

Lecture XIX. Other Characteristics.

We have wound our way back, after our excursion through mysticism and philosophy, to where we were before: the uses of religion, its uses to the individual who has it, and the uses of the individual himself to the world, are the best arguments that truth is in it. We return to the empirical philosophy: the true is what works well, even though the qualification “on the whole” may always have to be added. In this lecture we must revert to description again, and finish our picture of the religious consciousness by a word about some of its other characteristic elements. Then, in a final lecture, we shall be free to make a general review and draw our independent conclusions.

The first point I will speak of is the part which the æsthetic life plays in determining one's choice of a religion. Men, I said awhile ago, involuntarily intellectualize their religious experience. They need formulas, just as they need fellowship in worship. I spoke, therefore, too contemptuously of the pragmatic uselessness of the famous scholastic list of attributes of the deity, for they have one use which I neglected to consider. The eloquent passage in which Newman enumerates them²⁹⁹ puts us on the track of it. Intoning them as he would intone a cathedral service, he shows how high is their æsthetic value. It enriches our bare piety to carry these exalted and mysterious verbal additions just as it enriches a church to have an organ and old brasses, marbles and frescoes and stained windows. Epithets lend an atmosphere and overtones to our devotion. They are like a hymn of praise and service of glory, and may sound the more sublime for being incomprehensible. Minds like Newman's³⁰⁰ grow as jealous of their credit as heathen priests are of that of the jewelry and ornaments that blaze upon their idols.

Among the buildings-out of religion which the mind spontaneously indulges in, the æsthetic motive must never be forgotten. I promised to say nothing of ecclesiastical systems in these lectures. I may be allowed, however, to put in a word at this point on the way in which their satisfaction of certain æsthetic needs contributes to their hold on human nature. Although some persons aim most at intellectual purity and simplification, for others *richness* is the supreme imaginative requirement.³⁰¹ When one's mind is strongly of this type, an individual religion will hardly serve the purpose. The inner need is rather of something institutional and complex, majestic in the hierarchic interrelatedness of its parts, with authority descending from stage to stage, and at every stage objects for adjectives of mystery and splendor, derived in the last resort from the Godhead who is the fountain and culmination of the system. One feels then as if in presence of some vast incrustated work of jewelry or architecture; one hears the multitudinous liturgical appeal; one gets the honorific vibration coming from every quarter. Compared with such a noble complexity, in which ascending and descending movements seem in no way to jar upon stability, in which no single item, however humble, is insignificant, because so many august institutions hold it in its place, how flat does evangelical Protestantism appear, how bare the atmosphere of those isolated religious lives whose boast it is that “man in the bush with God may meet.”³⁰² What a pulverization and leveling of what a gloriously piled-up structure! To an imagination used to the perspectives of dignity and glory, the naked gospel scheme seems to offer an almshouse for a palace.

It is much like the patriotic sentiment of those brought up in ancient empires. How many emotions must be frustrated of their object, when one gives up the titles of dignity, the crimson lights and blare of brass, the gold embroidery, the plumed troops, the fear and trembling, and puts up with a president in a black coat who shakes hands with you, and comes, it may be, from a “home” upon a veldt or

prairie with one sitting-room and a Bible on its centre-table. It pauperizes the monarchical imagination!

The strength of these æsthetic sentiments makes it rigorously impossible, it seems to me, that Protestantism, however superior in spiritual profundity it may be to Catholicism, should at the present day succeed in making many converts from the more venerable ecclesiasticism. The latter offers a so much richer pasturage and shade to the fancy, has so many cells with so many different kinds of honey, is so indulgent in its multiform appeals to human nature, that Protestantism will always show to Catholic eyes the almshouse physiognomy. The bitter negativity of it is to the Catholic mind incomprehensible. To intellectual Catholics many of the antiquated beliefs and practices to which the Church gives countenance are, if taken literally, as childish as they are to Protestants. But they are childish in the pleasing sense of “childlike”—innocent and amiable, and worthy to be smiled on in consideration of the undeveloped condition of the dear people's intellects. To the Protestant, on the contrary, they are childish in the sense of being idiotic falsehoods. He must stamp out their delicate and lovable redundancy, leaving the Catholic to shudder at his literalness. He appears to the latter as morose as if he were some hard-eyed, numb, monotonous kind of reptile. The two will never understand each other—their centres of emotional energy are too different. Rigorous truth and human nature's intricacies are always in need of a mutual interpreter.³⁰³ So much for the æsthetic diversities in the religious consciousness.

In most books on religion, three things are represented as its most essential elements. These are Sacrifice, Confession, and Prayer. I must say a word in turn of each of these elements, though briefly. First of Sacrifice.

Sacrifices to gods are omnipresent in primeval worship; but, as cults have grown refined, burnt offerings and the blood of he-goats have been superseded by sacrifices more spiritual in their nature. Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism get along without ritual sacrifice; so does Christianity, save in so far as the notion is preserved in transfigured form in the mystery of Christ's atonement. These religions substitute offerings of the heart, renunciations of the inner self, for all those vain oblations. In the ascetic practices which Islam, Buddhism, and the older Christianity encourage we see how indestructible is the idea that sacrifice of some sort is a religious exercise. In lecturing on asceticism I spoke of its significance as symbolic of the sacrifices which life, whenever it is taken strenuously, calls for.³⁰⁴ But, as I said my say about those, and as these lectures expressly avoid earlier religious usages and questions of derivation, I will pass from the subject of Sacrifice altogether and turn to that of Confession.

