

IX THE HEBREW SOLUTION

(2) THEODICY

I THINK I can best preface this lecture by giving at this point some brief account of an experience which has suggested the line of thought pursued in this and the following lectures.

During the spring and early summer of 1916 it was my privilege to work among soldiers in one of the great base camps in France. My special duty was to deal with difficulties of religious belief and practice, and in my private conversations and public discussions I got some knowledge as to where these difficulties mainly lay. The great subject of interest for thoughtful men was God and the War, and the ever returning question was, "How can we believe in Almighty God while a hell like this is going on?" Though they were not of the officer class as a rule, many of them were highly educated men. One man, I remember, a corporal in the R.A.M.C., told me had been a Member of Parliament, and afterwards he became a Cabinet Minister. Another has since become a distinguished artist. The level of intelligence was good, they showed not the slightest captiousness, and they were all desperately in earnest, as well they might be, for many of them were back for rest from the grim struggle in the Salient, and all over

Northern France the armies were moving to the Somme.

The speaker in these poignant hours with men who were plainly feeling after God, had to give a reason for the faith that was in him, and a ground for moral sanity and courage that would not give way beneath these men in the struggle that was before them. The experience led me to think all my old thoughts on the fundamental mystery of Evil over again, and I found that I had to state the whole Christian idea that we might get down to ultimate Reality together. In doing so I made a discovery for myself that I ought to have made before, that in dealing with this fundamental problem of Evil every one of the great interpreting principles or ideas I found myself using had its roots deep in the Old Testament revelation.

How had the Hebrews come by them? By the revelation of God, certainly, but under what circumstances and by what processes of thought? It became clear to me that the Hebrews had been just in our position, fighting for their faith and thinking out, in the presence of apparently overwhelming God-denying evil, how they must think not only of Almighty God, but of the world and the soul which He had created and which He governed. It is sometimes thought that only the Book of Job deals with this problem of evil, but this, I believe, is quite a mistake. Job deals only with a particular form of the problem, that of undeserved suffering. But in truth the whole circle of Hebrew thought is conditioned by the existence in the world that God has made of evils, both inward and outward, that seem to deny His existence. Certainly if any

nation had experienced the tragedy of evil in its full bitterness, it was Israel. What a story of human struggle and agony lies behind the Old Testament, of hard-bitten wanderings in the sterile desert, of captivities in Egypt and "the iron furnace of Babylon," of fierce civil war, of flaming cities, of battle and murder, and sudden death. "Look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," cries the unknown voice which wailed the dirge of Jerusalem fallen. Assuredly the discipline of Israel through the centuries was hard, as it clung grimly to its ridges of rocky upland, and few fertile valleys and cornlands, while the great military empires of the Nile and Euphrates valleys fought for sovereign dominion around them, or marched their armies against them.

Against all these overwhelming forces they had their one great ally, the Living God. Of Him prophet and psalmist were sure, and holding fast to that faith, and striving to hold their people fast to it, they were led on inevitably to deepen and broaden their whole conception of the God in whom they believed, and to interpret the formidable world around them in terms of that faith. The theology of the Old Testament is thus at the same time a Theodicy, a justification of the ways of God with men. That this passed through certain stages of development seems to me too plain to be denied. It is clear, for instance, that the grand monotheism of the later prophets, with its sweeping claim that the God of Israel is the one rightful Sovereign over all peoples, arose out of the conflict of Israel with the great would-be world empires of Assyria and Babylon. Yet though the

Old Testament view is "a growing revelation," and therefore passes through stages of development, it is one coherent interpretation of Nature and human life all the way. As I hope to show, it persists in the fuller New Testament revelation, and, as I believe, must be the ground-work of every adequate interpretation of the nature of human life to-day. What then is that Hebrew Theodicy of which I have spoken, and what has the full Christian revelation added to that solution?

(1) First of all, and at the foundation of everything else, the Old Testament contains the enormously important assurance that there is some all-justifying permanent purpose being secured through the suffering and tragedy of human life. In this matter the religion of the Bible (for the New Testament here simply deepens and clarifies the Old) is alone among the religions of the ancient world with the single exception of Zoroastrianism, which also believes in a living God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.¹ The Hebrews believed that through all the sins of their people and all the calamities that befell them, the sovereign God of holiness, righteousness and grace was working His purpose out, that one day history would culminate in the coming of His Kingdom, that "the earth would be full of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea," and that this culmination would justify all His ways with them. There was nothing like this in the context of the pagan religions of the time, and there is nothing like it outside "Christendom" to-day. There is one very

¹ The Zendavesta does not teach a fundamental dualism. Abriman is not really the equal of Hormuzd.

singular feature of pagan religions generally. Whenever they think about the course of Nature and history, whenever they try to give an account of how the world came into being, and whither it is tending, they tend to divide its history into "ages," and to think of it as being a series of repetitions of these. This singular contrast between the faith of the Bible and practically all other faiths is so important, and yet so little realised, that it seems desirable to dwell for a little upon it.

