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THEODICY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT¹

THE problem of the theodicy of the Old Testament, already a century old, is a moot question, that is to say one the peculiarity of which consists in the fact that it has reached no definite solution. The reason is that in this problem two magnitudes are conjoined which trace their source to different fields of thought, namely the conception of a theodicy and the Old Testament itself. In order to apprehend the problem of theodicy in the Old Testament in its full extent and to clothe it in the garb of a question which is at once conformable to the Old Testament and elucidates the legitimate concept contained in the idea of a theodicy, we must first of all analyse the problem of a theodicy in general: must define the conception and its origin and characterise the more recent interrogations into the problem as well as those that find a place in the Old Testament.

I

1. *The problem of a Theodicy.* According to its Greek meaning, theodicy signifies a "justification of God" with reference to the *outcome* of such a justification, namely, God's abiding rectitude. But in modern western philosophical language the conception has not retained this under sense, the sense, that is, in which, e.g. it is still possible to understand God's rectitude in the sense of a subjective genitive as relatively objective at the same time, and thus find in it almost a parallel to Paul's *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. We shall have to show secondly how the Old Testament's answer to the question of a theodicy can employ this broad Greek acceptance of the word as a pertinent description of it. On the other hand the conception of a theodicy which has arisen in philosophical circles concerns a justification of God in view of mundane injustice and evil, whereby a man has to suffer in spite of his innocence in respect of the existing injustice or evil. On the assumption that God

¹ Ueber das misslingen alter philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizée : Einleitung.

is justified, a man can maintain the postulate that the World has a meaning.

It is of decisive importance for our inquiry to recognize at the outset that whether this Divine justification succeeds or not, it is canvassed by human reason, and takes place in that form. Man feels the need of justifying God or at least of recognizing Him as justified and defending Him against attacks. Accordingly Kant defines the question of a theodicy as a defence of the perfect wisdom of the Creator in answer to the accusations which reason propounds against it from the unsuitable elements in the world.¹ The problem of a theodicy therefore presents so far a philosophical problem, in case this apologetic itself is not altogether successful.

This notion of a theodicy and the wish manifested therein hides, of course, in its background a distinct conception of the Godhead. God is regarded as the wise framer of the universe, who assigns their destiny to men, according to their works with the precision of a perfect judge, and whose holiness dispenses an absolutely righteous recompense both to the good and the evil. This supposition has then at its base the usually tacit presumption that the actual recompense of good and evil must be appreciable by reason—a presumption, in company with which the postulate of a theodicy stands and falls.

2. It is instructive for the outcome of our investigation, and affects the right estimate of the Old Testament subject matter to realize at what period the conception of a theodicy arose. Leibnitz coined the conception, and for the first time introduced it into the title of his work of that name (1710). Leibnitz's book had a polemical occasion. It controverts an assertion of Bayle's, according to which God's omnipotence and goodness cannot be reconciled with the evil existent in the world. Theodicy then is a conception of the *Aufklärung* philosophy, which dissevers itself alike from atheism and from the faith of the Old Testament; wherein on the one hand a Divine Being is acknowledged and on the other that this Divine Being is a product of its own domain of thought which at the utmost owes no more than its suggestion to the Old Testament.

¹ The Editor distinguishes in this serious contribution between on the one hand its actual achievement and on the other the end at which it aims and the movement of thought which it represents. Accordingly he does not accept responsibility for all the statements while approving of the article in its aim and the direction of its movement.

3. Human thought transfers the ideal concept of human righteousness to God. Men's need of redressing righteousness must find fulfilment through Him; and, in particular, the perfectly just Deity, who is an axiom of reason, must be sensibly appreciable. There must be reward for piety (moral), and punishment for godlessness (immoral). This rectifying righteousness, by which alone order is maintained in the world of mankind, and which the Old Testament postulates for the human race, is not ascribed to God, in the decisive passages relating to it by virtue of an analogy of being, although in the history of Church Theology that transference has often been made. The opinion that the earthly talent bestowed by God and heavenly bliss are to be regarded as a reward of faith, and contrariwise the corresponding opinion that the earthly ill that He appoints and the condemnation in eternity are to be viewed as a penalty of unbelief is known theologically as Pelagianism, and has nothing to do with what the Old Testament holds to be faith. The question of a theodicy in the sense of recompensing righteousness is not propounded by Old Testament faith and certainly not by atheistic thought; it is rather a typical interrogation from the borderline of the Church and of faith. This problem, the axiom of the coadjustment between ethics and edaemonism finds utterance in cases where belief in the God of Creation and Redemption is in danger of collapse. That happens in a day of rationalism, or at any time when an individual or a group of men collectively are bent on comprehending the Deity by reason. Such an attitude does not make its appearance in the Old Testament.

4. The Old Testament is aware of the desire that makes itself felt in the problem of theodicy. Through this desire in fact the enquiry as to the justification of God from the position of the believer first gains expression. But is it to be marked from whom this question proceeds? It is not the query of faith of the mature Job, of the poet of the seventy-third Psalm with his answer reaching him from God, but it is the question of Job's three friends and of *that* Job who at the outset and from time to time seems to consent to the conception of his friends. Of them, judging by the general drift of the book, it is probably no injustice to conclude that they are viewed as acting in the service of Satan (Job ii, 4). It is the Psalmist's question when he is calling for an answer and has not yet

obtained it, the question of the natural man, the man interested in religion, yea, the man who was in juxtaposition with the people of God, who has heard the word of revelation and may have been affected thereby, but at the moment of putting the question it exalts reason to the place of judge.

It would be wrong then to assert that the problem of a theodicy is introduced into the Old Testament solely from without, though that may occur; rather may it be said to occupy a considerable place there, especially during the conflict as to a correct knowledge of God, where that final stage has not yet been attained. In any case that indicates a phenomenological distinction as regards the origin of the question. "Illuminism" asks it on philosophical grounds and those of a *Weltanschauung*, whilst in the Old Testament the question is a personal, largely national, question of *destiny*.

