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THE TWO TRADITIONS, ECCLESIASTICAL  
AND SCIENTIFIC.

I PROPOSE to treat in this paper two views of Tradition; one of them very old, the other comparatively new. The old view is ecclesiastical, the new view is scientific. The old view is that which commonly goes by the name of Tradition in theological discussion. The new view has not yet received the name, but on etymological grounds might fairly claim it. I shall have to begin with some very familiar and elementary statements, but trust that the subject may develop, as I proceed, into phases more provocative of thought.

The ecclesiastical view of Tradition is easily stated; and, admitting its premises, is easy of comprehension. The word *Tradition* has a very definite meaning in religious history. It may not always be easy to define the contents of Tradition. To show the real origin of this or that doctrine or practice which is said to belong to Tradition, or to trace the changes which may occur in such doctrine or practice in historical religion, and to assign the right cause for the change, may be a difficult problem. But the word *Tradition* itself stands for a much simpler and more uniform conception than is usual with

words which have figured so largely in the history of religion. The conception in Christendom comes from Judaism; and, among the Jews, Tradition meant the unwritten law of God. As Jehovah on Mt. Sinai was believed by the Jew to have directed Moses to write down certain things for a rule to the people of Israel, which made the *written law* of belief and duty, so it was believed that Jehovah had committed certain other things to Moses orally; that Moses had repeated these things to the elders who helped him in his office; that these elders had delivered them, also by word of mouth, to their official successors, and these, again, to theirs; and that thus a body of divine precepts had been handed down intact from one generation of Hebrew history to another, making the *unwritten law* of Jewish doctrine and practice. And the orthodox Jew regarded both of these rules,—the written law and the unwritten law, Scripture and Tradition,—as authoritative. The Traditions themselves finally became written in the Talmud.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of Tradition in Christian history is precisely like this of the Jews, except that Jesus and his apostles are put in the place of Moses and the elders. The Roman Catholic believes not only that the New Testament was written by divine inspiration to be a guide to the Christian Church, but that this guidance was supplemented by certain oral precepts, transmitted originally from Jesus and his apostles, and remaining now in the Church as uncorrupted and as binding as the written record. Like the Jew, the Romanist holds to the divine authority of both Scripture and Tradition.

Of course, the liability is great that any doctrine or rite which is thus committed to oral tradition alone for preservation will become corrupted, and lose in time its original form; also that beliefs and ceremonies which may spring up and grow in religious history, one hardly knows how or whence, and which find no authority in the written law, may be referred very safely for their right to exist to this source of Tradition, the authenticity of which cannot easily be put to a test. The Roman Catholic meets this difficulty by alleging the continued supernatural inspiration of the Church. The Christian Church, he claims,—by which he means his own section of it,—is saved from all corrupting influences by its own divine nature; and the

sacred trusts of doctrine and ordinance committed to its keeping by the oral precepts of the first apostles are preserved in their original integrity by the gift of the Holy Spirit, which miraculously enlightens the rulers of the Church in every age. In our own time this claim has been more closely defined, and practically made more simple, though at the expense of its rationality, by the proclamation that the Pope represents this miraculously enlightenment of the Church, and is officially clothed with infallibility.

But it is impossible that such a claim as this should be assented to by people who have once learned accurately to observe the facts of human society and history, and to use their reason upon them. As soon as and wherever thought is awakened, the claim will be questioned. The Jews never went to the extent of this modern Roman Catholic statement in behalf of the authority of Tradition; yet some of the more thoughtful and cultivated among them before the time of Jesus were wont to complain of their brethren for making too much account of Tradition in their teaching and practices. These objectors asserted that, under cover of regard for the oral law, many and gross corruptions were creeping into the faith of Israel. Notably the Sadducees made this complaint. They charged the Pharisees, who represented the mass of the people, with allowing and encouraging, under shelter of the authority of Tradition, doctrines and customs which had no vestige of foundation in the original religion as promulgated by Moses; and which, in truth, were imbibed from Persia during the period of Israel's captivity there, or had crept in from other foreign faiths. So, too, after some ten or twelve centuries of Christian history, it began to be queried whether some things were not being proclaimed and believed as Christian truth, on the authority of Tradition, whose real source might be found in Pagan religions or in the infirmities of human ignorance and passion. And no very deep learning nor preternaturally sharp eyes were required, but only the strong common sense and preponderance of reason over sentiment which characterized the Teutonic mind, to detect that these human infirmities, though clothed in saintliest robes and elevated to thrones of absolute power, were far from being saved from their natural human

consequences by any overshadowing protection of the Divine Spirit. Hence Luther and the Reformation, and the formal abolition of Tradition in Protestant Christendom as a source and channel of spiritual truth.

