

# THE RIDDLE OF THE WORLD

## I

### THE HUMAN SITUATION

THERE are many people in the world to-day who have abandoned the Christian revelation because they have found it, for one reason or another, too difficult to believe. The initial question I should wish to raise with them is whether they have really got rid of difficulty by such abandonment. To me it seems that they are now face to face with the radical mystery of human existence, the formidable riddle of the world.

The word Revelation means the taking away of a veil—the veil which, as Isaiah said, “lies on the face of all peoples”—it therefore implies the existence of that radical mystery. If there be a revelation, it must contain the solution of that mystery, the disclosure of reason and meaning in what, without it, is sheer confusion. Rejection of revelation, therefore, does not mean that we escape from intellectual difficulties. It only means that the supposed solution given by revelation being rejected, we come once more right up against the ancient menacing Darkness. But if this solution be true, revelation itself can only be deeply understood by those who have clearly discerned the underlying riddle of the world, in which is included the mystery of our own personalities. If they have never really seen and felt the pressure of that mystery not only on the

intelligence, but on the soul of mankind, they will inevitably see the revelation in a false perspective. Perhaps if it were discerned in its true context the difficulties would diminish and, it may even be, disappear.

But whether this be so or not, the courses of human thought to-day are compelling all serious minds to consider afresh the ancient riddle of the world. To-day we see it in terms of the modern scientific view of Nature, but in truth it is as old as man himself. In all ages it inheres in the very substance of man's nature and in the human situation. What is that riddle? It arises from the fact that man knows himself to be a higher being than any thing or any number or organisation of things in Nature, and yet comes out of, is entangled in, dominated by, and eventually destroyed by Nature.<sup>1</sup> He knows also that there is a deep division in himself between what is and what ought to be. The full and conscious recognition of the mystery of the world, at least is recent, but the truth is that man has never felt himself at home in the nature world, has always been protesting to what he has persistently believed to be over Nature, and has been restlessly trying to explain to himself how he came to be there in the human situation. He has been deeply convinced in his own mind that the world has no right to dominate and destroy him, that the unseen world in which he believes, and to which he makes his protest and appeal, is mightier than the empirical world of the senses in which he is entangled, and

<sup>1</sup> By Nature I mean the universe as we know it, through our senses, and explore it by the scientific method.

that this over-world or "Supernatural" is either friendly or may be made friendly to him, and thus he is constantly seeking its alliance and succour. That, explain it how we may, is a plain undeniable fact of history. The Science of Religion has, I believe, demonstrated once for all the nature and the universality of religion. As regards its nature let us hear one or two authorities. "By religion," says Sir J. Frazer, "I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life."<sup>1</sup> "Religion," says Professor Menzies, "is a worship of higher powers from a sense of need."<sup>2</sup> "Sabatier's view is that religion is essentially a "prayer" for life."<sup>3</sup>

As regards its universality there is practical unanimity. "A people without a religion," says one of our foremost anthropologists, Dr Marett, "is a chimera." Another great savant in the Science of Religion has also said, "The affirmation that there were peoples or tribes without a religion has hitherto always shown itself to be based on inaccurate observations or confusions of ideas. A tribe or nation which possessed no sacred rites or believed in no higher powers has never been discovered, and assertions of that kind made by travellers have always sooner or later been confuted by the facts. We have therefore the right to say that religion, if we apply this word to primitive sacred rites, is a universal human phenomenon."<sup>4</sup>

Further, simple inspection of the immense area

<sup>1</sup> Frazer's *Golden Bough*, vol. i, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Religion*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion*, chap. I, secs. 2 and 3.

