

PAULINE AND OTHER
STUDIES

IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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IN studying the life of St. Paul everything depends on the point of view from which one contemplates it, and the prepossessions with which one approaches the subject. There is one preliminary question on which it is absolutely necessary to make up one's mind clearly: Are we open to hear evidence or shall we rule it out beforehand? In recent years those who most pride themselves on their "freedom" of mind have set aside as inadmissible all evidence bearing on the greatest event of St. Paul's life, *viz.*, his experience on the road to Damascus. To do so means that they have made up their mind before they enter on the investigation.

The religion of the Jews from its first beginning to its fullest development in Christianity was founded on the belief that human nature can, in certain cases, at certain moments in the life of certain individuals, come into direct communion with the Divine Being, and can thus learn the purpose and will of God. In other words, God occasionally reveals Himself to man.

St. Paul himself believed unhesitatingly in the frequent occurrence of such revelations. This belief was part of his Jewish inheritance, strong with the growth of a hundred generations, a force driving him on through his whole life. Hence it demands the attention of every one who studies

his life. In St. Paul's view all true religion was the direct utterance of the voice and will of God, and all human history was impelled in its course by such utterance. He had been trained from infancy in the Hebrew view, which attributed the whole course of the national religion and fortunes—the latter being simply the measure of national adherence to the religion—to a series of such revelations made by God on various occasions to certain favoured individuals.

In his later years St. Paul did not consider that such revelation had been denied to other nations and confined absolutely to the Jews. On the contrary, it lies at the foundation of his later ideas of history and of life that all nations have some share in the revelation of God, and some capacity for understanding it, that *what can be known of Him is manifest in them, for He manifested it unto them; for His invisible nature, viz. His eternal power and Godhead, is clearly seen since the creation of the world, being perceived through the works of creation; that He has never left Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling men's hearts with food and gladness; and that, through this revelation, all men show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith.*

This revelation, which is granted to all nations, has sometimes been distinguished as "natural" revelation from that which was imparted to the Hebrews, the inference being that the latter was "supernatural". This seems to be an unsatisfactory way of expressing the nature of that undeniable distinction. It is misleading, and even inaccurate, to use the term "supernatural". We hold that revelation of the Divine to the human is a necessary part of the order of

nature, and therefore is in the strictest sense "natural"; and also that all revelation of the Divine to the human nature must necessarily be "superhuman," being a step in the gradual elevation of the human nature towards the Divine.

The nations had one by one rejected that revelation, or, as we might say in more modern phraseology, their history had become a process of degeneration. After a beginning of learning, of comprehension, and of improvement, their will and desire soon became degraded. In St. Paul's own words, *after knowing God, they ceased to glorify Him as God, and to be thankful, but turned to futile philosophic speculations, and their faculties lost the power of comprehending and became obscured.* The result was a steady process of degradation, folly, vice, crime, which St. Paul paints in terrible colours (Rom. i.).

History undoubtedly justifies this picture of the nations over which St. Paul's view extended. Where we can trace the outlines of their history over a sufficient time, we find that in an earlier stage, and up to a certain point, their religious ideas and rites were simpler, higher, purer. Sometimes we can trace a considerable period of development and advance. But in every case the development turns to degeneration,¹ and throughout the Græco-Roman world the belief was general, and thoroughly justified, that the state of morality in the first century was much more degraded than it had been several centuries earlier. Society had become more complex and more vicious. In religion the number of gods had been multiplied, but its hold on the belief of men had been weakened and its worst character-

¹ This paragraph is a brief statement of the view stated more fully in "Religion of Greece and Asia Minor" (Hastings' *Dict.*, v.).

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istics had been strengthened, while any good features in it had almost wholly disappeared.

It is doubtful how far that principle should be extended in human history, but there are certainly many examples of a similar kind beyond the range of St. Paul's knowledge. The history of Brahminism, of Buddhism, of Islam, of Zoroastrianism, all exemplify the same turn towards degradation and decay, when the power of growth has been exhausted. And, in the light of recent investigations, it must be considered as probable, perhaps almost certain, that many barbarous superstitions which by some modern scientific inquirers in the subject of folklore and primitive custom have been regarded as indications of the character of primitive man, are not really primitive, but merely examples of degeneration.