But Protestant Christianity also has its definition of Tradition, as well as the thing itself. Protestant theologians do not much use the word, regarding it rather as damaged phraseology. Nevertheless they claim that on Tradition rightly understood all true religion has been founded. The ordinary Protestant position is that Tradition was limited to the primitive divine act by which all necessary spiritual truth was delivered over to certain persons specially chosen and prepared to receive it, these persons writing it all down in so-called sacred books, and leaving nothing that was important to the uncertain medium of oral repetition. A well known Protestant author, of recognized authority, expresses it thus: "Primarily, Tradition stands for a doctrine first delivered by speech from God, and afterwards written in his book for the use of the Church." And, on the most important point, this agrees with the Roman Catholic definition; the point, namely, where the origin of religious truth is touched. Both Protestantism and Catholicism make Tradition the starting-point of revealed religion. They alike regard all true religion as the product of a certain supernatural act, by which the Almighty directly and personally gave to man a set of doctrines to be believed, and a code of duties to be performed. And this statement expresses the central idea in the ecclesiastical view of Tradition. Some such belief as this will be found in the ecclesiasticism of all the important faiths of the world. The Catholic definition of Tradition in Christendom, and the Pharisaic in Judaism, with their special recognition of the oral channel as well as the written message, are but different phases in the development of this one primary conception. The main and controlling thought is that religious truth is primarily given outright and complete to mankind, by a few very definite supernatural transactions between an Almighty Being and certain human beings whom he has chosen as media of communication: this truth, thus miraculously handed over to man from his Creator,

is then preserved,—either by book, or orally, or both,—as the perfect rule of faith and duty for the human race.

If what I have said thus far seems familiar and common-place, it is because I have tried faithfully to present the ordinary ecclesiastical view of Tradition,—a presentation that was a necessary condition for a clear development of the course of thought which I have in mind.

But this simple idea, natural to a childlike state of human intelligence, of resting religious faith wholly on one or two alleged historical transactions of a miraculous nature in the distant past, has not been permitted to pass unquestioned in any religion. In these latter times, and in Christendom especially, the idea has been vigorously attacked. It is objected that such a theory of the origin and authority of religious truth removes the Divine Power far away from present scenes of human life, and makes religion now a second-hand affair; that it compels the worship of the letter, and imprisons the religious sentiment in technical forms; that it requires people to observe where the Almighty *has been* rather than where he *is*, and to adore a memory more than a living Presence. It is claimed that Creative Power must be as near the earth to-day as it ever was; that a Being conceived as infinite and omnipresent cannot also be logically conceived as coming to and going away from the world, but must be ever immanent in Nature and man,—the Law of Nature's laws, the continued sustenance of every normal energy of the human mind; that Inspiration is not local, intermittent, supernatural, but constant, natural, universal; and that somewhat of genuine truth and faith has been possessed by every race and nation of the human family. In fine, instead of this traditional religion preserved through a book, or a church, or a ceremony, the counter proposition has been maintained that every man by himself stands in the attitude of immediate communication with Divine Power, and draws therefrom, through his natural faculties of intelligence, conscience, and spiritual aspiration, the moral and mental nutriment by which he lives now and is forever to live; and that, therefore, for the authority of tradition, however vouched for, as a basis of religion, must be substituted the authority of human consciousness,—or, in other words, the aggregated

authority of individual reason, intuition, conscience; that these, enlightened to the best of each man's ability, offer the requisite guide in all matters of belief and duty: the revealed word of God for each human being is to be listened for in the utterances of his own soul. This we shall recognize as the teaching of the Intuitional, or Transcendental, philosophy as applied to religion, in opposition to the doctrine of Tradition as ecclesiastically defined.

And now Science appears, propounding a new doctrine of Tradition; a kind of tradition very different from that which the ecclesiastical word stands for,—in fact, wholly undermining its chief assumptions; yet, on the other hand, crossing some of the theological affirmations of the Intuitional philosophy, and taking such a position with regard to the two sets of conclusions respectively drawn from the ecclesiastical idea of Tradition and from the philosophical idea of Intuition as eventually, perhaps, to effect a reconciliation between them in their application to religious problems.

How, then, shall we state the scientific doctrine of Tradition? Is it that man was instantaneously created, with the form, features, appearance, organs which his body presents in the advanced state of civilization where we observe him to-day, and that then, by special creative act, there was breathed into this body, as a receptacle prepared for it, a living soul, endowed with all the faculties of thought, affection, and will, such as we are now familiar with in human beings? By no means. Nor again that at special and critical times the Creator chose certain individuals out of the human race, and by exceptional and supernatural means made them the depositary of his thoughts and wishes concerning mankind,—decanting, as it were, into a few finite minds a set of theological ideas and religious precepts, with the injunction that these elect individuals were to pour out the miraculous gift in turn into some common receptacle for the benefit of their fellow-men. The scientific doctrine of Tradition, of course, is not so crudely mythological as this. It points us back to no such definite personal transaction, but takes us into the region of slowly operating, far-reaching, and subtly penetrating natural law. Yet it holds much more closely than the common ecclesiastical view of

Tradition to the etymological significance of the word. The doctrine is that each generation of men hands over to its successor, by natural ways, the consolidated results of its own experience,—passing on to the common mental property of the race whatever of accumulation it has added, of thought, affection, moral sensibility, practical power, and beneficence, to the vital stock of human society; having inherited from the preceding generation a certain amount of the same kind of stock to begin with. The process is like capital invested in trade, or money at interest. Each generation, if faithful to its trust, increases the capital which it received from its predecessor in the various kinds of knowledge open to human capacity, and in their application to human welfare; and hands down, therefore, to the generation that inherits its possessions, not only the original capital, but the income from the wise use of it added.