In regard to Confession I will also be most brief, saying my word about it psychologically, not historically. Not nearly as widespread as sacrifice, it corresponds to a more inward and moral stage of sentiment. It is part of the general system of purgation and cleansing which one feels one's self in need of, in order to be in right relations to one's deity. For him who confesses, shams are over and realities have begun; he has exteriorized his rottenness. If he has not actually got rid of it, he at least no longer smears it over with a hypocritical show of virtue—he lives at least upon a basis of veracity. The complete decay of the practice of confession in Anglo-Saxon communities is a little hard to account for. Reaction against popery is of course the historic explanation, for in popery confession went with penances and absolution, and other inadmissible practices. But on the side of the sinner himself it seems as if the need ought to have been too great to accept so summary a refusal of its satisfaction.

One would think that in more men the shell of secrecy would have had to open, the pent-in abscess to burst and gain relief, even though the ear that heard the confession were unworthy. The Catholic church, for obvious utilitarian reasons, has substituted auricular confession to one priest for the more radical act of public confession. We English-speaking Protestants, in the general self-reliance and unsociability of our nature, seem to find it enough if we take God alone into our confidence.³⁰⁵

The next topic on which I must comment is Prayer,—and this time it must be less briefly. We have heard much talk of late against prayer, especially against prayers for better weather and for the recovery of sick people. As regards prayers for the sick, if any medical fact can be considered to stand firm, it is that in certain environments prayer may contribute to recovery, and should be encouraged as a therapeutic measure. Being a normal factor of moral health in the person, its omission would be deleterious. The case of the weather is different. Notwithstanding the recency of the opposite belief,³⁰⁶ every one now knows that droughts and storms follow from physical antecedents, and that moral appeals cannot avert them. But petitional prayer is only one department of prayer; and if we take the word in the wider sense as meaning every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine, we can easily see that scientific criticism leaves it untouched.

Prayer in this wide sense is the very soul and essence of religion. “Religion,” says a liberal French theologian, “is an intercourse, a conscious and voluntary relation, entered into by a soul in distress with the mysterious power upon which it feels itself to depend, and upon which its fate is contingent. This intercourse with God is realized by prayer. Prayer is religion in act; that is, prayer is real religion. It is prayer that distinguishes the religious phenomenon from such similar or neighboring phenomena as purely moral or æsthetic sentiment. Religion is nothing if it be not the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it draws its life. This act is prayer, by which term I understand no vain exercise of words, no mere repetition of certain sacred formulæ, but the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence,—it may be even before it has a name by which to call it. Wherever this interior prayer is lacking, there is no religion; wherever, on the other hand, this prayer rises and stirs the soul, even in the absence of forms or of doctrines, we have living religion. One sees from this why ‘natural religion,’ so-called, is not properly a religion. It cuts man off from prayer. It leaves him and God in mutual remoteness, with no intimate commerce, no interior dialogue, no interchange, no action of God in man, no return of man to God. At bottom this pretended religion is only a philosophy. Born at epochs of rationalism, of critical investigations, it never was anything but an abstraction. An artificial and dead creation, it reveals to its examiner hardly one of the characters proper to religion.”³⁰⁷

It seems to me that the entire series of our lectures proves the truth of M. Sabatier's contention. The religious phenomenon, studied as an inner fact, and apart from ecclesiastical or theological complications, has shown itself to consist everywhere, and at all its stages, in the consciousness which individuals have of an intercourse between themselves and higher powers with which they feel themselves to be related. This intercourse is realized at the time as being both active and mutual. If it be not effective; if it be not a give and take relation; if nothing be really transacted while it lasts; if the world is in no whit different for its having taken place; then prayer, taken in this wide meaning of a sense that *something is transacting*, is of course a feeling of what is illusory, and religion must on the whole be classed, not simply as containing elements of delusion,—these undoubtedly everywhere exist,—but as being rooted in delusion altogether, just as materialists and atheists have always said it

was. At most there might remain, when the direct experiences of prayer were ruled out as false witnesses, some inferential belief that the whole order of existence must have a divine cause. But this way of contemplating nature, pleasing as it would doubtless be to persons of a pious taste, would leave to them but the spectators' part at a play, whereas in experimental religion and the prayerful life, we seem ourselves to be actors, and not in a play, but in a very serious reality.

The genuineness of religion is thus indissolubly bound up with the question whether the prayerful consciousness be or be not deceitful. The conviction that something is genuinely transacted in this consciousness is the very core of living religion. As to what is transacted, great differences of opinion have prevailed. The unseen powers have been supposed, and are yet supposed, to do things which no enlightened man can nowadays believe in. It may well prove that the sphere of influence in prayer is subjective exclusively, and that what is immediately changed is only the mind of the praying person. But however our opinion of prayer's effects may come to be limited by criticism, religion, in the vital sense in which these lectures study it, must stand or fall by the persuasion that effects of some sort genuinely do occur. Through prayer, religion insists, things which cannot be realized in any other manner come about: energy which but for prayer would be bound is by prayer set free and operates in some part, be it objective or subjective, of the world of facts.

This postulate is strikingly expressed in a letter written by the late Frederic W. H. Myers to a friend, who allows me to quote from it. It shows how independent the prayer-instinct is of usual doctrinal complications. Mr. Myers writes:—

“I am glad that you have asked me about prayer, because I have rather strong ideas on the subject. First consider what are the facts. There exists around us a spiritual universe, and that universe is in actual relation with the material. From the spiritual universe comes the energy which maintains the material; the energy which makes the life of each individual spirit. Our spirits are supported by a perpetual indrawal of this energy, and the vigor of that indrawal is perpetually changing, much as the vigor of our absorption of material nutriment changes from hour to hour.

