

THE SOUL

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SOME declare there is no soul, others, the majority using the term, are able to attach little definite meaning to it. Popular language is misleading, we speak of a good mind, a strong will, a great soul, meaning that the man thinks correctly, makes firm decisions, has fine feelings. We do not mean that the man is a series of compartments, one labelled mind into and out of which his thoughts march like a fourth of July procession, or another a dark cave from which his will issues, a mighty giant of action, or still a third a sort of bird house to and from which his feelings flutter like doves in a dovecote.

We know the ego is not partitioned off in any such mechanical fashion. The man, the ego is one undivided unity, his thinking, his willing, his feeling, are simply the various functionings of his egoistic activities. We hypostatize these functionings when we speak of mind, will, soul and find so doing very convenient for our every day dealings with each other. Philosophically speaking, however, this is of course absurd, an absurdity which becomes more apparent when we find a man solemnly declaring, there is no soul. How would such a skeptic answer if he were asked whether he had ever experienced the feeling of hate, of fear of love. For if he ever had that experience he must admit that he has a soul; that is what soul means translated from popular language to that of philosophy. I feel, therefore, I have a soul is as true as I think, therefore, I am.

It is by thinking, willing, feeling that we know ourselves; these congeries of activities make up ourselves to ourselves, they are ourselves, to doubt which is to doubt ourselves.

Whatever name we fix on them whether we simply style them feelings, emotions of the ego in and for themselves, or hypostatize

them as soul, there is no doubt that practically and philosophically they are of supreme importance the one important thing in an unimportant world. All our happiness as well as unhappiness consists in our feelings and emotions. It is the soul and its welfare that is more important than health or riches or power. All the material goods of this life are only of value as ministering to the soul's condition. We say this with our lips, we recognize its truth intellectually but by our acts we continually deny it. A man strives for the material goods of life as if they were good in themselves apart from the soul and their effect upon it. Happiness of soul is the measure of all these. Often it is entirely independent of them. Happy beggars and unhappy millionaires are not unknown or even rare. It is all a matter of the soul that many of the inequalities of condition that distress the tender-hearted (one man with the world at his feet, another worn with suffering, deprived of even the necessities of living) may disappear, be of little importance compared with their respective states of soul.

It would seem almost superfluous to argue a point like this, to insist that pleasurable feelings (the happy soul) were the true object of all men, but when we see how men confuse the means of pleasurable feelings with the pleasurable feelings themselves as if they were pleasurable in and by themselves it seems worth while to insist that before going after the means of pleasurable feelings health, wealth and the like we enquire whether they will render to the soul the pleasurable feelings sought, in other words, make a happy soul. Often they do create a happy soul but not always, it depends on the soul.

With this sort of happy soul, the result of external sensations of one kind or another we do not deal. Our concern is with the happy soul created by internal conditions, the happy soul of which religion treats. For convenience we use the term soul but only as an easy method of referring to the emotional side of the ego with the full understanding that soul as a separate distinct part of the ego is unthinkable. It is the soul of which St. Augustine said "Deum et Anima scire cupio; Nihilne plus? Nihil Omnino." Or in the words of Scripture what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul or what shall he give in exchange for his soul. Happiness of soul in the sense we use it means, to quote a recent author, "the union of the soul with God. That and

that alone is religion; church attendance, the ten Commandments, charity, missionary efforts, these in themselves are not Religion. Religion is the Religious spirit and all the rest but the means of that end."¹

Formidable objections to this statement present themselves. To assume that happiness of soul thus defined is the one supreme purpose of life, that it is the one important reality in a unimportant unreal world is to make every man the final judge of what that happiness is, makes his own consciousness the ultimate tribunal by which happiness is to be judged. Permit me to postpone the handling of this difficult point to the end of the discussion: first because it forms the appropriate climax of the reasoning involved and secondly because in the course of the discussion much will emerge to show how completely and satisfactorily the assumption of the soul's supreme importance disposes of many theological and philosophical difficulties and so affords persuasive evidence of its truth: it reconciles and accounts for the facts.