And the original capital of all, that sum of resources with which primitive man began business on this planet, the mental, moral, religious sensibility, or capacity for sensibility, which the first human beings are supposed to have possessed,—does the new Science resort to the ecclesiastical idea of Tradition to account for that? Does it assume that this primary mental and moral outfit was transferred outright to man in full efficiency by Creative will? Again, by no means. The new scientific view simply follows back this same idea,—that each generation begins as the product of preceding generations, and ends by the natural transmission of its own achievements to form the next generation,—and applies the conception there at the initial point of the human race. The claim is vigorously maintained by not a few of the most eminent living scientists,—indeed, we may almost say that it is established,—that the faculties possessed by the first beings that could be called human were not such as to require an act of miraculous infiltration of divine power to account for them, but were the evident result of the life and accumulating experience of thousands upon thousands of generations of beings for innumerable cycles of previous ages; that, in fact, all previous processes and energies of the universe (so far as they come within the limits of human knowledge), with their countless forms of organic life and activity,—species following upon species, and

through a natural process of differentiation and selection improving constantly by experience,—culminated in the mental and moral consciousness of man; that man, therefore, in his first appearance on the earth is himself the creature of tradition, having a genealogy that runs back through all phases of animal, and even of vegetable, life prior to him, and in the contents of his being holding the product of a force that began its career at a past era so remote as to be beyond all human power of measurement or comprehension.

This doctrine denies that any insuperable line of demarcation can be drawn between primitive man and the highest order of animals before him. It claims that there was no space, no gap, which Tradition had to leap by a miracle. No other tradition was required than that established in the natural law of transmission and inheritance. The difference between the highest civilized races of mankind to-day and the lowest existing savages is scarcely less than the difference between the lowest savages and the highest order of the brute creation. And the primeval men, according to this doctrine, were in a savage state, and doubtless lower than any existing savages. But there are tribes of savages now existing who manifest great *duiness* of mental and moral perception. Hence, it were absurd to suppose that the primitive human race was endowed with the same mental and moral ideas, or even sensibilities, that are manifest in civilized society in the nineteenth century. These ideas and sensibilities, even those moral and religious perceptions which we to-day call intuitions, are, this scientific doctrine alleges, the product of the accumulated and often bitter experience of the human race; and the beginnings of them, in that distant past which we cannot measure, are the product of the accumulated experience of races before the human. As Herbert Spencer expresses it: "The experiences of utility, organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition,—certain emotions corresponding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the *individual* experiences of utility." And Mr. Darwin, in "The Descent of

Man," sets himself confidently to the task of showing by the most patient and frank elaboration of evidence, that "there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties," but that a legitimate mental relationship, through laws of natural physical descent, exists between the two; and that the human moral sense was gradually developed by natural inheritance and growth in the same way, its origin being "social sympathy," which is characteristic of the higher animal orders as well as of man. He says it is probable "that any animal whatever, endowed with well marked social instincts, would inevitably require a moral sense, or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man." He traces religious beliefs and sentiments back by the same method, and conjectures for them a similar germination; finds something akin to the sentiment of worship in the adoration of the dog for his master; and sums up the whole argument in defining instinct and intuition by the exceedingly felicitous phrase, "inherited habit."

In this phrase, which is itself an argument, we have a concise statement of the scientific doctrine of Tradition. It carries us back to no specific, complete, full-rounded revelation of truth at some definite moment of time, gives us no picture of Infinite Being imparting by one act conscious perceptions of truth and right to the finite mind of man; but it directs us backward through the clear or tangled ways of human history, beyond the road of all recognized history and the era of all so-called Sacred Books, to a revelation that began in the first rude monosyllabic stammerings of the beings in whose intelligence first dawned the sense of the word *ought*, and whose consciousness first thrilled with the impulse of adoration before some unseen Power; ay, back of that remote era, to the strivings of Nature upward, through manifold forms of organism and tentative experiments of life, to reach the point where these stammerings became possible; and thence forward, following the revelation—the light of Truth and Social Order and Virtue—as it has spread and increased by natural process from lower forms of humanity to higher, through successive races, religions, migrations, civilizations, literatures, and through all the ages,

primeval and historic, down to this point of time in the nineteenth century and to these familiar phases of moral, religious, and social life amidst which we are living to-day.

