'The Foundations of Belief.'

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II.

It appears to me that Mr. Balfour in the constructive part of his book occupies a position not to be distinguished from that occupied by the naturalism he dislikes so much. Like them he is in search of the causes and genesis of belief; he uses their method, agrees with them in principle, and largely also in results. Like them he dwells on the impressions made on us, on effects wrought on us, on beliefs caused in us by causes which are non-rational in themselves, until we suspect that he is engaged in building what he destroyed. It is true, indeed, that in many of the sciences, when we have discovered the causes and the law of any phenomenon we may rest, for generally these give a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon in question. We do not need to ask any further question as to the truth or worth of the phenomenon, for such questions do not arise in the physical or natural sciences. Our curiosity is satisfied when we ascertain the genesis of the thing and the law of its working. It is otherwise, however, with regard to our beliefs. In this relation the most important question is, not how did we come to have such and such beliefs, but are these beliefs true, and what are they worth?

Mr. Balfour is under the influence of the traditional English psychology, and he seems unable to look at the problem except in the way in which it has been set in England. Even when he has formally recognised that there is a difference between the existence of a belief and its validity, he has practically ignored the latter altogether. Thus he has given us no criterion of belief, no way of discriminating between beliefs which are valid, trustworthy, and related to reality, and beliefs which are superstitious, irrational, and degrading. For psychology, one belief is as good as another; we have only to ascertain its nature and its genesis, and our work is done. True, English psychology has always assumed the validity of the original elements of mind or original beliefs, as Stuart Mills calls them. To find what these original beliefs are, English psychologists have been wont to interrogate the consciousness of new-born babies; and since evolution came into fashion, the appeal has been to the consciousness of the primitive man. It has been an irrelevant procedure from first to last. For if the genesis of every belief could be traced so that we could refer the total content of consciousness to its adequate causes in our psychological experience, we should still have no standard for distinguishing beliefs as true and false. We should have the beliefs as psychological facts; their truth and falsehood would still have to be determined. The truth or falsehood of a belief is not to be determined merely by a consideration of its origin, but much more by an examination of its contents, and the grounds which are offered for its acceptance. From the point of view of philosophy a belief must be self-evident, or it must be proven, or at least be made probable. Either in itself or in its relation to other beliefs it must have reasons which warrant its acceptance.

In his criticism of naturalism, Mr. Balfour has recognised or acted on this principle more than once. In particular, he has relied on it in his criticism of the naturalistic use of the principle of the uniformity of nature. He shows that the principle can be proved only by assuming its truth, or rather by assuming the truth of the law of causation. If he had prosecuted his inquiry a little further, he would have arrived at the recognition of a principle, which would have helped him in the search for a criterion of belief. He might have recognised that the mind has a direct insight into truth, at least into some kinds of truth. To have done so, however, would have subverted his whole system. So he uses the principle for a sceptical purpose, and then carefully lets it alone. It is not necessary for me to enter into the time-worn controversy between the intuitionalists and empiricists as to self-evident truths or as to their origin, or their character. But Mr. Balfour is wholly an empiricist in this relation. Every argument he uses against naturalism can be used, and with greater cogency, against his own position. For he has gone back to Hume's position, and ignores every answer to Hume that has appeared, whether from Scotland or Germany. Belief is founded on custom. We could scarcely believe our eyes when we read that 'certitude is found

to be the child not of reason, but of custom,' until we discovered that by reason Mr. Balfour means only reasoning. If that be the only meaning of reason, we at once remove all our intuitive beliefs beyond the range of reason. Why we should do so is not very evident. We cannot prove that 'every change must have a cause' by reasoning, for every argument we could use would involve the principle of causality. Are we to set down all self-evident truths as non-rational in their character and evidence? That is the net income of Mr. Balfour's lengthened argumentation. He does deal with the universality and inevitableness of certain judgments, but these are not self-evident truths discerned by intelligence to be universally and necessarily true, they are simply those judgments which seem 'to be a necessity of every great department of knowledge which touches on action.' It is no wonder that he says 'they exist, but they are irrelevant.' Again he says, 'We can scarcely reckon universality and necessity as badges of pre-eminence at the same moment that we recognise them as marks of the elementary and primitive character of the beliefs to which they give their all-powerful, but none the less irrational, sanction.'

True; but the qualities of universality and necessity do not in any proper sense belong to these judgments of which he speaks; while they do belong to those other judgments, the existence of which he steadfastly ignores. It would scarcely be possible for him to maintain the paradoxical thesis that the causes of our beliefs are non-rational, if he recognised the fact that the mind has a direct insight into truth of the axiomatic character. The recognition of this would destroy his theory. Still some discussion of the intuitional view ought to have been undertaken by him, if only to clear it out of his way.

