FAITH AND ITS PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

MAN has no deeper or wider interest than theology; none deeper, for however much he may change, he never loses his love of the many questions it covers; and none wider, for under whatever law he may live he never escapes from its spacious shade; nor does he ever find that it speaks to him in vain or uses a voice that fails to reach him. Once the present writer was talking with a friend who has equal fame as a statesman and a man of letters, and he said, 'Every day I live, Politics, which are affairs of Man and Time, interest me less, while Theology, which is an affair of God and Eternity, interests me more.' As with him, so with many, though the many feel that their interest is in theology and not in dogma. Dogma, they know, is but a series of resolutions framed by a council or parliament, which they do not respect any the more because the parliament was composed of ecclesiastically-minded persons; while the theology which so interests them is a discourse touching God, though the Being so named is the God man conceived as not only related to himself and his world but also as rising ever higher with the notions of the self and the world. Wise books, not in dogma but in theology, may therefore be described as the supreme

need of our day, for only such can save us from much fanaticism and secure us in the full possession of a sober and sane reason.

Theology is less a single science than an encyclopædia of sciences; indeed all the sciences which have to do with man have a better right to be called theological than anthropological, though the man it studies is not simply an individual but a race. Its way of viewing man is indeed characteristic; from this have come some of its brighter ideals and some of its darkest dreams. The ideals are all either ethical or social, and would make of earth a heaven, creating fraternity amongst men and forming all states into a goodly sisterhood; the dreams may be represented by doctrines which concern sin on the one side and the will of God on the other. But even this will cannot make sin luminous, for were it made radiant with grace, it would cease to be sin.

These books then,—which have all to be written by men who have lived in the full blaze of modern light,—though without having either their eyes burned out or their souls scorched into insensibility,—are intended to present God in relation to Man and Man in relation to God. It is intended that they begin, not in date of publication, but in order of thought, with a Theological Encyclopædia which shall show the circle of sciences co-ordinated under the term Theology, though all will be viewed as related to its central or main idea. This relation of God to human knowledge will then be looked at through mind as a communion of Deity with humanity, or God in fellowship

with concrete man. On this basis the idea of Revelation will be dealt with. Then, so far as history and philology are concerned, the two Sacred Books, which are here most significant, will be viewed as the scholar, who is also a divine, views them; in other words, the Old and New Testaments, regarded as human documents, will be criticised as a literature which expresses relations to both the present and the future; that is, to the men and races who made the books, as well as to the races and men the books made. The Bible will thus be studied in the Semitic family which gave it being, and also in the Indo-European families which gave to it the quality of the life to which they have attained. But Theology has to do with more than sacred literature; it has also to do with the thoughts and life its history occasioned. Therefore the Church has to be studied and presented as an institution which God founded and man administers. But it is possible to know this Church only through the thoughts it thinks, the doctrines it holds, the characters and the persons it forms, the people who are its saints and embody its ideals of sanctity, the acts it does, which are its sacraments, and the laws it follows and enforces, which are its polity, and the young it educates and the nations it directs and controls. These are the points to be presented in the volumes which follow, which are all to be occupied with theology or the knowledge of God and His ways.

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'O.'

PREFACE

THE main objects of this volume are threefold. Firstly, to vindicate for religious Faith its true dignity as a normal and healthy part of human nature. Next, to insist that Faith demands the actual reality of its objects, and can never be content with a God who is only an ideal. Lastly, to show in detail how most of the errors and defects in religious belief have been due to a tendency to arrest the development of Faith prematurely, by annexing it to some one faculty to the exclusion of others, or by resting on given authority. The true goal is an unified experience which will make authority no longer external. This scheme has compelled me to state, far too briefly and dogmatically, my grounds of disagreement with certain religious opinions which are widely held, such as the infallibility of 'the living voice of the Church,' and the finality of the appeal to Holy Scripture, and also with those religious philosophies which make religion exclusively an affair of the will, or the intellect, or the æsthetic sense. My criticisms of these various theories are all intended to show the errors which result from a premature synthesis. Faith claims the whole man, and all that God's grace can make of him. If any part of ourselves is left outside our religion, our theory of Faith is sure to be partly vitiated by the omission; and conversely, an inadequate theory of Faith is likely to be reflected in one-sided or distorted practice.