We find this belief in peoples so widely separated in space and time as the Aztecs in America, the Babylonians in the Euphrates valley, the Buddhists and Brahmans in India and, in the fullest detail, among the Greeks and Romans of classical antiquity. The prevailing, and perhaps the universal idea, is that the earlier ages were better than the present. This is probably due to the belief that the world as it came fresh from the creative hands of the gods must have been better than the world of to-day. If we take the cosmogony of classical antiquity as typical of the literature on the subject, history began with the Golden Age of unclouded goodness and happiness. This was followed by the age of Silver, this again by an age of Brass or Bronze, and this again by an age of Iron, each age showing deterioration from that which preceded it, violence, greed and war destroying the happiness of mankind.

But would this process go on for ever? Ancient thought shrank from that dire possibility, and reached instead another conception of history. There would come a time when some great cosmic cataclysm would overwhelm the race of men, and out of the chaos a new Golden Age would arise to

be followed by a similar succession of ages, each inferior to its predecessors, leading on to another cataclysm and a new golden age and so on *ad infinitum*, like the turning of a vast wheel. Such is the underlying conception of history that finds expression sometimes in references to the Golden Age, and sometimes, in its fulness, in Greek literature from Hesiod downwards. In Roman literature we meet with it in Ovid, Virgil, Horace and many others. The philosophers took over the idea of endless circular recurrence of all things from the myths and the poems. "Plato and Aristotle believed that the material earth had existed from all eternity and would go on existing to all eternity, but that every human civilisation would sooner or later perish by some great natural catastrophe—flood or earthquake. After that the few survivors would hand on, in out-of-the-way places, fragments of the arts and the sciences of the civilisation, till later generations gradually built up a new civilisation to perish in its turn. The Epicureans taught that worlds were always being constituted by chance collisions of atoms. . . . Sooner or later each world was broken up again, and the same sort of thing would go on for ever. . . . The doctrine of eternal recurrence was formulated most forcibly by the Stoics, the most widely popular of all the schools. As against the Platonists and the Aristotelians the Stoics maintained that the present world was not eternal. The whole universe had been constituted by a condensation of part of the Divine Fire which was Reason and God. After a destined period it would all be reabsorbed again into the Divine Fire . . . and the Fire and God

remain alone for a period in solitary oneness and bliss. Then at the destined moment another world precisely like our world would be formed out of the Fire, run its course precisely like the course of ours and be reabsorbed. And so on for ever and ever."¹

This is startlingly like the Vedantist view of Brahman, the absolute Being, and the sense world of Maya, illusion, with its ever recurring kalpas or cycles. If we may make a picture of a philosophy, Brahman is like a mighty peak round which eddy the mists of the phenomenal world. Brahman knows no change. He is beyond space and time. But the mist world has its sequences of ages or kalpas, each appearing and disappearing in its turn. This is the teaching of the standard Indian philosophy, the Vedanta. One of its most authoritative modern exponents, Deussen, expresses the matter thus: "While by creation we understand something done once for all, and therefore at a given time, the consciousness of the Vedanta is dominated by the concept that from Eternity to Eternity the world periodically re-emerges from and again returns to Brahman, *i.e.* emerges and returns times without number: the future world periods are measureless."

The Vedanta is the philosophy of Hinduism, but the same idea of endless recurrence haunts

¹ Edwyn Bevan, *The Hope of a World to Come*, Essex Hall Lecture, pp. 28-29. This is an admirable summary statement of the contrast between the cyclical and linear views of history. Other references, *Hasting's Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*; Ages of the World article; specially Söderblom on Zoroastrian ideas and Söderblom's Gifford Lectures, *The Living God*; also Baron von Hügel, *Essays*, Second Series, pp. 30-31.

the thought of Buddhism as well. In spite of Gautama's discouragement of all speculation the brooding Eastern mind has not been content to confine itself to just so much knowledge of the great universe as bears directly on the attainment of the blessed life, but has framed systems of thought to explain the course of nature and human history. These, too, are haunted by the thought of endless recurrence, the turning of the great wheel of phenomenal existence. All the schools of Buddhist thought, Northern and Southern, are agreed that "there is no beginning of Samsara or Transmigration, and will be no end to it." The causally related field of sense desires, and phenomenal illusion from which the Buddha came to deliver men by the extinction of desire, sweeps on interminably into the Unknown. Men

do not know

How long untired, unspent, that giant stream shall
flow.

In this ever-flowing stream, moving on in cycles of gradual deterioration and renovation, souls appear in endless successions and transmigrations. From some indefinite higher region Buddhas appear to show to hapless human spirits how to escape from that endless tide. What ultimately becomes of these Buddhas and those who follow them is left in the mist of the unknown. At last they enter Nirvana. What Nirvana is we cannot tell with any confidence, but the preponderance of opinion is that it means in effect, annihilation or absorption. Certainly the logic of the system leads to that view, but the final end is left in a golden haze. About the stream of phenomenal illusion there is no doubt.

It goes on interminably and meaninglessly. No purpose animates it or directs it, no reason illuminates it. It is a mere *datum*, deliverance from which is man's chief good.

Sects have arisen in modern Northern Buddhism, in China and Japan, possibly under Christian influence, perhaps from a revolt of the human heart and intelligence, which have not only transformed Nirvana into a "Western Paradise" and Buddha into a kind of limited divinity, but have sometimes even anticipated a cosmic salvation. But the logic of the system and the historical teaching of its Founder are against them. To him there is never ascribed the origin, or any control of that vast and gloomy ocean of phenomenal being amid which, as it were, drowning souls appear in their many transmigrations, through unending cycles of change. Such control as Buddha and the Bodhisatvas have exerted is not over the phenomenal ocean, it is purely over those whom they instruct how to escape from it.