<sup>4</sup> Tiele-Söderblom, *Kompendium der Religionsgeschichte*, 5th Ed., p. 18.

of our present-day knowledge of the religions of mankind should convince every open-minded observer that all religions always contain these four elements: faith in the powerful unseen world; obligation to it; the appeal to it for help against the destroying forces in the world around us; and some conception of the good that one seeks to gain by that obedience and appeal. Nearly all, if not all religions also contain some endeavour by myth, legend or tradition, to explain man's strange position. When we reflect on these things we see that they all have their root in one common and ineradicable conviction that man is not at home in the actual world. The same conviction and the sense that here there is an acute problem for the intelligence is also behind what has been called "the great tradition" in philosophy. Whether we profess Idealism or Realism, it can hardly be questioned that the former has most of the great names in philosophy on its side, whether we consider Indian thought as expounded by the philosophy of the Vedanta, or Greek as represented by Plato and his successors, or German as represented by Kant and Hegel. It is all dominated by the conviction that there is that in man which cannot be explained in terms of the actual, and which is higher than the actual. It has fixed upon this element as the all-important thing for determining our conception of Nature as well as personality, and has sought for that in the Unseen which could alone solve the riddle for the intellect and give man the power not only to explain, but to overcome the world. "Philosophy," said Novalis, "is a kind of home-sickness," and that pregnant saying has

been expanded by a recent philosophical writer<sup>1</sup> as follows: "There is a deep-seated need in the human mind, the roots of which strike far beneath all other needs and interests. This is need to feel at home in the universe. From this source spring all philosophies and all religions, though it is only in the most highly developed philosophies and religions that we have become effectively conscious of this need and of what it demands for its satisfaction. It is a need which at once demands to understand the universe and to love it. It wants at once truth and perfection. It wants what men mean when they say 'God.'" Now in what way did the religions of mankind meet this fundamental need of man? How did they help him to solve the mystery of his being? By assuring him that the supreme powers were on his side, and, if he were faithful to them, would see him through. His faiths thus made him free of a larger world in which he could be at home, which was not fundamentally alien to his highest values, but friendly to him and them, and which, in however imperfect a way, had meaning and purpose in it. To a certain extent these faiths thus for him solved the fundamental problem of his life, or at least lightened its mystery so that he could do his work in the world, by giving him a religious interpretation of life, which, however imperfect it might be, assured him of the one vital thing, that his supreme values were supported by supreme Reality.

But to-day, not only the non-Christian religions of India, China and Japan, but the Christian faith itself, are confronted by a new interpretation of the

<sup>1</sup> Hoernle: quoted by Burt, *Religion and Science*, p. 102.

world. The story of the discovery and development of the scientific method and of its amazing achievements is admitted by all to be one of the most important events in human history. It was discovered that by putting aside the time-honoured traditions of religious and philosophic thought, which by the consent of the ages men had used to help out their imperfect knowledge of Nature, and by, as it were, making a fresh start with the simple phenomena of Nature itself, it was possible by the application and refinement of ordinary common-sense ways of thinking, to give such a clear and orderly account of the world as would enable men at once to *describe* it as a whole, as a system of natural law, and what was of enormous practical importance, to *predict* to a very large extent what, given certain conditions, Nature would do next. This last discovery gave men the wonderful new powers over Nature which in the past three centuries have effected such far-reaching consequences in the whole life of mankind. These practical consequences and its own inherent grandeur have given to the scientific description of Nature an extraordinary prestige in the minds of all modern men. Just as in the Middle Ages the synthesis of all knowledge framed by Thomas Aquinas and the schoolmen dominated the scene and formed the background of poems such as the *Divina Commedia*, and paintings like the "Last Judgment" of Michelangelo and the "Madonna di San Sisto" of Raphael, so the scientific cosmogony was the background of later Victorian thought and art. Of the unexpected changes that have taken place in that scientific

world-view I shall speak later. But it is still the case that with the ordinary cultivated man the scientific view has the dominant place, although he is no longer able to make clear sense of it, and there are many in whose minds there still remains the conviction that in the scientific method alone lies our one hope of interpreting the cosmos. For them the old triad of religious thought, God, the world and the soul of man, no longer exists. God has disappeared as the world of Nature can be explained without Him, and man has been merged in Nature. This is the creed of Naturalism, which is to-day widely spread everywhere. It is to be carefully distinguished from the scientific view of the world. We shall see later in more detail what that scientific view of the world is. It is enough to say, at the present point of our argument, that the scientific account represents a certain abstract way of handling reality which by its very nature must be incomplete, but which so far as it goes has proved extraordinarily impressive and useful. Naturalism is a form of philosophy which insists that science is the only true way of describing reality, and that when completed it will tell us the final truth about the universe. Naturalism is not to be identified with the older Materialism which thought it could explain the universe in terms of an inconceivably large number of inconceivably small spherical bodies which were vehicles of energy. While this Materialism is dead Naturalism is still very much alive. Under the term of Naturalism I include every form of philosophy which believes that in the last resort the basis of all things is physical, whether that

basis be conceived of as matter or as physical energy, or a configuration of space-time.