We have a more serious objection to his attempt to base our beliefs on non-rational causes. He constantly speaks of our beliefs as if they were only effects. He has assumed throughout his book that the mind is wholly passive in the formation of belief. He never looks at the possibility of the mind having a say in the matter. In this respect he is as empirical as any Naturalist could desire. Our beliefs are wrought in us, we know not how, and the constitution and activity of the mind goes for nothing. Now if Mr. Balfour had considered that there can be no perception without the activity of the mind, and no experience without the activity of the subject, he would have hesitated to speak of our beliefs as effects, and nothing more. Human experience is the experience of rational beings. Every human being is implicitly rational, and even those qualities which he has in common with the lower animals have a new significance, for they are the appetites, desires, emotions, impulses of a being who is rational. The advent of rationality changes the aspects and relations of the lower nature, and makes them something new. I have no time to prove this; I can only state it, and pass on. Mr. Balfour deals with the causes of belief and their effects as if they were of the same kind and on the same plane. This may be right when we are dealing with physical objects, though even there we must take into account the character of the reactions. Much more is this the case when we speak of the causes of belief. For belief is conditioned not only by what he calls causes, but also the character, constitution, and nature of the mind itself. Now this factor in experience is wholly neglected by Mr. Balfour. Mind is secondary, derivative, receptive of impressions, determined in all its modes and actions by something beyond itself, which something is non-rational; such seems to be the final position of Mr. Balfour.

Now if this be the case, the battle of theology has been fought and *lost* beyond its borders. We can say nothing of the causes of belief, except that they are non-rational. Yet Mr. Balfour says: 'I do not believe that any escape from these perplexities is possible, unless we are prepared to bring to the study of the world the presupposition that it is the work of a rational being who made *it* intelligible, and at the same time made *us*, in however feeble a fashion, able to understand it.' Why should we, on his principles, bring this presupposition to the study of the world? Whence the necessity of it? He has shown that our beliefs are due to non-rational causes, why may not the world be the work of a non-rational being of the same kind as those which cause our beliefs? We agree with Mr. Balfour in accepting the presupposition. If, however, our beliefs are due to non-rational causes, there is no reason for postulating rationality anywhere, either in the Maker of the world or in the world itself. If non-rational causes can produce our beliefs, they can equally well produce the appearance of intelligibility which is in the world; for on his principles we can never know whether this appearance is, or is not, in

correspondence with reality. Reality may be as non-rational as the causes of our belief are. In fact, Mr. Balfour has unconsciously destroyed the foundations on which any possible theistic argument could be based. Rationality in ourselves and rationality in the world are the basis of the theistic argument; by basing belief on custom and tracing it to the action of non-rational causes he has cut the chain which enabled us to pass from the rationality of the world to the rationality of the Maker of the world. The Author of the world may be a non-rational cause.

We shall look at the chapter on 'Authority and Reason.' We shall first quote a curious sentence, which affords us a view of the working of Mr. Balfour's mind. 'We are acted on by authority. It moulds our ways of thought in spite of ourselves, and usually unknown to ourselves. But when we reason we are the authors of the effect produced. We have ourselves set the machine in motion. For its proper working we are ourselves immediately responsible; so that it is both natural and desirable that we should concentrate our attention on this particular class of causes, even though we should thus be led unduly to magnify their importance in the general scheme of things.', 'When we reason we are the authors of the effect produced.' Yes, and No. We are the authors in so far as we arrange the steps of our argument and seek to ascertain the truth of the matter in hand; but we are not the authors either of the premisses or of the conclusion. These are determined by an objective standard if our argument is to have any abiding value. Mr. Balfour exaggerates the function of the mind in reasoning just as he minimises the activity of the mind in every other function. In reasoning, the mind applies its rational principles to given material, as in other functions it applies its rational principles to given material. In all its experiences, mind is as much active as it is in reasoning. The only difference is that in reasoning we are for the most part painfully conscious of the operation, while in other operations of mind we may be so far unconscious. But to confine rationality to mere conscious reasoning is absurd.

The antithesis between authority and reason is misleading, and is itself a survival of the older Rationalism which Mr. Balfour has criticised. 'At every moment of our lives, as individuals, as members of a family, of a nation, of a church, as a universal brotherhood, the silent unnoticed influence of authority moulds our feelings and aspirations and, what we are more concerned with, our belief.' The statement is true, but irrelevant. It has no bearing on the matter in hand. For families, nations, churches, brotherhoods are themselves rational institutions, and are the work of rational creatures who were conscious of the bonds which bound them into a rational unity. There is reason in them all; otherwise they would never have held together. We fearlessly assert that every instance of the action of authority as opposed to reason, set forth by Mr Balfour, is itself rational, the work of reason and capable of explanation on grounds of reason. Take the case of language, and apply the argument to it. Language moulds our feelings, emotions, desires, aspirations, beliefs, and even our thoughts. Whatever he has said on behalf of authority may be said *à fortiori* on behalf of language. We are always under its influence, and we are unable to think for ourselves, or act in common with others without it. It is undoubted that language is itself the product of reason. Neither in the case of language nor in any other case instanced by him can we look at the antithesis between authority and reason as anything but misleading and irrelevant. Authority itself must be or become rational, or it will soon cease to have any influence on a rational being, and the work of theology is to justify our deepest beliefs as worthy to be held by rational beings.