There is something very remarkable in this agreement of ancient pagan thought as to the cyclical or circular nature of the course of history. The primitive religions have no conception of history or even of Nature as a whole, and so we cannot expect them to contribute anything of importance to the subject, but wherever religions and civilisations reach a certain point of development they seem almost inevitably to fall into this cyclical description, this cheerless and paralysing conception of the great universe. It means that there is no significance or purpose in it, nothing produced by all the striving, nothing taught by all

the suffering, nothing won by all the praying, that the gods or the Necessity which is over gods and men, deem worthy of preservation. Nor can the utmost striving of the hero or the statesman or prophet prevent the fatal ebbing of the tide. In opposition to this cyclical view is the distinctive view of the New Testament and also of the Old, with their conception of God, their fundamental belief that the world of Nature and of human life is realising a purpose wholly worthy of Him, and that those who give their lives to Him have the universe at their back. The symbol of all pagan views of Nature and of history, it has been truly said, is the circle, the symbol of all truly Christian ways is the line. The figure, it may be granted, needs some modification, the line is not straight but spiral, but in its broad effect it is, I believe, true, and I shall accept the term, the linear theory of history.

There is no doubt whatever that this is the view not only of the New Testament, but of the Old. It is, indeed, the distinctive view of the Bible, wherein it differs from practically every pagan faith, ancient or modern. Here we have the secret of the quenchless vitality of the Bible. It believes in God, and because it believes in Him it believes that the world of Nature and of human life is realising a purpose wholly worthy of Him, and that they who give their lives to Him for that end have the universe at their back.

This faith pervades the Old Testament. The whole literature is instinct with divine purpose and therefore points forward. From the call of Abraham onwards Israel is represented as knowing

itself to be a people of destiny, created to realise a divine end. "In thee (Abraham) shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "What we call 'Messianic' views necessarily belonged, in a certain sense, to the very essence of this religion." There is thus a latent universalism in the faith of Israel, even in its earliest stages. "Since the God of heaven and earth is the covenant God of Israel, the people cannot but be confident that its God and its salvation must be everywhere victorious and be revealed before the world as *the* God and *the* salvation."¹ Out of this fundamental faith there springs up, under the challenge of present and impending evil, the Messianic Hope. The God in whom Israel believes is no mere "spectator of time and existence," no mere Absolute, emitting and engulfing world after world, but the creative Father, who is making something that will be worth all the anguish and the tears. With that faith Israel could never contemplate anything but final victory and definite salvation. Yet it knew that such victory was beyond its powers to win. It had too just a measure of its own powers and of the evil which opposed it, to have any such belief. But this dire certainty drove it farther into the sanctuary of its faith, and it won there the assurance that God Himself would send His deliverance by sending Him who would bring definite and final salvation and complete the history of the world.

What we see then is not the endless turning of a kaleidoscope, in which the old patterns sooner or later return. Something new is being *created*, something is being achieved. Moreover there is a

¹ Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. ii, p. 334.

nearer and a farther horizon. God's Kingdom, the Messianic reign, will be accomplished on earth. But beyond the world of space and time, already in the later prophetic writings and in the psalms, there opens a farther and wider horizon. Later Hebrew and Jewish thought is no longer content with the primitive imagery of a world in which all the righteous shall live to be a hundred years old in peace and felicity and triumph, and the "lion eat grass like the ox, and the child lay its hand on the cockatrice's den." The great conception of immortality looms up and becomes ever more prominent as Israel enters a pass through the long gloomy defile of Judaism, and prophecy is supplanted by Law and Apocalypse, during the period between the Testaments. With the advent of the Gospel and the rise of the Christian Church, the long winter breaks up. All the trumpets of the spring are sounding in the New Testament. The religion of faith and hope and love has come at last to men, God Himself has come to His people. The æon of His new creation has come in, and His spirit is visibly at work creating that new order. I believe that we entirely miss the meaning of early Christianity if we miss the fact that it is an optimism, that as Edward Caird once said, "Jesus Christ was the greatest optimist that ever lived."

The optimism of the New Testament is one, however, that takes the fullest account of the facts of human sin and of the human tragedy of circumstance which reaches its culmination in death. At the very heart of the Gospel there is the Cross, which is the disclosure of the dark depths of sin and of death in its most agonising and ignominious

form. There is here, therefore, a continual reminder of the reality of the sin and misery of mankind. But it is all, as it were, contained in something greater, the grace of Almighty God. The first aspect of the Cross leads to pessimism. When we see deeper, it is the symbol of boundless optimism, for through it we see to the heights of the love of Him who is the Sovereign, Creator and Lord. This insight is what gives to all the greater apostolic writings their unique power of invigorating the spirit of man. Such was the love of the Creator and Sovereign! It cannot but be that He will triumph at the last, that He will fully realise His purpose, for is He not sovereign? So the whole linear conception of history which we find in the Old Testament is taken up into the New, but it is greatly deepened and widened.

