THE WILL TO BELIEVE

Address to the Philosophical Clubs of Yale and Brown Universities, 1896

by William James

IN the recently published Life by Leslie Stephen of his brother, Fitz-James, there is an account of a school to which the latter went when he was a boy. The teacher, a certain Mr. Guest, used to converse with his pupils in this wise: "Gurney, what is the difference between justification and sanctification?- Stephen, prove the omnipotence of God " etc. In the midst of our Harvard freethinking and indifference we are prone to imagine that here at your good old orthodox College conversation continues to be somewhat upon this order; and to show you that we at Harvard have not lost all interest in these vital subjects, I have brought with me tonight something like a sermon on justification by faith to read to you, --I mean an essay in justification of faith, a defence of our right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters, in spite of the fact that our merely logical intellect may not have been coerced. 'The Will to Believe,' accordingly, is the title of my paper.

I have long defended to my own students the lawfulness of voluntarily adopted faith; but as soon as they have got well imbued with the logical spirit, they have as a rule refused to admit my contention to be lawful philosophically, even though in point of fact they were personally all the time chock-full of some faith or other themselves. I am all the while, however, so profoundly convinced that my own position is correct, that your invitation has seemed to me a good occasion to make my statements more clear. Perhaps your minds will be more open than those with which I have hitherto had to deal. I will be as little technical as I can, though I must begin by setting up some technical distinctions that will help us in the end.

I

Let us give the name of hypothesis to anything that may be proposed to our belief; and just as the electricians speak of live and dead wires, let us speak of any hypothesis as either live or dead A live hypothesis is one which appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed. If I ask you to believe in the Mahdi, the notion makes no electric connection with your nature,--it refuses to scintillate with any credibility at all. As an hypothesis it is completely dead. To an Arab, however (even if he be not one of the Madhi's followers), the hypothesis is among the mind's possibilities: it is alive. This shows that deadness and liveness in an hypothesis are not intrinsic properties, but relations to the individual thinker. They are measured by his willingness to act. The maximum of liveness in hypothesis means willingness to act irrevocably. Practically, that means belief; but there is some believing tendency wherever there is willingness to act at all.

Next, let us call the decision between two hypotheses an option. Options may be of several kinds. They may be: 1, living or dead; 2, forced or avoidable; 3, momentous or trivial: and for our purpose we may call an option a genuine option when it of the forced, living, and momentous kind.

- 1. A living option is one in which both hypo
  theosophist or be a Mohammedan," it i
  neither hypothesis is likely to be aliv
  Christian," it is otherwise: trained as
  appeal, however small, to your belief.
- 2. Next, if I say to you: " Choose between
  it," I do not offer you a genuine option
  it by not going out at all. Similarly, i
  Either call my theory true or call it fa
  remain indifferent to me, neither loving
  any judgment as to my theory. But i
  without it," I put on you a forced optio
  the alternative. Every dilemma based o
  possibility of not choosing, is an option
- 3. Finally, if I were Dr. Nansen and pr
  expedition, your option would be mon
  only similar opportunity, and your ch
  the North Pole sort of immortality alto
  your hands. He who refuses to embrac
  surely as if he tried and failed. Per
  opportunity is not unique, when the st
  is reversible if it later prove unwise. Su
  life. A chemist finds an hypothesis live
  he believes in it to that extent. But if h
  way, he is quit for his loss of time, no v

It will facilitate our discussion if we keep all th

II

THE next matter to consider is the act we look at certain facts, it seems as if our pass of all our convictions. When we look at oth when the intellect had once said its say. Let us Does it not seem preposterous on the very modifiable at will? Can our will either help o truth? Can we, by just willing it, believe tha and that the portraits of him in McClure's M by any effort of our will, or by any strength o well and about when we are roaring with rh sum of the two one-dollar bills in our pocket any of these things, but we are absolutely in things is the whole fabric of the truths that w immediate or remote, as Hume said, and re

there or not there for us if we see them so, and which if not there cannot be put there by any action of our own.