Now, one of the results of the scientific movement has been that Nature stands out as a whole with a distinctness that it has never had before. In the Bible there is, I think, no mention of Nature as a self-enclosed system at all. The Bible is dominated by the thought of God, Nature's great agencies being regarded as His servants and instruments: "Who maketh the winds His messengers, His ministers a flame of fire." But science as such has eliminated all explanation of natural processes that take us outside Nature herself. This was in itself a legitimate course to take, for it is the business of science to let the phenomena it investigates make their own impression, and not to dictate to them what they must say, until it becomes quite obvious that they cannot explain themselves. This is one of the abstractions which, as we shall see, characterise the scientific method. Naturalism, however, has taken this good working rule of science and transfigured it into the dogma, "There is nothing but Nature." But, having done this, it has during the period that has followed the time of its ascendancy found itself involved in ever-growing difficulties. Is it, after all, really possible to explain man as simply a part of Nature? A very large part of the scientific work of the latter part of the nineteenth century was given to showing that man was continuous with the rest of Nature, that in his bodily structure he could only be explained as one of the stock of the primates, and that there was an unbroken chain of evolution connecting him with animal forms of an even lowlier type. As this process continued

science seemed to be substantiating the claims of Naturalism. The process of applying the ideas of evolution was carried not only back from the first beginnings of man, but forward down his history, and an impressive and comprehensive endeavour was made by the sciences of anthropology, sociology and comparative religion to show the development of his moral, intellectual and religious life on thoroughgoing naturalistic lines of explanation. The case for Naturalism, that is to say for the view that man is simply one of the higher animals and therefore a part of Nature, rests on two bases: the validity of the principles of scientific investigation, and the adequacy of the purely scientific account of Nature to explain all the complex phenomena of human life. Later on we shall examine both of these foundations more thoroughly. Meantime I would repeat that the result of all the labours of science has simply been to disclose with luminous distinctness what has all along been present to the prophets of religion and the sages of philosophy in less distinct form: Nature seems to have produced in man a being higher than herself, and having brought him into being, she seems to be at once seeking to nurture him and to destroy him. We may add to this fundamental paradox the further statement that, so far as our scientific knowledge goes, Nature will in the end obliterate the whole human race, and the whole result of human life and thought will be as if they had never been.

Now the nerve of this paradox lies in the word "higher." If it did not come into the matter we should simply have a meaningless picture of intricate

change, of shapes emerging from formlessness, becoming more definite and complicated, and then being resolved into their elements again, a kind of shifting cloud-rack, slowly forming into patterns and then dissolving again. If that were all, we might find such a world of kaleidoscopic change at first strange and then wearisome to watch. But the word "higher" disturbs and excites, and then distresses us. For it implies that, after all, something worth while is going on, something worthy of existing is being made, and that quite inevitably suggests some purpose and meaning behind it all. And when that is once glimpsed it becomes intolerably shocking and painful to see it extinguished. Is the purpose behind all malignant? But, if so, how did it come to produce anything so noble, so worthy to live on? Here in germ is the old riddle of the world returning on our hands.

Plainly this word "higher" as applied to man requires further investigation. Is man really higher than the world of things, than stones and clouds, or than animals, a snake or a lion? Or is this simply a human illusion by which certain poets, not usually of the first magnitude, ascribe human emotions to Nature? When we say that a man is "higher" than a "thing" what do we mean? Do we mean that he is really higher, that we simply recognise it, and that that is all there is to be said about it? Do we mean, to be concrete, that Jesus was really higher than Judas, and would in Himself have been higher though there was no human being there to acknowledge it? Or is there only a subjective and relative value that is here expressed? Are all judgments of good