This, then, is what may be well called the Scientific view of Tradition. And what shall we say now of its bearing on questions of ethical and religious philosophy, and especially in regard to certain widely prevailing theological conceptions in Christendom? First, we may say that the view agrees with the ecclesiastical doctrine of Tradition in this particular,—that it lays special and great emphasis upon the past for what man is at present as an intellectual and moral being. But it differs fundamentally from the ecclesiastical doctrine in respect to the mode in which the past preserves authority over the present. Ecclesiasticism teaches that there is a separate and supernatural channel, external as it were to the ordinary and natural course of human development, through which certain truths, miraculously revealed to man at the outset of his career, have since been transmitted. Science teaches that the transmission and origin of such truths is *internal*,—that these truths, or beliefs, are involved in the natural organism and development of the race itself, and become apparent in the ordinary unfoldings of human history. This scientific view, again, agrees with the intuitional philosophy—in opposition to the ecclesiastical view of Tradition—in recognizing the present declarations of human intelligence in matters of truth and duty as more authoritative than any alleged revelation at a definite era in the past can possibly be,—since the intelligence embodied in the highest human races to-day has beneath it the accumulated wisdom of all the past. But it also differs from the usual interpretations of the intuitional philosophy in that it goes back of the intuitions to account for them,—claiming ability to prove that, instead of being the direct gift or immediate manifestation of an external Creative Power, they are the gradually consolidated product of an experience extending back into an infinite antiquity: not so much, therefore, the immediate voice of a personal Deity in each individual soul, as the condensed lesson of a vast and august series of efforts of the Creative Energy. Now, since the scientific view of Tradition has points of unity with both the intuitional and the ecclesiastical schools of

religious thought, while on other points it opposes both, one of its excellent effects may be, assuming that its truth will be established, to furnish a basis of reconciliation between these two antagonistic parties. It may in time lead the ecclesiastical traditionalists to abandon their superfluous theory of a supernatural and exclusive channel for the reception and transmission of divine instruction for mankind, and to adopt instead the natural courses, through which perceptions of truth and right have been acquired and transmitted, as the legitimate and all-sufficient mode of divine revelation. And, on the other hand, it may lead the intuitionists to regard as more important than they have been wont to do the accumulated teachings of the past, or the general mental and moral sense of the most developed portions of the human race, as a means of verifying present theories and declarations which may be put forth on the alleged authority of individual personal consciousness and inward vision.

And here is a point which may well detain us for a moment, since it touches some questions of immediate practical interest. The point is that the deliverances of *individual* consciousness must be able to show a connection with the *general* human consciousness, in order to legitimate their validity. All researches into the phenomena of history are daily bringing additional proof of close organic relationship between individual man and universal man. From every direction the facts multiply, disclosing the subtle threads of the natural lineage which connects the beliefs, thought, customs, language, institutions of the modern civilized world with the farthest antiquity of the race. Thus the materials of all past human experience go to the making of the mental and moral intelligence of the present age, and produce a certain average of mental and moral sensibility, or certain common elements of mental and moral sentiment: and these common elements must appear in the action of every individual mind, whatever else it may possess, or else that mind testifies against itself as having lost by some mental derangement healthy relationship with its kind. And here is a test by which individual vagaries and idiosyncrasies may be discriminated from the genuine human consciousness; a test by which we may detect when personal conceit, or

ambition, or passion, or a disordered imagination usurps the place of a real deliverance of truth. The light of consciousness may flame up higher and brighter in certain individuals than it does in the ordinary level of humanity; but it must have beneath it for fuel, and flame up from, the same elements of mental and moral perception that have become the common property of surrounding mankind: else it is an *ignis fatuus*, a delusive taper, which, having no permanent and substantial source of sustenance, must soon expire. The genuine "Inner Light," to use the fine Quaker phrase, must be lighted from the substance of the common reason and the common conscience, with whatever exceptional brilliancy it may in some instances shine. In other words, however much consciousness may be refined in some persons to nicer sensibility and clearer perception, producing the sage and the genius, yet it must to a certain extent harmonize with the public intelligence and the public conscience, because of the mental and moral solidarity of the race. The New Testament saying, that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation," suggests a larger truth than it utters; namely, that the Infinite does not impart itself on any principle of monopoly, and that no private soul can set up a claim to have an exclusive revelation of the Divine Mind. The revelation, to be valid, must prove its hereditary relationship with universal truth. To this test we must bring all claims that may be made to a knowledge of truth on the ground of individual consciousness.

And in this test a mental safeguard is furnished against the danger that the cry of some exaggerated personal fancy or disordered imagination may be taken for the veritable voice of truth. A peril of this sort vitiates the sectarian interpretation of the noble Quaker doctrine of the "Inner Light," as also the *daimon* of Socrates, the visions of Swedenborg, the ecstasy of the Mystics, and the modern spiritualistic claim of possession and inspiration by the spirits of the departed. Whenever the doctrine of the "Inner Light," or of intuitive consciousness, has led individuals to claim the power of personal prophecy and vision, disconnected from all evidence of facts and grounds of reason; or has impelled zealous devotees to walk naked through the streets to testify to the Lord's displeasure

against the people's sin of extravagance and luxury; or has inculcated the belief that an edifying ministry may be sustained without learning, thought, or culture, on the ground that the Divine Spirit, or the spirits of dead men, will suggest both thoughts and words at the time of utterance; or has taken the form of a claim to have received a complete volume of revelations directly from God, like the book of Mormon,—we may be pretty sure that the mind in which such beliefs and impulses are generated has in some way lost healthy connection with the common mental stock of mankind, and that the real inner light of personal consciousness has been eclipsed by a cloud of intellectual delusion.