Human rectitude inquires after an equitable adjustment between moral uprightness and reward, and moral aberration and penalty: Divine righteousness inquires concerning faith, in the sense the idea of faith has in the Old Testament. So he who investigates theodicy apart from faith remains involved in the problem without finding a way out. The Old Testament saints are thinking and questioning from faith's standpoint and God speaks from His standpoint—we shall have to show that all these adverbial phrases are identical in Hebrew—and thus are as it were indemnified from concern with the labyrinth of the other problem of theodicy relating to the unimpaired righteousness of God in view of the phenomena of suffering.¹

The conception of a theodicy does not originate from the Old Testament and is not adapted in the historical shape it has received, to comprise the Old Testament inquiry respecting the justification of God in view of the evil present in the world. We therefore make choice of the etymological sense of *theodicy* corresponding to the meaning of the question, viz. God's Righteousness, and since the question at issue is whether that righteousness sustains the charge it incurs on account of the evil in the world we adopt the formula, implying a positive

¹ The Old Testament presents something like the following passages in which the problem comes distinctly to light: Gen. xxxii. 22-32; Hab. i. 9, ii. 4; Jer. xii. 1-6, xv. 16-21, vii. 18, xxxvii. 25-27, xlix. 15, 16; Ps. lxxiii; Job; Isa. liii, Ecclesiastes. We shall consider the essential and sometimes specially stressed *loci classici* of the problem of theodicy in this catalogue, with the aim of answering the question regarding the theodicy-problem in the Old Testament: Hab. i. 2, ii. 4; Ps. lxxiii, 13; Job, Isa. liii.

answer to this question, "the *abiding* righteousness of God". Since the emergence of the problem of theodicy it has been customary to emphasize the second element in this problem, the evil in the world of humanity, in so far as it is undeserved, that is to say, the wrong, under the concept of suffering. If we adhere to this concept, we must understand thereby on the one hand, besides pangs of illness every kind of evil (in the sense of Luther's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer) which relates to men, but on the other side the evil which is merely apparent or seemingly unjust, that is to say, the evil which gives to suffering its depth.

II

From what has been already said it results that it is all important for the correct demarcation and judgement of suffering what point of view a man adopts (1) and therein differentiates himself from the philosophical conception of theodicy. Furthermore the right appreciation of the final purpose of suffering (2), the appreciation of the limitation of suffering (3) and of its removal (4) will determine the right understanding of the abiding righteousness of God. The declarations of the Old Testament themselves supply the elements of this classification.

1. We attempt, first of all, to make clear the abiding righteousness of God in regard to the condition of the sufferer from Habakkuk i. 2—ii. 4. In Habakkuk's case personal suffering is contingent upon national suffering, the distress of his people is the distress of the prophet himself. Supposing the verses 5-11 to occupy their original setting, the prophet is deploring the suffering occasioned to the people by an invading military power; if that supposition be not accepted, it is a question of suffering inflicted on the body of the people by wicked parties within its pale. Oppression, violence, discord, relaxation of the law, obscuration, and perversion of justice, coercion of the godfearing by the godless (i. 2-4) is what Habakkuk beholds, and himself probably suffers therefrom. It is not contested that the injured party regarded as the *zaddiq* is undeserving of such treatment. He cries to Jehovah that the suffering may come to an end, but cannot report the fulfilment of his desire. What attitude does the *zaddiq* take up in respect of the almost uncurbed behaviour of the godless? *His own* resolution prompts him to no special attitude. It is rather the necessity of a special attitude of Jehovah towards such godless demeanour

that is proclaimed. In presence of the reckless and dishonest parties the *zaddiq* will abide in life by reason of his *aēmuna*.

This sentence, twice quoted by Paul, stands in Habakkuk in another connection than in Paul. Here it has a historical significance and is an utterance respecting preservation of life in presence of mortal danger. Paul places the proposition in a systematic setting and means by it eternal salvation. Yet the divergence from the literal lexical sense of *ēmuna* fundamentally viewed, is unimportant. Who will abide in life, in other words, who ranks as *zaddiq* over against the *rasha*? He who persists in the *emuna*; he who literally, *haamin*, is fixed, who has solid ground under his feet, who stands on a steadfast basis. And the fixed seat, the ground, the foundation is what has stability, endures, maintains its position, namely the truth. This bedrock of truth is to be confided in, for it is trusty. We must comprehend these three elements under the phrase, "the trusty foundation of truth" in order to reproduce the full meaning of the Hebrew, and to recognize what the Hebrew grasped as a matter of course in his native tongue, if he were urged to exercise *ēmuna*. But the verbal group *ēmuna-haamin* carries a distinct emphasis. All these concepts, to be trustworthy, to have a foundation, to be truthful, are in *haamin* not primarily manifestations of the man himself, but of Jehovah. He has foundations, He is trusty, He is the truth. And this trustiness of Jehovah, this truth, this foundation of His, is imputed to the *zaddiq* as his trustiness, truth and foundation, so that thereupon he will live. Therefore the *Zaddiq* lives on God's faithfulness, truth and foundation. He lives upon God's innermost attributes, to speak anthropomorphically, on God's power and almightiness. God's power and almightiness live in him. He is grounded in God, grows like a plant in the soil of God, he is, if rightly construed the living power of God. He who has this basis under his feet has no room for another basis, another anchorage. In that sense his righteousness of the *zaddiq* is already God's own righteousness, which is Paul's thesis. The *zaddiq* lives upon and together with God, because Jehovah so wills, and so he judges what is happening round about him, the behaviour of the wicked and the suffering of the just, as from God's watch-tower. If he were to inquire, why do the righteous suffer? It would be as though God asked Himself the question. And the *zaddiq* asks it as little as God does;

grounded in God, he trusts Him fully. Ask not, but believe! So in the sense of the problem of theodicy as regards the *zaddiq*, God is justified in presence of suffering; the question is silenced. How little this posture has to do with resignation, we shall discover from the eschatological aspect which comes into prominence in face of the removal of suffering.

2. The abiding righteousness of God in face of suffering sustains itself not only subjectively in the bearing of the faith which foregoes further inquiry in the track of the problem, that is to say, in the forum of faith, but also objectively for the believer; for suffering is positively a means of revealing that righteousness. An analysis of the book of Job will elucidate that.

