
Arnold Lunn's Tentative Explanations.

Question XX. Very well, then, I'm all agog to hear your tentative explanation of God's reluctance to coerce faith.

Answer. I'll do my best. Perhaps an analogy from mountaineering may help. The Jungfrau Railway carries tourists to the Jungfrauoch, 14,400 feet above the sea. This Pass was first reached by Leslie Stephen's party who forced their way up the great north ice wall. Many years ago I spent the best part of a night in a snowstorm below the Jungfrauoch. I was alone and it was not a pleasant experience. The storm clouds parted just before the dawn. I struggled up the last slopes to the Pass, and broke into the restaurant of the Jungfrauoch. After the misery of the long fight against darkness, cold, storm, and solitude, the warm friendly rooms of the summit restaurant seemed like Heaven. Next day I watched the trains unloading their thousands of trippers into this same restaurant. They had just taken a ticket and arrived. The restaurant was just another restaurant to them, not a foretaste of that beatitude which awaits the Faithful after the storms and darkness of life.

I wandered out onto the summit snows of the Pass. Two tourists were being photographed in heroic attitudes brandishing ice axes which they had hired for the occasion. And I thought of those who first crossed this Pass from the north, of the long hours on the ice wall, of the queer sound of ice fragments as they swish down the slope, of the heat reflected from the radiant surface, of that gamut of emotions, hope, fear, anxiety, which are the essence of a new climb. Yes, the Jungfrauoch meant more to Stephen than to the gentlemen who had just been photographed on the summit.

It would be easier to understand that Heaven is not ours for the asking, that it is an exceeding great reward for a gallant struggle, if our defective imagination could begin to conceive the infinite glory of the Divine Vision. Why should we expect to have this handed to us on a dish? It's worth fighting for, and the fight is intellectual no less than moral.

In this life, struggle is an integral element in the happiness which is best worth attaining. No true scientist desires to have knowledge handed out to him without effort. The great astronomer who located the unknown and undiscovered planet, Neptune, felt a thrill when he turned his telescope onto the sky and found the planet where he had calculated mathematically that the planet would be. His faith was rewarded. In football, as in all other sports, little value is attached to walk-over victories. Why should we expect walk-overs in matters of belief? Why should we not work for faith, just as the scientist works to discover truth?

Few people deny that virtue is admirable precisely because virtue is difficult. I have no copy of Milton with me, and I quote from memory, but there is a noble passage in which he depreciates that virtue "unexercized and unbreathed which slinks out of the arena where that immortal garland is to be run for not without dust and heat." But in this unintellectual age we have lost all sense of the intellectual virtues. We concede that it is virtuous to fight against the temptations of the flesh. We forget that it is no less virtuous to fight against the temptations of the intellect. Protestantism is rapidly losing all sense of sin so far as the rejection of what God proposes for our belief is concerned. But it is just as sinful willfully to reject what God proposes for our belief as willfully to resist what God proposes for our behavior. Intellectual chastity is as important as physical chastity. God does not bludgeon us into monogamy and God does not coerce us into faith.

PRAYERS: (deceased) grandfather of Al Negro (Lyons); uncle of James Hayes (Walsh); Fr. Victor A. Bast, S.S., friend of Fr. Edwin J. Schneider, S.S. Ill, Charles Carody, son of an alumnus; aunt of Tom Kearney (Alum.); friend of Jim Quinn (Walsh); Carlos Lazaro (Brown.) operation; Jim Corcoran (St. Ed's); three special intentions.