

## MISCELLANEOUS

### "NEW LIGHT ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL"

TO the Editor of THE OPEN COURT:

In your March, 1924, number, Victor S. Yarros gives some beautiful quotations on the "Problem of Evil," and concludes that if there be any solution of the problem, it must be scientific, or in a scientific religion. The late Paul Carus has said in his wonderful writings that "Science is Holy," and I believe a study of his many books and essays would give such a solution as Mr. Yarros indicates.

Is not the problem like those of Light and Darkness; Heat and Cold; Up and Down; Positive and Negative and the Squaring of the Circle?

Doctor Carus has shown us many truths, and amongst them the fact that some old so-called problems were not problems at all, and could not ask for any solution, as that: "if an irresistible body meet an immovable one, what would happen?" He shows that that would imply two infinities, as impossibility, and the "statement" passes like the question: "if black is white, what will happen?" We no longer beg questions by asking whether God can make twice two equal five?

Light being defined as the effect of ether waves, or of ion patterings on the nerves of the eye, it is a "Feeling," and "subjective." We may ask whether God could make an eye that would forever respond to such irritations, and enjoy eternal Light! Perhaps the eye could keep up the sensations if they were varied from time to time but a uniform light would destroy its own effects in time, to say nothing of the law of conservation.

Life is manifested in "Feelings," and feelings are subject to the condition of change, because with no change in feelings or motions a merely frozen condition would ensue—no motion, no life.

The next thought to arise in our solution is one of having God make the change in feeling forever upwards, so that each day we should be able to say: "I am happier today than I was yesterday." Scientifically, here again, we should meet the question of the law of conservation of energy. Also the question of the ability of the nerves to stand a high degree of exaltation. Otherwise we might ask a slow life, like the supposed life of the clam, increasing in happiness only a little day by day! Even then, the other difficulties would arise, such as memory of the past lower enjoyment, or of dear friends left behind, or of comparisons and wishes the same as we now have. In a word,

a thousand fancies, imaginations and wonders would have to be rearranged to make this new way to a "Heaven!"

As we now "live and move and have our being in God" our lives, or "Feelings" are in wave motions, and as we go up the slope of a wave, we say we are enjoying more happiness, and as we go down, we sigh, but know that the comparisons are necessary to appreciation of our blessings.

Herbert Spencer has said that practically all of life's activities are in wave motions, including all of nature's works.

Some modern philosophers believe we are making a new and better ethics for our "Life in God" all the time, according to Evolution, and how grand it is to feel that already we can see the improvement in humanity, in business, in charity, for all nations and Creeds, in kindness to animals, in contentment and better health for ourselves, and a longer life.

We are learning that Death (which comes sometimes in earthquakes) is perhaps not an evil in itself, after all. No more than sleep.

We seem to have reached an uncertainty in the old beliefs in Spirits, though the ancient Egyptians and early Hebrews were weak on that belief themselves, while some of us well-educated moderns have gone far in it!

There are old and untenable beliefs about the "personality" of God, and even so, we have rather ridiculous ideas about Spirits, and it is very wholesome that the Ghost superstitions of the Middle Ages are nearly gone.

But these good changes are not reasons for giving up hopes and beliefs in a scientific mode of existence by electricity or ions or some holy and undreamed-of future quite as beyond us now as is the New World to ancient and revered Prophets! "Science is Holy," and it always leaves us as much of infinite hope in a future as have ever any superstition-made Utopias. Do we fear death? Why, some vast religions make a heaven of hopes of an extinction in an utter rest and freedom from all care. We find a similar condition in sleep, and some seek death as a refuge. We may be sure of a future in our children, and in the influences of our work as good citizens. And all the beautiful time, we have a right to hope for a finer future than any dream of any poet thus far in this world!

But Science is teaching us to walk on the paths God has made, and not to repeat the olden error of torturing our fellow creatures to live in superstitious regions evolved from unproven guesses and fancies, or fears!

Again, as to the "miseries" of people's lives: we are prone to imagine *others'* sufferings as unendurable and horrible, while if we think to go to each person we know, or can reach, and inquire into their conditions, we shall surely find them enjoying the vicissitudes of life about the same as ourselves, as nearly as one can place himself in another's feelings and inherited influences. There *are* hard sufferings, and most of us have our turns at them, but we must in general confess that our balance of happiness and woe is largely on the side of joy, and a fear of having to go in death and leave it! Wars and Commerce have always broadened the minds of men, and so the World War has done for millions, and we see one beautiful effect in the broad view that we can not eliminate the old Churches in a year or even in a generation, and, since they contain our best ethics of a thousand years or more, it is far best to take them as they are, and

use them, and at the same time grow with them into the better conditions that we can plainly see developing year by year. And indeed, we see the increase in Church attendance already, and in the building of new ones. Yes: we know that their Pastors and many of their members are squirming at some of the old inconsistencies and ridiculous teachings of a cruder age, but the truth is seen gaining all the time, and we feel sure the end will be for the good of all, and that the stubbornness of the simple-minded will be conquered by more light, and by love, the thing they worship.

Again, as to the problem of Evil: when we have light without darkness, and warmth without cold, and up without down, we shall have happiness without clouds. Let us live with God in evolution of the better world.

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