

have seen Russia or Japan than a century ago would have travelled as far as France. The mere amusement of travel (in earlier days not an amusement but a risk), curiosity, sport, business, take into foreign lands all manner of people who a century ago would have thought it an adventure to move to a different county. For each of them travel means contact with foreigners and the establishing of some kind of relationship with them. There is at least acquaintance; there is an opportunity for friendship and for some understanding of them and their country.

(4) The mutual dependence of nations in regard to the primary necessities of life has made them, whether they will or no, concerned in one another's interests. This is partially recognized in matters of organization. Commercial or manufacturing companies, shipping companies, banks, have tended recently to become international in character, operating in several countries, and having men of several countries as shareholders and

directors. And if there has been a drawing together of those who control industry or trade, the same is true of the workers. Men employed in a certain industry in Great Britain may be vitally affected by the wages paid and the hours worked in the same industry in Italy or Japan. A sudden influx of cheap goods produced by cheap labour in the Far East might throw thousands of British workmen out of employment; the same result would follow more surely from the degrading of sections of European labour to Asiatic standards of living—a possibility not altogether remote at present. So labour organizations in various countries have come to feel that their aims and objects are common, and have united to further those aims, both in political organizations such as the Socialist Internationals, and in federations of men employed in some particular industry, such as the International Conference of Miners.¹

¹ B. C. Waller, *Towards the Brotherhood of Nations*.

The Central Problems of Faith.

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'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'—He 11¹.

THE familiar chapter which opens with these words dwells upon certain aspects of faith such as do not receive emphasis elsewhere in the New Testament. For instance, it is not the faith of the Christian, as distinguished from other people, that is there discussed: it is faith in its widest or most general sense—faith in the abstract. The examples of the faithful life which follow upon the description of faith which I have just quoted are indeed all taken from the Old Testament, and therefore from times previous to the Christian age; and among them we observe the harlot Rahab, one of 'them that believed not' in the God of Israel. Again, the object of faith, as it is here described, is not restricted, as it usually is, to Christ or even to God. In the writings of the Apostle Paul, faith is treated as possessing efficacy in so far as it is due to being trust in Christ or in God; in the Epistle to the Hebrews, on the other

hand, it is the efficacy of the instrument, of faith in itself as an attitude of mind issuing in the higher life, that is maintained with all the writer's wealth of illustration. And the object to which faith directs itself is asserted to be the whole region of the future and the unseen. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen, whatsoever these may be: perhaps the eternal archetypes, the 'intelligible realities,' of which the things that are seen and are temporal, are, in the writer's habitual phrase, the patterns, examples, or shadows; just as for Plato time was the moving shadow of eternity.

It is these invisible and eternal realities, then, of which faith is said to be the substance, or to which faith gives substantiality, and for which it is, or supplies, evidence. So runs the definition contained in our text. But what are we to understand by its unwonted and somewhat surprising terms? Certainly we cannot take the author of the Epistle to mean that our faith constitutes the existence of

its objects, that their reality consists in and is exhausted by their being believed in by human subjects, that their *esse* is *percipi*; for the possibility would then seem to be left open that they are no more than the dream-products of our subjective fancy, the figments of our minds: which is the opposite of what the writer assumes and maintains. It cannot then be the reality or existence of things hoped for and unseen as they are in themselves, or as they *sub specie eternitatis* from the point of view of God, that faith is here said to constitute; it can only be their reality—in a quite different sense of that ambiguous word—for the believer's present experience, their actuality for *his* life. The idea which we are in quest of to explain the substantiality here spoken of and to interpret the writer's meaning, is in fact that expressed in our word 'realize,' in one of its commoner senses. We well know the difference between an event that has just happened, or is about to happen, to us, before we have discerned the implicit import with which it is fraught, and the same event after that its significance and its consequences have revealed themselves to our mind; when, that is to say, the event is realized by us, and has become for us something with which we have to reckon, something which can influence our thought and modify our action. Faith, we are given to understand, is exactly such 'realization.' It brings us into actual relations with what was indeed already there, but which perhaps had been as yet, as we say, nothing to us. And so we may feel certain that the Revised Version gives us a really apt translation of our writer's original words when it represents him as saying 'faith is the assurance of things hoped for': the strong personal conviction, the moral certitude, which renders our practical concern with them a possibility. If I may invent for the moment a distinction between words which unfortunately do not differ in meaning, faith may be said to be subjective certitude as to matters concerning which we cannot claim knowledge characterized by objective certainty.

