

credere, ac specimen securitatis antigene tali sumere experimento." Our insensibility before the composition of the body, seems to natural reason a proof of a like state after dissolution.—Were our horrors of annihilation an original passion, not the effect of our general love of happiness, it would rather prove the mortality of the soul. For as nature does nothing in vain, she would never give us a horror against an impossible event. She may give us a horror against an unavoidable event, provided our endeavours, as in the present case, may often remove it to some distance. Death is in the end unavoidable; yet the human species could not be preserved had not nature inspired us with an aversion towards it. All doctrines are to be suspected which are favoured by our passions, and the hopes and fears which gave rise to this doctrine are very obvious.

'Tis an infinite advantage in every controversy to defend the negative. If the question be out of the common experienced course of nature, this circumstance is almost if not altogether decisive. By what arguments or analogies can we prove any state of existence, which no one ever saw, and which no way resembles any that ever was seen? Who will repose such trust in any pretended philosophy as to admit upon its testimony the reality of so marvellous a scene? Some new species of logic is requisite for that purpose, and some new faculties of the mind, that may enable us to comprehend that logic.

Nothing could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations which mankind have to divine revelation, since we find that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON EARTHLY EXISTENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN AN ETERNAL LIFE.¹

BY HELMUTH VON MOLTKE.

[In connection with a discussion of thoughts on man's destiny after life, it will be interesting to our readers to see what a famous German general thought about death. Moltke, a man characterized as the *Schlachtendenker*, pondered on the religious problems of life and death more than we may have expected, and we see that the problem moved him deeply. Off and on throughout his life he worked at notes for a little sketch which is commonly known as his *Trostgedanken*, and there are extant no less than three distinct but very similar manuscripts of it written in his own hand. All three have been published in his collected works (Berlin: Mittler & Son, Vol. I) thus enabling

¹ Translated by Lydia G. Robinson.

readers to compare them. As a basis of our translation we utilize the last one, dated at Creisau in October 1890, which incorporates all important passages of the first two. It has been more worked up and polished than they but contains no note that does not accord with the former conceptions.

Moltke is a conservative thinker, but after all a thinker, and it is strange to observe how his preference for rationalism makes him linger with sympathy on the fate of the Arian sect, and when he justifies his confidence in a conscious life he adds: "Whether this is to be desired is another question." Considering his arguments we might say that they are equally applicable to a broader interpretation in conceiving man not as an isolated individual but as a link in a chain where we must look upon the whole evolution of life on earth as a unity. But we do not mean either to interpret or criticize the thoughts of a great man; we wish simply to present his views and let him speak for himself.—EDITOR.]

MAN feels that he is a completed whole, isolated from the rest of the world, and externally separated from it by the corporeal envelopment which serves here on earth as the dwelling of the soul.

Nevertheless I would fain recognize functions in this whole which, though closely united with the soul and dominated by it, have still an independent existence.

From the obscurity of our origin the body is developed first of all. Its nature works indefatigably in the growth of the child, and in him prepares the dwelling for higher organs. The body reaches the summit of its perfection before half of its existence is past and from the surplus of its power it awakens new life; from that time on decline and nothing more, except the painful effort to preserve its own continuance.

For perhaps one-third of our existence during sleep the body receives no commands from its mistress and yet the heart beats on without interruption, the constituents undergo chemical change and the breathing process is performed—all without our will.

The activity of the servant, however, can show resistance even against this, for instance when a cramp painfully contracts our muscles. But the pain is the call for help and assistance when the living bodily function has lost control over lifeless matter which we experience as illness of our vassal.

After all we must recognize the body, to be sure, as one part of our being, but yet as something apart from ourselves.

At least, is the soul, the particular ego, a single inseparable whole?

By a slow unfolding, reason rises to constantly greater perfection clear up to old age, as long as the body does not forsake it. Capacity for judgment grows with the fulness of life's experience,

but of course memory, that handmaid of thought, vanishes earlier, or rather loses the ability to take up anything new. Strange enough is this ability to store away everything which has become our own since earliest youth—everything we have learned or experienced—into a thousand drawers which open to the spirit at a moment's notice!

It cannot be denied that old age often seems dull of wit, but I cannot believe in an actual obscuration of reason, for it is a bright beam of the divine and even in insanity the error is only external. Yet a deaf man who strikes notes that are quite correct on an instrument entirely out of tune must himself be conscious of the correct chord while all around him hear only confused discords.

Reason is supreme sovereign; it recognizes no authority above it. No superior force, not even we ourselves, can compel it to accept as wrong what it has recognized to be true.

E pur si muove!

The thinking soul strays through boundless distances of shining stars; it casts the plummet out into the unfathomable depths of the smallest life; nowhere does it find limits, but everywhere law, the direct expression of divine thought.

A stone falls upon Sirius in accord with the same law of gravitation as upon the earth; the distance between the planets and the chemical composition of the elements are based upon arithmetical relations, and everywhere the same causes yield the same effects. Nowhere is there caprice in nature, everywhere law.

To be sure reason cannot discover the origin of things, but it never contradicts the law which directs everything. Reason and natural law are conformable; they must have the same origin.

Even if the imperfection of all creation leads reason on a path which deviates from the truth, nevertheless truth is its only goal.

So of course reason is often in contradiction to many venerable traditions. It struggles against miracle, "the favorite child of faith"; it cannot be persuaded that omnipotence could have needed to abrogate in individual cases the laws of nature which hold eternally, in order to attain its purpose. Yet the doubts that arise are not against religion but only against the form in which it is presented to us.