Some races have degenerated through the influence of war, because they lay too much on the track of armies and armed migration; others deteriorated through unfavourable climatic conditions, either because they were crushed into remote corners among untraversable mountains, or into regions unfit to support life on proper conditions, or because a too enervating and luxurious climate sapped the stamina and energy of the people in the course of generations. Massacre, or the dread of massacre, has been a frequent cause of degeneration. The victors are brutalised. The survivors of the victims deteriorate because the higher qualities of human nature are denied exercise, as entailing the death of those who display them.

Among the Jews alone there was found a long succession of great men who heard and obeyed the Divine voice. Each was, in a sense, the disciple of his predecessor, learning from the past and acquiring fuller comprehension of,

and susceptibility to, the Divine nature and revelation. In the process of revelation the religious ideas which they expressed to the people developed and became purer and more elevated. In each new revelation the whole past experience of the race was focussed, and the spark of progress kindled therefrom. Those old Hebrew prophets thus raised the national ideas and the national life, for though the nation always seemed to them to be slipping back into idolatry and the immorality which is its inevitable associate, yet, in reality, the people were being raised, though only very slowly, above the low level of their ancestors. What seemed to the Hebrew prophets to be retrogression was strictly only persistence of old habits.

Yet that apparently favoured nation was not in the long run more responsive than the others had been to the Divine message. It was for a time drawn onwards by the prophets whom it produced. Almost reluctantly, with many slips and many falls, it was raised to a far higher moral level than any of the nations around. The captivity in Babylonia purified it, for it was chiefly the most patriotic and religious who came back, while the more weak-minded and sluggish would not face the difficulties of returning. The Zealots were in the majority, and they held the nation together, resisted the insidious advance of Greek civilisation and education, defeated at last the Syrian armies, and won freedom for their nationality and their religion.

But the hard-won triumph resulted only in unfertile exclusiveness and self-complacency. The people ceased to feel any need and any desire for the Divine guidance, and lost all power of development. The race of the prophets seemed to have come to an end, when John the Baptist

appeared with the brief simple message that the Messiah was at hand.

To St. Paul the failure of the Jews to recognise and receive the Christ was the result and the proof of their having ceased to be the favoured nation. They had refused to listen to the Divine voice, and the Divine favour was turned away from them. It had never been part of the Divine purpose to reject the nations. The nations had turned away from God, but they had learned in their consequent degradation and darkness their need of Divine illumination, which the Jews in their self-satisfied exclusiveness had begun to despise.

How far certain germs of his later views already existed in Saul's mind during the early part of his career, it is impossible to say. It is probable that some germs did exist of a wider view than the purely Jewish. But, at any rate, Saul, in his youth, was mainly occupied with the thought of Hebrew progress in the past, and the coming triumph of Hebrew religion. He could not shut his eyes to the fact that the great line of the prophets had for a considerable time been interrupted ; and he must have been firmly convinced that the interruption could not last for ever, and that a new revelation of the Divine power was likely soon to come. There can be no doubt that the feeling to which John the Baptist gave utterance was deep and wide-spread ; and few will doubt that Saul shared it.

With this belief in the reality and frequency of Divine revelation reigning with intense fervour in his mind, Saul must always have been prepared to hear that a prophet had appeared ; and, according to our conception of his character, he must from childhood have been filled with the desire and hope of hearing for himself the Divine voice.

He must have had his mind roused by the message of John ; he may probably have heard him, and believed fervently his announcement of the immediate coming of Christ.

But, further, Saul undoubtedly was eager, and was preparing himself by education, by study, by scrupulous obedience to the Law, by ardent zeal in enforcing it on others, to be in a fit state to hear the voice of God. It may be argued that this eagerness rendered him the more open to self-deception : and there is of course some plausibility in that argument.

The issue was that he did become the recipient of revelation, and that his life was profoundly affected, and his views revolutionised thereby. He repeatedly described himself, or is described by others, as having both seen the Lord and heard His voice.

Now what do we understand by this? The question cannot and ought not to be evaded. Paul's words are too clear and strong to be passed over as inexact or unimportant. He declared emphatically that the revelations made to him, the words spoken to him, and the sights granted to his eyes, were his greatest privilege and honour, constituted the motive power of all his action, and supplied the whole spirit and essence of his life. Those revelations, and especially the first of them, when he saw Jesus on the way, as he was now nigh unto Damascus, were in his view the most real events of his life. In comparison with them, all else was mere shadow and semblance ; in those moments he had come in contact with the truth of the world, the Divine reality. He had been permitted to become aware of the omnipresent God who is everywhere around us and in us.