Taking up then some of these difficulties and applying our assumption to their untangling, we come, first, upon what is, I suppose, one of the most distressing dilemmas to the thoughtful man. What is to be the fate of those men who long before Christ lived and were, so far as we are able to form any judgment, good, well meaning men according to their lights. It revolts our sense of justice that, because they did not believe in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, did not know the necessity of baptism, or understand the meaning of original sin or of predestination, were ignorant of the tender love of God which Christ brought to men that they must be consigned to eternal punishment. Be it conceded that our human reason is not competent to deal with these high matters, it is yet a satisfaction to find a solution that at least does no violence to our human ideas of justice and right.

If these men of the ancient world were happy souls in the sense to be later defined and explained, they may not only have escaped damnation but may have themselves created their heaven. Under our assumption men make their own heavens and hells. For what is Heaven and Hell? It is not a place but a condition, a condition of the soul and there may be as many heavens and hells as there

¹ Debellino's *England*, p. 403.

are varieties of men.² Each man's heaven or hell will differ from every other man's according to the capacity of the particular man. The heaven of St. Francis of Assissi will not be the same as that of an Esquimaux or a Hottentot or even of the average man. It will be richer fuller, just as one man's nature is richer and fuller. In my father's house are many mansions, we are told, which indicates the difference that must exist in the heaven of men.

By this measure of the soul we may in like manner value the various religions of men, not by way of condemning them but by way of estimating their true worth. It is by richness of content which a given religion bestows on the soul that we are to value and judge it. The old Hebrew religion with its stern and awful Jehovah did not give to the soul that love and child-like confidence that Christ brought, nor did the religion of Mahomet although, compared with the religions it displaced, it gave to the soul a higher spiritual content. It destroyed the materialistic and hampering worship of idols, presented to the soul the idea of one Almighty God to whom unceasing prayers—five times every day—were to be offered. The prayers, fasting, giving of alms tended to a higher spirituality.

We do not condemn the various religions of the world but we judge them as more or less helpful to that happiness of soul which is the goal of all religions. We measure the heaven which they prepare for their worshippers by the richness of content that it gives to the soul, by the nearness to God that it brings. It is this that makes the content of the soul and so, its happiness.

In like manner, this measure of the happy soul may be applied to those dogmas over which such long theological disputes have raged and so many dusty and forgotten volumes have been written. Does this particular dogma make for a happy soul: Then to that soul it is true and all disputes about its truth are idle. Its truth is the making of a happy soul. Whether predestination, the Virgin birth, even the Divinity of Christ are in question, their truth is the making of a happy soul. In the next world it matters not whether predestination, the Virgin birth, original sin are true or not, they will have fallen away, the rude scaffolding, upon which has been

² It would seem that this is contrary to the teaching of Scripture where we are told of the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched but it must be remembered that this language is metaphorical, symbolic, appealing to the Oriental imagination to which it was addressed.

built the happy soul. That survives and lives forever. These dogmas have no further office and disappear. The futility of these dogmas save as they stand in relation and as they contribute to the happy soul, may be known by considering what the consequence to the happy soul would be if a dogma such as predestination should eventually turn out untrue. It could not be contended that the falsehood of the dogma of predestination would destroy the happiness of soul or affect in any way the salvation of that soul which had mistakenly but in all sincerity believed it.