and evil, of despicable and noble men and women, simply advantageous racial illusions, which, as men progress in knowledge of actual reality and become more absolutely wedded to the facts, they will come to see through? What is at least perfectly clear is, that when they are not sophisticating themselves, men and women of Western civilisation believe that they can recognise real objective differences, and unhesitatingly accept this judgment of men and things as objectively true and valid. I can think of no audience, for example, in Western civilisation, at least, that would fail to respond at once to two propositions when set before them by any speaker capable of making the issue plain. First, that it is the duty of every civilised government to exploit to the uttermost for the benefit of the citizens of its country all its available natural resources, its pastures, its arable land, its mines and fisheries, its flocks and herds. In the case of its flocks the exploitation, it would be recognised, must be done with humanity. But done it must be, all the same.

The second proposition that would, I think, be recognised everywhere with a like spontaneous agreement would be that it would be infamous so to exploit men. To do so, all men and women of intelligence and goodwill would say, was not purely imprudent, but *wrong*. It is no doubt true that governments as well as individuals often do exploit human beings, but they are always careful to disguise the fact, and when they are accused of it, there is an immediate uproar. No government that openly professed the exploitation of human beings as one of its principles of action could live

in any decent commonwealth for a month. Most men and women of intelligence and goodwill, moreover, would say without hesitation that the whole progress of mankind depended on an ever-deepening recognition of the worth and sacredness of human beings as such; depended, that is to say, on our discovering and realising what was there in human beings whether we recognised it or not, and so becoming aware of a reality to which before we were blind. The more we recognise the worth and sacredness of human beings the more difficult does it become to explain how they should ever have been produced by mere indifferent Nature, and why Nature which has produced them should so ruthlessly obliterate them all. In other words, the more society advances in moral quality and distinction the sharper must become the riddle of the world. The more society tends to fall backward towards the brutish level the more will the riddle of the world tend to disappear. As I have already said, this problem is what lies behind all the greater philosophies of the world.

The past century has been distinguished beyond all others by the triumphant march of science. Almost within human memory we have seen region after region of new knowledge annexed and occupied by the triumphant armies of science. Never has man's knowledge of the actual empirical world and his power over it grown with greater rapidity. Yet here is the paradox. The more he has known it the greater, apparently, has become his perplexity and distress, and the more acute the riddle of the world. The period that has been so fruitful in scientific achievement has seen a succession of

impeachments of Nature by leaders of our modern *intelligentsia*, that show how little the ancient problem has been advanced by all the advances of science, and how poignant is their distress. I shall make no apology for quoting at some length from these writers, for I believe they are expressing the perplexity of their age and laying bare the real problem.

Let us first of all hear John Stuart Mill, whom Mr Gladstone called "the saint of rationalism":

"In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are Nature's everyday performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognised by human law, Nature does once to every being that lives; and in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow creatures. . . . This Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst, upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequences of the noblest acts, and it might almost be imagined as a punishment for them. She mows down those on whose existence hangs the well-being of a whole people, perhaps the prospects of the human race for generations to come, with as little compunction as those whose death is a relief to themselves or a blessing to those under their noxious influence. Such are Nature's dealings with life. . . . Next to taking life is taking the means by which we live, and Nature does this, too, on the largest scale with the most

callous indifference. A single hurricane destroys the hopes of a season; a flight of locusts or an inundation desolates a district; a trifling chemical change in an edible root starves a million of people. . . . Even the love of order which is thought to be a following of the ways of Nature is in fact a contradiction of them. All which people are accustomed to imprecate as disorder and its consequences is precisely part of Nature's ways. Anarchy and the reign of terror are overmatched in injustice, ruin and death, by a hurricane and a pestilence."<sup>1</sup>

Now let us hear T. H. Huxley. Writing towards the close of his strenuous career in the famous Romanes Lecture the palinode which caused so much dismay in the ranks of his fellow Darwinists of the heroic age, Huxley speaks thus of the cosmic process:

"If there is a generalisation from the facts of human life which has the assent of thoughtful men in every age and country, it is that the violater of ethical rules constantly escapes the punishment which he deserves. . . . Greek and Semite and Indian are agreed upon this subject. The Book of Job is at one with the *Works and Days* and the Buddhist Sutras; the Psalmist and the Preacher of Israel with the Tragic Poets of Greece. What is a more common motive of the ancient tragedy, in fact, than the unfathomable injustice of the nature of things; what is more deeply felt to be true than its presentation of the destruction of the blameless by the work of his own hands, or by the fatal operation of the sin of others? . . . Thus, brought before the tribunal of ethics, the cosmos might well

