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Mountain of Purification are reproved in these words :

What negligence detains you loit'ring here ?
Run to the mountain to cast off those scales,
That from your eyes the sight of God conceal.¹

There is also implicit in Plato's thought the conception, so clearly expressed in modern times by Hegel, that the punishment is not disconnected from, or arbitrarily attached to, the evil done. It is not 'a menace,' which 'may incite a man to rebellion in order that he may demonstrate his freedom. . . . The injury [penalty] is a right of the criminal himself, and is implied in his realized will or act. . . . The Eumenides sleep, but crime wakes them. So it is the criminal's own deed which judges itself.'² Finally Hegel's paradox—itself a re-affirmation of Plato's—that the evil-doer has a *right* to be punished, is taken up and extended by the great Russian moralist, Solovyof : 'The true conception of punishment is many-sided, but each aspect is equally conditioned by the universal moral principle of pity, which includes both the injured and the injurer. The victim of a crime

¹ *Purg.* ii. 115 (tr. Cary).

² *Philosophy of Right*, §§ 99-101 (tr. Dyde, 96 ff.).

has a *right* to protection and, as far as possible, to compensation ; society *has a right* to safety ; the criminal *has a right* to correction and reformation.'³

At the end of this process of development we have reached an idea of punishment which resembles the so-called punishment for the breach of Nature's laws in the inevitability with which it follows the doing of wrong, but which differs *toto cælo* in that its inevitability now has an inward character. It is an inward compulsion which brings the wrongdoer to say, *Mea culpa*, and to seek both to make amends to others and to amend his own life. If the punishment includes deprivation of freedom, that, as Solovyof further says, 'is especially important as a *pause* in the development of the evil will, as an opportunity to bethink himself and repent.'⁴ His eyes may thus be opened to the ugliness and baseness of what formerly attracted him, 'until his iniquity be found to be hateful'—a phrase which in Ps 36 may be a mistranslation, but which expresses one of the most profound truths of moral experience.

(*To be concluded.*)

³ *The Justification of the Good* (tr. N. A. Duddington), 322 f.

⁴ *Ib.*

Christianity and Progress.

BY THE REVEREND FREDERIC C. SPURR, BIRMINGHAM.

THE idols that men worship are for ever doomed to fall. Dagon is found lying on his face in the early morning and his 'hands cut off upon the threshold.' The golden calf is burned, ground to powder, and strewn upon the water which the people drink. The idols of the mind share a similar fate, but in another realm. Their destruction is none the less real although it lacks a material form.

The great mental idol of the Victorian epoch was named Progress. It was invested with the attributes of Deity itself. Mr. Herbert Spencer declared social progress to be a 'cosmic law identical with biological evolution.' It was inevitable. His camp follower, Mr. H. G. Wells, repeats the dictum of his master. 'Progress,' he says, 'continues in spite of every human fear and folly. Men are borne along through space and time, *regardless of themselves*, as if to the awakening of the greatness

of man.'¹ The italicized words are identical in meaning with Mr. Spencer's 'cosmic law.' Mr. Wells, who is an accredited prophet with some, is so certain of human progress being perfected, that he permits himself to draw in advance, and with much imaginative detail, the world as it will be one day. But the date, unfortunately, runs into six figures. Meanwhile life has to be lived, and it is pressing. The Victorian optimism, however, did not remain unchallenged even in Spencer's time. Ernst Haeckel, who was very confident about the past, and who very cleverly filled up unpleasant gaps with material of his own, was not so sure about the future. In his *Riddle* he had to admit with regret, that there was another and a serious side to his picture. 'We have made little or no progress in moral and social life, in comparison with

¹ *The Work, Wealth, and Happiness of Man.*

early centuries. At times there have been serious reactions.' Professor Huxley went much farther. So far from progress being a 'cosmic law,' and the bearing of men onward 'regardless of themselves,' he insisted that 'social progress means the *checking* of the cosmic progress at every step.' This is in violent opposition to the theory of 'inevitable' progress. It is a small advance towards the Christian idea of progress, although it lacks the specific Christian core.

In our own time the whole idea of human progress is boldly challenged. Spengler has hit it hard in his *Decline of the West*. Dean Inge, as is well known, continually inveighs against it. And Bertrand Russell has evolved a Philosophy which leaves no room at all for any notion of real human progress. 'Man,' he tells us, 'is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving. His origin, problems, hopes and fears, lores and beliefs are but the accidental collocation of atoms. No fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave. The whole temple of man's achievement must *inevitably* be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins. These things, *if not quite beyond dispute*, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. . . . Only on the *firm foundation of unyielding despair* can the soul's habitation be safely built. . . . Man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, is to-morrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness. It remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day.'¹ And this in a book on 'A free man's worship'!!

