

The Soul As It Is and How to Deal With It

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IN Tolstoy's novels, *The Cossacks*, there is a scene where a man swimming is shot dead and drifts to the shore, while his slayer swims over the flooded river to get him and crouches down exhausted at his side. There the two lie, looking almost the same. But one is full of a turmoil of desires and aspirations, mingled feelings of pride and misery; and the other is dead. And the only sign of difference is a light steam rising from the body of the living man.

So small a sign, and yet all the difference that can be!

A distinguished anthropologist, Dr Elliot Smith, has suggested to us the kind of speculation that would go on in the mind of a primitive man if he found a dead body preserved, as it might be, for instance, in the dry Egyptian sand — the phenomenon that led up to the practice of embalment. What is wrong with that body in the sand? What is it that it lacks? It does not breathe. There is no breath in it; that is the first thing that strikes our Egyptian; so he gives it breath as best he can, burning incense under its nostrils, so that the breath may enter in, warm like the breath of the living, and fragrant to correct the smell of the corpse. Again, it is all dry, there is no blood in it; and our Egyptian knows that the blood is the life, because he has seen wounded men die as their blood ebbed away. So he pours libations of blood into the grave, that the dead may get their life again. Some of us will remember the weird passage in *Odyssey*, xi, where Odysseus sees the ghosts of the departed, like puffs of wind made visible, as it were; *psuche kai eidolon*, "a breath and an image," and no more; with no life nor power of thought till they have drunk the blood that he has poured out for them.

If you start thus from the dead body, it seems as if the life or soul lay in some breath or spirit that has departed. Most of our words for the soul show that origin. The word "soul" itself is of doubtful derivation; but "ghost" means "breath," "spirit" means breath. In Latin *spiritus* and *animus* and *anima* are simply breath or wind; in Greek *psuche* is wind, and *pneuma* breath, and *thumos* smoke or vapour. All the words are metaphors; naturally and inevitably so. For whenever mankind notices a new fact and wants to find a name for it, he must needs search about for something like it among the facts he already knows and has names for. The new fact does not come with a name ready written upon it.

The word "life," oddly enough, means "body". I think that comes from another line of thought, in which mankind, when trying to express the thing we call soul or life, started not from the dead body but from a dream-image or phantom. A dream-image, a shape seen in hallucination, a reflection in water or a looking-glass: what is wrong with them, and how are they lacking in the life of the living? Why, they are like those ghosts in Homer. There is "a breath and an image," but no heart or blood or solidity. They are not real. If they could drink of blood and grow solid, if they could get themselves a body, that would be

life.

Another mode of thought which started from the dream-image conceived that that image itself was the soul or life; that it moved out of the body in sleep, and sometimes in waking time; moved out and drifted far away at its will and pleasure, with always the possible danger of losing its way and not being able to return to the body. That mode of thought explains the curious pictures in ancient times of the soul as a little human being, sometimes with wings and sometimes without, who lives inside the ordinary body and keeps it alive. There is a common phrase in Homer describing death: "the life left the bones." The word for life there is *thumos*, the word that means smoke or vapour; but the old vase-paintings which depict that kind of death show not a smoke but a beautiful little winged human figure springing out from the body as it falls, and rising heavenward.

II

What does all this amount to? What conclusion can we draw from these stumbling efforts of instinctive man to describe or name or depict this thing within us, which no man has ever seen or heard or touched, and yet which makes the greatest of all differences, the difference between the living and the dead?