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill, *Three Essays* (Nature), pp. 28-31.

seem to stand condemned. The conscience of man revolted against the moral indifference of Nature, and the microcosmic atom should have found the illimitable macrocosm guilty. But few, or none, ventured to record that verdict. . . . Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it. It may seem an audacious proposal thus to put the microcosm against the macrocosm and to set man to subdue nature to his higher ends; but I venture to think that the great intellectual difference between the ancient times with which we have been occupied and our day, lies in the solid foundation we have acquired for the hope that such an enterprise may meet with a certain measure of success."

I take next a characteristic passage from William James's *The Will to Believe* (1896). There is less poignancy in this passage with all its vividness, for James did not really believe that Nature said the last word about the universe, and he did believe in God, though, as he has told us in his letters, rather on the witness of others than from his own direct communion with Him :

"Now, I do not hesitate frankly and sincerely to confess to you that this real and genuine discord (namely between the ideals of the spirit and the facts of nature) seems to me to carry with it the inevitable bankruptcy of natural religion, naively and simply taken. There were times when Leibnizes with their heads buried in monstrous wigs could compose Theodicies, and when stall-fed officials of an established church could prove by

the valves in the heart and the round ligament of the hip-joint the existence of a 'Moral and Intelligent Contriver of the World.' But those times are past, and we of the nineteenth century, with our evolutionary theories and our mechanical philosophies, already know nature too impartially and too well to worship unreservedly any God of whose character she can be an adequate expression. Truly, all we know of good and duty proceeds from nature; but none the less so all we know of evil. Visible nature is all plasticity and indifference—a moral multiverse, as one might call it, and not a moral universe. To such a harlot we owe no allegiance; with her as a whole we can establish no moral communion; and we are free in our dealings with her several parts to obey or destroy, and to follow no law but that of prudence in coming to terms with such of her particular features as will help us to our private ends. If there be a divine Spirit of the universe, nature, such as we know her, cannot possibly be its *ultimate word* to man. Either there is no Spirit revealed there; and (as all the higher religions have assumed) what we call visible nature, or *this* world, must be but a veil and surface-show whose full meaning resides in a supplementary unseen or *other* world."

We come now to Bertrand Russell, in whom the note of poignancy returns. In what is by far the most quoted of any passage of his writings he expresses his moral disdain of Nature. After a grim parable of a Divine dramatist who creates Nature and human life as a spectacle for His æsthetic enjoyment, he closes it by saying: "And God smiled, and when he saw that man had become

perfect in renunciation and worship, he sent another sun which crashed into man's sun; and all returned again to nebula. 'Yes,' he murmured, 'it was a good play; I will have it performed again.'" He then continues:

"Such in outline, but even more purposeless, more void of meaning is the world which science presents for our belief. Amid such a world, if anywhere, our ideals henceforward must find a home. That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end which they were achieving, that his origin, his growth, his hopes and his fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms, that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; but that all the labours of all the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruin—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundations of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation be safely built."

Such is man's lot. Now notice the terms in which the writer refers to Nature: "How in such an alien and inhuman world can so powerless a creature as man preserve his aspirations untarnished? A strange mystery it is that Nature, omnipotent but blind, in the revolutions of her

secular hurrying through space, has brought forth a child, subject still to her power, but gifted with sight and knowledge of good, with the capacity of judging all the works of his unthinking mother. In spite of Death the mark and seal of the parental control, man is yet free, during his brief years, to examine, to criticise, to know, and in imagination to create. To him alone in the world with which he is acquainted, this freedom belongs; and in this lies his superiority to the resistless forces that control his outward life. . . . But the world of facts is, after all, not good; and in submitting our judgment to it, there is an element of slavishness from which our thoughts must be purged. For in all times it is well to exalt the dignity of man by freeing him as far as possible from the tyranny of non-human power. When we have realised that Power is largely bad, that man with his knowledge of good and evil is but a helpless atom in a world which has no such knowledge, the choice is again presented to us: Shall we worship force or shall we worship goodness? Shall our god exist and be evil or shall he be recognised as the creation of our own conscience?"<sup>1</sup>

Last of all this lugubrious cento I would take Thomas Hardy. In his recently published *Letters*<sup>2</sup> there occurs the following passage:

"After infinite trying to reconcile a scientific view of life with the emotional and spiritual, so that they may not be interdestructive, I come to the following general principles: Law has produced in man a child who cannot but constantly reproach

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Essays*, "The Free Man's Worship."