The 'free man' who is not awed by a great reputation, would probably like to invite Mr. Bertrand Russell into the witness-box and subject him to a rigorous cross-examination. He might then ask some very awkward questions such as, 'How do you *know* all this?' 'What *science* has given you the right to assume the pontifical robe, and to speak with such assurance?' 'And will you be good enough to inform us in what way can lofty and ennobling thoughts be safely built upon the firm foundation of unyielding despair?' Further, will you kindly tell us how unyielding despair can be a foundation for anything? If you think it can, we shall be obliged if you will offer us a few concrete examples of so prodigious a miracle. You will not think it impertinent if we demand something more substantial than your bare word for your revolutionary ideas.'

¹ *A Free Man's Worship*.

A similar line of cross-examination might, with advantage to clear thinking, be directed to certain eminent men of science, who assure us that the universe is running down, either into ice or fire, they are not sure which. In any case they give us little hope of the final end of humanity which, according to them, is part of this material universe and no more than that. Therefore it shares its fate. True, the catastrophe is millions of years away. But, near or distant, it is inevitable.

Evidently there is something wrong somewhere. Either the *data* is wrong, or the conclusions drawn from them are wrong. But are they really *sure* of their data?

The challenge to the idea of progress comes also from another side—the *historic*. Dean Inge will have it that the notion of progress is entirely modern, that it came in with modern science, that it is nothing more than a magical formula attached to the general idea of evolution, that it has become a fetish, that until modern times men thought in static and not in progressive terms. The world was regarded as fixed. Religion was something fixed, theology was fixed. The future life was conceived as a fixed state on both sides, heaven and hell. Even human society was fixed by Providence.

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate . . .
The Lord God made them all.

All this may be perfectly true, so far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. It is a very partial reading of history which can arrive at the opinion that the idea of progress is only of recent date.

St. Augustine's *City of God* certainly does not lend colour to the suggestion, and St. Augustine can scarcely be called 'modern.' Nor can St. Thomas Aquinas be left out of the reckoning.

There must be other reasons, then, for combating the idea of progress. And most of them, upon examination, will be found to be the result of the terrible experiences of the Great War.

It is not true to say that the Great War destroyed the theory of progress. What it did was to bring to ruin the foolish and ill-founded optimism which was based upon the material progress of the world due to the new power which science had placed within our hands. It tore the mask from the face of our false gods and revealed their essential cruelty. It disturbed our foolish dreams, and it made it clear for ever that when mankind turns away from the river of the water of life, it is forced to the alternative of preparing a bath of blood.

Despite the horrors of the War, men still have failed to learn its main lesson. It is folly, however, to deny the idea of progress because of the explosion of 1914-1918. . . .

Let us look a little more closely at this question of material progress. It is only by comparison that we can appreciate the enormous difference between the life of, say, one hundred years ago and that of to-day. Then, life was desperately hard, and even cruel, for the workers. The factories had a fourteen-hour day for six days a week. There were a million paupers living in conditions made known to us in the pages of Dickens. The mass of the people were denied what is a necessity—pure milk. Seventy per cent. of the people were illiterate. Drunkenness was common. Sanitation was in an appalling state. The Public Health Act was not passed until the year 1858. When Spurgeon came to London cholera was raging. Tea cost 8s. 6d. a pound, and sugar one shilling. Brutal prize fights were often held. The son of Lord Shaftesbury fought with bare fists sixty rounds at Eton, and after being primed with brandy, was in the end killed. There is little to be proud of in those bad old days. The change for the better has been enormous socially. It is hardly the same world. Materially, the change has been still greater. The coming of electricity, radio, the cinema, the automobile, rapid transport, better houses, and popular education have given us a new material world. Beyond that, science has conquered the soil and the air, and compelled the earth to yield enough food for all men.

But what has all this done for *man as man*? Scientists such as Sir Alfred Ewing, Sir John Russell, Sir William Bragg, and even Julian Huxley tell us candidly that the benefits of science have been wrongly handled, that man's spiritual control has not kept pace with his material control, hence the menace of unemployment, the spectre of poverty amidst incredible wealth, half-starved bodies (whilst grain is burned for want of markets), a growing fear of new and deadlier wars, men mechanized so that they watch a machine do the work they fain would do, an industrial system denuded of humanitarian feeling, the growth of dictatorships, a lessened value of human life, and an abnormally high suicide rate. There is a debit and a credit account of Progress, and at present one seems particularly heavy from the human point of view. To speak of Progress is to offer an insult to millions who ask, bitterly, in what it consists. Progress, as an *idol*, lies with Dagon, its face on the ground. . . .

We must begin again to do some serious thinking and to inquire in what Progress really consists. We cannot accept the world as it is as an evidence of the inevitability of human advance, for if the doctrine of the divine right of kings has gone, that of the divine right of the people to live fully has not replaced it—at least in practice. Roman and Greek slavery have disappeared for ever, as also serfdom and the villein, but slumdom curses our life. Many Roman slaves were infinitely better housed and clad and fed than are millions of dwellers in our modern cities. The barbarities of ancient warfare have only changed their form. Modern fighting is in essence quite as murderous as the ancient massacres, whilst on scale it is infinitely more so. So far as moral and intellectual progress is concerned, it may be pertinent to ask whether we to-day are in advance of Greek sculpture, or Italian painting, or Greek philosophy, or the French architecture of the twelfth century, or the honesty of the medieval market-place. Quite a lot of thinking is necessary before we can continue to chant the praises of progress as explained by Mr. Wells and his school of optimists.