“I call these ‘facts’ because I think that some scheme of this kind is the only one consistent with our actual evidence; too complex to summarize here. How, then, should we *act* on these facts? Plainly we must endeavor to draw in as much spiritual life as possible, and we must place our minds in any attitude which experience shows to be favorable to such indrawal. *Prayer* is the general name for that attitude of open and earnest expectancy. If we then ask to *whom* to pray, the answer (strangely enough) must be that *that* does not much matter. The prayer is not indeed a purely subjective thing;—it means a real increase in intensity of absorption of spiritual power or grace;—but we do not know enough of what takes place in the spiritual world to know how the prayer operates;—*who* is cognizant of it, or through what channel the grace is given. Better let children pray to Christ, who is at any rate the highest individual spirit of whom we have any knowledge. But it would be rash to say that Christ himself *hears us*; while to say that *God* hears us is merely to restate the first principle,—that grace flows in from the infinite spiritual world.”

Let us reserve the question of the truth or falsehood of the belief that power is absorbed until the next lecture, when our dogmatic conclusions, if we have any, must be reached. Let this lecture still confine itself to the description of phenomena; and as a concrete example of an extreme sort, of the way in which the prayerful life may still be led, let me take a case with which most of you must be acquainted, that of George Müller of Bristol, who died in 1898. Müller's prayers were of the crassest petitional order. Early in life he resolved on taking certain Bible promises in literal sincerity, and on letting himself be fed, not by his own worldly foresight, but by the Lord's hand. He had an extraordinarily active and successful career, among the fruits of which were the distribution of over two million copies of the Scripture text, in different languages; the equipment of several hundred missionaries; the circulation of more than a hundred and eleven million of scriptural books, pamphlets, and tracts; the building of five large orphanages, and the keeping and educating of thousands of orphans; finally, the establishment of schools in which over a hundred and twenty-one thousand youthful and adult pupils were taught. In the course of this work Mr. Müller received and administered nearly a million and a half of pounds sterling, and traveled over two hundred thousand miles of sea and land.³⁰⁸ During the sixty-eight years of his ministry, he never owned any property except his clothes and furniture, and cash in hand; and he left, at the age of eighty-six, an estate worth only a hundred and sixty pounds.

His method was to let his general wants be publicly known, but not to acquaint other people with the details of his temporary necessities. For the relief of the latter, he prayed directly to the Lord, believing that sooner or later prayers are always answered if one have trust enough. "When I lose such a thing as a key," he writes, "I ask the Lord to direct me to it, and I look for an answer to my prayer; when a person with whom I have made an appointment does not come, according to the fixed time, and I begin to be inconvenienced by it, I ask the Lord to be pleased to hasten him to me, and I look for an answer; when I do not understand a passage of the word of God, I lift up my heart to the Lord that he would be pleased by his Holy Spirit to instruct me, and I expect to be taught, though I do not fix the time when, and the manner how it should be; when I am going to minister in the Word, I seek help from the Lord, and ... am not cast down, but of good cheer because I look for his assistance."

Müller's custom was to never run up bills, not even for a week. "As the Lord deals out to us by the day, ... the week's payment might become due and we have no money to meet it; and thus those with whom we deal might be inconvenienced by us, and we be found acting against the commandment of the Lord: 'Owe no man anything.' From this day and henceforward whilst the Lord gives to us our supplies by the day, we purpose to pay at once for every article as it is purchased, and never to buy anything except we can pay for it at once, however much it may seem to be needed, and however much those with whom we deal may wish to be paid only by the week."

The articles needed of which Müller speaks were the food, fuel, etc., of his orphanages. Somehow, near as they often come to going without a meal, they hardly ever seem actually to have done so. "Greater and more manifest nearness of the Lord's presence I have never had than when after breakfast there were no means for dinner for more than a hundred persons; or when after dinner there were no means for the tea, and yet the Lord provided the tea; and all this without one single human being having been informed about our need.... Through Grace my mind is so fully assured of the faithfulness of the Lord, that in the midst of the greatest need, I am enabled in peace to go about my other work. Indeed, did not the Lord give me this, which is the result of trusting in him, I should scarcely be able to work at all; for it is now comparatively a rare thing that a day comes when I am not in need for one or another part of the work."³⁰⁹

In building his orphanages simply by prayer and faith, Müller affirms that his prime motive was "to have something to point to as a visible proof that our God and Father is the same faithful God that he ever was,—as willing as ever to prove himself the living God, in our day as formerly, to all that

put their trust in him.”³¹⁰ For this reason he refused to borrow money for any of his enterprises. “How does it work when we thus anticipate God by going our own way? We certainly weaken faith instead of increasing it; and each time we work thus a deliverance of our own we find it more and more difficult to trust in God, till at last we give way entirely to our natural fallen reason and unbelief prevails. How different if one is enabled to wait God's own time, and to look alone to him for help and deliverance! When at last help comes, after many seasons of prayer it may be, how sweet it is, and what a present recompense! Dear Christian reader, if you have never walked in this path of obedience before, do so now, and you will then know experimentally the sweetness of the joy which results from it.”³¹¹