In Ezekiel xiv. 14-20, in agreement with the Book of Job, he is termed a son of righteousness. Thus Job takes his place beside the *zaddiq* of Habakkuk, though it does not follow that the declarations of the *ëmuna* can be equally applied to him. We must characterize Job according to his own book.

Job is a pious man; even God's heavenly servants praise and admire his godly demeanour. Nevertheless he is visited with suffering rarely paralleled. In a short while he loses all that is his health too. Only his wife and friends remain to him; but they contribute to enhance his woes; they add soul trouble to his physical ills and lack of means; they fill up the measure of his sufferings. These sufferings are, according to the final canonical arrangement of the book, disciplinary, permitted, in a measure, ordained by God, executed by Satan, God's obedient messenger, yet antagonist. It is probably part of the book's design that we should regard the attitude of his wife and three friends as Satan's work. His probation of suffering was to convince all the world and Satan himself that Job's piety was not practised for the sake of the divine blessing, but was unselfish. God is veiled from Job. He assails him, but he nevertheless flees to God; he remains grounded in God. So long as Job is tormented to renounce God by being stripped of his goods or by his wife's challenge, his godly deportment does not change one whit. But the three friends make it plain by their speeches and rejoinders that Job's attitude still needs clearing up, as is affirmed later on by Elihu (xxxvi. 7); not as if Job has declined from his original posture of soul. Rather we may say that the three friends broach the problem of suffering, and waken thoughts in Job which neither his piety durst endorse nor had

hitherto mooted. They arise from the exchange of speech. The three friends are neither atheists nor pagans, but parties who know of God, yea, bear testimony of God's righteousness, but who do not accept the spirit of the *ēmuna*, but refer the problem of a theodicy to Job and his sufferings. It is the word of man in God's word, the word of man that is acquainted with the word of God, but does not stand underneath it or spring forth from God, but in counter-position to that word becomes audible at the verge of the *ēmuna* to the soul that is on God's foundation. Job joins in his three friends' utterances, defending himself against their reproofs, but he does not decline the colloquy altogether. He traverses the plane of thought occupied by the problem of theodicy, which does not at all correspond with the plane of thought of the *ēmuna*. Consequently Job remains where he was only he is not advanced by the discussion. He answers the three friends, but does not himself become a champion of the theodicy question; rather he relinquishes the pursuit of the problem at the last, surrendering to his friends' talk, because no true solution has been reached. The "wherefore" must yield to the confession: "the fear of Adonai, that is wisdom" (xxviii. 28).

Job has got no further by his conversation with his three friends; but he is prepared by his consent to be silent and bow to the fear of God for Elihu's utterances, which show a way out in as far as they reveal to him the purpose of affliction. Job's sufferings are not penal, they have the design of cleansing. No specific sin has caused or entailed or necessitated them; but his general sinful attitude (cf. xxxiv 5 sq.) becomes manifest through his suffering and is purged in God's forgiveness (xxxvi. 9). In Elihu's second speech Job has to recognize and own by his silence that his attitude before God does not need pardon. And so he becomes faster anchored in God's ground. That is in the first place the meaning of his sufferings.

The speeches of God finally shut Job's lips; the consideration of the theodicy is tabooed, Job is humbled. His foundation in God has stood the test and is now more firmly fixed than ever. Job stands forth at the close of the book as a man of piety throughout, and furthermore as the *tested* Godly man in a new God-given measure of life. Satan has lost his suit, God gained His. God's honour is displayed in the trial and displayed by means of Job's sufferings. Those sufferings serve *in maiorem*

Dei gloriam. "Here doth Job stand fast, and hold that God puts the godly man to pain without cause for His own praise" (Luther, Preface to *Job*). That is the second meaning of suffering. After his own humbling and purging Job has, by divine injunction to offer an *olah* for his three friends, who obviously do not stand in the *ëmuna*, and to pray for them; for only for Job's sake is no *nebata* to befall them (xlii. 8). Job becomes the mediator and indeed the redeemer of the advocates of a theodicy. His trial has conferred on him this function. Their false attitude became evident by his suffering; through it was he led to such a depth of understanding as to steer clear of the region of speculation touching a theodicy, a region hitherto unknown to him, and not to fall into a state of doubt or denial of God's righteousness. Through his trial Job has seen God (xlii. 5); by hearing God's word, like Moses, he has been led on to the sight of God.

Thus purged, by God's will, even though it be through the instrumentality of Satan, Job rises to the Old Testament priest, who has by divine warrant to blot out the sins of the people, both of friends and foes. Job proves the way for the outlook of Isaiah liii; he advances into the light of the vicarious suffering—his suffering itself is not yet vicarious—of the Servant of Jehovah, and prepares the right interpretation, namely the Isaian Self interpretation of the fourth song of God's servant. That is third meaning of suffering.

III

What significance has the fourth song of Jehovah for the problem of a theodicy? In Isaiah liii a Servant of the Lord is beheld who, Himself sinless, carries the sin-punishment of sinners, and so procures peace for sinners, and likewise deliverance from sin. This servant of God who suffers guiltlessly, we are not shown whether by His own initiative, or like Job unasked, does not call God to account, entertains no doubt regarding God's righteousness but is silent before God and man. A model therefore for Habakkuk and Job! "Of whom speaketh the prophet?" Who is this Servant of the Lord? The prophet and poet of the song? Or a fellow prophet? or simply prophetism personified? or a believing, God-grounded king? or the people of Israel? or an eschatological figure? If we do not wish to fall a prey to speculation, nor to conceal

this song's stamp of reality, bound up as it is with the history of Israel, nor to speak precipitately and indefensively of Jesus of Nazareth, but to let its self-interpretation as far as possible, come to light, the answer must run: this Servant of God is the proclamation of the Word of God, as it is found expression in the poet of the song, in Israel's prophetism, in the people of Israel, and as it once—this is the hope and promise of the song—will find place much more distinctly and clearly as the Word of God in person. And that is the lot of the righteous man, of the Divine message of faith, of the presence of God among men, that the Word of God, His Herald will be despised, mocked, spit upon, slain, nay slaughtered, and so treated that the purer the Word of God grows vocal, the more contempt turns to mockery, and mockery to spitting and spitting to strokes and strokes to slaughter, and that thus nothing save slaughter awaits the anticipated and promised proclamation of the Word of God is essence. But all this is at once man's sin and God's will. Notwithstanding, yea *in confusione hominum Dei providentia*; or rather notwithstanding. Yea *in peccatis hominum Dei gratia*. The Word of God is sent to be slaughtered, to serve as a sacrifice, and bear the sin of His slayers. Both the abiding righteousness of God and, in particular, the suffering of the Righteous One are published in Isaiah liii in their profoundest depth; for the righteousness of God here treads the path of suffering. The problem of theodicy, in fact, can here no longer find utterance as a problem. The inquirer can at the utmost resolve to decline entirely its ventilation