The hoped for and the unseen, indeed, are not objects of such knowledge. We walk by faith precisely when we cannot walk by sight. But just as increased knowledge widens our horizon within the realm of the things that are seen, and thereby opens out access to manifold new relationships, to a fuller and more complex life; so faith enlarges yet further our intellectual horizon, till it includes

even the unseen Beyond, and enables the believer to establish touch here and now with the unknown side of what we know but in part, and with the invisible aspect of what we see but as in a glass and darkly. At least that is the grand assumption, the great adventure, of faith, as faith is defined by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And the gist of his teaching could hardly find happier expression than in Hartley Coleridge's lines on faith:

Think not faith, by which the just shall live
Is a dead creed, a map correct of heaven;
Far less a feeling fond and fugitive,
A thoughtless gift, withdrawn as soon as given;
It is an affirmation and an act
That binds eternal truth to present fact.

I have spoken of the grand assumption which underlies the assertion made in our text concerning the real existence of the unseen world which faith enables us to realize. And no sermon on faith, on the mental attitude of believingness, would at the present time minister to, or at any rate satisfy, the needs of thoughtful people if it concealed or passed lightly over the element of unproved assumption which inheres to some extent in all religious faith, in its intellectual or cognitive aspect. I wish therefore now to bring that element of assumption into the focus of our attention.

The central problem of faith, the problem which may press at times upon any believer and provide trial for his faith, is the question whether we can justify to our reason this leap from what we deem the *terra firma* of knowledge into hope, trust, or belief, as to what we do not know and cannot rigidly prove. Can we give to others or to ourselves a reason for the hope, for the faith, that is in us? Can we Christians satisfactorily meet the charge that we are but light-hearted and credulous upholders of cunningly devised fables, or the assertion that the unseen beyond in which our faith expatiates is but a world of shadows cast by our own minds, rather than a real world of which the temporal and the visible is a fragmentary or distorted appearance? The common saying that 'seeing is believing,' taken, as it always is, to mean that believing is seeing, may be strictly speaking a contradiction in terms; but it gives expression to a habit of mind that springs up as perennially as hope: a habit of mind, moreover, which is by no means dispensable in many of the affairs of

ordinary practical life, and one which is inimical to faith as well as to credulity. Can we, in the religious department of our activity, afford to set it wholly aside? Faith, some may tell us, may be the realization of the hoped for and the unseen; but what, they may ask, of the reality of the hoped for and the unseen, which faith does not constitute? Short of possessing knowledge and proof of such things, are we not indulging in ungrounded assumptions when we speak of establishing relations with them?

The classical chapter on faith from which we have set out does not contain any explicit attempt to justify to our reason this element of venture in faith. The chapter indeed abounds in illustrations of the fact that faith issues in a higher life than is possible without it. It enumerates many examples of the heroic life which faith had inspired men of old to achieve. You will recall that it tells how Abel, Enoch and Noah, the patriarchs and Moses, and a long series of national deliverers, kings and prophets, had been enabled to gain material or moral victories, to endure afflictions and to surmount trials, or to win spiritual rewards, solely in virtue of faith's possession of their souls. However, the power of a great belief, once it is held with unquestioning conviction, to produce strenuous activity or spiritual endeavour, is one thing; and the correspondence of the same belief with external reality or fact is another. Experience now and again enforces this distinction upon us, however ardently some have tried to annul it; for we well know that beliefs such as have proved to be not really true to fact have sometimes inspired men to do, to dare, and to die. There has always lived in my memory, in this connexion, a ballad describing how a very commonplace young man was transfigured, by his belief in the exalted nobility and purity of his lover, into a hero; yet she turned out to have been all the time a worthless and depraved woman. Spiritual efficacy, then, although a criterion of true religious belief, is by no means so exclusively a characteristic of true belief that we can infallibly or without exception infer the one from the other. None of us doubts that life is more than logic, that reality is richer than thought and unexhausted by knowledge, or that advantages of the highest and noblest kind do actually accrue from believing where we cannot see. But our faith will perhaps still be liable to be beset with a certain shrinking fearfulness unless

we can further justify to ourselves the reasonableness of its venture or assure ourselves as to the clairvoyance of blind hope.