When the supplies came in but slowly, Müller always considered that this was for the trial of his faith and patience. When his faith and patience had been sufficiently tried, the Lord would send more means. “And thus it has proved,”—I quote from his diary,—“for to-day was given me the sum of 2050 pounds, of which 2000 are for the building fund [of a certain house], and 50 for present necessities. It is impossible to describe my joy in God when I received this donation. I was neither excited nor surprised; for I *look out* for answers to my prayers. *I believe that God hears me*. Yet my heart was so full of joy that I could only *sit* before God, and admire him, like David in 2 Samuel vii. At last I cast myself flat down upon my face and burst forth in thanksgiving to God and in surrendering my heart afresh to him for his blessed service.”³¹²

George Müller's is a case extreme in every respect, and in no respect more so than in the extraordinary narrowness of the man's intellectual horizon. His God was, as he often said, his business partner. He seems to have been for Müller little more than a sort of supernatural clergyman interested in the congregation of tradesmen and others in Bristol who were his saints, and in the orphanages and other enterprises, but unpossessed of any of those vaster and wilder and more ideal attributes with which the human imagination elsewhere has invested him. Müller, in short, was absolutely unphilosophical. His intensely private and practical conception of his relations with the Deity continued the traditions of the most primitive human thought.³¹³ When we compare a mind like his with such a mind as, for example, Emerson's or Phillips Brooks's, we see the range which the religious consciousness covers.

There is an immense literature relating to answers to petitional prayer. The evangelical journals are filled with such answers, and books are devoted to the subject,³¹⁴ but for us Müller's case will suffice.

A less sturdy beggar-like fashion of leading the prayerful life is followed by innumerable other Christians. Persistence in leaning on the Almighty for support and guidance will, such persons say, bring with it proofs, palpable but much more subtle, of his presence and active influence. The following description of a “led” life, by a German writer whom I have already quoted, would no doubt appear to countless Christians in every country as if transcribed from their own personal experience. One finds in this guided sort of life, says Dr. Hilty,—

“That books and words (and sometimes people) come to one's cognizance just at the very moment in which one needs them; that one glides over great dangers as if with shut eyes, remaining ignorant of what would have terrified one or led one astray, until the peril is past—this being especially the case with temptations to vanity and sensuality; that paths on which one ought not to wander are, as it were, hedged off with thorns; but that on the other side great obstacles are suddenly removed; that

when the time has come for something, one suddenly receives a courage that formerly failed, or perceives the root of a matter that until then was concealed, or discovers thoughts, talents, yea, even pieces of knowledge and insight, in one's self, of which it is impossible to say whence they come; finally, that persons help us or decline to help us, favor us or refuse us, as if they had to do so against their will, so that often those indifferent or even unfriendly to us yield us the greatest service and furtherance. (God takes often their worldly goods, from those whom he leads, at just the right moment, when they threaten to impede the effort after higher interests.)

“Besides all this, other noteworthy things come to pass, of which it is not easy to give account. There is no doubt whatever that now one walks continually through ‘open doors’ and on the easiest roads, with as little care and trouble as it is possible to imagine.

“Furthermore one finds one's self settling one's affairs neither too early nor too late, whereas they were wont to be spoiled by untimeliness, even when the preparations had been well laid. In addition to this, one does them with perfect tranquillity of mind, almost as if they were matters of no consequence, like errands done by us for another person, in which case we usually act more calmly than when we act in our own concerns. Again, one finds that one can *wait* for everything patiently, and that is one of life's great arts. One finds also that each thing comes duly, one thing after the other, so that one gains time to make one's footing sure before advancing farther. And then everything occurs to us at the right moment, just what we ought to do, etc., and often in a very striking way, just as if a third person were keeping watch over those things which we are in easy danger of forgetting.

“Often, too, persons are sent to us at the right time, to offer or ask for what is needed, and what we should never have had the courage or resolution to undertake of our own accord.

“Through all these experiences one finds that one is kindly and tolerant of other people, even of such as are repulsive, negligent, or ill-willed, for they also are instruments of good in God's hand, and often most efficient ones. Without these thoughts it would be hard for even the best of us always to keep our equanimity. But with the consciousness of divine guidance, one sees many a thing in life quite differently from what would otherwise be possible.

“All these are things that every human being *knows*, who has had experience of them; and of which the most speaking examples could be brought forward. The highest resources of worldly wisdom are unable to attain that which, under divine leading, comes to us of its own accord.”³¹⁵

Such accounts as this shade away into others where the belief is, not that particular events are tempered more towardly to us by a superintending providence, as a reward for our reliance, but that by cultivating the continuous sense of our connection with the power that made things as they are, we are tempered more towardly for their reception. The outward face of nature need not alter, but the

expressions of meaning in it alter. It was dead and is alive again. It is like the difference between looking on a person without love, or upon the same person with love. In the latter case intercourse springs into new vitality. So when one's affections keep in touch with the divinity of the world's authorship, fear and egotism fall away; and in the equanimity that follows, one finds in the hours, as they succeed each other, a series of purely benignant opportunities. It is as if all doors were opened, and all paths freshly smoothed. We meet a new world when we meet the old world in the spirit which this kind of prayer infuses.