3. If the suffering of the righteous subserves these high ends it is surely to be asked how far the suffering as such should be counted valuable. Regarding it as evil or as a calamity, it grows very evident that in that mischief its opposite is involved, namely healing. Suffering cleanses from sin, and even the announcement of calamity in the Old Testament is always made in reference to sin. So announcement of calamity and healing are coupled together. The sin is destroyed (finally the sinner) that faith (finally the believer) may live. In the midst of the breaking up of the old world lie the indications for the unfolding of the new life, both in the national life of Israel and the personal life of Job. Thus we understand, if we speak of the abiding righteousness of God in the province of suffering, by that province primarily not the final outcome,

but the constant accompaniment of suffering by means of the purged faith which streams from it. Job obtains through his trial a new life not to be confounded with his earlier career. From this point of view it is intelligible how a Paul, not in contradiction to Job, but beyond what Job in his grief could reach, can boast of suffering and infirmity. He boasts thereby, only of God's abiding righteousness of Him who maintains rectitude even in the sufferings of the righteousness, yea through them and brings his purpose with men, to ground them in God, to fruition.

4. In order to appreciate the abiding righteousness of God finally in the abrogation of suffering, that is to say, in the end imposed upon it, we adduce the evidence for the triumph of the conception of a theodicy found in the seventy-third Psalm. What imparts its peculiar profundity to this Psalm is the circumstance that not merely the prosperity of the sinner but the arrogance of atheism induces the poet to touch on the problem. For not only is God's rectitude called in question, but God's existence. How does the poet here surmount the question which he himself raises? How does godly faith win the victory over godly doubt? Two elements mark the thought of the Psalm and supply the material for the solution and dismissal of the problem of theodicy. They are the question of recompense after the removal of suffering, and the historical eschatological character which the removal of suffering indicates.

(a) The Old Testament does not differ from human thought in general by ignoring the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the sinner. The reward and the punishment are, on the contrary, seen, though not in a scheme of compensatory retribution. The single reward for the believer is fellowship with God, faith itself. The reward then once more is the right posture of soul, a right apprehension of the subject of the theodicy. In Job's case the so-called reward consists in the redoubled good fortune that is to be appraised as an outward token of God's victory, manifesting withal God's honour. The poet of Psalm lxxiii who at first inquired "whether it was in vain that his heart lived irreproachably" (v. 13), sees God's rewarding response in the fact that he can abide in God, and that he obtains an insight with His Holy secret (v. 17). The so-called "nevertheless" of faith (Luther's term) (v. 23), is, however, no conclusion of a man who notwithstanding all contrarieties of life "nevertheless gives not God up, but

according to the textual connection the nevertheless of God, His bestowal and so-called reward; for although everything seemed to tell against it, He nevertheless holds to the blameless one "guides him by His counsel and afterwards receives him to glory" (v. 24). The recompense extends throughout the entire life and through death. (*Laqach* is here a technical term for the taking of a soul from this life to life eternal.) The reward will only be known aright from the side of eternity, only rightly understood eschatologically.

(b) The grounding of the believer in God signifies a life in communion with Him, a life originating in and emanating from *olam*. The Hebrew conception of eternity does not mean that which follows our time, but that which dominates also our life-span, the hidden or silent domain, God's kingdom of life. To live in communion with Him is to view suffering from this *olam*, and in so far as we men of this age cannot yet do that, to acquiesce in the hope hereafter to see with God's eyes and comprehend the meaning of all that has befallen us. We have noted above that in the Old Testament it is not the thought of the problem of Theodicy but of the *ēmuna* that prevails. That holds for the present life. We predicate in conclusion instead of the question of theodicy an eschatological outlook, one of faith, which does not confine itself to the present grounding in God, and so should not be wholly regarded as resignation or mere acquiescence, reducing the problem of theodicy to silence, but an attitude of faith which propounds the purified problem, to wit, the longing to know the meaning of life and of suffering from the standpoint of faith, because it yearns after the vision of God, after the *olam* where the questions that appeared problems to the understanding find their solution. The eschatological attitude of faith recognizes that what the cogitations about a theodicy strive to grasp here will in the *olam* actually become intuitive vision. Then will the abiding righteousness of God in suffering and indeed through it be revealed as His righteousness in a higher measure than we can know it in the assumptions of faith. "I am persuaded that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." "We know that for them who love God all things work together for good."

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DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN FREEDOM

I

As analysts of British character and exponents of our order of civilization, from Francois Guizot to Hilaire Belloc is rather a far cry. Accurate observers of the facts they set themselves to report and explain, for different reasons both made light of a main cause of our liberties. Had that chief cause of British freedom been wholly overlooked, scarcely more defective had the picture been in each case, or its ensemble more misleading. The camera was out of focus and the cinematographic action of the figures is blurred and very uncertain.

Guizot's work, now almost forgotten, we may leave. In a recent brochure, *The Nature of Contemporary England*, Mr. Belloc at some points gets so near a great discovery that his fecklessness elsewhere seems all the more disappointing. To a very generous tribute to the uniqueness of British life he adds (p. 4), "The three main characteristics of England as she now is are, that she is Commercial, that she is Protestant, and that she is Aristocratic".