Various attempts are made to explain away or soften

down his clear and emphatic words by devices of a more or less sophisticated kind ; and many people hope in this way to retain all that they like in Paul, while they pretend that he did not mean what they dislike. But all such attempts to close the eyes to plain facts are unreasonable.

In truth that vision near Damascus is the critical point, on which all study of St. Paul's life must turn. On our conception of that event depends the whole interpretation of his life. The question at this stage is not whether that event as he conceived it was true and real, or was distorted and exaggerated in his mind owing to some diseased and unbalanced mental state. That question will come up in its proper place.

The preliminary question alone here concerns us : was that event, in the form that Paul describes it, a possible one, or was it so wholly and absolutely impossible that even to discuss the evidence about it is irrational ?

If it be an impossibility that the Divine nature can thus reveal itself to human senses, then the whole life and work of Paul would be a mere piece of self-deception. To those who take that point of view, the only other alternative to self-deception, regarding a man who declared that the Divine nature had manifested itself to his hearing and sight, would be the supposition of imposture. But, in the case of Saul, this alternative is, by common consent, set aside. He was an honest believer in what he said.

Now no amount of evidence can make us believe in what we know to be impossible. One who holds such manifestation to be impossible cannot regard seriously, or even listen to, any evidence of its having occurred. Such evidence is condemned in his mind before it is brought forward, as involving either self-deception and unsound mind

or imposture. If he examines at all the so-called "evidence," he does so only as a matter either of curiosity, or of scientific interest in the vagaries of human error.

The view that Paul's experience on the way to Damascus was due to some form of madness has been widely maintained in recent years. It is tacitly held by many who would shrink from explicitly formulating it to their own mind. It is openly and resolutely declared by many learned and honest men. Scientific investigators have discussed and given a name to the precise class of madness to which Paul's delusions must be assigned.

Now there have been many madmen in all times ; but the difficulty which many feel in classing St. Paul among them arises from the fact that not merely did he persuade every one who heard him that he was sane and spoke the truth, but that also he has moved the world, changed the whole course of history, and made us what we are. Is the world moved at the word of a lunatic? To think so would be to abandon all belief in the existence of order and unity in the world and in history ; and therefore we are driven to the conclusion that St. Paul's vision is one of the things about which evidence ought to be scrutinised and examined without any foregone conclusion in one's mind.

Further, it is part of our view that the Divine nature, if it is really existent in our world, must in some way come into relation to man, and affect mankind. The Divine nature is not existent for man, except in so far as he can hope and strive to come into direct relation with it. If he cannot hope to do so, then the Divine nature belongs only to another world, and has no reality, no existence in ours. What is God to us if we cannot come into knowledge of

or relation with Him? Either you must say that we know nothing about the existence of any God, or you must admit that man can in some way become aware of the existence, *i.e.* the nature, of God. Now to say that we can become aware of the nature of God is only another way of saying that the Divine nature is revealed to man; and, if it is revealed, that can only be because it reveals itself by coming into direct relation to man. There is nothing that can reveal God except Himself.

It must, therefore, be true that God reveals Himself to man in some way or other. St. Paul claims to have received such revelation; and we ought not to set aside his claim as irrational and necessarily false. Many such claims can easily be put away; but history has decided that his case is one which deserves scrutiny, examination, rigid testing.

St. Paul also claims to have received this revelation in an eminent and unusual degree: in other words, that he was more sensitive to, and more able to learn about, the Divine nature than others.

This claim also is one that deserves to be carefully scrutinised with an open mind. If we admit that the Divine nature reveals itself to men, then there must be inequality and variety in the revelation to different individuals. There is no equality or uniformity in nature.

It is not involved in our view that we must be able to explain clearly in scientific detail exactly what takes place in such a revelation, and by what precise process an individual man becomes cognizant of the Divine nature and purpose. There are powers of acquiring knowledge which are an unintelligible mystery to those who have not possessed and exercised them; and this is a case in which

possession implies exercise, and only exists in virtue of being exercised.

Who can gauge, or understand, or describe, the way in which a great mathematical genius hurries on in his sweep of reasoning with easy, unerring rapidity? Even when his reasoning is afterwards explained in detail, few are capable of being educated up to the comprehension of it. To him it is far easier to move on from step to step in his reasoning about the forces that act in the world than to explain his steps so as to bring them within the comprehension even of the few who can be educated to understand. His demonstration of his process of reasoning would be, to all but a handful of exceptional persons, an unintelligible jargon, having no more reality or sense than the ravings of a madman. But to him those words and signs, so meaningless to others, present a vision of order and beauty, of reality and symmetry, which changes the whole aspect and nature of the universe in his thought, and enables him or his successors to understand and direct its forces, and to affect profoundly the life and fortunes of mankind.

