

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

### CHAPTER 4.

#### RECONCILIATION.

King Alfred's moment of deathless glory was when he was reconciled with Guthrum, the Danish leader, even after broken faith in the past, and entered into a treaty with him, which left Wessex free. But he did this after he had defeated Guthrum in battle, and not before! It led to a lasting peace, To be reconciled with your country's enemies before you have defeated them in battle, is a more perilous adventure; it may well lead to broken faith, and no peace.

Reconciliation between individuals presents the same problem. It can be summarised in the question: do you want the feeling of reconciliation or the real thing, do you want appearance or substance? In ordinary social life, you have to be content with appearances; they are all that is on offer. If you want something more substantial, you have to cut across the grain of social life, and not many people are willing to do that, or accompany you on such an adventure. But this, I regret to say is what religion is all about. Jesus had no time for the routine of convention, and I regret to say very little time for good manners. If you asked him to dinner, he was likely to insult you, according to the myth which he has left behind him. And for a nice congregation of law-abiding, conventional, good mannered people to call themselves a Christian Church, is like a man who has learned to sail a mirror-dinghy on a dis-used gravel pit claiming to be a sailor. Surely you must at least have some experience of the open sea?

When two people fall in love, who are from different nations, the problem is much more difficult. Not only will you have different outlooks, the basic facts or beliefs in your subconscious will be different. And of that, you will be almost entirely unaware – because they are in your subconscious! So the scope for misunderstanding each other is enormous. Much better to stick to appearances, you might say, when you seem to understand each other? But that is no good, when difficulties crop up, as they are bound to do. It will just be obvious that you misunderstand each other, whatever you pretended a moment before. So is

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

the solution to strive to have the same beliefs and basic assumptions, the same “attitude”, as Jung would have said? But that means disowning your loyalties to your respective countries, and being a couple wrapped up in themselves. Most people would say that was to end up “insignificant”, or a “very small parcel”. There is a story from Bunker’s Hill, the first real battle of what we call the American War of Independence. A Yankee and a British sergent-major saw and recognised each other as a friend. They both broke ranks, and ran to meet each other, the Yankee from his entrenchment the sergent-major from the line of his marching regiment. They flung their arms round each other, and embraced. Of course they were shot down a moment later by the murderous fire from both sides; but for one brief moment they had expressed a love that defied death. That is what you want to solve the Romeo and Juliet dilemma.

And this too is the courage the clergy need in their Imitation of Christ, if they are ever to have achievements that equal or are greater than those of Jesus in his earthly life. So how is it that they, who were given the inestimable privilege of being the guardians of the highest aspirations of the spirit of Man, have succeeded in creating a Church that is ignored or despised by the bulk of the population? What has gone wrong? In the Day of Judgement, if there ever is a day of judgement, what will their answer be? If one of them answers, “I was a timid man, and I did not have the courage to act on my own initiative”; how will that be received? The parable of the talents does not suggest that those who are afraid to use their limited talents are commended. Even in the parable of the unjust steward, Jesus commends the man who, in a tight corner, had the audacity to put his own interests before those of his master. Nowhere in the Gospels is it recorded that Jesus commended those who were afraid.

No-one knows what happens after death. The suicide bombers of Islam seem to think that they are going to Paradise; but I very much fear that after death, if they are conscious at all, they will find that their Paradise existed only in their imaginations, and nowhere else. Christians too think they are going to

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

be welcomed into heaven by the Jesus, on whom they have lavished praise all their lives. Maybe; but I very much fear that unless they have shown a modicum of courage, there is a risk he will disown them. Jung often found with his mental patients that their thoughts of what would happen after death were merely the elements of human personality, that had remained un-lived in this world, welling up from the unconscious. Could it be the same for those of us, who think we are sane? Even if one has courage, many of our dreams must necessarily remain partly or wholly unfulfilled; and even in old-age one tends to day-dream about what one might have done. Who is to say that thoughts of life after death are not just an extension of that process. Is it not enough to say that one has tried to do one's duty, and that it is for God to decide what is best? As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, one should fear God and obey His commands; and that is all one can do. Eternity without Him would be hell. It is for Him to decide if He wants an eternity with us. Maybe one should have courage not to enquire too nicely?

I think the worst accusation that can be levelled against the Church is that it has defaulted on its mission of enabling men and women to become whole. In doing so, it has failed both church-members, civilisation and the religious urge which is deep-seated in human nature. Some people would be unkind enough to say it had betrayed this trust; this is the view expressed in *Piers the Ploughman*, the Medieval novel, that the clergy had betrayed the City of God to the enemy – Evil. The Church has trained men to become monks in monasteries, not men who can play a confident part in the world of affairs. And what use were monks, when the Saxons invaded Britain, and all the best brains were in cloisters? What you want in a world, which is in dire peril from many dangers, is men with the courage and initiative of Jesus, in a world very different from the one he knew. Where are we going to find them?