His arguments we need not traverse; but some of his remarks merit notice as being extremely candid and creditable to such an ardent apologist for Roman Catholicism as Mr. Belloc. "England grew great, wealthy and powerful through the difficult rooting out of Catholicism in her midst" (p. 55). Both positively and negatively, says he (p. 45), "England is and has long been fundamentally Protestant. . . . Indeed no large proportion (of Englishmen) read the Bible habitually. But the mass of English agnostics and atheists are, in morals and outlook, of the same Bible-Christian kind as were their fathers". And "the whole body of English literature is Protestant" (p. 50). In fact "the Bible is now everywhere woven into the very stuff of the English" (p. 54). Furthermore, "the astounding strength of Biblical influence on England,

the depth to which it has penetrated the English mind, the universality of its effect and the extraordinary persistence of it in our generation, when all the old religious basis of it is disappearing, proceeded from a special factor which only those to whom the English language is native can understand. This factor was the power of the Word" (p. 52). Perhaps those experiencing God's regenerating grace through the entrance of His Word into their hearts know how little the matter of nativity counts here. The hiatus, when it occurs, must be sought at another point altogether.

There are certainly some fine pearls in this little brochure, deserving to be strung on a better thread than Mr. Belloc has yet found for their display.

II

Four successive revivals of evangelical religion have punctuated our millennium—in the twelfth, fourteenth, sixteenth, and eighteenth centuries—which account for the prevalence of Protestantism and the hold it has in the world. A glance at them, followed by a thumb-nail sketch of the Reformation of Religion in our land, will show both how Protestantism got firmly seated in the saddle here through a general diffusion of the knowledge of God revealed to men in the Bible, and that the wide liberties which form the warp and woof of our British order of civilization have resulted from the response of our forbears to the enunciation of the Divine Sovereignty in the last three of those four great works of the Spirit of God.

Just as the Papacy reached the apex of its power in Europe came the Waldensian revival. In its background we see a community of *Vallenses* who, lodged in the seclusion of their Alpine valleys where France borders on Italy, had kept the Faith of Christ more or less intact throughout the preceding millennium. In the ninth century the godly and zealous Bishop Claude of Turin (820-840), who may have been awakened by contact with some devout Vallenses, did much for the cause of Christ in that area. Three centuries later Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, through reading the Bible was born again of God, and with others thus regenerated received a baptism of the Spirit, making them ardent evangelists to all around, near and far. The burden of their message was that all must

take their religion, not from Popes or priests, but from the Word of God only, whom we must worship in spirit and truth. Thirty of their number landed in England in 1161, where all suffered martyrdom for the Faith of Christ.

The next of the series began with the awakening of John Wycliffe in England, who soon gathered around him a great band of preachers, by whom most of England and the South-West of Scotland was evangelized. In a petition sent to the House of Commons in 1395 (See Wilkins' *Concilia*, iii. 221) they pilloried most of the heresies of the Latin Church now rejected by Protestants. Wycliffe emphasized chiefly two cardinal principles: that in His absolute sovereignty God requires undeviating obedience to the truth revealed in His holy Word; and that, His administration of earth's affairs being in virtue of His grace, all earthly Dominion is of Grace alone—a distinct development of what the Waldenses had so nobly taught. When further developed in the revivals of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Wycliffe's principles produced and solidified the Christian and Protestant order of civilization which is our British heritage unto this day.

In the Reformation the Absolute Sovereignty of God was chiefly stressed, with its terms so translated into human experience as to secure human freedom in a manner and measure unknown since Apostolic times. This our Reformers did by proclaiming (according to the terms of the Gospel) and pressing home the truth that both justification and sanctification are obtained by faith alone. As to what that faith is by which men are justified and sanctified, they were under the deepest obligation to Calvin. "There is an inseparable relation between faith and the Words," wrote he (*Institutes*, i. 473-5); "and these can no more be disconnected from each other than rays of light from the sun. . . . Take away the Word, therefore, and no faith will remain. . . . Paul designated faith as the obedience given to the Gospel (Rom. i. 5). . . . Faith is the knowledge of the Divine will in regard to us, as ascertained from the Word. . . . Faith is a firm and sure knowledge of the Divine favour towards us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, revealed to our minds and sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Thus made partakers of justification and sanctification by faith, so as to live and work for the coming of Christ's kingdom of grace on earth, multitudes of our countrymen thereby became

invested with liberties of a kind till then unknown, liberties personal and social, religious and civil.

The last of the four had John Wesley as its central figure and unwearied promoter. In 1777 he wrote (*Works*, xi. 367), "In 1729 I began not only to read but to study the Bible as the one and only standard of truth, the only model of pure religion." In 1747 he had solemnly named himself *homo unius libri*. As all his writings and the records of his work show, he lived and laboured for one thing alone, to bring men into the obedience of the Gospel.

His adherence to Calvin's basic principle above stated seems to be partly accounted for by his hereditary acquirements. Both his grandfathers had been numbered among the 2,000 Calvinistic ministers ejected from the Church of England in 1662. Dr. Samuel Annesley, his maternal grandsire, with a preface of his own had published an edition of Coles' *Treatise on the Divine Sovereignty* (See Calamy's *Nonconformists' Memorial*, i. 107). So probably from youth Wesley had reflected often and deeply on the subject, pondering the teaching of Holy Scripture upon it. In the result he was led to apply Calvin's doctrine of salvation more widely in two directions.

First, in the matter of justification by faith. He agreed with Calvin that it is God's will that ministers of the Word should proclaim the gospel of salvation to all men; that none who hear the Gospel can be saved save those who obediently believe it with the whole heart; and that Christ is now the Saviour of all men on earth in that He takes care of them and blesses them with all the good things they possess. But Wesley, assured by many express statements of the New Testament, held that in the proclamation of the Gospel to men God conveys to each and every hearer an actual power to believe the truth proclaimed, and by this obedient belief of the Gospel to be justified in that same moment. In his view, then, eternal salvation is possible to each hearer of the Gospel.

The point where he diverged from Calvin on this solemn issue seems to be indicated when he says (*Works*, x. 360), "Arminians and Calvinists are just upon a level." Both Calvin and Arminius had held that the number to be saved eternally had been determined by God, ere yet the world was made, by a fixed and unalterable decree. But Wesley, holding fast to the terms of the Gospel, discounted the idea that the salvation

of men is predetermined by a Divine decree. The reasonableness of this may appear to us on reflecting that, as Calvin held, God has no past and no future, but exists ever in one Eternal Now. In the Divine aspect of our salvation, therefore, there is in fact no such thing as *fore-knowledge* and *pre-destination*; but only an ever-present administration. The fact seems unquestionable, and its bearing on our subject is very evident.