That there are pessimistic versions of Christianity current in the world to-day we have seen. These are not confined to those parts of continental Europe which have suffered most in the war, where we might have expected them, but we find them in our own country as well. Dean Inge, for instance, holds that we have no ground for thinking that the course of history is leading on to some universal blessed consummation. Christianity is for the spiritually minded few, who are able by their insight to pierce through the evil and inherit eternal life. For the rest, if I understand him rightly, there is little but the old cyclical great year going on apparently interminably, without any real and lasting progress. How is this pessimistic view of history derived from the New Testament? It is got, I think, by the simple excision of the whole

Advent element from the teaching of our Lord, as part of the Jewish inheritance of Christianity which does not belong to its real essence. That this is critically untenable has long, I think, been conclusively shown. It is clear that our Lord predicted His own return in glory and in power, and that the great majority, if not the whole, of the early Church had that expectation. The New Testament outlook is certainly, therefore, upon the victory of God's Kingdom in the world of space and time, as well as upon the vaster background of eternity. That is what makes the simple dropping of the Advent teaching as Jewish survival so dangerous. It means a subtle but drastic change in the whole New Testament outlook on the earthly future, for assuredly we shall go into it expecting defeat rather than victory, and we shall look out upon nature and history with very different eyes if we think of all their vast processes as converging at last upon collapse rather than transfiguration. We shall inevitably lapse back into the pagan conception of cycles, rather than the linear conception of the Bible.

It is not my purpose here to enumerate the many factors, human and divine, in the spread of early Christianity in the exhausted Græco-Roman world. I wish to single out one of these which is fundamental, and which, I think, until recently has never been adequately realised. It is difficult for us to-day to realise that the world into which Christianity came was one without faith that the world had any purpose or meaning at all, for that is what, as we have seen, the cyclical view of Nature and history implies. This dreary concep-

tion was common not only to the dying polytheisms of Greece and Rome, with their gorgeous temples and ritual, but, as has been said, the philosophic schools as well. In the cyclical view of history human striving for the good of one's kind means in the long run nothing at all. The one thing a man can do is to keep his own soul brave and clean and unbroken by evil fortune. Stoicism was the natural creed of the finer spirits in the pagan world of the early Roman Empire, and it had no finer example than Marcus Aurelius. Yet who that has read his writings has not discerned the note of weariness in them, the weariness not only of a man, but of a dying age, whose gods had grown old and passed away, and whose philosophy lacked the great quality of hope, and could only construe the universe in terms of endless recurrence? The teaching of the Stoics could brace men up to maintain their own uprightness and superiority to fortune. But fortune itself was absolutely indifferent to them, did not care whether they lived or died or rose or sank in the scale of moral being. It was a great wheel intent only on accomplishing the revolutions of its great year. Into this dreary world of thought came "the new race," believing that the world meant something, that "it meant intensely and meant good." It believed that God was working His purpose out, and the true life for man was not the self-centred life, even though it was intent on its own moral perfection, but the life that threw all its energies into the divine purpose, and became a "fellow-worker with God." To the older view a man's life made little difference to the great year. "All the windy ways of men are as dust

that rises up and is lightly laid again." But to each Christian his life was a great thing, something that he had to live once for all, and that could never be repeated. For him to move in a circle meant death, to move in the line of God's purpose, life everlasting. By his faithfulness or infidelity the Lord's victory might be hastened or delayed. Inspired by such faith "the new race" threw itself into the battle with an unconquerable courage that more than made up for its poverty in numbers.

Rickert¹ believes that it was this quality of zeal and joy in living and suffering that above all else secured the final victory to the early Church. The man who believes that the universe has a purpose and meaning, and that his own life can fulfil that purpose, is certainly worth infinitely more as a soldier of a cause, than the man who is always thinking of his own perfection. However that may be, certain it is that a great and kindling faith has a wonderful power of attraction. The finest and bravest spirits gravitate to it by a kind of spiritual affinity. God's new truth attracts those who in this measure have beforehand been followers of His Spirit. There is little doubt that thus in time the older faiths and philosophies became so weakened by the loss of their finest witnesses that it only needed the Act of Constantine to bring the whole mighty fabric of Paganism to the ground, and so the cyclical conception of history gave way to that of the Bible, which for many centuries in one form or another held the foreground of Western civilisation. Wherever that

¹ Quoted by Baron von Hügel in *Essays and Addresses*, second series, pp. 30-31.

conception has prevailed, men have been convinced that there was a deep and wonderful meaning in human life, and a purpose in the immense Nature environment, that all things and men, "the stars in their courses, the seas in their flowing," all the myriad processes and events in human life, were convergent to an all-justifying end, a result so great and good that it would be worth while even for God Himself to keep it in being for ever and ever. There has been, and still is, divergence of mind among Christians as to the narrower eschatology, as to whether or no God's Kingdom will triumph in the world of time. There is no doubt, never has been any, as to its larger eschatology, its triumph in eternity. Thus to all Christian thought there is *meaning* in all things. History is not mere recurrence, its course is once and for all, and man plays his part in it, not as an actor in a drama who may have the same part to play a thousand times, but as a warrior in a decisive battle which must be finally won or irremediably lost. For many centuries this view of life held the field in Western civilisation. But in our day the older pagan view has returned in modern forms, in which, instead of the transcendent and sovereign Creator, we have Nature as the Absolute and science as its sole interpreter. Inasmuch as science takes no account of anything but facts and events, and has stripped these of values, except as subjective creations of man's own mind, it cannot tell us anything of a creative purpose or any cosmic end, and so it is left to a pure inference from the facts and events of Nature to discover if there is progress and meaning in the world at all.