In Pascal's Thoughts there is a celebrated passage known in literature as Pascal's wager. In it he tries to force us into Christianity by reasoning as if our concern with truth resembled our concern with the stakes in a game of chance. Translated freely his words are these: You must either believe or not believe that God is--which will you do? Your human reason cannot say. A game is going on between you and the nature of things which at the day of judgment will bring out either heads or tails. Weigh what your gains and your losses would be if you should stake all you have on heads, or God's existence: if you win in such case, you gain eternal beatitude; if you lose, you lose nothing at all. If there were an infinity of chances, and only one for God in this wager, still you ought to stake your all on God; for though you surely risk a finite loss by this procedure, any finite loss is reasonable, even a certain one is reasonable, if there is but the possibility of infinite gain. Go, then, and take holy water, and have masses said; belief will come and stupefy your scruples,-Cela vous fera croire et vous abetira. Why should you not? At bottom, what have you to lose?

You probably feel that when religious faith expresses itself thus, in the language of the gaming-table, it is put to its last trumps. Surely Pascal's own personal belief in masses and holy water had far other springs; and this celebrated page of his is but an argument for others, a last desperate snatch at a weapon against the hardness of the unbelieving heart. We feel that a faith in masses and holy water adopted willfully after such a mechanical calculation lack the inner soul of faith's reality; and if we were of the Deity, we should probably take pleasure in cutting off believers from their infinite reward. It is evident that unless there be some pre-existing tendency to believe in masses and holy water, the option offered to the will by Pascal is not a living option. Certainly no Turk ever took to masses and holy water on its account; and even to us Protestants these seem such foregone impossibilities that Pascal's logic, invoked for them specifically, leaves us unmoved. As well might the Mahdi write to us, saying, " I am the Expected One whom God has created in his effulgence. You shall be infinitely happy if you confess me; otherwise you shall be cut off from the light of the sun. Weigh, then, your infinite gain if I am genuine against your finite sacrifice if I am not! " His logic would be that of Pascal; but he would vainly use it on us, for the hypothesis he offers us is dead. No tendency to act on it exists in us to any degree.

The talk of believing by our volition seems, then, from one point of view, simply silly. From another point of view it is worse than silly, it is vile. When one turns to the magnificent edifice of the physical sciences, and sees how it was reared; what thousands of disinterested moral lives of men lie buried in its mere foundations; what patience and postponement, what choking down of preference, what submission to the icy laws of outer fact are wrought into its very stones and mortar; how absolutely impersonal it stands in its vast augustness,--then how besotted and contemptible seems every little sentimentalist who comes blowing his voluntary smoke-wreaths, and pretending to decide things from out of his private dream! Can we wonder if those bred in the rugged and manly school of science should feel like spewing such subjectivism out of their mouths? The whole
schools of science go dead against its toleratio
have caught the scientific fever should pass
sometimes as if the incorruptibly truthful inte
and unacceptableness to the heart in its cup.

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is s

sings Clough, while Huxley exclaims: " My c
however bad our posterity may become, so
pretending to believe what they have no reas
advantage so to pretend [the word 'pretend'
have reached the lowest depth of immoral
Clifford writes: "Belief is desecrated when
statements for the solace and private pleasure
well of his fellows in this matter will gua
fanaticism of jealous care, lest at any time it
catch a stain which can never be wiped aw
insufficient evidence [even though the belie
explains] the pleasure is a stolen one.... It is si
duty to mankind. That duty is to guard oursel
which may shortly master our own body and
wrong always, everywhere, and for every o
evidence."

III

All this strikes one as healthy, even somewhat too much of robustious pathos in t seem, in the matter of our credences, to be c one should thereupon assume that intellectua will and sentimental preference have taken settles our opinions, he would fly quite as dire

It is only our already dead hypotheses to life again. But what has made them dead fo of our willing nature of an antagonistic kin mean only such deliberate volitions as may h now escape from,--I mean all such factors c passion, imitation and partisanship, the circ matter of fact we find ourselves believing, w gives the name of 'authority' to all those inf that make hypotheses possible or impossible we all of us believe in molecules and the co necessary progress, in Protestant Christianity of the immortal Monroe,' all for no reasons