When we try to analyse the contents of Faith, after claiming for it this very comprehensive range, we must

be prepared for the criticism that we have given only bare outlines, or else that we have left rival constructions side by side in the form of patent inconsistencies. For we cannot hope to understand and co-ordinate all the highest experiences of the human spirit. And our own generation, it seems to me, is not called upon even to attempt any ambitious construction. We must be content to clear the site for a new building, and to get the materials ready. The wise master-builder is not yet among us. 'Revivals' are only a stop-gap; they create nothing. They recover for us parts of our spiritual heritage which were in danger of being lost, and having achieved this, they have done their work. The words Catholic and Protestant are much like the words Whig and Tory in politics. They are the names of obsolescent distinctions, survivals of old-world struggles. When the next constructive period comes, it will be seen that the spiritual Latin empire and the Teutonic revolt against it belong to past history. Already the crucial question is, not whether Europe shall be Catholic or Protestant, but whether Christianity can come to terms with the awakening self-consciousness of modern civilisation, equipped with a vast mass of new scientific knowledge, and animated for the first time by ideals which are not borrowed from classical and Hebrew antiquity.

The great danger in our path, I venture to think, comes from the democratisation of thought, which has affected religion, ethics, philosophy, and sociology—in fact, almost every department of mental activity except natural science. We see its results in hysterical sentimentalism, which is the great obstacle in the way of using organised effort for social amelioration. We see them in the frank adoption of materialistic standards, such as the pleasure and pain calculus, as soon as we leave the region of abstract speculation. And in philosophy it is impossible to miss the connection between the new empiricism, with its

blatant contempt for idealism, whether of the ancient or modern type, and the democratic claim to decide all things in heaven and earth by popular vote. It is possible to sympathise thoroughly with the spread of education, and yet to be aware of the enormous dangers to civilisation which the false theory of natural equality brings with it. It has bred a dislike of intellectual superiority, and a reluctance to allow reason and knowledge to arbitrate on burning questions. Everywhere we find the praises of feeling or instinct sung, and the dangers of intellectualism exposed. Now instinct is the tendency in humanity to persistence, reason is the tendency to variation. Most variations, we are reminded, fail to establish themselves; instinct is therefore the safer guide. But the tendency to variation is just what has raised man above the lower animals; it is the condition of progress. And in civilised man reason has largely displaced instinct, which is no longer so trustworthy as in the brutes. Since this process is certain to go further, distrust of reason is suicidal, and to exclude it from matters of Faith must be disastrous. I believe that the Kantian antithesis between the speculative and practical reason is wholly fallacious, a residuum of the dualism which Kant found dominant in philosophy and failed to overcome. If this dualism is abandoned, the contrast between Faith and knowledge falls with it. And yet the temptation to 'heal slightly' the wounds of religion by reverting to this separation of Faith from fact has proved irresistible to very many, and I believe that it is a main source of the notorious inefficacy of our apologetics. The intellectual difficulties raised by science are not popular, and we are tempted to override them because the masses are still ignorant and superstitious; but I believe that here is still our great problem, and that we shall do well to agree with our adversary quickly, while we are in the way with him.

