

# THE BELIEF IN GOD AND IMMORTALITY

*A Psychological, Anthropological  
and Statistical Study*

BY

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1916

## INTRODUCTION

God, the soul, and immortality constitute, according to general opinion, the great framework of religion. In an earlier book I have considered the origin, the nature, the function, and the future of the belief in what I have called "personal" gods. The present volume is a similar study of the belief in personal immortality. Chapters one to four treat of the origin, the nature, and the function of this belief. They show in particular that two quite different conceptions of personal immortality have been successively elaborated; and that the modern conception is not a growth from the primary belief, but an independent creation, differing radically from it in point of origin, in nature, and in function. Whereas the primary belief was forced upon men irrespective of their wishes as an unavoidable interpretation of certain patent facts (chiefly the apparition of deceased persons in dreams and in visions), the modern belief was born of a desire for the realization of ideals. The first came to point to an exclusively wretched existence, and prompted men merely to guard against the possible danger to them arising from ghosts; the second contemplated from the first endless continuation in a state of completed or increased perfection, and incited the living to ceaseless efforts in order to make themselves fit for that blessed consummation.

## INTRODUCTION

The effort that has been made to justify at the bar of reason the modern belief in immortality by providing metaphysical proofs of it, is considered in chapter five. From a survey of these "proofs" it is evident that the longer we strive to demonstrate its truth, the more obvious becomes our failure, and the more general the conviction that "if immortality cannot be disproved, neither can it be proved." We shall see that even firm believers in immortality have had to come to this opinion.

Deductive reasoning having failed, an attempt was then made to demonstrate personal immortality by methods acceptable to science. This effort — mainly the work of the Society for Psychical Research — is described and appraised in the last chapter of Part I.

It would of course be most helpful, both to scientific students of religion and to ministers of it, did there exist definite information regarding the present diffusion of cardinal religious beliefs among the civilized nations. Heretofore most divergent opinions have prevailed; and it has been possible neither to prove nor to refute them, since the statistics of belief so far attempted have no actual statistical value whatever. In Part II, the present status in the United States of the beliefs in God and immortality is shown as it appears from extensive statistical inquiries in which the usual fatal defects of statistical researches in the field of religious beliefs have been avoided. These inquiries have yielded results of considerable significance; and we are now for the first time in a position to make certain definite statements, valid for *entire groups* of influential persons,

## INTRODUCTION

namely, college students, physical scientists, biologists, historians, sociologists and economists, and psychologists. We have been able not only to compare these groups with each other but also, among the students, the lower classes with the higher; and, among the other groups, the more eminent persons with the less eminent. It appears, with incontrovertible evidence, that in each group the more distinguished fraction includes by far the smaller number of believers. This, taken in connection with a study of the factors of belief, leads to important conclusions regarding the causes of disbelief. I hope that despite the widespread and, I must admit, on the whole justifiable distrust of statistics of belief, no reader will pass a summary judgment upon mine until he has examined them with some care.

The numerous and extraordinarily varied comments made by those who answered the author's *questionnaire*, as well as by those who refused to answer it, provide data of especial value for the psychology of belief and also for an understanding of the present situation of the Christian religion. Not only in Part II, but throughout the book, I have cited typical, concrete instances in profusion. By thus following a practice common in descriptive sciences, I have, I trust, kept close to reality and avoided the theoretical and empty character from which so many works on religion suffer.

In a third and last part are presented certain facts and considerations bearing upon the present utility of the beliefs in a personal God and in immortality, from which it appears that, so far at least as the United States and other equally civilized

## INTRODUCTION

countries are concerned, the enormous practical importance customarily ascribed to these beliefs no longer corresponds to reality. Since the study of origins and motives shows that the attributes which make gods and life after death precious to mankind are derived from social experience, it is evident that the loss of these beliefs would involve the loss not of anything essential, but only of a particular method (that of the present religions) of maintaining and increasing among men certain values created and discovered in social intercourse. What the real losses would be, and whether they might be compensated or even turned to gain, constitute the chief topics of this concluding section.

It is often urged that studies of origins and motives do not yield information bearing upon the probable truth of beliefs. This opinion should be corrected. When the methods of philosophy are impotent to determine "truth," our only recourse is to a verification by experience, as in the case of scientific hypotheses, and to a study of origins and motives. There are circumstances where acquaintance with the origin of a belief, together with a knowledge of its inherent difficulties, bring down to a vanishing point the probability of its truth.

A word of explanation is probably necessary in order to prevent misunderstanding of the scope of this study. My investigation of immortality bears upon "personal immortality" only. I take this term in its ordinary acceptance, i. e., as meaning a continuation after death (with or without body)

## INTRODUCTION

of the consciousness of personal identity. Similarly, I am concerned, as in my earlier book, only with that conception of the divine which I have qualified by the term "personal." My purpose does not oblige me to define the meaning I attach to that difficult word when applied to gods, further than to say that it designates beings with whom can be maintained the relations implied in all the historical religions in which a God or gods are worshiped, i. e., direct intellectual and affective relations. A personal God as here understood is therefore not necessarily an anthropomorphic, but certainly an *anthropopathic* being.

Few words are used in as wide and ill-defined a meaning as "god," for few are willing to forego the prestigious advantage belonging to its use; and so it has come to pass that a term owing its primary and dominant meaning to its connection with historical religions has come to be used in a second meaning precluding attributes essential to the gods of the historical religions. The conception of Ultimate Reality as it is found in the philosophy of Absolute Idealism, and by it called God, is no more adequate to the expectations of any existing form of worship than the alchemist's conception of matter is adequate to the work of modern science.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> That the gods of metaphysics are not the gods of religion, is clearly acknowledged by Arthur Balfour in his last book (*Theism and Humanism*, Gifford Lectures for 1914, page 35, 36). I quote: "It is the God according to religion, and not the God according to metaphysics, whose being I wish to prove. . . . When I speak of God, I mean something other than an Identity wherein all differences vanish, or a Unity which includes but does not transcend the differences which it somehow holds in

## INTRODUCTION

confusion of these two meanings should not be tolerated, not even though it should prove impracticable to limit the use of "god" to its original significance. That this confusion is in fact tolerated, and even, it seems, encouraged, is not due only to the lack of a sufficiently clear realization of the essential difference existing between the gods of the historical religions and the "gods" of metaphysics, but in an equal measure perhaps to an unwillingness to admit an unwelcome truth. There are devoted Christians who apparently prefer living in intellectual dishonesty to recognizing that the God whom they worship has no existence in their philosophy.

It hardly need be said here that the abandonment of the belief in a personal God and in personal immortality, though it involved the disappearance of the existing religions, need not bring to an end religious life. Religion is not to be identified with its present forms. The faith of the ancient Hebrews, which looked only to the continuation of the nation, refutes sufficiently the opinion according to which the immortal individual soul is a tenet necessary to all religions. While original Buddhism, which denies the existence of a personal God, and Comte's *Religion of Humanity*, which includes among its articles of faith neither personal God nor soul,

solution. I mean a God whom men can love, a God to whom men can pray, who takes sides, who has purposes and preferences, whose attributes, however conceived, leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created."

For a demonstration of the correctness of this distinction, see chapter XI, especially pages 245 to 254, of my earlier book, *A Psychological Study of Religion; Its Origin, Function, and Future*.

## INTRODUCTION

demonstrate the possible independence of religion from the belief in a personal God. The sources of the religious life, its fundamental realities, lie deeper than the conceptual forms in which they find expression.

To regard this book as merely destructive in its results, because no sufficient ground has been found for belief in immortality, and because the statistics presented demonstrate an alienation from beliefs present in all the historical religions (Comtism and original Buddhism excepted) and provide reasons for anticipating a continuous decrease of these beliefs, would be to overlook its essential results, namely, the analysis both of the fundamental motives and of the secondary causes which have led to the formation of the primary belief in immortality, to its subsequent displacement by the modern belief, and which at the present time prompt many of those most sensitive to moral values to seek elsewhere than in the continuation of the identity of the Ego the satisfaction of spiritual needs. To uncover the deeper sources from which spring the varied forms of our religious life, even when this involves laying bare the uncertainty or inadequacy of old and widely accepted convictions, cannot with justice be characterized as a destructive performance. Rather should it be regarded, from a practical point of view, as tending to accomplish a threefold good: the deliverance of man from a devitalizing fear of imaginary disastrous consequences that are to attend the loss of these beliefs; his inspiration with renewed confidence in the reliability of the forces by which

## INTRODUCTION

3. he feels himself urged onward, however ignorant of their nature he may otherwise be; and his enrichment with information useful for the wise guidance of his efforts at reconstruction when reconstruction shall have appeared imperative.

Parts II and III may be read independently of Part I, but the full weight of the investigation will not be felt by those who have omitted the first part.

I take pleasure in acknowledging here the valuable assistance received from Miss Edith Orlady in the preparation of this book.

## CONTENTS

### PART I

#### THE TWO CONCEPTIONS OF IMMORTALITY: THEIR ORIGINS, THEIR DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS, AND THE ATTEMPTED DEMONSTRATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE MODERN CONCEPTION

##### I THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRIMARY BELIEF IN CONTINUATION AFTER DEATH . . . . . 1

When did the belief in primary continuation appear? — The savage's idea of soul and ghost — The survival after death and immortality — The life of ghosts and their relation with the living; the primary paradise — Explanation of the fear of ghosts and of the evil character usually ascribed to them — Conditions of admission to the other world and the relation of morality to continuation after death — Morality and religion.

##### II THE ORIGIN OF THE GHOST-IDEA, AND THE DIFFERENTIATION OF THE GHOST FROM THE SOUL . . . . . 42

I. The origin of the ghost-idea — Memory-images exteriorized under the influence of emotion — The "sense of presence" — Dreams — Visions — The natural endlessness of man — The influence of death —  
xiii

## CONTENTS

- Vegetation and insect metamorphosis — The waxing and the waning moon; the rising and the setting sun — Physical and moral likenesses between a living and a dead person — Reflections and echoes — The instinct theory of the origin of the belief in continuation — II. The differentiation of the ghost from the soul — III. The origin of the soul as set forth by Durkheim in his theory of the origin of the idea of the soul-ghost — Crawley's and Feuerbach's theories.
- III THE PRIMARY BELIEF IN CONTINUATION AFTER DEATH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE HISTORICAL PERIOD . . . . . 82
- I. The belief in immortality is said to have appeared late — II. The chief characteristics of the primary belief at the beginning of the historical period, in the countries bordering the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.
- IV THE ORIGIN OF THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF IMMORTALITY . . . . . 99
- I. Translation to a land of immortality — II. The Messianic prophecies — III. The recognition of the insufficiency of national hopes, the consequent establishment of individual relations with the gods, and the dawn of the modern belief in personal immortality — IV. Greek sources of immortality. Ecstasy — V. The absence of continuity between the primary and the modern belief in immortality.

## CONTENTS

- V THE DEDUCTIVE DEMONSTRATION OF MODERN IMMORTALITY . . . . . 127 ✓
- I. The metaphysical arguments — Arguments from the spiritual nature of all reality, from the simplicity of the soul, from an intelligent non-moral, and from an intelligent and moral First Cause — II. The acknowledged insufficiency of the deductive arguments and the falling back upon direct "inner experience" of immortality.
- VI THE DEMONSTRATION OF MODERN IMMORTALITY BY DIRECT SENSORY EVIDENCE AND SCIENTIFIC INDUCTION . 154
- I. Physical manifestations — II. Psychological manifestations — III. The resurrection of Christ.

## PART II

### STATISTICAL STUDY OF THE BELIEF IN A PERSONAL GOD AND IN PERSONAL IMMORTALITY IN THE UNITED STATES

- CRITICAL INTRODUCTORY REMARKS UPON RECENT SYMPOSIA AND STATISTICAL INVESTIGATIONS . . . . . 173
- VII INVESTIGATION A: THE BELIEF IN GOD AMONG AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS 185 ✓
- I. Typical answers, in extenso — II. The personal or impersonal nature of God — III. The form, or image, or symbol under which God is conceived — IV. God's relation to man.

## CONTENTS

- VIII INVESTIGATION B: THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY IN AN AMERICAN COLLEGE 214  
A statistical inquiry, including a comparison of the changes in belief taking place during college years.
- IX INVESTIGATION C: THE BELIEF IN GOD AND IN IMMORTALITY AMONG AMERICAN SCIENTISTS, SOCIOLOGISTS, HISTORIANS, AND PSYCHOLOGISTS . . . 221  
A statistical inquiry, including in each group a comparison of the less with the more eminent men— I. The causes of the failure to answer and the interpretation of the questionnaire— II. The scientists— III. The historians— IV. The sociologists— V. The psychologists— VI. The philosophers— VII. Comparison of the signed with the unsigned answers, and of the answers to the first with the answers to the second requests— VIII. Summary and conclusions from the statistics.
- X INDIVIDUALISM AS A CAUSE OF THE REJECTION OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS . . . 282

## PART III

### OF THE PRESENT UTILITY OF THE BELIEFS IN PERSONAL IMMORTALITY AND IN A PERSONAL GOD

- INTRODUCTORY . . . . . 291
- XI THE DESIRE FOR IMMORTALITY AND THE USEFULNESS OF THE BELIEF . . . . 295  
The dislike for immortality— Indifference to immortality— Immortality as a

## CONTENTS

- morally inferior belief— Present causes of the desire for immortality.
- XII THE SOCIAL ORIGIN OF MORAL IDEAS AND INSPIRATION AND THE UTILITY OF TRANSCENDENTAL BELIEFS . . . . 321
- APPENDIX . . . . . 335
- INDEX OF NAMES . . . . . 339



**PART II**

**STATISTICAL STUDY OF THE BELIEF IN A  
PERSONAL GOD AND IN PERSONAL IM-  
MORTALITY IN THE UNITED STATES**

## CRITICAL INTRODUCTORY REMARKS UPON RECENT SYMPOSIA AND STATISTICAL INVESTIGATIONS

In the present status of religion and of philosophy, there is only one fundamentally significant classification of the various conceptions of God. On the one side must be placed the conceptions that are consistent with the means of worship common to all the religions, original Buddhism and Comtism excepted; on the other, those that are not. Every book of worship at present in use implies a Being in direct affective and intellectual relation with his worshipers; a Being, therefore, endowed with will, feeling, and intelligence. The surrender of that conception would mean either the disappearance or the radical transformation of practically all the religions known to history.

Who would recognize the Christian religion, either Protestant or Roman Catholic, were all traces of direct communication with the Divinity now indicated in its liturgies to be removed? The Christian God and the unknowable First Cause of Spencer, or the impassible Absolute of most contemporary philosophers, are essentially different conceptions which can be used interchangeably neither in religion nor in philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the preface of this book for some remarks concerning the meanings of the term "God."

I have called those beings who hold the direct personal relations with man characteristic of the worship of the historical religions, "personal gods." It is with gods of that description only that we are concerned in this volume.

The expression "personal immortality" is usually understood to mean the continuation after death of the conscious individual and implies the continuation of the sense of one's identity. Any conception which does not include this sense of identity is not the one intended here.<sup>2</sup>

The beliefs in a personal God and in personal immortality are regarded as cardinal tenets of Christianity, and, many would hold, of every possible religion. Yet, in the absence of any reliable knowledge, the widest divergence of opinion exists regarding their prevalence in Christian countries. Pulpit orators assert, for instance, that scientists and philosophers, with few exceptions, share with them the "fundamentals" of the Christian faith. On the other hand, "free thinkers" declare that no man of science can accept the Christian beliefs; and that, as to the clergy, they are mostly dissemblers. One of my correspondents, a chemist, adds to a declaration of belief in God and immortality, "You will find that 90 per cent. of the chemists of this country believe as I do." But another chemist, a disbeliever, informs me that no more than 40 per cent. of his brother chemists accept these two beliefs. If men of science accustomed to accuracy in

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of brevity, I shall in the sequel omit usually the adjective "personal," both with reference to God and to immortality.

the gathering and weighing of evidence, diverge to that extent when speaking of their own profession, what reliance can be placed upon the opinion of those who lack those advantages?

Although valuable statistics on almost every possible subject have been compiled, none really significant have been attempted regarding the beliefs in which we are interested. Is it because there would be no gain in definite knowledge? Who would venture that assertion? It is rather the old desire to protect "holy things" from too close scrutiny, and also the more or less unconscious antagonism of those interested in the maintenance of the *status quo* in religion that have stood in the way of those who might have been disposed to face the difficulties of a statistical investigation of religious convictions.

It has seemed to me desirable on general theoretical ground, as well as for reasons of practical importance to religion, to add to the study of the origins of the beliefs in immortality presented in this book, and to the study of the origins of gods set forth in a preceding volume, a statistical and psychological inquiry into the present status of these beliefs among us. Studies of origin, when not brought into comparison with present conditions, lose much of their import. If a knowledge of the past is necessary to a full understanding of the present, acquaintance with the living present is no less indispensable to a complete understanding of the past.

Limited in its scope as it is, the present research will, nevertheless, I hope, be found worthy of attention not only by the students of religion, but also by

those interested in the possibilities of the statistical method. The sociologist speaks freely of development and of progress, but he has measured only material changes. He may state with sufficient precision changes in the wealth of a nation and in church membership; but he cannot express definitely the alterations that have taken place in the conceptions and convictions of men. For instance, there exists no information that would make possible a reliable statistical comparison of the religious ideas and beliefs of the Europe of the beginning of the last century with those of the present. And yet, changes in conceptions and convictions are more indicative than wealth of profound social transformations. Statistics of belief, similarly computed at different periods, would provide a measure of some of the changes that take place in the moral life of a given population. The influence upon religious beliefs of general intellectual ability and of knowledge of definite kinds could also be ascertained, did we but possess statistics established separately for groups of men differing in these respects. Recent researches have shown that problems seemingly as difficult can be solved by the statistical method.<sup>3</sup>

To religion itself, the significance of an exact knowledge of the present trend of fundamental beliefs could not easily be overstated. It is necessary to religious progress that what passes in the souls of our contemporaries should come to light; for, in

<sup>3</sup> I allude to the work of James McKeen Cattell, Karl Pearson, Edward Thorndike, Dr. James Woods, and others, on heredity and on the conditions productive of insanity, of genius, of high intellectual ability, etc.

order to fulfill effectively their mission, religious teachers must know the needs of men, their hopes, beliefs, and unbeliefs. It is, furthermore, essential to intellectual and moral advance that the beliefs that come into existence should have free play. Antagonistic beliefs must have the chance of proving their worth in open contest. In this way, scientific theories are tested; and in this way also religious and ethical conceptions should be tried. But a fair struggle cannot take place when people are dissuaded from seeking knowledge, or when knowledge is hidden.