I think we can conclude just thus much, that there is something really there, and that man's powers of thought and language trained as they are on the experience of the material world, have been unable to define or comprehend it. Our modern phraseology is practically all derived from the Greeks, and the Greeks went on using metaphors to the end. If the indescribable thing was not a breath or a wind, then it was a spark of fire; but not ordinary fire, which destroys and perishes; rather the celestial fire of which the stars are made, the stars which neither consume nor are consumed. Or is it a fragment, as it were, of God Himself prisoned in our earthly material, imperfect because fragmentary, yet in some way akin to the Most High? No need to trouble with further attempts at such description; the main result that remains from these broken speculations, on which the world has been living ever since, is the profound conviction of Greek philosophy that man, in some unexplained way consists of two parts, of which one is living and one dead. "What art thou?" said the Emperor Marcus Aurelius to himself. "*A little soul carrying a corpse.*"

Plato, the earliest author who discusses and supports with argument the great doctrine that the soul is immortal — that the soul is life, and therefore cannot die — is fond of metaphors about the soul. He is unconsciously founding a new science, that "science of the soul" which we call psychology. His first division of the soul is a very fruitful and interesting one. How is it that the soul shows itself in action? In other words, how is it that a man shows he is really alive? There are three ways, says Plato, desire and anger and reason; or —since it is hard to get words simple and large enough to express the Greek, by lusting, fighting and thinking. There are things it craves for, and things it hates and rejects; but above the craving and rejecting there is a power of judging, of distinguishing between good and evil and shaping its own course. This power, which he calls reason and we moderns mostly call "will," is the very soul itself. The lusting and fighting, though they may serve the soul, and are forms of life, are mere functions of the live body. A man's soul, he says in another fine passage, is like a charioteer upon a chariot with two horses. One of the horses is sluggish, lazy, tending always downward; the other fierce, but of generous nature and full of courage; and the man who drives them has to master the two of them, keep them abreast, and above all choose for himself the path he means them to take. The charioteer is the real soul.

“*A little soul carrying a corpse*”: what is there wrong about that description, or rather, what would be wrong with it if it were ever meant to be literally and exactly true? It is that it separates the body and soul too sharply. That is the mistake in all these primitive conceptions with which we have been dealing, and consequently in a great deal of our own current language, which of course is descended, as all language is, from the philosophy of earlier times. If you have a lump of hot iron, the thought of primitive man will probably regard it as made of two separate things, heat and a lump of iron. Just as we have certain pictures by savages — and I believe also by children — in which an angry man is shown by drawing first a man, and second his anger, seated inside him or sticking out of his head. Just as in primitive poetry, a man constantly holds conversations with his own heart or his own thought, as if it was a separate thing. It was another Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who cleared that matter up. You meet angry men, not first anger and then men; you meet live persons, not first a life or soul and then a body which it is carrying about. But with that passing caution against possible misunderstanding we shall find it simpler to use the ordinary language, and speak as if the body and the breath or soul inside it were entirely different things.

“*A little soul carrying a corpse*”: the modern writer who has made that old Stoic phrase most clear to the average reader is, I think, M Bergson. To him man consists of a body which is so much matter, governed by the law of gravitation and all the other laws of dead matter, governed also by the laws of biology or animate matter; and a soul or will — Plato’s charioteer — which is free and moves of itself. How the will can be free, of course, is one of those problems which no one can satisfactorily explain. It seems impossible to understand how it can be free; yet almost more impossible to imagine that it is not free. It is an old problem, perhaps an eternal one. But M. Bergson’s special contribution to it, if I understand him aright, is this.

The body is of course subject to mechanical and biological law. Throw it up in the air, it will fall down again. Hit it hard enough, it will break. Starve it, and it will suffer and die. And the exact strain necessary in each case can, within limits, be calculated. Furthermore, for much the greater part of life the will — that is, the man himself — acts automatically, like a machine. He is given bad coffee for breakfast, and he gets cross. He sees his omnibus just going, and he runs. He sees in one advertisement that X’s boot polish is the best, and on another that Y’s boot polish is the best, and he accepts both statements. He does not criticise or assert himself. He follows steadily the line of least resistance. The charioteer is asleep, and the two horses jog along without waking him.

But, says M Bergson, you will sometimes find that when you expect him to follow the line of least resistance he just does not. The charioteer awakes. He can resist, he can choose; he is after all a live and free thing in the midst of a dead world, capable of acting against the pressure of matter, against pain, and against his own desires.