Is it going to be possible to find them among those who have the courage to think that the Incarnation includes them? Of course it is! Because then your imitation will not be a slavish imitation, a creeping in the Master's footsteps; it

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

will be an imitation that attempts to display his courage and initiative. You can only do this, if you believe you have a communion with Jesus (which the communion service offers), or a communion with the Father, the Creator, as well as Jesus, (which is what Jesus promised in his Last Discourses). And who dare say what such a life will be like, or what beliefs he may legitimately hold? He will obey the Spirit within, not some antiquated creed thought up in response to a summons by a Roman Emperor, who to the end of his days called himself, “Pontifex Maximus”, or the chief priest of the Roman pantheon. Nor is there any disrespect in pointing out the limitations that the earthly Jesus necessarily was subject to. Indeed one can hardly honour him sufficiently unless one bears in mind what those limitations were, and what he achieved despite them.

Where one must not criticise Jesus is in his claim to have had a close communion with God, and a clear understanding of what God had in store for him. The legitimacy of our inspiration depends on the legitimacy of his. If the Transfiguration happened, as I believe it did, it happened six days after Jesus had asked his disciples whom they thought he was? So six days after Peter had confessed that he believed Jesus was “The Christ”, Jesus took three disciples up a mountain to demonstrate to them that he was indeed the Christ. That must have taken tremendous courage: the sort of courage that Columbus showed when his ship passed the point of no return, and he had to continue sailing West, because his food and water would not have lasted if he had turned back. And what greeted Jesus on his return to the valley, after this tremendous experience? An unseemly squabble due to his disciples’ failure to heal an epileptic. No wonder he felt weary.

Even if the Transfiguration was only a vision in their imaginations, rather than a truthful window into another world, it was still pretty good proof that he was the Christ. And frankly it does not matter which it was. If you can create a vision in the imaginations of three sober men, you probably can give them a truthful window into another world. And the scene that follows in Mark’s

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

Gospel, where they are all arguing over the disciples' failure to heal the epileptic, is as down to earth an account as you could wish. That was not invented, and it gives credence to the transfiguration story that preceded it. It does more; it gives us a window into another world, into the Majesty of Jesus. To be able to see in one's mind's eye the Majesty of Jesus is a priceless vision to have. It is worth following him to the edge of the known world, in order to have it! And if one ever does have it, it is worth going back into the known world to do something about its deplorable condition.

Of course Jesus had his blind spots. We all have our own shadow, as Jung called it. Even God has His shadow. To achieve his magnificent purposes, great suffering is involved on the part of Mankind, and as the crucifixion showed on God's part too. That you learn through suffering is a universal rule. So it was inevitable that Jesus did not see the many practical difficulties in bringing his kingdom of heaven down to earth, difficulties that lesser men see with crystal clarity. But that is no excuse for lesser men to put their own careers and wishes before the welfare of the Church, and so reduce its stature until it is ignored and despised. Presumably they did this because they were incapable of marrying the sacred and the secular, without contaminating the sacred. Ever since clergymen have been allowed to marry, they ought to have solved this problem. St. Paul asked how a man can please God, if he has always to please his wife? How do you reconcile God and a wife? Married clergymen should have had an answer!

Actually the solution is straightforward; and when you see it, you can see nothing else, because it is glaringly obvious, as I say on page 5. All you need then is to see that first attempts often fail, and that you may have to sacrifice your life. Not your physical life, because in these humane times we do not at present crucify people; but you might lose your sanity, if things were to go wrong. And that would be much worse than the loss of physical life. Most people would find it daunting. And that is why most Christians dare not stray from the path of conventional religious dogma and doctrine.

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

But in the world today, men and women are crying out for a pattern of the good society: good both temporally and spiritually. It is, I think, generally recognised that democracy is better than tyranny; but there seems dissatisfaction with the way democracy is working. A “Property Owning Democracy” is a good slogan to start with, because I firmly believe people must have wealth if they are to be able to stand out against the latest fashionable folly or injustice. And if everyone had the same amount of wealth, no-one would have enough wealth to dare to do it. And this would be the recipe for a tyrant to enslave everyone. So inequality is probably necessary to maintain freedom. Similarly privilege is probably necessary too, otherwise the potentially public-spirited leaders would take so long to emerge, that the charlatans would get there first. But pure Capitalism has lost its appeal, as it lets the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer; and anyway it leads to a society in which most, if not all, important decisions are made on the basis of cost. To whom then should we go for advice, as to how to maintain the correct balance between cost and worth? Ideally one might think it was the Church. But in our country’s hour of need, the Church is useless. It is living in an unreal world, or a world that no longer exists. It would be folly even to listen to its advice. Just remember “Putting Asunder”! So we need not only a vision of a decent just society; we need a new religious vision as well. That was why I wrote RELIGION REWRITTEN, in order to start the process of creating a new religious vision. And the way to begin, it seemed to me, was to enable a man to reconcile his relationship with God and a wife. One world and not two, in the human psyche! Civilization is a seamless garment, even if civil liberty in practice demands a system of checks and balances. The solution was obvious; the difficulty, as always, was to work out the details. Writing Religion Rewritten was the work of a life-time; and my website is the result. I never denigrate Jesus, and hope that others will do better.

