

The Achievement of Personality in a Material World.

ANY critically minded person observing the title of this article would fasten, I imagine, upon two ideas in it; viz., that personality has to be achieved, that the material world is, at present, the real sphere of its achievement.

For the purpose of this argument I shall assume that the material world is real. Many attempts, of course, have been made to reduce what we call matter either to ultimate unreality or at least to merely subjective reality, e.g., the religious movement popularly known as Christian Science, but better called Eddyism, proceeds on the assumption that the material world is essentially unreal, as the following quotation shows :

“There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is all in all, Spirit is immortal truth, matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and the temporal.”

But without entering into a criticism either of Bishop Berkeley and his modern interpreters, or of Mary Baker Eddy, we may surely assert that the material world, whatever may be its ultimate nature, does form the sphere in which our lives are played. In your metaphysical moments you may feel inclined to doubt the substantial reality of your body, but if the body weren't there *you* wouldn't be there either. The whole process of awareness, the expression of thought in language, the communication of one mind with another, are possible only, as far as we know, through this external bodily life of ours. The material world, in its varied manifestations, forms the arena in which we play our little part: it brings the challenges through which we begin to realise ourselves: it supplies the medium through which all art, whether of sculptor or painter or musician, declares its enduring message to mankind. The life we live, however we may define it, is made possible by this vast medley of experiences occurring in what we call the material world.

I assume further that personality has to be achieved. It is not given to us ready-made at the start. It is something to be won. The main purpose of this paper is to substantiate the view that when you speak of personality it must be in terms of body as well as mind: but there is no doubt that historically, both in religion and philosophy, it has been easier to regard

personality as mind, or spirit, or soul. Thus discussions on the origin of life have often taken the form of enquiries into the origin of the soul, and before the three main theories of that origin ecclesiastical thought has never been able quite to make up its mind. Pre-existence, so strongly asserted in Greek writers, failed to secure a permanent place in the thought of the Christian Church. The most distinguished exponent of the view among the early Church Fathers was the Alexandrian Origen, but ecclesiastical writers in the main were too anxious to do justice to the solidarity of humanity to give the theory of pre-existence more than a passing glance. It has no warrant in Biblical teaching. As far as more modern views are concerned, whether (with Spinoza or Hegel) you conceive the soul as pre-existent in the Deity, or pre-existent with its own individuality, they all tend to make the soul the real man to the exclusion of the bodily factor, and therefore do not fall into line with our present argument. Creationism, the view that the rational soul is created at the moment when it is infused into the new organism, was the favourite scholastic conception. Pringle-Pattison rather makes fun of this view, perhaps without proper respect to the very solid memory of St. Thomas Aquinas, when he pictures God standing by, so to speak, ready to squirt a new soul into the newly-made biological organism. The third view, that of traducianism, makes soul and body come into being together in the normal process of life-emergence, and has much to commend it from the standpoint of modern biology. But whatever view you prefer, I want to urge that personality is not to be thought of as implanted ready-made. We begin with potentialities, both mental and physical, and the fortunes of any person are only revealed in the sequel. Everything that goes to make up personality is subject to the laws of development. That is why I used the term "achievement" in the title. Life, properly understood, is to be regarded as something to be won, and in the winning of it we are to consider the part played by the material world.

There is no doubt that the thinking of the Christian Church in the West is under a considerable debt to Platonism, an indebtedness which, with Dr. Inge, we shall gladly recognise. But it is not everything in the Platonic trend of thought which accords with the Hebrew contribution to life, that contribution, that is to say, which is at the basis of the specifically Christian view. On one point in particular there is a real divergence between the Greek and the Hebrew views of human personality. In spite of the fact that Greek culture always appreciated the beauty of the body, expressed that beauty in art and developed it in athletics, it is incontestable that the philosophy of Plato tended

to exalt the soul at the expense of the body. You will recall the popular picture of the soul as a bird, flapping its wings against the bars of a cage, the cage being the body. It was not every Greek thinker who took this view: Aristotle stands out as the exponent of a view which has much in common with the standpoint of modern biology: but a considerable section of Christian thought took the line of Plato. It saw in the body something that was always antagonistic to the soul, an enemy to be beaten, or at least a foe to be carefully watched. Accordingly, we have in the Christian movement the important contribution of asceticism. In that movement, in its beginnings a lay protest against the worldliness of the Church, there came into being first the practices of solitary ascetics like the famous St. Simeon on his pillar, and then organised monasticism. The underlying philosophy was that the soul could only develop by its spurning of bodily things . . . family, appetites, society. This tendency found its corollary, when modern philosophy emerged, in the dualism of writers like Descartes. Descartes distinguished between soul and body as two substances: the matter of the material world is *res extensa*: the soul is *res inextensa*. The reasoning soul, he declared, is of a nature wholly independent of the body, and is immortal.