Such a spirit was that of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus.³¹⁶ It is that of mind-curers, of the transcendentalists, and of the so-called "liberal" Christians. As an expression of it, I will quote a page from one of Martineau's sermons:—

"The universe, open to the eye to-day, looks as it did a thousand years ago: and the morning hymn of Milton does but tell the beauty with which our own familiar sun dressed the earliest fields and gardens of the world. We see what all our fathers saw. And if we cannot find God in your house or in mine, upon the roadside or the margin of the sea; in the bursting seed or opening flower; in the day duty or the night musing; in the general laugh and the secret grief; in the procession of life, ever entering afresh, and solemnly passing by and dropping off; I do not think we should discern him any more on the grass of Eden, or beneath the moonlight of Gethsemane. Depend upon it, it is not the want of greater miracles, but of the soul to perceive such as are allowed us still, that makes us push all the sanctities into the far spaces we cannot reach. The devout feel that wherever God's hand is, *there* is miracle: and it is simply an indevoutness which imagines that only where miracle is, can there be the real hand of God. The customs of Heaven ought surely to be more sacred in our eyes than its anomalies; the dear old ways, of which the Most High is never tired, than the strange things which he does not love well enough ever to repeat. And he who will but discern beneath the sun, as he rises any morning, the supporting finger of the Almighty, may recover the sweet and reverent surprise with which Adam gazed on the first dawn in Paradise. It is no outward change, no shifting in time or place; but only the loving meditation of the pure in heart, that can reawaken the Eternal from the sleep within our souls: that can render him a reality again, and reassert for him once more his ancient name of 'the Living God.'"³¹⁷

When we see all things in God, and refer all things to him, we read in common matters superior expressions of meaning. The deadness with which custom invests the familiar vanishes, and existence as a whole appears transfigured. The state of a mind thus awakened from torpor is well expressed in these words, which I take from a friend's letter:—

"If we occupy ourselves in summing up all the mercies and bounties we are privileged to have, we are overwhelmed by their number (so great that we can imagine ourselves unable to give ourselves time even to begin to review the things we may imagine *we have not*). We sum them and realize that *we are actually killed*

with God's kindness; that we are surrounded by bounties upon bounties, without which all would fall. Should we not love it; should we not feel buoyed up by the Eternal Arms?"

Sometimes this realization that facts are of divine sending, instead of being habitual, is casual, like a mystical experience. Father Gratry gives this instance from his youthful melancholy period:—

“One day I had a moment of consolation, because I met with something which seemed to me ideally perfect. It was a poor drummer beating the tattoo in the streets of Paris. I walked behind him in returning to the school on the evening of a holiday. His drum gave out the tattoo in such a way that, at that moment at least, however peevish I were, I could find no pretext for fault-finding. It was impossible to conceive more nerve or spirit, better time or measure, more clearness or richness, than were in this drumming. Ideal desire could go no farther in that direction. I was enchanted and consoled; the perfection of this wretched act did me good. Good is at least possible, I said, since the ideal can thus sometimes get embodied.”³¹⁸

In Sénancour's novel of Obermann a similar transient lifting of the veil is recorded. In Paris streets, on a March day, he comes across a flower in bloom, a jonquil:

“It was the strongest expression of desire: it was the first perfume of the year. I felt all the happiness destined for man. This unutterable harmony of souls, the phantom of the ideal world, arose in me complete. I never felt anything so great or so instantaneous. I know not what shape, what analogy, what secret of relation it was that made me see in this flower a limitless beauty.... I shall never inclose in a conception this power, this immensity that nothing will express; this form that nothing will contain; this ideal of a better world which one feels, but which, it seems, nature has not made actual.”³¹⁹

We heard in previous lectures of the vivified face of the world as it may appear to converts after their awakening.³²⁰ As a rule, religious persons generally assume that whatever natural facts connect themselves in any way with their destiny are significant of the divine purposes with them. Through prayer the purpose, often far from obvious, comes home to them, and if it be “trial,” strength to endure the trial is given. Thus at all stages of the prayerful life we find the persuasion that in the process of communion energy from on high flows in to meet demand, and becomes operative within the phenomenal world. So long as this operativeness is admitted to be real, it makes no essential difference whether its immediate effects be subjective or objective. The fundamental religious point is that in prayer, spiritual energy, which otherwise would slumber, does become active, and spiritual work of some kind is effected really.

So much for Prayer, taken in the wide sense of any kind of communion. As the core of religion, we must return to it in the next lecture.

The last aspect of the religious life which remains for me to touch upon is the fact that its manifestations so frequently connect themselves with the subconscious part of our existence. You may remember what I said in my opening lecture³²¹ about the prevalence of the psychopathic temperament in religious biography. You will in point of fact hardly find a religious leader of any kind in whose life there is no record of automatisms. I speak not merely of savage priests and prophets, whose followers regard automatic utterance and action as by itself tantamount to inspiration, I speak of leaders of thought and subjects of intellectualized experience. Saint Paul had his visions, his ecstasies, his gift of tongues, small as was the importance he attached to the latter. The whole array of Christian saints and heresiarchs, including the greatest, the Bernards, the Loyolas, the Luthers, the Foxes, the Wesleys, had their visions, voices, rapt conditions, guiding impressions, and “openings.” They had these things, because they had exalted sensibility, and to such things persons of exalted sensibility are liable. In such liability there lie, however, consequences for theology. Beliefs are strengthened wherever automatisms corroborate them. Incursions from beyond the transmarginal region have a peculiar power to increase conviction. The inchoate sense of presence is infinitely stronger than conception, but strong as it may be, it is seldom equal to the evidence of hallucination. Saints who actually see or hear their Saviour reach the acme of assurance. Motor automatisms, though rarer, are, if possible, even more convincing than sensations. The subjects here actually feel themselves played upon by powers beyond their will. The evidence is dynamic; the God or spirit moves the very organs of their body.³²²