And the same test is a moral safeguard, too, against the danger that the doctrine of following individual reason and conscience may be pushed to an *extreme individualism*, under cover of which a claim may be set up for the vicious indulgence of personal passion and desire. For, just as certain mental aberrations from a certain standard of intelligence are intellectual lunacy against which society protects itself, so any gross departures from a certain common moral standard, which the aggregate of human experience thus far has established as the line of social ethics, are to be treated as moral lunacy. Whenever, under the plea of free reason and free conscience, the pursuit of individual impulse leads beyond this line, the inquiry is in order whether it is reason and conscience, or only disordered and selfish passion, that holds the guiding rein. Wherever reason and conscience really guide, there is necessarily recognition of the relation of the individual, not only to his own objects and impulses, but to the human race as a whole; and for every personal right that is claimed, a corresponding duty towards society is acknowledged.

So much for the modifications which this scientific view of Tradition might effect in the practical application of the philosophy of intuition, and for the restraints it might throw around the doctrine of individual liberty. It should be added, however, that they are not modifications that would invalidate, or restraints that would hinder, the peculiar services for humanity rendered by the great seers, sages, and geniuses,—the men who, like Moses, Sakya Muni, Jesus, Luther, Dante, Shakspeare,

appear to stand so high above their contemporaries as to gaze at truth with clearer vision and who speak or act with a power that visibly lifts mankind upward to a higher level of life. Even scientific men have visions, or catch glimpses, of great principles and laws of Nature long before they are able logically, or experimentally, to authenticate them. But these previsions of truth have their origin in some suggestion made by a fact already authenticated, and so meet the required test: which, whether in the domain of physical or religious science, is that the new truth shall have natural and valid relationship with the old; that the personal proclamation shall not be put forth on authority exclusively personal and special, but shall be based on grounds that are common to speaker and hearer,—the personal proclaimer only making a finer and clearer revelation of what is already in many hearts. There has been but one Shakspeare in human history. Yet no name in literature is so universal; no author combines so many interests of our common humanity. It is claimed in Christendom that Jesus occupied an entirely exceptional position as a teacher of religion,—that he received his truths direct from heaven, and had thence also special endorsement of his right to teach them. But the common people had little difficulty in comprehending him,—not so much, indeed, as the learned,—and, we are told, “heard him gladly.” And this was really a more genuine credential of the authority which went with his teachings, and which has preserved them to this day, than any miracles which he is alleged to have performed.

It is to be observed, too, that what is here said of the weakness of the claims which are made for special personal revelations will apply equally well to the claims which ecclesiasticism sets up for the authority of all its traditions; for these traditions, it is maintained, had their origin in a specific revelation through supernaturally illuminated personal vision, the things thus seen having been then committed to oral transmission or to scripture. The test that sets aside the claims of Mormonism and of the Oneida Community to-day, sets aside no less all irrational and immoral doctrines and customs that may appeal to the Bible, or the Koran, or the Vedas, for their right to exist. The only safe place of trust is to be found

in this gradually developing moral intelligence of the race,—which pronounces at any time its clearest voice in the communities where civilization has reached the point of highest elevation, and which in the course of human progress comes to sit in judgment on the ancient prophets and bibles themselves, with authority to sift all their teachings and to revise all traditions.

But this scientific view of Tradition—now commonly styled the doctrine of Evolution—starts questions that concern religious and moral faith more vitally than any we have yet considered. The objection that the dignity of the human race is assailed, if man be thus linked in natural kinship with the brute animals, is becoming antiquated, and needs no consideration. To ridicule the theory, and oppose those who hold it with theological abuse, neither intimidates scientific men nor abolishes the facts upon which they claim that the theory rests. To ask if you want a monkey for an ancestor may raise a laugh among the bystanders; but science is not answered by a laugh, and does not consult the caprice of human wishes so much as the purport of Nature's facts. But even if it were a question of the dignity of the human race, it might be replied that it is better to have risen from an ape than, according to the popular theological theory, to have fallen from an angel. It is more honorable to be climbing up than slipping down. And there are species of animals with whom we might more proudly claim cousinship than with some specimens of mankind. But this concern lest human dignity is to suffer from any earnestly advocated theory of science is puerile. Graver questions demand attention.

