

FAITH THE SIXTH SENSE.

RELIGION is recognised not only as a universal factor in human history, but also as an essential element of human nature, so that if any person with a sense of responsibility proposes to remove the supernatural Religion of the past, he feels himself bound to replace it with a natural Religion for the future. It is one thing however to do homage to a ruler, it is another to identify his throne, and, apart from Jesus, it were hardly possible to determine the seat of Religion. Some have argued that Religion is the fulfilment of duty; this is to settle Religion in the conscience and to reduce it to morality. Some have insisted that Religion is the acceptance of revealed truth; this is to settle Religion in the reason, and to resolve Religion into knowledge. Some have pled that religion is a state of feeling; this is to settle Religion in the heart and to dissolve it into emotion. The philosopher, the theologian, the mystic can each make out a good case, for each has without doubt represented a side of Religion. None of the three can exclude the other two; all three cannot include religion. Piety, knowledge, emotion are only prolegomena to Religion—its favourite forms and customs. Localize religion in any of those spheres, and you have a provincial notion; what we want is an imperial idea of our greatest experience. As usual, we owe it to Jesus.

Jesus recognised the variety of the religious spirit and gave His direct sanction to its choice fruits. Religion is obedience to the highest law: "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (St. John xv. 14). Religion is knowledge: "that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (St. John xvii. 3). Religion is a sublime emotion: "She hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head" (St. Luke vii. 44). But religion with Jesus is not

merely an influence diffused through our spiritual nature like heat through iron ; it has a separate existencé. Religion is not a nomad that has to receive hospitality in some foreign department of the soul ; it has its own home and habitation. It is a faculty of our constitution as much as Conscience or Reason, with its own sphere of operations and peculiar function. When some exuberant writer refers to Religion as a fungoid growth or a decaying superstition, one is amazed at the belated state of mind. Science discovers that Religion has shaped the past of the Race, and concludes that it will always be a factor in its evolution. Jesus did not create Religion, it is a human instinct. He defined it, and Jesus' synonym for the faculty of Religion is Faith.

Jesus as the Prophet of Religion was ready to submit every word of His teaching to Conscience and Reason. He never suggested that what would have been immoral in man might be moral in God. His argument was ever from a good in man to the best in God. Human fatherhood was a faint suggestion of Divine Fatherhood. "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? . . . If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (St. Matt. vii. 9, 11). He never insisted that what was absolutely incredible to man was therefore all the more likely to be true with God, but used the human as the shadow of the divine. Common sense in man was Grace in God. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost till he find it?" (St. Luke xv. 4). Jesus claimed no exemption for His doctrine from the Law of Righteousness or the Law of Fitness, but it was in another court He chose to state His case for decision.

When Jesus made His chief appeal to the individual He addressed Himself to Faith. He asked many things of men, but the first and last duty was to believe. Faith lay behind life; it formed character, it inspired discipline. "What shall we do," said captious Jews, "that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (St. John vi. 28, 29). Before the soul came to perfection it would have to suffer, but it must begin by believing, else there could be no Religion. Jesus' mind was continually fixed on Faith; the word was ever on His lips. It was the recurring decimal of His thinking, the keynote of His preaching. His custom was to divide men into classes from the standpoint of Religion, not morals—those who believed, those who believed not (St. John iii. 18). He marvelled twice: once at men's unbelief (St. Mark vi. 6), once at a Roman centurion's faith (St. Matt. viii. 10). When any one sought His help He demanded faith (St. Matt. ix. 28). When He rebuked His disciples it was usually because they had little faith (St. Mark iv. 40). Understand what Jesus meant by Faith and you understand what Jesus meant by Religion.

