is asserted that GOD RESPONDS, that he GIVES courage and the power of self-suppression to our weakness.

5. A NOTE ON A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY

Let me now quote and discuss a very beautiful passage from a lecture upon Stoicism by Professor Gilbert Murray, which also displays the same characteristic of an involuntary shaping out of God in the forms of denial. It is a passage remarkable for its conscientious and resolute Agnosticism. And it is remarkable too for its blindness to the possibility of separating quite completely the idea of the Infinite Being from the idea of God. It is another striking instance of that obsession of modern minds by merely Christian theology of which I have already complained. Professor Murray has quoted Mr. Bevan's phrase for God, "the Friend behind phenomena," and he does not seem to realise that that phrase carries with it no obligation whatever to believe that this Friend is in control of the phenomena. He assumes that he is supposed to be in control as if it were a matter of course:

"We do seem to find," Professor Murray writes, "not only in all religions, but in practically all philosophies, some belief that man is not quite alone in the universe, but is met in his endeavours towards the good by some external help or sympathy. We find it everywhere in the unsophisticated man. We find it in the unguarded self-revelations of the most severe and conscientious Atheists. Now, the Stoics, like many other schools of thought, drew an argument from this consensus of all mankind. It was not an absolute proof of the existence of the Gods or Providence,

but it was a strong indication. The existence of a common instinctive belief in the mind of man gives at least a presumption that there must be a good cause for that belief.

"This is a reasonable position. There must be some such cause. But it does not follow that the only valid cause is the truth of the content of the belief. I cannot help suspecting that this is precisely one of those points on which Stoicism, in company with almost all philosophy up to the present time, has gone astray through not sufficiently realising its dependence on the human mind as a natural biological product. For it is very important in this matter to realise that the so-called belief is not really an intellectual judgment so much as a craving of the whole nature.

"It is only of very late years that psychologists have begun to realise the enormous dominion of those forces in man of which he is normally unconscious. We cannot escape as easily as these brave men dreamed from the grip of the blind powers beneath the threshold. Indeed, as I see philosophy after philosophy falling into this unproven belief in the Friend behind phenomena, as I find that I myself cannot, except for a moment and by an effort, refrain from making the same assumption, it seems to me that perhaps here too we are under the spell of a very old ineradicable instinct. We are gregarious animals; our ancestors have been such for countless ages. We cannot help looking out on the world as gregarious animals do; we see it in terms of humanity and of fellowship. Students of animals under domestication have shown us how the habits

of a gregarious creature, taken away from his kind, are shaped in a thousand details by reference to the lost pack which is no longer there--the pack which a dog tries to smell his way back to all the time he is out walking, the pack he calls to for help when danger threatens. It is a strange and touching thing, this eternal hunger of the gregarious animal for the herd of friends who are not there. And it may be, it may very possibly be, that, in the matter of this Friend behind phenomena our own yearning and our own almost ineradicable instinctive conviction, since they are certainly not founded on either reason or observation, are in origin the groping of a lonely-souled gregarious animal to find its herd or its herd-leader in the great spaces between the stars.

"At any rate, it is a belief very difficult to get rid of."

There the passage and the lecture end.

I would urge that here again is an inadvertent witness to the reality of God.

Professor Murray writes of gregarious animals as though there existed solitary animals that are not gregarious, pure individualists, "atheists" so to speak, and as though this appeal to a life beyond one's own was not the universal disposition of living things. His classical training disposes him to a realistic exaggeration of individual

difference. But nearly every animal, and certainly every mentally considerable animal, begins under parental care, in a nest or a litter, mates to breed, and is associated for much of its life. Even the great carnivores do not go alone except when they are old and have done with the most of life. Every pack, every herd, begins at some point in a couple, it is the equivalent of the tiger's litter if that were to remain undispersed. And it is within the memory of men still living that in many districts the African lion has with a change of game and conditions lapsed from a "solitary" to a gregarious, that is to say a prolonged family habit of life.

Man too, if in his ape-like phase he resembled the other higher apes, is an animal becoming more gregarious and not less. He has passed within the historical period from a tribal gregariousness to a nearly cosmopolitan tolerance. And he has his tribe about him. He is not, as Professor Murray seems to suggest, a solitary LOST gregarious beast. Why should his desire for God be regarded as the overflow of an unsatisfied gregarious instinct, when he has home, town, society, companionship, trade union, state, INCREASINGLY at hand to glut it? Why should gregariousness drive a man to God rather than to the third-class carriage and the public-house? Why should gregariousness drive men out of crowded Egyptian cities into the cells of the Thebaid? Schopenhauer in a memorable passage (about the hedgehogs who assembled for warmth) is flatly opposed to Professor Murray, and seems far more plausible when he declares that the nature of man is insufficiently gregarious. The parallel with the dog is not a valid one.