Why should we doubt, or hesitate to admit, that there may be even greater differences between different men as regards their power of coming into relation with, and comprehending, the Divine nature, than there is in power of comprehending mathematical truth? Yet all men have some little power of comprehending mathematical reasoning, and similarly all are endowed with some rudimentary power of attaining a knowledge of the Divine nature.

And in both cases, from want of exercise, want of desire, sluggishness, or idleness, the endowment of power may remain undeveloped, and apparently non-existent.

When we speak about recognising the truth of those

great processes of mathematical reasoning which were alluded to, there are two totally different ways and kinds of recognition. The discoverer himself recognises intuitively, but the world takes him on credit: it recognises by faith. This is a case where we believe without understanding. Though we cannot attain anything beyond the vaguest and most rudimentary understanding of what the discoverer has seen and of the way in which he can perceive it, yet we believe unquestioningly and unhesitatingly that he has comprehended a department of external nature which we cannot comprehend.

Now the reason why in that case we believe without understanding and through mere faith is partly because we recognise in him the spirit of truth—we perceive that the man has no reason to deceive us, that his whole credit and in a sense his life is staked on his truth and accuracy—we feel, and all men recognise unhesitatingly, that his is a truthful mind, and one can see the joy and the consciousness of knowledge glorifying and irradiating his personality—and partly because we see the results of the knowledge which he has gained: we believe in his knowledge because it manifests itself in power.

But the original discoverer recognises intuitively and unerringly the truth of his reasoning. To know when one's reasoning is correct is the foundation of mathematical endowment. One sees and feels it, and one cannot shake off the knowledge or free oneself from it. Galileo might, under compulsion, pretend to acknowledge that the earth does not move, but he could not get rid of the knowledge that, in spite of all pretences and confessions, still it does move. This absolute consciousness of knowledge dominates the mind that possesses it, and drives the man on in

his career. He must think: he must experiment and test his knowledge in practice, and the test is whether his reasoning realises itself in actual power.

Surely the same principles of belief may fairly and reasonably be applied in respect of the comprehension and discovery of the Divine nature and will and purpose.

To come into direct relation with the Divine nature, what is that except to make a step in the appreciation of the truth that underlies the visible and sensual phenomena, to get a glimpse of the eternal value of things, to see them as they are in reality, not as they appear to the mere individual observation from the purely individual standpoint? Man cannot easily rise above his own selfish and narrow point of view, and in the hurry and pressure of common life he can hardly do so at all; yet he is

not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure, though seldom, are denied him,
When the spirits true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing,
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

Such moments do not come in the same way, or amid the same surroundings, to all men. The accompaniments are special to the individual. A man can become possessed of knowledge only in such way as he is capable of receiving it, and that is a matter of his habits and education and surroundings.

One who has learned almost entirely through the senses, who lives by reliance on sight and hearing, cannot learn, and could not believe, anything except what comes to him through those senses, or rather is associated with impressions of the senses. The thought is, of course, distinct

from the impressions, but it comes with them and seems to come through them, and the reality of the experience lies not in the impressions on the senses, but in the sudden consciousness of the Divine nature animating the world, in which hitherto the man was aware only of the objects that touched his senses.

To one who is accustomed to gain knowledge by contemplation and thought, the revelation of the Divine nature will come through contemplation and thought. Such a one does not connect truth with sense-impressions; rather he distrusts these, knowing that they are mere shadows which his own personality casts on the world, and that reality does not lie that way.

But in either case the perception of the Divine truth is ultimate, final and convincing. He who has seen knows. And he can never again lose the knowledge, nor live unhesitatingly the free unconscious life of previous days. The consciousness of the Divine nature becomes a power within him, driving him on to his destiny, good or evil.

The question whether the physical sensations which are sometimes associated with the perception are real is obviously a superficial and unintelligent one. What sensation is real?

Take here the individual instance. What can we learn from the case of St. Paul, admitting for the moment that he acquired higher and better knowledge of God in those revelations of which he speaks. Those who were with him near Damascus had a vague idea that something was taking place; they were aware of light, and even of sound, but they did not hear any words, nor were they affected in any noteworthy way. Had Paul died there, no one would have known that anything remarkable had occurred,

Such is the clear and unmistakable account in which Paul and Luke agree, though there are some trifling differences between them about details.