A few years ago I began, at first rather tentatively, an attempt to determine scientifically the presence in particular classes of persons, of the beliefs in God and immortality. In the earlier investigations, I aimed at the same time at securing information as intimate as possible on certain aspects of religious life. The groups chosen for study were American students, scientists, historians, sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers. The choice of these groups was determined chiefly by the fact that these men, because of their intelligence, habits of reflection, and knowledge, may be regarded as in the vanguard of progress; their opinions represent probably the public opinion of to-morrow. I was also attracted to these classes by the possibility they afforded of correlating belief and unbelief with the kind of knowledge, possessed by the believer or unbeliever, and with the possession of certain traits upon which depend success in intellectual and other pursuits. The existence of authoritative lists of the persons belonging to these several groups was

also a circumstance of considerable advantage to me.

Before presenting the results secured, I should like to offer some critical comments on the kind of statistical inquiries and the symposia which have so far taken the place of scientific statistics.

*Critical Remarks upon Recent Symposia and Statistical Investigations.*—The past fifteen years have seen the publication of many symposia and statistical inquiries on God and immortality.<sup>4</sup> Most of the symposia are mere collections of edifying testimonies possessing no statistical value whatsoever. Nearly all of them produce upon the average reader the impression of a more or less universal acceptance of the beliefs in behalf of which they speak. Publish two hundred attestations of a particular opinion upon any question, gathered from among a population of one million persons, and the great majority of the readers will not be able to resist the belief that that opinion is the dominant one in the population to which these two hundred persons belong. Whereas it is theoretically possible that every one of the 999,800 silent ones hold another opinion.

<sup>4</sup> Clara Spalding Ellis: *What's Next? Or Shall a Man Live Again?* Richard G. Badger; Boston.

Robert J. Thompson: *The Proof of Life after Death; A Twentieth Century Symposium*: Chicago, 1902.

E. D. Adams: *This Life and the Next; Impressions and Thoughts of Notable Men and Women from Plato to Ruskin*: London; 1902.

Samuel J. Barrows: *Science and Immortality; The Christian Register Symposium Revised and Enlarged*: Boston; Geo. H. Ellis; 1887.

Arthur H. Tabrum: *Religious Beliefs of Scientists; A Reply to a Challenge by the Rationalistic Press Association of Great Britain*: Hunter and Longhurst; London; 1913 (140 letters from English scientists).

What, for instance, is the significance of the two hundred testimonies of Christian belief gathered by Clara Spalding Ellis — the largest collection of the kind with which I am acquainted? Two hundred voices belonging to several generations of people of many nationalities, is one voice in a million. They belong, it is true, to the upper classes. Let us say, then, that they represent one person in ten thousand; or even, if you please, one in one thousand. What are the opinions of the nine hundred and ninety-nine others?

To such illusion produced by symposia is usually added deception — unintentional, to be sure — of considerable importance. Because of insufficient definition of the terms upon which the meaning of the testimonies turns, the testifiers are understood to support opinions which frequently are not theirs. A recent volume entitled *Religious Beliefs of Scientists* provides a notable illustration of this. The book is an attempt “to ascertain the truth or falsity of certain assertions made by Freethinkers and Agnostics, and other opponents of religion.” Here are two of these assertions: “It is extremely doubtful whether any scientist or philosopher really holds the doctrine of a personal God”; “Beyond all question the higher culture of America is rationalistic from New York to California.” These are reckless assertions, but our present concern is with the attempt of the author of the book mentioned to prove them false, and not with their reliability. He addressed to a number of scientists, nearly all British, these two questions:

“Is there any real conflict between the facts of

science and the fundamentals of Christianity?" "Has it been your experience to find men of science irreligious and anti-Christian?"

The one hundred and forty scientists who answered are nearly all men past middle life, many are very old, and quite a number are now dead. They do not therefore represent the beliefs of the rising, but of the passing generation of English men of science.

The significance of this inquiry turns upon the meaning attached to the expression "the fundamentals of Christianity." The author does not define it; he does not even ask his correspondents to say what meaning they ascribe to that expression. As a matter of fact, very few have thought it necessary to be explicit. When they affirm, of themselves or of others, a "deeply religious" disposition, one very properly wonders whether to understand accessibility to awe and reverence, which, we are told on every hand are "the fundamental religious emotions"; or whether to suppose that, in addition to these emotions shared by all pagans with Christians, these persons hold as essential to salvation a belief in the Apostles' and Nicean creeds.

That great men of science should have been content to express themselves in terms so absurdly indefinite, would be incredible if one did not know that it is still a widespread habit not to think about religion; and that, should you have transgressed this rule, you are expected to hold your peace, or to speak with so much discretion that the sway of the tenets you now disbelieve may remain unshaken.

"I am not able to write you at length," says Lord Rayleigh, "but I may say that in my opinion true

Science and true Religion neither are, nor could be opposed." Sir William Ramsey, James Ward, and dozens of others, write just as unexplicitly. The former hold that "between the essential truth of Christianity and the established facts of Science there is no real antagonism"; and the latter is of the opinion that "there is not and never can be any opposition between Science and Religion, any more than there can be any between Grammar and Religion." But neither of these men says what he means by "religion," or by the "essential truth of Christianity"; and yet it is well known that the widest divergences of views exist regarding the truths essential to Christianity.

The distinguished psychologist, Professor G. F. Stout, is an exception to the rule. He knows that in answering the queries of Mr. Tabrum, the meaning of "essentials of Christianity" must be explicitly stated under penalty of utter confusion. He writes, "I should also agree in a sense that there is no antagonism between the established facts of Science and the fundamental teachings of Christianity, but I should define 'fundamental teachings of Christianity' as those elements of Christian doctrine which have given Christianity its influence for good in the world. What are these?" and here he stops. Professor Stout's published writings warrant, it appears to me, the statement that the influence he acknowledges is essentially independent of inspiration, revelation, the divinity<sup>5</sup> of Christ, and even of the existence of a

<sup>5</sup> I use these words in their historical, doctrinal meaning, not in the sense which would make every man "inspired" and "divine."

benevolent God who hears and may answer man's desires and supplications. Nevertheless, the majority of the readers of that book will probably put Professor Stout on Tabrum's side of the controversy.

This book, worthless to one desiring to know what English scientists really believe, is useful as a demonstration of the ambiguities tolerated in religious matters, not only by the muddle headed and ignorant, but even by acute minds trained in the accurate methods of science.

With one exception, the researches in statistical form upon Immortality and other religious beliefs<sup>6</sup> are completely meaningless when considered as statistics. One of these will serve the purpose of bringing out the essential conditions to be fulfilled by a valid statistical inquiry in this field.

In *The Religion of One Hundred and Twenty-Six College Students* are to be found tables purporting to give information upon the number of students of a certain college who pray, attend church, believe in immortality, and upon other related topics. It appears, in particular, that one hundred students pray and that twenty-six do not. We knew already that

<sup>6</sup> F. C. S. Schiller: "The Answers to the American Branch's Questionnaire regarding Human Sentiment as to a Future Life," *Proc. of the Soc. for Psychological Research*; Part 49; 1904. Vol. XVIII; pages 416-450. Reproduced in substance in *Humanism*; London; Macmillan; 1903.

Morse and Allen: "The Religion of One Hundred and Twenty-six College Students": *Journal of Religious Psychology*; 1913; Vol. VII; pages 175-194.

Simon Spidle: "The Belief in Immortality": *Journal of Religious Psychology*; 1912; Vol. V; pages 5-51.

Colin A. Scott: "Old Age and Death": *American Journal of Psychology*; 1890; Vol. VIII.

many American students pray; what more do we know now? Nothing more, since we are left in the dark concerning over two-thirds (274) of the students who received the questions and left them unanswered. Should these be dominantly non-praying persons, the religious status of the college would be altogether different from what the incomplete statistics offered us seem to indicate. The facts gathered have no statistical value whatsoever. In order to be valid, a statistical investigation must include every member or nearly every member of the whole group under study, or of a definite and not too small fraction of it. In the latter case, the selection must be according to chance.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The exception to which I referred above, is the inquiry of the American Branch of the Society for Psychical Research. Even that investigation is not free from objection since the *Questionnaire* was "quite random and unsystematic," and since it was answered by much less than one third of those to whom it was addressed directly or through its publication in various journals. As it was circulated chiefly by the members of the Society for Psychical Research and in spiritualistic circles (several spiritualistic journals reprinted the questions), the reported number of believers is obviously unduly large. This, Dr. Schiller himself admits. The investigation is nevertheless very far from worthless; the methodological defect influences, in fact, only the results secured by the first question (Would you prefer to live after death or not?). The five other questions are addressed to those who have answered the first. Now, all, or nearly all of those who answered the first answered also the last five questions. Thus, while this inquiry contributes nothing definite to the general statistics of belief in immortality, it provides valid statistical information upon the persons who answered its first question. In addition, it offers a rich material on the psychology of belief. As the only results published so far refer to the fourth and sixth questions, this is not the place to speak of them.

Dr. Schiller, who prepared the report alluded to, is not to be held responsible for the conduct of the investigation. The *Questionnaire* (see below) was issued from the United States by Dr. Richard Hodgson, at the time Secretary of the Society.

INQUIRY INTO HUMAN SENTIMENT WITH REGARD TO A  
FUTURE LIFE

- I. Would you prefer (a) to live after "death" or (b) not?
- II. (a) If I. (a), do you desire a future life whatever the conditions might be?  
(b) If not, what would have to be its character to make the prospect seem tolerable? Would you, e. g., be content with a life more or less like your present life?  
(c) Can you say what elements in life (if any) are felt by you to call for its perpetuity?
- III. Can you state *why* you feel in this way, as regards questions I. and II.?
- IV. Do you now feel the question of a future life to be of urgent importance to your mental comfort?
- V. Have your feelings on questions I., II. and IV. undergone change? If so, when and in what ways?
- VI. (a) Would you like to *know for certain* about the future life, or (b) would you prefer to leave it a *matter of faith*?

CHAPTER VII

INVESTIGATION A: THE BELIEF IN GOD  
AMONG AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

If fifty years ago American students had been asked to formulate their beliefs, I surmise that they would have answered, with uniformity and assurance, in the terms of the Catechisms then in use. They would have affirmed, for instance, a belief in the one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, in whom dwell three persons of one substance, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. How is it to-day? Official creeds and articles of faith have remained substantially unchanged, and the clergy are still expected to teach the tenets of their religion. What is the faith of the "flower of the rising generation"?

A few years ago I drew up four questions, and succeeded in having them answered by all the students of a number of classes belonging to non-technical departments of nine colleges of high rank, and by two classes (seventy-eight answers) of a normal school. Nearly one thousand answers were received, 97 per cent. of which are from students between eighteen and twenty years of age. This number of answers is small, yet their significance is considerable. With obvious limitations, they provide reliable information as to the state of mind of students in non-technical college departments regarding the Christian



conception of God. These data have special value because *every student* in the class when the *questionnaire* was distributed, answered.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Questionnaire* (see below) was distributed in the class room by the instructor in psychology, or, less frequently, in philosophy, who had been directed to read to the class the remarks printed as introduction to the questions, and warned against discussing them. The students were then allowed the remainder of the class-period to formulate their answers. In order to encourage complete freedom of expression, signatures were not requested.

Nine hundred and twenty-seven answers were received (289 from men and 638 from women) from nine colleges and 78 from one normal school. The tabulation was already completed when it occurred to me that for the sake of greater homogeneity the answers from the normal school had better be omitted. They include a larger proportion of believers than the others. I secured the services of instructors in psychology and philosophy merely because of my acquaintance with them, and of their interest in the investigation which should not, however, be thought to reflect in a special way their teaching, for the students were all in their first year of psychology or philosophy, and nearly all of them in their first semester. Any one familiar with what is taught in the first semester of an elementary course in these branches will know that the opinion of the students on the subject of this investigation is not likely to have been directly affected by their professors. Their ingenuousness with regard to any philosophical knowledge appears to me demonstrated by the papers themselves. Should further doubts remain concerning this point, they will be removed by the outcome of Investigation B, in which every student of one college took part, and which is in substantial agreement with the result of Investigation A.

A wider and more accurate representative value might be claimed for this inquiry if each participating college were represented in it by a number of answers proportional to the number of its students. Interesting additional knowledge would have been gained if the colleges had been classified according to their academic standards and religious interests, and the answers from each had been correlated with these features. Again, information of considerable importance

### I. TYPICAL ANSWERS, IN EXTENSO

Before presenting the results of this inquiry in statistical form, I shall quote *in extenso* a number of typical answers<sup>2</sup> with the purpose of illustrating the diverse points of views and the temper of these stu-

dent would have been secured if entering classes could have been compared with senior classes. These and other inquiries would be well worth the trouble they would entail, but they will I fear become practicable only when the existing traditional opposition, passive when not active, to the search for definite information regarding religious beliefs has considerably weakened.

If the scope of this investigation is narrow, it is not through lack of desire on my part to make it broader. Circumstances imposed narrow limitations as a condition of success.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE UPON THE BELIEF IN GOD

The purpose of the following questions is to find out what are your real beliefs concerning God. We know well enough what people are supposed to believe, but we have little opportunity of finding out what they actually believe.

*Not what one should or would like to believe, but what one really believes, is asked for in these questions.*

Be as clear and definite as you can be without going beyond the truth, but do not refuse to answer because you cannot be otherwise than indefinite. The very lack of definiteness is a fact well worth ascertaining. The answers need not be signed, but the approximate age is desired.

1. Do you think of God as a personal or impersonal being?
2. What difference do you make between a personal and an impersonal being?
3. Describe as fully as you can how, under what image, or images, you think of God. Distinguish here between what in your description is for you merely an image, a form, of speech, and what is the reality.
4. What difference would the non-existence of God make in your daily life?

<sup>2</sup> Except for abbreviations, these answers are published here as they were written. The numbers designate the questions to which the quotations refer.

dents. With one exception, every quotation is representative of a large number of others of the same type, if not of the same quality. No student of human nature will complain of the number of these documents. He will rather find a keen interest in observing the amazingly different ways in which persons in similar situations think and feel. Frequently they occupy opposite positions on questions declared by the Christian church to be matters of salvation or damnation. And yet, these young people are receiving the same teaching, they work and play together; and, for the most part, do not give any indication in their conduct of these alleged life-and-death differences.

The reader interested in religious education should find the following pages particularly enlightening. Vigorous efforts are being made in the United States to standardize educational methods, and protests inspired by the danger of uniformity have already been heard. This investigation will show that religion is running an opposite danger. Stupendous ignorance is the price paid by our youth for the absence of teaching and guidance. The situation cannot be improved until traditional and no longer teachable beliefs have been replaced in the confidence of public opinion by others in agreement with modern knowledge.

It will be observed that an opportunity was given the respondents to define the meaning they ascribed to the term "personal" as applied to God. This seemed wiser than for me to provide a definition. Their efforts to define that expression are most suggestive.

I should perhaps add, by way of partial explanation of the intellectual *naïveté* and other defects of several of these answers, that the writers were given little more than a half hour during which to produce something like photographs of the content of their mind with regard to one of the most difficult subjects possible.

I. *A woman, age 19.*—I begin with the naïve and rather commonplace statement of a person who feels keenly the need for affection and moral support.

"1. God is a very personal being because he always listens and answers, and is . . . interested in us.

"3. Under no image or images do I think of God. He exists everywhere, was heard as a 'still, small voice,' and seen as a dove, but I do not think of him as such. Except as he was revealed in his son, Jesus Christ, I have no image of God in my mind. . . . I know he is not like anything I have ever seen. How do I think of God? As a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; in him dwell wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. I think of God as the maker of this whole world, of every man, woman, and child in it. He knows the past, present, and future. I think of him as the ruler of the lives of each of us. And out of his inexhaustible love, he is deeply interested in every person on this earth. Therefore we can pray to him, asking and receiving what is good for us. He is like a human father, but divine.

"4. If I did not believe that there is a God, if this life was all (for the belief in God brings with it a

belief in a world to come), I think my life would be a very unhappy one. In that case one might as well enjoy himself as much as possible here. . . . I certainly would do what pleases me most.

"It would be almost unbearable to part from one's friends if one did not hope ever to see them again."

II. *A woman, sophomore*, very different from the one just quoted.

"1. I do not believe in God. (This, of course, prevents my answering the first three questions.)

"4. I can remember when I gave up my last attempt to believe in God. The only difference I felt in my daily life when I gave up the belief was that I felt a greater sense of responsibility for my own conduct. I also felt more independent. I have not been able to shake off a slight feeling of contempt for the narrow bigotry and superstition of conventional beliefs which most people accept without allowing their reason to act."

III. *A woman, junior*.—The poetical, richly sensitive nature of this person makes a strong contrast with the hard self-reliance of the preceding one.

"1. I think of God as a personal being.

"2. The difference between a personal and an impersonal God to me is that a 'personal God' is interested in each human being, . . . whereas an 'impersonal being' is a ruling law that sets the world in motion and allows natural forces once created to operate, with indifference on his part. The difference is, I think, that of a God who feels (though I suppose not with such violence as to disturb his perfect con-

trol) as contrasted with a God who knows no emotion, but is all reason and power.

"3. My conception of God, that is, the image I form of him, changes. Most of the time he is to me the spirit of life in the out-of-door world and then the feeling I have of him is of some strong force pushing up from the ground or in motion of some sort, very free and pure and joyous. I don't think I embody his force; I merely conceive of it as the spirit within the trees, grass, or what not, and in people the active impelling force that produces some special act of strength or beauty. God at such times is the lifting power of things, yet even then he is personal, a disembodied joy is the nearest I have ever gotten to a definition of him. At other times, when I am indoors, and cannot get into the buoyancy of this conception of God, when imagination is dull or I am depressed, I think of God in the image of a vast and understanding face, a face that is undefined except in the general impression of august might and sympathy. This is to me merely a symbol which I never think of as real. It comes as the consequence of human limitations and I take it as an expression of the sluggishness of my mind. At times when the visual sense is not keenly alive, God means to me a voice, the voices heard in plant life, and then it is still a manifestation of a personal being but I cannot conceive of him further.