Suppose this scientific view to be true; suppose man, as we find him in civilized society to-day, with all his beliefs, faiths, moralities, humanities, arts, sciences, power, to be only a natural and gradually evolved product of the accumulated experiments of certain organic forces that have been acting upon each other from the beginning of time to the present moment: how is this to affect the common belief in God, the common belief in an immutable moral law, the common belief in conscience as the human representative of that law, the common belief in intuitive perceptions as representing absolute realities,

the common belief in humanity as in direct communication with Divinity and under divine guidance? Here are questions that go to the centre of things. They are questions that must be met with all candor and seriousness. But, in the limits of a magazine article, the answers are to be suggested rather than elaborated to completeness.

First, as to belief in God. It seems inevitable that this new scientific view of creation and of man's relation to the universe in which he lives,—that any scientific view of the matter which stands a chance of being rationally justified,—should very essentially modify the conception of Deity as it has been ecclesiastically taught in Christendom. It must, as it becomes accepted, very materially change the popular idea of the external relation which Deity holds to the universe. It must revolutionize the entire ecclesiastical theory of the method of Divine Providence. It must, in time, wholly eradicate the mechanical view of the creation and regulation of the world,—the view that represents Almighty Power as embodied in a vast individual being, patterned after the form of man, only inconceivably greater, having an existence distinctly separate from the universe, and making the world in a definite period of time and superintending its movements from the outside, as a man might make and watch over a machine. This whole conception, with all its kindred and allied notions, must be relegated to the regions of mythology.

But when we have said this, have we not said all? "All, indeed," many might be disposed to answer, "and enough to leave only atheism." But to modify the conception we may have of a being is not to abandon all belief in the being. To eradicate one form of idea is not necessarily to eradicate the substance of thought for which the idea was meant to stand. To change our theory of the method by which power may manifest itself is not to say there is no power at all. And whatever theory science may establish concerning the creation and sustenance of the universe, it does not and cannot get rid of the central substance of what mankind have meant to signify through the word *Deity* and its cognate terms in different languages and religions. Science and culture are ever modifying and refining the form of the thought, but the vital

germ of the thought remains. So, let science now trace the universe back through a system of evolving forces as far as it may, it must necessarily come somewhere to a force that resists its analysis. Scientific men admit this necessity, and, if they claim to be philosophers also, are apt to call this boundless region of powers and possibilities beyond their present search, "The Unknowable." But "The Unknown" would be a more accurate form of expression; for human thought is continually pushing its explorations into this vast land of shadows, and translating its unknown possibilities into facts of positive knowledge,—proving that behind any present boundary of the Unknown there is always power and being. Yet we cannot conceive that finite mind can ever come to the end of this region of the Unknown and be able to say there is nothing beyond, and therefore no possibilities of further knowledge. To the finite mind, let it advance in knowledge as far as it may, there must ever remain a Beyond unexplored, unlimited, infinite. And we can no more conceive of this infinite Beyond as merely blank space and time than we can conceive of it as sheer nothingness. In it we know, as well as we know any thing that our eyes cannot see nor hands touch, there must be somewhat of existence and power. Up to it we trace clearly the threads of creating, sustaining, vitalizing forces which our knowledge grasps, and we keep tracing them farther and farther as fresh knowledge pushes back continually the boundary of the Unknown. What then? Do these threads suddenly cease at that movable line? Such a supposition were as absurd as to declare that a rivulet ceases at the point where impenetrable thickets make it impossible for us further to follow back its course. We know that the Nile has a source, though we may not be able to find it. So we know that these threads of organic, formative energy, which science traces through the wondrous phenomena of the universe, run back behind the veil of human ignorance to sources of power and life whose existence must be admitted, though not revealed. And we know more. We know somewhat of the nature of these hidden sources of the universe. What is in the issue must be, at least potentially, in the source. The *elements* of being must be akin on both sides of the veil.

But there is one secret which science, with all its research,

never fathoms. The primal impulse with which things began yields to no experiments nor discoveries. This remains as much a mystery to-day as in the days of Pythagoras or of the writer of Genesis. Science follows the illuminated lines of natural laws and forces close up to the bounds of the great Mystery, and peers with awe into its depths, but never uncurtains it. Scientific men can trace the ways and by-ways of development in the world's phenomena; may be able to tell us clearly how this form has come from that, and that species from another, and how one chain of power binds all the phenomena together,—but the original power itself, the evolving, developing force, the directive agency, the formative principle, or whatever other name be given to it, eludes all search, though it must always be assumed. Who will venture to say, then, that this scientific theory of creation is atheistic; since it only comes, after its long journey, to the old Scriptural text, "Touching the Almighty we cannot find Him out"? Yet the Secret Power, Cause within cause, Force behind all laws, Motor within all movement, is necessarily assumed to exist; and the universe is somehow its work, and held within its grasp to-day! And is there not at least as much reverence in this silent recognition of Infinite Being, and patient devoted study of its ways and purposes,—though confessing that the finite mind cannot comprehend it in the entirety of its power,—as in the claim that mankind has received a definite revelation of the whole scheme and plan of creation as conceived by an Infinite Mind, and possesses a knowledge of religious and moral truth sufficient for all possible human needs for all time?