On the one hand, it is plain that Paul's companions did not see what he saw. On the other hand, it is equally plain that they learned nothing there, whereas Paul obtained an insight into truth and reality which revolutionised his aims and changed the world's history. If the test of reality lies in the capacity of all sentient beings to experience the same sensations when placed in the same position, then Paul's sensations were not real. But is that a fair test? Are there not phenomena in the world where that test fails? Are there not more things in the world than those which everybody can see and hear? Is this not one of the things which we may and must take on credit and believe without understanding? The question is surely worth putting and carefully considering in the light of Paul's whole career.

There is nothing but scholastic pedantry in debating the question as to the reality of Paul's sensations of sight and hearing on that occasion. There is no standard accepted by the opposing parties, there is no agreement as to the meaning of the terms; each side discusses with its mind made up beforehand, and its eyes closed to the intention of its opponents. There can be no issue and no result; the question is as barren as that older question about the number of angels who can stand on the point of a needle. The problem should be approached otherwise.

The lesson which Saul had to learn before he could make any progress in knowledge of the Divine nature was that the actual Jesus of recent notoriety in Palestine—the Jesus whom he had seen and known, as I believe—was still

living, and not, as he had fancied, dead. His was not a soul disciplined, eager to learn, ready to obey. It was a soul firm in its own false opinion—not even possessed of “true opinion”—resolute and hardened in perfect self-satisfaction, proud of what it believed to be its knowledge, strong in its high principle and its sense of duty. There was no possibility that he should by any process of mere thinking come to realise the truth. Nothing could appeal to him in this question except through the senses of hearing and sight.

Such we see to be the general conditions of the situation. St. Paul tells us the result. He heard, he saw, he was convinced, he was a witness to the world that the Jesus who had lived and been crucified was still living. But those who were with him did not learn, did not see, did not hear. They were not capable of gaining the knowledge which Saul acquired, nor should we be capable if we could be put in the same situation now. They were not, and we are not, able to respond as Saul was to the impulse of the Divine nature. The same experience would not convince them or us. Saul knew that this was Jesus, and his plans of life, his aspirations after the Divine life, his conceptions of the possibilities of work in the existing condition of the world, his longing for the Messiah who was to make Judaism the conquering faith of the civilised world, his whole fabric of thought and religion and belief, were in such a position that this sudden perception of the truth about Jesus recreated and invigorated all his mental and moral frame.

That perception, then, was the real part of the experience which came to Saul. But that perception could not be gained by him except in a certain way, with certain

physical accompaniments and certain affection of the senses, and those accompaniments acquire reality from being the vehicle of a real perception of truth in one special and peculiar case.

That brief experience in which Saul learned so much was the outcome of his whole past career, the crystallisation into a new form of all the loose elements of will and thought and emotion which his life and education had given him, under the impulse of the sudden imparting to his mind of the decisive factor; and the physical accompaniments conveyed the spark or the impulse which set the process in motion.

If then it be asserted that the sensations which Paul experienced were in themselves a necessary part of the knowledge which he acquired, one must denounce the assertion as false and irrational. The sensations were only a proof of the weakness of nature, the insensibility to purer and higher ways of acquiring truth, in which Paul was as yet involved: they were the measure of his *ignorance*, not the necessary vehicle of his knowledge. As he became more sensitive to the Divine nature, and more capable of apprehending the Divine message, he rose superior to the grosser method of communication through the senses.

That St. Paul was conscious of a growth and elevation of his own powers of perception in regard to the Divine nature seems implied clearly in 2 Corinthians v. 16, *even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more.*

Standing on this point of view one sees that the variation between Luke (*these men, hearing a voice, but seeing no man, Acts ix. 7*) and Paul (*they saw indeed the light,*

but heard not the voice, Acts xxii. 9) with regard to the degree to which Paul's sensations were shared in by his companions, stamps the sensations as being accidental and secondary, the encumbrances rather than an essential accompaniment of his perception of truth.