Similarly Wesley widened the scope of sanctification by faith. If Calvin was the first for centuries to show that Christians are sanctified by obedient belief of what God has written in Holy Scripture, Wesley, founding on specific New Testament promises to that effect, like that (Matt. v. 48) at the close of Christ's exposition of the Spirit's law of the New Covenant, held and taught that entire sanctification is blessedly possible on earth to every Christian through belief of all God has written in His Word. And, though alive to the defects of those he knew intimately, and till he lay on his deathbed deeming himself as not yet having attained his hope, Wesley doubted not many of his circle bore every scriptural mark of having been entirely sanctified by faith.

III

The near kinship of those four revivals of religion is stamped on their most prominent features. (1) They were successively recoils from the authority and traditions of men to the paramount sovereignty and the commandments of God—reassertions of the apostolic claim, that we must obey God rather than men. (2) The Bible revelation of God and His laws they set apart from and supreme over all else within human ken. (3) The unseen realities of heaven they held so high that all earth's good things shrank to very minute dimensions. (4) As was the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit recorded in the *Acts*, each was a direct work of God, a manifestation of the Divine Sovereignty making for a wide extension of human freedom. (5) With no human warrant or authorization for what they did, their promoters felt they needed none but that of God alone. And (6) the race of men new-born in each period showed themselves not only prepared to give, but in many cases actually paid, the uttermost price of staunch fidelity to the Faith of Christ that was in them.

In our millennium none others have borne all these family features. Seen in retrospective, other movements somewhat similar in character tended to revert to the order of this world, as the Christian Churches had done in the preceding millennium. Others of a directly subversive kind we must notice hereafter, nullifying and marring what has been built up in those four.

Their Divine unity is further evidenced by the increase, stage by stage, of evangelical knowledge—a work of God fitly typified by the stages of a human life up to early manhood, from infancy to childhood, adolescence, puberty. A survey of the growing knowledge of evangelical truth throughout the series, and of the ever-widening effort to bring all men into the obedience of the Gospel till now it has entered almost every nation on earth, affords proof of a Divine plan, whose completion seems already well within sight.

IV

In the sixteenth-century Reformation the changes Britain underwent were analogous to those of persons powerfully converted to God in Christ. Scotland's transformation is reminiscent of what befell Saul of Tarsus outside Damascus and thereafter. That of England partly resembles the call of a Peter, and is partly like the slower response of a Thomas. Ultimately nearly identical as to results, the methods of reform were very dissimilar, and in two important matters the order followed here was just the reverse of that taken there.

There, owing to external causes, the earliest enactments (1532-4), which later led to the establishment of the Reformation on a national basis, quashed and abolished the jurisdiction of the Pope, subjects of the Realm being prohibited from appealing to Rome on any matter, civil or religious, or ecclesiastical. In Scotland a similar Act, passed on the 24th August, 1560, put the cope-stone on the Reformation here. So in point of legislative measures, the Scottish Reformation ended where that of England had begun.

A main cause of that and other differences lay in the fact that, whereas in England the Acts of Reform were promoted by the Sovereign, here each stage of the movement, unless the first, was gained in teeth of strong opposition from the Royal Family, moved by agents of the Papacy. A glance at the course

of the Scottish Reformation will show how profoundly this affected things here.

The Estates of Scotland on March 6th, 1542, passed an Act making it lawful for every citizen to buy, sell, possess and read the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, abolishing all penalties to which formerly men were subject for so doing, and penalising encroachments on their right to have and study the Bible "in the vulgar tongue." No formal protest seems to have been made by the Royal Family against the passing of that Act. When in England Henry VIII had put an end to Papal interferences, a partial concession of this kind was made by having a copy of the Bible in English chained to the lectern in each parish church, where all who pleased might go and read it.

A goodly number of the Scottish nobles and aristocracy now adhered to the Reform cause, some in obedience to the Gospel and others on patriotic grounds. Becoming united in a fairly compact body popularly known as "the Congregation," their leaders were designated "the Lords of the Congregation." From its formation this body met with a steady intensified opposition from the Queen Mother and the Latin clergy around her, an opposition that caused the Scots folk generally to rally in growing numbers to the banners of Reform under the leadership of the Lords of the Congregation.

To the outcry of the Court party, that the Lords of the Congregation and their adherents were in rebellion against their lawful Sovereign, we owe the enunciation of that cardinal principle which gave form to our unique liberties and became the keystone of our British order of civilization. To Wycliffe's ideas our Reformers gave effect by enacting that *the government of a people should be by the people themselves in accordance with the provisions and the laws of Christ's Gospel*. In all their appeals and enactments of that period, ending in August, 1560, their case as here epitomized stands declared. Its embodiment in the constitution of our country secured to our people the widest liberties then known or anywhere yet existent on earth. Our entire order of civilization took shape according to this, *the evangelical principle*.

It differs essentially from the theocratic principle in that, whereas the latter requires penalties to be imposed on refractory subjects, it established and conserves the Gospel liberties of

all, providing penalties against those only who rob their neighbours of their lawful rights. It does away with the use of violence save in restraint of violent men; and it holds the conscience and personality of each so sacred as to forbid its being forced on any pretext whatsoever.

Thus in Scotland Wycliffe's noble idea, *Dominion is of Grace alone*, first took effect; and in England only after many ups and downs, when some 130 years later a Prince, who prior to ascending the throne of Britain got initiated into the Jesuit Order (See Voltaire's *Age of Louis XIV*, i. 239), attempted to bring our country again under the Papal yoke. To the perils of the situation the English then awoke almost to a man and, everywhere adopting the evangelical principle, which in 1560 had brought life and liberty to Scots folk, reached a settlement that put the South abreast with the North. In the matter, then, the English Reformation ended almost where the Scottish had begun; and a way was opened to have but one Legislature in the United Kingdom.