Does not the truth lie rather in the supposition that it is not the Friend that is the instinctive delusion but the isolation? Is not the real deception, our belief that we are completely individualised, and is it not possible that this that Professor Murray calls "instinct" is really not a vestige but a new thing arising out of our increasing understanding, an intellectual penetration to that greater being of the species, that vine, of which we are the branches? Why should not the soul of the species, many faceted indeed, be nevertheless a soul like our own?

Here, as in the case of Professor Metchnikoff, and in many other cases of atheism, it seems to me that nothing but an inadequate understanding of individuation bars the way to at least the intellectual recognition of the true God.

6. RELIGION AS ETHICS

And while I am dealing with rationalists, let me note certain recent interesting utterances of Sir Harry Johnston's. You will note that while in this book we use the word "God" to indicate the God of the Heart, Sir Harry uses "God" for that idea of God-of-the-Universe, which we have spoken of as the Infinite Being. This use of the word "God" is of late

theological origin; the original identity of the words "good" and "god" and all the stories of the gods are against him. But Sir Harry takes up God only to define him away into incomprehensible necessity. Thus:

"We know absolutely nothing concerning the Force we call God; and, assuming such an intelligent ruling force to be in existence, permeating this universe of millions of stars and (no doubt) tens of millions of planets, we do not know under what conditions and limitations It works. We are quite entitled to assume that the end of such an influence is intended to be order out of chaos, happiness and perfection out of incompleteness and misery; and we are entitled to identify the reactionary forces of brute Nature with the anthropomorphic Devil of primitive religions, the power of darkness resisting the power of light. But in these conjectures we must surely come to the conclusion that the theoretical potency we call 'God' makes endless experiments, and scrap-heaps the failures. Think of the Dinosaurs and the expenditure of creative energy that went to their differentiation and their well-nigh incredible physical development. . . .

"To such a Divine Force as we postulate, the whole development and perfecting of life on this planet, the whole production of man, may seem little more than to any one of us would be the chipping out, the cutting, the carving, and the polishing of a gem; and we should feel as little remorse or pity for the scattered dust and fragments as must the Creative Force of the immeasurably vast universe feel for the DISJECTA

MEMBRA of perfected life on this planet. . . ."

But thence he goes on to a curiously imperfect treatment of the God of man as if he consisted in nothing more than some vague sort of humanitarianism. Sir Harry's ideas are much less thoroughly thought out than those of any other of these sceptical writers I have quoted. On that account they are perhaps more typical. He speaks as though Christ were simply an eminent but ill-reported and abominably served teacher of ethics--and yet of the only right ideal and ethics. He speaks as though religions were nothing more than ethical movements, and as though Christianity were merely someone remarking with a bright impulsiveness that everything was simply horrid, and so, "Let us instal loving kindness as a cardinal axiom." He ignores altogether the fundamental essential of religion, which is THE DEVELOPMENT AND SYNTHESIS OF THE DIVERGENT AND CONFLICTING MOTIVES OF THE UNCONVERTED LIFE, AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE WITH THE IMMORTAL PURPOSE OF GOD.

He presents a conception of religion relieved of its "nonsense" as the cheerful self-determination of a number of bright little individuals (much stirred but by no means overcome by Cosmic Pity) to the Service of Man. As he seems to present it, it is as outward a thing, it goes as little into the intimacy of their lives, as though they had after proper consideration agreed to send a subscription to a Red Cross Ambulance or take part in a public demonstration against the Armenian Massacres, or do any other rather nice-spirited exterior thing. This is what he says:

"I hope that the religion of the future will devote itself wholly to the Service of Man. It can do so without departing from the Christian ideal and Christian ethics. It need only drop all that is silly and disputable, and 'matter not neither here nor there,' of Christian theology--a theology virtually absent from the direct teaching of Christ--and all of Judaistic literature or prescriptions not made immortal in their application by unassailable truth and by the confirmation of science. An excellent remedy for the nonsense which still clings about religion may be found in two books: Cotter Monson's 'Service of Man,' which was published as long ago as 1887, and has since been re-issued by the Rationalist Press Association in its well-known sixpenny series, and J. Allanson Picton's 'Man and the Bible.' Similarly, those who wish to acquire a sane view of the relations between man and God would do well to read Winwood Reade's 'Martyrdom of Man.'"

Sir Harry in fact clears the ground for God very ably, and then makes a well-meaning gesture in the vacant space. There is no help nor strength in his gesture unless God is there. Without God, the "Service of Man" is no better than a hobby or a sentimentality or an hypocrisy in the undisciplined prison of the mortal life.