The great field for this sense of being the instrument of a higher power is of course “inspiration.” It is easy to discriminate between the religious leaders who have been habitually subject to inspiration and those who have not. In the teachings of the Buddha, of Jesus, of Saint Paul (apart from his gift of tongues), of Saint Augustine, of Huss, of Luther, of Wesley, automatic or semi-automatic composition appears to have been only occasional. In the Hebrew prophets, on the contrary, in Mohammed, in some of the Alexandrians, in many minor Catholic saints, in Fox, in Joseph Smith, something like it appears to have been frequent, sometimes habitual. We have distinct professions of being under the direction of a foreign power, and serving as its mouthpiece. As regards the Hebrew prophets, it is extraordinary, writes an author who has made a careful study of them, to see—

“How, one after another, the same features are reproduced in the prophetic books. The process is always extremely different from what it would be if the prophet arrived at his insight into spiritual things by the tentative efforts of his own genius. There is something sharp and sudden about it. He can lay his finger, so to speak, on the moment when it came. And it always comes in the form of an overpowering force from without, against which he struggles, but in vain. Listen, for instance, [to] the opening of the book of Jeremiah. Read through in like manner the first two chapters of the prophecy of Ezekiel.

“It is not, however, only at the beginning of his career that the prophet passes through a crisis which is clearly not self-caused. Scattered all through the prophetic writings are expressions which speak of some strong and irresistible impulse

coming down upon the prophet, determining his attitude to the events of his time, constraining his utterance, making his words the vehicle of a higher meaning than their own. For instance, this of Isaiah's: 'The Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand,'—an emphatic phrase which denotes the overmastering nature of the impulse,—'and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people.' ... Or passages like this from Ezekiel: 'The hand of the Lord God fell upon me,' 'The hand of the Lord was strong upon me.' The one standing characteristic of the prophet is that he speaks with the authority of Jehovah himself. Hence it is that the prophets one and all preface their addresses so confidently, 'The Word of the Lord,' or 'Thus saith the Lord.' They have even the audacity to speak in the first person, as if Jehovah himself were speaking. As in Isaiah: 'Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called; I am He, I am the First, I also am the last,'—and so on. The personality of the prophet sinks entirely into the background; he feels himself for the time being the mouthpiece of the Almighty.'³²³

“We need to remember that prophecy was a profession, and that the prophets formed a professional class. There were schools of the prophets, in which the gift was regularly cultivated. A group of young men would gather round some commanding figure—a Samuel or an Elisha—and would not only record or spread the knowledge of his sayings and doings, but seek to catch themselves something of his inspiration. It seems that music played its part in their exercises.... It is perfectly clear that by no means all of these Sons of the prophets ever succeeded in acquiring more than a very small share in the gift which they sought. It was clearly possible to 'counterfeit' prophecy. Sometimes this was done deliberately.... But it by no means follows that in all cases where a false message was given, the giver of it was altogether conscious of what he was doing.”³²⁴

Here, to take another Jewish case, is the way in which Philo of Alexandria describes his inspiration:—

“Sometimes, when I have come to my work empty, I have suddenly become full; ideas being in an invisible manner showered upon me, and implanted in me from on high; so that through the influence of divine inspiration, I have become greatly excited, and have known neither the place in which I was, nor those who were present, nor myself, nor what I was saying, nor what I was writing; for then I have been conscious of a richness of interpretation, an enjoyment of light, a most penetrating insight, a most manifest energy in all that was to be done; having such effect on my mind as the clearest ocular demonstration would have on the eyes.”³²⁵

If we turn to Islam, we find that Mohammed's revelations all came from the subconscious sphere. To the question in what way he got them,—

“Mohammed is said to have answered that sometimes he heard a knell as from a bell, and that this had the strongest effect on him; and when the angel went away, he had received the revelation. Sometimes again he held converse with the angel as with a man, so as easily to understand his words. The later authorities, however, ... distinguish still other kinds. In the *Itgân* (103) the following are enumerated: 1, revelations with sound of bell, 2, by inspiration of the holy spirit in M.'s heart, 3, by Gabriel in human form, 4, by God immediately, either when awake (as in his journey to heaven) or in dream.... In *Almawâhib alladunîya* the kinds are thus given: 1, Dream, 2, Inspiration of Gabriel in the Prophet's heart, 3, Gabriel taking Dahya's form, 4, with the bell-sound, etc., 5, Gabriel in propriâ personâ (only twice), 6, revelation in heaven, 7, God appearing in person, but veiled, 8, God revealing himself immediately without veil. Others add two other stages, namely: 1, Gabriel in the form of still another man, 2, God showing himself personally in dream.’³²⁶

In none of these cases is the revelation distinctly motor. In the case of Joseph Smith (who had prophetic revelations innumerable in addition to the revealed translation of the gold plates which resulted in the *Book of Mormon*), although there may have been a motor element, the inspiration seems to have been predominantly sensorial. He began his translation by the aid of the “peep-stones” which he found, or thought or said that he found, with the gold plates,—apparently a case of “crystal gazing.” For some of the other revelations he used the peep-stones, but seems generally to have asked the Lord for more direct instruction.³²⁷

Other revelations are described as “openings”—Fox's, for example, were evidently of the kind known in spiritistic circles of to-day as “impressions.” As all effective initiators of change must needs live to some degree upon this psychopathic level of sudden perception or conviction of new truth, or of impulse to action so obsessive that it must be worked off, I will say nothing more about so very common a phenomenon.