"4. The difference in the actual doings of daily life would be immaterial, and the relations between me and human beings would remain the same, because the humanitarian motive seems stronger than the divine. The difference would come in the lack of

final purpose seen in life, an exchange from optimism to pessimism, and more immediately there would be a great difference in my feeling for nature since now my views are touched with Pantheism."

IV. *A woman, junior.*—In nothing do these students differ more than in their opinion of the effect the loss of belief in a personal God would have upon their daily life. Number III thinks that it would not alter her relations with her fellowmen; number I, on the contrary, says she would pursue her own enjoyment and nothing else. She also thinks that the disappearance of God would involve annihilation at death, and that seems to her unbearable. Number IV is of the same mind as I. There would, she thinks, be no use in trying to live without God. Others, however, whom I shall quote, and many others not mentioned here, get along, as they think, very well without God and immortality. That, as we all know, is quite possible. For the rest, number IV is evidently in a great muddle, and in distress because she can no longer follow the "very firmly fixed habit of mind" formed in her childhood. The magnitude and intricacy of the issues on which she feels obliged to take sides, quite overpower her.

"1. My whole idea of God is very indefinite. I think of God as personal.

"2. I think that God is personal in that he stands for a spiritual power that influences man, at least the higher types of men, and influences them individually. I believe that it is this spiritual power in men that makes them human and that makes their higher development possible. . . . But whether this comes from

an outside source such as God or is the natural result of man's evolution I am not sure. I do not believe that God exercises much control over actual events.

"3. God seems to me wholly this spiritual force. I do not believe that he is pleased or displeased with actions, but I believe that the more a person acquires this spirit the more he comes to feel what is called 'in harmony with God.' Hell seems to me the losing of this power and heaven the complete acquiring of it. I don't know whether I believe in the immortality of the soul or not.

"4. I have been brought up in a family and in associations that have made religion a very firmly fixed habit of mind, and I very naturally try to believe in all the orthodox beliefs. And it makes me always very unhappy when I think that there is no God. Of course, there would be no use in living if there were no God and no immortality, and I think it is largely this feeling that makes me try to persuade myself that there is. Certainly there is some spiritual power somewhere and some First Cause for the universe. . . . I do not believe that I shall ever come to definitely and finally believe in anything, for about such things I shall never be able to make up my mind. I have changed some of my ideas even since I wrote this down, and it seems to me impossible that any one should ever say he is sure of anything."

V. *A woman, junior.*—Here is a person who seems to possess settled views. Her description of a God both personal and impersonal is interesting. Very

few of these students give evidence of so much thoughtfulness.

"1. My idea of God is a combination of the personal and impersonal idea. I believe in Him as absolutely perfect, and complete in all conceivable and inconceivable respects; that is, that He is something beyond what the mind of man can grasp. What we know of Him is only a part of His nature. He is therefore impersonal in a general way. But the conception of His completeness demands that He have all characteristics, and therefore He has a personal side.

"2. As personal I consider a Being who has the human attributes, who has emotions, senses, and perhaps human form, resembling man, but not necessarily on the same scale as man's. An impersonal Being would be one who represented the idea of certain qualities, but was not their embodiment, who did not stand for them in material form. The impersonal idea is of a vague formless Being without definiteness, not so much from a deficiency of the personal qualities as from an existence too large for our minds to grasp. It is as though every quality were unlimited and stretched out to the infinite.

"3. I believe that the personal aspect of God is apparent only through the necessity of His communicating with man, that for this one purpose we see this one part of Him, but we are unable to look beyond and see Him in His entire nature. For this reason, in my image of Him only the essential qualities for communication are present. I think of Him as having the sense of hearing, for he listens to my prayers; as having the qualities of mercy and

forgiveness, for I know he displays them toward me; and as having other qualities, such as interest in human affairs, etc. But in order that he may show these same qualities to everyone, he must be perfect and complete, and in my conception of the infinitely complete, the impersonal aspect is also necessary to His nature. . . . This is, therefore, my real idea of Him: certain personal appearances that He should have as personal Being are not present, are merely a form of speech.

"4. I can say sincerely, that, as far as I can see, the non-existence of God would take all the interest out of my daily life. I have a feeling of His power in everything that happens to me, and all my doings are generally with an effort to please Him, but sometimes in rebellion against His power, for the very fact that it is stronger than my own."

#### VI. *A man, sophomore, aged 20.*—

"1. It is so recently that I have begun to think on the matter of a deity that I have not absolutely decided as yet what God really is. To me, however, in my present state of mind, I think of God rather as an impersonal being.

"2. That is to say, I do not conceive of him as being a certain body or material substance. For this, it appears to me, would have to be limited in proportions, but rather as an all-pervading power, as it were, having all the senses of man and animal, only in a most perfect form. Those powers are not confined to one body, for I seem to believe that God is everywhere and anywhere, and if he were a body, it appears to me there would have been the resistance

offered to his penetration that there is to other material things. Thus, for instance, I believe that God can enter and at times is in my heart and body, and were he a person, he could not well be divided up into bits. Thus to me the difference between a personal being and an impersonal being is that the former seems to confine God into a certain space or body, where there are hands and feet, and a head, etc., while an impersonal being has nothing of the kind, except that it fills the universe and is shapeless.

"3. It may be a remnant of youth, but anyhow, every time I think of God there appears a vague image of a man, with all members of the body, just enormously large. The next instant, however, I correct my image, and instead of that there appears a kind of power (as if it were an expanse of gas) floating in the air and pervading everything. The image thus is only a convenient way in my mind of thinking of God.

"4. The non-existence of a God would make me give up the prayers which I say daily, and further would prevent me from keeping the Sabbath holy. . . . As far as moral principles are concerned, the existence or non-existence is immaterial."

VII. *A woman, age 20.*—Here is a radical non-conformist, with very little respect for clinging parasites seeking shelter and warmth within church doors.

"3. I think of God merely as a term symbolizing our feeling for right and wrong, developed from the savage state when the struggle for existence *alone*,

without regard for any intellectual superiority of man to beast, influenced the human race. I believe that by God is [should be] meant the fine distinction of right and wrong which grows finer and finer as the development of our intellect advances. . . . I believe with Socrates that men would do right if they knew enough and had been properly instructed what a momentous thing is at stake if they choose the wrong. Nobody who knows would choose the wrong.

"I do not think of God under any image but rather as a universal influence. I believe it is within human power to live quite independently of any miraculous help of perhaps a supernatural influence, such as most people conceive God to be. At least my hope urges me thus to believe. It is the underlying cowardice, a remnant of the savage state of the human race, that causes us to lay our troubles at the door of a divine being. As man gradually advances in civilization, he more and more casts off this weakness, I think, and learns to stand on his own feet with this one belief to reassure him—to do right for right's sake and not for any reward in heaven. To me the heavenly reward at the end of life is another sign of cowardice in man, because he does not dare to face the grave and likes to delude himself and not face the actual state of affairs. To this may be added conceit; for why is man so much better than all other existing things that all else should perish but he?"

VIII. *A man, junior, age 21.*—This person thinks of God as "real, actual skin and blood and bones,

something we shall see with our own eyes some day"! Doubts, however, have appeared; he stands watching curiously, and, it seems, peacefully, their advance.

"1. I have been brought up to think of God as a personal being, a very real, actually existing person, who watches over us all, treating us with fortune or misfortune as we merit them. As time goes on I feel myself growing skeptical as to the fact that God sees everything, and has foresight; but as yet the early belief taught me still makes me believe that we are absolutely at his mercy — fixed fate, you may call it.

"3. Here again, due to the fact that I have given so little actual thought, my earlier ideas still hold clear. I think of God as the perfect being living somewhere in the distance surrounded by the company of the blessed. He is all-powerful, but withal magnanimous. I think of him as real, actual skin and blood and bones, something we shall see with our eyes some day, no matter what lives we lead here on earth.

"4. In an uncertain way, I feel that I am watched over and taken care of by the Almighty, and if he should cease to be and I should know of it, I should feel like a ship without a pilot, not daring to do much for fear of hidden reefs, and for fear of suffering harm in meeting the many passing derelicts. I have faith in the belief that he guides our footsteps, and I should falter greatly if the leader should be taken away."

IX. *A woman.*—I quote this pathetic instance because it is typical of a great many young people

who have begun life with a conception of God and religious habits in disagreement with modern knowledge.

"1. I believe in an impersonal God though I should love to believe in a personal one. I believe that there is some great force back of nature, a great Mechanism or Governing Force — the Creator of all things. I believe that after this God has created us, there is no continuation of any personal connection. Therefore, I cannot think of God as a close personal Father, and when I do pray, I always feel that the effort is futile, and consequently when I am in trouble I get no spiritual comfort or uplifting.

"4. I am afraid the non-existence of God would make but little difference in my daily life. I pray to Him every night, but it is always with a sort of superstitious dread,—a fear that neglect of him may provoke anger. Yet my prayer is never helpful to me. Whenever I finish it I am always tormented by the question, After all, is there really a God, and does he hear what I am saying? If so, why does he not let me know of his existence as I have so often prayed to him to do. . . . ?"

X. *A man, age 19.*—He represents also, I believe, the condition of a large number of college students.

"1. I have two beliefs in regard to God, which are entirely inconsistent with one another. I see the world about me and realize that a great will, termed God, must have created it. At the time of creation I look upon him as a personal God. Now

it seems to me that God having set the machinery working is letting it run its course and is taking absolutely no part whatsoever in the affairs of man. This being the case, I believe in no God at present but in nature and its works in which God has revealed himself, and therefore I look upon Him now as purely impersonal. Naturally I have never been able to reconcile these beliefs.

"3. God is to me a reverential word-image. It has been dinned into me so much that God is All-merciful, Omnipotent, and Just, that through a kind of superstitious fear I make myself feel respectful at the sight or sound of his name. I have absolutely no visual image of God; if I thought he resembled man I could hardly reverence him as I do at present. I love to think of him as infinity or nature, and quell my doubts by changing the subject.

"4. If the non-existence of God were clearly proved, I think it would make but slight difference, if any, in my daily life. If the spirit of generosity, justice, self-sacrifice, and honesty is inculcated in one, the mere fact that the higher being is found to be a myth could not destroy those characteristics. My character would not undergo any reformation, but I might discontinue the prayers I make to God, which I do in a spirit of cowardice, for I fear to tell myself openly there is no God . . . lest punishment (which I do not believe will come because of my belief of mine) may be visited upon me."

The first of the two final illustrations comes from the only student in my records who gives evidence of having been properly drilled in the official beliefs,

and who has not yet been shaken by the spirit of the age. The second stands squarely upon a non-Christian foundation.

XI. *A woman, age 20.*—

"1. Personal being, because our creed teaches us that God exists in three persons.

"3. I think of God as merciful, loving, just, all-powerful Father, existing in three distinct persons — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — known as the Trinity. The Trinity is a mystery, accepted as an article of faith by some religions and not accepted by others. I believe that the Father created us, that the Son redeemed us, and that the Holy Ghost sanctified us. I never think of God as one distinct person; at the mention of the name, the idea of God in three persons comes into my mind.

"4. The non-existence of God would make a decided difference in my daily life. First of all, in the morning I should never thank Him who has guarded us safely during the night and I should not ask His protection during the day. In a very short time, I should be selfish, doing all I could for myself, forgetting that I should give assistance to the needy and overladen. All my work would be done for the glory of man and not for the glory of the One who has made us. At the close of the day, I should not thank God for the many blessings bestowed on me which enabled me to do my work in such a way that it would be pleasing in the sight of God."

XII. *A woman, age 18.*—

"1. As an impersonal being.



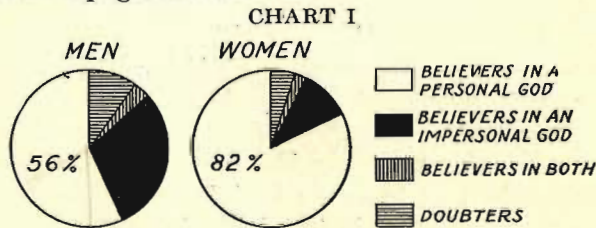
"2. I have never tried to formulate my somewhat vague beliefs, but I mean that I do not believe in a Supreme Being who enters into and regulates the course of our daily existence. There must be some supreme force which regulates the universe as a whole, but I cannot conceive of it as anything near or in any way tangible.

"4. As far as I can see, it does not in any way determine my daily life."

We may now pass to the statistical results of the investigation.

## II. THE PERSONAL OR IMPERSONAL NATURE OF GOD

The answers to the first question required careful interpretation, for the words "personal" and "impersonal" did not convey the same meaning to every student. But, as the second question usually brought out the significance ascribed to these terms, their interpretation rarely presented any difficulty. In chart I, "personal God" has the meaning defined on pages 173 and 174.



As many as 31 per cent. of the men, and only 11 per cent. of the women, conceive God as impersonal. If the "doubtful" cases are added, the percentages

rise to 40.5 per cent. for the men, and to 15.7 per cent. for the women. This greater variation from tradition on the part of the men is one of the striking features of these records. It must be referred on the whole, I think, to a stronger impulse to self-affirmation and freedom, and to a correlated lesser need of affection and of moral support felt by the men.<sup>3</sup>

Investigation B (see the following section) indicates that the proportion of disbelievers in immortality increases considerably from the freshman to the senior year in college. Considered all together, my data would indicate that from 40 to 50 per cent. of the young men leaving college entertain an idea of God incompatible with the acceptance of the Christian religion, even as interpreted by the liberal clergy.

The conception of God varies frequently in the same person as he passes from one mood to another. These cases have been counted under "Both Personal and Impersonal." Here are a few instances of this henotheism:—

*A woman, age 22.*—"In an agitated frame of mind I think of God as a personal father who is ready to reward or punish, but generally I think of God as a mass of forces, having certain effects following from certain causes, the force that causes us to do good brings with it its own reward, and vice versa."

*A man, age 21.*—"God to my mind is an impersonal being, but whether for convenience or through

<sup>3</sup> See chapter X. *Individualism as a Cause of the Rejection of Traditional Belief.*

sheer impotence I pray to him as a personal being. I probably think of Christ when I pray. . . . I know I talk on both sides of the fence, but that is just where I am, and until I get personality into the being which I realize is impersonal, I must try to find it. Experience teaches me it is the 'juste milieu' that is worth most."

*A man, age 20.*—"I have never given this matter serious attention. . . . My two views of God involve contradictions. . . . When I regard God as a creator and ruler He is distinctly personal. But when I believe that man works out his own salvation, and that things need no superior mind to direct them, then God seems to me impersonal. . . . An impersonal being may be compared to an automaton."

But whether the contradiction is realized or not by the student, it never seems particularly to disturb him. He thinks of God according to his practical needs, and if logic is considered at all, it is in second place:—

*A woman, age 23.*—"I think of God as both a personal and impersonal being. I think of him as personal when I feel the need of some support outside myself; a sympathy and understanding which no one else can give. I like to think of him as impersonal at other times; as a power like ether, which is infused through everything."

*A woman, senior.*—"When I am just thinking about him in a speculative or philosophical way, I generally think of him as impersonal, but for practical purposes I think of him as personal.

"By a personal God I mean the God I naturally

turn towards when I feel as if things were getting too hard for me."

*A man, age 20.*—"Knowing as little as I do of the two sides, the personal and the impersonal, I should always rely upon the personal nature of God to bring me through."

The difference between these young people—the flower of the land—who turn to God when they need him, and the Zulus, who think of the spirits of their forefathers only when they go to war,<sup>4</sup> is that the savages never disbelieve in the existence of these forefathers, whereas in their calm moments college men and women do deny the God on whom they call in the time of their need.

### III. THE FORM, OR IMAGE, OR SYMBOL UNDER WHICH GOD IS CONCEIVED

Two thirds of the men, and nearly half the women disclaim any mental picture of God.<sup>5</sup> The larger number of the remainder distinguish between image or symbol, and reality. In a remarkably large number of cases, however, a description in sensory terms is held to represent God adequately. That young people having reached the mental development of college students should think of God as "actual skin and blood and bones, something we shall see with

<sup>4</sup> Max Muller: *The Science of Religion*; page 43.

<sup>5</sup> Of 290 men, 39 per cent. imagine God in human form. To 80 of these the form is a mere symbol; to 20, it is a reality; while 7 find it impossible to decide whether the image represents the reality or is a symbol. Of 640 women, 34.5 per cent. picture God in human shape. Of these, 166 state definitely that the image is a mere symbol, 42 think it actually represents the reality, while 13 cannot decide.

our eyes some day," is almost incredible; but the evidence is compelling. Seven per cent. hold apparently to a thoroughly anthropomorphic conception of God:—

*A man, age 21.*—"I imagine God in the same form as any human being; the same as man. I think God and man are equal physically, or were equal physically at one time but man has deteriorated. God has all the feelings and passions of mankind. He can love and hate, reward and punish, as a man does."

*A woman, senior.*—"God has always been and still is a personal Being for me. . . . By personal I think I mean a being which has individuality, one that has a definite shape, in the sense that it is distinguishable from empty space."

*A woman, age 19.*—"I have always pictured him according to a description in *Paradise Lost* as seated upon a throne, while around him are angels playing on harps and singing hymns. The angels are merely images which are not realities, while the figure of God stands for the reality."

*A man, age 20.*—"I think of God as a personal being. A personal being would have a form that you could see or touch, while an impersonal being would have nothing in common with human beings."

The character of the imagery is frequently traced to Sunday-school pictures, church windows, statuary, and the like. The human shape is naturally the most frequent form assumed by the representations; occasionally, a flame, a sphere, a cloud, an all-seeing eye, an immense voice, a soft wind, stand as symbol. The following illustrations give only a very

inadequate idea of the variety and frequent oddity of these images:—

*A woman, freshman.*—"I think of God as having bodily form and being much larger than the average man. He has a radiant countenance beaming with love and compassion. He is erect and upright, fearless and brave."

*A woman, sophomore.*—"When I think of God at all definitely I have in mind the image of a head, with dark brown flowing hair and dark eyes; below the head the arms of the image are extended. They seem wrapped in soft gray folds rather like clouds; the whole figure—which has no definite shape—is draped in the same stuff which extends far down around the earth."