This is not the kind of intellectualism which paralyses

action. To escape this, it is only necessary to remember that, in the life of man, thought and action are equally important. The normal course of all experience is expansion followed by concentration. Ideals are painted by imaginative thought, but realised only in action. Character is consolidated thought. Action and contemplation must act and react upon each other; otherwise our actions will have no soul, and our thoughts no body. This is the great truth which the higher religions express in their sacraments. A sacrament is more than a symbol. The perception of symbols leads us from the many to the one, from the transitory to the permanent, but not from appearance to reality. This belongs to the sacramental experience, which is symbolism retranslating itself into concrete action, returning to the outer world and to mundane interests; but in how different a manner from our earlier superficial experience! The formula 'From symbol to sacrament' completes and Christianises the Platonic (or Plotinian) scheme, and gives the mystic a rule of life. 'Are we not here to make the transitory permanent?' asks Goethe. 'This we can only do if we know how to value both.' There are two essential movements in the spiritual life: one which finds God in the world, mainly through thought and feeling; the other which re-finds the world in God, mainly through moral action. The former reaches permanence through change, the latter change through permanence. So the spiral goes on, in ever-diminishing circles (*gyrans gyrando vadit Spiritus*), till in heaven, we may be sure, the disharmony between thought and action is finally attuned.

NOTE.—This book is an expansion of ten lectures which were delivered in London on the Jowett Foundation, in the early months of this year. For this reason, the form of lectures has been adhered to throughout.

CONTENTS

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CHAPTER I

'FAITH' AS A RELIGIOUS TERM

(*a*) *In the Bible*

I PROPOSE to consider the first of the theological virtues, in order to determine, if possible, in what it consists. I will not begin by attempting a definition of 'Faith'; but a brief indication of the sense in which the word will be used in the course of the discussion seems desirable. Broadly speaking, when we use the word Faith, without special reference to religion, we mean, either the holding for true of something which is not already verified by experience or demonstrated by logical conclusion,[1] or confidence in the wisdom and integrity of a person. In the former sense, the corresponding verb is 'believe,' in the latter it is 'trust.' In the former sense, the conception of Faith is independent of the character or quality of the thing believed. I may believe in a God or in a devil; in the habitability of Mars or in the man in the moon; or I may believe that if I make one of a party of thirteen at dinner it will be a good speculation to insure my life. The grossest superstition might be called Faith in this sense. But in religious language, to which the word more properly belongs, Faith has a more limited and a more dignified meaning. 'It is the general expression for subjective religion.'[2] It is used for conviction as to certain ultimate

[1] Cf. Fechner, *Die drei Motive und Gründe des Glaubens*, p. 1.
[2] Dorner.

facts relating to the order of the universe and our place in it. And we shall see in the sequel that this conviction is not the result of a purely intellectual judgment, but has a more vital origin. It involves an eager and loyal choice, a resolution to abide by the hypothesis that the nature of things is good, and on the side of goodness. That is to say, Faith, in the religious sense, is not simply belief; it is inseparable from the sister virtues of hope and love.[1]

After this preliminary statement about the meaning of the word, I will proceed to sketch the historical growth of 'Faith' as a theological concept. For it is a complex idea and has a history.

Let us take first the history of the Greek words πίστις and πιστεύειν. Πίστις means the *trust* which we place in any person or thing, and the *conviction*, or *persuasion*, which we hold about any subject.[2] Less frequently, it means *fidelity*, and so the *pledge of fidelity*, acquiring the meaning of *promise, security*. Æschylus (*Frag.* 276) has οὐκ ἀνδρὸς ὅρκοι πίστις, ἀλλ' ὅρκων ἀνήρ; and πίστις became a common technical term for 'proof.'[3] The word first occurs in Hesiod—πίστεις γάρ τοι ὁμῶς καὶ ἀπιστίαι ὤλεσαν ἄνδρας, *i.e.* 'in money matters be neither confiding nor suspicious'; while Theognis has learned by experience that it is safest to trust nobody: πίστει χρήματ' ὄλεσσα, ἀπιστίῃ δ' ἐσάωσα. In the first-mentioned sense it is opposed to *knowledge*, and is thus almost a synonym of δόξα, though πίστις could never (like δόξα) be contrasted with ἀλήθεια, or νόησις, but only with ἐπιστήμη, or γνῶσις. Very instructive is Plato (*Rep.* 10. 601): τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἄρα σκεύους ὁ μὲν ποιητὴς πίστιν ὀρθὴν ἕξει περὶ κάλλους τε καὶ πονηρίας, ξυνὼν τῷ εἰδότι καὶ ἀναγκαζόμενος ἀκούειν παρὰ τοῦ