In all these measurements we must always bear in mind that in them we undertake an intellectual task: the attempt is to measure spiritual values by our intellectual powers and that such measurements must always fall short of any true and accurate appreciation. Spiritual values are refractory to intellectual measurements in a very great degree. The music of Mozart cannot be expressed in logical terms nor can it be compared with the music of Bach or Beethoven. It is only in terms of emotion that we have knowledge of them and these are incapable of accurate measurements or expression in words. We may get some sort of notion by comparing the various mechanical or intellectual devices by which the emotions are kindled. We can compare the mystical beliefs of Brahma, the cold logical doctrine of Calvin, the doctrines verbally formulated of the various religions and perhaps conjecture more or less truly the emotions they would create in the soul. The doctrine of predestination, we may think, calculated to make feelings hard and uncompromising, the doctrine of universal salvation, to create tolerant and kindly feelings for others. But the spiritual condition of the soul is beyond and above all these and is to be known only as it is experienced.

Hell like Heaven is this spiritual condition of the soul, it depends for its significance on the individual man. We make heaven or hell here on earth by our daily lives. Thus is the justice of God made manifest since man by his own deeds makes his own reward or punishment under, of course, the rule and in accord with the laws of God but always by his own will and effort. And so we may with confidence hold that those men of old, if their souls were happy in the sense of being in union and harmony with God, according to their capacity and knowledge have attained heaven, have saved their souls. The process of creating heaven or hell in the

soul may be conceived not altogether imperfectly if we picture to ourselves the man on earth giving free rein to all his appetites without regard to the appetites of others. The appetites thus unchecked when deprived of all satisfaction by the death of the body upon which they depend will plunge the soul into the hell of a Tantalus with physical cravings ever present but without any possibility of their satisfaction. On the other hand a soul whose physical appetites have been held in proper subjection, whose spiritual side has been developed enters the next world with all the opportunities for the satisfaction of its spiritual cravings increased a thousand fold, the possibilities of its union with God brought far nearer than ever they could be in the material world, its physical appetites gone with its physical body. For of course all the physical pleasures that make up the great part of our human life, give it all its most poignant joys and sorrows, perish utterly with death and the soul that has no spiritual joys within itself is a starving empty shipwrecked mariner on those eternal seas. It is only spiritual joys, companionship and union with God, that survive and must furnish the soul's joys or leave it empty and joyless in their absence.

In the world of the Hebrews where we have the most complete and lengthy account of the history and development of happy souls and the reverse—that is of religion for that is what the development of a happy soul means—we see how long before Christ's coming men acquired happy souls, souls which by no process of reasoning could be conceived as wicked or destined to eternal punishment. David, for example, despite his sins and moral downfalls never lost the sense of his spiritual obligations, never wholly fell away from the union with God which is the goal of happy souls. In his penitential psalms we read again and again of his struggles to regain God's favor, to renew that union with God impaired by his evil doing. The coming of Christ and his teaching simply put before the soul a new and higher means of attaining its happy state, its union with God. It brought a tenderness and love into the relations of the soul with God which had never before been vouchsafed to man.

And thus by realizing the all importance of the soul we are enabled to grasp the true office of prayer. For prayer is not a tool, an improved heavenly instrument for accomplishing some

physical purpose. The dispute regarding its efficiency in this aspect is seen to be an idle, useless speculation which is the fruit of a want of understanding of its use and purpose. The experiment made some years ago in London of subjecting one ward in a hospital to the prayers of the faithful while neglecting all prayer for a second ward and thus testing the efficacy of prayer by the difference in the recoveries made by the patients in the two wards is an example of the crass materialism of looking upon the office of prayer not as solely and only for the growth, development and welfare of the soul but as a "go-getter" of worldly material good things. The great service of prayer is the putting the soul in close communion with God. This does not exclude the asking for earthly gifts, material help, health, wealth, success or whatever the soul craves, because this expresses the hopes, the feelings of the soul and, if the prayer be truly a prayer, there comes back perhaps the very help requested; what matters is that there comes back to the soul a union with God, an assurance of his presence and sympathy, in short a happy soul. So a parent might pray for the life of a child, the prayer might not be granted, the child might not live; yet if that prayer brought calm to the parent's soul, an understanding and a submission to God's will it would be truly answered, would accomplish its real purpose in the development of the parent's soul. The soul and its happiness are the only important things in an unimportant world. The soul destined for a life to all eternity far outweighs the earthly life of a child destined at best for an earthly life of a few brief years. Prayer brings to the soul the presence of God himself, the Holy Ghost—be it said with all reverence and fear—comes to the praying soul, the mystery, the glory of this surpasses all human words.

