

on the table with the very valuable material. If he'd simply picked it up and thrown it in the dirt so that nothing would have been burned, the valuable table would not have been threatened.

In that case each of the people along the line may be considered a second cause. It might be argued whether the first cause was the prankster who put the stick on the table of material of little value in the first place, or the owner of that table who threw it. But the second causes were held to not be responsible in the chain of events. It was the first one who threw the stick who even though he had never seen the other table, and had no possible reason for dislike or hatred to the man who owned it or desire to destroy his material was considered obligated to pay for it because ~~hex~~ had caused ^{that} it should be burned.

It's not always easy to see what the first cause is. We believe that the first cause of everything is God.

On the other hand, you cannot say that second causes are absolutely unimportant. You cannot divest them of all responsibility. It is easy to take a second cause and think it is a first cause. Many of us like to do that.

I think an outstanding instance is the poet Wm Ernest Henning, and his terrible poem. Despite the wicked anti-Christian thought it contains, nevertheless it strikes something of a responsive chord in everyone of us. Because it suggests that we are a first cause, not a second cause.

When I graduated from college a very fine singer came to sing a solo at the commencement service. He sang a beautiful solo which ~~consisted~~ consisted of the words of Wm Ernest Henley's poem Invictus. You can think how I felt receiving my degree from college right after hearing this poem.

"Out of the night that covers me; black as the pit from pole to pole; I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance my head is bloody but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears, looms but the horror of the shade, and yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll. I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul!"

There is a man trying to kid himself into believing that he is the first cause, that he and he alone is responsible for what will happen to him. We all have a realization that we do have a liberty of choice. We all have a realization that when some trouble comes to us we can cringe, and bow before it and suffer five times as much as we should. Or we can stand up to it, defy it