

would take no reward from individual men; on the contrary he deemed himself amply repaid by the gratitude which those who associated with him felt for his influence, and the years of his mature manhood were spent in the consistent endeavour to lead others to make the pursuit of virtue the main object of their lives.

And it was entirely in accord with this humility of character and this single-minded pursuit of the truth that Socrates in regard to both religious and political matters should exhibit an attitude of respectful obedience to all constituted authority. And thus it is that though in his search for the truth he shows so essentially a liberal mind, nevertheless in dealing with established principles Socrates is so thoroughly conservative. The reformer is usually impatient of precedent, and anxious to upset established authority; but Socrates, who was not a reformer but primarily and essentially a seeker after truth, emphasized the essential character of his mission by his continued desire to submit to all lawfully constituted authority. This characteristic is made clear alike by Xenophon and Plato. So far was he from claiming any special authority or importance for himself that he exhibited extreme care to conform in his own person to the religious practices and ceremonies of the time, and was also, as is shown in the case of Xenophon, anxious that his friends should consult the oracles in cases of real emergency. Even in his last moments, as recorded by Plato, we see the same tendency to reverence custom and constituted authority. He reminds Crito that he owes a cock to Aesculapius, and urges that the debt be duly paid after his decease.

The same disposition to conform to established custom and to make no positive claim on his own behalf is also illustrated by his attitude to physical science. Socrates, though possessing in the highest degree a speculative mind, nevertheless seems to have thought that to attempt to pierce the veil which shrouded the mysteries of human life was to commit an impiety. All such inquiry he regarded as impious, or at the least foolish, and this for the very practical and characteristic reason that it is absurd to enter into such speculative matters before the nature and character of wisdom, justice, honour and the like are properly understood.

So far indeed was Socrates from claiming to introduce a new religion or even a reformed system of government that he has left us in the Crito of Plato the most striking defence of lawful authority that has ever been devised by the heart of man.

The argument is in answer to the suggestion that he shall make his escape from prison, and the reply of Socrates is as follows: "Then consider the matter in this way: Imagine that I am about to play truant (you may call the proceeding by any name you like), and the laws and the government come and interrogate me: 'Tell us, Socrates,' they say, 'what are you about? Are you going by an act of yours