matters with no more inner clearness, and probably with much less, than any disbeliever in them might possess. His unconventionality would probably have some grounds to show for its conclusions; but for us, not insight, but the prestige of the opinions, is what makes the spark shoot from them and light up our sleeping magazines of faith. Our reason is quite satisfied, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand of us, if it can find a few arguments that will do to recite in case our credulity is criticised by some one else. Our faith is faith in some one else's faith, and in the greatest matters this is most the case. Our belief in truth itself, for instance, that there is a truth, and that our minds and it are made for each other,--what is it but a passionate affirmation of desire, in which our social system backs us up? We want to have a truth; we want to believe that our experiments and studies and discussions must put us in a continually better and better position towards it; and on this line we agree to fight out our thinking lives. But if a pyrrhonistic sceptic asks us how we know all this, can our logic find a reply? No! certainly it cannot. It is just one volition against another,--we willing to go in for life upon a trust or assumption which he, for his part, does not care to make.

As a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use. Clifford's cosmic emotions find no use for Christian feelings. Huxley belabors the bishops because there is no use for sacerdotalism in his scheme of life. Newman, on the contrary, goes over to Romanism, and finds all sorts of reasons good for staying there, because a priestly system is for him an organic need and delight. Why do so few 'scientists' even look at the evidence for telepathy, so called? Because they think, as a leading biologist, now dead, once said to me, that even if such a thing were true, scientists ought to band together to keep it suppressed and concealed. It would undo the uniformity of Nature and all sorts of other things without which scientists cannot carry on their pursuits. But if this very man had been shown something which as a scientist he might do with telepathy, he might not only have examined the evidence, but even have found it good enough. This very law which the logicians would impose upon us--if I may give the name of logicians to those who would rule out our willing nature here--is based on nothing but their own natural wish to exclude all elements for which they, in their professional quality of logicians, can find no use.

Evidently, then, our non-intellectual nature does influence our convictions. There are passional tendencies and volitions which run before and others which come after belief, and it is only the latter that are too late for the fair; and they are not too late when the previous passional work has been already in their own direction. Pascal's argument, instead of being powerless, then seems a regular clincher, and is the last stroke needed to make our faith in masses and holy water complete. The state of things is evidently far from simple; and pure insight and logic, whatever they might do ideally, are not the only things that really do produce our creeds.

IV

OUR next duty, having recognized this mixed-up state of affairs, is to ask whether it be simply reprehensible and pathological, or whether, on the contrary, we must treat it as a normal element in makin
briefly stated, this: Our passional nature no
option between propositions, whenever it is a
be decided on intellectual grounds; for to s
decide, but leave the question open," is itself a
or no,--and is attended with the same risk of l
expressed will, I trust, soon become quite cle
of preliminary work.

V

It will be observed that for the purpos
ground,--ground, I mean, which leaves syste
out of account. The postulate that there is tru
to attain it, we are deliberately resolving to n
We part company with him, therefore, absolu
exists, and that our minds can find it, may b
empiricist way and of the absolutist way of
matter say that we not only can attain to kn
have attained to knowing it; while the empiri
we cannot infallibly know when. To know is
know is another. One may hold to the first
the empiricists and the absolutists, a]though
philosophic sense of the term, show very diffe
If we look at the history of opinions, we see
prevailed in science, while in philosophy the a
own way. The characteristic sort of happine
mainly consisted in the conviction felt by ea
bottom-certitude had been attained. " Other
mostly false; my philosophy gives standing-gr
this the key-note of every system worthy of t
must come as a closed system, reversible in
essential features never!

Scholastic orthodoxy, to which one m
perfectly clear statement, has beautifully el
doctrine which it calls that of 'objective evi
doubt that I now exist before you, that two
mortal then I am mortal too, it is because the
The final ground of this objective evidence
adequatio intellectus nostri cum re [the agreeme
The certitude it brings involves an *aptitudi*
aptitude for extorting a certain assent from
envisaged, and on the side of the subject *a qu*
when once the object is mentally received, th

and in the whole transaction nothing operates but the *entitas ipsa [entity itself]* of the object and the *entitas ipsa* of the mind. We slouchy modern thinkers dislike to talk in Latin,--indeed, we dislike to talk in set terms at all; but at bottom our own state of mind is very much like this whenever we uncritically abandon ourselves: You believe in objective evidence, and I do. Of some things we feel that we are certain: we know, and we know that we do know. There is something that gives a click inside of us, a bell that strikes twelve, when the hands of our mental clock have swept the dial and meet over the meridian hour. The greatest empiricists among us are only empiricists on reflection: when left to their instincts, they dogmatize like infallible popes. When the Clifford tell us how sinful it is to be Christians on such 'insufficient evidence,' insufficiency is really the last thing they have in mind. For them the evidence is absolutely sufficient, only it makes the other way. They believe so completely in an anti-christian order of the universe that there is no living option: Christianity is a dead hypothesis from the start.