[1] On the connection between Faith and Hope, cf. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, p. 256 *n.* 'Luther and Calvin both virtually grant that faith and hope are inseparable, or parts of one thing, though Luther (and perhaps Calvin) denies this of faith and love.' Cf. p. 15.

[2] Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon*, p. 495.

[3] Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 156.

εἰδότος, ὁ δὲ χρώμενος ἐπιστήμην ('though the implement is the same, the maker will have only a correct *belief* about the beauty or badness of it . . . whereas the user will have *knowledge*'). Πίστις is not necessarily weak conviction, but it is unverified conviction. As, however, all conviction should seek to verify itself, it may be called *incomplete science*. Plato (*Rep.* 6. 511; 7. 533) gives us two divisions of the mind, intelligence (νόησις) and opinion (δόξα), each having two subdivisions. The four divisions thus produced are science (ἐπιστήμη), understanding (διάνοια), *belief* (or faith or persuasion—πίστις), and the perception of images (εἰκασία). And he says that as being is to becoming, so is intelligence to opinion; and as intelligence is to opinion, so is science to belief, and understanding to the perception of images. Faith, for Plato, is a mental condition which still takes the visible and opinable for true; though it possesses a higher degree of clearness than εἰκασία. It is a stepping-stone to true knowledge.

Πίστις is used in classical Greek of belief in the gods; generally (*e.g.* Eur. *Med.* 414) of confidence in them rather than of belief in their existence; but examples of the other sense are not wanting. By the time of Plutarch, Greek thought was already familiar with the idea of 'Faith' as that which guards a traditional deposit of divine truth. Cf. *Mor.* 756 B.: ἀρκεῖ ἡ πάτριος καὶ παλαιὰ πίστις, ἧς οὐκ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν οὐδ' ἀνευρεῖν τεκμήριον ἐναργέστερον. 'The ancient ancestral Faith is sufficient, than which it is impossible to mention, or to discover, anything clearer. If [he continues] this common foundation for the pious life is disturbed and shaken at any point, the whole becomes insecure and suspected.'

The verb πιστεύειν, when used in relation to persons, seems to have expressed a somewhat stronger emotion than the substantive πίστις, and accordingly it was not much used in classical Greek of mere belief in the existence of gods. For this belief νομίζειν was the regular word,

indicating acceptance of statutory beliefs rather than any warmer sentiment. At the beginning of the *Memorabilia*, Socrates is accused of not 'believing in' (νομίζειν) the gods whom the city worships, and Xenophon replies that since he certainly trusted in the gods, how can it be true that he did not believe in them? So a distinction is recognised which is of great importance in the history of Faith.

In the later Platonists, we have a doctrine of Faith which closely resembles that which I shall advocate in these lectures. The nature of God, says Plotinus, is difficult to conceive and perhaps impossible to define. But we are sure of His existence, because we experience, in our inmost being, expressible and definable impressions when we come near to Him, or rather when He comes near to us. The ardent desire with which we turn towards Him is accompanied by a pain caused by the consciousness of something lacking in ourselves; we feel that there is something wanting to our being. It must be by His presence in our souls that God reveals Himself to us, for we have no means of knowing things except by something analogous to contact. The light of God's presence is brighter than the light of science or reason. But none can see it who is not made like to God, and whose being is not, like that of God, brought to an inner unity. Elsewhere, Plotinus explains Faith as a kind of spiritual perception, as opposed to demonstration (ἀπόδειξις), which is the result of reasoning.[1]