Secondly, does this new scientific view imperil the authority of conscience and moral law? I answer that, though it should be proved that conscience is a faculty which has been gradually acquired under the pressure of social experience; that moral intuitions are inherited habits of judgment into which mankind has slowly grown; that our perceptions of right and wrong, our sense of duty, our obligations of honor and virtue, are all the product of the laboriously accumulated and transmitted knowledge of things as they have been found to serve individual utility under the rough discipline of millions of generations of animated existence,—still it would not follow that the validity

of these intuitions and perceptions were disproved or even assailed. Nor is such a result claimed by any noted scientists. To account for the moral intuitions in a natural way is not to deny them. To say that intuition is "inherited habit" is not to say that intuition does not exist. It would not even follow that all the elements of these intuitions come from outward experience, and that nothing has been furnished from the mind itself, or from the *organizing* principle in animated existence as distinguished from the environment. The principle of utility may have been the practical agency for evolving the moral sense, and yet not account for the primal seed of the moral sense. Let it be admitted that all races and classes of mankind do not possess the same degree of moral sensibility; grant that there are savages who have little or no perception of the Golden Rule as a guide of life, and whose moral nature seems scarcely above that of the highest brutes,—still it is certain that, as civilization proceeds and men advance in general intelligence and culture, there is, whatever be the varieties of race or the differences in outward condition and experience, a convergence towards unity of moral perception. Whence come this common drift and direction, this steady aim within the evolving action?—this progress in the process? How happens it that the principle of utility, operating in the midst of such various and even contradictory conditions, brings out at last substantially the same result? Whence the fact that men everywhere, arriving at a certain stage of mental development, come essentially to the same moral intuitions? Can we answer these questions without admitting that there is something in the organizing, evolving power which determines moral direction and sets the process definitely towards a goal? To account for the moral facts in human history, must we not claim that there was that in the germinal essence whence all things have sprung which guided the grand process upward to a definite result,—just as there is that in the elm-seed which, amidst whatever conditions of environment, determines the product into an elm-tree, and never an oak, or any thing but an elm?

If it be objected that the facts do not indicate moral unity,—that in reality there is great difference in the moral standards of different races and communities even when tolerably cultivated,

the people of one country sometimes regarding actions as right and praiseworthy which the people of another country will condemn as wrong,—the reply is ready, that differences of this kind occur in the *application* of moral principles and convictions rather than in the principles and convictions themselves. Men may agree, for instance, that there is such a thing as justice, and define it in the same way, and alike declare its authority over human conduct, and yet differ as to what particular course of conduct justice might require in a given case. And these differences in respect to the application of moral principles are precisely such as we might expect would be produced by different sets of external conditions. But amidst all these differences there is essential agreement on the principles themselves; and this is the kind of moral unity that concerns the question under discussion. Take the nations that have risen to a civilization adequate to the production of a literature, and they show a wonderful unity in the elements of moral sentiment, and a growing unity as mental enlightenment has increased and become more general. Consider the great historical religions of mankind. With all their differences of custom and belief, and wide variety of educational discipline from outward circumstances, there is among them a startling harmony of ethical statement. We may read in them all essentially the same precepts in behalf of truthfulness, kindness, justice, purity. Is it possible that these precepts, and the moral sense of obligation involved in each of them, have been wrought out solely by the principle of serving individual utility, with no determining moral germ at the outset upon which the principle has acted? Has the principle of utility, with no essential moral distinctions or purposes as a foundation to begin upon, by mere accident or caprice amidst the heterogeneous conditions of human development, determined that certain classes of actions shall be called virtuous or just or honorable; and upon this wholly factitious and arbitrary ground finally built up a complete ethical system for mankind? Moreover, whence comes the power to distinguish between a lower and higher utility, and to choose the latter, though distant and uncertain, in preference to the former, which may be sure and close at hand? And whence the obligation that

men often feel to serve others' welfare rather than their own,—to sacrifice, indeed, individual utility to universal good? By what metamorphosis can the selfish principle of serving individual utility ever be transformed into an act of genuine self-sacrifice? Can selfishness beget the love that utterly forgets and abandons self? If not, must not Love, Good-will, have been in some way involved in the developing process of the world from the beginning? Whence comes it that the Golden Rule has been independently reached, and uttered in nearly the same form, in three different quarters of the globe and among as many different nations and religions? Whence comes it but from the fact that the principle of beneficence, or the principle of the Golden Rule, is one of the original germs of mind itself,—that it is an inherent element in the very substance of that Power which becomes manifest in the developing process of the universe,—that it was first involved and hence has been evolved? The Golden Rule comes whenever and wherever man attains to any good degree of enlightenment, because the seed of it is in his nature; or, to go farther back, because the seed of it was in the germinal substance out of which man's nature has been developed: in protoplasm, or whatever else was the primal germ-world whence all finite things started on their career.