I would not under-estimate the contribution which science, by the theory of evolution, has made to those who believe in the linear view of history. But this, taken alone, is plainly insufficient to sustain that view. For a considerable time men thought that it was, and even to-day we get the social Utopianism of Karl Marx and the more sanguine of the Humanists, combined with a philosophic Naturalism that is really quite incongruous with it. For if we believe, as the second law of thermodynamics teaches, that the energy of the universe is in continual process of "degradation," like a clock running down, and that human history can only terminate in a final age of ice and perpetual night, and if we believe that the only real universe is that of space-time energy patterns, then everlasting life, personal and racial, is a mere dream created by the "wishful thinking" of man. In that vaster frame of the physical universe, biological evolution shrinks to a mere episode. The final word is Death and not Life. All Life and Love and Beauty and Goodness "burn to the same white ash at last."

The growing realisation of all this, accentuated by the great disillusionment of the war, has shaken to its foundations the whole idea of indefinite "progress" as the law of history, which played so great a part in the nineteenth century. Mr Bury has written the story of that idea in an admirable monograph. He has traced it to the rationalism of the eighteenth century, the revolutionary optimism of the French Revolution, and the opening of the age of science with the new sense of control over the powers of Nature which came with it.

That something of its early exhilaration still remains we can see from some of the Humanist writers. The fanatical optimism of Russian Communism is a close parallel with the optimism of the Age of Reason. In both cases the existing absolute monarchies had become an incubus on the growing life of their countries, and with their disappearance men breathed more freely and hoped and believed in the future and an earthly paradise to be won by man, in the earlier case through the principle of liberty, and in the latter through collectivism and the machine. But in spite of these survivals the prevailing temper of our age is far more sombre. It has lost faith in indefinite progress. It has a secret feeling in its heart of the iron ruthlessness of the final order of Nature, and the cyclical conception of the great year which, as we have seen, was universal in the old classical Paganism seems to be coming back again in the new.

Nietzsche gave it shrill expression in not a few of his writings. For some obscure reason he seems to have thought what other ages, who were very familiar with it have found to be an intolerably tedious and depressing conception of life, a veritable gospel. An acute critic¹ thinks that in his passionate defence of the "eternal recurrence" the motive was a yearning to retain the last remnant of the old metaphysical belief in immortality.

Spengler, in his sombre book, *The Decline of the West*, has an analogous conception of the course of history. To him the whole linear conception

¹ Mügge, *Nietzsche: His Life and Work*, p. 312.

of history as a process realising absolute values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness is obsolete. It is a provincialism of Western civilisation. There are really no absolute ideals discoverable by us and valid for all peoples. Each civilisation has its own. We have to study each civilisation "morphologically," as a whole, and when we do so, we find that each has its day, its morning, evening and night. They are all under destiny which has so decreed, and none can escape its inevitable fate. Here we have simply a variant of the cyclical conception, supported by a formidable wealth of erudition.

Certainly the old conception of indefinite evolutionary linear progress of the Victorian Age, which is still too lightly taken for granted by some of the Humanist writers, seems to have gone for good. Even Herbert Spencer, the prophet of evolutionary philosophy of that period, at the close of his book on *First Principles*, where he has been tracing the vast scope of the evolutionary laws through the whole range of Nature and history, winds up his survey by admitting that, in the end, our whole solar system is on its way to universal dissolution, but finds consolation in the thought that somewhere else in the universe the story of evolution will be taken up anew. This, too, in its turn will run down like a clock, but somewhere else will start again "alternate eras of evolution and dissolution." And then there is suggested the conception of a past, during which there have been successive evolutions analogous to that which is going on, and a future during which successive other evolutions may go on—ever the same in

principle, but never the same in concrete result. Here we have, it is clear, yet another version of the ancient idea. It would appear, therefore, that the issue between a cyclical and a linear conception of history is still a live issue. The chapter of the rise of modern science has made no real difference in that essential matter as to whether the natural universe has a meaning and a purpose, or whether its whole life is best symbolised by the mechanical motion of a revolving wheel. It is worth dwelling as we have done on this dreary but persistent theory, if only to throw into relief the alternative view, that which is persistently maintained throughout the whole of the Bible, the view that we are living in the heart of a great creative process, which is making that which will be worthy of eternal life worth keeping for ever, when the scaffolding shall be taken down and the building revealed.