VI

BUT now, since we are all such absolutists by instinct, what in our quality of students of philosophy ought we to do about the fact? Shall we espouse and indorse it? Or shall we treat it as a weakness of our nature from which we must free ourselves, if we can?

I sincerely believe that the latter course is the only one we can follow as reflective men. Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with, but where on this moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found? I am, therefore, myself a complete empiricist so far as my theory of human knowledge goes. I live, to be sure, by the practical faith that we must go on experiencing and thinking over our experience, for only thus can our opinions grow more true; but to hold any one of them--I absolutely do not care which--as if it never could be reinterpretable or corrigible, I believe to be a tremendously mistaken attitude, and I think that the whole history of philosophy will bear me out. There is but one indefectibly certain truth, and that is the truth that pyrrhonistic scepticism itself leaves standing,--the truth that the present phenomenon of consciousness exists. That, however, is the bare starting-point of knowledge, the mere admission of a stuff to be philosophized about. The various philosophies are but so many attempts at expressing what this stuff really is. And if we repair to our libraries what disagreement do we discover! Where is a certainly true answer found? Apart from abstract propositions of comparison (such as two and two are the same as four), propositions which tell us nothing by themselves about concrete reality, we find no proposition ever regarded by any one as evidently certain that has not either been called a falsehood, or at least had its truth sincerely questioned by some one else. The transcending of the axioms of geometry, not in play but in earnest, by certain of our contemporaries (as Zöllner and Charles H. Hinton), and the rejection of the whole Aristotelian logic by the Hegelians, are striking instances in point.

No concrete test of what is really true has ever been agreed upon. Some make the criterion external to the moment of perception, putting it either in revelation, the *consensus gentium (the agreement of all natio* systematized experience of the race. Others n -Descartes, for instance, with his clear and di God; Reid with his 'common-sense;' and Kan priori. The inconceivability of the opposite; possession of complete organic unity or self- other,--are standards which, in turn, have evidence is never triumphantly there; it is a ideal notion] marking the infinitely remote certain truths now possess it, is simply to say are true, then their evidence is objective, c conviction that the evidence one goes by is of subjective opinion added to the lot. For wha objective evidence and absolute certitude bee and through,--its existence is an ultimate personal God is inconceivable; there is an e known,--the mind can only know its own ide is only the resultant of desires; a permanent are only shifting states of mind;--there is a absolute first cause; --an eternal necessity,-- primal One,--a primal Many; a universal c things, an infinity,--no infinity. There is thi which some one has not thought absolute absolutely false; and not an absolutist among the trouble may all the time be essential, and in its grasp, may have no infallible signal for k indeed, one remembers that the most stril doctrine of objective certitude has been the c the Inquisition, one feels less tempted than ev

But please observe, now, that when a objective certitude, we do not thereby give up pin our faith on its existence, and still belie towards it by systematically continuing to r difference from the scholastic lies in the way the principles, the origin, the *terminus a quo* [t the strength is in the outcome, the upshot, t where it comes from but what it leads to is from what quarter an hypothesis may come means or by foul; passion may have whispere drift of thinking continues to confirm it, that i

VII

ONE more point, small but importan

are two ways of looking at our duty in the matter of opinion,--ways entirely different, and yet ways about whose difference the theory of knowledge seems hitherto to have shown very little concern. *We must know the truth; and we must avoid error*,--these are our first and great commandments as would-be knowers; but they are not two ways of stating an identical commandment, they are two separable laws. Although it may indeed happen that when we believe the truth A, we escape as an incidental consequence from believing the falsehood B, it hardly ever happens that by merely disbelieving B we necessarily believe A. We may in escaping B fall into believing other falsehoods, C or D, just as bad as B; or we may escape B by not believing anything at all, not even A.