In the Scriptures we are told of the sin against the Holy Ghost, what that is, how awful in its finality we are only dimly warned. Even prayer is powerless: "Whoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world neither in the world to come."³ If we dare make a conjecture may it not be a condition of soul created by an exclusive absorption in the affairs and interests of this world so that the capacity for understanding and sharing in spiritual things becomes so atrophied that it is lost beyond recall. There is no room for spiritual growth, God is excluded from the soul by these earthly desires, these physical appe-

³ St. Matthew XII, 32.

tites and the intense pursuit of their satisfactions. There is no cure for this, no remedy, no forgiveness: it is past that stage of sinfulness where repentance and change of feeling are possible. "There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it:"⁴ This in all probability is what is meant by that terrible declaration of hopeless condemnation. It is a condition of soul past praying for.

We then come to the vital fundamental question: What is happiness of soul and how do we know it. The reference is of course to that eternal happiness of soul that is briefly described as spiritual, the reunion with God, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

The man in the street if asked if he were happy might perhaps reply with all confidence, "Yes, of course I am happy." If however the further question were asked: "How do you know you are happy?" We can imagine his bewildered expression at what would seem so unreasonable a question. He might say: "Why I am happy and I know it because I am." To answer philosophically he would say the feeling of happiness is myself for the time being, I cannot doubt it without doubting my own existence of which it is for the particular moment a part. In other words it is an example of the immediate apprehension of something by consciousness. This happiness is not necessarily the happiness of soul which we deal with here. There is a perfectly genuine happiness produced by external sensations, eating, drinking and other physical satisfactions cause a happiness that is not to be despised. But the proof or evidence of both states of soul is precisely the same: It is an instance of direct knowledge which is beyond all possibility of doubt or question. The two states of the soul, the temporal and the eternal, are easily distinguished. Two outstanding marks of eternal happiness are first, it is permanent, it depends on no extrinsic elements. The transitory sensations of the external world which carry with them when they pass the happiness they produce are of no consequence. Secondly, its dependence is on internal as contrasted with external conditions. It is superior to all external circumstances and to all happiness produced by them.

As a result of this permanence and superiority a third characteristic emerges capable of intellectual cognizance. This is a certain peace and tranquility, nothing disturbs this serene condition of soul. Calamity, dangers, sickness, to these and all other evils of a

⁴1 John V: 16.

like nature, the soul possessing it is immune. It is in harmony with itself and with all around it. It suffers no agitating feelings, hatred, malice, evil, selfish desires are suppressed by its happiness of soul or rather it may be said that happiness leaves no room for them.

The gratification of physical desires that makes up terrestrial happiness in large degree often brings men into conflict not only with their fellow men but with nature. Thence result much misery, disappointment, struggle. In the happiness of soul with which we deal this is, of course, impossible since it is based on internal conditions entirely independent of external influences.

These marks are, I think, the only ones capable of intellectual statement, marks by which we may recognize the happiness that is eternal, destined to form the basis of all the joys of the world to come. The vital and crucial test is too esoteric for any exact statement in intelligible terms. The indwelling of God, the Holy Ghost in the soul, which is the highest and last stage of this happiness is not communicable by one who has it to another. It has to be known only by experiencing it. The soul that has it possesses the assurance of salvation within itself: that possession is salvation.

It will be said with much cogency that this makes every man the sole judge of his own salvation. The only answer to this criticism is that this solipsism, if so we must call it, is true in many other instances. Every man is the final and only judge in matters intellectual as well as spiritual.