This conception of the dualism between body and soul, important and influential though it was, was not the only theory which held the field of Christian thought. Aristotle, as well as Plato, had his followers. It is in the teaching of Aristotle that we find the real roots of the modern biological position. He held that Nature's processes move without a break in an ascending scale from the inanimate world to the most intricate form of animate existence. Bodily and mental developments are parts of one continuous process. Soul and body bear a close relation to each other. You can separate them only in thought. So Aristotle called the soul the "form" of the body, the natural realisation of the organic body. "If the body were one vast eye," he said, "seeing would be its soul." This point of view kept its influence through the long years of mediæval Christendom and may be said to have come into its own in the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics who followed him.

While the Platonic idea, which separated soul and body, was influencing Christian writers, the other point of view, viz., that body is important to soul, kept its head above the ground. This we see, for example, in the persistence in the idea of resurrection as the typical Christian idea of the future life. It has never been the specifically Christian view to regard the future life as that of the immortality of the spiritual principle: always there has been, in the chief writers, some idea of the continuance of

soul plus some form of bodily organism. This was the expression of the view, not always clearly defined, that somehow bodily life is needed for the completeness of personality.

To-day, of course, modern biology, and, to an important degree, modern philosophy, proceed on the assumption that the dualism of soul and body must be resolved. Lloyd Morgan, for example, declares that in any organism we can tell two stories, a physical and a psychical. Each must be set out in terms proper to itself, but the activity which the two describe must be regarded as coming from one indivisible source, the living organism. The world plan, which is a manifestation of divine purpose, shows emergent evolution both in the physical and mental realms. Body and mind are to be regarded from the point of view of monistic interpretation within one realm of nature. Pringle-Pattison is clearly influenced by the Aristotelian view. So far from regarding soul and body as disparate entities, he prefers to start from the idea of the living body as the embodied soul. General Smuts feels that science has rendered a great service in restoring to the body its place of dignity in personality. "Body and mind," he declares, "are not independent reals, but have meaning and reality only as elements in the one real substantive whole of personality." Disembodied mind and disminded body are both impossible concepts, as either has meaning and function only in relation to the other. I am not concerned to estimate the metaphysical position that is behind such points of view: but only to notice the definite tendency in modern writers to get rid of the old-time dualism between soul and body. The position is well expressed by R. M. Freienfels in his volume called *Mysteries of the Soul*. "No longer does the body appear as a clod of earth into which the soul has been breathed from without: it is no longer the despicable prison of the soul, a mechanism which the soul somehow controls; no, for the body itself is animate, is an outward manifestation of life of the soul, a miraculous structure built up by the actual physical energy of the soul inextricably interwoven with it. But even the soul is more profoundly conceived. It is no longer an amorphous, vaporous form, no longer an empty shadow, no longer a bundle of ephemeral data of consciousness, or a conceiving mechanism, but a creative controlling force, a formative entelechy, whose internal aspect is the consciousness, and its external aspect the body. Our life is neither an external parallelism nor an incidental reciprocity between two separate substances, but a unity of body and soul; a unity which is more than matter and more than consciousness" (46).

The important thing to notice is that this view of the body in personality, which underlies modern biology and modern psy-

chology, has close affinities with that Hebrew conception of life which the Old Testament bequeathed to the Christian Church.

It is beyond dispute that the psychology of the Old Testament gave to the human body an importance not exceeded in any ancient literature, even that of Egypt. There are, e.g., many passages which indicate that the members of the body are conceived as possessing psychical power. The two factors which comprise man, body and soul, both owe their existence to God, and are to be regarded as honourable. There is no trace of the idea of the body as something unfortunately assumed by the soul. The Hebrew could not think of life at all without the body. In so far as the future life of the individual was thought of at all it was a future of resurrection. In a well-known passage in Maccabees we read of one Razis, an elder in Jerusalem, "standing upon a steep rock, when, as his blood was well-nigh spent, he drew forth his bowels through the wound, and taking them in both hands he shook them at the crowds, and calling upon Him who is Lord of life and the spirit to restore him these again, he died." A passage of vivid realism, and indicating the possible materialistic dangers in the view, but still good evidence that the future was thought of as a future of the restored body.