In Hebrew, the verb 'trust' or 'believe' is connected with words meaning 'support' and 'nourish'; and the fundamental idea is *stability, trustworthiness*. 'Whatever holds, is steady, or can be depended upon, whether a wall which securely holds a nail (Isa. xxii. 23, 25), or a brook which does not fail (Jer. xvi. 18), or a kingdom which is firmly established (2 Sam. vii. 16), or an assertion which has

1 Cf. Plotinus. *Enneads*, v. 5, 11; vi. 7, 24-26; vi. 9, 4.

been verified (Gen. xlii. 20), or a covenant which endures for ever (Ps. lxxxix. 28), or a heart found faithful (Neh. ix. 8), or a man who can be trusted (Neh. xiii. 13), or God Himself who keeps covenant (Deut. vii. 9), is 'faithful.'[1] The difference between 'believing *in*' (placing trust in) and simple credence is marked in the Old Testament by different prepositions following the verb. It cannot be said that the verb is very common in the Old Testament in a religious sense; and there is in Biblical Hebrew no substantive properly meaning 'Faith' in the active sense. Accordingly, the Revised Version only admits the substantive *Faith* in two places (Deut. xxxii. 20, and Hab. ii. 4). These are not translations of the same Hebrew word. In Deut. xxxii. 20, the words are: 'they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no Faith.' Here one may doubt whether the meaning is not simply, 'they cannot be trusted.' In Habakkuk, however, the active sense is apparently intended: 'the just shall live by his faith'; but even here the sense is disputed, and the margin of the Revised Version has 'in his faithfulness.' I think, however, that the marginal rendering, though more in accordance with the usage of the word, gives a less satisfactory sense, because the context shows that a contrast is being drawn between the arrogant self-sufficiency of the Chaldæan and the humble trust in God of the 'just.' We may perhaps, then, hold that in this one passage of the Old Testament we have the word Faith used in something like its full Christian or Evangelical meaning, as an enduring attitude of the mind and heart towards God.

The notion of Faith, or rather, faithfulness, in the Old Testament is largely determined by the idea of a *covenant* between God and His people. Faith, trust, or faithfulness belongs to the parties to a covenant; it has no meaning outside that relation. The covenant was made between God and His people collectively; individuals were parties

[1] Warfield in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, s. v. Faith.

to it as members of the favoured nation.[1] Faith, or faithfulness, is the observance of a right attitude towards the covenant with God—it is the conscientious observance of the human side of the covenant, the divine side of which is grace and mercy. We may trace a development in the Jewish ideas about this covenant. With the decay of the national fortunes Faith became more spiritual and more individualistic. It became finally the mental attitude of those who 'waited for the consolation of Israel,' trusting in promises which seemed every year further from their fulfilment.

The Septuagint was not able to preserve the distinction, above referred to, between 'to trust to' and 'to trust in.' It usually renders both by πιστεύειν with the dative. Nor can the Greek reproduce all the meaning of the Hebrew words. It wavers in translating the Hebrew word for 'trustworthiness,' the nearest equivalent to Faith, and the corresponding adjective, rendering them sometimes by ἀλήθεια, ἀληθινός, and sometimes by πίστις and kindred adjectives. In Isa. vii. 9, there is a kind of play on words. 'If ye be not firm' (in Faith), 'ye shall surely not be made firm' (in fact); or, 'If ye hold not fast, ye shall not stand fast.' This is lost in translation. In the important verse, Hab. ii. 4, the Septuagint manifestly misunderstands the original, translating ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται='the just shall live through my faithfulness (to my covenant).' Still, the word πιστεύειν is satisfactory, as it has the right association with moral trust, as well as with what may be called the earlier Greek associations of πίστις, as opposed to ἐπιστήμη.

Philo's notion of Faith is characteristic of his position as a mediator between Jewish and Greek thought. As a Jew, he emphasises *trust* as determining Faith; but his philosophy leads him to single out the *unchangeableness* of God almost exclusively as the ground and object of Faith.

[1] A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 280.