When, in addition to these phenomena of inspiration, we take religious mysticism into the account, when we recall the striking and sudden unifications of a discordant self which we saw in conversion, and when we review the extravagant obsessions of tenderness, purity, and self-severity met with in saintliness, we cannot, I think, avoid the conclusion that in religion we have a department of human nature with unusually close relations to the trans-marginal or subliminal region. If the word “subliminal” is offensive to any of you, as smelling too much of psychical research or other aberrations, call it by any other name you please, to distinguish it from the level of full sunlit consciousness. Call this latter the A-region of personality, if you care to, and call the other the B-region. The B-region, then, is obviously the larger part of each of us, for it is the abode of everything that is latent and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved. It contains, for example, such things as all our momentarily inactive memories, and it harbors the springs of all our obscurely motivated passions, impulses, likes, dislikes, and prejudices. Our intuitions, hypotheses, fancies, superstitions, persuasions, convictions, and in general all our non-rational operations, come from it. It is the source of our dreams, and apparently they may return to it. In it arise whatever mystical experiences we may have, and our automatisms, sensory or motor; our life in hypnotic and “hypnoid” conditions, if we are subjects to such conditions; our delusions, fixed ideas, and hysterical accidents, if we are hysteric subjects; our supra-normal cognitions, if such there be, and if we are telepathic subjects. It is also the fountain-head of much that feeds our religion. In persons deep

in the religious life, as we have now abundantly seen,—and this is my conclusion,—the door into this region seems unusually wide open; at any rate, experiences making their entrance through that door have had emphatic influence in shaping religious history.

With this conclusion I turn back and close the circle which I opened in my first lecture, terminating thus the review which I then announced of inner religious phenomena as we find them in developed and articulate human individuals. I might easily, if the time allowed, multiply both my documents and my discriminations, but a broad treatment is, I believe, in itself better, and the most important characteristics of the subject lie, I think, before us already. In the next lecture, which is also the last one, we must try to draw the critical conclusions which so much material may suggest.

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1. Idea of a University, Discourse III. § 7.
 2. Newman's imagination so innately craved an ecclesiastical system that he can write: "From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion: I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion." And again, speaking of himself about the age of thirty, he writes: "I loved to act as feeling myself in my Bishop's sight, as if it were the sight of God." *Apologia*, 1897, pp. 48, 50.
 3. The intellectual difference is quite on a par in practical importance with the analogous difference in character. We saw, under the head of Saintliness, how some characters resent confusion and must live in purity, consistency, simplicity (above, p. 280 ff.). For others, on the contrary, superabundance, over-pressure, stimulation, lots of superficial relations, are indispensable. There are men who would suffer a very syncope if you should pay all their debts, bring it about that their engagements had been kept, their letters answered, their perplexities relieved, and their duties fulfilled, down to one which lay on a clean table under their eyes with nothing to interfere with its immediate performance. A day stripped so staringly bare would be for them appalling. So with ease, elegance, tributes of affection, social recognitions—some of us require amounts of these things which to others would appear a mass of lying and sophistication.
 4. In Newman's *Lectures on Justification*, Lecture VIII. § 6, there is a splendid passage expressive of this æsthetic way of feeling the Christian scheme. It is unfortunately too long to quote.
 5. Compare the informality of Protestantism, where the "meek lover of the good," alone with his God, visits the sick, etc., for their own sakes, with the elaborate "business" that goes on in Catholic devotion, and carries with it the social excitement of all more complex businesses. An essentially worldly-minded Catholic woman can become a visitor of the sick on purely coquettish principles, with her confessor and director, her "merit" storing up, her patron saints, her privileged relation to the Almighty, drawing his attention as a professional *dévôte*, her definite "exercises," and her definitely recognized social pose in the organization.
 6. Above, p. 362 ff.
 7. A fuller discussion of confession is contained in the excellent work by Frank Granger: *The Soul of a Christian*, London, 1900, ch. xii.
 8. Example: "The minister at Sudbury, being at the Thursday lecture in Boston, heard the officiating clergyman praying for rain. As soon as the service was over, he went to the petitioner and said, 'You Boston ministers, as soon as a tulip wilts under your windows, go to church and pray for rain, until all Concord and Sudbury are under water.'" R. W. Emerson: *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, p. 363.
 9. Auguste Sabatier: *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion*, 2me éd., 1897, pp. 24-26, abridged.
 10. My authority for these statistics is the little work on Müller, by Frederic G. Warne, New York, 1898.
 11. *The Life of Trust; Being a Narrative of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller*, New American edition, N. Y., Crowell, pp. 228, 194, 219.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
 13. *Op. cit.*, p. 383, abridged.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
 15. I cannot resist the temptation of quoting an expression of an even more primitive style of religious thought, which I find in Arber's *English Garland*, vol. vii. p. 440. Robert Lyde, an English sailor, along with an English boy, being prisoners on a French ship in 1689, set upon the crew, of seven Frenchmen, killed two, made the other five prisoners, and brought home the ship. Lyde thus describes how in this feat he found his God a very present help in time of trouble:—