*A woman, sophomore, age 20.*—"The image under which I think of God is always confused in my mind with the image which I have of the Saviour . . . but the image of God is always a little the less distinct of the two. I think that my image must be very much like the reality."

*A woman, sophomore, 19.*—"When God is mentioned, I always think of the picture of a man . . . as king with all the insignia of royalty. I am not sure as to what is the image and what the reality in this image."

*A woman, senior.*—"God is like flame . . . I do not think that God is flame, . . . but flame is the thing in human experience that comes nearest to my conception of what God is."

*A woman, sophomore.*—"The image in which I see God most often is a sphere. Of course this is quite distinct from my opinion as to the real image

in which God might appear, but the phrase, 'God is all in all,' makes me always feel that a sphere is the only image in which God can appear in which he would fit this."

To ascribe to God the female sex seems almost impossible to one nurtured in a Christian country, yet even that idea is present in these records:—

*A man.*—"Sometimes I have pictured to myself a sort of beautiful woman . . . but the majority of the time I do not think of God under any image whatever."

*A woman.*—"I think of God almost as if he were a second greater mother, to whom I can tell my troubles. . . . He has a certain vivid, mother-like personality, yet I never see him under any definite image. I feel him rather than see him."

The majority think images serviceable to them and wish to preserve them. A few, however, consider images debasing and would like to get rid of them. Here are instances of each:—

*A man, aged 18.*—"Although I do not think of God as a person, I find satisfaction and a sense of reality in endowing him with certain fine human qualities. . . . I generally think of God as a great, benign, bright, splendid man."

*A woman, age 18.*—"It makes God seem more real and present to think of him as possessing human form."

*A woman.*—"My first image of God is seen against my will and quite instinctively; invariably the figure of a white-robed figure. I think it is a woman,—the expression of the face is feminine,—with lacerated brow and hands and feet. I know

that this image is due to the wickedly distorted imagination of my childish training in religion. It is wrong, untrue, degrading. The image which in my better moments I can successfully form of God is a different thing, but so indefinite I can hardly describe it."

*A man, age 20.*—"I think of God somewhat as a superhuman being—an enormous, majestic figure. His face resembles Michael Angelo's *Moses*, but his extremities don't seem to have any definite ending like our hands and feet, but seem just to float off into space and as it were to cover and protect the whole world. It really seems to me to be a barbarian and somewhat heathenish way of imagining anything so great and wonderful as God."

One might see in these quotations an argument in support of Rousseau's contention that not until the "age of reason" should God be so much as mentioned to children.

#### IV. GOD'S RELATION TO MAN

Believing in a personal God does not necessarily mean holding those relations with him that constitute religious life. The belief may be a mere echo of tradition or a philosophical notion. In order to find information on the importance to these students of their religious ideas, one must turn to their answers to the last question, "What difference would the non-existence of God make in your life?" The needs gratified by the belief in God may be classified under three heads; need for explanation, for righteousness, and for affective support.

A philosophical conviction of the existence of God, i. e., a belief that gratifies intellectual curiosity, is rare among these students. But God is very often spoken of as the principle of righteousness, manifesting itself in us, or as the Being whose approval or love makes it possible for us to triumph over temptation and gives us hope of realizing our ideals. Expressions like these are common:—

“God means everything to me in moral struggles”; “Morality alone would not be sufficient for inspiration and guidance in daily life”; “Trust in God keeps me from worrying and makes me happy and better”; “God is a constant support for the immediate task—without him I could not live”; “God is the highest perfection, all-knowing, all-wise. . . . His non-existence would mean the non-existence of hope, of any reason for preferring good to evil.” “If God had not existed for me, I should have been a law-breaker and a criminal. Now if my belief should change, I might pass beyond control.”

The need for the love of an always adequate friend plays a very great part in establishing belief in God. The conviction that “God is love” may make unnecessary any further knowledge of him. In that case he is described as “directly interested in me,” “friend,” “comforter,” “sympathetic father,” and every other attribute seems forgotten:—

*A woman.*—If God did not exist, “there would be no one . . . to whom we could go at all times for sympathy in joys and sorrows.”

*A woman.*—“If there were no God I should seek more sympathy from my friends.”

*A man.*—“Some people apparently go through life without bothering about God. Some one says: ‘Is he necessary after all?’ The answer is that such happy-go-lucky people know not the needs of human nature; their wills are out of conformity with the Logos. Every one who is ever brought face to face with trouble realizes man’s need and striving after God, and almost to a man these people in misfortune, I think, turn to a personal God.”

Many admit that the universe is to them most of the time godless; now and then, however, particularly in the hour of need, a sudden kaleidoscopic change takes place, and God is felt hovering about and filling the air with his protecting and loving presence.

The greater self-reliance of the men and their greater independence from tradition is again in evidence in the answers to question four. Thirty-two per cent. of the men and only seventeen per cent. of the women declare that the non-existence of God would make no difference at all in their lives. If the “doubtful” cases are added the proportions become 43 per cent. for the men and 22 per cent. for the women.

In estimating the significance of these figures we should remember that when one is brought face to face suddenly with a question never before considered, the natural tendency is to state the traditional opinion. Now, the probable effect of the non-existence of God had perhaps never before been considered by these students. One may, therefore, take

it that the number of those who ascribe to God a great influence upon them is larger than would truly represent the facts. It should also be observed that in several instances the affirmation of the great importance of the existence of God is nothing more than a logical deduction from the theoretical belief that God is the creator and the upholder of the universe, and does not involve necessarily the existence of warm personal relations with him.

Putting together those who think God's existence of great importance to them, and those who ascribe to it a small, or a merely occasional value, we get, for the men, 57 per cent. The others (43 per cent.) apparently think themselves morally independent of the existence of God.

Are we to accept the opinion stated by these persons as expressing correctly the value to them of the belief in the existence of God? Obviously not. The conviction that one could not get along in the absence of certain material or spiritual possessions, is very frequently proved false by later events. As this is not the place to consider the value to humanity, and in particular to these students, of the belief in God, I shall remark merely that those who think their belief in God essential have not had occasion to test their conviction; whereas those who think themselves morally independent of the belief and who also disclaim the belief, i. e., nearly the whole of the 43 per cent. may be said to have demonstrated their moral independence of the belief in God. In the absence of satisfactory proof, one need not consider as valid the opinion that the morality

of the unbelievers is derived from that of the believers.

The deepest impression left by these records is that, so far as religion is concerned, our students are groveling in darkness. Christianity, as a system of belief, has utterly broken down, and nothing definite, adequate, and convincing has taken its place. Their beliefs, when they have any, are superficial and amateurish in the extreme. There is no generally acknowledged authority; each one believes as he can, and few seem disturbed at being unable to hold the tenets of the churches. This sense of freedom is the glorious side of an otherwise dangerous situation.

The most striking result of this inquiry is the high percentage of believers in the lower classes and the relatively high percentage of disbelievers in the higher classes (see chart II). Only 15 per cent. of

students in residence, on a Sunday morning, between nine and ten o'clock, and were collected just before lunch on the same day. A few were handed in later in the day, and a few others on the next day. The non-residents received the Q. on the following day, i. e., on Monday morning, on their arrival at the college. They were requested to place their answers during the day in a box provided for the purpose.

The professor who conducted the investigation had announced in several of the largest classes that all the students of the college would be asked on Sunday morning to answer a set of questions, but the subject of the investigation was not disclosed. It was explained that they were held in ignorance in order to prevent discussion in advance. The great desirability of having every one answer in order to make the information gathered valuable for statistical purposes was emphasized, and the directions printed at the head of the Q. were read to them without comment. The students present in each class visited were requested to pass on to the others the information they had just received.

When it was found that a considerable number of freshmen and sophomores had failed to answer, an effort was made to complete the statistics from these two classes. Students of the upper classes interviewed the freshmen and the sophomores and placed the Q. directly or indirectly, in the hands of those who had not answered. It was ascertained that most of these were absent from college when the questions were first circulated. A few explained that they had not answered because they were too uncertain of their beliefs. One said, "I know nothing at all about it," and another, "I did not want to be bothered with these questions." No evidence could be obtained tending to show that students who entertained definite opinions had refused to answer. Arrangements were made for the collection of the tardy answers in a manner to preserve the students' *incognito*. Among the students of the two lower classes who responded to the second call, the proportion of disbelievers is slightly larger than in the others. In table III all the answers are included.

## CHAPTER VIII

### INVESTIGATION B: THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY IN AN AMERICAN COLLEGE

Investigation A was concerned with the belief in a personal God in nine American colleges and one Normal School; investigation B deals exclusively with the belief in immortality in one college of high rank and of moderate size, whose students are divided in their affiliation among all the important Protestant denominations. It includes, in addition, a few Roman Catholics. The spirit of this institution is assuredly as religious as that of the average American college.

Ninety per cent. (seniors, 95.8 per cent.; juniors, 97.7 per cent.) of all the students answered a set of questions divided into three parts: the existence of the belief, its influence upon the individual life, and the grounds upon which the belief is held.<sup>6</sup> How this somewhat difficult performance was accomplished and what care was taken in order not to prejudice the students, is explained in a foot-note.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The Questionnaire will be found in an Appendix to this book.

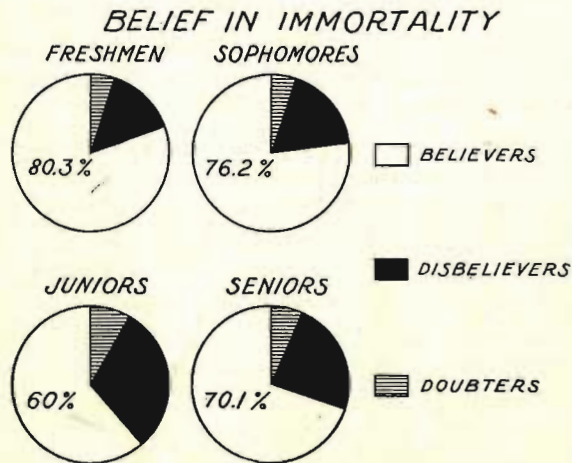
<sup>7</sup> The word *questionnaire* recurs so frequently in these pages that I shall take the liberty of replacing it by its first letter, capitalized.

If I give only percentages and no absolute figure, it is merely in order to prevent the identification of the college.

The Q. were distributed by students to the rooms of all the

the freshmen reject immortality, and 4 per cent. are uncertain; while nearly 32 per cent. of the juniors have given it up, and 8 per cent. more are uncertain.

CHART II



The seniors (24 per cent. of disbelievers and 6 per cent. of uncertain) stand nearer the lower classes than the juniors. It will probably be supposed that this fact indicates a return to a "saner" view after a brief iconoclastic period; i. e., the greater unbelief of the juniors will be taken to mark the effect of a little knowledge, and the greater belief of the seniors, the reaction that has set in with increased maturity. I can not accept that interpretation. When the results were announced several students, including both seniors and juniors, offered in explanation of the fact mentioned the acknowledged, exceptional independence and "intellectual

superiority of the junior class." The professors I interviewed concurred in this judgment. Furthermore, Investigation C provides incontrovertible evidence of a decrease of belief corresponding with an increase of knowledge and of general mental ability.

Not only do the younger students believe more generally, but nearly all the believers accept the doctrine of unconditional immortality. In so far as that is the traditional Christian belief, this result should have been expected of persons who unthinkingly reflect prevalent opinions. We may note that the junior class again distinguishes itself by a relatively high proportion of believers in conditional immortality (13 per cent. as against 4 per cent. for the freshmen). The seniors are also in this respect nearer the lower classes than the juniors.

The effect of the loss of belief, as estimated by these students, changes little as one passes from Freshman to Senior. The great majority think it would be considerable. Whatever change there is, is in the direction of a decrease in the estimated effect. If there is anything clearly disclosed by the study of the origin and of the grounds for the modern belief in immortality, it is that the strongest factor of belief is the conviction that without continuation after death, this life would be morally unacceptable. Now, the statistics reveal the interesting fact that a considerable number of believers do not think the loss would have any influence upon their lives; immortality is for them a fact without vital significance. May we not then conclude that those who believe either in conditional or in uncon-



I dditional immortality and who, at the same time, declare that the loss of the belief would leave them unconcerned, are on the point of discarding that belief?

It is noteworthy that almost 25 per cent. of those who can not declare a belief in immortality, nevertheless desire it; and that of these, four fifths belong to the two upper classes of the college. Since a considerable number desire immortality, though they do not believe, a decrease or a loss of desire may not be made responsible for the decrease in the number of believers. The increase in unbelief observed as one passes from the younger to the older classes, indicates rather the growing recognition of the insufficiency of the foundation upon which the belief stands.

Fifty-one per cent. of the freshmen, and forty-nine per cent. of the sophomores, declare that they have never assigned any reason for their belief in immortality. That the younger students should have failed more frequently than the older ones to concern themselves with the reasons for their belief, is not surprising; but that as many as 45 per cent. of the believing juniors and 40 per cent. of the believing seniors should be in that naïve situation, may well cause some astonishment. These figures would refute the accusation that some might be inclined to direct against colleges for indoctrinating their students. They indicate rather how distressingly uninterested and ignorant these "cultivated" young people are regarding what is commonly considered a great religious issue. The preceding section has shown that they are equally naïve with regard to the conception of God.

Very little significance may be attached to the figures referring to the arguments "supporting" or "establishing" the belief. I shall merely note that four times out of five, they are said to "support," not to "establish," the belief, and that they are in general agreement with the statement made in the first part of this book: the belief of these students — when it has any conscious basis — rests preponderantly upon moral arguments and upon faith in a personal God.<sup>8</sup>

We should hardly have expected to find 35 per cent. of the juniors and seniors in a Christian college unable to profess belief in immortality, and a considerable additional number evidently indifferent to it. This situation points to a very profound change now taking place in the convictions of our educated young people regarding a belief usually considered vital to Christianity.

The knowledge we have gained as to the loss of belief suffered by students leaves unanswered the momentous question of the later development of their religious convictions. If we cannot now discover the beliefs these young people will entertain twenty

<sup>8</sup> The first argument was named 71 times; the second, 43 times; the third, 168 times; the fourth, 112 times; the fifth, 180 times; the sixth, 170 times; the seventh, 70 times; the eighth, 88 times.

Several students completed the list of arguments they found in the Q. by adding the resurrection of Christ. My intention was not to include every possible ground of belief, but to seek information upon the influence of certain of them. Had the resurrection of Christ been on the list, a large proportion of the students would have doubtless marked it.

years hence, we can at least find out those of the men and women who preceded them in college and are now pursuing professional careers. This we shall do in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IX

INVESTIGATION C: THE BELIEF IN GOD  
AND IN IMMORTALITY AMONG AMER-  
ICAN SCIENTISTS, SOCIOLOGISTS,  
HISTORIANS AND PSYCHOL-  
OGISTS

In this investigation, I was able to make use of *American Men of Science*, a volume containing about fifty-five hundred names, and of the membership lists of the American Historical Association, the American Sociological Society, and the American Psychological Association. Any one familiar with these lists will know that their standard of inclusion is rather too low than too high; it would be easy to single out from the membership of the American Psychological Association many persons who could hardly be offended if denied the right to be called psychologists. I say this in order that it may not be imagined that this inquiry deals only with men of very high achievements.

A study of statistics shows that a relatively small number of the members of a group suffice to represent with a high degree of exactness the whole group, provided the selection made be a chance selection. The probable error resulting from such limitation is, moreover, mathematically ascertainable. I have been assured by statisticians that results based on the whole list of fifty-five hundred men of science

and results based on five hundred, would be to all intents and purposes the same. I shall not weary the reader with a mathematical demonstration of the truth of this statement. A practical demonstration will, I am sure, advantageously replace it. Such a proof might be attempted by carrying out two separate, but otherwise identical investigations, each involving five hundred persons taken by a rule of chance from the volume named. Should their conclusions coincide, they could be held to be valid also for the entire fifty-five hundred men listed in *American Men of Science*. This is precisely the procedure I followed, i.e., I carried out separately two identical investigations, each including 500 scientists. In every one of the other groups my investigation included a larger proportion of the whole than in the case of the scientists.

The chief difficulty in the way of statistical investigations such as the present one, is that not all those addressed answer. This may introduce a type of selection that vitiates results. In order to minimize as much as possible this cause of error, I formulated possible beliefs, and requested the recipients of the Q. to mark with a cross all those that were true for them, and I inclosed addressed and stamped envelopes. A minimum of time and thought for answering was thus required. This procedure had the additional advantage of getting all answers in the same forms.

It was not an easy task to formulate satisfactorily for all those to whom the Q. was to be sent, the particular beliefs on which I wished the investigation to bear. Expressions in common use were to be preferred to philosophical and theological terms, for these would not al-

ways have been understood or construed in a uniform sense. As I was not concerned with fine points in the conception of God, it was not necessary to frame the statements so as to satisfy the technical philosopher accustomed to consider a tangle of problems where the ordinary man — and in this respect, our scientists are ordinary men — sees but a relatively simple question. The adequacy of the Q. for men of science, if not for philosophers, will, I think, be admitted when the use I intended to make of the answers is fully known.

Despite the measures taken to facilitate the task of those addressed, it proved necessary to send out a second pressing request, again with addressed and stamped envelope. This was done not only for the 1000 men of science, but also for every other group. The time that elapsed between sending out the first and second requests was not the same for each group. When answers had practically ceased to come in, the second request was dispatched. All answers received later than one day after mailing the second request, were counted as answers to it, although a few of these were no doubt belated responses to the first request. As I had not requested signatures, I had to address again every person included in the investigation, except those who had chosen to give their names.

Friends told me that I should not succeed, and they advanced various reasons. Most of their predictions remained unrealized. A number of those addressed did indeed refuse to answer, and a few made derogatory comments; but on the whole, the members of every group found it possible to answer to their own satisfaction — the philosophers excepted. I shall mention later the special difficulties encountered in the attempt to extend the investigation to philosophers.

The many remarks written in the margin of the re-

turned Q. and the letters of those who would not, could not, or thought they could not answer, have frequently a real psychological interest. I shall take occasion when discussing the causes of failure to answer, to quote some of these utterances. They will throw much light on the reception accorded to the Q.

The *Questionnaires* sent to the two groups of five hundred scientists follow. A slightly different set of questions was sent to the second five hundred and to the other groups. These changes are commented upon below.

### A STATISTICAL INQUIRY

#### (First Form)

Conflicting statements are confidently made regarding the prevalence among civilized Christian nations of the belief in God and in Personal Immortality. Nevertheless sufficient data are not extant to support any opinion.