It has sometimes been argued that in the New Testament, e.g., in Paul, we find an essential dualism between soul and body. This, however, is to misunderstand the references. The body is not in itself evil: it is peculiarly liable to attack, the powers of evil seize upon it, but in itself it is not to be dualistically conceived as essentially evil. Speaking generally, we may say that the New Testament exalts our ideas of the physical life. The body is a temple of the Spirit. In the life to come there is to be an appropriate organism, which Paul calls the pneumatic body, to correspond to the redeemed soul. And the most significant fact of all is the Incarnation itself: God to express Himself in the noblest manner took the form of man . . . an ennoblement of the body which is not excelled anywhere in ancient literature. Undoubtedly we correctly apprehend the main teaching of the New Testament when we regard the personality of man as a unity of soul-body. The whole man is to be consecrated to the service of God.

This idea of the essential nature of man, as comprising what Fairbairn called a spiritual outfit and a material outfit, leads us to some pertinent reflections on the development of that personality and its achievement of its noble place in the economy of life.

We begin with the view that man has an important place assigned to him in the economy of nature. Measure him by his physical bulk and he is indeed insignificant, a tiny speck, as

Carlyle once remarked, standing on the outer crust of a small planet. But if you measure him by the marvellous intricacy within that small physical bulk, and, further, by the creative purpose and spiritual effort which he can demonstrate, he takes his place in the very centre of all created things. As Sir Thomas Browne remarked in *Religio Medici*, man carries within him all the marvels and wonders he beholds without him. He is not to be disregarded because in size he seems pitiable before a mountain like Everest, or before the unmeasured distances of the stellar universe. It is merely the truth to say that the mountaineer is bigger than the mountain, and the scientist bigger than the scientific facts he discovers. If the world in which we live is a world of wonder, it takes the mind of man to experience the wonder. More significant than the fact that the sun is so many millions of miles away is the fact that anyone could ever find it out. In the world of life man has a place peculiarly his own, and we do not err if we consider that place in terms of purpose.

The fundamental purpose for every man is that he shall realise his true place in a universe whose final explanation is God. How shall man realise that true place? The view we have taken of man's essential nature suggests certain definite steps in his progress.

(a) *Man cannot be said to be living at all unless he develops the spiritual possibilities within him.* The attempts, so common in the nineteenth century, to explain man mechanically have failed. It is true that in some branches of modern psychology materialism is again rearing its head (as, e.g., in Behaviourism): but in spite of this we may say that materialism, as a philosophy, fails to gather much support to-day. There is in man a spiritual wealth: for our purpose it does not matter much whether you express it in terms of mind or soul or spirit: it is the inner side of man's nature. By it man thinks, is conscious of himself, dreams his dreams, forms his general principles, and prays. He is heir to a world of beauty and truth and goodness: these are values which, while having their ground in God, have a definite relation to man's life, and he cannot be said to be living in the fullest sense if those values are ignored. This means that every noble pursuit, whether that of truth or beauty or duty, is a Godly pursuit: to ignore these things is to close our eyes to life in its highest meaning. The appreciation of a painting or a sonata is, from the higher level, essentially religious appreciation. Religion has to be conceived in such a manner as to make it as wide as every aspiration of the inner side of man's nature.

So far, I imagine, the main trend of Christian thought is with us. But it is not every Christian thinker who would go with us to the next point, viz.:

(b) *Man's achievement demands also the development of the physical life.* From the point of view adopted in this paper we may say that the culture of the body, as well as the culture of the spirit, is a religious matter. We do not deny that asceticism, in its various forms, has made a valuable contribution to life: we do not deny that there are elements in the bodily life which have to be kept in their place. But you do not keep them in their place if you despise them. The spiritual emotion of love undoubtedly has at least part of its basis in physiology. It is wrong, I believe, to despise the biological basis of love. The truer way is to harmonise it with the true spiritual purpose of man. It will be found, I suggest, that few of man's highest achievements can be separated from some physical concomitant, and if we are to seek the noblest fulfilment of the soul we had better seek also the noblest development of the body.

This has a significance for religion that is sometimes overlooked. Questions like personal cleanliness, athletics, good housing, have a spiritual reference. It is, for example, hopeless to expect spiritual qualities to develop under the terrible conditions under which so many thousands have to live to-day. That is not to say that if you put every man into a good house and give him plenty of water, air and sunshine you save his soul; but it does mean that you give his personality some of the conditions which are needed for its full achievement.

The same argument will lead us to the social implications of religion. There should not be any need to argue this point to an audience familiar with the first principles of the Christian religion. Whatever you may think about the extent to which the Church figured in the mind of Jesus there is not the slightest doubt about the important place He gave to the idea of the Kingdom of God. From the first His preaching had a social reference, and Christianity can never attain its real significance save in the setting of society.