Just as a ship is kept in the waterway by the buoys on either side, so does one arrive at Jesus' idea of Faith by grasping the startling fact that it was quite different from the idea of His own day. The contemporary believer of Jesus was a Pharisee, and his faith stood in the passionate acceptance of a national tradition. He believed that the Jewish nation was the exclusive people of God, and that Jerusalem would yet be the metropolis of the world, with a thousand inferences and regulations that had grown like fungi on the trunk of this stately hope. It was contrary to fact to say a Pharisee believed in God: it came out that he did not know God when he saw Him. It is correct to say that he believed in a dogma which, in another age,

might have been the Holy Trinity, but in his age happened to be the national destiny. The dogma of the monopoly of God was difficult to hold, being vulnerable both from the side of God and man. Jesus Himself showed that it did not correspond with the nature of God, whose mercy was not a matter of ethnology. "I tell you of a truth . . . many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (St. Luke iv. 25-27). He pointed out that it was contradicted by the nature of man, whose piety was not a matter of geography. "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. viii. 11). While this dogma had the advantage of being patriotic, it had the misfortune of being incredible to any fair-minded and reasonable person. You could only believe it by shutting your eyes to facts, and making the most intolerable assumptions. Faith with a Pharisee was the opposite of Reason.

Jesus also had a contrast in the background of His mind, and it throws His idea of Faith into bold relief. "Master," said certain of the Scribes and Pharisees to Jesus, "we would see a sign from Thee." It was dangerous, they considered, to let truth stand on her merits: for a prophet to rest his claim on his character. It was safer to shift from truth to miracles and to depend on the intervention of the supernatural. Jesus was angry because this wanton demand for a sign was the tacit denial of Faith, and the open confession of an irreligious heart. "An evil and adulterous generation," He said, "seeketh after a sign" (St. Matt. xii. 39). A nobleman was impressed by the spiritual power of Jesus, and besought Him to heal his sick son. His faith was strong enough to believe that Jesus could do this good work: it was too weak to believe that Jesus could work at a distance. Faith in this man's mind was fettered by con-

ditions of sight, and so was less than faith. "Except," said Jesus, "ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe" (St. John iv. 48). When Jesus rose from the dead He found that one of His apostles had not kept Easter Day, and would not accept His Resurrection unless Jesus afforded him physical proof of the most humble and elementary kind. Jesus conceded to Love what could not be given to Faith, and St. Thomas, who had lost faith in Jesus' humanity, rose to the faith of His divinity. But Jesus reproached him, and rated his faith at a low value. It was only a bastard faith that had not freed itself of sight. "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed" (St. John xx. 29). "What," said St. Augustine, "is Faith, but to believe what you do not see?" It was a happy epitome of Jesus. With Jesus Faith is the opposite of sight.

Jesus crystallized the idea of Faith which is held in solution throughout the Bible, and rests on the assumption of two worlds. There is the physical world which lies round us on every side, and of which our bodies are a part. This is one environment, and the instrument of knowledge here is sight. There is the spiritual world which is hidden by the veil of the physical, and of which our souls are a part. This is another environment, and the instrument of knowledge here is faith. There is an order in the education of Humanity, and the first lesson is not faith but sight. The race, and each individual in his turn, begins with the experience of the physical: seeing visible objects, handling material possessions, hearing audible voices, looking at flesh-and-blood people. It is a new and hard lesson to realize the spiritual: to enter into the immaterial, inaudible, invisible, intangible life of the soul; to catch a voice that only calls within, to follow a mystical presence through a trackless wilderness, to wait for an inheritance that eye

hath not seen, to store our treasure on the other side of the grave. This is to leave our kindred and our father's house, and to go into a land which God will show us. It is to emerge from the physical, it is to enter into the spiritual sphere. It is an immense advance; it is a tremendous risk. Any one who shifts the centre of his life from the world which is seen to the world which is unseen deserves to be called a believer. Abraham was the first man in history who dared to make this venture and to cast himself on God. He discovered the new world of the soul, and is to this day the father of the faithful.

Jesus insisted on Faith for the same reason that a mathematician relies on the sense of numbers, or an artist on the sense of beauty: it was the one means of knowledge in His department. He was the Prophet of God and must address the God-faculty in man. Between Faith and God there was the same correspondence as between the eye and light. Faith proves God: God demands Faith. When any one ignored Faith and fell back on sight in the quest for God, Jesus was in despair. Before such wilful stupidity He was amazed and helpless. You want to see, was His constant complaint, when in the nature of things you must believe. There is one sphere where sight is the instrument of knowledge: use it there—it is not my sphere. There is another where faith is the instrument; use it there—that is my sphere. But do not interchange your instruments. You cannot see what is spiritual; you might as well expect to hear a picture. What you see you do not believe; it is a misnomer; you see it. What you believe you cannot see; it would be an absurdity; you believe it. Faith is the instinct of the spiritual world: it is the sixth sense—the sense of the unseen. Its perfection may be the next step in the evolution of the Race.