Here, I think, is one of the central issues in the Christian Apologia to-day. It is at least the fundamental issue that arises between the Christian and the man who says that he finds it impossible to believe in God because there is so much pain and tragedy in the world. Cost there certainly is, but the first question to ask is whether the result is worth the cost. If the course of history is cyclical, "the mere drift of cosmic weather, doing and undoing without end," then pain and sorrow and death are gratuitous, and we cannot call the unknown source of all things good. But if the result is of lasting beauty and eternal worth, the whole process is transformed. It becomes a means to an end. To the outward eye a surgeon at work

may seem a torturer and butcher. When we understand what he is doing we may admire and reverence him. Is such a transformation possible in our view of the enormities of Nature? We are under too great disadvantage in answering this question. We are living in the very heart of an unfinished process. That is true even of Nature herself. She is still in process of evolution, and bears a very different aspect to-day from what she did in the æons of pre-history. To us, as a matter of fact, she appears much more friendly than she did to our forefathers. Still more is this true of human history. It is quite clear that if there be any meaning in the universe it must be found not in the earlier stages of the immense process, but in the later, not in Nature but in history. But there is no indication that we are anywhere near the end of that process. We may indeed be only in its earlier stages. The scaffolding is up, the general structure of Nature is definitely marked, but it may be that in the history we know, we are as yet looking only at the lower courses of the masonry that will one day be a temple. We are living in an unfinished world, and so cannot adequately estimate either the scaffolding or the building, unless indeed the architect has taken us into his confidence, and in some measure given us to see the future building as he sees it. Further, besides the difficulty of our understanding an unfinished world there is the further difficulty of the limitations of our own natures. Do we fully understand our fellow-men, or even ourselves? In part this is due to our own finitude, and in part to our own moral failure. We are both unde-

veloped and morally warped, and it would plainly be unreasonable for us to expect intellectual completeness while our own intellectual and moral powers are so imperfect. In fact, any solution of the riddle of the world that had no gaps and difficulties in it would be gravely prejudiced by that fact. We have to keep both these cautions in our minds as we pursue our inquiries.

What, then, is the Christian solution?

We have, first of all, the undeniable fact that Nature with all her ambiguities has produced man. Out of Nature has come humanity, and the real question now before us in this lecture is as to whether man is worth all the labour and suffering, all the blood and fire and tears which have gone to his making.

When men like Mr Lippmann and Mr Huxley impeach the universe and say that it is impossible that a world which is so cruel and unjust to man can have a just and loving source, we must remind them that man owes his very existence to this austere discipline. They judge Nature by certain ideals and standards. They say the world is often unjust and cruel, therefore it cannot have had a just creator and sovereign. If man is not worth it, then the cosmos is an irrational and unmoral place for all its uniformity and order. But if he is worth it, then there must be something unreasonable in all these clamorous impeachments of the cruelty and unreason of the natural order.

The worth and sacredness of man is vital to any reasoned Theism. On the other hand, it will, I believe, be impossible permanently to maintain

that worth and sacredness of man in a world without God.

The Nature environment, if it could speak, might say, "You say I am blind, unreasonable, unjust and cruel. Yet see what I have made by these methods which you find so blundering and ruthless. I have made Man. I have sculptured his body, his heart and his brain, without which he would have been a helpless disembodied spirit. Without me he could not have rejoiced in colour and sound or fragrance or been able to give his joy expression. By my hardness to him I have driven him into society, and all that wealth of love and loyalty in family, fatherland, city and state, which society implies. Take my apparent cruelty and indifference away, and how would he have learned courage and fidelity and endurance? How could he have learned to think, to love, to dare, and to achieve? How could he have been a man? Yes, I have been hard to him, I have made him subject to death. But without death would he ever have awakened to that vaster environment toward possession of which I have been schooling and leading him? Without death would he have learned faith?" Nature, could she speak, could say much in her defence. Without the schooling of Nature man could never have had those moral standards by virtue of which he judges and condemns her. The situation is far more complex than the accusers allow.

We see some lovely flower, and we pluck it and individualise it and think how wonderful it is that so fragile a thing should have fought so good a fight against the environment of frost and rain and

storm and stubborn soil. But the whole environment has gone to the making of the flower, it is the stuff of which the flower is made. It has persuaded and dared the flower to lay hold of it and struggle with it, and win from it its magical beauty and fragrance. The flower, as it were, has plucked its secret from the environment, that which the environment desired to be, but could not be. To explain that single flower you need not only summer sunshine, but winter nights, not only calm, but storm, not only the brown earth around its roots, but every sun and moon and star. To know it through and through you would need, as the poet said, "to know what God and man is."

Now what is true of the flower is in a much more striking degree true of man. Man is more than Nature. He is a spiritual being. That our whole argument has been directed to show. But actual concrete man as we know him to-day is to a very large extent also the product of the Nature environment which, through all the ages of history and pre-history, has fostered and fondled and persuaded, but has also intimidated and beaten and hammered him into shape. For

Life is not an idle ore
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use.

Take any one or all of the great virtues: sincerity, patience, courage, justice, love and faith. As we

realise what each of those means does there not rise up before us the environment which brought it to the historic birth, as man struggled with it for dear life and called to his aid his brothers and his God?