We agree with the conclusions of Mr. Balfour, though we could never have reached them by his method of argument. We believe that we must have the presupposition of a rational Being as the Maker of the world; also we need the further postulate that morality is at the basis of things. In fact, we heartily agree with the main propositions of the last chapter of his book. 'If the reality of scientific and of ethical knowledge forces on us to assume the existence of a rational and moral Deity, by whose preferential assistance they have come into existence, must we not suppose that the power which has thus produced in man the knowledge of right and wrong, and has added to it the faculty of creating ethical ideals, must have provided some satisfaction for the ethical needs which the historical development of the spiritual life has gradually called into existence?'

This is a true and profound thought, beautifully and adequately expressed. Would that the argu-

mentation which led up to it were such as were consistent with it. Again we have a beautiful statement of a distinctive Christian position in the following words :—'What is needed is such a living faith in God's relation to man as shall leave no place for that helpless resentment against the appointed order so apt to rise within us at the sight of undeserved pain. And this faith is possessed by those who vividly realise the Christian form of Theism. For they worship One who is no remote contriver of a universe to whose ills He is indifferent. If they suffer, did not He on their account suffer also? If suffering falls not always on the most guilty, was He not innocent? Shall they cry aloud that the world is ill-designed for their convenience when He for their sakes subjected Himself to its conditions?' If Mr. Balfour would only allow us to think that these beliefs are rational; that faith in God is a rational faith; that trust in Christ is consistent with reason and eminently rational; and that loyalty to Christ and obedience to Him is a reasonable service!

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF II. CORINTHIANS.

2 Cor. xiii. 5.

'Try your own selves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate' (R.V.).

Exposition.

The connexion with what has gone before would seem to be as follows :—The apostle had been among the Corinthians in weakness (1 Cor. ii. 3; cf. chap. x. 1, 10). He had boasted of nothing but his infirmity (chap. xi. 30, xii. 5, 9). So that many of them had come to regard him with contempt. But the gospel, he says, is a power. He appeals to the testimony of their own Christian experience on the point, as in chap. iv. 2, v. 11, vi. 4. 'Is it *not* a power?' he says. Look at yourselves. Do you not feel it to be so in your own hearts? Does not Jesus Christ dwell in you, at least in all who are not finally cast off by Him, and does He not make manifest His power in the subjugation of the natural mind within you? Could this have taken place unless the gospel were a real power of God? And then to whom, humanly speaking, do you owe this power? Is it not to him of whom you are ready to believe that he is no true apostle of Christ?—Lias.

Try.—Try or tempt; put to the test, with good or bad intention. Same word in 1 Cor. vii. 5, x. 9, 13; Matt. iv. 1, xvi. 1; Heb. xi. 17; James i. 13; Matt. iv. 3; 1 Thes. iii. 5; cognate to 'temptation,' 1 Cor. x. 13; Gal. iv. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 9, etc.—Beet.

Your own selves.—The position of 'yourselves' in the Greek (before the verb in both clauses) shows that that is the word on which stress is emphatically laid, and the thought grows out of what has been said in verse 3: 'You seek a test of my power. Apply a test to *yourselves*. Try *yourselves* whether you are living and moving in that faith in Christ which you profess' (the objective and subjective senses of faith melting into one without any formal distinction). 'Subject yourselves to the scrutiny of your own conscience.'—Plumptre.

Whether ye be in the faith.—Whether you maintain your Christian place and standing in Christ, which will be shown by the power of Christ's Spirit present and energising among you.—Alford.

Prove.—A nobler word than *try*, only used of a trial with good intent; 'find out, by testing, your own genuineness.' So 2 Cor. viii. 8; 1 Cor. iii. 13, xi. 28, xvi. 3. The addition of it here suggests a hope that the trial will be satisfactory.—Beet.

Or.—They ought to see that self-testing is the right mode of obtaining the proof which they seek of Christ's power, 'or,' *i.e.* 'otherwise,' he must conclude that it is no part of their sure self-knowledge that Christ is in them.—Waite.

That Jesus Christ is in you.—By His Spirit giving victory over sin, prompting filial confidence in God, and reproducing the whole mind of Christ. Cf. Rom. viii. 9 ff.; Eph. iii. 17.—Beet.

Except indeed ye are reprobate.—The Greek word