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii, p. 192.

its parent for doing much and yet not all, and constantly say to such parent that it would have been better never to have begun doing than to have overdone so greatly. The emotions have no place in a world of defect, and it is a cruel injustice that they should have developed in it. If Law itself had consciousness how the aspect of its creatures would terrify it, fill it with remorse."

Hardy, like Russell and Mill, constantly oscillates in this and in other passages of his writings between speaking of Nature as if it were a blundering and unjust, or even malignant, personal being, and a blind, unconscious system of force, but throughout it is clear that he thinks of man as morally higher than Nature, a creature of a nobler kind than its creator. And the same idea runs through all the other impeachments as well.

These passages are all from writers who are universally recognised as representative of the spirit of the age and, I believe, express its fundamental spiritual problem, the problem which has been set it by its acceptance of the scientific account of things as ultimate, with, as it believes, the dismissal of Theism as a necessary consequence. Obviously it has the old problem of Theism, the existence of evil, still on its hands, though it appears no longer as the problem of evil, but as the riddle of the world. It is not God now who is mysterious, it is Nature, Nature expounded to us with the terrible clarity of science. Clear it may be in the parts, for we have text-books of admirable lucidity on all the particular sciences. But when we put the parts together and try to make a whole of them is the result such as can permanently hold the mind of man?

As we have seen, all these writers oscillate between describing Nature as morally evil and morally indifferent. Further, they all imply that man is objectively a nobler being than Nature. That is to say, they do not think good and evil, right and wrong, are merely human illusions. I submit that these two positions are in fundamental discord, and that one of them must give way to and be transformed by the other. You cannot have an absolute standard of right and wrong emanating from a morally evil or indifferent universe. I shall not at this stage argue the point, but shall content myself with saying that we have here a position that is intellectually quite untenable. Difficulties there may be in the solution given by the Christian revelation, but nothing comparable with this.

Meantime let it be said that if we concede the principle which is assumed by all these writers, that the scientific account of the universe is the final account, then I believe that their conclusion is irrefutable. Human life is fundamentally a tragedy. These writers have had the courage to face the facts, and in time the simple pressure of these facts will force all our literature and art and social and political aspirations down to their own level of pessimism.

Consider what is the human situation. The life of a nation which has lost its freedom and is in subjection to an alien power is not an enviable one, even if that subjugating power is of a higher type of civilisation than its own. In such a case it may in the long run be better for it to be under the yoke until it is ready for freedom, but meantime all generous minds sympathise with it in its dis-

satisfaction under that foreign sway. But if the lot of a subjugated people under a more advanced power be hard, what shall we say of a higher civilisation enslaved by a lower power? Surely that is a kind of earthly hell. In such a pitiable condition of affairs rebellion is the highest virtue and will enlist on its side the finest and bravest spirits. They are its true heroes and prophets. Yet their rebellion must be futile if the subjugating power is irresistible. Who can call such a condition of affairs anything but irremediable tragedy? Yet if the scientific account of things is held to be the last word such, beyond question, is the permanent human situation. But is this the final answer? Does it take reasonable account of all the realities?

This, I repeat, is the real problem before human thought to-day. The substance of it is as old as mankind, and, as we shall see later, the Christian faith had and has its own way of dealing with it. In the minds of many that solution has been put aside in the belief that science could furnish a better explanation. But that explanation has resulted in what seems at last to be very like a *reductio ad absurdum*. Having now stated the issue we have to explore it more thoroughly, and to consider whether we cannot reach a point of view which will enable us to do full justice to all the facts which constitute the problem.