Whether this doctrine is exactly true or not, I do not pretend to judge; but it certainly is fruitful. It is just what one feels in one’s ordinary experience: a constant tendency to behave like dead matter, to fall into habits, to become by slow degrees — as the ancients put it — “a chained slave”. You are chained by your own standard of comfort; by your conception of what is necessary for you; by your meal-times and the conventions you live among; by the things that you always say or always do or always have. Bergson has for middle-aged men added a new terror to life. He makes you watch yourself becoming mechanical; moving in conformity to outside stimulus; growing more and more dependent on your surroundings — as

if the little soul carrying the corpse had found it too heavy and was letting it lie, or perhaps, roll while the soul itself fell half asleep. Fortunately from time to time it wakes, and when it does wake its strength is amazing. A friend of mine wrote to me from amid the heaviest fighting on the Somme, describing the strange impression he received from that awful experience of the utter difference between man's soul and body; the body is so weak and frail a stuff, so easily broken, scattered, torn to rags, or trodden indistinguishably into mire; and the soul so resolute, so untouched and unconquerable.

III

Untouched and unconquerable: those, I think, were my friend's words, and that was the impression which he received. There German shells and bombs and bullets tore men's bodies to pieces without any trouble, but they could not touch the men's souls or change their will. I do not wonder that he received that impression. Yet, is the impression absolutely true? Can we really, without qualification, believe the common, comfortable doctrine that persecution always fails, that the blood of martyrs is always the seed of the Church, that the soul is really unconquerable? The average man does not believe it, much less the ordinary tyrant. In every country he treats such doctrines as mere sentiment, and is perfectly confident that if you give him a free hand with rifle, bayonet, and cat-o'-nine-tails he can stamp out any inconvenient doctrine which puts its trust in nothing more substantial than the soul of man. And I fear the tyrant is not always wrong. Why are there no Protestants in Spain? Not because of the persuasiveness of Spanish theology, but because the Spanish Inquisition did its work. Why are there no descendants of the Albigenses in France? Because they were massacred.

No, we must not delude ourselves into believing that the path of the human soul or conscience when protesting against the world is a safe path, or a path that must in the end lead to victory. It is neither. It leads for certain through suffering and humiliation; and it may also, it may ultimately, end in defeat. There is no certainty for the protesting soul anywhere; except the certainty of a great uncertainty, of a great battle of unknown issue, in which the odds are by no means as they appear. The big battalions of the world on one side, and the one little soul or group of souls on the other — they are not so unevenly matched after all. The little soul starts indeed with one great handicap against it — it has first to carry its own corpse, and then fight. But if it can do that, if it can get comparatively free from that burden and those entangling chains, get rid of desire and ambition, and hatred and even anger, and think of nothing but what it wills as right, then it is, I will not say unconquerable, but one of the most formidable fighting forces that exist upon this earth.

The doctrine that the persecutor is always defeated and the martyr always triumphant is, I think, little more than mere comfort-seeking, a bye-form of the common vulgar worship of success. We can give great strings of names belonging to the martyrs who were successful, who, whether living or dead, eventually won their causes, and are honoured with books and statues by a grateful posterity. But what of the martyrs who have failed — who beat against iron bars, and suffered and were conquered, who appealed from unjust judges and found no listeners, who died deserted and disapproved by their own people, and have left behind them no name or memorial? How many Belgians, and Serbs, and Poles, how many brave followers of Liebknecht in Germany itself, have been murdered in silence for obeying their consciences, and their memory perhaps blasted by a false official statement, so that even their example does not live? In ancient Athens there was, beside the ordinary altars of worship, an altar to the Unknown God. There ought to be in our hearts, whenever we think with worship and gratitude of the great men who have been deliverers or helpers of the human race, an altar to the unknown martyrs who

have suffered for the right and failed.