“With the assistance of God I kept my feet when they three and one more did strive to throw me down. Feeling the Frenchman which hung about my middle hang very heavy, I said to the boy, ‘Go round the binnacle, and knock down that man that hangeth on my back.’ So the boy did strike him one blow on the head which made him fall.... Then I looked about for a marlin spike or anything else to strike them withal. But seeing nothing, I said, ‘Lord! what shall I do?’ Then casting up my eye upon my left side, and seeing a marlin spike hanging, I jerked my right arm and took hold, and struck the point four times about a quarter of an inch deep into the skull of that man that had hold of my left arm. [One of the Frenchmen then hauled the marlin spike away from him.] But through God’s wonderful providence! it either fell out of his hand, or else he threw it down, and at this time the Almighty God gave me strength enough to take one man in one hand, and throw at the other’s head: and looking about again to see anything to strike them withal, but seeing nothing, I said, ‘Lord! what shall I do now?’ And then it pleased God to put me in mind of my knife in my pocket. And although two of the men had hold of my right arm, yet God Almighty strengthened me so that I put my right hand into my right pocket, drew out the knife and sheath, ... put it between my legs and drew it out, and then cut the man’s throat with it that had his back to my breast: and he immediately dropt down, and scarce ever stirred after.”—I have slightly abridged Lyde’s narrative.

16. As, for instance, In Answer to Prayer, by the Bishop of Ripon and others, London, 1898; Touching Incidents and Remarkable Answers to Prayer, Harrisburg, Pa., 1898 (?); H. L. Hastings: The Guiding Hand, or Providential Direction, illustrated by Authentic Instances, Boston, 1898 (?).
17. C. Hilty: Glück, Dritter Theil, 1900, pp. 92 ff.
18. “Good Heaven!” says Epictetus, “any one thing in the creation is sufficient to demonstrate a Providence, to a humble and grateful mind. The mere possibility of producing milk from grass, cheese from milk, and wool from skins; who formed and planned it? Ought we not, whether we dig or plough or eat, to sing this hymn to God? Great is God, who has supplied us with these instruments to till the ground; great is God, who has given us hands and instruments of digestion; who has given us to grow insensibly and to breathe in sleep. These things we ought forever to celebrate.... But because the most of you are blind and insensible, there must be some one to fill this station, and lead, in behalf of all men, the hymn to God; for what else can I do, a lame old man, but sing hymns to God? Were I a nightingale, I would act the part of a nightingale; were I a swan, the part of a swan. But since I am a reasonable creature, it is my duty to praise God ... and I call on you to join the same song.” Works, book i. ch. xvi., Carter-Higginson translation, abridged.
19. James Martineau: end of the sermon “Help Thou Mine Unbelief,” in Endeavours after a Christian Life, 2d series. Compare with this page the extract from Voysey on p. 275, above, and those from Pascal and Madame Guyon on p. 286.
20. Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse, 1897, p. 122.
21. Op. cit., Letter XXX.
22. Above, p. 248 ff. Compare the withdrawal of expression from the world, in Melancholiacs, p. 151.
23. Above, pp. 24, 25.
24. A friend of mine, a first-rate psychologist, who is a subject of graphic automatism, tells me that the appearance of independent actuation in the movements of his arm, when he writes automatically, is so distinct that it obliges him to abandon a psychophysical theory which he had previously believed in, the theory, namely, that we have no feeling of the discharge downwards of our voluntary motor-centres. We must normally have such a feeling, he thinks, or the *sense of an absence* would not be so striking as it is in these experiences. Graphic automatism of a fully developed kind is rare in religious history, so far as my knowledge goes. Such statements as Antonia Bourignon’s, that “I do nothing but lend my hand and spirit to another power than mine,” is shown by the context to indicate inspiration rather than directly automatic writing. In some eccentric sects this latter occurs. The most striking instance of it is probably the bulky volume called, ‘Oahspe, a new Bible in the Words of Jehovah and his angel ambassadors,’ Boston and London, 1891, written and illustrated automatically by Dr. Newbrough of New York, whom I understand to be now, or to have been lately, at the head of the spiritistic community of Shalam in New Mexico. The latest automatically written book which has come under my notice is “Zertoulem’s Wisdom of the Ages,” by George A. Fuller, Boston, 1901.
25. W. Sanday: The Oracles of God, London, 1892, pp. 49-56, abridged.
26. Op. cit., p. 91. This author also cites Moses’s and Isaiah’s commissions, as given in Exodus, chaps. iii. and iv., and Isaiah, chap. vi.
27. Quoted by Augustus Clissold: The Prophetic Spirit in Genius and Madness, 1870, p. 67. Mr. Clissold is a Swedenborgian. Swedenborg’s case is of course the palmary one of *audita et visa*, serving as a basis of religious revelation.

28. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorâns*, 1860, p. 16. Compare the fuller account in Sir William Muir's *Life of Mahomet*, 3d ed., 1894, ch. iii.
29. The Mormon theocracy has always been governed by direct revelations accorded to the President of the Church and its Apostles. From an obliging letter written to me in 1899 by an eminent Mormon, I quote the following extract:—
- “It may be very interesting for you to know that the President [Mr. Snow] of the Mormon Church claims to have had a number of revelations very recently from heaven. To explain fully what these revelations are, it is necessary to know that we, as a people, believe that the Church of Jesus Christ has again been established through messengers sent from heaven. This Church has at its head a prophet, seer, and revelator, who gives to man God's holy will. Revelation is the means through which the will of God is declared directly and in fullness to man. These revelations are got through dreams of sleep or in waking visions of the mind, by voices without visual appearance, or by actual manifestations of the Holy Presence before the eye. We believe that God has come in person and spoken to our prophet and revelator.”
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