Jesus continually offered Himself as the object of Faith because He was the Revelation of the unseen world.

Believe on Me, He said with authority, not on the ground that He was God, whom no man could see, but because He was sent by God whom He declared. "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us" (St. John xiv. 8), was the confused cry of Faith. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (xiv. 9), was Jesus' answer. To see Jesus was not sight: it was Faith. Sight only showed a Jewish peasant, and therefore Jesus said once to the Jews, "Ye also have seen Me and believe not" (St. John vi. 36). Faith detected His veiled glory; therefore Jesus said to St. Peter on his great confession, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (St. Matt. xvi. 17). Jesus did not depend on His metaphysical equality with the Father, but on His moral likeness to the Father — not His eternal generation, but His spiritual character. Reason must decide whether Jesus be God and Man in two distinct natures and one person: it is the function of faith to respond to His Divine excellence, who was

"Fulfilled with God-head as a cup
Filled with a precious essence."

God was made visible and beautiful to Faith as Jesus spoke and worked, and the denial of Jesus was the denial of God. "The Father Himself, which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape; and ye have not His word abiding in you, for Whom He hath sent ye believe not" (St. John v. 37, 38). Faith fulfils itself in the discovery and acceptance of Jesus; beyond Him nothing is to be desired, no one to be imagined. As Mr. T. H. Green says, "Faith is the communication of the Divine Spirit by which Christ as the revealed God dwells in our heart. It is the awakening of the Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry Abba Father."

Two questions which harass the religious mind in our

day were never anticipated by Jesus' hearers: they were impossible under His idea of Faith. When Faith is an isolated and subtle act of the soul, some will always ask, What is Faith? and some will always reply, There are seven kinds, more or less, and the end will be hopeless confusion. If Faith be defined as the sense of the unseen which detects, recognises, loves, and trusts the goodness existing in innumerable forms and persons in the world, and rises to its height in trusting Him who is its source and sum, then it is needless to inquire, "What is Faith?" We are walking by Faith in one world every day with our souls, as we are walking by sight in another world with our bodies. No one asked Jesus, "How can Faith be obtained?" because Jesus did not regard Faith as an arbitrary gift of the Almighty, or an occasional visitant to favoured persons, but as one of the senses of the soul. Jesus did not divide men into those who had Faith and those who had not, but into those who used the faculty, and those who refused to use it. He expected people to believe when He presented evidence, as you expect one to look if you show him a picture. One might have weak faith as one might have short sight: one might be faithless as one might be blind. That is beside the question. The Race has sight, although a few may be blind, and the Race has Faith, although a few may not believe.

Jesus regarded the feeblest effort of this faculty with hope because it lifted the soul above the limitations of this life and allied it to the Eternal. "With God all things are possible" (St. Matt. xix. 26), and therefore "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to Him that believeth" (St. Mark ix. 23). When His disciples caught a glimpse of the higher life and prayed "Increase our Faith," Jesus encouraged them. "If ye had Faith as a grain of mustard seed (synonym for smallness), ye might say unto this sycamine (synonym for greatness) tree, Be thou plucked up

by the root, and be thou planted in the sea ; and it should obey you (St. Luke xvii. 6). It was not easy to believe strongly any more than to see far, and Faith, like any other faculty, must be trained by discipline. Jesus was evidently satisfied with the father who said with tears, "Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief" (St. Mark ix. 24), and ever cast His protection over struggling Faith. Positive unbelief or absolute incapacity of Faith, Jesus refused to pity or condone. It was not a misfortune : it was a wilful act. It was atrophy through misuse or neglect, and was, to His mind, sin.