IV

But let us stop a moment. When the soul of man thus stands up against the world, is it necessarily always in the right? Because a man holds a belief so firmly that he will submit to prison and death rather than forswear it, does it follow that the belief is true? Obviously not in the least. In every great moral conflict of history you have had martyrs on both sides. Christians and Pagans, Arians and Trinitarians, Catholics and Protestants, have killed each other and died themselves for their respective beliefs, and more particularly for those particular parts of them which most directly contradicted the beliefs of the other side. Martyrs are not always right. Indeed, I am not sure that if you took the whole faith for which a particular martyr suffers — the whole mass of passionate beliefs by which he is really at the time actuated — I am not sure you would not find that martyrs were almost always considerably wrong. A man does not usually reach the point where he is willing to die for a cause without getting his passions strongly interwoven with his beliefs; and when a belief is mixed with passion, as we all know, it is almost certain to deviate from truth. If you ever wish, as we all sometimes do, to punish someone who differs from you, and to go on punishing him till he agrees with you, it is no good arguing that your victim is not a martyr because he is wrong or even wicked in his beliefs; a great many martyrs have been wrong, and their persecutors have always thought them both wrong and wicked. It is still more irrelevant to condemn the martyr for being inconsistent: for two reasons. First, there is no person known to history, neither priest nor philosopher, nor statesman, nor even mathematician, who has yet succeeded in building a complete theory of life which has no inconsistencies in it. The best we can do is to be consistent in some little corner of life, or in dealing with some immediate practical problem. And further, it would be absurd to say that a man must not take any step until he had made sure that the whole of his life was consistent with it. If a man wants to behave in some respect better than he has behaved before, it is practically certain that the new and better part of his life will not be consistent with all the other parts of it which he is not attending to. To reproach such a man for inconsistency is equivalent to asking him to remain always at the lowest level of which he is capable — though as a matter of fact he would not attain consistency even then.

You must not be surprised then at a martyr being wrong, and you must not dream of expecting him to be in all of his beliefs consistent.

What can you expect of him, then? I think all you can expect is sincerity of belief and purity of motive. If he is a fool, if he is prejudiced, if he is muddle-headed, if he is misled, if he is exasperating, even if he has certain grave faults of character in other respects, he can still be a martyr, and be entitled to a martyr's reward. But if he is insincere, if he is lying; if, when professing to suffer for the right and the truth, he is really seeking his own advantage, and saying things which he does not believe, then he is done for; there is nothing more to be said about him; he is not a martyr, but a mere ordinary humbug. And no doubt one of the troubles of a Government which has to deal with people who of set purpose and principle defy a particular law, is to make out which are martyrs and which humbugs. And this is a matter of more consequence than may at first appear. For it is a very dangerous thing to allow people by mere cunning and obstinacy and self-advertisement in breaking the law to rise into public fame and to undermine the fabric of mutual agreement which holds society together; a nation in which any well-organised rebels could safely defy the law would soon almost cease to be a free nation. And, on the other hand, a nation in which the Government seems to be forcing men into sin against their conscience, so that good people

instinctively respect the prisoner and condemn the judge, has already ceased to be a free nation. You remember the old worlds of Gamaliel: "Lest haply ye be found to be fighting against God." It is a serious thing for any organ of material power to be found fighting against the human soul.

V

Let me take a present-day instance of this battle between a soul and a Government, a very curious instance, because it is almost impossible without more knowledge than most people in England possess to say who was wrong and who right.

About the year 1889 a young Indian student, called Mohandar Karamchand Gandhi, came to England to study law. He was rich and clever, of a cultivated family, gentle and modest in his manner. He dressed and behaved like other people. There was nothing particular about him to show that he had already taken a Jain vow to abstain from wine, from flesh, and from sexual intercourse. He took his degrees and became a successful lawyer in Bombay, but he cared more for religion than law. Gradually his asceticism increased. He gave away all his money to good causes except the meagrest allowance. He took vows of poverty. He ceased to practise at the law because his religion — a mysticism which seems to be as closely related to Christianity as it is to any traditional Indian religion — forbade him to take part in a system which tried to do right by violence. When I met him in England, in 1914, he ate, I believe, only rice, and drank only water, and slept on the floor; and his wife who seemed to be his companion in everything, lived in the same way. His conversation was that of a cultivated and well-read man with a certain indefinable suggestion of saintliness. His patriotism, which is combined with an enthusiastic support of England against Germany, is interwoven with his religion, and aims at the moral regeneration of India on the lines of Indian thought, with no barriers between one Indian and another, and to the exclusion as far as possible of the influence of the West, with its industrial slavery, its material civilisation, its money-worship and its wars. (I am merely stating this view, of course, not either criticising it or suggesting that it is right.)