So also the older disciples learned the truth through sight and hearing ; they had known the Man, and they must hear and see before they could realise that He was not dead. But there is in the mind of the Evangelist who saw and heard a consciousness that those sensations are mere accidents of the individual, personally incidental to their peculiar experience and condition, merely ways by which the truth was made clear to their duller minds : *Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.*

What would it have meant to those companions of Paul then, what would it mean to us now, if the information could have been suddenly flashed on them or on us that Jesus was living? It would mean little or nothing. We should dine and sleep as usual. Those men would have proceeded quietly to Damascus, and reported that they had an odd experience by the way, but whether it was real or a phantasm, true or untrue, they did not know.

There lies the difference. The man to whom the Divine reveals itself recognises inevitably. He cannot doubt or hesitate : he knows at once and for ever.

The Divine never reveals itself in vain. Or perhaps one should rather say that the Divine is always ready to reveal itself, but we do not perceive it except when we are in such a state that we are convinced by it, and recognise it. There rises to memory here a wonderful passage in T. H. Green's Essay on "The Philosophy of Aristotle" :—

“ If in any true sense man can commune with the spirit within him, in the same he may approach God, as one who, according to the highest Christian idea, ‘liveth in him’. Man however is slow to recognise the divinity that is within himself in his relation to the world. He will find the spiritual somewhere, but cannot believe that it is the natural rightly understood. What is under his feet and between his hands is too cheap and trivial to be the mask of eternal beauty. But half aware of the blindness of sense which he confesses, he fancies that it shows him the every-day world, from which he must turn away if he would attain true vision. If a prophet tell him to do some great thing, he will obey. He will draw up ‘ideal truth’ from the deep, or bring it down from heaven, but cannot believe that it is within and around him. Stretching out his hands to an unknown God, he heeds not the God in whom he lives and moves and has his being. He cries for a revelation of Him, yet will not be persuaded that His hiding-place is the intelligible world, and that He is incarnate in the Son of Man, who through the communicated strength of thought is Lord also of that world.”

But the human being who is to become sensitive to the Divine presence and voice must be able to do his part. The manifestation cannot be wholly one-sided : there must be the proper condition of mind and body, and intellect, and will in the man. What all the conditions are no one can say, except perhaps one to whom the manifestation has been granted. But one thing is sure : a certain state of mental receptivity is needed, and a certain long preparation of the whole nature of the recipient must have occurred.

Such preparation was, in several forms of ancient religion, described as purification ; and formal rules were prescribed,

as regards time and rites. In such a state of things the preparation of the mind, the emotions and the will, soon become almost a secondary matter, and purification was mainly ceremonial, though even in the most formal and vulgar religious prescriptions the proper moral and mental state was never entirely lost sight of.

But, it will be objected, when we speak of the Divine nature as revealing itself to man through the senses, we are introducing an element of the supernatural, and asking men to believe what no rational being can accept, inasmuch as it is contrary to reason.

This objection is merely verbal, it shows not even a faint glimmering conception of the real situation, it belongs to a stage and a way of thinking that rational men ought now to have left behind them.

If the Divine reveals itself to the human nature, the latter must in receiving the knowledge rise above its ordinary plane of mere individual existence, it must rise superior to the limitations of time and space, and contemplate truth, and eternity, and reality. Its momentary elevation to the plane of the Divine view is necessarily and inevitably a superhuman fact, but why call it supernatural? It is surely a part of the order of nature that man should reach out towards God; if that, or anything involved in that, is supernatural or marvellous or miraculous, then everything in the life of man beyond the mere reception of impressions and action under their stimulus, every step in the progress of knowledge, every widening of the outlook of man over and beyond the single successive phenomena of the world, is equally marvellous and supernatural. But the order of nature is that man should strive to rise, and should succeed in rising above the level

from which he starts. Nothing in his life is real except the advance that he makes above himself. He cannot attain to knowledge and truth, but yet he does attain to them in so far as he struggles a little way towards them. He lives at all only in so far as he moves onward: stagnation is death. All that is real is superhuman: what is *only* human is mere negation and unreality, the expression of our ignorance and our remoteness from truth and knowledge and God.

In truth the stigmatising of anything in the revelation to man of the Divine nature as supernatural or contrary to reason is simply the arbitrary and unreasoning attempt to establish that our ignorance is the real element in the world, and to bound the possibilities of the universe by our own acquisitions and perceptions.

The only proper attitude before such questions is that of inquiry and of open-mindedness—surely that is a truism, and yet it is to the so-called free and critical mind that we have to address this remonstrance!

The investigator in every department of science and study knows that it is half the battle to succeed in putting the right question. In this case the right question is, What can we learn from Paul's experience? And not how was Paul's evidence falsified? nor what insanity misled him?