The accompanying questions are sent to 500 persons taken by chance from those listed in *American Men of Science*, in the hope of securing statistics valid for this whole group. The condition of success is that all those addressed respond. No satisfactorily definite conclusions could be drawn if many of those addressed refused or neglected to answer.

It will take you only a few seconds to make a mark to the right of every statement true for you. Please do it, if at all possible, on receipt of this paper and return it in the inclosed stamped envelope. Your answer may be anonymous.

#### A. CONCERNING THE BELIEF IN GOD.

1. I believe in a God in intellectual and affective com-

munication with man, I mean a God to whom one may pray in the expectation of receiving an answer. By "answer," I do not mean the subjective, psychological effect of prayer.

2. I do not believe in a God as defined above. . . . .  
3. I am an agnostic. . . . .

#### B. CONCERNING THE BELIEF IN PERSONAL IMMORTALITY.

1. I believe in { personal I for all men. . . . .  
conditional I, i. e., for those who have  
reached a certain state of development.  
2. I believe neither in conditional nor in unconditional I  
of the person. . . . .  
3. I am an agnostic. . . . .  
4. Although I cannot believe in P. I.,  
I desire it . . . . . { intensely . . . . .  
moderately . . . . .  
5. I do not desire P. I. . . . .

#### (Second Form)

#### A. CONCERNING THE BELIEF IN GOD.

1. I believe in a God to whom one may pray in the expectation of receiving an answer. By "answer," I mean more than the subjective, psychological effect of prayer. . . . .  
2. I do not believe in a God as defined above. . . . .  
3. I have no definite belief regarding this question. . . . .

#### B. CONCERNING THE BELIEF IN PERSONAL IMMORTALITY, I. E., THE BELIEF IN CONTINUATION OF THE PERSON AFTER DEATH IN ANOTHER WORLD.

1. I believe in { personal Immortality for all men. . . . .  
conditional Immortality, i. e., Immortal-  
ity for those who have reached a cer-  
tain state of development.

2. I believe neither in conditional nor in unconditional Immortality of the person in another world. . . . .
3. I have no definite belief regarding this question. . . . .
4. I desire personal immortality { intensely. . . . .  
moderately. . . . .  
not at all. . . . .

Remarks upon the changes made in the second form of the Q.:—

1. I thought it advisable to leave out the words "in intellectual and affective communication with man" which appear in A 1 of the Q. sent to the first division of 500 scientists. The meaning is sufficiently indicated in the rest of the sentence. By substituting in the same statement "I mean more than," for "I do not mean," the intended meaning becomes clearer and the sense is not changed.

2. Instead of "I am an agnostic," I wrote in the revised Q., both in sections A and B, "I have no definite belief regarding this question." The meaning ascribed by my correspondents to these two formulations will be discussed later.

3. The heading of section B was extended in the second form by the addition of "i. e., the belief in continuation of the person after death in another world." This addition excludes cases of belief in transmigration at death in animal or human forms living on the earth. Few answers if any could have been affected by the change. A similar addition was made to statement B 2.

4. In the first Q., the questions regarding desire for immortality are addressed only to those who do not believe; in the second Q., they are addressed to all alike: believers, disbelievers, and doubters. The answers made to B 4 by the first division are therefore not comparable with those made to B 4 by the second division.

### 1. THE CAUSES OF THE FAILURE TO ANSWER AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As the attitude assumed towards the Q., and the reasons for abstaining to answer were on the whole the same in every group, I shall discuss these matters now, once for all, and with especial reference to the men of science. In the few instances in which the figures and the extracts from letters belong to other groups, I shall indicate their origin.

The reader will find it necessary to remember that in the *Questionnaire* all the statements under A refer to God, and those under B to immortality. A 1 is a statement of belief in a personal God; A 2, one of disbelief in that God; A 3, one of agnosticism or doubtfulness. Similarly, B 1, is a statement of belief in personal immortality, either unconditional or conditional; B 2 one of disbelief; B 3, one of agnosticism or doubtfulness.

#### A. THE FAILURE TO RETURN OR TO MARK THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Almost one quarter of those addressed either returned a blank Q. or did not return it at all. This is a considerable percentage, and were we altogether in the dark as to their cause, these failures would lower considerably the value of the statistics. But, thanks to the remarks of many who refused to answer, and also to certain other data, we are able to disregard some of these blanks or failures to answer as not affecting the investigation, and to classify at least approximately a considerable number of the remainder.

Those who did not return the Q. amount to not quite 10 per cent.; of these, an indeterminable number may be put down as dead, or critically ill, or absent. The failure of these to answer may be considered as not affecting the statistics, since there is no reason to think that the dead, the critically ill, and the absent belong entirely or predominantly to a particular class of believers.

Turning to the 14.7 per cent. whose Q. were returned blank, we observe first that these are not all to be regarded as expressions of unwillingness to answer. Altogether 22 of these were reported as dead, and 26 as not found, away, or ill. The failure of these to answer leaves the investigation unaffected. There remain 99 of the blank Q., that is about 10 per cent. of the total number sent out. A large number of these fall into more or less exactly defined categories, which I shall now characterize and illustrate.

There are many people who do not know what you mean unless you speak in terms of weight and measure. How must the devout believer who "lives with God" be startled when he encounters fellow-men like some of my correspondents. Two greater scientists wrote, for instance:—

"I cannot answer these questions. I do not know what they mean. I have no interest in them, and can hardly conceive of any one wishing to know."

"I have not the slightest desire to answer those questions, either to myself or to any other person."

One person jeered at me for expecting "scientific men" to answer questions "not accessible to proof," questions that are "not matters of knowledge." I

gaped in amazement on reading the two following stout pronouncements:—

"As a scientist my entire attention is directed to matters accessible to proof. Neither of your questions belongs to this category."

"How is it possible for a sane student to answer these questions? They do not deal with phenomena or material which we can investigate. I believe in everything that is."

Well, after all, beliefs, disbeliefs, and doubts exist, they are *real*; and they come into existence without cause no more than physical phenomena. Therefore, seeing that religious beliefs move men to actions of vast consequence, let the psychologist continue to busy himself with them. I have fair hopes that some of these narrow minded scientists may be brought to see, perhaps by means of this investigation, that there is another real world open to scientific study beside the one they acknowledge; and that in fact they themselves, as well as everybody else, live in that world.

A certain number did not answer because they were too completely "at sea." "My views are too vague to be of any value," says one of these. Another excuses himself on the ground that he "has not investigated the subject." Another who has given long hours to considering these problems, states that his opinions "are too indefinite to justify their presentation in the categorical form inquired after." It would seem that the person who "neither believes nor disbelieves," but rejoices "in a suspended judgment," would be in a position to mark A 3 and B 3. He did not do so, however. "I have my doubts,"

writes one who also prefers not to mark A 3 and B 3, "about many of these things, and believe that hypnotism and superstition are the basis of much we believe."

Why did not the person who declares himself a member of the Christian church and answers that he "tries to live up to its teachings," mark the Q.? Are we to infer that he does not accept the dogma of his church, and merely endeavors to live up to its practical teaching?

What a sorry figure this man cuts:—

"I am a Presbyterian by heredity and by profession. I have no wish to be considered ambiguous or a hypocrite; neither have I any wish to leave the beliefs of my fathers. I wish my faith could be as simple as that of some of my relatives who are now dead. If I had children I would have a responsibility that fortunately I do not now carry. I must admit there are many things that I cannot accept as proven."

The opposition between feeling or belief and knowledge appears frequently as a source of difficulty in marking the Q. An historian writes:—

"I have found it impossible to decide how far the beliefs as stated were the result of my own definite, intellectual conclusions based on a fair amount of investigation, and how far they were affected by a very conscious aversion to breaking with my ancestral past. We are doubtless all conscious of wide divergence in belief from the beliefs held by our parents. Yet I personally hesitate to commit myself irrevocably on paper to a statement to this effect."

This person is certainly right in conjecturing that her hesitancy to break with the past is somewhat widely shared. The result is, of course, to swell the number of believers by the addition of many who are not really convinced.

An unusually subtle and complex attitude, involving more than the opposition of belief and knowledge, is revealed in this very interesting letter of a psychologist. I do not know what part in it should be ascribed to downright aboulia, and what to a legitimate unwillingness to forego the least particle of freedom by pinning oneself down to a formulated belief.

"I owe you an apology for not answering your questions before this. . . . I seem to find no question to which I should care to give a categorical answer. Will you let me say, however, that the questions seem to me to trench upon an area which I find in a state of flux a considerable part of the time? They refer to what in my own case I seem to regard as a protean element of consciousness, which like water is now fluid, now a crystallized solid, and now an imperceptible vapor. This element of consciousness, I somehow feel it is important not to reduce to categories, not even to that of indefiniteness or to that of mysticism. . . ."

"In these days of the new ecclesiasticism, the ecclesiasticism of science, when the so called applications of science are actively engaged in formulating, fixing, mechanizing, institutionalizing, and standardizing, I feel, though perhaps at the risk, in this instance, of totally misunderstanding the purpose of a serious piece of scientific research, that one may

silently persist in trying to live, part of the time at least, in or with the fluid medium of shifting belief — now melting and evanishing quite, now precipitating afresh, now firm as a rock on which to stand — of the unsettled and problematic character of which belief science has made us all the more certain, while helping to free us from bondage to externals.”

I sent the writer questions in another form, hoping that now at least he would be able to answer. I got in reply this letter:

“I find it quite disconcerting to seem to be so obliging as still not to answer your Statistical Inquiry. I have tried to give what I could of my reasons for my reluctance in my previous letter. I am not sure that I can completely or accurately account for this reluctance. Very likely I cannot account for it. I regret it none the less, for I would gladly cooperate with you in your investigation; but I seem to be profoundly inhibited for some reason, or lack of reason.”

I should have been surprised and sorry to find among scientists many instances of refusal to answer because of the “privacy” (signatures were not asked for) or the “sacredness” of religious beliefs. Only six, perhaps, belong to the suspicious class of those who try to persuade themselves and others that matters of faith are too sacred to be recorded for a scientific purpose: —

“I feel that these matters are of a personal and private nature, and . . . I do not care to express myself.”

“Those are matters of individual concern only and

a statistical study of them is unnecessary and useless.”

I shall venture to think that the weightier reason for the dislike displayed by most of these “scientists” for research in religious life, is that given in the second clause of the following sentence which I italicize: “Those questions are of too personal a nature to permit of public expression — *even were it possible for me to express or formulate my belief.*”

Several are convinced that the beliefs in question are not matters of knowledge, but of faith, or of “spirit,” and therefore they prefer not to answer: —

“Ideas of a God are to me not matters of scientific knowledge but of faith; and a scientific examination of faiths does no especial good, I therefore prefer not to answer.”

Again, in cases of this last sort, one cannot escape the suspicion that the excuse given covers some other, more real impediment. Why should faith in a personal God and in personal immortality prevent one from stating that faith? Have these believers forgotten the noble and brave example of prophets and apostles who proclaimed their faith even in the face of an angry world? I suspect that had these persons possessed a real and lucid belief, they would have responded to my provocative questions with the quickness of powder to the match. They would have burst out in exclamatory sentences as others of my correspondents did: —

“Of course, every Christian does.”

“I have positive knowledge of God by actual experience.”



"I not only believe firmly in a personal God, but feel certain of his existence."

Closely related to those who will not debase "faith" and "things of the spirit" by utterance, is the position of one who informs me briefly that she will not analyze her religious feelings. Why not? Probably because of a fear that clear-eyed contemplation might entail an irreparable loss. A sociologist confesses that he "almost fears to reason" about these topics. When he attempts it, he "cannot reach the conclusion that a personal God watching over us all and ready to listen to and grant our petitions exists"; but "in moments of exaltation or of sorrow one does not reason about God, but instinctively gives thanks or prays for help and comfort." If this shifting attitude is rare among men of trained minds, it is not infrequent in others. I have had occasion elsewhere to comment upon the effect of feeling and emotion in bringing to the fore old attitudes and beliefs. When thinking is inhibited, the habitual, the traditional gets the upper hand.

Pragmatic principles, in absolute contempt of objective truth, are expressed in several communications. I suppose that perfect worldly wisdom consists in believing in God when advantageous, and in disbelieving in him when belief is disadvantageous. Some of my correspondents have attained to this perfection. Here are the more striking instances of this attitude; they refer to the belief in God:—

"Sometimes, yes; sometimes, no, according to my temporary needs."

"Philosophical discussion of religious matters often afford opportunities for intellectual athletics and mental relaxation, but there is comfort in the belief of the existence of an Almighty without any consideration as to the details of such a belief. . . . Such beliefs do not and should not interfere with the efficiency of a man, or prevent his working out his own salvation in worldly matters."

"Strong belief, and absolutely no knowledge," is admitted by a good many, particularly with reference to immortality. A sociologist, for instance, who unlike the preceding marked both A 1 and B 1, writes, "I have no scientific reasons to back my belief. I believe in immortality because I like it."

But those who, despite absence of all knowledge, behave as if they believed, are not all so outspoken. Sometimes a tone of helplessness and even of shame creeps into the confession:—

"I certainly do not believe in a God defined as above, and yet I use him sometimes as though I did—as though it were a useful custom left over from childhood." (The writer marked A 2 and B 2.)

"Do I believe in a personal God and immortality? If you mean completely and always, certainly not. Practically, I sometimes act as if I believed. There is often definite prayer but no sense of warmth or close contact." (From a psychologist.)

A sociologist who answers A 2, "Intellectually, no," makes the following marginal note: "In crises

a traditional belief recently appeared which astonished me. I felt that my prayer would be answered. My reasoning is freer than my living, my living than my tradition. I have never succeeded in getting away entirely from the dogmatic fear-teaching of parents and Sunday-School."

A few among scientists and also among the other groups, refrained from marking any statement, because the questions "are so phrased that it is practically impossible for thinkers of a certain very advanced but yet quite conservative school to answer them without creating false impressions." Their "real belief is neither expressed by an affirmative nor by a negative answer." The same complaint is voiced by an historian, thus, "The questions relating to God are so formulated as to make it impossible for me to formulate my belief. I would say 'no' to the first two questions. But *I have a belief.*" Others say, similarly: "I fear that I could not state the truth as I see it by merely answering this Q."; or, "I do believe in a God and in prayer, but *not as you have outlined it.*"

These persons rebelled against the limitations imposed by my statements upon the expression of their philosophico-religious opinions. They assumed that I wished to find out what they believed, and complained that marking the statements submitted to them would not convey a sufficient idea of their own opinion. As a matter of fact, I was interested merely to discover whether or not they held the *particular beliefs formulated in the Q.* *What else they might believe, fell outside my present concern.* I

asked, "Do you believe this or not?" The answer these persons made is, in effect, "We cannot reply because we believe something else!" This illogical objection derived strength, I think, from a fear that the denial of God as defined, would class them with "degraded" materialists. That fear has little foundation, for it is well known that to-day the denial in question is as likely as not to point to an idealistic view of life. The conclusions of this book will show what inference I draw from these statistics.

B. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DEFINITION OF GOD  
AS CONTAINED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

There remain to be considered a number of cases of misunderstanding A 1 which either prevented marking or led to an erroneous marking of the statements concerning God.

In a long letter a physical scientist declares that the meaning of the expression "answer to prayer" is not clear to him and begs permission to ask whether in the Q. it means:—

"(1) That the specific thing or change among things prayed for shall follow the prayer;

"(2) That the specific thing or change prayed for, or *something which from the point of view of the petitioner is equally desirable*, shall follow the prayer; or

"(3) In addition to the occurrence of (1) or (2) above, the offering of prayer is a *sine qua non* of the occurrence of (1) or (2); or

"(4) Has the term some meaning not covered by the above?"

The meaning of A 1, has been obvious to nearly all my scientific correspondents. They have understood that the specific thing, or change prayed for, or something equally desirable following the prayer, does not constitute an answer in the sense intended, unless *this "thing" or "change" be the result of the will of a superhuman Being moved by the prayer.* The seriousness of this gentleman's desire "to return a useful answer" may be measured by the circumstance that he does not say which one of the several meanings he takes the trouble to distinguish is the one he favors. We may be assured, however, that he is not in a position to mark A 1.

Another physical scientist formulates briefly his beliefs and leaves it to me to place him in the category to which he belongs. He writes:—

"You ask if I believe in God, and I say, 'Certainly,' for otherwise I should be simply asserting my own comprehension of the world and life. Such claims I would be very far from making. . . . Second, you ask if I believe in a God who upsets natural law at the request of prayer. I should say, 'Certainly not.'"

At this point we come to the cause of the writer's unwillingness to mark any of the statements under A. He disclaims any right to assert "that the expression of the desire of any individual could not possibly have any effect upon the course of events. Such expression certainly does have effect upon the course of events since one's own feelings and purposes are only a part of that course." The writer is evidently right in this last affirmation. But since the Q. expressly includes effects of prayer due

to the action of a divine Being determined by prayer, why did he not mark A 2?

A third physical scientist, who also did not answer, wrote:—

"I should be pleased to learn in some detail just what your first question means. Was it to ask if I believe in a material God who would or might alter or revoke natural law and thus fulfill an expressed request for some material thing which I might desire or request? If so, my answer would have been definitely, 'No.'"

My answer to this correspondent ran somewhat as follows, "The statements of the Q. define neither God nor the kind of request answered by him, as material or spiritual. Why, then, construe in the sense of material? *Any kind of response* proceeding from the will of a God moved to action by man's supplication or desire, falls under 'answer' as defined in A 1."

Two other scientists, and several belonging to other groups, refrained from marking, but declared a belief in a God who does not interfere with his own laws. And six scientists—I shall not speak of similar instances in the other groups—marked A 1 although they also reject God's intervention in natural laws. They say, "The answer is always through the mind of man and never 'breaks' a natural law." Or, "I do not believe in any interruption or subversion of known laws of nature. I do, however, believe in a supreme being." Or, "I should not expect an answer involving any upset of the established order of the physical universe."