Believe truth! Shun error!-these, we see, are two materially different laws; and by choosing between them we may end by coloring differently our whole intellectual life. We may regard the chase for truth as paramount, and the avoidance of error as secondary; or we may, on the other hand, treat the avoidance of error as more imperative, and let truth take its chance. Clifford, in the instructive passage which I have quoted, exhorts us to the latter course. Believe nothing, he tells us, keep your mind in suspense forever, rather than by closing it on insufficient evidence incur the awful risk of believing lies. You, on the other hand, may think that the risk of being in error is a very small matter when compared with the blessings of real knowledge, and be ready to be duped many times in your investigation rather than postpone indefinitely the chance of guessing true. I myself find it impossible to go with Clifford. We must remember that these feelings of our duty about either truth or error are in any case only expressions of our passional life. Biologically considered, our minds are as ready to grind out falsehood as veracity, and he who says, " Better go without belief forever than believe a lie!" merely shows his own preponderant private horror of becoming a dupe. He may be critical of many of his desires and fears, but this fear he slavishly obeys. He cannot imagine any one questioning its binding force. For my own part, I have also a horror of being duped; but I can believe that worse things than being doped may happen to a man in this world: so Clifford's exhortation has to my ears a thoroughly fantastic sound. It is like a general informing his soldiers that it is better to keep out of battle forever than to risk a single wound. Not so are victories either over enemies or over nature gained. Our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nervousness on their behalf. At any rate, it seems the fittest thing for the empiricist philosopher.

VIII

AND now, after all this introduction, let us go straight at our question. I have said, and now repeat it, that not only as a matter of fact do we find our passional nature influencing us in our opinions, but that there are some options between opinions in which this influence must be regarded both as an inevitable and as a lawful determinant of our choice.

I fear here that some of you my hearers will begin to scent danger, and lend an inhospitable ear. Two first steps of passion yo
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surest path to those ideal consummations, y
onwards to take no further passional step.

Well, of course, I agree as far as th
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in our dealings with objective nature we obv
truth; and decisions for the mere sake of deci
business would be wholly out of place. Throu
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questions here are always trivial options, the
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would escape mistakes. What difference, ind
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in mind-stuff, or have a conviction about the
difference. Such options are not forced on us.
them, but still keep weighing reasons pro et c

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confirmed had been kept out of the game. Se
and Weismann now display. On the other ha
investigation, you must, after all, take the r
results: he is the warranted incapable, the po
because the most sensitive observer, is alway
the question is balanced by an equally kee
Science has organized this nervousness into a
of verification; and she has fallen so deeply in
say she has ceased to care for truth by itself a
that interests her. The truth of truths might
would decline to touch it. Such truth as that,
stolen in defiance of her duty to mankind. Hu
technical rules. " *Le coeur a ses raisons*," as Pas

heart has its reasons which the mind does not understand]" and however indifferent to all but the bare rules of the game the umpire, the abstract intellect, may be, the concrete players who furnish him the materials to judge of are usually, each one of them, in love with some pet ' live hypothesis ' of his own. Let us agree, however, that wherever there is no forced option, the dispassionately judicial intellect with no pet hypothesis, saving us, as it does, from dupery at any rate, ought to be our ideal.

The question next arises: Are there not somewhere forced options in our speculative questions, and can we (as men who may be interested at least as much in positively gaining truth as in merely escaping dupery) always wait with impunity till the coercive evidence shall have arrived? It seems *a priori* improbable that the truth should be so nicely adjusted to our needs and powers as that. In the great boarding-house of nature, the cakes and the butter and the syrup seldom come out so even and leave the plates so clean. Indeed, we should view them with scientific suspicion if they did.

