

began to irritate me like the mere buzzing of flies: and I determined that I would, as soon as an opportunity offered, retire from public life for a time, and balance my accounts with realities.

“The condition in which I shall enter on this task is as follows. Though I am no longer able to ascribe any value to life or assent to the reality of those differences between good and evil which has lain at the root of all mental civilisation, I desire to do this; and were it possible for me to make the first preliminary movement, I should be supported by an army of instinctive faiths and feelings, which are not dead, but are helpless, lying drugged or chained in prison. What prevents my making this movement is an obstacle which is purely intellectual. If my faith in life is to revive, feeling will be one of its elements; but feeling must be associated with an assent to certain facts as facts: an assent to the reality of the proposition that the world of spirit—of God, of the soul, of freedom—is a real world, and not a fancy. How is it possible to find a place for this world in the microcosm of one’s own mind without rejecting the whole sum of that positive knowledge the truth of which mankind, by experience, is each day more clearly learning? How can the free and the immortal find a place in the determined and the transitory?”

“To myself, so far as I at present am able to understand the matter, I put it in a nutshell, thus: Science shows us that twice two equals four. Religion teaches us that twice two equals five. How are these two propositions to be reconciled? This is the supreme question in which all modern knowledge converges. Here is the primary difficulty—here and nowhere else. And how do the modern apologists of religion meet it? Some of them do not see it at all. Others see it, but having seen it, they try to hide it. None of them throws a single ray of light on it. The most respectable of these apologists are men like Carlyle, Emerson, Tolstoy, and a school of orthodox divines, who endeavour ‘to create a soul under the ribs of death,’ by an insistence on the beauty, the depth, and so