Let us draw our argument at this point to a conclusion. Through the whole mystery of human suffering and sorrow and death God through Nature is *making* something. He is not simply like an artist or poet creating a cosmic work of art. He is creating human spirits for real communion and co-operation with Himself and with each other. The world is thus an unfinished world, and we are here to aid in its completion. A large part of the evil in the world is therefore of our own making, or is due to our own inaction. "The world" said John Keats, giving, though he did not know it, classical expression to the ancient Hebrew faith, and to what we have called the linear view of history, "is not a vale of tears, it is a place of soul-making." The Hebrew solution, however, is wider than that. It thinks not of a multitude of independent souls, but of a triumphant humanity, a household, a family, a kingdom of God. There is not a glimmer of this possibility in either of the two statements by Lippmann or Huxley quoted in an earlier lecture. There is simply the assumption that if there be an almighty and loving God He must desire to see all His creatures happy, and since great numbers of them are not happy, there cannot be a loving God. What made John Keats object to the world being called a vale of tears? It was certainly not because he was blind to the sorrow of human life. How deeply he felt the

pathos of mortal transience his letters and poems show :

And when I feel, fair Creature of an hour !
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflective love—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

But he felt, too, that it was keying the real meaning of the universe too low, that it was a weak and lachrymose way of looking at human life and love and death. The world was a much greater place than the term "vale of tears" implies, and a place much better worth living in, calling for heroism and achievement and love even if for suffering and sorrow. Something great was afoot! It was a place of soul-making. We, too, surely feel that there is something great and fine about Keats' saying. We approve it as against the lachrymose view. Why? Because we feel that Keats thought nobly of the human spirit, that that is how we too ought to feel about it, that, in fact, it is the ultimate truth about the soul of man. But if it is the truth about the soul of man we ought also to think nobly of the great natural environment which has produced the soul, and in which its goodness can grow. It cannot be so dark a place as lachrymose and impatient people think it to be. How if, with all its pathos and tragedy, it is the only kind of world that can produce heroic human souls, the faith that can move mountains, the love that never faileth, the hope that maketh not ashamed? How if the kind of world that Lippmann and Huxley want could only at the best produce men and

women of a lower type? I think that John Keats at least would have said that he preferred the "soul-making" kind of world to the world without tears of the Humanist desire.

Before we begin to impeach the cruelty of the Nature environment and the God who made it, surely the first question to ask is this: Is the product worth while? What are we to make of humanity? There is much in the story of mankind to make us sorrowful, much to tempt us, too, to hatred and contempt as well as to pity. Yet who does not feel that there is much that is very splendid, something of a quality far above that of Nature and of boundless possibility for yet higher things? Humanism, surely, of all creeds, preaching, as it does, the service of man as the highest of all kinds of being, were it not obsessed by its naturalistic prejudices should feel this. Say what you will of Nature, it remains true of her that out of her stern discipline there has come man.

(2) But, it may be said that this view of the world-process implies limitations of the Divine Power. Mr Lippmann urges the old dilemma that either we must deny the power or the love of God, implying that in either case He ceases to be God. But it seems to me that in defining God's omnipotence we must distinguish clearly between the idea of a God limited in power by some other power outside Himself, and if I may put it with intentional crudity, as old as Himself, and a God who is self-limited. The former is a really limited God, whether the limit is set by other gods or by an eternal matter. The latter is really omnipotent. Now the Biblical conception of the world

starts from the faith that it was created by God. I cannot conceive of an omnipotent God who is unable to create new things. Surely this is the very highest reach of omnipotence, of mere power. Yet if the things which He creates are in truth real beings, and to deny their reality is to deny creation, He must take account of them. Reality, as we have seen, has been defined as "that of which we must take account." So real beings are beings of which even God must take account. So long as He does not annihilate them He must recognise them, and allow for the nature with which He has endowed them. That is self-limitation. It seems to me to follow inevitably from creation, whether that which is created is "material substance" or energy, or any living thing, or a human personality. Even as regards material substance creation seems to carry with it this self-limitation by the Creator. The more definite and determinate any created thing is the more does this become plain. But of these grades of being, human personality is unquestionably the highest. It is that of which God Himself must take the fullest account, the sphere in which God at once expresses Himself in His creative power most fully, and limits Himself the most. Here, in the very heart of the Divine Omnipotence, we have the ground of human freedom, freedom of the lower order, freedom of choice between good and evil. It has been truly said that it is a lesser act of Divine Power to make things than it is to make things that can make themselves.

To follow another line of thought, it is the Christian faith that God is Love. But Love is always essentially creative. The artist loves beauty,

and that love leads him to create beautiful things, whether they are painted on canvas or sculptured or built in stone, or woven in the more flexible and subtle medium of sound. Human beings of different sexes love each other and desire to create their like, and the family comes into being. Friends love each other, and out of that love of friendship spring the motives to help each other to fuller life and greater personality. Out of the love of the Fatherland comes the desire to make it nobler and greater yet. All pure love desires fuller life and love. Love is thus essentially the creator and guardian of life and love. Christian faith finds in the Divine Love the motive of all creation. The older forms of theology expressed this motive by saying that God created all things for His own glory, but inasmuch as the essential nature of God is Love this is only a somewhat misleading and repellent way of saying the same thing. But if Love is the motive of all creation, the climax of the creative process must be the creation of human beings who can enter into the mind of God, become "fellow-workers with Him" and love Him again and so become worthier of His love. The possibility of this, according to the Hebrew tradition, is grounded in this, that He has created man "in His own likeness." Paradoxical as it may seem, it is none the less true that in this finest of God's creative works, that into which He has put most of Himself, He has most decisively limited Himself. We can conceive of Him creating absolutely determinate spirits who could not err or sin, and of His infinite love going out to them. But can His Fatherly approval of them go out to them

in quite the same measure as to a free human spirit who, able to err and to sin, has yet overcome? Supposing mankind in the end to achieve such a victory, would there not be something greater there than spirits which, though faultless, had never been free? Thus in making free human spirits there is a deep purpose of the Creator. He may be on His way to making something greater than a world of spirits who have never been free.