Oriental peoples, perhaps owing to causes connected with their form of civilisation, are apt to be enormously influenced by great saintliness of character when they see it. Like all great masses of ignorant people, however, they need some very plain and simple test to assure them that their hero is really a saint and not a humbug, and the test they habitually apply is that of self-denial. Take vows of poverty, live on rice and water, and they will listen to your preaching, as several of our missionaries have found; come to them eating and drinking and dressed in expensive European clothes — and they feel differently. It is far from a perfect test, but there is something in it. At any rate I am told that Gandhi's influence in India is now enormous, almost equal to that of his friend the late Mr Gokhale.

And now for the battle. In South Africa there are some 150,000 Indians, chiefly in Natal; and the South African Government, feeling that the colour question in its territories was quite sufficiently difficult already, determined to prevent the immigration of any more Indians, and if possible to expel those who were already there. This last could not be done. It violated a treaty; it was opposed by Natal, where much of the industry depended on Indian labour; and it was objected to by the Indian Government and the Home Government. Then began a long struggle. The whites of South Africa determined to make life in South Africa undesirable, if not for all Indians, at least for all Indians above the coolie class. Indians were specially taxed, were made to register in a degrading way; they were classed with Negroes, their thumb-

prints were taken by the police as if they were criminals. If, owing to the scruples of the Government, the law was in any case too lenient, patriotic mobs undertook to remedy the defect. Quite early in the struggle the Indians in South Africa asked Mr Gandhi to come and help them. He came as a barrister in 1893; he was forbidden to plead. He proved his right to plead; he won his case against the Asiatic Exclusion Act on grounds of constitutional law, and returned to India. The relief which the Indians had expected was not realised. Gandhi came again in 1895. He was mobbed and nearly killed in Durban. I will not tell in detail how he settled down eventually in South Africa as a leader and counsellor to his people; how he founded a settlement in the country outside Durban, where the workers should live directly on the land, and all be bound by a vow of poverty. For many years he was engaged in constant passive resistance to the Government and constant efforts to raise and ennoble the inward life of the Indian Community. But he was unlike other strikers or resisters in this: that mostly the resister takes advantage of any difficulty of the Government in order to press his claim the harder. Gandhi, when the Government was in any difficulty that he thought serious, always relaxed his resistance and offered his help. In 1899 came the Boer war; Gandhi immediately organised an Indian Red Cross unit. There was a popular movement for refusing it and treating it as seditious. But it was needed. The soldiers wanted it. And it served through the war, and was mentioned in despatches, and thanked publicly for its skilful work and courage under fire. In 1904 there was an outbreak of plague in Johannesburg, and Gandhi had a private hospital opened before the public authorities had begun to act. In 1906 there was a Native rebellion in Natal: Gandhi raised and personally led a corps of stretcher-bearers, whose work seems to have proved particularly dangerous and painful. Gandhi was thanked by the Governor of Natal — and shortly afterwards thrown into jail in Johannesburg. Lastly, in 1913, when he was being repeatedly imprisoned, among criminals of the lowest class, and his followers were in jail to the number of 2,500, in the very midst of the general strike of Indians in the Transvaal and Natal there occurred the sudden and dangerous railway strike which endangered for the time the very existence of organised society in South Africa. From the ordinary agitator's point of view the game was in Gandhi's hands. He had only to strike his hardest. Instead he gave orders for his people to resume work till the government should be safe again. I cannot say how often he was imprisoned, how often mobbed and assaulted, or what pains were taken to mortify and humiliate him in public. But by 1913 the Indian case had been taken up by Lord Hardinge and the Government of India. An Imperial Commission reported in his favour on most of the points at issue, and an Act was passed according to the Commission's recommendations, entitled the Indian Relief Act.