External authority, for example, of Pope, Church, priest, would seem to exclude all personal judgment of the individual, to substitute a higher over-ruling tribunal. But a very slight investigation of the process by which the rule of such tribunal is exercised would reveal that the final tribunal is in the soul itself which recognizes and gives effect to the decrees of the external tribunal. The soul passes on the credentials of all alleged authorities accepting or rejecting them as seems good to it. It is a historical fact that in some cases these authorities of Pope, King, or Church are rejected and the soul is revealed as the sole and final authority in all spiritual and many temporal matters. If the soul were governed by external authority all would submit to it without question.

But again a formidable objection makes itself felt. Is every man his own judge: is there no universal standard, no fixed estab-

lished rule to which all must conform? Is there no Procrustean bed of right and wrong upon which each man is to be stretched and measured? To this, in the last resort, the answer must be "No." There is no such standard outside the man himself. The rule, the exact standard is within the man himself. It is not of his enacting, it is given him by a higher almighty power, the same power that prescribes the laws of his thinking. Like these laws it is of validity so far as he knows only for himself. Of the validity of the rule beyond himself he has no knowledge just as he has no assurance of the validity of his thinking beyond himself; there is no sufficient voucher for either. It is valid for himself, he must recognize and obey it, but that is all. The moral sanctions laid down for him in his soul are true for him, beyond that he cannot go. To prescribe these rules for another is intolerance, that fruitful source of wrong in ages past.

But again it might be urged that there is a general consensus so to speak of all men in certain rules of conduct, beliefs, that seem to claim by reason of their universality a superior authority to that of any individual man's rules or beliefs. While a plausible contention, it is utterly unsound in reason for it is to be remembered that no authority can rise above its source and the source of these rules and beliefs is the soul of the individual man. His soul originates these rules and beliefs and the bare fact that many souls agree in them adds no authority additional to that of the individual soul any more than adding to a column of ciphers increases the sum total. The fact of the universality does indeed give a certain probability of the truth of the rules and beliefs but that does not vouch their authority. Not only that but we find that this universal consensus varies with different races and different periods of time.

What then must we conclude is the ultimate authority which passes on the happiness of soul as true and of saving virtue? It must of necessity be the man's own assurance in his soul. In all spiritual concerns his only guide must be his own consciousness his immediate apprehension of spiritual truth. This he can never verify by external evidence any more than he can verify his intellectual conceptions such as causality for example. He has the two marks of permanence and of superiority to external influences. These can be known and defined in intelligible terms and they dis-

tinguish this eternal happiness from all other; beyond this he must trust to the happiness itself as he recognizes it as such.

It is at this point that all the skeptical and other intellectual difficulties arise. They are all based on a fatal misapprehension, namely, the failure to comprehend that the happiness of soul here indicated is the final reality, there is nothing beyond or above it, as St. Augustine has declared. God realized that in the soul is the final attainment of all knowledge of Him. To such a soul the declaration that there is no God, has no meaning, for God is within it.

The existence of God so far as we are permitted to know, is a matter belonging exclusively to the soul, that is, the emotional side of the ego. The existence of God as affecting the physical world, as the power behind and above all natural phenomena is a matter which concerns the intellect. It must be dealt with intellectually. But the human mind has not power adequate for any such subject. Were the Atheist challenged to prove the non-existence of God he would find himself essaying an impossible task for he would be compelled to reason on the basis of those mental conceptions which govern human reasoning but for which he possesses no voucher or authority but his own mind. In other words all skeptical speculations of this sort are simply fairy tales, spun out of vain imaginations without value or real meaning. The truth being that apart from and outside the soul the proof or disproof of God's existence is simply impossible philosophically and strictly speaking. God has revealed himself to the soul of man, but there is no evidence in nature of external proof of himself. All the arguments framed on the fashioning of physical nature, the adapting of means to ends, are based wholly and entirely on the conceptions of the human mind, causality, purpose, unity of design, what is called the teleological proof, which, so far as we know, have no reality outside of the mind. Thus we are brought back to man's soul as the only reality in an unreal world.