This judgment would be a gross injustice if Faith were an accomplishment of saints ; it is an inevitable conclusion if Faith be an inherent faculty. No one could be reduced to this helpless state unless he had habitually shut his soul against the unseen as it lapped him round and had fastened his whole interest on this world. It was one of the paradoxes of Jesus' day, that the same people were the conventional believers and the typical unbelievers. The Pharisees believed in their creed with pathetic tenacity and disbelieved in Jesus with hopeless obstinacy, and the reason of their Faith and their unbelief was the same. It was their utter and unqualified worldliness. They believed in a kingdom where its citizens strove for the chief seats of the synagogues and the highest rooms at feasts ; they were offended with a kingdom whose type was a little child and whose Messiah came to serve. They had lived so long in the dark of vain ambition and material aims, that their eye-balls had withered, and when they came into the open they could not see. "How can ye believe," said Jesus to the Jews, illuminating at one stroke His idea of Faith and the reason of their unbelief, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (St. John v. 44).

Jesus' attitude to miracles hangs on His idea of Faith,

Define Faith as the antagonist of reason, and miracles are then a necessity. They are the twelve legions of angels which intervene on the side of Truth. Define Faith as the supplement to reason in the sphere of the unseen, and miracles are at best a provisional assistance. If Faith had been alert and strong, then miracles had been an incumbrance. Since Faith was weak and inert, miracles served a purpose. For a moment the spiritual order projected itself into the natural and arrested attention. No one could deny another state, and he might be roused to possess it. A miracle was a sign, a lightning flash that proves the electricity in the air; otherwise a useless and alarming phenomenon to men. Jesus did not think highly of physical miracles; He was annoyed when they were asked; He wrought them with great reserve; He depreciated their spiritual value on all occasions. If blind men could not see the light, let them have the lightning, but it was a poor makeshift. "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me (recognise Me), believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him" (St. John x. 37, 38). So He put it to the Jews, and His heart sometimes failed Him about His own disciples. "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake" (St. John xiv. 11).

"You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs,
To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
And check the careless step would spoil their birth;
But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go.
. . . This book's fruit is plain,
Nor miracles need prove it any more."

Jesus was Himself the one convincing and permanent miracle, the "avenue into the unseen." When any one believes in Jesus he has the key of revelation and the vision of Heaven. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under

the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (St. John i. 50, 51).

With Jesus' idea of Faith religion is independent of external evidence, and carries a warrant in her own bosom. The foundation of Faith is a grave problem, and its difficulty is admirably raised in an Eastern legend. The world rests on an elephant. Very good: and the elephant itself on a tortoise: and the tortoise? on air—sooner or later you come to air—no foundation. There are two conceivable grounds on which Faith can stablish herself, and each is a priceless assistance. One is the testimony of faithful people in all the ages; this is an infallible Church. The other is that "volume which is a Divine supplement to the laws of nature and of conscience": this is an infallible Book. But what is to certify the Church or the Book? Their character alone can be their certificate, and how am I to identify this character save by my Faith? We end where we began—with Faith, which must be self-verifying and self-sustaining. We believe in Jesus, not because the prophets anticipated Him or disciples have magnified Him, but, in the last issue, because He is such an one as we must believe. Jesus is the justification because He is the satisfaction of Faith. Faith is thankful for every aid, and strengthens herself on the Bible, but Faith is self-sufficient. "In its true nature," to quote Mr. Green again, "Faith can be justified by nothing but itself," or, as John Baptist has it, "What He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth . . . he that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (St. John iii. 32, 33).

Jesus' idea of Faith explained His contradictory attitude to this visible world, which was sometimes one of friendliness, sometimes one of watchfulness. When He saw the world