Our heritage of ordered liberties we owe, therefore, to a fixed belief in and general submission to the Absolute Sovereignty of God over men, which He ordinarily exercises according to the evangelical principle. That two whole nations should have adopted that evangelical principle so as to have produced an order of civilization conformable to the Gospel of Christ; that in so doing we should, despite great differences of temperament and outlook, have become so truly united; that in every great national crisis for nigh two centuries we should have stood united, shoulder to shoulder, in loyalty to the evangelical principle; and that for ages past, both at home and in the tasks Divinely entrusted to us throughout our far-flung Empire, we have worked so harmoniously together—all this must press home on us that, both for our well-being at home and for a due execution of our trusts overseas, nothing can so well fit us as to lay hold anew on the eternal truth of the Divine Sovereignty over the world.

V

Since our evangelical order of civilization began to take shape, God is seen exercising His sovereignty over Britain mainly by means of elect minorities. Here chiefly Mr. Belloc's little brochure misses the mark. Designating our civilization

“an Aristocracy”, he yet finds himself (p. 5) compelled to admit he cannot give “a perfectly accurate definition” of his meaning. He says our “Aristocracy is from below”, and proceeds to a conclusion that shows how little they can know Britain who have not threaded the central current of her life. “Government of this kind is not merely acquiesced in by the governed; still less is it imposed upon the governed. Rather does it proceed *from the appetites* of the governed. On this account, the Aristocratic State has been called ‘a society where the poor desire to be governed,’ &c.” (Italics mine, J.F.). Mr. Belloc’s interpretation of our case seems here to be ruled, not by what he has perceived among us, but by things in areas he is probably better acquainted with.

To have stood surrounded by the mighty spiritual forces so active in those periods of religious revival in the fourteenth, sixteenth, and eighteenth centuries; to note the thousands upon thousands of men and women then born anew into the kingdom of God, to become powerful in prayer and in devoted service; to have observed the concurrent general response of the masses to these manifestations of the Divine goodness and love to men, albeit the masses follow not the few right through the gates into the kingdom of heaven; and then to notice how, even when the tides of spiritual revival had receded far from our shores, leaving the beaches drear and deserted of the healthful waters and the elect minorities but as pelicans in the wilderness, yet in every great crisis of national affairs our people arising, almost as one man, to give effect to some new application of the evangelical principle—he who has taken note of those things in the life of our country for centuries past, knows how surely and well God has exercised His sovereignty over us by means of His elect minorities, not often by placing them in the seats of earthly authority and administration, but by investing them with the superior powers of the kingdom of heaven, which is over all.

VI

As it was between the fourteenth- and sixteenth-century revival seasons, and again in the interval between those of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, we are now experiencing another acute spell of spiritual drought and famine. Though Mr. Belloc’s picture of “the mass of English agnostics and

atheists" grown to such proportions that "all the old religious basis" of our order of civilization "is disappearing", may be somewhat too sombre, who that treasures our unique heritage can feel no disquiet over the very powerful forces threatening it, most of all those operating within our own borders?

Special attention should be directed to that group of subversive movements which, between 1825 and 1835, were launched on the Protestant Churches of our land, eroding and destroying the foundations of those national institutions created by successive applications of the evangelical principle made paramount by our Reformers. In the April issue of the *Evangelical Quarterly* I sketched one of these and the damage it did, and touched on another simultaneously started. They were but two of a group of such agencies, which for a time flourished as parasites preying on the vitals of British Christianity, and giving off noxious gases that more and more poisoned the air of national life.

Like the ivy which, battenning on an English oak till the festoon of its poisonous leaves is almost the only shade of green left, has sucked the good tree dry and all but dead, those toadies are either themselves dead or fast perishing for lack of sustenance. By robbing their hosts of the means of life, all parasites exhaust the sources of their own nutriment. And so, if eventually they succeed in killing their hosts, they must themselves die with them.

VII

The four successive revivals of scriptural Christianity in our millennium present an aspect of history radiant of hope for our generation. Perhaps even more so are the advances made in the knowledge of evangelical truth as one of those revivals succeeded another, affording clearer and yet clearer evidence that the Sovereignty of God most characteristically and best manifests itself in love and grace to mankind, infinite and unfathomable; and that this is why human liberty so readily flows from true and whole-hearted obedience to God. In the light of these rediscoveries of truth by those who reverently studied the Bible as God's proved Testament to men, and of the notable uplifts of our people resulting from the labours of our pathfinders, who can read the Bible without assurance that in the Gospel of Christ there is still a wealth of truth to be brought

into human knowledge and experience, whose apprehension may further enlarge our liberties and well-being almost incalculably? Most certain it seems that a final application of the evangelical principle belongs still to the future, great indeed as have been the benefits of its past applications.

The supreme manifestation of the Love of God in the death of His Son for our redemption, the very quintessence of the Gospel, takes us back to its origin in that eternal world where He stands solitarily apart from all He has made. Several New Testament passages refer to Christ's having offered Himself, ere yet the world was made, in an act of expiation and atonement for the sins of mankind, reconciling God to men. Of all Jesus' disciples John seems most to have caught His meaning when discoursing of the deeper things of God. So, when in the Book of the Revelation he writes of "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world", our thoughts get carried back to some of our Lord's sayings recorded in his Gospel, like John xii. 27-8 and xvii. 5.

In Christ's request to the Father recorded in John xvii. 5 is not the meaning deeper far than appears superficially? What was "the glory" He had with the Father "before the world war?" of the work the Father had given Him to do on earth (referred to in verse 4) one most vital part remained ere yet He could say, *It is finished*—the sure conflict in the shades of dark Gethsemane and an accursed death on Calvary. Was it for strength to be true to the Father's trust in respect of that crowning part of His ministry He here made request? unless He held His near agony and death relatively so trivial as to be out of account, His words "*Now glorify Thou me*" must be taken as referring to that; and *the glory He had with the Father before the world was* can, therefore, only have been the effulgence of Love's act of complete self-sacrifice.