Did these six scientists mark correctly in marking

A 1? Any one thinking that because of the action of prayer upon God's will, something will happen that would not otherwise take place, marks correctly when making a cross opposite A 1. But do all these persons entertain that opinion of prayer? If they do, they exclude at least the human mind from the realm in which God cannot, or does not interfere; they are of the opinion of the theologian who teaches that "God can excite new centers of association of ideas, can arrest old associations; all intellectual activity being subservient to feeling. He can produce whatever doctrines and ideas He wishes."<sup>1</sup> This distinction between the relation maintained by God with the physical and with the psychological world is not infrequent among people of some culture. Such is probably the opinion of the person who holds that "the answer is always through the mind of man."

Detailed acquaintance with the orderliness of physical nature dispossessed God of that realm. Will not familiarity with mental and social laws dispossess him of the psychic world also? The statistics of the beliefs of the psychological and sociological groups give, it seems, an affirmative answer to this query. For the psychologist the mental life is as completely within the realm of law as the physical; therefore, if the existence of law is a bar to God's action, he is excluded from intervening in the psychological life of man as well as in the physical universe.

<sup>1</sup> H. Bois: *Inspiration and Revelation; Unpublished Lectures to Theological Students: 1902-1903*. Quoted by E. Ponsoye, in *Expérience et Acte de Foi; A Doctor's Dissertation: Valence; 1905*. Pages 63, 64.

Are we to suppose that all those who marked A 1 without comment accept the possibility of divine intervention both in the physical and in the mental world? Most of them very probably do, but a number limit God's action to the psychic world.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the term "subjective," I must observe that one psychologist interpreted that term in the strict sense, and therefore marked A 1. He wrote, "I have this belief (A 1) on the basis of personal experience which I can interpret in no other way. But do you not see that the man who does not believe in God, but holds to the strictest form of the mechanical, rather than the spiritual theory of the world, is above all others logically bound to hold that such tremendous facts as the constant prayers of hundreds of millions cannot possibly fail to have objective effects?" The effects the writer calls here "objective," are the results of prayer which pass beyond the praying individual, for instance those affecting other persons and which, nevertheless, are not due to the action of a divinity acting in consequence of the prayer. Prayer exerts, incontrovertibly, such objective effects. But they are usually included in the expression "subjective effect of prayer," as currently used. In any case, statement A 1 implies clearly that the "effect" must come from God, at the instigation of the petitioner.

If we suppose that this writer admits only the strictly subjective and the objective *psychological* effects of prayer, and not the determination of God's will by it, he belongs with those who do *not* believe A 1. Errors resulting from this misunderstanding of the meaning given to "subjective" in the Q., would unduly increase the number of the believers. I do not think, however, that many persons took the word in its strict signification. As a matter of fact, the present instance is the only one which has come to my notice.

I am not sure that, except in the case of the psychologists, the addition to A 1 of the word "objective" (the statement of the Q. would then have read, "I mean more than the subjective and objective *psychological* effects of prayer") would not have caused more trouble than its omission. I find even my philosophic correspondents writing "subjective effects," when obviously they intend to include what the person cited means by "objective."

C. THE INTERPRETATION OF A 2 AND B 2<sup>3</sup>

These statements do not necessarily imply a conviction of the non-existence of God and of immortality. They may mean merely the *absence* of the conviction of their existence. In that case statements A 2 and B 2 have approximately the same meaning as statements A 3 and B 3 (agnosticism or absence of definite belief). But, although the Q. asks that every statement "true for you" be marked, only a small percentage of those who marked 3, marked also 2. One may, therefore, probably regard the majority of those who marked A 2 and B 2, and not also A 3 and B 3, as desirous of doing more than affirm the absence of the belief in God and immortality, they may be taken to have intended to express positive belief in their non-existence.

Readers may ask themselves why I did not formulate statements which would have separated more definitely those who merely lack the beliefs expressed in A 1 and B 1, from those ready to affirm their falsity. But can a sharp line of demarcation be drawn between these two attitudes? Evidently not; the terms, *belief*, *unbelief*, *doubt*, *uncertainty*, are susceptible of endless gradation. "The questions do not provide for degrees and intensities," complains one of those who returned a blank Q. This is unfortunately true, but in attempting to refine, I should probably have made matters worse. As a matter of fact, few were seriously troubled by the

<sup>3</sup> A 2: I do not believe in God as defined above. B 2: I believe neither in conditional nor in unconditional immortality of the person.

indefiniteness of these terms, and my purpose was as well, perhaps better served by the statements of the Q., as by any others; for, the persons who could affirm a belief in the two great propositions of Christianity are actually separated from those who could not; and, in addition, those who were willing to do more than affirm absence of belief and doubt, were enabled to do so, and usually did so, by marking A 2 and B 2, without marking also A 3 and B 3.

Something of the variety of attitudes and the fluidity of the meanings which should be covered by a theoretically, if not practically, perfect Q. is suggested in the following extracts from two letters written by eminent psychologists:—

"Question 3 really represents my position, which would rather be agnostic in the purely negative sense of the word, not the positive and aggressive sense. My feeling is that for all I know, there may be a personal God who answers prayer, and there may be a personal immortality. The surface facts do not seem to me to favor either, but I have been wrong so many times in my life that I am emphatically not ready to deny the possibility of either. What the possibilities of the universe are, is surely one of the things I do not know."

"These things have for the past several years become so entirely indifferent to me — save as matters for psychological study — that I find it difficult to answer the questions. Ten years ago I should have said I do not believe — I am an agnostic (possibly with reservations as to precise definition) — I do not believe — I do not desire. Now it seems to me that, while there is no chance of my ever be-

lieving or desiring, to say that I do not believe and do not desire is to make too positive a statement. What I mean is that, if I could bring myself to any serious consideration, I might decide (and probably should decide) No, again; but serious consideration strikes me as waste of time; these things are just non-existent for me; I can no more say: 'I do not desire immortality' than I can say, 'I do not desire to reign in hell.' I may say, 'I do not believe in God' is a thing I should never think of saying, because it implies some interest in the question."

D. THE MARKING OF A 3 AND B 3<sup>4</sup> IN THE FIRST AND IN THE SECOND FORMULATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Those who marked A 3 and B 3 occasionally explained their meaning by phrases such as these: "Neither belief nor disbelief"; "In the dark"; "I mean merely the absence of belief"; "I have no sufficient knowledge about it." Three *know* that "it is impossible for any one to know anything about such matters." An attitude representative of a large number of "agnostics" is expressed in these words, "I believe in a spiritual life here and now. The trend of the universe is towards the higher and better. Righteousness here is sufficient for me. Of God and the future I am ignorant. The best impulses of man are not meaningless. I am content, I believe, not to know where evidence is lacking."

It appears very clearly from the answers that A 3 in the first Q. was marked by agnostics in the

<sup>4</sup> A 3 and B 3, in the first Q.: "I am an agnostic"; in the second, "I have no definite belief concerning this question."

exact sense of the term, and also by persons who, without denying the possibility of knowledge, are themselves in doubt. It is equally clear that in the revised Q., A 3 was marked not only by persons with indefinite views, but also by genuine agnostics. I have therefore put all the answers to A 3 and B 3 under the double head "Agnostics and Doubters."

E. THE INTERPRETATION OF "PERSONAL IMMORTALITY"

It was not intended that believers in continuation after death without preservation of the consciousness of identity should mark B 1. If any have, the number of disbelievers recorded in the tables is smaller than it should be.

The anticipation of continued individual existence without the preservation of the consciousness of identity satisfies neither the desire for justice nor that for the perpetuation of love and friendship; it is not the immortality for which the human heart commonly yearns, nor is it the Christian conception of it.

F. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION OF THE FAILURES TO MARK THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND OF ITS INTERPRETATION

The 14.7 per cent. of scientists who returned blank Q., include eight per cent. who could not answer for physical reasons (death, severe illness, or absence), or else gave some clue to their opinions. The utterances of most of the latter are sufficiently explicit (as the reader may have judged for himself by the preceding quotations) to show that their be-

liefs, were they entered upon the statistical tables, would increase rather than decrease the proportion of non-believers in A 1.

A similar statement is true regarding the part of the Q. dealing with immortality. The number of those who marked B 2 and B 3 is less than the whole number of those who do not believe B 1. Why, for instance, did the person who wrote the following refrain from marking any of the statements on immortality? "I have no opinion and do not care to the extent of striving to understand the unknowable." He could, it seems, have marked B 3. Another, who also refrained from marking the Q., declared the subject "an open one." Why, then, not mark the affirmation of "no definite belief" made in B 3? The same question may be asked of others who make similar remarks, and in particular of the person who calls himself a "materialist." I may add that only once did this term appear in the correspondence occasioned by this inquiry.

As to the failure to return the Q. (10 per cent.), an indeterminate number is to be ascribed to death, to critical illness, or to absence. The information derived from the comments of those who returned but did not mark the statements, and in particular of those who answered only at the second request (see the discussion of table XXIII), indicates that, had the remainder of this 10 per cent. answered, the proportion of disbelievers would very probably have been increased.

The proportions of Q. not returned, or returned blank in the other groups, will be mentioned in the proper place. In every case, except that of the his-

torians, they will be found to be less, and in some cases very much less, than for the scientists.

The foregoing survey of the causes of failure to answer should not leave us under the impression that on the whole the Q. was frowned upon. After all, the proportion of those who raised objections is small. Two of these are conspicuous for their picturesque language:

"A man must be lacking a job or a mind to go into this business."

"This is a lot of damned rot."

Strange as it may seem, these two persons marked the Q.; the first A 1 and B 1; the other, A 2 and B 2. A large number wrote approvingly and congratulated the author upon having undertaken this research; the great majority complied with the request for information and otherwise remained silent. In the main, the reception accorded to this inquiry and its results should make impossible in the future the rough and ready adverse judgment which many are in the habit of formulating as to the possibility of obtaining, by the *questionnaire* method, definite and reliable knowledge upon questions such as those under investigation here.

The chief result I hoped to achieve by means of the statements of part A of the Q. should now be evident. I wanted to separate the believers in a personal God from all others, even from those who, rejecting that belief, entertain nevertheless a spiritual conception of ultimate reality.

In the sphere of practical religion gods are defined by the attributes implied in their worship.

Now, the worship of the God of the Christian Church, in all its branches, implies a Being in direct, affective, and intellectual communication with man. No one who has ever entered a Christian Church and opened a Prayer Book, whether Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Unitarian, can fail to know that when both the physical and the psychic world are conceived as subject to immutable laws; or when these laws, although regarded as not absolutely fixed, are no longer thought of as in any degree subject to human desires acting upon a Being able to gratify them, Christian liturgies and hymnologies have lost their object. In such a world, prayer for rain, for protection from sin, for pardon; songs of praise and adoration — these, and nearly everything else in the church services, have become at best atrophied survivals of once potent means of salvation.

I am well aware that there are those who say, "No; these things have not lost their meaning, they have assumed another meaning." Why should earnest men quibble? The practical question raised by this research is precisely whether those for whom these "things" have changed their meaning, *as they actually have*, should nevertheless strive to preserve the established forms of worship.

## II. THE SCIENTISTS

This part of Investigation C is based upon answers received from 1000 persons chosen by a rule of chance from *American Men of Science*. It is separated, for a reason already indicated, into two divisions of 500 each; and these again fall into two subdivisions including 300 persons of lesser and 200

of greater distinction.<sup>5</sup> Every other group of investigation C was likewise divided into "lesser" and "greater" men. In one division of the scientists, I kept separate the answers of the physical, from those of the biological scientists, and was thus able to show what influence training in these sciences has upon the belief in God and immortality.

<sup>5</sup>The 300 less eminent men of the first division were selected by taking the first name on every other page of *American Men of Science*; and in addition, as this did not provide the desired number, the last name on every fifteenth page. In case one of the names so found was starred, the first unstarred name following, or preceding was taken instead. The 200 eminent men were found by taking every fifth starred name in the volume. Since there are in the whole directory 1000 starred names, this method produced the desired 200 names.

In the second division, the 300 less eminent men were found by taking the second name on every other page, and the name before the last on every fifteenth page. When a starred name, or a name which had been used in the first division was encountered, it was replaced by the nearest available name. The 200 eminent men were found by taking every fifth starred name, beginning at the end of the volume.

I left my correspondents in ignorance of the distinction I was making in lesser and greater men. A slight difference in the size of the Q. was used as a means of keeping separate the answers from the two classes. The answers from the physical scientists were kept distinct from those of the biologists by a difference in the printing of the Q.

The choice of the 1000 starred names in *American Men of Science* was made by Dr. James McKeen Cattell with the cooperation of twelve of the most distinguished men in each science. From these men, Dr. Cattell asked and received, for each science, twelve lists containing a definite number of names arranged in the order of their distinction, according to the opinion of the makers of the lists. From the twelve lists in each science, Dr. Cattell compiled, according to a method described in an Appendix to *American Men of Science*, the lists of names starred in that volume.



The sciences and the occupations represented in the first division are indicated in chart III. The upper figure in each square of the table refers to the lesser; the lower one, to the greater men. It appears that college and university professors make up over 60 per cent. of the total. The next two larger groups are of men employed by the government (12 per cent.), and in industries (11 per cent.).

*The Beliefs in God and Immortality.*—In the two divisions of scientists taken together, the believers in God (A 1) amount to 41.8 per cent. of the number of those who answered. If we put together the *disbelievers*, (41.5 per cent.), i. e., those who marked A 2, and the *agnostics* or *doubters*, i. e., those who marked A 3, we get 58.2 per cent. of *non-believers*.<sup>6</sup>

If the lesser men are compared with the greater, the number of believers become, for the former, 48.2 per cent. of the lesser men who answered; and for the greater men, 31.6 per cent. of the greater men who answered. Thus it appears that, among the lesser men, believers and non-believers are nearly equal, while over two thirds of the greater men are not able to affirm belief in the God of the Christian churches. The reliability of these figures, when taken to indicate a difference due to intellectual ability and knowledge, and to traits making for success in the professions concerned, might be questioned if quite similar differences were not found in

<sup>6</sup> I shall use this term throughout, to designate by one term both those who marked A2 (the disbelievers) and those who marked A3 (the agnostics or doubters).

CHART III  
OCCUPATIONS OF THE MEN OF SCIENCE OF  
DIVISION I

	Physical Mathemat. Sciences	Biolog. Sciences	Psychol. and Philos.	Sociolo. and Educat.	Totals in per cents.
College and Univ. {	107	57	6	3	58.
Professors .... {	73	52	5	5	68.
Government ser- {	26	10	—	—	12.
vice ..... {	17	6	—	—	12.
Industry ..... {	38	3	—	—	14.
	12	—	—	1	6.
Lower School {	7	4	2	—	4.
Teachers .... {	1	—	—	—	—
Physicians and {	—	10	—	—	3.
Surgeons ..... {	—	3	—	—	1.5
Museums ..... {	1	2	—	6	3.
	—	6	1	—	3.5
Research ..... {	5	2	—	—	2.
	9	2	1	1	7.
Unclassified .... {	6	3	—	—	3.
	1	3	—	—	2.

*Notes:*—The upper figure in each space refers to the lesser; the lower one, to the greater men of science.

The percentages (last column to the right) are of the total number of lesser or greater men, as the case may be.

It will be noticed that a few psychologists, sociologists, and educators got into this division. This was not intended. In the second division physical and biological scientists only were included. With this difference, this table may stand also, in a general way, for the second division.

every one of the other groups, both regarding God and immortality.

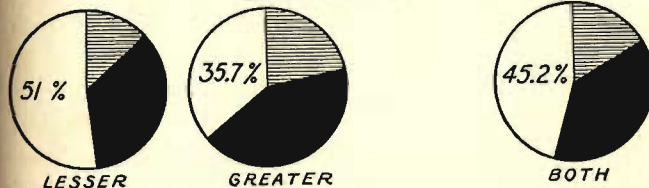
In this group, as well as in every other, the number of believers in immortality is larger than the number of believers in God. This is an interesting fact. When the two divisions are taken together, the believers in immortality are found to be very nearly equal to the non-believers, the proportions are respectively 50.6 per cent. and 49.4 per cent. If we compare the lesser with the greater men, we get 59.3 per cent. of lesser, against 36.9 per cent. of greater believers.

Among the greater men, believers, disbelievers, and agnostics or doubters, number each about one third of the total number of those who returned an answer.

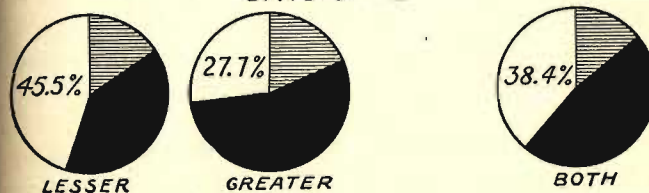
If, instead of taking the two divisions together, we consider them separately, differences of the same kind, but a little less for the first, and somewhat larger for the second division are to be observed with regard to both beliefs (see chart IV). The difference between the lesser and the greater men of the second division is shown by the figures 45.5 per cent. and 27.7 per cent., for believers in God; and by 52.8 per cent. and 35.2 per cent., for believers in immortality.

It is noteworthy that the number of those who announce agnostic or indefinite opinions concerning immortality is greater than the number of disbelievers. This is especially marked among the greater men of the second division: disbelievers, 25.4 per cent.; agnostics and doubters, 43.7 per cent. They feel much less hesitation in affirming disbelief

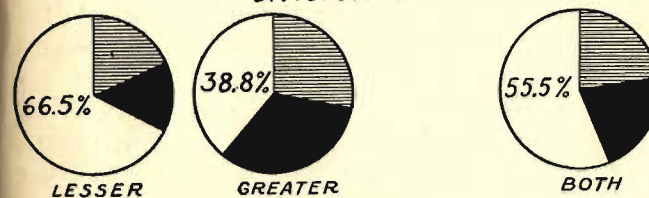
CHART IV  
BELIEF IN GOD  
DIVISION I



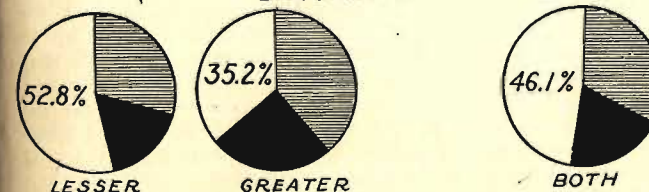
DIVISION II



BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY  
DIVISION I



DIVISION II



BELIEVERS
  DISBELIEVERS
  AGNOSTICS & DOUBTERS

in God: disbelievers, 52.7 per cent.; doubtful opinions, 20.9 per cent.<sup>7</sup> It would be interesting to know how far the recent efforts of the Psychological Researchers have led to a shift from disbelief in immortality to a suspension of judgment.