My sketch is very imperfect; but the story forms an extraordinary illustration of a contest which was won, or practically won, by a policy of doing no wrong, committing no violence, but simply enduring all the punishment the other side could inflict until they became weary and ashamed of punishing. A battle of the unaided human soul against overwhelming material force, and it ends by the units of material force gradually deserting their own banners and coming round to the side of the soul!

Persons in power should be very careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy — because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase upon his soul.

VI

In Gandhi's case the solution of the strife between him and the Government was particularly difficult,

because he was not content to be let alone. He thought it his duty, God helping him, to compel a Government backed by the vast majority of the nation to change their policy. And no Government could yield, or ought to yield, to such coercion. The best it could do was probably somewhere near that which, by the advice of General Smuts, it eventually did propose to do: to purge its policy as far as possible of all elements which were not essential to its own conviction and which did particular violence to the convictions of others.

In the next case I wish to lay before you the issue is much simpler. It is the case of the persecution of an Englishman of saintly life, Stephen Hobhouse. I say deliberately of saintly life, and I say no more; not for a moment that his views are right, or his theory of life socially convenient, or his example one that should be followed. As we have noticed before, it often happens that the saints are wrong and the children of this world right; but they are not often right when they begin treating the saints as criminals.

Stephen Hobhouse began life as the son of rich parents; he was a scholar at Eton, afterwards a scholar of Balliol; he won First Class Honours in Moderations, and Second Class Honours in Greats, after which he obtained a post on the Board of Education. He was rich and well connected; he was clever and successful, and had every prospect of a brilliant career. But from early life he had a conscience more exacting than the consciences of most of us. He was religious with a touch of mysticism. He wanted to follow Christ. He eventually formulated the goal at which he aimed as "self-identification with the oppressed". To help the poor and suffering was not enough; he must be one with the poor and suffering. He could not do this as a rich man. So he began renouncing his position as heir to his father's estate, and stripping himself of the prospect of inherited wealth. He had, I think, already joined the Quakers, and was a regular speaker in their meeting-house. (They have no ordained ministers.) He went with his wife, who shares his religion, to live in a workman's flat in Hoxton, and the two spent all their time in social work — that is, in ministering to the poor and in the effort towards "self-identification with the oppressed". Their life, I need hardly say, was abstemious to the point of asceticism. Let me give one small illustration.

A friend of mine calling on Mrs Stephen Hobhouse the other day noticed a clothes-line hanging across the room and asked some questions about it. It appeared that when they first moved into the flat, living of course without a servant, Mrs Hobhouse sent her washing out to a laundry. The work of suddenly living without a servant was for two delicate people hard enough. But they noticed that the families living round them did not send their washing out; they did it at home in the living room. "Self-identification with the oppressed" pointed the road clearly, and they tied the clothesline across the living room and did the washing at home.

Stephen Hobhouse had been a Quaker, and a Quaker of the strictest sort, for ten years before 1914. He had had experience of a previous war; for during the war in the Balkans he has resigned his post in the Board of Education and gone to Constantinople to nurse the refugees of various nations who were lying, largely untended, in the mosques, particularly in the mosque of St Sophia. Of his work there I know only by hearsay, but the stories of it sound like stories of St Francis. Creeds and religious organisations clash against one another; but true saintliness, the quality of the soul that has really mastered the corpse it carries, is much the same in all religions, and breaks the barriers of creeds. Stephen's interpreter, a pious Moslem, who was accustomed probably to think of all Christians as dogs, felt the spirit that radiated from this Christian, and the two used to pray together to the same God.

The present war came and was followed by conscription, embodied in an Act which gave complete exemption to those who on conscientious grounds, however mistaken, refused to take part in slaying their fellow-men. If conscription was necessary, as I am inclined to think it was, that was a generous Act, and one worthy of the traditions of English tolerance. It was well known that Stephen Hobhouse, as a strict Quaker, considered it a sin to partake in war, and there was not the smallest glimmer of a doubt to be cast on the sincerity of his objection.