(3) But clearly such freedom implies the possibility of sin, and it is part of the same Biblical interpretation of life that men have universally "missed the mark" and sinned. This is one of the great structural conceptions both of the Old Testament and the New, an essential part of the solution of the problem of Evil which is given in the Bible. There are really only two ways of dealing with the problem of moral evil in God's world. Either it is part of the very structure of the universe, in which case we are in constant peril of minimising moral evil by reducing it to man's finitude, rather than his fault, and thus of compromising the moral character of the Creator; or else of tracing moral evil to man's misuse of his freedom. The Hebrew mind in its most characteristic form, the testimony of the prophets, seems to me quite clear in its broad outlines. There are passages here and there in the Old Testament as in the New where prophet or apostle, dwelling on the greatness of God and the universality of His sovereign power, uses expressions which, if literally and logically treated, might seem to imply that evil itself was due to the Divine fiat, but they are comparatively few, and are best explained by the

psychological law that when men see any one thing white hot they are for the time incapable of seeing anything else. But the overwhelming mass of evidence in the Old Testament, as in the New, throws the whole responsibility for the sin of mankind upon mankind itself, which is accused of having, of its own motion, or prompted by temptation from the infernal world, departed from the way of the living God. This is, indeed, one of the universal and permanent elements in the prophetic writings and is echoed in the Psalms, which reveal in the most intimate way the very soul of Israel. This deep sense of sin is part of the very substance of the Hebrew literature. It cannot be minimised or ignored without radical transformation of the whole ethos of the people. It is an essential part of that Hebrew Apologia of which I have spoken. The central shrine of the faith was the moral purity and perfection of the Lord God Omnipotent, and Israel never could have maintained that in the face of the world unless it had been convinced that the dire moral condition of mankind was due not to the will of God but the sin of man.

The case is not otherwise to-day. The tendency of modern thought is to throw the main responsibility for moral evil upon Nature, and to look upon man as victim rather than sinner. The inevitable result is seen in the depersonalising of the Sovereign and the consequent loss of all faith in the moral order of the universe. Instead of the Living God, Creator and Sovereign of the universe, just, pure, merciful and loving, we have that Nature against which fierce impeachments are hurled, and which

can only be defended on the supposition that it is unconscious as well as unmoral. Moreover, since moral evil becomes entrenched in the very substance of the world, the nerve of moral courage in the war against it is cut. Many are to-day, or it would be truer to say were yesterday, protesting against the Christian teaching about sin as if it were unduly gloomy and pessimistic. But in truth it is a far more hopeful reading of life and the universe than either Naturalism or Pantheism, for all doctrines of sin imply that it is against the fundamental order of the universe. It is an intrusion or disturbance, not part of the essential nature of things. Therefore it may be overthrown and cast out. The difference between the older and the modern view is like the difference between a disease and a congenital deformity. The former may be overcome, the latter never, until the cosmos is cleansed or passes away.

It is sometimes said that the Christian doctrine of sin depends upon the Fall story and the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, and that as the historicity of this has been undermined by criticism the whole doctrinal fabric of Christianity has been undermined. I should rather say that if we really believe in an almighty, transcendent and good Creator of the universe, and if we hold to the fundamental moral belief that we ought to be just and pure and humane, while we know that we are not, we are bound to think of sin as an intrusion in God's world, as the Hebrews believed it to be. How the lapse came about we may not know. But the story of the Fall did not create the sense of sin. Rather did the sense of sin create the

story. It is a myth, no doubt, a symbolic and imaginative presentment of reality. But it is an inspired myth, a poetical and imaginative presentment of an event or a historical series of events, which resulted from man's abuse of his inheritance of freedom far back in the mists and morning of history. Every serious student of history knows that there have been periods of decadence in the higher life of man, even within the brief illuminated zone that we call history. But we can hardly hold that there has been fall within history, and refuse to allow its possibility within the far longer period of human pre-history. That there are obscurities and difficulties left in the whole region of the historical origin of sin we are not concerned to deny, but that they do not inhere in the story of the Fall, but in the plain facts of the moral situation, seems to me clear.

It is certainly an essential part both of the Hebrew and the Christian Apologia and solution of the riddle of the world, that all the moral tragedies of human life are due not to the Divine Creator and Sovereign of the world, but to the wrong-doing of man himself. "God is not the author of sin." That is fundamental, even in that classical document of Calvinism, the Westminster Confession of Faith!

But it may be said that even on the fullest Christian view of man's freedom and of sin as a human aberration from the divine order, God is the source of man's freedom, and as sin is in the world solely because of man's freedom, therefore He is, in the last resort, the author of man's sin. One would hesitate to consider such an argument

as being anything but a man of straw. But as Mr Huxley actually finds the Great War a reason for disbelieving in God, we must consider the point. We may, I think however, dismiss it with an *argumentum ad hominem*. All human fathers and mothers are responsible for bringing children into the world. Are they therefore to be debited for all the evil deeds their children do, or are they to be credited with all their virtues ?