IX

Moral questions immediately present themselves as questions whose solution cannot wait for sensible proof. A moral question is a question not of what sensibly exists, but of what is good, or would be good if it did exist. Science can tell us what exists; but to compare the worths, both of what exists and of what does not exist, we must consult not science, but what Pascal calls our heart. Science herself consults her heart when she lays it down that the infinite ascertainment of fact and correction of false belief are the supreme goods for man. Challenge the statement, and science can only repeat it oracularly, or else prove it by showing that such ascertainment and correction bring man all sorts of other goods which man's heart in turn declares. The question of having moral beliefs at all or not having them is decided by our will. Are our moral preferences true or false, or are they only odd biological phenomena, making things good or bad for us, but in themselves indifferent? How can your pure intellect decide? If your heart does not want a world of moral reality, your head will assuredly never make you believe in one. Mephistophelian scepticism, indeed, will satisfy the head's play-instincts much better than any rigorous idealism can. Some men (even at the student age) are so naturally cool-hearted that the moralistic hypothesis never has for them any pungent life, and in their supercilious presence the hot young moralist always feels strangely ill at ease. The appearance of knowingness is on their side, of naivete and gullibility on his. Yet, in the inarticulate heart of him, he clings to it that he is not a dupe, and that there is a realm in which (as Emerson says) all their wit and intellectual superiority is no better than the cunning of a fox. Moral scepticism can no more be refuted or proved by logic than intellectual scepticism can. When we stick to it that there is truth (be it of either kind), we do so with our whole nature, and resolve to stand or fall by the results. The sceptic with his whole nature adopts the doubting attitude; but which of us is the wiser, Omniscience only knows.

Turn now from these wide questions of good to a certain class of questions of fact, questions concerning personal relations, states of mind between one man and another. Do you like me or not?--for exam
countless instances, on whether I meet you
must like me, and show you trust and expec
your liking's existence is in such cases what
aloof, and refuse to budge an inch until I hav
done something apt, as the absolutists say, a
one your liking never comes. How many wo
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hypothesis that they cannot. The desire for
that special truth's existence; and so it is in
gains promotions, boons, appointments, but t
the part of live hypotheses, who discounts th
before they have come, and takes risks for
powers above him as a claim, and creates its o

A social organism of any sort whatever
member proceeds to his own duty with
simultaneously do theirs. Wherever a desired
many independent persons, its existence a
precursive faith in one another of those im
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But now, it will be said, these are all c
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that. Religions differ so much in their ac
question we must make it very generic and b
religious hypothesis? Science says things are;
other things; and religion says essentially two

First, she says that the best things are
things, the things in the universe that throw

final word. " Perfection is eternal,"- this phrase of Charles Secretan seems a good way of putting this first affirmation of religion, an affirmation which obviously cannot yet be verified scientifically at all.

The second affirmation of religion is that we are better off even now if we believe her first affirmation to be true.

Now, let us consider what the logical elements of this situation are in case the religious hypothesis in both its branches be really true. (Of course, we must admit that possibility at the outset. If we are to discuss the question at all, it must involve a living option. If for any of you religion be a hypothesis that cannot, by any living possibility be true, then you need go no farther. I speak to the 'saving remnant' alone.) So proceeding, we see, first that religion offers itself as a momentous option. We are supposed to gain, even now, by our belief, and to lose by our nonbelief, a certain vital good. Secondly, religion is a forced option, so far as that good goes. We cannot escape the issue by remaining sceptical and waiting for more light, because, although we do avoid error in that way if religion be untrue, we lose the good, if it be true, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve. It is as if a man should hesitate indefinitely to ask a certain woman to marry him because he was not perfectly sure that she would prove an angel after he brought her home. Would he not cut himself off from that particular angel-possibility as decisively as if he went and married some one else? Scepticism, then, is not avoidance of option; it is option of a certain particular kind of risk. Better risk loss of truth than chance of error,-that is your faith-vetoer's exact position. He is actively playing his stake as much as the believer is; he is backing the field against the religious hypothesis, just as the believer is backing the religious hypothesis against the field. To preach scepticism to us as a duty until 'sufficient evidence' for religion be found, is tantamount therefore to telling us, when in presence of the religious hypothesis, that to yield to our fear of its being error is wiser and better than to yield to our hope that it may be true. It is not intellect against all passions, then; it is only intellect with one passion laying down its law. And by what, forsooth, is the supreme wisdom of this passion warranted? Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear ? I, for one, can see no proof; and I simply refuse obedience to the scientist's command to imitate his kind of option, in a case where my own stake is important enough to give me the right to choose my own form of risk. If religion be true and the evidence for it be still insufficient, I do not wish, by putting your extinguisher upon my nature (which feels to me as if it had after all some business in this matter), to forfeit my sole chance in life of getting upon the winning side,--that chance depending, of course, on my willingness to run the risk of acting as if my passional need of taking the world religiously might be prophetic and right.