By an act of deliberate and purposeful injustice his tribunal disallowed his conscientious objection and sent him to the army. He did not appeal against the sentence, because many of his friends and fellow Quakers were already being sent to prison, and "self-identification with the oppressed" forbade his deserting them. He refused to obey military orders. He was court-martialled and sentenced to various military punishments, culminating in 112 days' hard labour. When that was over he was taken out and the order repeated; of course he still disobeyed, and is now undergoing two years' hard labour. The renewed sentences bring with them conditions more severe than those of continuous penal servitude.

And one point more. Every one interested in prison reform knows that one of the most severe strains upon human nature involved in prison life is the eternal silence — one of the most severe and, many people hold, the most corrupting and injurious to mind and character next to solitary confinement itself. In every prison the rule of silence is apt to be somehow evaded. It is a thing which human nature in the long run will not bear, and by hook or by crook, by sundry unedifying artifices, the prisoners do manage to snatch a few words of conversation with one another from day to day. Stephen Hobhouse at first did talk by these secret methods, then he decided that it was wrong. He writes to his wife: "The very night of thy last visit I was smitten with a sense of shame for the habits of concealment verging on deception which this life seems to force on all of us. For a fortnight I wrestled day and night with this feeling . . . It seemed so hard to give up the only outward ways of expressing love." He confessed to the governor that he had been breaking the rule of silence, and refused to promise to obey it in the future. And the result is that in order to make sure he does not break that rule, and at the same time to avoid the constant repetition of special punishments, this man is in solitary confinement for the indefinite future.

I believe in this case that the Government has broken the law. I am certain that the original sentence of the tribunal was wrong. But for the moment I am dealing with another aspect of this case. Apart from the rightness or wrongness of the prisoner's views about war, apart from the technical legality or illegality of the Government's action, you have here a deliberate conflict between the massed power of Government and the soul of one righteous man. There are about a thousand men in the same position.

I do not know who will win. I make no prophecy. It is quite easy for a huge engine like the War Office to crush any one man's body, to destroy his reason by perpetual solitude, or put an end to his life. But I do not think that a Government which sets out to prosecute its saints is a wise or a generous Government; I do not think a nation which cannot live in peace with its saints is a very healthy or high-minded nation.

VII

I have not attempted to answer the question with which we started, to define what the soul is or what life is, or where the difference comes between the mere physical life that makes a man move his limbs and

desire his food, and the soul itself or central guiding principle, which the ancients called reason and the moderns think of as will. The question is perhaps still beyond human powers of analysis. I have only tried to consider with the help of examples the actual working of the soul in shaping a man's life, and sometimes bringing him into conflict, not only with his own apparent interest, but with the general stream of will in the society around him. And I have tried, first, to suggest that a wise ruler will be very circumspect, a conscientious ruler will be very tender, before challenging the lowliest of human souls to battle on the soul's own ground, or setting about the task of compelling the humblest of his subjects by torment and violence to do that which he definitely believes to be wrong. So much for action between man and man. And secondly, within our own hearts, I would say that the main lesson to each man of us is to see that his own soul does not die. It will sometimes stagger under the weight of the corpse it carries; that is inevitable. Only let it not fall into the power of the corpse. The weight of dead matter seems, at times like the present, to increase upon us. Our whole being is dulled. We do more and more things because we are driven, fewer and fewer because we choose them and love them; we cease even to suffer as we should suffer, or to pity as we should pity. In our own great war we tend to forget what we ourselves owe to the higher causes for which our friends have died as martyrs, to forget because the deaths are by now so common and the martyrdom has lasted so long. We tend to shrink from the higher emotions because they are difficult, to sink into the round of lower and more commonplace emotions because they make less disturbance in our daily business. The power of death is abroad over the world. It has taken lives innumerable, and better lives than ours. Let those of us whose bodily life is still spared make sure that the soul within us shall not die.