as the shadow of the real, He loved it and wove it into an endless parable. Its fertility, tenderness, richness, brilliancy were all signs of the Kingdom of Heaven fulfilled in Himself. "I am the true vine" (St. John xv. 1); "I am the good Shepherd" (St. John x. 11); "I am the Light of the world" (St. John viii. 12); He was the "living water" (St. John iv. 10). He was the substance of every appearance: the truth under every form. The spiritual was embodied in this world, as Jesus was God in human flesh, and he that believed, like St. John, could see. This was the appreciation of the world. When Jesus thought of the world as the veil of the spiritual, He was concerned, and warned His disciples lest they should be caught by the glitter of the visible, lest they should be held in the prison of the material. They must have a sense of proportion, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness: they must not fret about this world, knowing it to be an appendage of the Kingdom. They ought not to lay up for themselves treasures on earth, because they would be lost; they must store their treasures in heaven, because they would last (St. Matt. vi. 19, 20). They ought not to fear the trials of this life, because persecution cannot injure the soul; they ought to fear spiritual disaster only, because it is destruction to be cast into hell fire (St. Matt. x. 28). He that seeks to house his soul in barns is a fool (St. Luke xii. 20): he that prepares an everlasting dwelling place is wise (St. Luke xvi. 9). The world as a parable is perfect; as a possession it is worthless. It is never to be compared with the soul, or the kingdom of God. Jesus did not denounce the world as wicked, He disparaged it as unreal. This is the depreciation of the world.

When Jesus' idea of Faith is accepted, then its province in human life will be finally delimited, and various frontier wars brought to an end. Painters will still give us charming pictures of Faith and Reason, but they will

no longer represent Reason as a mailed knight picking his way from stone to stone, while Faith as a winged angel floats by his side. Faith and Reason will be neighbouring powers, each absolute in its own region. It is the part of Reason to verify intellectual conceptions and apply intellectual principles, and Faith must not disturb this work. It is the part of Faith to gather those hopes and feelings which lie outside the intellect, and Faith must not be hampered by Reason. When the knight comes to the edge of the cliff, he can go no farther; then Faith, like Angelico's San Michele, opens his strong wings and passes out in the lonely quest for God. An Eastern has understood Jesus perfectly. "What Reason is to things demonstrable," he says, "is Faith to the invisible realities of the spirit world."

One may also hope that with Christian views of Faith we shall not hear any more of a reconciliation between Science and Religion, which is as if you proposed to reconcile Geology and Astronomy. Science has, for its field, everything material; religion, everything spiritual. When the scientist comes, as he constantly does, on something beyond his tests, as, for instance, life, he ought to leave it to Religion. When the saint comes on something material, as, for instance, creation, he ought to leave it to Science. Faith has no apparatus for science; science has no method of discovering God. For the phenomena of the universe we look to Science; for the facts of the soul to Faith. "A division as old as Aristotle," say the authors of the *Unseen Universe*, "separates speculators into two great classes: those who study the How of the universe, and those who study the Why. All men of Science are embraced in the former of these; all men of Religion in the latter."

Define Faith as the Religious faculty, and you at once lift from its shoulders the burden of Theology. In the minds of many, Faith and Religion have been so con-

founded together as to be practically one, and Faith has been exercised on dogmas when it should have been resting in God. Theology is a Science; it is created by reason. Religion is an experience; it is guided by faith. The Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, is a very elaborate effort of reason, and is not, strictly speaking, within the scope of faith. When one says "I believe" in the Nicene Creed, one means I assent to the Theological statement. When one says "Lord, I believe" in Jesus' sense, one means I trust—a very different thing. Jesus' physical Resurrection, in the same way, is a question that can only be decided by evidence, and is within the province of reason. His spiritual Resurrection is a drama of the soul, and a matter of faith. When I declare my belief that on the third day Jesus rose, I am really yielding to evidence. When I am crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and rise to newness of life in Christ, I am believing after the very sense of Jesus.

Our wisdom in this day of confusion is to extricate Faith from all entanglements, and exercise the noblest, surest, strongest faculty of our nature on Jesus Christ, whose Person constitutes the evidence of the unseen, whose one demand on all men is Trust, whose promise, fulfilled to an innumerable multitude, is Rest.

"Remember what a martyr said
 On the rude tablet overhead:
 I was born sickly, poor and mean,
 A slave; no misery could screen
 The holders of the pearl of price
 From Cæsar's envy; therefore twice
 I fought with beasts, and three times saw
 My children suffer by his law.
 At last, my own release was earned,
 I was some time in being burned;
 But at the close a hand came through
 The fire above my head, and drew
 My soul to Christ, whom *now I see*."

JOHN WATSON.