I have already remarked that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whose guidance we are following, does not explicitly concern himself with our present problem. I would now observe, however, that implicitly he suggests the clue to the most satisfying solution of it that, as it seems to me, we can hope to discover.

You will recollect the most impressive of all the examples of faith which his eleventh chapter contains—that of the father of the faithful. 'By faith Abraham . . . when he was called to go out into a place which he should hereafter receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went.' The father of the Hebrew race, leaving his Mesopotamian home and forsaking the Nature-worship of his ancestors, hearkening to the inward summons to go forward, 'not knowing whither,' may be regarded as a prophetic type of the whole religious history of Israel; of that forgetting of things that were behind and reaching forth unto what was before, of recognizing mystery behind the familiar, which rendered the Hebrew race unique in its religious insight, in spite of its being about the least philosophically minded of civilized peoples. And the figure of Abraham stands for yet more than this. He has been looked upon, and rightly, as an allegory of the moral, and as, we may make bold to say, of the intellectual progress of the world. For he is a concrete embodiment of the principle 'nothing venture, nothing have.' And that principle is not only the essence of all religious faith; it also underlies the acquisition of all human knowledge of the actual world—at least of all the knowledge which we account most worth having.

Neither we as individuals, nor mankind as a race, began with knowledge, or even with knowing. We began with learning, and with learning chiefly through doing. We learned sometimes by success, sometimes by failure. In either case we ventured before we could have. And without this exercise of primitive faith—or credulity if you will—mankind would never have begun to acquire its sciences or its civilization. For instance, the law of causality, or the principle of the uniformity of Nature, was not written so large or so legibly upon natural phenomena that, in the time of man's primitiveness, he who ran could read it off. On the other hand,

had it not been hoped for and tentatively assumed, here a little and there a little and line upon line, the principle never could have come to have 'substance' for man's knowledge—that is to say, relevance to his life; had it not been believed or trusted in while as yet undiscerned and unverified, while belonging rather to the realm of mystery than to that of familiarity, there never would have emerged any 'evidence' of its actuality. And even to-day, I may remark in passing, the uniformity of Nature, as relating either to the future or to the past which preceded scientific observation, though the certainty of every prediction of science, and all the prudence of common sense, depend upon it, is, from the point of view of logic, a postulate only; or rather, as has quite recently been brought to light, a group of postulates. It is a belief for which there is no *a priori* necessity, for which full empirical proof is of course out of the question, and yet which every induction presupposes. Thus mankind have always been subject to the necessity of believing, hoping, or trusting in the rationality of the world while this was as yet undemonstrated, before they could proceed to erect the edifice of knowledge, or even to lay its foundations. Mankind's case, with respect to knowledge, has therefore been fundamentally the same, and must for ever remain fundamentally the same, as that of the Christian in respect of faith, who, before he can come to God, must first believe that He is. *Credo ut intelligam*, or venture before victory, describes what actually has been, and indeed what necessarily must have been, the attitude of the human mind in virtue of which it has attained to its religion and its science alike. I do not mean to imply that all the dogmas of the religious are necessarily on a par, in respect of probability, with the more settled convictions of the scientific; but I submit that the antithesis between knowledge and belief is commonly exaggerated beyond the limits within which the logician assigns it significance or validity; that knowledge has always contained and must for ever continue to contain an element of faith that ordinary language has tended to conceal; and that within the sphere of knowledge or science, as well as within that of religion, probability is the guide of life. Both, like Abraham, have gone forth 'not knowing whither'; both have by their primitive faith obtained their first glimpse of the places they should afterward receive as their inheritance.