It is obvious to everyone, except church-goers, that a rethinking of religious doctrine is necessary, or it is “curtains” for the dear-old-C.of E. In

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

such a rethinking, everything of the past is at stake. What folly, scientists say, to be bound hand and foot to the views of men 1700 years ago; men who were highly intelligent, but who accepted slavery, and had only ever lived under tyranny: assumptions we indignantly repudiate. Every scientific theory has to be revised in the light of new experimental evidence that simply does not fit current theory. Wise men would say it is the same for religion. So a rethink may involve stripping Jesus of his titular divinity. He could keep it, if the incarnation includes us, as well as him; but I have met few Christians who like the price of acceptance. If he loses his titular divinity, given him centuries after he died, he can still be regarded as the first person to grasp that the Spirit of God pervades the entire universe, from the very big to the very small, and we would add from the stars in the heavens down to the tiny atom and the elements of the Periodic Table, and who yet still allowed his character to reach its full stature. Inevitably parochially minded men opposed him, in the event savagely. So we can still regard his contribution to Man's spiritual evolution as crucial, leading us all out of Plato's cave of shadows into the sunlight of truth outside.

Actually, if one adopts the language of modern psychology, and says that the Spirit of God lurks in the depths of the psyche, and you ignore Him at your peril, which I firmly believe to be true, you avoid the language of incarnation. Jesus did, and called an individual becoming aware of this a "Second birth". St. Paul called it "a new creation". **Jesus taught men to stand upright.**

Sadly the Church, whilst doing much good, also did much harm. By insisting that its members subscribe to its creeds, it tended to cripple the spirit of its members once again. And by persecuting deviation, undid everything Jesus had died to achieve. The temptation was considerable; it preserved the clergy's power and jobs. And when they had supreme power, it went to their heads!

But do not truths that need to be enforced by torture and burning at the stake, cease to be truths? Does not the Church's long history of intolerance, and of religious wars, mean that the old doctrine is simply not worth defending?

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

Why? Because God himself abandoned those concepts long ago. It would demesne Him to ask men to accept them again. It has frequently been said that God makes all things new. So is there not considerable truth in the aphorism that theology is ignorance masquerading as knowledge? Or at least, out of date knowledge masquerading as relevant knowledge? And has the hierarchy of the C.of E. really changed since Trollope's day? Is not Religion too serious a matter to be left to priests, just as War is too serious a matter to be left to soldiers?

Do not let anyone think that "second birth" solves the problems of life. Rather it enables a person to face the real problems of life, which previously convention would have decided for you; the problem of vocation, of when to subscribe to convention, and when to reject it, of threading your way through the labyrinth of life without straying into absurdity, of **standing upright**.

Of course I was tempted to think I had hit on the correct way to reconcile the sacred and the secular; and necessarily so to persuade me to continue until I had said all that I had to say. Similarly Jesus must have been tempted to think his was the complete Revelation, to motivate him to face the agony of the cross. But it was not true. He had nothing to say about running a community. Similarly the worthy fathers at Nicaea were no doubt tempted to think their Creed was immortal truth, to encourage them to do their best. And they would have been disappointed to be told at the end of their conference, that it was "not a very good best". I expect people will say the same about me. It is the old paradox, which Philip Pullman identified: "Without the story, there will be no church, and without the church Jesus will be forgotten". The fathers at Nicaea chose the church. Who dare say they were wrong about that? But have not times changed since then? Nowadays do you preach a Gospel which your agnostic, science-loving public will understand? Or preach the legend of your treasured beliefs, and allow the church to die? Creation always has more to reveal than any one man can envisage. This must be so, otherwise life would cease to be exciting. And then it would not be worth living!

## A PERSONAL RECORD.

So if I limit Jesus on the one hand, I never diminish him, I exalt him on the other. He was the first man to dare to believe he had a sense of communion with the Almighty, the Creator, and the audacity to put it into practice, despite the appalling consequences for himself which he knew would follow. He did this in the only way possible, through the archetypes in the subconscious, which have a habit of coming alive, if you respond to them. So he ended up with a sense of communion with the Spirit of God within. But knowing nothing of the language of modern psychology, he had little option but to use the revolting symbolism of demanding that to believe in him, you had to eat his flesh and drink his blood. In other words, you had to be like him, and dare to believe that you too similarly have an indwelling with the Almighty, despite the fear that the reward of your temerity may be a lecture such as poor Job received, "Where were you when I laid out the foundations of the world?" This fits in with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, in which he said that unless a man was born again, he could not see the kingdom of God. And the point of such an intimacy with God is that it enables us to ask what our vocation is, which potentially we all have, and which may or may not be crucifying. It is not to enable us to prance around saying, "I'm a born-again Christian!"

So looking back in old age, what do I see? In the Brexit negotiations, I have not seen one word of gratitude for what Britain did for Europe between 1939-45: how Britain stood alone from June 1940 to June 1941, how Britain bankrupted and exhausted herself, to help free Europe from Nazi tyranny. Indeed, in Germany there may be no gratitude? Germany's only regrets may be that Hitler lost the War, which he so nearly won? And on my spiritual adventure, I am disposed to see that I escaped catastrophe by the skin of my teeth. For that, I am profoundly grateful.