All this is on the supposition that it really may be prophetic and right, and that, even to us who are discussing the matter, religion is a live hypothesis which may be true. Now, to most of us religion comes in a still further way that makes a veto on our active faith even more illogical. The more perfect and more eternal aspect of the universe is represented in our religions as having personal form. The universe is no longer a mere It to us, but a Thou, if we ar
possible from person to person might be pos
sense we are passive portions of the universe,
as if we were small active centres on our own
religion to us were made to our own active g
withheld from us unless we met the hypothes
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every concession, and believed no one's word
such churlishness from all the social rewards
here, one who should shut himself up in sna
extort his recognition willy-nilly, or not get it
his only opportunity of making the gods' acq
know not whence, that by obstinately believi
so would be so easy both for our logic and
deepest service we can, seems part of the livi
the hypothesis were true in all its parts, incl
with its veto on our making willing advan
participation of our sympathetic nature wou
one, cannot see my way to accepting the agn
agree to keep my willing nature out of the ga
that *a rule of thinking which would absolutely pr*
truth if those kinds of truth were really there, wou
long and short of the formal logic of the situ
might materially be.

I confess I do not see how this logic ca
me fear that some of you may still shrink fr
that we have the right to believe at our own
tempt our will. I suspect, however, that if th
from the abstract logical point of view altoge
realizing it) of some particular religious hypot
to ' believe what we will ' you apply to the
faith you think of is the faith defined by the
you believe something that you know ain
misapprehension. *In concreto*, the freedom t
which the intellect of the individual cannot b
seem absurdities to him who has them to
question as it really puts itself to concrete me
which both practically and theoretically it in
put a stopper on our heart, instincts, and cour
more or less as if religion were not true [*Since*
to believe religion to be true, necessarily also forbid
true. The whole defence of religious faith hinges upon

religious hypothesis is in no way different from that dictated by the naturalistic hypothesis, then religious faith is a pure superfluity, better pruned away, and controversy about its legitimacy is a piece of idle trifling, unworthy of serious minds. I myself believe, of course, that the religious hypothesis gives to the world an expression which specifically determines our reactions, and makes them in a large part unlike what they might be on a purely naturalistic scheme of belief.] –till doomsday, or till such time as our intellect and senses working together may have raked in evidence enough, --this command, I say, seems to me the queerest idol ever manufactured in the philosophic cave. Were we scholastic absolutists, there might be more excuse. If we had an infallible intellect with its objective certitudes, we might feel ourselves disloyal to such a perfect organ of knowledge in not trusting to it exclusively, in not waiting for its releasing word. But if we are empiricists [pragmatists], if we believe that no bell in us tolls to let us know for certain when truth is in our grasp, then it seems a piece of idle fantasticality to preach so solemnly our duty of waiting for the bell. Indeed we may wait if we will, --I hope you do not think that I am denying that, -- but if we do so, we do so at our peril as much as if we believed. In either case we act, taking our life in our hands. No one of us ought to issue vetoes to the other, nor should we bandy words of abuse. We ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to respect one another's mental freedom: then only shall we bring about the intellectual republic; then only shall we have that spirit of inner tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless, and which is empiricism's glory; then only shall we live and let live, in speculative as well as in practical things.

I began by a reference to Fitz James Stephen; let me end by a quotation from him. " What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world? . . . These are questions with which all must deal as it seems good to them. They are riddles of the Sphinx, and in some way or other we must deal with them. . . . In all important transactions of life we have to take a leap in the dark.... If we decide to leave the riddles unanswered, that is a choice; if we waver in our answer, that, too, is a choice: but whatever choice we make, we make it at our peril. If a man chooses to turn his back altogether on God and the future, no one can prevent him; no one can show beyond reasonable doubt that he is mistaken. If a man thinks otherwise and acts as he thinks, I do not see that any one can prove that he is mistaken. Each must act as he thinks best; and if he is wrong, so much the worse for him. We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? ' Be strong and of a good courage.' Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. . . . If death ends all, we cannot meet death better."