And so we might adopt the illustrative method of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews and lengthen out indefinitely the chain of examples of the efficacy of faith which his eleventh chapter presents to us. We might generalize from Israel's religion to humanity's knowledge. By faith, we might say (or by hope, if we wished to be historically correct and literally accurate), Newton founded all physics on his three simple laws of motion; by faith the atomists of ancient Greece conceived the reign of law throughout the material universe; by faith primitive man made possible all subsequent science, philosophy, and theology. Thus much, I believe, we might add as matter of fact or sober truth. And perhaps it would not be a mere indulgence in phantasy if we allowed analogy to carry us a great step further. At any rate I follow high authority in presenting the suggestion that, but for the 'unconscious experimenting' of the living creatures below us in Nature's hierarchy, but for an element of venture in their behaviour comparable in some respects to that involved in the faith of rational man, there would have been no such thing as organic evolution in our world. As Professor Ward has remarked, reptiles would not have become modified into birds had they waited till first they could fly; and there was little in all the wisest fish could know to justify belief that there was more scope for existence on the land than in the water, or to show that persistent endeavours to live on land would issue in the transformation of his swim-bladder into lungs. And if these instances, so put, will seem largely fanciful, they nevertheless bring out one fact: namely, 'that when we regard the development of living forms as a continuous whole, we are forced to recognize as immanent and operative throughout it, a sort of unscientific trustfulness, that from the very first seems to have been engrained in all living things.' And so we might further extend our series of examples, and say: by something akin to faith 'the primordial slime' fashioned itself into the order and varied beauty of living Nature, and eventually into the dignity of rational and religious man. The whole world is full, fortunately, of the irrepressible tendency to venture: from amoeba to man, no less than from primitive man to philosopher and theist, venture has been the source and cause of development. Every onward step in the progress of man, it would seem, has been an act not wholly warranted

by past experience alone. Indeed, the most apt description that has been given of experience is that it consists in growing expert by experiment. In the lower animals, development was not postponed until its remoter stages were found fit; in man, as we have seen, knowledge is the outcome of faith, of trying, and of postulating. Thought arose as instrumental to life. Logic may be the test of its validity, but its cause was unrest.

Now the conclusion which we have reached has an important bearing on what I have called the problem of faith. What has been said with regard to the lower realms of the living world, and has been presented only as matter of analogy, may be withdrawn, if so you will, as but embellishment. It is in any case superfluous to the argument which I have been constructing. But it will serve to vindicate the reasonableness of the attitude of faith to have pointed out that, in view of the needs of life and in the light of our rounded knowledge of the world as an apparently purposeful moral order, the will to believe, to hope, or to trust, beyond the limits within which we can coercively prove or immediately perceive, is no anomaly and no irrationality imposed on us exclusively by religion. It will serve to justify the venture, the element of assumption, involved in faith, to have shown that it is the final phase of an ascending order of ventures which are normal, natural, nay indispensable, to man: an order which begins in instinctive credulity but culminates in reasoned

and rational conviction. This conviction, moreover, is one for which all our knowledge leaves room, and to which much of our knowledge encourages. I am speaking now only with reference to the fundamental contents of religious faith in general; not as to this or that more precarious detail, which needs to be considered on its own particular evidential merits, but as to the being of God and whatever may reasonably be regarded as necessary corollaries of that belief, such, for instance, as divine self-revelation, divine providence, human immortality, personal inter-communion between God and man. It remains true that faith as to even these fundamental things must always be subjective certitude rather than objective certainty, a venture outstripping knowledge. But the venture is of the kind involved in our very knowledge itself, so that faith is not antithetic to knowledge; and indeed faith is grounded upon such knowledge as we have. If a venture, then, faith is a reasonable venture. And it is further reasonable in that, like our science, it illumines life by finding increased meaning in life as interpreted by faith. And inasmuch as the venture is evoked by life, it must find its subjective and pragmatic verification most chiefly in its enrichment and ennobling of life. Faith is thus the realization of what we have reason to assert to be real; it is the substantiation for man of what, apart from his mentality, has substance, the evidencing of what is none the less actual for its remaining unseen.

Entre Nous.

TWO TEXTS.

Luke xvii. 5.

'BUT it is Saturday night, and I must turn to my preparations for to-morrow. I am to preach in the morning. My subject will be, "Lord, increase our faith"; my points the following: (1) The incidental testimony to our Lord's divinity—in the request that He will bestow a spiritual gift. (2) The ascription of moral weakness to defect of faith. Christ had laid on them the duty of unlimited forgiveness; they reply, Lord, increase our faith. (3) The *wherefore* of the above—because faith brings to bear upon the soul the motive power of the unseen, the revealed.

(4) Divine action on the soul necessary to the production and increment of faith—Lord, increase . . . (5) Yet the human effort is not excluded. Christ retorts: If ye had faith, etc., as if it depended on them.'¹

James i. 17.

'As usual with him he devoted much time to placing the words in their context and showing how they were led up to in the mind of the writer. He began with the double aspect of sorrow from the Christian's point of view: firstly, as a dispensation of God's, and secondly as a temptation, an

¹ H. J. Piggott's *Life and Letters*, p. 262.