Christianity has elevated the world from barbarism to civilization. In a century of endeavor it has abolished slavery, ennobled labor, emancipated woman, and directed the glance toward eternity. But was it the doctrine of faith, the dogma, which brought this blessing? One can inform oneself about everything except those

matters to which human capacity for thought cannot reach and it is over just such concepts that men have contended for eighteen centuries, have desolated the world from the time of the extermination of the Arians through disturbances like the Thirty Years' War down to the stake-burnings of the inquisition; and what is the end of all these wars? The same divided opinion as before!

We may accept the creeds as one accepts the assurance of a true friend without putting it to the proof, but the kernel of all religions is the system of morality they teach, of which the Christian is the purest and most exhaustive.

And yet people speak of a dry morality with a shrug of the shoulders, and regard the form in which it is given as the main thing. I am afraid that the zealous priest in the pulpit who persuades where he cannot convince, preaches Christians out of the churches.

In general ought not every pious prayer, whether addressed to Buddha or Allah or Yahveh, reach the same God beside whom there is none other? The mother hears her child's request in whatever language he babbles her name.

Reason does not contradict morality at any point; in the final account the good is the reasonable, but to act according to it does not rest with reason. Here it is the controlling soul which decides, the soul of sentiment, our willing and doing. To reason alone and not to its two vassals God has given the two-edged sword of free will, that gift which according to scripture leads to bliss or damnation.

But a safe counsellor is also given us. Independent of us he receives his authority from God himself. Conscience is the incorruptible and infallible judge that pronounces sentence at every moment when we will listen and whose voice finally reaches even the one who pays no heed to it, no matter how greatly he strives against it.

The laws which human society has made for itself bring only acts before its judgment seat, not thoughts and sentiments. Even the various religions make different demands on different peoples. They demand here the sacred observance of Sunday but in other places of Saturday or Friday. One religion permits enjoyments which another forbids. Moreover there is always a wide space between what is allowed and what is forbidden, and here conscience raises its voice with delicacy of feeling. It tells us that *every* day ought to be consecrated to the Lord, that even the lawful tribute levied by oppression is unjust; in short, it preaches that morality

which is within the breast alike of Christians and Jews, of pagans and savages. For even in the most uncivilized peoples whom Christianity has not enlightened the fundamental ideas of good and evil are consistent. Even they recognize breach of faith and falsehood, treachery and ingratitude as evil; even to them the bond between parents, children and relatives is a sacred one.

It is hard to believe in the universal depravity of the human race, for however it may be obscured by crudeness and illusion yet in every human breast the germ of good reposes, the sense of what is noble and beautiful, and conscience has its dwelling there, pointing out the right path. Is there any more convincing proof of the existence of God than this feeling for right and wrong which is common to all, than the consistency of *one* law dominating the moral world as well as the physical; except that nature follows this law unconditionally whereas man because he is free has been given the possibility to violate it.

Body and reason serve the governing soul, but they also make their own independent demands; both are determining factors, and so man's life becomes a constant battle with himself. If the voice of conscience does not always determine the decision of the soul oppressed in so many directions by external and internal conflict, we must still hope that the Lord who created us imperfect will not demand perfection of us.

For how many things rush upon us in our activities, how different are original natural dispositions, how unequal are education and position in life! It is easy for fortune's favorite to keep to the right path almost without meeting temptation—at least not to crime; on the other hand it is a hard matter for the starving untutored man assailed by passion. All of this must weigh heavily in the balance in weighing guilt and innocence at the final judgment, and thus mercy becomes justice, two concepts which would otherwise be mutually exclusive.

It is harder to think of nothing than of something, especially when this something already exists; harder to conceive of ceasing to be than of continued existence. It is not possible that this earthly life can be a final purpose. We did not ask for it; it was given to us, laid upon us. We must have a higher destination than constantly to renew the course of this wretched existence. Are the riddles which surround us never to be solved, to whose solution the best of mankind have devoted their lives? Of what use are the thousand threads of love and friendship which bind us to the

present and the past if there is no future, if everything ceases with death?

But what can we take over into this future?

The functions of our earthly garment, the body, have ceased; the substances which were constantly changing even during our life-time enter into new chemical combinations, and the earth retains what belongs to it. Not the smallest particle goes astray. Scripture promises us the resurrection of a transfigured body, and of course a separate existence without limitation is not to be considered; yet by this promise we are probably to understand the persistence of personality as opposed to pantheism.

We are entitled to hope that reason and with it everything which we have painfully acquired in the way of knowledge and wisdom will accompany us into eternity, perhaps even the memory of our earthly life. Whether this is to be desired is another question. What if our whole life, our thoughts and acts, would be spread out before us and we ourselves would become our own judges, incorruptible, merciless?

But above all affection must remain, an attribute of the soul if it is immortal. Friendship is based upon reciprocity, and reason has much to do with it, but love can exist without responsive love. It is the purest, the divine flame of our being.

Now scripture tells us that above everything else we should love God, an invisible and wholly incomprehensible being bestowing upon us joy and happiness but also privation and pain. How can we do it except as we follow his commands and love our fellow men whom we see and understand?

If, as the Apostle Paul tells us, faith shall be turned to knowledge and hope to fulfilment and only love will persist, then we may also hope to meet the love of a lenient judge.

A MOSLEM EDITION OF THE KORAN.

BY THE EDITOR.

A NEW translation of the Koran into English is being prepared by a number of modern well-educated adherents of Islam in India, and the first part of it in the shape of an unbound brochure of 118 pages lies before us. Thirty such parts are intended to make the whole, and the editors are prompted not by mercantile