WHAT IS PROGRESS? Fewer than we might suppose have taken the trouble to obtain a definition of what they mean by it. And definition is essential to understanding. Progress, as every schoolboy knows, is the English form of the Latin *progressus* = *progredi*: a march in advance step by step. And it supposes a point of departure and a point of arrival. It is a free march along a definite road to a destined end. Strictly speaking, it is confined to man. We cannot speak of animals, or trees 'progressing.' By breeding or by natural unfolding they develop. But for them there is no *free* march to a destined end. They are under law over which these have no control. With man it is wholly different. He also is under law, but in no fatalistic sense. He works under a Divine charter—'multiply and *subdue* the earth.' 'Thou hast given him *dominion* over the works of thy hands.' The material world is given to him to master. The Christian truth about man is summed up in a sentence; the world is submitted to him, but he is to be submitted to God. He is to master the world in virtue of the fact that he is a Son of God. The world is not his, but God's, and he must treat it as such. He is neither the slave of the material world nor its absolute lord. He is a son and a steward, *and no more*. Now it is precisely this fundamental truth that men refuse to face, hence their advances in material domination, divorced from their true end, and becoming

an end in themselves, arrest progress, and create periodical crises which force the race backwards and plunge it into misery.

Movement, more movement, and ever more speedy movement: it is this which has been mistaken for progress. Men have not paused to ask what they are, why they are here, and where they are going? So long as they are in motion, that is deemed to be sufficient. They have asked few or no questions about themselves: the kind of men they are, the kind of men they are becoming. Or they have been content with cheap and superficial answers supplied by philosophers who have explained man in terms of neuroses, or fatally inherited instincts, or environment, and have missed the greatest things about him. So, after a generation of ever accelerated movement on the one hand, and of materialistic thinking on the other, the world has arrived at a crisis in which it is confused, fearful, disillusioned, incoherent. It is not without significance that in our time human values are cheaply held, and human life for many is wholly without meaning. Mr. Joad, who is not religiously on the side of the angels, is constrained to say 'a generation is arising which has no religion, and no need for one. Also, it is very unhappy, and the suicide rate is abnormally high.' On the Continent of Europe, in the United States, and in Britain, suicides are becoming increasingly common. Youths, students, girls, comedians, and financiers resort to the gas oven and leave behind letters of farewell announcing that they are 'fed up' with things. More than twenty-five financiers of world reputation have terminated their lives within the last four years. . . . PROGRESS!

It ought to be clear what is the radical trouble with the world. To the average person it savours of cant and platitude to say that we have left God out of our calculations. But, however it sounds, it is the simple truth. To refer our miseries to causes financial or industrial or political or commercial, is merely playing with the surface of things. These are only nearer causes, they are not the *radical* cause. The radical cause is far deeper. There are no such entities as finance, industry, politics, or commerce functioning by themselves. These things are the creation of man, and it is his character as creator that is really in question.

Evidently he has created badly, because he has conceived badly, and he has conceived badly because he is related badly. He has forgotten that he is a creature, a steward, a son. He has acted as if he were the proprietor of the planet, and to gain his own ends he has often copied the swift methods of the jungle. He has admitted no authority higher than his own. And he has wholly forgotten the universe and its claim upon him. He has failed to make the progress which God intended for him. He has taken his own way, which has landed him in an *impasse*. He has ignored the 'end' for which he was created.

When we have said everything, we must return to this simple and fundamental fact. If progress is a free march along a definite road to a destined end, man must 'stand in the ways' and ask for the one way which leads to that goal. We must know what that goal is. And it is here that the great opportunity for the Church lies. But first of all the Christian society must know exactly where *it* stands and what *it* believes. It must make up its mind whether or not the 'way' of Christ is the only way of true progress, and then at all costs tread that way, leaving out of the count any question of success or failure. The world will never be changed by being preached to. It must be shepherded, *led*. The disciples of Christ are sufficiently numerous to lead the world if they are consent to live above it and by a higher rule than that which it acknowledges. 'The saints shall *manage* the world' is Moffatt's rendering of St. Paul's famous sentence. We may leave Mr. Bertrand Russell to enjoy his pessimism as best he may, and Mr. Wells to watch the bursting of his coloured bubble. For the Christian there can be neither a depressing pessimism nor a foolish optimism. He lives by faith and the power of God. But that faith must rise to daring adventure and risk, then will the power be available, and not until then.

The Victorian idol of necessary evolutionary progress, regardless of what man does or can do, has been broken by hard circumstances. The niche cannot remain empty. It must be filled with the figure of the Christian idea of progress which places God at the beginning and at the end and as the living director of the marchers.