This point, the social aspect of religion, needs strong emphasis to-day. It is admitted that Jesus and interpreters of His mind, such as the Apostle Paul, did not definitely commit themselves to specific theories. Indeed, there were many problems of the ancient world (such as slavery) which did not come within the range of their criticism. But it cannot be denied that the principles of life, both according to Jesus and Paul, carried to their logical issue, lead to the abolition of slavery in any form. We rightly regard the New Testament as laying down fundamental principles which have to be related to the special needs of any age. Those principles need to be related to the economic and political conditions of to-day, and exponents of the Christian religion fail in their duty if they do not remember

that Christ's precepts have relevance to the life of society and the life of nations. Any little group of Christians which sets itself to the redemption of individuals is engaged in a noble and necessary task: but there is another task, equally urgent, viz., the redemption of society from views on economics, war, international relationships, which are at enmity with the mind of Christ.

(c) Our view of the real unity of body and soul will have an effect, finally, on our conceptions of organised worship. We have suggested that this material world is to be regarded as a revelation of God. As Gwatkin eloquently said, "The common things on which the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, the sea and the morning, the wild goats of the rock, the horse that mocketh at fear, and the eagle that beholdeth from afar . . . all these are no more than the surface of a mighty structure of seeming power and wisdom which grows more marvellous with every year's discoveries . . . there is a beauty running through Nature, from the purple clouds of evening to the iridescent colours that flash like jewels from a beetle's wing case. The petals of a lily are more gorgeous than the robes of Solomon; and even the tiger's beauty is not more terrible than a spider's eyes, gleaming out like four gigantic pearls." Such a view of Nature, which corrects the deistic view of the world, and is superior to any pantheism, presenting to us Nature as the expression of God, makes the world in a peculiar sense man's world. That world is the medium through which man finds some of his noblest artistic expressions. It is also the world which he may call to his aid as he bows down in reverence before the Creator.

This, I suggest, is the philosophy which underlies the true sacramentalism. If body is important in personality, does it not follow that physical channels may indeed be the means of spiritual benefits? Always noting carefully the importance of appropriate psychological conditions in the worshipper, it is undeniably helpful both in worship and in general experience to call in the help of external beauty, such as the aid of forms and what we call "atmosphere." A stained glass window may be a help to the soul in its aspiration. The presence of bread and wine, physical things, may be the means by which the soul is ushered into the very presence of Christ. Our friends in the Roman Church emphasise this rather to the subordination of essential psychological factors in the worshipper. Our friends the Quakers, regarding all life as sacramental, will dispense with any special physical means of grace such as the Sacraments. Is not the true position a merging of both views? With the Quakers we say: the essential requirement in religion is the inner spiritual con-

dition. With the Romanists we say: but man is body as well as soul, and this must be regarded in acts of worship. Our view of personality as soul-body unity acknowledges the power of material channels of grace while safeguarding the essential spiritual conditions of all religion. There is cogency in Paul's great words, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Let me conclude by quoting a passage which I have already written on this theme: "So man takes stock of himself and the environment in which he lives his life. He finds in all directions an incentive to achievement. What appears dead will take on new life. What is inert will be revealed as full of meaning for his progress. He will no longer mourn that he is incarcerated in a fleshly prison, but will accept his bodily life as a rich endowment without which he could not achieve at all. He will no longer feel hemmed in by the outer world, as if it were a tyrant pressing in upon him. He will find it full of meaning, his friendly ally, if he reacts to it in the proper way. He will learn to link together the here and the yonder, the temporal and the eternal, finding elements of both in his own nature, and knowing that God is in all. Thus he will discover a kinship between God, the world and himself. Such an attitude is not only Christian: it has the merit of supplying both purpose and power for the achievement of personality."

F. TOWNLEY LORD.

ON THE MOORLANDS in the north-east of Staffordshire, Baptists were living about 1653, Thomas Hammersley of Basford being one. He took a visitor to a meeting in the house of Taylor, at Ipstones. This visitor, Humphrey Woolrich, was one of the First Publishers of Truth, and he was so convincing that he persuaded both the host and Hammersley to join the Quakers. This is a typical instance how General Baptists were treated as a body to be exploited by the Friends. Within a year, Hammersley lent his home as a regular meeting-house for his new friends; and the General Baptist cause near Leek and Cheadle faded away, though it persisted near Stone. Details are given in the *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, xxxii. 51.

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