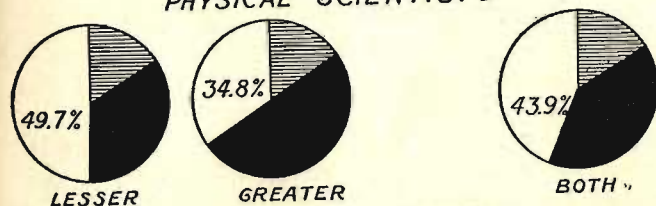
*Comparison of the Physical with the Biological Scientists; Second Division.*—The biologists produce a much smaller number of believers in God and in immortality than the physicists (see chart V). The figures are, for the believers in God: physicists, 43.9 per cent; biologists, 30.5 per cent; and for the believers in immortality, 50.7 per cent. against 37 per cent.

There are fewer believers among the greater men, whether physicists or biologists. The smallest percentage of believers is found among the greater biologists; they count only 16.9 per cent. of believers in God and 25.4 per cent. of believers in immortality. As many as 59.3 per cent. of greater biologists express disbelief in God, and 31.7 per cent. in immortality. The discussion of these interesting figures had best be deferred until the results from the other groups have been set forth.

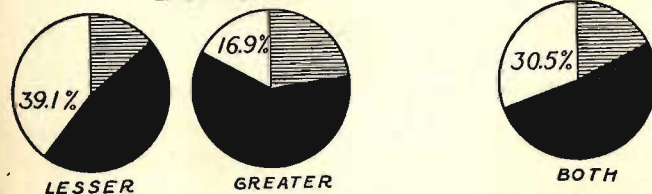
<sup>7</sup> In several instances the percentages given in the text for believers, disbelievers, and agnostics or doubters, sum up to more than one hundred. The reason of this anomaly is that some persons marked both disbelief and agnosticism or doubt (statements 2 and 3). Among the men of science, for instance, 15 lesser and 11 greater men of division I, and 5 lesser and 2 greater men of division II marked both A2 and A3; in no other group did this happen as frequently.

In the graphic representations I counted as disbelievers all those who marked both statements.

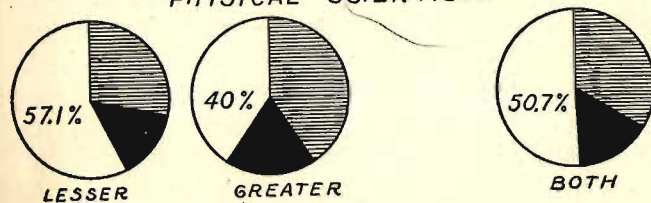
CHART V  
BELIEF IN GOD<sup>7</sup>  
PHYSICAL SCIENTISTS



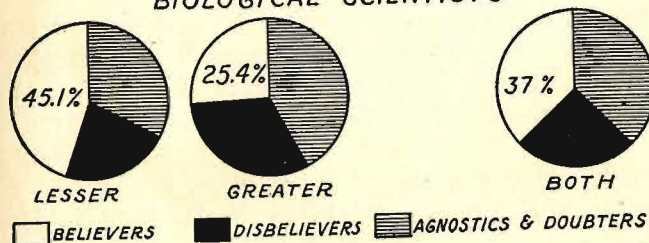
BIOLOGICAL SCIENTISTS



BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY  
PHYSICAL SCIENTISTS



BIOLOGICAL SCIENTISTS



*The Desire for Immortality.*— Among savage and semi-civilized populations every one believes in immortality because directly observable facts seem to establish continuation with absolute certainty; but no one desires to enter the other life. With us it is different. Of those who answered my Q. all who profess belief in immortality, with the exception of three in each division, express also a desire for it. Even of those who do not believe, a considerable number would find great solace in the assurance of a future life.

"I should be very glad if the evidence seemed sufficient to warrant marking the first statement in each part of the Q., since to my mind there would be considerable comfort in both beliefs," writes one of my correspondents. Another, who has felt obliged to mark A 2 and B 2 because he has "not found the slightest trace of evidence" for God or immortality "in the course of 54 years of life," confesses that he "sincerely abhors" his position.

The facts and the arguments known to my correspondents are apparently quite insufficient to convince all those who would find satisfaction in the expectation of an after life.

With the normally constituted individual, the realization of the absence of ground for a belief usually abates, and even removes the desire for it. Such is apparently the experience of the person who would desire immortality if he considered it "at all probable." The reasonable man tries to suppress desire for the unattainable, and sometimes succeeds. Several marginal notes on the Q. affirm this triumph of reason. But the desire for immortality

is usually too strong, either because deep-rooted in human nature or kept alive artificially, to yield to lack of evidence. In the second division the number of non-believers who desire immortality is equal to 20 per cent. of all those who marked any of the statements concerning immortality.

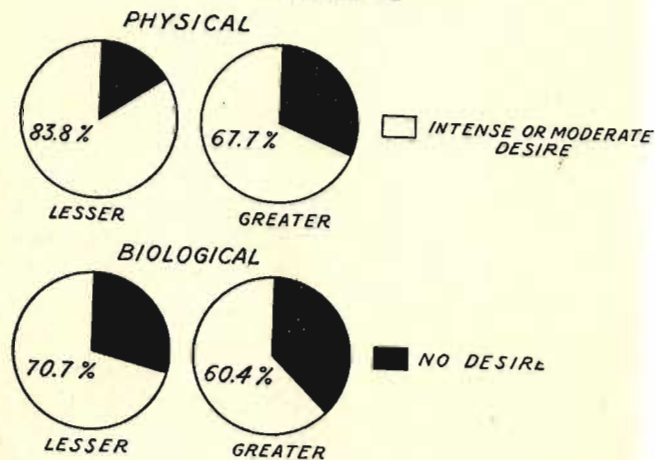
In the two divisions taken together, only two disbelievers desire immortality intensely; while of those who marked B 3, 29 desire it intensely. This fact should be construed both as indicating the destructive effect of disbelief upon desire, and the influence of strong desire upon belief.

The prospect of immortality leaves many believers very nearly indifferent. They say, "I almost never think of it"; or, "It does not seem to influence my life"; and the like. In order to form some opinion of the vitality of this belief, we should consult the answers to the statements concerning desire for immortality. Twenty-seven per cent. of those who in the two divisions marked any of the statements, do not at all desire immortality, 39 per cent. desire it moderately, and 34 per cent. intensely. (For the statistics of the lesser and greater men considered separately, see chart VI.)

For some unstated reason, 24 persons who marked A 1 and B 1 left B 4 unmarked. The only information available concerning these persons is contained in two remarks: "I do not think about immortality"; "I am indifferent to it." One may conjecture that still others of these 24 were in the same situation. They must have found all three statements under B 4 too decidedly affirmative to represent fairly their attitude, for they neither desire

immortality intensely, nor moderately, nor yet do they desire it not at all. They are rather, on the whole, indifferent. In any case, it may be assumed that, had they felt keen desire, they would have indicated it.

CHART VI



So few genuinely old-fashioned utterances are to be found in my correspondence, that I quote this model of pious resignation: "I desire immortality in so far as it is the Lord's will." A disbeliever says curtly, "I would dread it."

### III. THE HISTORIANS

The last membership list of the American Historical Association was published in 1911. It contains about 2800 names, a part only of whom are professional historians. In order to make this

group as nearly as possible comparable with the men of science, I limited the investigation to professors of history in colleges and universities, leaving out, however, the professors of history in Roman Catholic institutions and all professors of Church history. The list thus prepared numbered 375 persons. One hundred of these were selected as greater historians. Of the remainder, 102 were singled out according to a rule of chance similar to the one followed in the case of the scientists, and designated "lesser men."<sup>8</sup> The other names were disregarded.

*The Questionnaires not Returned, or Returned Unanswered.*—Six Q. were returned unopened, and 33 others were never heard from. We may probably account for this large proportion on the ground that the membership list of the American Historical Association which I used, although the most recent one, was over three years old. Many of the Q. not heard from had no doubt been addressed to persons who had died or were absent from home or were seriously ill.

Of the returned Q., twelve from greater, and seven from lesser historians, were blank. But here again, as in the case of the scientists, comments make it

<sup>8</sup> I do not claim that these lists are perfect. Limitation of time induced me to be satisfied with a list of greater men compiled from two initial lists prepared by competent persons; more was not necessary. *The only criticism that might be directed against the statistics on the ground that certain names were not accurately ranked, is that the differences shown to exist between the lesser and the greater historians are smaller than they would have been had the lists been more carefully prepared.* This criticism I would accept, with the reservation that, in my opinion, the error is a very small one indeed.

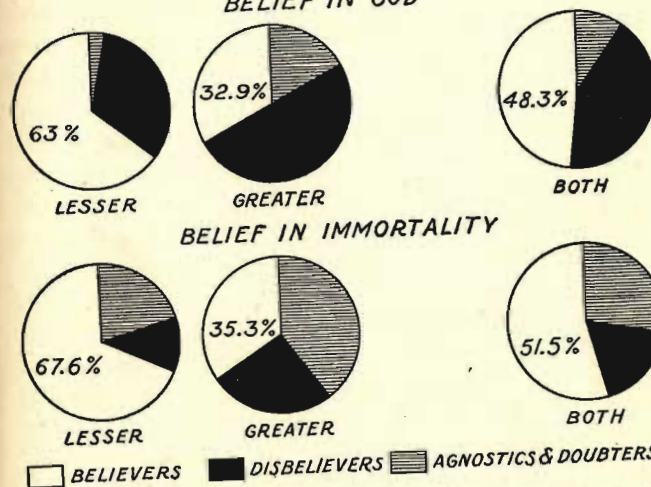
possible to classify a considerable number which would on the whole increase the percentage of non-believers. Persons who will not put their names "to a written creed," or "do not care to make any definite statement," are in any case not ardent believers in propositions A1 and B1. They could not have said, as did one of their number who marked these statements: "With me it is not only a conviction; it is a fellowship and an experience of great reality." The tables include, however, only those who marked the statements. Four of those addressed were reported away and one as dead. Other blank Q. probably fall into the same categories. For a detailed discussion of the statistical significance of the Q. returned unanswered, I beg to refer the reader to a preceding section.

*The Beliefs in God and in Immortality.*—There is little difference between the greater historians (see chart VII) and the greater scientists; only about one-third of each believe in God. The proportions are not very different regarding immortality (see chart VII). If, however, the lesser historians are compared with the lesser scientists, a marked difference appears. The former include a much larger number of believers than the latter: 63 per cent. against 48 per cent. A similar disparity exists with regard to immortality.

In round numbers, the proportion of historian non-believers in God among greater men is about equal to that of believers among the lesser men, namely two-thirds of the whole number of those who answered. Of the 36.9 per cent. of non-believing

lesser men, as many as 34.2 per cent.; and of the 67.1 per cent. of non-believing greater men, as many as 50 per cent. affirmed positive disbelief in God (A2). The contrast between the lesser and the greater men is hardly less regarding immortality.

CHART VII  
BELIEF IN GOD



Three who marked A1 disclaim any belief in "miraculous intervention with the laws of nature," or "in suspension of natural laws." Two affirm a hope of immortality. One of these marked neither B1 nor B2; the other marked B2.

*The Desire for Immortality.*—The figures reveal nothing of general interest not apparent in the figures for the scientists (chart VI). Forty-five per cent. of the non-believers desire immortality

either moderately or intensely. Of the believers, only one affirms the absence of desire. The number of greater men who do not desire immortality is nearly double that of the lesser men in the same situation.<sup>9</sup>

#### IV. THE SOCIOLOGISTS

The last membership list of the American Sociological Association (published in 1913) contains approximately 580 names, a large number of whom are of persons who may be called professional sociologists neither in the practical nor in the academic sense. I thought I might, without increasing the total number addressed and without giving up the comparison of lesser with greater professors, enlarge the interest of the inquiry by making a group of sociologists who are not teachers of sociology. Accordingly, I prepared with the help of two competent collaborators a list of 23 (it should have been 25) greater professors, and I marked 25 of the remaining professors according to a rule of chance.<sup>10</sup> Of the non-teaching sociologists, 149

<sup>9</sup> One who did not mark belief, qualifies thus his affirmation of desire, "if [the other life] is not radically different from the present." Another who marked both conditional immortality and moderate desire, adds, "but merely on account of the instinctive clinging to life, and not from any rational conception of the nature of the life hereafter. Annihilation is preferable either to hell or to singing psalms in heaven." One who marked B3 finds it impossible to answer the questions concerning desire without defining the conditions of immortality. A person who accepts "the Roman Catholic Church doctrine" abstained from marking any statement under B.

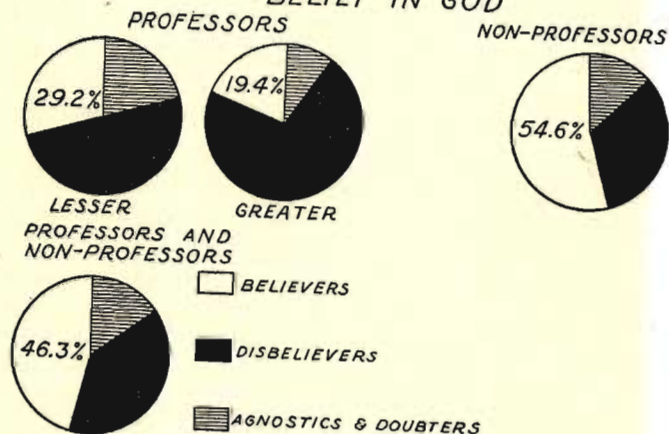
<sup>10</sup> The Russell Sage Foundation was included among the colleges and universities. Professors in Roman Catholic institutions were excluded.

were selected, also according to a rule of chance. I had thus three lists, two of which were of professors, numbering altogether 197 names.

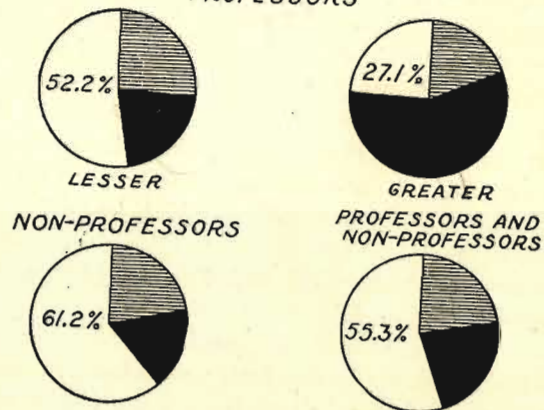
*The Questionnaires not returned or returned unanswered.*—The percentage of Q. not returned is much less for the sociologists than for the historians and less also than for the scientists. Shall we credit sociologists with deeper interest and greater confidence in statistical investigations? Certainly it is true that the statistical method of research is the sociologist's very own, and that he is much more generally familiar with its possibilities than the scientist or the historian. However that may be, every one of the 23 greater sociologists returned the Q. and only three of them were blank. Of the 25 lesser men, 24 filled the Q., one only remaining unaccounted for. The non-teaching sociologists did not do so well. Fourteen per cent. of these ignored the Q. Four Q. were returned blank, two of these because of the death of the addressee; a third contained the following, "All wise men are of one religion, but this wise man never tells which." I venture the opinion that wise men of this sort are not in a position to mark A1. Five Q. came back unopened, with the inscription, "Not found."

*The Beliefs in God and in Immortality.*—The professors of sociology separate themselves sharply from the non-academic sociologists. Regarding the belief in God, the latter stand about midway between the lesser scientists and the lesser historians (54.6 per cent. of believers; see chart VIII).

CHART VIII  
BELIEF IN GOD



BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY  
PROFESSORS



Whereas of the 45 professors who marked the Q. no more than 24.4 per cent. are believers in God. When the greater professors are considered separately, the difference in the number of believers and non-believers is accentuated; only 19.4 per cent. of them marked A1. These figures are approximately the same as those for the greater biologists.

It is not difficult to explain the particular place occupied by the sociologists and the biologists in this investigation. When the student of physical laws has come to accept determinism in the physical world, he may and often does keep for the less generally understood biological and sociological phenomena the traditional belief in divine intervention. The biologist and the sociologist, however, better acquainted with the natural causes of these phenomena than their brothers of the physical sciences, find it just as impossible to admit God's action in the biological and sociological domains as in the physical.

The figures referring to immortality suggest no particular comment. As in the other groups, the number of believers in immortality is greater than the number of believers in God. The features characteristic of preceding groups reappear here. Of the non-professing sociologists who marked B1, one believes merely "in the possibility" of immortality; and another treats immortality "as a working hypothesis."

*The Desire for Immortality.*—The only point deserving special mention is the large proportion of the non-professional group who desire immortality



intensely. In all other respects, the more general remarks made with reference to the corresponding figures for historians and scientists apply also to the sociologists.<sup>11</sup>

#### V. THE PSYCHOLOGISTS

The list of members of the American Psychological Association for 1914 contains 288 names. I eliminated the names of all those who do not teach psychology (making an exception, however, in favor of those engaged in scientific psychological research), those teaching in Roman Catholic institutions and exclusively in medical schools,<sup>12</sup> and those who are decidedly educators or philosophers rather than psychologists. This last exclusion was the more appropriate that I intended to investigate separately the beliefs of philosophers.

<sup>11</sup> From the comments it appears that several abstained from marking B4 because the "conditions" were not defined. They said, "I desire immortality under some conditions." Others refrained from expressing complete absence of desire because they were merely "indifferent." On the other hand, one who had marked moderate desire describes his attitude as one of "practical indifference." In one case the desire is a "matter of intellectual interest" pure and simple. I add the comments of two persons, neither of whom marked B1, although they both expressed desire for immortality.

"The answer to B4 depends largely upon my physical condition and the weather. The day when one feels immortal, one intensely desires immortality."

"I desire fullness of life, not all its qualities and activities; life in all its best relations and noble purposes. The desire involves immortality, though its contents is qualitative rather than temporal."

<sup>12</sup> My reason for eliminating those teaching exclusively in medical schools, is that these men are usually physiologists rather than psychologists.

In a list thus reduced to about two-thirds of its original length, fifty names were singled out as those of the more distinguished psychologists; and, marking the remaining names according to a rule of chance, I obtained 57 lesser psychologists.