And it argues nothing against the validity of this or any moral perception, to show that it does not appear until certain conditions of development are presented. The important question is, Does it appear at all? Is it there? And the fact that under such variety of environment, amidst such differences of external conditions and experience, men do in time develop substantially the same moral perceptions, come to the same sense of the binding obligations of virtue, reach the same convictions of the moral beauty of beneficence, show the same admiration for acts of brave honesty and self-sacrifice, is the strongest possible proof that these moral convictions and intuitions—and the same may be said of intuitions with regard to intellectual truths—represent immutable distinctions and realities. They are what they are, and could not have been otherwise than they are, because they are the very substance of that eternal power which science traces back by the pathway of wondrous phenomena to the secret places of more wondrous Mystery, and which is signified by the word

Divinity; unfolding itself, revealing its own essence and nature, in the consciousness of humanity. Thus the validity of conscience and of the moral sentiments in general, so far from being endangered by the new science, is strengthened; since their authority, instead of being left to the uncertain dependence of special personal revelation, transmitted by corruptible scripture or tradition, is established ineradicably in the nature of things.

Thirdly and finally, how must this new scientific view of the universe affect our personal relations to this Infinite Power? If this view be true, what becomes of the doctrine of Providential care and love? Doubtless, if this view be substantiated, since it must greatly modify the commonly accepted conception of Deity, it must also correspondingly modify the common idea of personal relation between him and human beings. But the relation is not necessarily on this account the less real or the less spiritually productive and satisfying. The popular theological view represents Deity as enthroned in the heavens, and as thence watching over the members of the human family with sovereign majesty or paternal solicitude, and communicating with them, through the vast intervening spaces, by the mysterious supernatural agency of his spirit. But suppose, in place of this conception, anthropomorphic and crude, we conceive of our relations to Deity as wholly internal and natural; suppose that we believe literally with Paul, that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being,"—does that make our personal relations to him any the less close and vital? The divine influence certainly is as real, if, instead of conceiving it as passing by some miraculous process through the air, we believe that it comes into our being through our natural faculties and intuitions: and these faculties and intuitions themselves are none the less the work and product of divine power, though the power has been by so long a way working up to them, than if they were the immediate creation and endowment by the Almighty for each individual soul. The thought, indeed, is intellectually and morally ennobling, that man is the culmination and crown of this vast process of the ages,—that the creative energy, which has been working its way slowly and patiently from the simplest beginnings up through manifold forms of organism and life, comes to consciousness of itself in the mental and moral being of man; and

henceforth has in him a self-directive organizer of its purposes and fulfiller of its aims: a son, who carries on his manly brow the marks of his wondrous parentage.

Nor is the power any the less near or present because of the long road by which it has been travelling. Niagara loses nothing of its stupendous mightiness, though we may trace the majestic volume of its waters back to the rills in the far-off mountains where came the first bubbles from the soil, and though the precipice itself may have been in slow process of forging for ages under the Titanic forces of Nature. The power is present and in it all the same. A rose is as sweet and beautiful, though we know it to be the organized essences of elements that have been gradually drawn from surrounding air and water and earth and the distant sun, as it would be if it were a sudden apparition in our gardens from the skies.

Will the theological critics object, however, that they miss the Father's face; that here, indeed, is order, law, majesty, beauty perchance, but no personal Providence, no paternal Heart? It is much, certainly, to see a father's face. But do we rationally expect ever to be able to localize the Infinite Father's face? Must we not be content to see its smile in the features of the universe and in the face of humanity; in the faces of our own fathers and mothers; in the lives of the good and brave; in the love of the friend at our side? Surely, it is not to remove us beyond the reach of a paternal Providence, when we believe that the providence and the paternity, the wise foresight and the loving heart, are lawrought into the very law and life of the world wherein we daily share! It is the divine energy, springing in its finite manifestations, we know not whence nor how, from the primal fount of Being, which, thus working through the ages and through all the anterior forms of existence, makes the very substance of the life that is ours to-day. Far away from God? Rather are we so close to him that we cannot see him apart from ourselves! In his light we see light. By his love our hearts are warmed and thrilled with manifold forms of human love. In our consciences we feel the pulse-beats of his eternal rectitude. Coldly separate and distant? Oh, no! Rather do we stand in the very current of his living energies;

and day by day, more literally than the old Hebrew poet thought, he maketh us "drink of the river of his pleasures."

WILLIAM J. POTTER.

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### TO BENEDICT SPINOZA.

O PURE as Christ, as deeply-souled!  
Whose life an alder-shaded stream,  
Hid from the broad day's garish beam,  
In hush of thought unrummuring rolled.

Thou outcast of an outcast race!  
From loyalty to truth no lure  
Thy step could turn,—its path obscure  
Content with even tread to pace.

With surer foot who could have scaled  
The vulgar heights? Conformist,—thee  
With loud acclaim and jubilee  
Rabbles and rabbins would have hailed.

With tardy recognition now  
Memorial honors thee await,  
There, where on earth thine humble fate  
Thou didst accept with placid brow.

E. W. BALL.