Here our minds go back to John xii. 27-8. The coming of some Greeks anxious to see Jesus had led Him to speak of His death, now known to be near, and of the marvels to flow from it. Passes there a cloud as He speaks: *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say,—Father, save me from this hour? but hereto for this very hour am I come.* (Rather this will I say), *Father, glorify Thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, Once did I glorify it, and I will glorify it yet again.* Thrice was that voice heard speaking from heaven concerning

Jesus; first, when in baptism He dedicated Himself to tread the lonesome way destined to end on Mount Calvary, then at the Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah reappeared to converse with Him about His death, and now again as He was publicly discoursing of His death. Can we doubt the special glory of which that voice from heaven said, "I will glorify it yet again", was the radiance of our Lord's Passion? then, was not the glory He had had with the Father just the effulgence of Love's uttermost outpouring? a glory belonging to the Father as much as to the Son, to the Son as fully as to the Father.

Under his overshadowing cloud Eternal and Unsullied Justice met Everlasting and Fathomless Mercy, to clasp and kiss in warm and holy embrace. Marvel we now to see human liberty springing by natural generation from Divine Sovereignty? or to know why our freedom stands secure in God's Absolute Love only?

VIII

Writing to the Philippians on the personal application of the evangelical principle, in reference to Christ's act of supreme self-sacrifice, Paul uses a term (Phil. ii. 7) which has sometimes been greatly misunderstood. He calls it a *kenosis*, that is, a self-emptying. Many commentators on this passage have overlooked the fact that Paul has here our Lord's true and proper Deity in mind, whose *kenosis* he describes as having consisted in His becoming man so as to take the place and duties of "a bondservant"—His self-emptying being in fact His act of taking the rôle of a bondservant—in order to suffer a shameful death for our redemption from sin and death eternal. Was it in truth a manifestation on earth of that eternal act of God whereby the Son became the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world?

If so, then the incarnation and ministry of Christ, culminating in that final act whereby He satisfied the claims of Divine Justice by dying in our stead that we might live in Love's full freedom, makes God's eternal act humanly intelligible. But also, the earthly *kenosis* has that as its source and background: what God manifest in the flesh was and did, fulfilled temporarily and spatially what the Eternal Spirit did anterior to creation. Two things are thus clear: in that eternal act the Divine Being expressed himself in glory ineffable, an unfolding

in plentitude of the Divine Personality; and secondly, human personality can find complete expression only on receiving to itself the Divine Mind and Being so as to die to the things of sense and time.

How cogent then the opening word of Paul's exposition of our Lord's *kenosis*, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus!" Could aught better tell that the self-emptying was essentially a triumph of mind over matter? or need we a more effective reply to the philosophic mirage that sets before us, not a fully developed personality invested with noble liberties, but Nirvana as the soul's goal? "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

In this way alone, through their rediscoveries of the truths eternal contained in God's Book, the pathfinders were raised up who led the revivals above specified. This made them men of God, whose great stature is the more evident the farther we recede from them. This alone qualified them to beget with the Word of Truth their many spiritual children, the then very powerful elect minorities. So generally submissive to the Divine Sovereignty became their generation that a heritage of liberty was transmitted to us such as earth nowhere else presents.

IX

On the analogy of that series of revivals the great hope of the near future may seem to lie in God's raising up another such band of true pathfinders, to lead His people onward to the promised land. On the other hand, we may be so much nearer full realization of our most ardent hopes that the leadership of great men will be needless. No prediction of Holy Writ could be clearer than those announcing that in the world's last days God will so pour out His Spirit on all flesh that His children generally will in spiritual stature be as the great men of His kingdom formerly. If this come to pass in the lifetime of some now among us—a possibility many signs of our times proclaim almost a certainty—then we need expect no such outstanding leadership to be given.

In any case we must wait for none. Most certain is it there is always much work the most ordinary can do, and do well. Never has it been more so than in our day. Only, if the ordinary Christian is to succeed in the tasks so clamantly thrusting themselves on our attention, he must be no ordinary

Christian in the sense of living on the average level of spiritual life about him, but a follower of the Christ knowing the meaning and the value of His *kenosis*.

By every circumstance in personal life, in the ecclesiastical world, and in the affairs of our people that word, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus", is being forced home upon every one of us. Ours it is to attempt nothing less than turn the world upside down, right side uppermost. But we are little likely to effect much without regard to that word (Phil. i. 29) from which Paul's mind ran on to the *kenosis* of our Lord: "Unto you it hath been granted in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, *but also to suffer on His behalf.*" Save by sufferings such as our pathfinders steadfastly endured, what can be accomplished in such a world as ours of to-day?

Under like sufferings even prophets have betimes cursed the day they were born to be men of strife and contention. Such grieving under what was felt to be "the burden of the Lord", one of them learnt (Jer. xxiii. 33-40), was but a mark of the false prophet. "Contempt is a part of the cross every man bears who follows Christ," wrote one pathfinder; "it is the badge of His discipleship, the stamp of His profession, the constant seal of His calling". To tread the Way the Master went, is the Christian's high privilege, perhaps the highest given to men on earth. To endure pain and loss for the Gospel's sake is still both the only Way to the kingdom of God's ordinary means of bringing others into it. The truth that alone brings life and liberty to the humble-hearted seldom fails to cut impenitent sinners to the quick, arousing in them hate and fury expressing itself in a bitterly persecuting spirit.

But on the other hand, what a wondrous cementing power persecution exerts on those who, though cast in very different moulds—unlike in temperament, in modes of thought, and in outlook—and though far apart in station, love and serve our common Master! That such fellowship and concord is highly pleasing to Him who with His own most precious blood redeemed them, one and all, is most evident from the measure of His blessing upon their lives and labours.

Such concord well becomes the exponents of the evangelical principle, that true connecting link between the Sovereignty of God and earth's noblest thing, human freedom. To turn

a deaf ear to the call of the Master's *kenosis* upon us, will but close our hearts to His Sovereign Grace and Love, depriving us of the power to establish and maintain this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. What then, if in the maelstrom surging violently around us the liberties of the British order of civilization should sink and disappear? Would not the destruction of our liberties be but a seal on the impotency of God's elect minority. His token that the salt had lost its seasoning power?

But, as above said, God's mercy to us these hundreds of years leads us to pray and encourages us to hope for better things.

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Note.—The Editor does not accept responsibility for all the views expressed in this interesting article.