*The Questionnaires not Returned or Returned Unanswered.*—Four greater men did not return the Q. ("absence" was the cause in one instance). Eight returned unanswered blanks. Of the lesser psychologists, none failed to return the Q.; and, of the four who returned blanks, two explained at some length their views. The letter of one of these was published in a preceding section.<sup>13</sup>

*The Belief in God.*—The proportion of believers (24.2 per cent., see chart IX) is almost the same as among the teaching sociologists (24.4 per cent.). The greater psychologists yield the smallest proportion of believers of any of the groups investigated, namely 13.2 per cent. This result bears out the explanation I ventured as to the differences in the number of believers observed among the several classes of scientists.

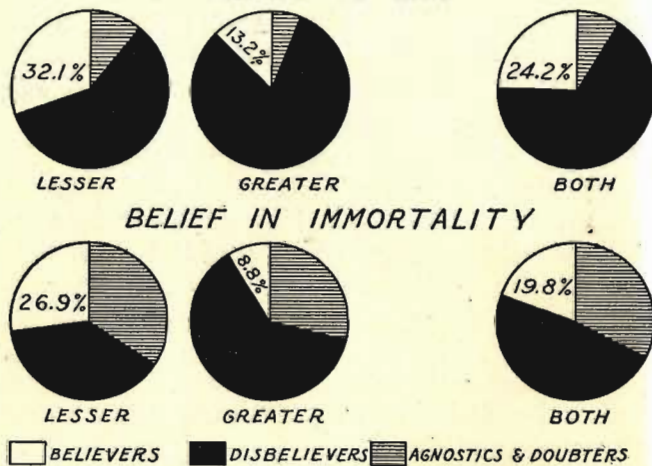
*The Belief in Immortality.*—The most striking fact brought to light by chart IX is that whereas in every preceding group the number of believers in

<sup>13</sup> In the selection of the greater men in this field, I was assisted in the same way as in the preparation of the list of greater historians.

To three psychologists who raised objections to the form of the Q. I sent another set of questions prepared for the philosophers. One psychologist answered that form.

immortality is substantially larger, and, in the case of the sociologists, very much larger than that of the believers in God, in the present group the number of believers in immortality is clearly less than that of the believers in God. Only three of the greater psychologists declare a belief either in unconditional or in conditional immortality.

CHART IX  
BELIEF IN GOD



Taken altogether, the teaching sociologists give 49 per cent. of believers in immortality as against 24.4 per cent. of believers in God; the psychologists, 19.8 per cent. as against 24.2 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> One psychologist replaced the word "belief" by "hope." Another who, like the preceding, marked none of the statements under B, says, "I think it likely, however, that my psychological awareness of the world and of what I perceive and conceive as myself will cease at death." That is also

From these figures one may fairly draw this conclusion: in the present phase of psychological science, the greater one's knowledge of psychic life, the more difficult it is to retain the traditional belief in the continuation of personality after death.

*The Desire for Immortality.*— Although the number of those who do not desire immortality (47.2 per cent.) is far greater in this than in any other group, nevertheless the desire remains, not only in the small number of believers (with one exception), but, in addition, in 34.7 per cent. of the non-believers.

#### VI. THE PHILOSOPHERS

I intended from the first to cap the preceding statistics with a study of American philosophers. The Q. was, however, formulated primarily for scientific men. It proved, on the whole, satisfactory to them and also to the historians, to the sociologists, and even to the psychologists. As it was desirable to keep throughout to the same statements, I then ventured to send the same Q. to the philosophers also. But the number of objectors was so considerable that, after some correspondence with philosophical friends, I prepared another set

the opinion of the one who describes God as "incarnated in him and in others." He thinks it "likely" that consciousness of the consciousness of our earthly self will cease. Is that also the opinion of the one who marked B1 and wrote, "I believe that there is something corresponding to personal immortality, although I cannot make out a satisfactory belief as to its nature"? Should this person not admit the continuation of the consciousness of identity, he ought not to have marked B1.

of questions. My purpose remaining the same, the new statements were so shaped as to make the answers comparable with those already obtained.

A philosopher who had warned me that the first form would prove a failure, thought the new formulation "a great improvement." A large proportion of those addressed did in fact send in answers without any expressed reservation; but a disconcertingly large number returned blanks; and, what was worse, in several instances the comments accompanying certain marked questions, especially A1, showed that the same markings could not be taken to express in all cases the same view.

The circumstances in which I found myself at the time prevented a further effort to formulate statements which would have met more exactly the needs of the case. How difficult it would have been to produce something adequate without transforming altogether the scope of my inquiry appears from the following comment.

"I do not know what is meant in this circular by the terms 'a God,' 'the course of nature,' 'the divine,' 'personal immortality,' 'state of development.' That is, I do not know in what sense Professor Leuba uses these terms in this connection. . . . It would therefore be useless for me to add my statistical contribution.—This reply stands for no lack of interest or of wish to cooperate."

Another, also a well disposed correspondent, writes, "I would answer, if I could, but I cannot, believing as I do in a *meaning* for all these things, but not in the apparent meaning of the questions." This philosopher differs from the preceding in that

he knows what the *apparent* meanings of the statements are; but because he does not accept those meanings, he cannot answer, though he would like to.

If the reader will recall the many quotations I have made in the preceding pages, and in particular the letters from two psychologists on pages 243 and 244, he will be amazed at the difference in understanding—unless it be something else—that separates philosophers from other men, even from eminent psychologists. For, in these letters there appears not even the shadow of difficulty in interpreting the Q. To the writers, it is as clear as the questions of the Census Bureau.

One of the potent reasons for failure to answer has already been mentioned. Those addressed imagined that I was preparing statistics of philosophical opinions on God and his relation to nature and to man; whereas my sole interest was to find out how many of them accepted a *particular* conception of God and of his relation to man. As the statements did not provide the scope necessary to an expression of their philosophy, these persons found the Q. "inadequate." This seems to have been the feeling of the one who wrote:—

"I do not find it possible to answer your questions by *Yes* or *No*. I have very deep convictions in reference to them all, but I should feel about answering them with the plain *Yes* or *No*, very much the way I would feel about answering the articles of the creed, that any *Yes* or *No* was not quite adequate. I have serious distrust of the statistical method of promoting any matters of this sort, and

I feel sure that these questions can hardly bring to light any adequate information about the general spiritual attitude of present day men."

A number of those who returned blanks should, it seems, have found it possible to fill out the Q.; that one, certainly, who wrote, "I believe its effect (prayer) is only æsthetic, analogous to those of self-expression through lyric poetry or, possibly, dramatic poetry."

But the fatal defect, for statistical purposes, of the philosophers' returns, is that the marking of A1 does not express a uniform meaning. This appears conclusively in comments such as the following:—

"I believe in a certain summation of effects wrought by prayer — which is, of course, to be distinguished from the belief that objective conditions may be altered by the mere weight of petitions. In a universe in which, as I believe, the ordinary distinction between 'subjective' and 'objective' is a practical and methodological one, there is no hard and fast distinction between the 'unalterable' and objective conditions and those which are subject to the human will. Prayer is a potent influence in fashioning the human will, and a world in which men pray should differ profoundly from a world in which men do not."

Agreeing as I do with all this, I unhesitatingly deny belief in A1, instead of affirming it as this person does. In so doing, I find myself in agreement with practically all my non-philosophical correspondents, and doubtless also with most philosophers

holding the view of prayer defined in the above quotation.

Another who also marked A1, added, "In some sense, yes — or at least I am inclined so to believe." But when he came to the statement, "I have no definite belief, etc." (A4 of Q. for philosophers) he wrote, "Perhaps this comes nearer my position than any of the other statements. *I do not believe in prayer as a means of getting something, either external goods or desirable psychological states.*"<sup>15</sup> Now, it seems clear that the sense in which this person marked A1 is not that given it by the non-philosophers.

#### VII. COMPARISON OF THE SIGNED WITH THE UNSIGNED ANSWERS, AND OF THE ANSWERS TO THE FIRST WITH THE ANSWERS TO THE SECOND REQUESTS

Although signatures were not requested, a large number of the respondents put their names to their answers. In every group the proportion of signatures among the answers to the first request is considerably larger than among the answers to the second.<sup>16</sup> This might have been foreseen, for many who waited for the second appeal must have answered reluctantly.

Who are most likely to sign, unasked, a statement of religious belief? Not those in disagreement with

<sup>15</sup> The italics are mine.

<sup>16</sup> The percentages of signed answers to the first and to the second requests were, for the scientists of division II, respectively, 41.9 per cent. and 21.4 per cent.; for the historians, 41.6 per cent. and 13.9 per cent.; and for the sociologists, 33.6 per cent. and 27.1 per cent.

officially accredited convictions. Chart X shows what a strong influence upon the readiness to sign the answers is exerted by the thought of orthodox opinion. In every group the proportion of believers is much larger among those who signed than among those who did not. The figures for the historians show the greatest difference; they are 66.7 per cent. for the believers who signed the Q., and 38.9 per cent. for the believers who did not. The disbelieving greater men do not evince a greater readiness to disclose their identity than their less illustrious *confrères*. Of the signed answers from greater historians, only 38.9 per cent. are from disbelievers or doubters.

Men who do not choose to put their signatures to their heterodox opinions when replying to a scientific inquiry, are not likely to announce these opinions to the orthodox people among whom they may live. On the other hand, believers who, unrequested, sign their answers, are just as unlikely to conceal their orthodox opinions from their neighbors. I have already referred to the result of such condition, namely, the far reaching and misleading exaggeration of the number of believers.

I have explained elsewhere that it was necessary to send out the Q. twice. It occurred to me that a comparison of the prompt with the tardy answers might reveal interesting information on the attitude of the respondents. One would suppose that persons with clear and sharply defined views, whether positive or negative, would be the more likely to answer at the first request, while those with vague

CHART X  
THE SIGNED AND UNSIGNED ANSWERS

		Believers	Disbelievers	Agnostics or Doubters	Non- believers	
Scientists — Division II	Lesser . . . . .	60.7 34.9	26.9 44.9	12.4 20.1	... ...	
	Greater . . . . .	34.6 23.5	46.2 55.1	19.2 21.4	... ...	
	Both . . . . .	51.1 30.4	34. 48.9	14.9 20.6	48.9 69.5	
	Historians	Lesser . . . . .	70. 58.1	26.7 39.7	3.3 2.3	... ...
		Greater . . . . .	51.1 23.1	33.3 53.9	5.6 23.1	... ...
		Both . . . . .	66.7 38.9	29.2 47.4	4.2 13.6	33.3 61.1
Sociologists	Lesser . . . . .	35.7 19.4	57.1 61.3	7.1 19.4	... ...	
	Greater . . . . .	66.7 48.8	25.6 33.8	7.7 17.5	... ...	
	Both . . . . .	58.5 40.5	33.9 41.4	7.5 18.	41.5 59.5	

Notes: — The figures in this table are percentages of the total number of lesser or of greater men, or of both, as the case may be.

The upper figure in each group of two refers to the signed, the lower to the unsigned answers.

and uncertain opinions would be tempted to procrastinate. The figures do not bear out very definitely this conjecture.

#### VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STATISTICS

Although I have from time to time drawn attention to the most striking results of this statistical inquiry and to their significance, a brief summary and some additional comments seem to be required in this place.

I have claimed that the investigation provides relatively exact information concerning the beliefs in God and in immortality of college students and of several classes of men of high attainments. I have further claimed that this information is valid for all students in the non-technical departments of American colleges and universities of the first rank, when the first rank is taken to mean approximately the upper third of all recognized colleges; and for all the American scientists, historians, sociologists, and psychologists, when these designations are used in as broad a sense as by the official organizations of these different groups.

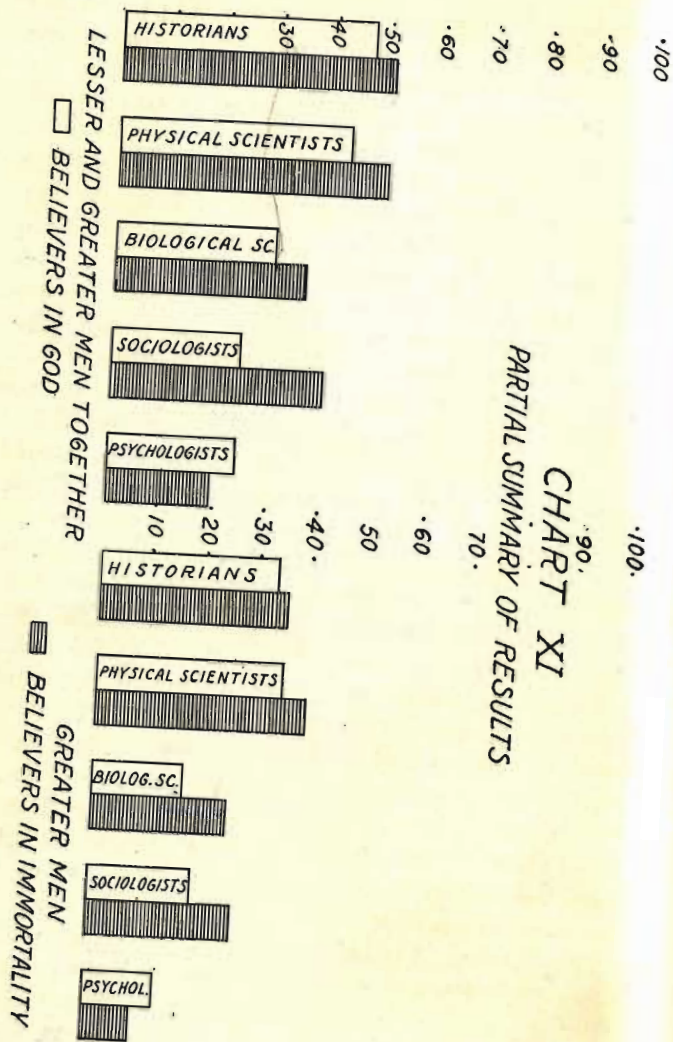
This second claim need not be accepted merely on the strength of the affirmation of statisticians who declare that the fractions of the whole groups upon which our several investigations bear are sufficient to make the results representative of the entire groups. The 1000 scientists to whom the *questionnaires* were to be sent were separated into two divisions of 500 each. A comparison of these two divisions (table IV) provides adequate justification

for the claim that our figures are valid — with unimportant variations — for all those whose names are included in *American Men of Science*, i. e., for practically every American who may at all properly be called a scientist.

If, in the case of the scientists, we may take the statistics of 1000 as representative of 5500, we may *a fortiori* accept the other statistics as representing the whole of each group, since in each the proportion upon which the investigation bears is larger than in the case of the scientists. While for these the proportion is only 17 per cent., for the historians, it is 54 per cent.; for the sociologists, 34 per cent.; and for the psychologists, 56 per cent.

The representative nature of our statistics invests them with a very great significance, for if these groups of men do not include all the intellectual leaders of the United States, they certainly include the great majority of them. The expression "intellectual leader" should not by any means be construed as a disclaimer of the importance of the moral influence exerted by these men. Most of them are teachers in schools of higher learning. In that capacity they should be, and doubtless are, in a very real sense, moral leaders. There is no class of men who, on the whole, rival them for the influence exerted upon the educated public and upon the young men from whom are to come most of the leaders of the next generation.

What, then, is the main outcome of this research? Chart XI (Partial Summary of Results) shows that in every class of persons investigated, the number of believers in God is less, and in most classes very



much less than the number of non-believers, and that the number of believers in immortality is somewhat larger than in a personal God; that among the more distinguished, unbelief is very much more frequent than among the less distinguished; and finally that not only the degree of ability, but also the kind of knowledge possessed, is significantly related to the rejection of these beliefs.

The correlation shown, without exception, in every one of our groups between eminence and disbelief appears to me of momentous significance. In three of these groups (biologists, historians, and psychologists) the number of believers among the men of greater distinction is only half, or less than half the number of believers among the less distinguished men. I do not see any way to avoid the conclusion that disbelief in a personal God and in personal immortality is directly proportional to abilities making for success in the sciences in question. What these abilities are, we shall see in the following chapter.

A study of the charts, with regard to the kind of knowledge which favors disbelief shows that the historians and the physical scientists provide the greater; and the psychologists, the sociologists and the biologists, the smaller number of believers. The explanation I have offered is that psychologists, sociologists, and biologists in very large numbers have come to recognize fixed orderliness in organic and psychic life, and not merely in inorganic existence; while frequently physical scientists have recognized the presence of invariable law in the inorganic world only. The belief in a personal God

*success depends on belief in God*

as defined for the purpose of our investigation is, therefore, less often possible to students of psychic and of organic life than to physical scientists.

The place occupied by the historians next to the physical scientists would indicate that for the present the reign of law is not so clearly revealed in the events with which history deals as in biology, economics, and psychology. A large number of historians continue to see the hand of God in human affairs. The influence, destructive of Christian beliefs, attributed in this interpretation to more intimate knowledge of organic and psychic life, appears incontrovertibly, as far as psychic life is concerned, in the remarkable fact that whereas in every other group the number of believers in immortality is greater than that in God, among the psychologists the reverse is true; the number of believers in immortality among the greater psychologists sinks to 8.8 per cent. One may affirm it seems that, in general, the greater the ability of the psychologist, the more difficult it becomes for him to believe in the continuation of individual life after bodily death.

The students' statistics show that young people enter college possessed of the beliefs still accepted, more or less perfunctorily, in the average home of the land, and that as their mental powers mature and their horizon widens, a large percentage of them abandon the cardinal Christian beliefs. It seems probable that on leaving college, from 40 to 45 per cent. of the students with whom we are concerned deny or doubt the fundamental dogmas of the Christian religion. The marked decrease in belief that takes place during the later adolescent years, in

those who spend those years in study under the influence of persons of high culture, is a portentous indication of the fate which, according to our statistics, increased knowledge and the possession of certain capacities leading to eminence reserve to the beliefs in a personal God and in personal immortality.

The situation revealed by the present statistical studies demands a revision of public opinion regarding the prevalence and the future of the two cardinal beliefs of official Christianity; and shows the futility of the efforts of those who would meet the present religious crisis by devising a more efficient organization and cooperation of the churches, or more attractive social features, or even a more complete consecration of the church membership to its task. The essential problem facing organized Christianity is constituted by the wide-spread rejection of its two fundamental dogmas — a rejection apparently destined to extend parallel with the diffusion of knowledge and the moral qualities that make for eminence in scholarly pursuits.